# (Re) thinking Systems in Enlightenment's Metropoles

## in Patricia Eakins' *The Marvelous Adventures of Pierre Baptiste, Father and Mother, First and Last* and Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*

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## Résumé en Français

*The Marvelous Adventures of Pierre Baptiste, Father and Mother, First and Last* (1999) de Patricia Eakins suggère une représentation fictive de la fonctionnement de L'Empire français dans l'ile imaginaire de Saint Michel. Le roman met en évidence les limites des Lumières, illustrées dans le texte à travers le personnage de Dufay. Son approche taxonomique du monde contribue à l'installation d'un modèle hiérarchique dans le contexte scientifique du 18ème siècle. Une telle vision verticale et autocratique du monde est remise en question par le personnage de Pierre Baptiste, un esclave qui dépasse le modèle prédominant de son maître. Il propose une conception horizontale du monde qui exclut toute hiérarchie et verticalité. Le roman critique les Lumières en utilisant leurs propres instruments, et fournit une version plus démocratique de ce siècle.

*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (2001) offre le récit autobiographique de l'ancien esclave Olaudah Equiano qui fut témoin de l'activité économique de l'Empire britannique dans l'espace atlantique. L'autobiographie souligne les limites de la pensée des Lumières, retranscrites à travers un système économique hiérarchique qui oppresse les esclaves. L'auteur propose une amélioration interne de l'économie et du fonctionnement impérial britanniques. Cette critique représente alors une alternative politique démocratique qui présèrve l'ancien modèle (l'économie des Lumières) tout en reconsidérant la place et l'inclusion des Africains dans ce système.

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## Foreword

The topic for my thesis comes out of a number of random reflections about the Mediterranean geography from which I originate, and towards which I have mixed feelings. This kind of geography can sometimes be associated with the meanings of beauty as with the meanings of death, and at other times, it is associated with none of them, just an empty vast expanse of space that is devoid and discharged of all meanings. These general reflections have gradually developed, as they now involve the human element, the subjects in transit across such a geography. My reflections articulate the experiences of my compatriots- these subjects in transit- who cross the Mediterranean and focus their visions on Europe. Some of these mobile subjects make it to the other side of the Mediterranean, reflected through their concentration in Italian island cities such as Lampedusa and Pantelleria. However, many others die in the process because they embark in a "quasi-boat", a boat that does not look like a boat, and which in the migrants' common jargon is called "Fantasma" or "Phantasm" since it accesses them to a surreal world. These powerless migrants depart from the "margins" (which reflect poverty, unemployment, underrepresentation, etc.) towards the "enlightened" or "enlightening" metropoles.

At this point, my random reflections embed two essential words: The Mediterranean, which signals the element of the sea in general terms, and the idea of Enlightenment that is both an end and a means. Like all migrants (dis) placed from their dwellings and (re) placed or (mis) placed in other localities, my compatriots reflect a culture that itself is in a continuous transit or simply transition. They reflect a "culture that is not bound to land, a watery culture, a culture in the transit and in the movement mutated from one ecology to another" as Paul Gilroy puts it in an interview he had with Randi Gressgård and Bjørn Enge Bertelsen at Litteraturhuset in Bergen on the 19th of April 2018. Gilroy stresses the "watery sense of culture and our

dependency on water", a claim that reinforces my above impressions towards the element of the sea.

I wanted to design a topic based on the above-mentioned insights, but I was faced with the problem of a missing scholarship (at least in English) that voices these Mediterranean and "watery" experiences. This is why I am now shifting my attention to the Atlantic, which "becomes a second Mediterranean," as Gilroy argues, and perfectly articulates the watery experiences of bodies-in-transit. I have wanted to design a topic based on these particular terms: the sea, culture, people-in-transit, Enlightenment that in turn brings up the idea of slavery.

The link between my topic and the above reflections, is that what is applied to the Mediterranean can also be applied to the Atlantic. People on the move are essentially conditioned by "watery" experiences. This link is going to be made clearer in my conclusion to the thesis. In what follows, and which is based on the above reflected ideas, I will attempt to study two different texts that articulate two different "watery" experiences in the Atlantic world. The texts that I have chosen to discuss are Patricia Eakins' *The Marvelous Adventures of Pierre Baptiste, Father and Mother, First and Last* (1999), a contemporary magic realist text, and, in the other extreme direction, I have chosen to discuss the autobiographical work *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (2001).

## Introduction

"And a ghostly Pintal did speak in my ear, saying, "there is no choice but to embrace one's fate, and in so doing, transcend" (Eakins 184, my emphasis).

Patricia Eakins' *The Marvelous Adventures of Pierre Baptiste, Father and Mother, First and Last* (1999) is a neo-slave narrative that tells the story of a slave Pierre Baptiste who lives on a sugar plantation in the imaginary island of Saint Michel situated in the French Anduves. The novel is (re)located and (re)contextualized to the 18th Century Enlightenment, represented in the novel by the French natural historian and philosopher Georges Louis Lecreq, Comte de Buffon. Françoise Palleau Papin, the editor of *A Collective Volume of Essays on Patricia Eakins With Excerpts From Her Fiction* (2002), provides us with a synopsis of our novel and she suggests that:

> The introduction to the story, the 'Overture' summarizes the plot of the novel, since the story is the end of what became the full novel: In 1754, an exceedingly valuable slave named Pierre, trained as a bookkeeper, escapes by sea in a rum cask from a sugar plantation in the French Anduves. He floats away from the shipping lanes to wash up on the shore of the island we know as Big Cayana, then uninhabited and bearing no name ... [The novel] explains Pierre's upbringing and life on the plantation, how he acquires his learning, his marriage, his occupations, why he has to escape the plantation, and his perilous sea journey until he is marooned on a desert island. Then the story narrates his life on the island and his pregnancies and bearing metamorphic children to a female fish, and runs until the end of his life and of the novel, covering parts 7 and 8. (101)

As mentioned already, Eakins relocates her narrative to the 18th Century and addresses through a slave's perspective the incompleteness of the science of Enlightenment, which is reflected in

how Pierre's Master Monsieur Dufay embarks on a sketching project, consisting in drawing several varieties of species, thus, contributing to Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*. Eakins stresses the shortsightedness and the limitations of such a scientific venture and aims at filling the several gaps left by the white scientists of the era, relying on the marvelous account of a slave, Pierre Baptiste. Reflecting on the incompleteness of 18th century thinking, Pierre notes "Ah! If Buffon had come out from France, he would have seen in what respects his histoire of these islands be incomplete" (Eakins 13). I stress the fact that Pierre's scientific venture consists in the addition, configuration, thus in the "contribution to the completeness of knowledge" (Eakins 81) because that reveals how he operates within the same system that he aims to (re)think and (re)work. In so doing, he guarantees a better inclusion, integration, and participation of various elements such as the slaves who are scattered in the "white" science. For this reason, Pierre aims at "shadow[ing] Monsieu's philosophic project he has undertaken with the Sage of Montbard" (46). "Shadowing" in this sense reveals how Pierre potentially aims at (dis)placing Dufay's project by submitting himself an alternative project that consists in "compiling a prodigious compendium of natural and moral histories, setting forth in orderly fashion the commemorative particulars of Guinee, fauna and flora and diverse terrains along with accounts of industries and customs and beliefs" (46).

Since *The Marvelous Adventures* essentially reflects 18th century French thinking, it has interestingly attracted a French readership that is developed into a scholarship, reflecting on the various angles of Eakins' text. The French scholarship, which is the only one I have found on *The Marvelous Adventures,* generally conceives Pierre's contribution to 18th century thinking in terms of writerly and authorial additions. For example, critic Antoine Cazé stresses the "liberating power of writing" (14) in his essay "Reduplication and Multiplication: Split identities in Eakins' Writing". Based on this understanding, one assumes that Pierre's aspirations are to a larger sense writerly aspirations. In another similar approach, Brigitte Felix

stresses the "centrality of the theme of inscription" (45) and ties Pierre's existence and survival to language, as the title of her essay "The Performance of Delicate Duties or, Living by Letters" suggests. While I find this reading very relevant, I will additionally argue that Pierre's eventual liberation is the result of his all-encompassing scientific approach that frees an arrested nature from a rigid taxonomy, exercised by his master. Therefore, my own reading and that of the existing scholarship differ in terms of the methodology used to articulate Pierre's liberation.

I will essentially argue that Pierre's establishment of a utopian world outside the boundaries of the plantation and outside the boundaries of scientific taxonomy is what potentially leads to his liberation. Moreover, my addition to the existing scholarship is at the level of the location or framework of Pierre's invented world. I will argue for establishing the element of the sea as a "contour" and a framework for creation and inventive thinking, and this constitutes my essentially differing position.

I will be structuring the first chapter of my thesis as follows: The first part addresses Master Dufay's installation of an autocratic plantation system that grants him the right to exercise his taxonomic reading of the natural world. The second part addresses Pierre Baptiste's post-colony transition or post-plantation transition whose ultimate concern is to destabilize Dufay's taxonomic approach to the natural world. Drawing on some ideas from critic Thomas Pughe's essay "Post-Colonialism and Post-Pastoralism in Patricia Eakins' *The Marvelous Adventures of Pierre Baptiste* and Caryl Phillips' *Cambridge*", I will suggest that in *The Marvelous Adventures*, there exists a relationship of reciprocity between the colonial/the pastoral, the post-colonial/the post-pastoral, and the anti-colonial/the anti-pastoral.

