

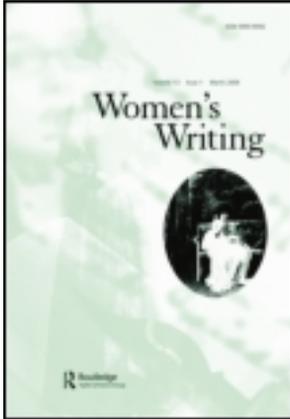
This article was downloaded by: [University of Warwick]

On: 15 November 2013, At: 11:21

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Women's Writing

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rwow20>

Sierra Leone, Slavery, and Sexual Politics: Anna Maria Falconbridge and the "swarthy daughter" of late 18th century abolitionism

Deirdre Coleman

Published online: 09 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: Deirdre Coleman (1995) Sierra Leone, Slavery, and Sexual Politics: Anna Maria Falconbridge and the "swarthy daughter" of late 18th century abolitionism, *Women's Writing*, 2:1, 3-23, DOI: [10.1080/0969908950020101](https://doi.org/10.1080/0969908950020101)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0969908950020101>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form

to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Sierra Leone, Slavery, and Sexual Politics: Anna Maria Falconbridge and the “swarthy daughter” of late 18th century abolitionism

DEIRDRE COLEMAN

THE ASSOCIATION of white women with brutal colonisation and with the leisured consumption of luxury imports is well established by the end of the eighteenth century.[1] So too is the contrary conviction that white women, with their superior moral sensibilities, should be in the vanguard of the abolitionist struggle. Thus an uncomfortable identity of interests governs the nexus of white woman and black slave; and the discomfort only increases when women attempt to capitalise upon fashionable anti-slavery rhetoric for their own political objectives – an effect most evident in their employment of the emotive but clichéd analogy between their own disenfranchised lot and the plight of enslaved Africans.[2]

The analogy was particularly pervasive in the 1790s, that tumultuous decade which began with wide popular support for abolitionism; to mention just one example, Mary Wollstonecraft's last work, *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria. A Fragment* (1798), a novel illustrating the misery and oppression of two women of different classes.[3] This is one of the more interesting (and inoffensive) explorations of women and slavery, a good illustration of the way in which the analogy had so saturated the narrative of woman's oppression that many readers today seem unaware of its detailed presence as a structural device. The topoi of slavery recur throughout the text: Maria is sold by her uncle into marriage with a brutal and mercenary husband who at one point tries to sell her to one of his friends for sexual use (that Maria is pregnant at the time may be an allusion by Wollstonecraft to the greater worth of the breeding slave as property.) Finally, when Maria runs away, her tyrant master/husband advertises for her return, then has her baby snatched from her bosom which is bursting with milk.

The Wollstonecraft novel is exceptional in so far as it avoids some of the more obvious pitfalls of the analogy, such as the gross reckoning of the respective ills of white women and black slaves. The same can be argued of Anna Maria Falconbridge's travel and adventure book, *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone, during the years 1791-2-3* (1794).[4] Falconbridge's text is also important for a number of other reasons. In providing the reader with a detailed account of a woman's perspective on the colonisation of Africa, it helps us to explore further a number of issues recently canvassed by feminism, such as the effects of race and class differences on gender identity[5], the overlapping of patterns

of racial and sexual difference in the eighteenth century, the role of gender in the construction of race, and vice versa. Following the lead of Laura Brown's *Ends of Empire* (1993), this paper is particularly concerned with the proposition that critiques of eighteenth-century texts in regard to the two categories of race and gender often lead off in opposite directions. The text Brown uses to illustrate this point is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, a work whose misogyny is powerfully bound up with its critique of imperialism and colonisation.[6] Falconbridge's case is rather different; she too stands out against the colonial enterprise, but the terms of her critique are both feminist and pro-slavery.

In Falconbridge's *Narrative* we have the white English woman on the west coast of Africa, the context of whose story is marriage, slavery, abolitionism and colonisation. Falconbridge was the young, newly married Bristol wife of Alexander Falconbridge, a slave-trading surgeon who, after publishing a stomach-turning account of the horrors of the middle passage, entered the employ of the Sierra Leone Company – first as a superintendent, then as a commercial agent.[7] Casting most of her narrative as a series of letters to an intimate female friend, Falconbridge uses the epistolary form to place in the foreground the femaleness of her voice and her preoccupation with issues to do with her sex; the private letter also conveys to the reader a lively, informal, firsthand view of history in the making.[8] In her preface Falconbridge bluntly informs us that the letters were written with a view to publication; after all, what could be more amazing (she tells us) than the spectacle of a young woman setting out for the “inhospitable Coast of Africa”?[9] Besides, the Sierra Leone experiment, a West African “free” colony of (principally) black settlers, had generated a good deal of public interest, not to say controversy[10] – and Falconbridge was not slow to frame her impending voyage within the wider historical context of England's new settlements abroad. In her second letter, written on board whilst waiting to set sail, she remarks: “The only thing that has attracted my notice in the harbour, is the fleet with the convicts for Botany Bay, which are wind bound, as well as ourselves”.[11] Since Sierra Leone had often been mooted as a possible site for a penal colony[12], the identification was not, perhaps, fortuitous, but it is an identification quickly annulled by the narrator's pointed contrast between her own freely chosen exile and that of the miserable felons. Nevertheless, the uncomfortable proximity of Botany Bay and Sierra Leone dogs the *Narrative*, destabilising and bringing into ironic conjunction notions of transportation and of resettlement, the convict and the free.

Sierra Leone was the brainchild of an eccentric botanist, Henry Smeathman, who had grandiose mercantile ambitions about an African commonwealth in which ex-slaves would grow rice, sugar, cotton and other commodities, thereby opening a channel of trade and commerce with Britain. Always in search of financial backing, Smeathman's first success was with the London “Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor”. The scheme was then taken up by Granville Sharp and other leading abolitionists, such as Thomas Clarkson. Set up in the mid- to late-1780s, this experimental settlement was to be the jewel in the crown of the British anti-slavery movement, a self-governing “Province of Freedom” for ex-slaves, the first shipment of whom

were rounded up from the London slums. By 1791 the “Province of Freedom” had been dissolved, the Sierra Leone Company established by the British Parliament, with Directors in London, and a colony proclaimed. A year later, to secure the new colony, almost 1200 loyalist Africans, many of them ex-slaves, were relocated with promises of land from their temporary first “homes” in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.[13]