These equal pairs constitute a substantial part of my discussion. It reads as follows: Pierre's reaction against his master's pastoral ideology in the plantation of Saint-Michel is understood in terms of post-pastoral, thus, post-colonial reactions. Therefore, I will argue that Pierre's

transition from the plantation of Saint Michel to the new island is a post-plantation transition or a post-colony transition that in its temporality comes 'after' or 'supersedes' the plantation, and also constitutes a post-colonial transition that goes beyond the colony and resists it. Thus, Pierre Baptiste's eventual achievement behind his transition is an attempt to (re) think systems and to free nature from an enslaving scientific taxonomy. He does so by designing a global perspective or a "Weltanschauung" through which creation is conceived as a common and shared process between all the species: animals, plants, and human beings. He designs the space of the sea as a participatory space that accumulates all creation.

The second narrative that I will study is Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative Of The Life Of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written By himself* (2001), first published as an abolitionist text in the year 1789. The autobiography recounts the early life of Olaudah Equiano who was born in West Africa in 1745, and was then abducted at the age of eleven from his country of birth, the "vale of Essaka", present day Nigeria. Equiano is then introduced to slavery via the Middle Passage to the Americas, which later sends him to England where he starts his service in the British Empire. This service I believe is reflected in two grand stages of Equiano's enslavement: The Seven Years' War in which he participates under the lieutenancy of the British Captain Michael Henry Pascal, and the slave trade in which he actively participates, and which finds its ground and territory in the Caribbean and the Atlantic in a larger sense.

Readings of Equiano's autobiography essentially fall into two main orientations: while a number of scholarships conceive of the *Interesting Narrative* as a resistant text that secures a voice for the slaves by undermining the hegemony of the white masters, other scholarships understand Equiano's negotiating potential with slavery as accommodationist, since Equiano entirely gives himself to the service of the British Empire. In *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804* (2003), Srinivas Aravamudan aptly mentions the two existing orientations

of Equiano's narrative, and thus argues, "Many readings of Equiano celebrate his triumph over slavery, but others cautiously condemn his continued collaboration with colonialist commerce" (237). These two dominant scholarships introduce Equiano as either a revolutionary figure or a collaborator with the hegemonic systems that absorb him. In addition to these two orientations, there is another scholarship that tackles the ambivalent reactions drawn from Equiano's narrative, and this is the scholarship that I adopt the most in my analysis, yet with further contributions. I will study this kind of ambivalence, seeing in Equiano a figure who operates on different sides: He is both resisting and accommodating the powers that enslave him. He entirely gives himself to the service of his masters, and that in a sense constitutes his rhetorical techniques to coexist with the hands that yet enslave him. My contribution to this reading is that, this kind of hybridization (both a resistant and an accommodationist, both an African and a British) finds its ground or its application in the space of the Atlantic, which functions as a space of hybridization and as an arena of confluence and of accumulation.

I will be structuring the second chapter of my thesis as follows: Olaudah Equiano is abducted from Africa and introduced to a diasporic life in his early ages. I read this introduction to diaspora as a process of new being for Equiano, which is later marked in my analysis as "Creation of the Other". Equiano's experience in the diaspora is developed through his employment in the service of the British Empire in two grand events: The Seven Years' War and his later integration into the slave trade in the Atlantic. I read these two events as processes of acculturating Equiano to the ideals of the British Empire. Equiano is then introduced to the Atlantic and he is "Activated by Empire". I will argue that Equiano reshapes the Atlantic and contributes to what I have developed as "entangled relations" in the space of the Atlantic.

The two texts that I have here introduced completely diverge at the level of genre: *The Marvelous Adventures* is a fictional and magic realist text written in 1999 but relocated to the 18$^{th}$ century, and includes elements of the fantastic in order to highlight a slave's resistance

against such an autocratic establishment as plantation slavery, while *The Interesting Narrative* is an autobiographical text whose events took place at a certain moment in a certain context, which is the 18th century institution of slave trade. I believe however that although both narratives diverge generically, they converge thematically, as they both negotiate with and reflect on 18th century Enlightenment thinking. Therefore, the main question that I attempt to answer throughout the thesis is how the two narratives represent such a negotiation with the 18th century. I will suggest that both narratives posit an interrogation from within an established system, whether a scientific autocratic order as it relates to Eakins' or an economic autocratic system (the slave trade) as applicable to Equiano's. In either cases, functioning within the obligations of the age of Empire provides a common ground. Both Eakins and Equiano are aware of the continuity of such an age, so they design "additional" or "additive" approaches in order to (re)configure it.

Thus, I will suggest that both Pierre's story and Equiano's autobiography respond to the Enlightenment, but each of the protagonists designs his own approach or angle to reflect on it. *The Marvelous Adventures* sets the ground for a scientific angle to Enlightenment thought through which the slave Pierre yearns for a more useful and inclusive science, while *The Interesting Narrative* provides an essentially political and economic angle through which an ex-slave Equiano yearns for a more participatory, pragmatic and enlightened trade in which the black community actively partakes.

The two narratives discuss different processes and methodologies in the quests for freedom. I will argue that both Equiano and Pierre negotiate with Enlightenment and are thus rhetorical, but they may differ in terms of the methodology of resistance. While Pierre Baptiste for example resists acculturation through the construction of a utopian cosmology that secures for the slaves an imaginative return to their homeland, Equiano in contrast absorbs acculturation and believes it is the sole way to reach liberation in the age of high Empire. Thus, I will suggest that the two

narratives posit two different figurations of Empire that are in turn configured through two different methodologies. *The Marvelous Adventures* posits a scientific figuration of Empire that is approached by way of a more inclusive and participatory science, thus, securing addition to a scientific autarchy that still encompasses a number of gaps. The *Interesting Narrative*, however, posits an economic figuration of Empire (in the form of the slave trade) that is approached by way of a more inclusive and participatory economy (a "system of commerce and exchange") which guarantees addition to 18th century established economic system.

Based on the above mentioned, I try to communicate the fact that both narratives share a potential of participation and inclusion of elements that have been discarded and (dis)entangled by 18th century science and economy. This potential grants the two texts a full responsibility in the rendering of "entangled", "errant", "opaque" and "rhizomatic" connections among the already omitted elements, consisting of slaves in the participation of science and economy of the era. One could not find any platform, arena, or framework that makes such a rendering of "entanglement", "opacity" and "errancy" possible better than the space of the sea. I will suggest that the element of the sea functions as a space or a platform for creation, inventiveness, conduct of rhetoric, and "entangled" relations. For example, the element of the sea in *The Marvelous Adventures* is designed as a space for "opacity", a concept I develop through my reading of the Martinican novelist and philosopher Edouard Glissant't *Poetics of Relation* (1997). The "Opaque", as will be discussed in a later section of my first chapter, consists in the retrieval of relations, which react against reducing human thinking to certain categories, units, and divisions. Thus, the "opaque" aims at securing cohesion, confluence, and exchange between different varieties.

Conceived in this vein, the sea in *The Marvelous Adventures* enforces itself as a participatory arena in which species of different varieties, slaves, fishes, and plants secure a living based on exchange, thus, of relations. Taken from a broader and more encompassing angle, the element

of the sea in *The Interesting Narrative* functions as a space for "errancy", a concept that is also developed by Glissant, and that guarantees confluence even among power relations. My discussion of Equiano's text includes a specific terminology such as "aesthetic imaginaries", "spaces-of-flows" as developed by Ian Baucom's book *Specters of the Atlantic* (2003), and "échos-monde" as developed by Glissant in *Poetics of Relation* (1997). What holds all these concepts together is an Atlantic zone and an all-encompassing imperial exercise, also known as the slave trade, which, though it has a potential for enslavement, displacement, and marginalization, serves to group, accumulate, and (re) place various pieces together around the Atlantic. Therefore, my reading of *The Interesting Narrative* is not predicated on a single orientation: whether to incriminate slavery, slavers, slave trade, Enlightenment or to vindicate the slaves and their experiences. My reading is neither an incrimination (a defense against slavery) nor a vindication of the enslaved (a defense for). I rather seek to present them both, or to side with both of them by way of a "double-consciousness" or a "counter-culture of modernity," as Gilroy develops in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). The book goes beyond the two essential approaches that emerge in the study of the Atlantic: an early scholarship that studied the Atlantic as a 'graveyard' or a 'deathbed', and a late scholarship that sought to reconfigure the Atlantic as a liberational space for a routed freedom.

Gilroy calls for a more comprehensive scholarship on Black Atlantic issues, as he explains, "cultural historians should take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective" (15). In simpler terms, he urges that the Black Atlantic be addressed beyond a binary thinking that conceives it either as a site of death or of life, but rather be articulated in terms of the cultural encounters that are facilitated by the Atlantic. He studies the Atlantic sea as an intercultural formation wherein different cultures, races, backgrounds and

peoples encounter one another in the middle of the sea, as *The Interesting Narrative* reflects. Commenting on Gilroy, Alan Rice argues in his book *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (2003) that, "With its positing of an in-between space of encounter and meaning, Gilroy's theory designates new spheres of cultural activity that exhibit an inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas" (23). Conceived in this regard, the Atlantic becomes an arena where fluid and hybrid relations are installed, developed, and changed.

Rice also adopts such a "double consciousness" in his study of the Atlantic, and argues that "the transatlantic passage is liberational for Africans in the diaspora as well as the cause of their fetters … The ocean stands both as marker of slavery's harsh alienating and dehumanizing realities and of the possibility of mobility to freedom" (14). Thus, I have considered a discussion of spatiality because I believe that both enslavement and liberation take place in the same arena. Both Equiano and Pierre negotiate for their freedom in an Atlantic that is both enslaving and liberating. Therefore, if the experience of slavery is situated in the Atlantic, freedom is also situated in the same framework. In an 18$^{th}$ century context, one is both enslaved and liberated in the same territory.

In sum, both texts expose an Enlightenment project that is at some point proven failed whether in scientific terms as fictionally represented in *The Marvelous Adventures,* or in economic terms as represented in *The Interesting Narrative*. The two narratives reflect on an Enlightenment project that has gaps, blank spots, and shortcomings. At the same time, both try to negotiate with and coexist with a failed Enlightenment for the aim of reconfiguring and restructuring it. The ultimate aim for such a negotiation is to add, to (re)figure, to (re)configure, to (re)consider, and to (re)think Enlightenment. The sentence with which I start the thesis, that "there is no choice but to embrace one's fate, and in so doing, transcend" (Eakins 181), conveys the fact that one needs to speak to systems, to communicate with them rhetorically, and to negotiate with established orders and hierarchies in order to transcend them.

# Chapter One:

## (Re) thinking 18th century science in *The Marvelous Adventures of Pierre Baptiste, Father and Mother, First and Last*

*The Marvelous Adventures* (re) thinks eighteenth century understanding of nature and problematizes the views of scientists of this era. The novel annexes Enlightenment's taxonomy that essentializes, categorizes and systematizes nature. Systematization is conceived of as an organizing and a methodological tool that selects, classifies and clusters the species for the aim of achieving an ordered control of different varieties. In his work entitled "The Biology of the Enlightenment" (1967), Frans Stafleu discusses the eighteenth century need to systematize knowledge in order to master the profusion and the multiplicity of nature, thus he writes:

> The overwhelming increase of factual data during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries forced natural scientists to concentrate upon systematizing knowledge in order to master the great profusion of nature. They used the Aristotelian methods of logical, division and classification to deal with this huge amount of detail. First the priority was given to the definition of the naming objects rather than to attempts to describe nature comprehensively. (432)

This brief backdrop constitutes an entry into the novel under study, which presents Master Dufay as an advocator of this systematic paradigm. He seizes the "profusion" with which the island of Saint Michel is endowed, and embarks on a cataloguing, classifying and clustering project of sketching various species for Comte de Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*.

The general framework of the novel is as follows: in my opinion, there exists a two-fold colonization which embeds two fundamental aims: First, the island of Saint Michel is presented

in the form of a plantation system which possibly reads as a colonial site, and the presence of the white planters colonizes the black community, which in a sense means that the plantation empowers the colony. Second, the island of Saint Michel is Dufay's archival site in which he exercises his taxonomic and systematic approach to nature, which means in a way that nature is 'colonized' by way of a too strict and rigid taxonomy.

The first part of Eakins' text before "Journey of an Apprentice Savant" reflects a plantation slavery that is enhanced by a scientific taxonomy adopted by the planter Monsieur Dufay, which makes me consider studying the connections or encounters between 18th century science and the plantation system. The second part of the novel, which covers the three last chapters in the novel "Voyage of an Apprentice Savant", "The Motherhood of Man" and "The Old Temptation", signals Pierre's breaking away from plantation slavery and his establishment of a maritime and naval experience after his transition from his master's plantation to a new territory. In what follows, I divide the chapter into two main sections. The first section deals with Dufay's adoption of a hypothetical approach to nature and to the world of species, his adoption of a pastoral ideology that treats the slaves as part of the landscape, and his reinforcement of a hierarchical plantation system that enforces a kind of verticalization among creation. I then devise a small section entitled "textual resistance" which deals with the rhetorical strategies that Pierre uses while designing his escape from the plantation. The second part of the chapter addresses Pierre's breaking away from the plantation, a movement I address in terms of post-plantation/post-pastoral transition. I will however also argue that Pierre enforces his experimental approach to nature and the world of science. He (re) places or (dis) places his Master's hypothetical understanding of the natural world by inserting a more experiential and comprehensive study of nature. I will show how his approach is more of a (re)thinking, a (re)description, and a (re)naturalization of the natural world, noted in my chapter in a section entitled "Magical or Utopian Recreation of the Natural World". The last section of

my chapter, “Utopian Imaginaries,” addresses the reformulation of the element of the sea, and of the Atlantic in a larger sense.

**Encounters between science and the plantation.**

The novel’s fictional character Dufay is the commander of a sugar plantation in the imaginary island of Saint Michel, situated in the French Anduves as a French overseas colony in the Caribbean. He embarks on a scientific project of sketching species for Buffon’s *Histoire Naturelle*. In what follows I argue that Dufay’s sketching project fails at the level of a proper observation of the species that he is presented, and that his approach to nature is hypothetical (based on hypothesis) which, as will later be discussed from Pierre’s perspective, is not sufficient for a comprehensive contribution to Buffon’s science.

Dufay rather arrests nature due to a stylized view of natural elements. Stylization, then, is the outcome of an orderly and neat picture of nature, in which every single species occupies a unique and separate position. Dufay does not study relationships, “inter as well as intraspecific relationships” in nature, as Paul Lawrence Farber puts it in his essay entitled “Buffon and Daubenton: Divergent traditions within the Histoire Naturelle” (1973). Dufay rather imposes a cataloguing system, which selects the species based on what he is presented, and not what he himself manages to experience in nature. For example, prior to the sketching of the fishes, Dufay considers the element of the sea as a “slimy endless chaos” (Eakins 7), since it brings movement and disorder, which is why he has to force Pierre into the waters to catch fishes to be sketched. Critic Antoine Cazé describes the submarine world that Dufay fails to access as “this shifting world is foreign to the white Master Dufay, who finds it frightening and strange: It is an endless chaos, as if there lurks the threat of being liquefied-liquidated, one’s identity

dissolved. By sharp contrast, Dufay's world has a solidity that makes it look purer than the real universe he inhabits, and colder, too (15).

Thus, Dufay fears experience as he fears an immersion into the waters, and he is blinded by a hypothetical approach to nature, which can be moreover shown through instructing Pierre on how to swim by hypothesis. Once he is coerced into the waters for the first time, Pierre notes:

> Yet I knew not how to comport myself in the sea, nor did my master. Yet he would teach me by hypothesis, trying one expedient then another. First, he had me dangled as bait on a rope he tied to a pole held by two big men, and he lowered me choking and bellowing into the sea, until I learned to hold my breath. And he bade me agitate my arms and legs, like a human mill, and thus make myself an engine for motion in the sea. And when he saw my terrors had eased, he bade the two men throw me in, without the rope of the pole, so I must save myself with the motions I had learned. (Eakins 7, my emphasis)

In yet another example that shows how Dufay is still stuck at the level of hypothesis, Pierre ironically notes, "M'sieu undertook longer and longer excursions to more and more remote parts of our isle, and was even rowed in boats, though he could not swim and had not ceased to hate the sea with its monotonous tides and dank and perilous depths" (Eakins 30). Pierre's irony consists in the fact that Dufay is the one who has contributed (hypothetically) to Pierre's ability to dive into the sea, yet he himself still does not know how to swim. In contrast, and as it will be discussed later in the chapter, Pierre accesses the submarine world by experience while Dufay thinks he can access it by hypothesis. Thus, his inaccessibility to the submarine world inhibits him from seeing the "hermaphrodite plants, with thick stalks and bright petaled flowers, yet with roots emerging from the calyx, squirming and grasping at tiny fish, which they did feed into the calyx, as hands would stuff a mouth" (Eakins 8). By sharp contrast, Pierre turns

the forced plunge into the submarine world into an arena that furthers his scientific (in this case botanical) interests.

Dufay's "scientific" project is not based upon an empirical or experimental study of natural elements. In her book entitled *Unfinished Enlightenment: Description in the Age of the Encyclopedia* (2010), Joannah Stalnaker argues that the "ideal of natural history description is to provide the fullest possible account of the naturalist's actual empirical observations" (38). What Dufay draws does however not match an empirical reality, and this is obvious in his avoidance of specific elements of natural history study such as "creatures of shadow, orchid-dust mites, obscure, hot vermin and hermaphrodite flora-fauna" (Eakins 14) and the slaves, which he all puts on the same axis. In fact, Dufay has his own reasons why he refuses to draw each of these elements. He refuses to draw the "vermin" because he considers it a rotten element just like slaves. For him, the "vermin" does not represent the appealing nature, and he does not understand that nature is studied both in its appealing and rotten elements. His refusal of drawing the "vermin" shows that his sketching project does not speak to nature, and that his "drawings are more exact than nature herself had been" (Eakins 12). Dufay thus fails at drawing nature in its real aspects, whether appealing or rotten. Furthermore, Dufay refuses to draw the "orchid" for fear it disorders his overly pure vision of natural elements. Such an avoidance of the orchid is noted by Pierre as, "M'sieu would not draw the brown-bagged blossoms, and cursed and stamped if he found but a grain of the pollen on his sleeve, calling for me to brush from him the devil-take-the-stinking-fish-hole crumbs" (13). According to Dufay's vision, orchids are considered dangerous or rebellious, especially since they are associated with reproduction and generation, as the word "orchis" in Latin means "testicle", the reason why he restricts their growth in the island. Pierre notes:

> Ah well! Who would not be moved by the orchids, with their birdlike shape, wings spread to fly, golden pollen? Alas! The bold appearance of passion was deceptive, for

> though orchids sprouted everywhere on that isle, they were constrained to cling to trees, to fallen logs, to fence posts and roofs and walls. True, their tangled roots sucked air, but no fluting ballad emerged from the twisted pipes. (Eakins 103)

The orchid is thus avoided due to its hybrid nature that is likely to destabilize Dufay's overly pure understanding of natural elements. Interestingly enough, in their book entitled *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004), Deleuze and Guattari bring up the idea of hybridity or multiplicity in relation to an image of the Orchid, which as they argue, "deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of the wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece of the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen" (11). I bring up the link to such an image of the orchid to explain that there exists a dialectic between the orchid and the wasp and the pollen- a regenerative and reproductive dialectic- that is, according to Dufay, likely to destabilize the order of nature. Therefore, the "Orchid" relegates in Dufay's scientific approach into the realm of the unclassifiable and even unnamable. In fact, Dufay's selective approach to nature and his avoidance of studying various elements such as the Orchid, the vermin, and the slaves possibly presents his vision of the world in pastoral terms. Therefore, I bring up the link to pastoralism in relation to his systematic view of nature that contributes to discarding, or equating the slaves with other natural elements.