Sierra Leone was set up to serve a number of purposes. It was to be an act of atonement for the slave trade, a key weapon in the fight to undermine the entire system of slavery, and a model to the rest of Africa of what could be achieved in terms of untainted commercial transactions with the rest of the world. The charter of the new Sierra Leone Company declared that, “they will send out goods from England and take all kinds of African produce in exchange; that they will not deal in slaves themselves, nor allow of any slave trade on their ground”.[14] In 1794 the colony was to feature prominently in Carl Wadstrom’s *Essay on Colonization* (1794), a book which enthused that the colonisation of Africa was “not only practicable, but, in a commercial view, highly prudent and advisable”.[15] For abolitionists like Wadstrom it seemed obvious that traders would make more money if they treated Africans as customers rather than merchandise – instead of selling them, the idea was to sell them goods.[16] There was also a good deal of speculation as to the viability and expert potential of African produce. Wadstrom’s enthusiasm for turning West Africa into one giant plantation with native labourers and white overseers was reflected in the Company’s appointment of two successive governors, one of whom came fresh from Botany Bay, the other from overseeing a slave plantation in Jamaica.[17] Of the latter appointment Anna Maria Falconbridge wrote with some sarcasm: “It is not to be questioned that the prejudices of such an education must impress him with sentiments favourable to the Slave Trade, and consequently I should not suppose him qualified for a Member of Administration in a Colony mostly formed of *Blacks*, founded on principles of *freedom*, and for the *express purpose* of abolishing the Slave Trade”.[18]

The initial resettlement of blacks in Sierra Leone was clearly designed to rid London’s slums of their surplus, the numbers swollen by an influx of black loyalists after the American War of Independence. Although masquerading as a relief effort, the various schemes used to inveigle Africans on to the ships looked more like deportation. Olaudah Equiano, initially reluctant to have anything to do with the scheme because of the notoriety of Sierra Leone as a slaving site, was eventually appointed Commissary of Provisions and Stores, only to be dismissed when he complained about the corruption of one of his employers; he also complained about the miserable plight of those waiting on board to sail – 50 of the transportees were to die before the ships set sail.[19] Mismanagement and corruption dogged the enterprise from the start, and continued to plague the fledgling colony, as Falconbridge’s *Narrative* amply demonstrates.

1791, the year of the Falconbridges’ first journey, was a crucial one for the colony. Of the original settlers only 15% had survived in the 4 years since their arrival in 1787, and this motley remnant of settlers had been chased off

their land by one of the local native chieftains, King Jemmy. Alexander Falconbridge's mission was to regroup the demoralised settlers and start rebuilding on a new site, a job which entailed a good deal of negotiation with the native chiefs. More threatening to the existence of the settlement than the natives, however, were the numerous European slave factories (i.e. trading posts) dotted in and around the Sierra Leone river, themselves witness to a flourishing trade in human flesh; indeed, with its estuary, deep channels and well-populated adjacent territories, Sierra Leone had long been a lively centre for trade in slaves and goods. Its notoriety in the slave trade was, as I have already mentioned in the case of Equiano, one of the main reasons why London's black poor were so dubious about the resettlement idea. Their distrust is well summarised by another African, Ottobah Cugoano: "can it be readily conceived that government would establish a free colony for them nearly on the spot, while it supports its forts and garrisons, to ensnare, merchandise, and to carry others into captivity and slavery".[20] Indeed, shortly before the arrival of Anna Maria and Alexander Falconbridge, a number of the original settlers had been captured and sold into slavery by a local chieftain and the resident British slaver on Bance Island (today Bunce Island).[21] Tensions between the settlers and the slave traders, who were constantly inciting the natives to disrupt the colony, were to plague the early years of the settlement.

In practical terms, then, the precarious existence of this abolitionist experiment arose from its proximity to the commercial success of slavery. A number of times in her narrative, Falconbridge makes invidious comparisons between the thriving trade in human cargo and the paltry amount of goods such as camwood, ivory and rice garnered for the Sierra Leone Company. In 12 months alone, she claims "upwards of two thousand slaves [had] been shipped and sent to the West Indies" from the river[22], and as the colony lurched from one disaster to another, it slid closer to collusion with the more viable economy of slave trading. Falconbridge charged, for instance, that under the governorship of Lieutenant Dawes, late of Botany Bay, the near starving colony bought supplies from a French ship which would only take slaves as payment – a blatant infringement of the Act of Parliament incorporating the Company.[23] By the time she was readying herself to leave Africa for the last time, she correctly predicted from the mayhem surrounding her that, "before ten years, we may hear that the Colony is dwindled into a *common* slave factory".[24] The many irregularities and hypocrisies of these early years were finally exposed in 1813, when, in a public enquiry, the Company was charged with a number of abuses, including the enforced slave labour of natives and the iniquitous system of apprenticing newly arrived ex-slaves.[25] By the middle of the nineteenth century Sierra Leone was condescendingly referred to as Granville Sharp's "poor little ill-thriven swarthy daughter".[26]

On one level, Falconbridge's *Narrative* functions as self-vindication, the work of "an injured Woman" seeking redress for the shabby treatment she has received at the hands of the directors of the Sierra Leone Company.[27] Her text also publicises the plight of the loyalist Africans, the "Nova Scotians", by incorporating a number of their letters of grievance to the directors.[28] Of the

fledgling colony itself, and of abolitionism as an ideal, her text is more ambiguous, threaded through with equivocal, and sometimes contradictory, statements. She speaks, for instance, of the Sierra Leone Company's "original laudable and magnanimous purposes", yet dismissively describes her husband's employment with the Company as an enlistment in the "chimerical cause of freedom and humanity". On the subject of abolitionism, too, she is something of a fence-sitter, clearly embarrassed by the admission towards the end of her book that she has defected to the pro-slavery camp. This apostasy leads to self-contradiction: the anti-slavery movement is "chimerical", yet a complete suppression of the trade is not "impracticable, or even difficult to effect", providing that Africans extricate themselves from that "vortex of disgrace", "the ignominy of trafficking in their own flesh".[29] This conveniently impossible proviso – that the irredeemable Africans be one day redeemed from their endemic slaving – is the culmination of pages of awkward argument:

For a length of time I viewed the Slave Trade with abhorrence ... but I am not ashamed to confess, those sentiments were the effect of ignorance, and the prejudice of opinion, imbibed by associating with a circle of acquaintances, bigoted for the abolition ... Pray do not misinterpret my arguments, and suppose me a friend to slavery, or wholly an enemy to abolishing the Slave Trade ... I must explain myself ... I must think favourably of the Slave Trade, while those innate prejudices, ignorance, superstition, and savageness, overspread Africa ...[30]

It is entirely in keeping with this slipping and sliding about that, while she denies seeing or hearing of wars instigated to supply slaves (a common abolitionist charge), she simultaneously denounces Africa for its "murdering, despotic Chieftains".[31]

From the start her marriage into abolitionism seems to have been a mistake, with Falconbridge unsympathetically presenting her new husband as a hot-tempered and argumentative zealot in the anti-slavery cause. As so often in her lively and spirited text, italicisation is a mark of ridicule: according to her husband, the slave trade is "abominable", the traders they meet "diabolical". His unkindness to her, which extinguished "every spark of affection or regard" she ever had for him,[32] would even appear to bear out a certain strand of contemporary feminist complaint: that anti-slavery enthusiasts were often the greatest slavers when it came to their own domestic relations.[33] For this reason, when the ardent abolitionist obligingly killed himself with drink on the second trip out, Falconbridge bluntly informs us she has no regrets, and very promptly remarried another employee of the Company – Isaac DuBois, a prosperous US loyalist from a southern slave-holding family.[34]