**Pastoralism in the novel.**

I have noted above that Dufay puts the slaves on the same axis with the rotten or decaying elements in nature like the "vermin", and this is made obvious when Pierre says, "No more than pilfering vermin or invading insects were we slaves to be discovered in M'sieu's chaste pencil and chalks or his fastidious ink washes, unless we be those dim tiny figures seen from afar in

rippling fields of cane" (Eakins 9). Critic Thomas Pughe comments that there is in this passage "a pastoral representation of colonial landscapes in which the slaves have a function more akin to the animals in the flock than to that of the traditional shepherds and shepherdesses herding them" (91, my emphasis). In a pastoral landscape like the island of Saint Michel, the slaves are treated as part of nature, and there is one striking passage in the novel that shows how Pierre's wife is treated by her previous master Ravenal as part of his cattle. She is put on the same axis with her master's cow, and this is made clear when Pierre notes:

> Pélérine Vérité-didn't she name herself, then? Before she was mutilated and came to Dufay's, she was called Beauty, a name Ravenal had given as well to one of his cows, so that, to distinguish between the woman and the cow, they called her Beauty Girl or even Beauty-Strumpet. Yet she was not distinguished from the cow in all respects, for, like cattle, we slaves were branded on the shoulder, and this were true on Dufay's estate. But only Beauty-Girl Ravenal branded all over her body, as to say it belonged all to him, cow and cow again, though she would not be cowed. (90, my emphasis)

In a pastoral landscape, the slaves are treated no differently from the cattle or the livestock. Pierre recalls Dufay's "mark written on our skins with the silver iron. With this iron the branding crew, the same that in another season marked the cattle" (Eakins 209). Dufay has to prove his ownership of the slaves, so he leaves on their shoulders some marks that identify them as his. In fact, the act of branding the slaves with a silver iron brings together the planter and the 18th century scientist in the same practice. For example, Buffon the scientist and the philosophe, uses the iron balls for the sake of experiment. They are "roasted in [Buffon'] oven, till they are red-hot, to be fondled by a number of blushing girls, with soft hands, who must describe the diverse sensations, of burning and pain …" (Eakins 91). While Buffon uses the iron balls for the sake of reaching a scientific result, which as I noted already consists in the

description of various feelings and sensations, Dufay uses the iron silver to prove his ownership of the slaves.

Pierre on several occasions highlights the severity of the plantation system and the cold-blooded way of punishing, torturing or ending the lives of the slaves. He strikingly invokes one moment in which, "to M'sieu's benefit there turned a mill that had crushed whole men, and yes, our M'sieu had sold their pulp with the rum, and refused to sieve them out, so their grieving widows had no shred to send into the wave" (91). Here Pierre invokes a strong image of crashing the millers in the process of making rum and mixing their pulp with rum, thus leaving no material trace of their bodies, so that their bodies are not sent into the sea. This image highlights the white planter's inhibition of the slaves' magical and relieving practice of sending their dead into the sea, a practice I will be discussing in more details towards the end of this chapter.

**The plantation as a hierarchical system.**

In the novel, the plantation establishes itself as a vertical structure that imposes a kind of hierarchy on all creation. Pierre notes, "In these Anduves, God must be a white man, a very big, very hairy one, with a very long beard that curls into clouds just above the earth … Then God unfastens his falls; he pulls out his huge wormy cock and he pours his seed on the ground, and cane grows" (Eakins 101). When entrusted to the business of the plantation, Pierre mentions how the Anduves are passed on by way of inheritance to Dufay who "receives one-third of all the net profits" (Eakins 26). Because it is inherited and because of its legacy to maintain profit through generations of masters and planters, Saint Michel occupies a transcendent and sacred role. In his book entitled *The Production of Space* (1991), Henri Lefebre lists a variety of "spaces", among which the agro-pastoral space, which he describes as follows:

> The cradle of absolute space is a fragment of agro-pastoral space, a set of places named and exploited by peasants or by nomadic pastoralists. A moment comes when, through the actions of masters or conquerors, a part of this space is assigned a new role, and henceforward appears as transcendent, as sacred, as magical and cosmic. The paradox here, however, is that it continues to be perceived as part of nature. (234)

Thus, I argue that in the novel, both the divine and the colonial (in terms of the possession of power) go hand in hand: Saint Michel is named for a mighty God, and hierarchy establishes itself as a divine etiquette, thus Pierre notes:

> All the places I knew had the names of white men, and were under the dominion of white men's Gods, viz; Saint Michel. Now that Saint with his Sword were a brave Christian Martyr, his likeness a powerful charm to protect who would implore him to intercede with Son and Father to bless the inhabitants of his name-place. So I had been told by Pere Gouy, and could believe, for these celestial hierarchies were very like mundane etiquettes I had known … (Eakins 180)

In this vein, assigning Saint Michel a mystic and deified function confirms Lefebre's idea that part of the agro-pastoral space is granted a celestial, divine and transcendent role. In addition, Saint Michel operates as a pastoral site where Master Dufay enforces his own incomplete scientific approach in his dealings with the various natural elements. Thus, Pierre's propensity to write to Buffon accusing his master of "capricious and scandalous disregard of fishes, orchids and vermin and shadows and slaves, aspects of the world and its history" (15) can be understood as a definition of anti-pastoralism, which essentially consists in the destabilization of the pastoral ideology that Dufay endorses. Pughe argues, "Pierre becomes aware of the pitfalls of pastoral ideology as he watches his master sketch the landscape" (92). Therefore, Pierre's

approach to nature and to the world of science, which I will be discussing in a later section of this chapter, is potentially post-pastoral since it goes beyond his master's pastoral ideology.

Before treating Pierre's scientific approach, which will take place after his escape from the plantation, I would however like to study Pierre's textual resistance throughout the first part of the novel (before "Voyage of an Apprentice Savant") that reflects his rhetorical strategies that in turn help him design his escape.

**Textual Resistance: Rhetoric.**

Textually speaking, Pierre's scheme of escape is unveiled after a number of rhetorical strategies. His scheme of escape presents itself to the reader towards the end of the sixth chapter, "The Sage and the Meemie Worm", when Pierre notes, "Flight was my safest and only course. Yet how was I to devise my escape?" (Eakins 107). Pierre goes through many stages of feigning ignorance, obedience, and illiteracy, so that his schemes of escape are not revealed to his master. He operates within a strategy of self-defense at least in the first part of the novel before his "Journey of An Apprentice Savant". His mastery of feigning ignorance is reflected in his acquisition of education from his master's son Pamphile. While being supervised, Pierre "feigns ignorance of what he already knows ... Yet he dares not demonstrate too facile an apprehension, so he continues to feign intractable stupidity, suffering his vexed tutor beat the letters and numbers into his head, one by one, in the miserable chinks of his very short attention" (Eakins 20). By having feigned illiteracy, Pierre develops his secret composition of a philosophical treatise in the dust. In yet another instance of feigning ignorance, Dufay suspiciously asks Pierre "how came you to speak so learned a tongue?", and Pierre responds this way "I am a simple fellow with a pattern to follow" (16), thus, he at once acknowledges and deludes Dufay into

thinking that he is but a mere copyist of his master's methods. In addition, Pierre performs strategies of self-defense and of survival by rhetorically manipulating his master. He notes:

> When Pierre was charged to draft a letter detailing how masters stood here in the islands, in the management of the plantation, he subtly and dexterously emphasized economy and vigilance and the difficulty of all the undertaking, so that M'sieu-shall we say his independence?- was covered with a thick layer of prevarication, a gloss of glittering, reflective mendacity. In this way, Pierre earned his master's gratitude. (Eakins 28)

Thus, Pierre enmeshes his master within a strategy of prevarication and flattery in order to gain his gratitude, and he uses the same technique of manipulative flattery when he transmits to Buffon "embellished drawings" (Eakins 29) of those finished works of his master. Having done this, Pierre earns his master's gratitude, and at the same time, makes himself more visible to Buffon. Pierre is opportunist as he uses Dufay's contact with Buffon, so that he has the opportunity to get into a closer link with the Sage of Montbard.

Pierre's strategic ignorance and illiteracy also functions as a masquerade to his original purpose, which is ascension; that is climbing the ladders of 18$^{th}$ century science. This is reflected in his revelation "my hopes were of a mythy ascent, like a god in a chair in a tragedy, such a divinity as one sees in the frontispiece of 'Chloethon', rising to a heaven occupied by Buffon and his correspondents …" (80). Pierre rhetorically manages to conceal his hopes of ascent. For example, when he is offered some fancy clothes for his wedding, he refuses them on the grounds they would present him in a station other than that of a slave, as he "bore himself with the stolid mien that was meet for his station" (91). Pierre rhetorically shows that he does not aim to ascend to a station other than that of a slave, so that his plans or strategies of a social climber are not revealed to his white planter Dufay. He then adds:

> Yet I disguised my resentment as a servant must. As I could stand so quiet with my back to a wall for so many hours, waiting to change the plates or trim the wicks, M'sieu did frequently charge me to attend him when his friends assembled. Though I loathed that porcine company of sots, I feigned impassivity, not only to avoid punishment, but to hear of the world, retailed in gossip over cards. (91, my emphasis)

Pierre's rhetorical gesture of presenting himself as an alienated slave is reinforced through the switch of pronouns from the first to the third person. He enforces his alienation by shifting to the third person "He", and this is reflected in one striking moment in the text when he discovers a hybrid creature that he names "The mutant Bee". Upon such discovery, Pierre immediately shifts to the third person pronoun, so that his potential for discovery is not revealed to Dufay. Cazé argues, "just as he mentions this hybrid creature, this changeling, Pierre himself switches from first to third person in his account: his own person (a) splits up, his identity contaminated as it were by the hybrid nature of the bee. Pierre thus recedes from the first-person discoverer of the third-person slave, even as he secretly keeps the initiative" (19).

Pierre Baptiste feigns ignorance and impassivity, and that is part of his strategies of manipulating and blackmailing his master Dufay. In yet another example of covering his intent of ascension with layers of pretense and ignorance, Pierre feigns his incapacity to read Madame's missive. This is made clear when he answers her question on whether he is able to read by responding "but poorly, and only the estate books, nor did I wish to trespass by reading the correspondence of my betters" (108). Here Pierre rhetorically blackmails Madame by feigning illiteracy and by expressing his wish that he never seeks to trespass the white people's capacity to read. Another rhetorical moment manifests itself when Dufay's son Pamphile provokes Pierre by this kind of question "and tell me, Goody, are the private parts of the black bitch as durable as those of a white?" (93). Pierre is enraged by this kind of question that degrades black female sexuality, but he also has his manipulative rhetoric in his answer to

Pamphile, as he again feigns ignorance and impassivity, pretending that he is "very little accustomed to address by a white in any particular that did not command his service" (93). Pierre feigns ignorance about the scientific particulars that he believes only white people can master or discuss, and he notes, "only from my current vantage it is apparent there had been no reply to his question that preserved me from appearance of trespass" (93). By having not answered the question and by having again mastered strategic ignorance, Pierre rhetorically manipulates his master's son.

Pierre's manipulative rhetoric is effective until this point in the narrative: Dufay stops his son when he attempts to strike Pierre, on the grounds that Pierre is "docile and very patient and accurate in his work, for which it cost me to train him … I have this Goody since he was a boy. In all that time, his eye has never flashed rebellion" (94). Pierre rhetorically gains his master's confidence, as he feigns docility, patience, impassivity and accuracy in the work he does in the fields. In the same textual vein, Pierre manages to manipulate both the father and the son. Pierre thus employs all these rhetorical techniques so as to secretly and implicitly design his plans of escaping from the plantation.

**A Post-Pastoral/Post-Colonial Transition from the plantation to the new island.**

Before dealing with Pierre's transition from the plantation in post-pastoral and post-colonial terms, I would like to briefly study the journey process once Pierre escapes from the French Anduves and embarks in an oceanic journey inside a 'barrel'. The physicality of the journey is expressed through Pierre's physical presence inside the barrel. In it, he has all his senses affected: his sense of hearing is affected by the screaming of the winds, noting that "so loud the screaming of the winds around my barrel and the terrifying roar of thunders, and the hideous crackle of lightning, as if the world were torn apart…" (Eakins 169). In addition, his sense of

vision is affected, as Pierre makes his struggle with the sun and with the element of 'light' very obvious. Added to these sensorial losses, Pierre suffers from an enclosure that the space of the barrel imposes. He experiences an initial confinement in a vast-stretching sea; the more it is stretched, the more it is limited. He "will not die alone in the watery wilderness spreading around him, clamoring vastness that no voice echoes in…" (242). Second, he is encapsulated in a barrel in the middle of the ocean, and this communicates enclosure in a double sense.

The point I try to communicate based on the mentioned above is that, in the process of the escape, the narration proceeds according to Pierre's restricted movements inside the barrel, and that is why the narrative starts unraveling in a looser manner. One more reason why the narrative proceeds in such a loose manner is Pierre's allowance for the access of mythical time, which is reflected in the number of mythical tales that he invokes from the African folklore. Thus, critic Papin comments that: "One passage revises the Western myth of creation. In another the whites are observed as if by an African, in all their cultural strangeness. In yet another, Pierre recalls a story the overseer of the plantation once told the slaves about the Jitseys" (109). By invoking these stories, Pierre aims at summoning and cherishing a plurality of voices in his mind. Papin argues: "Pierre's own vision becomes more and more fragmented and several voices are orchestrated in the processed theater of his mind. He then seems to be making up the tools of his new fragmented world vision as he moves to uncharted narrative territory" (109).

I argue that Pierre's transition from the plantation to the newly discovered island is a post-plantation transition. He is driven by a desire to go beyond plantation thinking, which in the 18$^{th}$ century imaginary is seen as a kind of ideology. Pierre in a sense resists this established system, and this is made clear in his escape, as he notes, "Woe to me if my barrel wash up in the Canaries, I be taken for the sugar plantings there. Better to be pressed for the gang of a ship-no slaver, I prayed" (Eakins 116). He hypothesizes the destination of his journey, and he wants

to make sure that he does not end up in the Canaries, where another sugar plantation awaits him. I read Pierre's escape in terms of a post-pastoral movement because in our novel the pastoral project adopted by Dufay and the operation of the plantation function in similar ways. I will suggest pastoralism and the plantation as quasi-synonyms. Thus, I conceive of Pierre's transition in post-pastoral terms because it reacts against a pastoral ideology enforced by the plantation system. Critic Pughe argues, "The traditional motif Eakins employs to open up a post-pastoral vision is the slave's, Pierre's escape across the sea from his plantation and his landing on an unknown island" (94). While Pughe does not develop the post-pastoral transition in relation to Dufay's scientific taxonomy, I add that Pierre represents the post-pastoral tradition because he adopts a vision of the natural world that liberates it from scientific taxonomy, thus from pastoral impositions, since the conduct of Dufay's taxonomy finds its ground on a pastoral site. I will however also argue that Pierre is motivated by anti-pastoral/anti-colonial orientations, as he yearns to liberate and mobilize his newly discovered island. His transition from the island of Saint Michel to the unknown island is a post-colonial transition, because his new dynamic environment reacts against a pastoral colonial legacy of colonizing human nature, as it is exemplified in Saint Michel. Thus, Pughe writes: "If Pierre's 'Shadow Histoire' represents an environmentally conscious approach to nature, then a powerful element of that consciousness is precisely anti-colonialism. The crucial point, then, is that in Eakins' novel, post-pastoralism emerges from the dismantling of the colonial version of pastoralism" (97).

Pierre challenges his master's approach (which also reflects 18$^{th}$ century science's approach to the world in a larger sense) that causes paralysis and immobility to the natural world, and embarks on a journey, the aim of which is to instill his own scientific approach that liberates nature and the species. Critic Antoine Cazé argues that Pierre "redescribes the [natural world] by accepting its changing nature and showing its basic instability by challenging taxonomies" (19). Pierre departs from the plantation and seeks to inscribe his own dynamic understanding

of the natural world. If Dufay's drawings lack vitality and life, since he does not draw the shadow, then I argue that one of the main preoccupations of Pierre's subversive histoire is the "rendering of the shadow", thus, the rendering of movement and dynamism vis-à-vis a dead and still nature.

I will however also argue that Pierre's liberating sense is enhanced in the newly discovered island. He was potentially enslaved in the plantation of Saint Michel onto which an arresting taxonomic approach is imposed. However, when he eventually reaches liberation that is because he instills in his island a natural order that refuses all sorts of taxonomy. In the novel, the concept of freedom is secured mostly on a geographical basis by means of a "free/anti-taxonomic" environment. For Pierre, a freer natural order should go beyond the restrictions of taxonomy, so he equates the liberation of nature with the shutting down of systems of taxonomy. Thus, critic Papin argues that Pierre's "eventual wreckage on the new island puts into practice an aesthetics of proliferation opposed to a vertical colonization of the real by the encyclopedic taxonomy, and incidentally, to any form of verticality" (103). The island of his shipwreck is the one island that is still not claimed by the white planters, this is why Pierre precedes everyone in its ownership and hastens his claiming of his new territory. His island has not yet attracted the attention of the white planters, as Pierre notes, "The whey-guts had not found my present island, or if they had, they had deemed it too trifling in size, or too far removed from other settlement, or too rocky for large-scale planting. If they had overlooked this isle, then no doubt their Gods had" (180). Having made sure that his discovered territory is not appealing to the white planters, Pierre embarks on instilling his magical or utopian recreation of the natural world, which the following section attempts to clarify.

**Magical or Utopian Recreation of the natural world.**

Pierre's newly discovered territory is moreover considered utopian because it is yet not penetrated by the whites, thus, not affected by colonial and pastoral ideologies, and because it so actively responds to his acts of recreating the natural order. He in a sense is engaged in a lively and dynamic interaction with the new environment that he helps recreating. I find it relevant here to engage with Terry Gifford in his presentation of some criteria for a post-pastoral tradition. Thus, in his book *Pastoral* (1999) he suggests that the post-pastoral includes:

1) Awe in attention to the natural world, deriving from a deep sense of the immanence of all things.
2) A recognition of a creative destructive universe, a continuous momentum of birth and death, growth and decay, ecstasy and dissolution.
3) Awareness of both nature as culture and culture as nature.

Pierre is in a process of remaking and reshaping the order of nature, and natural elements are responsive to his creative force. After claiming possession of the island by naming it, he "sees that all the geographical features of the place do spell now L'isle de L'Oncle and Pierre Baptiste de L'isle de L'Oncle. The very leaves of trees and grand plants, the twigs and motes of debris that littered the island floor, the flock of parrots whose flight darkened the sky, all spelled out these words in shifting and changing patterns" (Eakins 184). Pierre's movement to the new island lifts him from the everyday realities of the plantation, and in yet another utopian moment, he feels as if lifted from his own body. Pierre notes:

> I found my feet moving, my body swaying. Yet who chanted, who drummed? My bare feet marked the time with a resonant slap, but a greater heart than mine beat "Uncle! Uncle!" in my breast. I and and I turned and swayed in a pattern I did not know I knew,

> twisting my and my body to shape the letters of an airy alphabet, and in that alphabet, to spell *Uncle God*. (185)

By having lifted himself from the realities of the plantation, Pierre invokes the symbolism of flying, which in the African Slaves' utopian praxis signals a movement beyond autocratic regimes such as the plantation reality. Thus, Rice argues that "Flying highlights the desire to move beyond the physical constraints of the body to new gravity-defying feats: to fly home in the mind while approximating such motions in the body" (98). Pierre in a way detaches himself from his physical constraints and signals through his presence in the new island a movement beyond the physical barriers of the plantation.