Anna Maria Falconbridge may have had little time for her first husband, but her spleen is principally reserved for his employers in London, the pious abolitionists running the colony. They demoted and later sacked Alexander Falconbridge, thus precipitating his alcoholic decline, then cheated her of the small sum owing to her on his death. There was also the excruciating incompetence and corruption of the self-important governors and superintendents put in charge of running the colony. When the goods which

accompanied the Falconbridges on the first voyage were unpacked, instead of food and clothing, and the building materials and tools so desperately needed to house the settlers, they found an absurd *mélange* of trade goods, including “a prodigious number of children’s trifling *half-penny knives*, and some few dozen scissars of the same *description*”. Later, when a consignment of “*garden watering posts*” arrived from London (it rains for approximately half the year in Sierra Leone), the italics say it all.[35]

Thus, while in one sense Falconbridge and her husband are obviously the colonisers in Africa, they are also, *vis-à-vis* the Sierra Leone Company, colonial subjects – Anna Maria doubly so in her position as wife, then unsupported widow, of a Company employee. And while the Company may have had clear ideas about the role they wished her to play – for instance, preparations for the second trip out included sums of money for the purchase of gifts for the local chieftain’s principal wife and daughter[36] – she hardly conformed to the model “incorporated wife”. [37] Indeed, for modern scholars, she is in many ways that most attractive of species: a feminist who writes a damning critique of the bungling, hypocrisy, and greed of an African imperial venture run entirely by white men. It is not surprising, then, that the *Narrative* should have had some attention of late, from two 1992 book publications, one of which reads Falconbridge as an abolitionist, while the other reads her as a pro-slaver.[38] We might well want to ask how it is that two recent feminist critics could give the same text quite different political readings? The answer lies partly in a reluctance to admit that historical paths of difference (in this case, those of gender and race) may diverge sharply from each other. The other part of the answer lies in that change of heart about slavery, a shift of perspective which has something to do with the class affiliations of her two marriages, and something to do with her extremely mobile and often contradictory range of identifications and dyspathies. A pragmatist and political moderate, Falconbridge identifies her first husband’s passion and extremism with coarseness.[39] In comparison, the prosperous slavers she meets in and around the Sierra Leone river are all gentility and hospitality, and by the time of her happy second marriage she has won through, she says, to a new independence of mind, one which tempts her to accept the myth of slavery as the only efficient and rational economy for the present (in this she proves herself to be a true daughter of Bristol).[40] The span of her two marriages, the first in 1791, the second in 1793, also reflects the waning popularity of abolitionism as it became more closely associated with radicalism. Towards the end of 1793, and a few days before arriving in Jamaica, Falconbridge hears that Wilberforce and Tom Paine have been burnt together in effigy at Kingston. Although offended by the conjunction of Wilberforce with that “incendiary” (as she calls Paine), she nevertheless regards both men as dangerous extremists, Wilberforce’s zealotry springing from “too keen notions of humanity, and too zealous a desire of doing good”. [41]

The *Narrative* captures an early moment of white involvement in Africa, well before the ugly scramble by Europeans for territory, and pre-dating the now well-charted ideology of Victorian imperialism. In many ways Falconbridge’s travel story fits quite nicely into that sentimental genre Mary Louise Pratt has

designated “experiential” or “subject-centred”, where the traveller is very much the protagonist, and where there is reciprocity and exchange with Africans who are themselves characters in the text.[42] Certainly, this is the tradition with which Falconbridge appears to align herself in the preface, proclaiming that she leaves the more informational, or ethnographic work to writers like John Matthews, an unemployed naval officer turned slave trade agent, whose *Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone* (1788) had only recently appeared.[43] There are, however, several important ways in which her text differs from the sentimental mode, exemplified for Pratt by Mungo Park. For instance, Falconbridge never adopts the voice of innocence, born of isolation and vulnerability. Nor does she project herself as passive, like Park, or deal in mystification of the enterprise in which she is involved. On the contrary, she is very much the active participant who repeatedly claims to state everything just as she sees it, without self-delusion. She is the realist, she boldly implies, with impractical idealism the *forte* of her abolitionist husband and his do-gooding employers.

Falconbridge’s encounter with Africa is quite unique in offering us the story of a woman’s attempt to find her feet in an embryonic, rather than settled, colonial venture. Unlike later wives who accompanied their husbands to far-flung places where the hierarchies of gender, race and class appeared to be rigidly in place, and where racial segregation and the public/private spheres were clearly delineated, Falconbridge finds herself in a more fluid and unformed environment. She does not, for instance, see herself as the standard-bearer of civilisation to the benighted natives; nor, as we have seen, does she sanction Britain’s fledgling colonisation of Africa. Motivated primarily by an appetite for new and exciting adventure, she is something of a rogue, conspicuously lacking in the sorts of political investment familiar to us in English women travellers of a later period. Of course, this is not to say that she is devoid of all cultural baggage. Just as strong a presence in our text as the rogue is the “Lady”, with her prescriptive codes of feminine decorum and propriety, characteristically adventuring a certain distance, only to rebuke herself for going too far.[44] This disjunction between the roles of the rogue-traveller and lady – seen most obviously, perhaps, in her oscillation between identifying with the natives and maintaining an innate European sense of superiority and difference – makes for a good deal of self-parody and humour in the text; it also has the effect of opening fissures in the hierarchies of race, gender, and class.

Her interest in what it means to be a white woman in this environment can be seen in her close observation of the status of the women around her, be they native or settler; she is also curious to see where she fits, as a white woman, within the structure of native life. On a visit to the local Temne ruler, King Naimbana, she notes that she is the only woman to sit down to eat with him, an honour never before granted to any woman, he tells her. Meanwhile the Queen stands behind her “*Royal Consort*”, intermittently feeding him with bites from an onion. Falconbridge also notes that she and Naimbana are the only ones at the table eating with silver forks.[45] If sitting down to table signals her superior status to the native Queen, the sharing of silver forks with the King marks a special bond between the white woman and the black chieftain, as does Naimbana’s later gift to Falconbridge of “two beautiful pines”. [46] The silver

fork is a marker of her superior class status to that of her husband, who must share ordinary utensils with the rest of Naimbana's social inferiors. Her subordinate gender status is also momentarily set aside by this "courtly encounter", an encounter untainted by the sordidly commercial nature of her husband's dealings with the king.[47]