Pierre infects his new territory with his utopian approach to the natural world: an approach that is reinforced by his magical birth to what he calls "fishy offspring". Pughe explains that in this particular moment "Eakins' plot turns toward the fantastic, in particular the classic tradition of metamorphosis, her principal invention being Pierre's giving birth, out of his mouth, to offspring part human, part fish, magically conceived while he was nourished by creatures risen from the sea's depths" (95). The aim of such a magical impregnation is to destabilize the fixity of 18th century laws, making of the mouth an alternative organ of generation that replaces the ordinary mode of generation. Thus, Papin explains that "If the great French Philosophe that serves Pierre as a model 'carries his notions in his head till he has got them fully-fleshed … Pierre will carry an entirely new creation directly in his mouth, with his cheeks, not his head" (22). Pierre therefore comes to a separate, perhaps more original view than Buffon, in terms of the placement of knowledge. Also, Pierre's magical birth destabilizes 18th century static and ordinary laws of reproduction, as his offspring "lack those external organs by which we ascertain gender, having between their legs neither the stamen of the male nor the female's sepals and calyx" (199). Pierre's fantastic birth, which puts into question the ordinary laws of reproduction, thus questioning the law of gender, also questions the "law of genre" as Derrida

puts it in "The Law of Genre" (1992). In fact, the equation between genre and gender puts Eakins in contrast with Derrida who claims "Genres are not to be mixed" and here I add based on Derrida's claim, that gender(s) are also not to be mixed. Derrida understands genre as a limiting law by arguing, "As soon as the word 'genre' is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind: 'Do', Do Not', says 'genre', the word 'genre', the figure, the voice, or the law of genre "(56).

Eakins destabilizes Derrida's law of genre and goes for the 'mixing of genres' as she employs in her narrative both realism and magic realism or the fantastic which is accompanied by a 'mixing of gender(s)' through Pierre's birth to offspring who are gender fluid.

Thus, the paradoxical process Pierre calls "The Motherhood of Man" is a reaction against the static taxonomic terminology adopted and developed by 18th century scientists. He in a sense aims at rendering and retrieving that lost paradox, which he understands as it potentially lifts nature from a simplistic categorical approach. By having given birth to his species progeny, Pierre shows how nature is able to multiply itself beyond an 18th century uniformity. His "fishy" offspring are, therefore, the direct response to those categories and classifications imposed by 18th century approach to nature. Their creation comes as a response to or perhaps as a defiance of the fixity forced on the species, and that is why they are made unclassifiable and do not fit into rigid taxonomic categories. Critic Claire Fabre argues that Pierre's offspring's existence "questions the ordinary laws of reproduction, as much as they resist the encyclopedic colonizing of the real, more generally all the vertical structures of power" (38). His offspring bear no marks of similarities with other creatures which makes Pierre ask: "Did not their existence call into question the very notion species?" (199). When Pierre tries to study his species progeny with other creatures by raising the question "Did his progeny fit in the great panoply of speciation?" (Eakins 199), he is aware that he has given birth to unclassifiable offspring that do not fit in any

category or system. Questioning the "ordinary laws of reproduction" can be explained in how the species do not fit in dichotomies of male/female, since they are borne "with no genitalia" (199) or "were likely their organs of reproduction were miniscule as in certain plants that lack flowers" (199). Eakins thus problematizes binary structures and provides through the example of Pierre's marvelous birth a third solution that consists in a species progeny who are neither full animals nor full human beings; they are, as Pierre calls them, "parasites".

Pierre further describes his magical offspring as "versatile, tender sprites, now undines aflimmer in the watery element, now sylphs, leaping and turning in air, now gromes digging into holes in land" (Eakins 203). His hybrid offspring defy the fixity and the shortsightedness in thinking. They are the means by which a fluid thinking is achieved. In his instruction of his hybrid creatures, Pierre "seeks to teach by example, prattling to himself with his stub of a tongue. Lest it has not been made evident" (204), which in many ways speaks against Dufay's instruction of Pierre by hypothesis in the beginning of the narrative. In contrast, Pierre instructs his offspring by example and by evidential truth that can never by achieved by hypothetical instruction. His approach to the natural world is based on a more thorough and careful observation and examination, and these two faculties set him apart from his master Dufay. Rather, they set him apart from a whole 18$^{th}$ century approach to nature, as reflected already in the beginning of the chapter.

Pierre studies relations and connections in nature as his offspring's "rooted" existence is compared to an "orchidaceous organism" (Eakins 211) that produces unity, hybridity, fluidity, multiplicity and magnification, and which Dufay fails to see in the sketched species. He establishes his offspring's existence as a "rhizome," a word I borrow from Glissant in a chapter entitled "Errantry, Exile", and which he explains as an

> Enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other. (11)

In light of Glissant's notion of the "rhizome" above, Pierre highlights how nature is capable of multiplying itself beyond 18th century's static definitions of birth and reproduction. In a utopian immersion into the sea, he observes two "serpent worms" which "copulate in manner hermaphroditic, each with its male organ quivering in the other's female" (Eakins 214). This kind of utopian birth speaks against his master's deadening approach to the natural world, which allows for neither reproduction nor continuity in the lives of the species. Pierre thus achieves the prerequisites of natural history study, most important of which is the faculty of observation, which necessitates experiencing the natural world and studying nature as a lived experience: a faculty his master is very oblivious to. Pierre notes,

> Consider the observation of particulars that were the very foundation of Pierre's cyclopedish oeuvre. By means of close observation, he had discovered as youth the true and marvelous nature of the changeling. It is observation that enabled him to school himself beyond mere reading and ciphering. Through observation he discerned the multivarious virtues of his life. (Eakins 205)

Pierre multiplies the faculty of observation by passing it to his species progeny, and this is made clear in the text when he enables them to observe "botanical discoveries" (214) he himself has not observed. He notes "Still I had not observed the pinket tiny tiny, that miniscule blossom that that flourishes in the narrow dark depths of certain crannies" (214). This means that Pierre succeeds in achieving a thorough observation of his newly constructed utopia and he meets the

prerequisites of the study of natural history. He manages to instill a more comprehensive histoire, as seen from the lens of an African slave, in which "are chronicled the habits and attributes of beasts and the customs and events of men who are scanted in Europid accounts" (179). Pierre thus targets the incompleteness of 18th century science and his contribution to it is that of an addition and inclusion of lost, forgotten, ignored, and unconsidered elements. He "would prove that pasty devils be as meet an object of learned inquiry as any darker men" (150). His approach to the world of nature is not categorical, and in the final analysis, he aims at retrieving and including all the lost elements: blacks in science, pasty devils or rotten elements, fishes as worthy of a learned enquiry. The fish as being one of the elements that Dufay's scientific approach neglects becomes in Pierre's alternative world a metaphor for change and transformation. He establishes a fish dynasty together with his offspring who then:

> Plunge into the element of their greatest affinity, the sea, and commence to record the habits and proclivities of ladyfish and puffers; grunts, wrasses, and tallywags; surgeonfish and triggerfish; parrotfish and snappers. And not only these fish, well known to the denizens of Saint Michel, even to sea-anxious Dufay, but other fish, quite unknown, that lived far down. (Eakins 213)

Pierre's offspring invent for themselves a nautical and maritime existence, thus, establish the element of the sea as a realm of communion and shared qualities, both human and animal qualities. Pierre (re)locates, (re)settles and (re)positions all the creatures (animals, human beings, plants) in one communal space, which is the sea. Therefore, Pierre comes to "a separate view from Buffon on the gulf the great man has charted between humans and other creatures. For if the offspring be exemplum, this gulf were no deep chasm that is impossible to cross, but a sea, in which all creaturely conception floats. Among animals, humans alone float it entirely ignorant, some more than others" (Eakins 215).

The sea in *The Marvelous Adventures* is a participatory space in which all creation cohesively and inclusively coexists. It functions as a space for "Opacity", a term Glissant develops in his book *Poetics of Relation*. Opacity, according to Glissant, is a means to struggle against reductionism that consists in reducing human thought to certain visions and insights while discarding so many essential aspects. Opacity, Glissant argues, is "not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence" (191). It is, thus, a tool for inclusion, participation, and integrity, and in the final analysis, it is a tool for the achievement of democracy. Glissant invites one to "agree to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity. Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components" (190). Opacity is, therefore, a space of convergence and confluence, in which several different varieties can possibly coexist no matter what their divergences are. In the novel, Pierre sees that Buffon's systematic, and thus, reductionist ordering of life, has contributed to separation and division among the different varieties. Therefore, he designs the space of the sea, as it inculcates a unifying and connecting potential, and gathers all creation inside. Pierre and his offspring eventually mark their being and their existence inside the sea. Their peaceful dwelling in the sea constitutes, in broader terms, a utopian imaginary of the Atlantic, which is reflected throughout the narrative, and, which I will be discussing further in the following section.