A more dramatic instance of Falconbridge's status within the colony occurs in her participation in an episode of pawning, or hostage taking, a defensive tactic well-established on the coast for dealing with the treachery of white traders. Although common enough in practice, it was still a high-risk activity in an area so frequented by slave traders that it was ill-advised to trust anyone – let alone an estranged husband.[48] Falconbridge's involvement in this human barter took the form of her agreement to stand hostage for King Jemmy when he stipulated that this was the only condition on which he would step on board the Sierra Leone Company's ship: "He once consented on condition I remained in his town a hostage till he returned; this I agreed to, and went on shore for the intention; but his people dissuaded him just as he was going off".[49] The episode is interesting for a number of reasons. First of all, Falconbridge is not, like other pawns, pledged, but pledges herself quite willingly. Second, it shows that, despite their subordinate status, Falconbridge and King Jemmy are perfectly able to enter into a contractual agreement with each other. Third, if seen in the context of the only other major hostage episode of the *Narrative* – the one involving King Naimbana's son, John Frederick, offered to the Sierra Leone Company as a pledge of their new treaty[50] – there would appear to be some congruence in the *Narrative* between the status of the white woman and that of the African male noble.[51] It might be argued, of course, about both these episodes – the "courtly encounter" with King Naimbana and the hostage episode with King Jemmy – that Falconbridge is simply pandering to the common racist myth of the black man's inevitable gravitation towards the white woman, but it is equally clear that she proffers her special relationships with the chiefs as a way of enhancing her own status and authority within the colony.

Of all the local chieftains, King Jemmy was the one who had shown the most hostility to the outsiders, burning the first settlement and dispersing its would-be colonists. It is perhaps for this very reason that Falconbridge makes her friendship with him a point of pride in her *Narrative*; he is a man of his word, she claims, and also a man of great sensibility.[52] That he comes to see her before anyone else on matters to do with the settlement is an index of her power, exposing the bogus authority of those sent out to replace her first husband's command. With Naimbana she is on less certain ground, distrusting his smiles and friendly overtures, yet there is an unmistakable air of triumph, even of sexual conquest, in that scene where she sits eating with him, using his silver forks. The class point she scores against her first husband on that occasion is, however, compromised somewhat by her own uneasy jesting at the "royal" pretensions of these local chiefs. Reflecting on the day's proceedings, Falconbridge writes:

On the whole I was much pleased with the occurrences of the day; indeed, methinks, I hear you saying, "Why the week mind of this giddy girl will be

quite intoxicated with the courtesy and attention paid her by such great folks;" but believe me, to whatever height of self-consequence I may have been lifted by aerial fancies, overpouring sleep prevailed, and clouding all my greatness – I awoke next morning without the slightest remains of fancied importance.[53]

The baselessness of these high spirits, and the vulnerability of her laughter, are dramatically revealed soon afterwards on the first day of her attendance at the palaver initiated by Naimbana to renegotiate the Company's treaty. Here, surrounded by the chiefs, deafened and confused by their speeches and loud applause, and fearing that they are plotting treachery against them, Falconbridge bursts into tears and then swoons "into hysterics".[54] She then excuses herself from the rest of the protracted negotiations by pretending to be ill:

In the morning I feigned sickness, and beg'd to be excused from attending Falconbridge; he therefore set out, reluctantly leaving me behind: when he was gone, I went on shore, and spent the day in comfort and pleasantry, under the hospitable roof of Bance Island house; where I related the adventures of the preceding day, which afforded much mirth and glee to the company...

Before Falconbridge returned, which was not till between eight and nine o'clock at night, I had not only got on board, but in bed, and as he did not ask how I had spent the day, I did not inform him: he was vexed and out of humor, said he thought the wretches were only bamboozling him.[55]

Laughter is reinstated in the text, and the easy air of dominance reassumed as Falconbridge turns her flirtatious attentions from the natives to the slave traders her husband so depises. But her own (unwitting?) collusion with the natives as they (also) bamboozle her husband reveals the complexity of the game she is playing, and the puzzle as to where her truest allegiances lie in this new colonial settlement.

One thing which can confidently be said of Falconbridge's intentions in the *Narrative* is that she set out to subvert the authoritative moral position of her husband's well-known *Account of the Slave Trade*, published 6 years earlier in 1788.[56] This book, with its horrifically explicit account of the sufferings of the middle passage, obtained a certain prominence in the abolitionist debate by forming an important part of the evidence put before the House of Commons. On the first of her two journeys to Sierra Leone, Falconbridge begins to complicate the anti-slavery case by dramatically positioning herself between the English slave traders on Bance Island and an abolitionist husband who, in refusing to fraternise with those "diabolical" traders, imprisons her on board the Company's boat. Placing herself in the position of the captive slave, she writes:

Conceive yourself pent up in a floating cage, without room either to walk about, stand erect, or even to lay at length; exposed to the inclemency of the weather, having your eyes and ears momentarily offended by acts of indecency, and language too horrible to relate – add to this a complication of filth, the stench from which was constantly assailing your nose, and then you will have a faint notion of the Lapwing Cutter.[57]

Here we see the analogy at work, but the insertion of herself into the position of the black slave is done without fuss – and certainly without the appalling self-pity and racism of feminists like Mary Ann Radcliffe, who in 1792 rebuked abolitionists for callously putting the cause of illiterate slaves before that of their own country-women.[58] Falconbridge's point is simple and she makes it unobtrusively, but it is a point which underscores Laura Brown's argument about "the necessary intimacy of structures of oppression and liberation" in eighteenth-century culture.[59] In effect, to join the "genteel" slave traders on shore is to be emancipated from the coarse slavery of her marriage to an abolitionist.[60] Two years later, she leaves the settlement for good on what appears to be the eighteenth-century equivalent of a luxury liner – a slave-trading vessel complete with human cargo *en route* to England via Jamaica. Although apprehensive of being "exposed to indelicacies, too offensive for the eye of an English women" she is "agreeably disappointed" by the excellent food, accommodation and care given to the slaves. Furthermore, not only are the male and female slaves properly separated from each other, the women and girls (the only slaves, if any, the author is "liable to see" from her "comfortable apartments") are "full as well habited as they would have been in Africa".[61]

A similar point about the necessary intimacy of structures of oppression and liberation could be made about Falconbridge's relationship with the cheated Nova Scotians. Essentially her sympathies are with them; they share, after all, many grievances against the Company which lured them out to Africa with empty promises. It would be a mistake, though, to see this identification as springing from any narrative alignment of gender and race within an analysis of oppressive power. Concerned though Falconbridge might be at the rough deal handed out to the settlers, her critique does not, I suspect, entirely spring from a concern that the settlement will fail them. Rather, her critique of the free colony has much in common with those most concerted enemies of the interests of the black settlers: the pro-slavery lobby.[62] When Falconbridge chooses to exit on that commodious slaver, she makes her choice over the crowded Company ship full of disgruntled settlers ("Discontents") *en route* to London to air their complaints.[63]

When it comes to the relations of power involved in relations of looking, Falconbridge's *Narrative* exhibits aspects of that distinction which Harriet Guest claims is so entrenched by the late eighteenth century: namely, "that distinction between the moral interiority of the perceiving subject, and the observed subjection or degeneracy of the amoral object of knowledge".[64] Womanly modesty is central to this distinction. As Ruth Yeazell points out, in *Fictions of Modesty* (1991), female modesty was frequently figured as the last barrier of civilised society, serving in times of crisis as an important boundary-maker when all other boundaries were vulnerable.[65] From the very start of the *Narrative* we see modesty at war with the activities of the young writer-adventurer. Alluding in her first letter to the immodest haste of a marriage unsanctioned by her family and friends, she pictures herself as outlawed to the wilds of Africa in expiation of her wilfulness. The supposed expiation is simply a cloak, however, to that further act of immodesty, the venturing forth into the unknown with great excitement and curiosity.