**Utopian Imaginaries.**

In the "Overture" to the novel, Pierre (re)imagines an alternative utopian space that is in the process of construction, noting that "And could fish construct the 'cities', the miniscule towers

spiraling from reefs? Beneath the glimmer and shift of waves, the towers appear solid, adamantine edifices" (Eakins 2). He reflects a Middle Passage in Reverse in which the sea no longer is conceived as a deathbed absorbing towers, buildings and the lives of slaves. This kind of reversed conception of the Atlantic is going to be developed on several occasions in Pierre's story. When in the beginning of the narrative Pierre is forced into the waters to catch fishes for his master, he unexpectedly turns the forced dive into a bliss when he sees:

> not the flesh-shrouded bones of the dead, but a paradise shimmering in veils of light. Surely the dead [referring to the African ancestors who have been forced into the depths of the sea during the ordeal of the Middle Passage] must be at peace in their garden of fish … Yet the longer I spent in the garden of the dead, the less fearsome seemed the prospect of death. Was I not floating in a bliss that laved me, luxuriant and enjoyable? So Pierre splashed among his ancestors' souls, visible only as movement in water. He celebrated their sweet repose, free of the whites who feared to set foot in their domain. (Eakins 8)

Pierre is confident enough that there is no other world that can be more inclusive, more all-encompassing than the maritime or naval world, when he notes, "Then there were fishes, more multivarious than birds, a garden of flesh in the waters, impossible to catch and hold, their form, their movement one with the water they had their being in …" (7). He (re)imagines a reversed Middle Passage, that consists in a mythically-imagined homeland, through which the slave community lives in peace, communion, and life under the waters. In other words, he (re)imagines a submarine unity among his ancestors. Actually, this kind of imaginary, which helps the slaves construct and inscribe an imaginative return to their homeland, is shared by all West Africans who were transported from Africa to the New World during the 18$^{th}$ century.

These imaginaries, Alan Rice argues, inculcate a "demand for utopia and the imaginative transportation to another world away from the travails of life" (115). In the novel, the slave community conceive of the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic in a larger sense as a communicating element that connects them to those they are disconnected from. The very deep waters are for them a form of Baptism, rebirth and life as opposed to the whites' tradition or culture of interment which is conceived by the slaves as a kind of punishment, and this is made clear when Pierre notes, "Bad men weight down with earth the dead, or immure them in vaults of rock, confining to torture, preventing return to sea" (240). In contrast, the slave community in the novel expresses their allegorical appreciation to the element of the sea by showing their utopian proximity to their African origins despite the routes/the ocean in-between, and they also show a kind of "dynamic restlessness even when enmeshed within rigid and repressive plantocracies" (Rice, 89). In the novel, Pierre invokes how the practice of sending the dead into the sea is restricted by the autocratic rules of the plantation, as he notes:

> Now the Uncle of the place, whose claim was old on these islands, older than the claims of our Guinee Gods, or any claim of the Christian God, had demanded we adopt the tawny practice of pushing the dead out to sea on rafts. Yet the whites did not like us to emulate the tawnies, supposing we plotted a rising. They forbade our gathering. If one of us died, they called up their scurvy militia of landless little whites to roll the dead one into a grave in the dust that dogs and pigs defiled. (Eakins 68, my emphasis)

The novel highlights the fact that what has been lost realistically (reflecting the plantation as a realistic/real autocracy) is retrieved and regained by magic realist ways, thus, causing a mixing of genres. Magic realism, which is exemplified through the slaves' magical practices of sending their dead into the sea, resists the realistic mode of the plantation, thus, equating the genre of magic realism with a potential for resistance. I find it relevant here to engage with a critic Stephen Slemon in an essay entitled "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse" (1988). He

argues that in Latin American and Caribbean imaginaries, the concept of magic realism is "closely aligned with that of the 'marvelous' as something ontologically necessary to the regional population's vision of everyday reality" (9). Thus, magic realism is obviously operative in cultures that need a sense of recovery from realistic "plantocracies" and repressive regimes. Generically speaking, the magic realist mode (still in the context of Caribbean imaginaries) is a reaction against the "established systems of generic classification which are themselves examples of these centralized totalizing systems, for they have been constructed through readings of texts almost exclusively of European or United States provenance" (Slemon 10). As this now applies to our novel, Eakins employs the genre mode of magic realism and presents it as it is voiced by an African who lives on the margins of generic systems. The magic realist mode is reflected in our novel through the slaves' utopian practices, which serve to transcend the physical boundaries of the plantation. Thus, being subject to enclosure in a repressive plantation autocracy that inhibits the slaves from any link to their original homelands, the slave community in *The Marvelous Adventures* have their own ways to inscribe and reinstate Africa in magical ways. Pierre Baptiste has also his own way to reinstate or reenact Guinée, and this is revealed in his allegorical appreciation of his "Talisman" which contains elements or objects that he inherited from his mother in Guinée. Pierre calls the talisman pouch a "memento" (36) and he describes it as "[a] curiously wrought bag, nicely woven of tough and prickly fibers not of these islands … In it were relicts of mysterious provenance: some teeth of a very small creature, the beaks, claws, tiny bones of several birds … a shard of glass, such I have seen others use, holding it to water to see the homeland in Guinée (36).

The description of the "Talisman" above reflects what Pierre Nora refers to as "lieux de mémoire," which take place "at the same time that an immense and intimate fund of memory disappears, surviving only as a reconstituted object beneath the gaze of critical history" (11-12). Those objects contained in Pierre's talisman are reconstituted, reenacted and reinstated at

the moment the memory of the homeland disappears. Pierre Baptiste feels the urge to reinstate the homeland by way of a utopian system of conjuring that provides him with a cosmology about his homeland, so he in a way seeks to recover or reenact a pre-slave past in Guinée. Through the talisman, Pierre establishes a system of divination, as he notes that his master's son Pamphile "had divined my powers resided in the crumbling collection of relicts sequestered in the bag" (Eakins 44). Belief systems symbolized by the collection of remains from the homeland empower the slaves at least at the level of the mind through imagination and divination, which cannot be penetrated by the white masters. In fact, the act of retrieving the homeland by way of "remains" or "traces" of memory, after it being subject to a partial erasure or removal, is the ultimate function of palimpsesting, described in *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* (2012) as a "thing likened to such a writing surface, in having been reused or altered while retaining traces of its earlier form; a multilayered record" (869-902). Conceived in this vein, the palimpsest involves a "parchment that is scrubbed off" (Johannessen 870). It involves moments in history that are torn away from history because of a rupture, a deracination, or a displacement, etc… then those ruptured moments are accumulated and reconfigured for the sake of reinstating a previously-erased element. Therefore, the talisman imaginatively becomes an "expression of multilayered recording and the materiality of the trails our presences leave behind", as Sarah Dillon puts it in her book *The Palimpsest Literature, Theory, and Criticism* (2007). The Talisman contains "relics" or preserved "trails" and traces that help Pierre reinscribe pre-enslavement moments.

The reinscription of pre-slave moments is articulated through one of the most remarkable utopian moment in the narrative which consists in the slave's magical process of sending their dead into the sea, thus, securing for them a utopian return to Africa. In defiance of the whites' repression of their ceremonials and gatherings, the slaves start a secret process of watery transmigration: In a utopian gesture, they (trans) migrate the dead souls because they are not

accessed to a direct migration due to the ocean that stands in-between the New World and Africa, and for this reason the African community in *The Marvelous Adventures* yearn for a post-enslavement practice that consists in transmigrating the dead, thus, signal a utopian return to their African roots. Rice adds that "the slaves who possess the magical ability to transmigrate are usually first-generation Africans new to plantation life. Unable to acclimatize to the harsh conditions on a new continent, they disappear, and legends develop about their return to the homeland" (88). Because of the missing link to Africa, African slaves in the New World construct utopian belief systems and spiritual praxes that imaginatively connect them to their original homes. Therefore, by sending their dead into the sea, they conjure a post-death utopia back home and "prefigure a return across the Atlantic to Africa" (Rice 86). In the novel, transmigrating the souls consists in "singing the candlelit raft into starry night, praising the dead, and the dead before them, and the dead to come, that they might reach their protecting hands from the world beyond, to comfort us in our affliction" (Eakins 68). Such a watery process allows the slaves to design a new cultural self-consciousness that is foreign to whites, or rather in more illustrative terms, transmigrating the soul allows enslaved Africans to design a utopian space that is not likely to be penetrated by the whites.

The implication that can be drawn out of the above is that the Atlantic in *The Marvelous Adventures* is conceived beyond the disempowerment of the slaves and the empowerment of the masters, planters, and colonizers in the era of Enlightenment. Pierre attempts to destabilize the old conceptions of the Atlantic associating it with death, loss of identity, and displacement of the slaves, which altogether fall within an Enlightenment social praxis. In *The Marvelous Adventures*, Eakins aims at reaching a conceptual reformulation of the Atlantic, which is aptly articulated by Ian Baucom's article "Specters of the Atlantic" (2005). According to Baucom, the conception of the Atlantic should be shifted from presenting it as a zone of "ontological displacement, of being thrown from a knowable placeworld into the bewilderments of a

delocalized, despecified world space" (56) into a zone of (re)placement. Conceived in this vein, the slaves in our novel who are sent into the sea after their death are (re)placed, (re)located, and thus, (re)unified in a more inclusive territory that imaginatively connects them with the homeland. Pierre describes such a connecting potential of the Caribbean, and he thus, notes: "There beneath the waters all souls inhabit a single great HOUSE, the richness of which is not in possession of any worldly goods but in possession of the wisdom of all the world's people, which is shared by the dead and multiplied beyond mortal imagining" (Eakins 71, my emphasis).