Some of the most intriguing moments in the *Narrative* occur when Falconbridge, prompted by an immodest curiosity, absents herself from the general party to which she is attached. On her second visit to Bance Island she describes the slave factory, Bance Island House, as presenting a “respectable and formidable appearance”. “Delicacy”, she says, prevented the gentlemen from giving her a tour of the slave quarters behind the fortified house, but the room in which they dined looked directly into the slave yard:

Involuntarily I strolled to one of the windows a little before dinner, without the smallest suspicion of what I was to see; – judge then what my astonishment and feelings were, at the sight of between two and three hundred wretched victims, chained and parcelled out in circles, just satisfying the cravings of nature from a trough of rice placed in the centre of each circle.

Offended modesty rebuked me with a blush for not hurrying my eyes from such disgusting scenes; but whether fascinated by female curiosity, or whatever else, I could not withdraw myself for several minutes – while I remarked some whose hair was withering with age, reluctantly tasting their food – and others thoughtless from youth, greedily devouring all before them; be assured I avoided the prospects from this side of the house ever after. [66]

This is a complicated moment in the narrative, one which hinges on that contrast between her own indelicacy in looking and the slavers’ delicacy in not showing. Her blush appears to signify both guilt and innocence – innocence in so far as she registers some sense of womanly modesty, guilt that she should so disregard the promptings of this internal monitor. Just as the young slaves greedily devour their food, so too does her female curiosity greedily devour the Dantesque scene before her. Any identification with the slaves at this moment is blurred by the blush which suffuses the fair English skin of her face. Inevitably she resolves never to look again, for only by shutting out “such disgusting scenes” can she preserve intact her earlier figuration of herself as her husband’s captive slave.

At the first dinner at Bance Island House, after which her husband attempts to confine her to ship quarters, the men, warmed by alcohol, fall to heated debate about slavery. Taking off from the table as soon as “the cloath was removed”, Falconbridge finds she is something of a spectacle: “The people on the island crowded to see me; they gazed with apparent astonishment – I suppose at my dress, for white women could not be a novelty to them, as there were several among the unhappy people sent out here by the government ...”.[67] Dress, both native and European, figures prominently in Falconbridge’s narrative. While the people on the island stare at her dress, she stares back at their “native garbs” and draws conclusions about rank and distinction: “Seeing so many of my own sex, though of different complexions from myself, attired in their native garbs, was a scene equally new to me, and my delicacy, I confess, was not a little hurt at times”. Ironically, the indelicacy of scantily clad native women gives way to the supposedly more comforting sight of other black women, apparently “of superior rank, at least I concluded so from the

preferable way in which they were clad; nor was I wrong in my conjecture, for upon enquiring who they were, was informed one was the *woman* or *mistress* of Mr - -, another of Mr B - -, and so on: I then understood that every gentleman on the island had his *lady*".[68] Falconbridge's satirical play here with notions of delicacy and indelicacy, non-dress and European dress, the white lady and the black lady with the native woman as backdrop: all this is part of a sharp-eyed narrative which enjoys exposing the arbitrariness (and relativity) of decorous norms, such as those associated with the chivalric discourse of "Ladyhood". Nor is the simplicity of English dress, so envied by the fully veiled Portuguese women in the Azores, a reliable index of the social and political status of English women:

In conversation with one of these ladies she said to me "the women of your country must surely be very happy: they have so much more liberty than we have, or I believe, than the women of any other country, I wish I was an English woman!" I thanked her on behalf of my country women, for her good opinion, but assured her they had their share of thorns and thistles, as well as those of other countries.[69]

In her typically laconic way, Falconbridge resists making much of the stereotype – the dramatic encounter between a secluded, "unfree" foreign woman and a publicly visible "free" English self. In doing so, she refuses to draw a veil over the real powerlessness and oppression of English women at home.

Compared to John Matthews's *Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone*, with its extremely hostile and racist observations of the coastal Africans, Falconbridge's *Narrative* is moderately even-handed and open-minded in its recording of cultural difference. Problematising her role of reporter, she in one instance describes herself as "thoughtlessly" stooping to examine a "Gree Gree" before being asked to desist, "they being held in a very sacred point of view".[70] Being an environmentalist and monogamist, she also repeatedly states her belief that Africans are no less endowed than "any other part of the human race" with the capacity for improvement and cultivation. Many of the differences she perceives are attributed to external causes, such as the climate or cultural practices. The bandy legs which spoil the "well-limbed" bodies of the men are attributable, she says, to the way in which the newborn infant is carried by its mother on her back, "with both its legs buckled round her waist, and the calves pressed to her sides, by which means the tender bones are forced from their natural shape, and get a curve that never after grows out".[71] Moreover, when it comes to physical differences, she is prepared to concede the relativity, and hence limitation, of her European perspective; noting the way in which the native women's breasts stretch out to great length after much child-bearing, she adds "disgusting to Europeans, though considered *beautiful* and ornamental here".[72] Drawn as she is to numerous observations upon the native women, Falconbridge reads their position in Koya society as an index to the degree of that society's civilisation. Her impressions on this score are unfavourable; the women are not well-shaped like the men: "being employed in all hard labour, makes them robust and clumsy They are not only obliged to till the ground,

and do all laborious work, but are kept at a great distance by the men, who seldom suffer a woman to sit down or eat with them".[73] When taken on a tour of King Naimbana's salt works at Robana town, a product he disposes of in the interior in return for slaves, she comments (with much italicisation): "Making this salt is attended with a very trifling expence, for none but *old, refuse, female* slaves, are employed in the work, and the profit is considerable".[74]

Falconbridge's universalist attitude, her assumption that human nature is everywhere the same, keeps alternating, though, with what we have already seen: the desire to measure and classify racial and sexual difference. Innate assumptions of racial superiority are never far behind. When Falconbridge takes Clara, one of King Naimbana's daughters, back to Bance Island for a few days "to try her disposition", she finds her "impetuous, litigious, and implacable". In an attempt to "new fashion this *Ethiopian* Princess", she "endeavoured to persuade her to dress in the European way, but to no purpose; she would tear the clothes off her back immediately after I put them on".[75] In admitting the snub, Falconbridge concedes the one-sided presumption of attempting to "raise" up the African princess in the scale of beauty. Shortly after this episode Falconbridge meets the remnants of the original settlers, including seven English women "decrepid with disease, and so disguised with filth and dirt, that I should never have supposed they were born white; add to this, almost naked from head to foot". Although restoring them to their original whiteness and Englishness by washing and clothing them, she nevertheless preserves the boundary between herself and their "gone native" condition by remarking that they seemed "insensible to shame". As a footnote to the racial status of these women, it is worth adding what Falconbridge learns of them, and that is that they were sent out to the colony, not as convicts, as she had supposed, but as the coerced "wives" of the black settlers. Many of them were, it would seem, London prostitutes, rounded up by hired thugs and taken to Wapping where they were intoxicated, inveigled on board ship, and paired off with black men they had never seen before. "Thus", says one of the women, "upwards of one hundred unfortunate women were seduced from England to practice their iniquities more brutishly in this horrid country".[76] It is possible that the original intention behind the scheme resembled Lord Sydney's design in 1786 of enslaving Polynesian women for the new settlement at New South Wales, to keep the transported men from "gross irregularities and disorders".[77] The prospect of intercourse between free black settlers and native women must also have caused some anxiety about the disruption this might cause to the order and regulation of this experimental "civilising" settlement.

Alexander Falconbridge's task of re-establishing the first settlers involved extensive negotiation with King Naimbana, a most important and prosperous middleman for all Europeans who wanted to barter with the hinterland for slaves, and for other goods, like gold, ivory, pepper and camwood. Our narrator is decidedly satirical in her observations of this old African regent, who numbered amongst his many wives a "*Pegininee* woman ... a most beautiful young girl of about fourteen".[78] As though to underscore the absurdity of this, she emphasises his masculine sartorial vanity, his love of European dress,

his dandyism. When they first arrive in Robana town they catch him in undress, “*dishabille*”, i.e. “in a loose white frock and trowsers”, a figure whom she “*would not have suspected for a King!* if he had not been pointed out”. Half an hour later he reappears, dressed for the occasion, “in a purple embroidered coat, white satin waistcoat and breeches, *thread stockings*, and his left side emblazoned with a flaming star; his legs to be sure were *harliquined*, by a number of holes in the stockings, through which his black skin appeared”. [79] Marrying her italics, Falconbridge mocks the old man’s pretensions to rank and dignity, aspirations reflected in his donning of formal, if somewhat obsolete, eighteenth-century dress. In her eyes, the dress is a parody of theatrical costume, a costume which (as defined by Anne Hollander) “does not transform the actor into his character but, rather ... amplifies him and shows him as something else without eliminating him”. Hollander gives the example of Charles I and Louis XIV, who, “appearing in masques and ballets, were thus recognizable as showing through their clothes”. [80] Naimbana’s real self, anything but regal in Falconbridge’s eyes, peeps clownishly through the worn out stockings, puncturing any illusion of theatrical ceremony and reducing the scene to the more material level of pantomime. Furthermore, the sights of Robana town are referred to derisively as “*raree-shows*” [81], a term evocative of the world of popular fairs and exhibitions, where freaks and oddities, such as hermaphrodites, dwarfs, giants, and other “*curiosities*” were displayed, including, of course, Hottentots and American Indians. [82]

The parti-coloured, “*harliquined*” stockings are the one constant feature of what are to be no less than three costume changes in a single afternoon. Alexander Falconbridge’s gift of “a gold laced hat”, possibly a cast-off from some footman’s livery, only heightens the comedy until, suddenly, when Naimbana reappears in a black velvet suit, Falconbridge writes:

I often had an inclination to offer my services to close the holes: but was fearful lest my needle might blunder into his Majesty’s leg, and start the blood, for drawing the blood of an African King. I am informed, whether occasioned by accident or otherwise, is punished with death: the dread of this only prevented me. [83]

The homely ordinariness of a woman’s desire to darn stockings is suddenly, in this exotic context, transformed into something unfamiliar and full of danger. Naimbana may be a figure of fun, a clown, but as the stockings remind us, he is a harlequin too, with a mischievous, intriguing edge to his performance. In some ways he fits Bakhtin’s notion of the carnival-grotesque: buffoon-like and comic, this “*King of Kings*” is also formless and a bit terrifying, an unfinished body whose apertures cannot be closed. [84] The parti-coloured appearance of his lower body, part black skin, part pale fabric, also reflects his freakishness, his ambiguous, hybrid ancestry: “the features of his face resemble a European more than any black I have seen”, comments Falconbridge, “he was seldom without a smile on his countenance, but I think his smiles were suspicious”. [85] All in all, the narrator’s encounter with King Naimbana inverts the romance between white woman and noble black man so powerfully engendered by Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1688), where the narrator lovingly praises her black

hero for his European rather than African features, his nose “rising and *Roman*, instead of *African* and flat. His mouth the finest shaped that could be seen; far from those great turn’d Lips, which are so natural to the rest of the Negroes”. [86] Instead of recommending him, Naimbana’s European appearance and his mixed blood (he was probably African-Portuguese) seem to have had the opposite effect, generating in the narrator suspicion, dislike and an indeterminate gendering. On the last point it is notable that Naimbana’s son John Frederick, described by Falconbridge as “jet-black”, is also characterised as “manly”. [87]

Falconbridge’s distrust and dislike is a compliment well returned by the old man who (she records), “said he liked the English in preference to all white men, tho’ he considered very white man as a *rogue*, and consequently saw them with a jealous eye”. [88] Like other prosperous coastal chiefs, Naimbana prized education as the essential key to the Africans’ ability to trade equally with the Europeans. One son he sent to France, another to England, a third he entrusted to Muslim clerics: “Read book, and learn to be *rogue* so well as white man”; for they say, if white men could not read, or wanted education, they would be no better rogues than *black gentlemen*’. [89] The unsentimentality of the African perspective, as reported here by Falconbridge, stands in sharp contrast to the abundance of sentimental literature featuring the educated African, such as Zelma, Mary Robinson’s “Negro Girl”, whose education in the principles of equality has nothing to do with matching the rapacity of white people:

*The Tyrant WHITE MAN taught my mind –
The letter’d page to trace; –
He taught me in the Soul to find
No tint, as in the face ...* [90]

Falconbridge’s *Narrative* stands a long way off from such abolitionist pieties, but it is also markedly different from the more usual run of pro-slavery travel books. While her distrust of Naimbana fits the paradigm of many travellers’ perceptions of the natives – that they are treacherous, revengeful, and vindictive [91] – her position as a woman and as a colonial subject makes her an exception to the rule formulated by her contemporary, John Newton: that “the English and Africans, reciprocally, consider each other as consummate villains”. [92] Indeed, Falconbridge sees Naimbana as cheated of his land for “a paltry consideration, of about thirty pounds”, a sum which makes a mockery of her husband’s assurance to him of the Sierra Leone Company’s “*disinterestedness in point of obtaining wealth*”. [93] Falconbridge sympathises, even identifies, with Naimbana who, like herself, is cheated by the Sierra Leone Company. As the landlord with whom the Company has to deal, he may be a figure of resistance, but he is also, like the narrator herself, the Company’s victim.

The *Narrative* offers, then, a remarkably mobile range of sympathies and antipathies, many of which complicate our understanding of eighteenth-century racial and sexual politics. As we have seen, Falconbridge may sympathise with both settlers and native Africans as fellow victims of the Sierra Leone Company, but her sympathy can also be construed as part of a pro-slavery campaign to undermine the abolitionist experiment in West Africa.

Similarly, whilst she is remarkably free of the ugly racism so typical of pro-slavery advocates, she is nevertheless preoccupied with measuring difference, whether it be on a scale of beauty (*vis-à-vis* the women in Naimbana's family) or on a scale of personal authority and value (*vis-à-vis* the chiefly Africans playing host to the colonists). That she should principally focus on "royal" Africans to the exclusion of others may also tell us something about white culture's relative ranking of racial and sexual difference.

Correspondence

Dr Deirdre Coleman, Department of English, University of Sydney, Sydney NSW 2006, Australia. Email: deirdre.coleman@english.su.edu.au

Notes

- [1] Laura Brown has written cogently on commodification as the basis for attacks on women in the writings of Pope, Swift, Mandeville and Defoe; see her *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); see also Laura Mandell, "Bawds and Merchants: Engendering Capitalist Desires", *ELH*, 59 (1992): 107-123. Another useful study is *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, eds J. Brewer, J. H. Plumb & N. McKendrick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).
- [2] For some of the problems associated with this analogy in late eighteenth-century abolitionist writing, see Deirdre Coleman, "Conspicuous Consumption: White Abolitionism and English Women's Protest Writing in the 1790s", *ELH*, 61 (Summer, 1994): 341-362.
- [3] *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman*, eds J. Kinsley & G. Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
- [4] The full title of the first edition is *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone, during the years 1791-2-3, In a Series of Letters, by Anna Maria Falconbridge. To which is added, A Letter from the Author, To Henry Thornton, Esq. M.P. And Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company* (London: Printed for the Author, and sold by different Booksellers throughout the Kingdom, 1794). A second edition, in every respects the same text as that of 1794, appeared 8 years later, with altered page numbering, an expanded letter to Thornton, and the more descriptive (and politically slanted) title, *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone, during the years 1791-2-3, performed by A.M. Falconbridge. With a Succinct Account of the Distresses and Proceedings of that Settlement; a description of the Manners, Diversions, Arts, Commerce, Cultivation, Custom, Punishments, etc. And Every interesting Particular relating to the Sierra Leone Company. Also the Present State of the Slave Trade in the West Indies, and the Improbability of its Total Abolition* (London: L. I. Higham, 1802). Page numbers refer to this second edition (reprinted by Frank Cass, London, in 1967, and the text is hereafter cited as *Narrative*).
- [5] On the dangers of separating feminist thinking and politics from issues of race and class, see Elizabeth Spelman's *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).

- [6] See Brown, *Ends of Empire*, 170-200.
- [7] For Alexander Falconbridge, see Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Putnam, 1976). We know very little about Anna Maria Falconbridge's life, apart from what we learn of her through the *Narrative*. We do not, for instance, know her unmarried name.
- [8] Six weeks of the text, from 1 January until 15 February 1793 (approximately 20 printed pages) are in journal rather than letter format, a function (the author writes) of each day producing "such a sameness that really there is not subject for high seasoning, even a common epistle", *Narrative*, 208.
- [9] "Dedication", and again on p. 11.
- [10] Peter Fryer gives a lively account of the controversy in his *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), 196-203; see also Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 144-153.
- [11] *Narrative*, 16.
- [12] See Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 141-142.
- [13] For the history of these settlers from Nova Scotia, see Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*.
- [14] Quoted in Standish Meacham, *Henry Thornton of Clapham, 1760-1815* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1964), 104.
- [15] C. B. Wadstrom, *An Essay on colonization, particularly applied to the Western Coast of Africa, with some free thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce; also Brief Descriptions of the colonies already formed, or attempted, in Africa, including those of Sierra Leone and Bulama* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1794), iii.
- [16] This was an economic argument used pervasively by abolitionists, both English and African; for Olaudah Equiano's plea that his fellow Africans be treated as customers rather than merchandise, see his letter to the Privy Council, 1788, reprinted in *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, ed. C. Fyfe (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 109-111.
- [17] One was William Dawes, the other Zachary Macaulay. Dawes volunteered to go with the first convicts to Botany Bay in 1787; he was dismissed from his post in 1791, after a quarrel with the Governor of New South Wales. Macaulay went to Jamaica in 1784 as a 16 year-old in search of work; he was closely associated with the Sierra Leone Company from 1793 until its dissolution in 1808. For an account of these two men, see Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*.
- [18] *Narrative*, 194. Of Dawes's severe demeanour and service at Botany Bay she writes: "such behaviour, however suitable for a Colony formed wholly of Convicts, and governed by the iron rod of despotism, should be scrupulously guarded against in one like this, whose *basis is Liberty and Equality*", *Narrative*, 178-179.
- [19] For the narrative of his involvement in the Sierra Leone project, see chapter XII of *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written by Himself* (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 275-294.
- [20] Quoted in Fryer, *Staying Power*, 199.
- [21] Others took to slave trading themselves, or drifted off to work in the factories; see two subsequent Chief Magistrates' letters to Granville Sharp, 1788, reprinted in Fyfe, 114-116.
- [22] *Narrative*, 193.

- [23] *Narrative*, 191.
- [24] *Narrative*, 226.
- [25] For an account of some of the abuses which became endemic to the settlement see Meacham, *Henry Thornton of Clapham*, 114-120.
- [26] Quoted in Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 161.
- [27] See her heartfelt plea to Henry Thornton included in the appendix of the first (1794) edition.
- [28] *Narrative*, 211-216.
- [29] *Narrative*, 125, 238-239.
- [30] *Narrative*, 235-238.
- [31] *Narrative*, 193, 236.
- [32] *Narrative*, 169-170.
- [33] See, for instance, Hannah More's essay, "The White Slave Trade", *The Works of Hannah More*, 11 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1830), 3: 384ff.
- [34] See *Narrative*, 169. Alexander Falconbridge appears to have died on 19 December, 1792. The second marriage took place *circa* 21 January 1793, when the new Mrs DuBois hosted a large, celebratory dinner party. For information about Isaac DuBois, see Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 270.
- [35] *Narrative*, 67, 182.
- [36] Falconbridge was to present the gifts "as from myself, by way of enhancing my consequence", *Narrative*, 130.
- [37] For an analysis of this concept, see *The Incorporated Wife*, eds Hilary Callan & Shirley Ardener (London: Croom Helm, 1984), especially the articles on colonial and settler wives by Kirkwood, Gartrell and Brownfoot.
- [38] Moira Ferguson's *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 198-208; and Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 102-106.
- [39] From the few glimpses we get of him from contemporaries, it is clear there was nothing mild-mannered about Falconbridge. He used, for instance, to refer to the slave trade as that "lump of deformity"; see Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 185.
- [40] Her *Narrative* is, in fact, dedicated to the "Inhabitants of Bristol".
- [41] *Narrative*, 234-235.
- [42] See her "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen", *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Autumn 1985), 130-133.
- [43] *Narrative*, vi; see John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone, on the Coast of Africa; containing an Account of the Trade and Productions of the Country, and of the Civil and Religious Customs and Manners of the People; in a series of Letters to a Friend in England, during his Residence in that Country in the Years 1785, 1786 and 1787. With an additional letter on the African Slave Trade* (1788; 2nd edn 1791) (London: Frank Cass, 1966).
- [44] At the end of her discussion of slavery she writes: "I am heartily glad to get rid of this subject, and am surprised how I came to entangle myself in it", *Narrative*, 239. See also her response to the slaves behind Bance Island House, p. 13.

- [45] *Narrative*, 43, 77.
- [46] *Narrative*, 41.
- [47] The term “courtly encounter” is Pratt’s, in “Scratches on the Face of the Country”, 131-132.
- [48] John Matthews gives an account of how this practice worked, as it pertained to slaves and to the children of free blacks, Matthews, *A Voyage to the River of Sierra-Leone*, 155-156. It was well documented by other travellers too; see Thomas Winterbottom, *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighborhood of Sierra Leone to which is added An Account of the Present State of Medicine among them*, 2 vols (London, 1803), 126, and John Newton, in Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, 75.
- [49] *Narrative*, 137.
- [50] *Narrative*, 60.
- [51] For Laura Brown’s argument that “[t]he woman and the native can be seen as equivalent categories in the construction of difference”, see Brown, *Ends of Empire*, 161. On the contemporary preoccupation with classifying and ranking sexual and racial differences, see Londa Schiebinger’s interesting article, “The Anatomy of Difference: Race and Sex in Eighteenth-Century Science”, Special Issue: The Politics of Difference, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23 (1990): 387-405.
- [52] *Narrative*, 192, 188.
- [53] *Narrative*, 45.
- [54] *Narrative*, 55.
- [55] *Narrative*, 58-59.
- [56] Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (London: J. Phillips, 1788). The book was often quoted by abolitionists; see *An Abstract of the Evidence delivered before a Select Committee of the House of Commons in the years 1790, and 1791; on the part of the Petitioners for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade* (London: J. Phillips, 1791).
- [57] *Narrative*, 24.
- [58] Mary Ann Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate, or an Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation* (1792). (1799; reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1974).
- [59] Brown, *Ends of Empire*, 174.
- [60] For the general view that slave trading was “a genteel employment, and usually very profitable”, see John Newton’s *An Authentic Narrative of some Remarkable and Interesting Particulars in the Life of ***** Communicated in a Series of Letters to the Reverend Mr Haweis*, 5th edn (London: J. Johnson, 1782), 148.
- [61] Cf. *Narrative*, 232-234, with her husband’s *Account of the Slave Trade*, 19-32.
- [62] Pratt suggests that the *Narrative* may have been sponsored by the pro-slavery faction; see *Imperial Eyes*, p. 238, n.40.
- [63] *Narrative*, 228. For the settlers’ many grievances see “*Our Children Free and Happy*”: *Letters from Black Settlers in Africa in the 1790s*, ed. C. Fyfe (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991).
- [64] “Figures of the exotic in William Hodges’s work”, *New Feminist Discourses: Critical*

Essays on Theories and Texts, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 317.

- [65] Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 25.
- [66] *Narrative*, 32-33.
- [67] *Narrative*, 21.
- [68] *Narrative*, 21-22.
- [69] *Narrative*, 121-122.
- [70] *Narrative*, 41.
- [71] *Narrative*, 76.
- [72] *Narrative*, 76.
- [73] *Narrative*, 76-77.
- [74] *Narrative*, 61. For the slaver's term "refuse", see James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 60-61.
- [75] *Narrative*, 61-62.
- [76] *Narrative*, 65-66. Not all historians of Sierra Leone believe this story; see Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford University Press, 1962), 17.
- [77] Quoted Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: A History of the Transportation of Convicts to Australia, 1787-1868* (London: Collins, 1987), 245.
- [78] *Narrative*, 40. On polygamy, see Felicity Nussbaum, "The Other Woman: Polygamy, *Pamela*, and the prerogative of empire", *Women, "Race", and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. M. Hendricks & Patricia Parker (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 138-159. Nussbaum touches on Falconbridge's *Narrative*, but the discussion is too compressed to be very coherent or persuasive.
- [79] *Narrative*, 34. This is much more sharply observant than Matthews's generalised picture: "Image to yourself the shore of a little sandy bay covered with black men, women and children. Under the shade of a tree sat the king in an arm-chair, dressed in a suit of blue silk, trimmed with silver lace, with a laced hat and ruffled shirt, and shoes and stockings. On each sat his principal people, and behind him two or three of his wives", see Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone*, 4.
- [80] Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: Viking, 1978), 250.
- [81] *Narrative*, 42.
- [82] A spotted negro boy was one of the freaks on display at Bartholomew Fair in the late eighteenth century; see *Black Personalities in the Era of the Slave Trade*, P. Edwards & J. Walvin (Macmillan, 1983), and R. D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978).
- [83] *Narrative*, 39-40.
- [84] *Narrative*, 36; see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 29, 43.
- [85] *Narrative*, 43.
- [86] Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave* (New York and London: Norton, 1973), 8. Ros Ballaster has written a most interesting article on the way readers of

Behn's text have centred on a heterosexual romance of black man and white woman; see her "New Hystericism: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: the Body, the Text and the Feminist Critic", *New Feminist Discourse* (see [64]).

[87] *Narrative*, 127.

[88] *Narrative*, 37.

[89] *Narrative*, 77-78.

[90] Mary Robinson, "The Negro Girl", *Lyrical Tales* [1800] (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1989), 111.

[91] See, for instance, Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone*, 14, 96, 148, 167. Even the benign Thomas Winterbottom describes the natives as querulous and indolent; see his *Account of the Native Africans*, 90-91. Many of these complaints were directed at the coastal traders, especially if they were of mixed race, for the mulatto could play the game of "With a White Man he is a White Man, with a Black Man a Black Man"; see Matthews, in Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, 102.

[92] Quoted in Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, 74.

[93] *Narrative*, 60, 36.