The quote above articulates what the above-mentioned novelist and philosopher Edouard Glissant calls the "Unity is Submarine", which means that even though slaves share a history of sufferance, disempowerment, and disunity, they still paradoxically reflect a sense of communion and unification in their suffering and displacement.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to (re) think the scientific operation of Enlightenment in *The Marvelous Adventures*, and to prove the limitations of Dufay's taxonomic vision of the natural world, which is then countered, resisted, and gone beyond by a slave Pierre Baptiste. It has sought to (re) configure the incompleteness of scientific Enlightenment by means of a slave's vision, which studies nature in its all-encompassing elements, appealing or rotten, slaves, fishes, animals, and plants. This is achieved thanks to the invention of an alternative participatory space, which is the element of the sea, after it is (re) formulated as a communicative platform that facilitates the communal access of all creation. I will argue that such a reformulation of the Atlantic once conceived as graveyard for the slaves, is what the novel eventually achieves. By being displaced from their original dwellings in Africa, the slave community in *The*

*Marvelous Adventures* manage to create a sense of new placement while being marginalized and displaced, thus securing what Ian Baucom calls "[a] modern force, indeed, modernity itself in which the experience of history, this transit from 'place' to 'space', this discovery of the zones of displacement as our new places of belonging, this rewriting of the self under the signposts of the creolized is paradigmatic of a global experience of the modern" (70, my emphasis).

Baucom's emphasis on the "discovery of zones of displacement as new places of belonging" marks a bridge over to the second narrative that I intend to study, which is *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (2001).

## Chapter Two:

## (Re) thinking the Atlantic in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*

Ian Baucom's observation above speaks about the "discovery of the zones of displacement as our new places of belonging" (70). I believe that this kind of transformation from areas of displacement into areas of new belonging introduce the topic of diaspora with which I will start my chapter on *The Interesting Narrative* of The Life of *Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself*. In *Tropicopolitans* (1999) Aravamudan argues, "Equiano's life is discontinuously rather than uniformly checkered, indeed cobbled together from disparate episodes, forming a patchwork quilt of different life experiences" (249-50). Based on her argument, Equiano experiences a number of forced transitions in his life, and that causes his life to be constituted from disparate and discontinuous episodes. However, those discontinuities and fragmentations are "cobbled" together in the Atlantic framework. Equiano manages to transform his forced passages as a slave into destinations of his choice. Therefore, I will argue that Equiano, to a larger degree, has profited from his diasporic experience that grants him the freedom of mobility beyond a number of restricting boundaries. Diaspora, thus, sets Equiano on the move and prepares him for a "routed" rather than "rooted" experience in the Atlantic.

I will further argue that Equiano goes beyond his initial forced transition that consists in the reality of the Middle Passage and embarks for the exploration and discovery of the economics of both slavery and freedom in a larger context, which is the Atlantic. In other words, Equiano goes beyond the Middle Passage and expansively operates in the Atlantic where he should negotiate his liberation, as it is "absolutely necessary for the slave to negotiate the economics of slavery if he would be free" (39), Houston Baker argues in his book *Blues: Ideology and*

*Afro-American Literature* (1987). Thus, I will suggest that the Atlantic is Equiano's theater for his mastery and conduct of rhetoric. It is conceived as a space for rhetoric, for negotiation, and for ambivalence, which in a way conveys a different vision of the Atlantic from what I have already discussed in relation to *The Marvelous Adventures*.

In what follows, I discuss Equiano's "Developing Diaspora" right after his abduction from Africa, his introduction to the West, and thence to the Caribbean, an introduction I read with Derek Attridge's idea "Creation of the Other". Then, I discuss Equiano's "Developing Rhetoric" which I believe helps him secure his survival during his employment in the British Empire on two grand events: The Seven Years' War and the slave trade service. I will discuss how Equiano's developing rhetoric consists in his adoption of what I call "Strategic Anglophilia" which facilitates his entire absorption into the ideals of the British Empire, a gesture I believe it facilitates Equiano's negotiation for his freedom in yet an enslaving Atlantic. The last section of my chapter includes how Equiano is mobilized in his service of Empire**,** marked as "Activated by Empire", how he (re)shapes the Atlantic by way of "Entangled Relations" that contribute to the cohesiveness of Empire, thus, of the Atlantic.

**A Developing Diaspora.**

Equiano experiences a gradual displacement from his birthplace "Essaka" towards experiencing the reality of the Middle Passage. His abduction from Africa marks the beginning of his travels and mobility, thus, a beginning for the emergence of diaspora. Right after being kidnapped, Equiano writes: "Although I was a great so many days journey from my father's house, yet these people spoke exactly the same language with us" (33). He starts losing the traces of his country of origin on a gradual basis, and in terms of his forced mobility, the more routes he takes the farther away his dwelling appears, as he is "now carried to the left of the sun's rising,

through many different countries, and a number of large woods" (35). The farther Equiano goes the more changing linguistic terrain he encounters, and this signals, his gradual exclusion from his birthplace. He notes, "From the time I left my own nation I always found somebody that understood me till I came to the sea coast" (35). The seacoast marks a new beginning for Equiano, as it introduces him to a different world in motion across the sea, and this is made obvious in Equiano's reflection "The clouds appeared to be land, which disappeared as they passed along. This heightened my wonder; and I was now more persuaded than ever that I was in another world, and that everything about me was magic" (42).

The seacoast also introduces Equiano to a different race: "I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke" (38). Thus, Equiano is progressively distanced away from his birthplace, as he now sees himself "deprived of all chance of returning to [his] native country, or even the glimpse of hope of gaining the shore…" (39). The seacoast also familiarizes Equiano with the experience of the slave trade, and this is made clear in his reflections once he first encounters the trade's two essential elements: the sea and the ship. He notes, "The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived at the sea coast was the sea, and a slave ship which was riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo" (38). The reason why I have noted above that the seacoast marks a new beginning for Equiano is because he originally does not come from a sea-faring environment and his primary encounter with the element of the sea takes place during the Middle Passage. For him, the sea has always been associated with a people other than his origins, and this is made obvious in his description of the place of his birth "Essaka," as he writes: "The distance of this province from the capital of Benin and the sea coast must be very considerable; for I had never heard of white men or Europeans, nor of the sea …" (20). Equiano is also gradually introduced to the element of the sea. Before coming to the seacoast, he passes through a town called Tinmah, which has so

"many rivulets which flowed through it" (36, my emphasis). After this, he comes to "the banks of a large river which was covered with canoes … I was beyond mere astonished at this, as I had never before seen any water larger than a pond or a rivulet: and my surprise was mingled with no small fear when I was put into one of these canoes, and we began to paddle and move along the river" (38, my emphasis). In his first introduction to the slave trade via the seacoast, Equiano expresses his apprehension towards the element of the water and, thus, says: "I have never experienced anything of this kind before; and although not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it" (39). In this very moment, his upcoming experience in the Atlantic is still not fully articulated in his mind.

Actually, Equiano's initial inability to cope with the sea finds its historical and articulate expression in Jeffrey Bolster's most famous book entitled *Black Jacks: African American Seaman in the Age of Sail* (1998). Bolster argues:

> Most Africans had no maritime background, but every new slave came face to face with European seafaring technology during the ordeal of the Middle Passage. Olaudah Equiano remembered asking another captive 'how the vessel could go', and being told that cloth put on the masts, and that 'the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water, when they liked in order to stop the vessel. (57)

Equiano's initial apprehension is also directed at the slave ship, which he is aware is much more than a means of transporting the slaves. He writes: "I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen; I asked if these people [whites] had no country, but lived in this hollow place [the ship]" (40). Equiano's fear of the slave ship continues up until his arrival to the West Indies, as he describes the ship that carries him to the American quarter as a "prison": "I a prisoner on board, now without hope! I kept my swimming eyes upon the land in a state of unutterable grief; not knowing what to do, and despairing to help myself.

While my mind was in this situation the fleet sailed on, and in one day's time, I lost all sight of the wished-for-land" (72).

The Martinican philosopher and novelist Edouard Glissant has his own poetic style to articulate the forced transition of Africans from their homeland to the Americas by means of the slave ship and the sea, a transition he rather calls a "deportation" (5). Glissant writes:

> What is terrifying partakes of the abyss, three times linked to the unknown. First, the time you fell into the belly of the boat. For, in your poetic vision, a boat has no belly; a boat does not swallow up, does not devour; a boat is steered by open skies. Yet, the belly of this boat dissolves you, precipitates you into a nonworld from which you cry out. This boat is a womb, a womb abyss … The next abyss was the depths of the sea. Whenever a fleet of ships gave chase to slave ships, it was easiest just to lighten the boat by throwing cargo overboard, weighing it down with balls and chains (6).

Glissant's description of the abysmal sufferings of the slaves, who are transported to the Americas, corresponds to Equiano's first experience with the coast and his forced transportation, together with a number of African slaves from different African countries, to Barbados, thus, to the American quarter. Equiano recounts what would become known as the Middle Passage and writes:

> The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the

> chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. (41)

I will suggest that the reality of the Middle Passage is inscribed in Equiano's memory, but he needs to go beyond it in order to secure his freedom during his sojourn in the Atlantic. In what follows I argue that the Middle Passage is Equiano's first step towards absorbing himself into the ideals of the West, most particularly into the British Empire.

**"Creation of the Other".**

The British Empire has so far prepared the ground for Equiano's absorption into it: first gesture is his abduction, second, his transportation to the Caribbean, and the third gesture towards his absorption consists in transporting him from Virginia to England. Equiano becomes in a sense the "Other's creation", and his absorption in the service of Empire validates that. In the words of Derek Attridge in his book *The Singularity of Literature* (2004), Equiano is tempted or seduced by an "emerging newness" (20), which as it applies to the text, signals Equiano's shift from Africa to the West. I, therefore, understand Equiano's shift from Africa to America and thence to England in terms of processes of acculturation. In other words, he is introduced or exposed to such a "new" sphere that decides his new allegiance to Britain. In fact, exposing Equiano to "newness" is the beginning of creating him as a "new" Other. Equiano's first arrival to England at the age of twelve marks the beginning of acculturating him by familiarizing him with a "newly" absorbing culture.

This introduction to "newness" is reflected through Equiano's presence in England when he is exposed to new sights and new visions. For example, after his arrival to Falmouth, a port city in Cornwall, Equiano is "very much struck with the buildings and the pavements of the streets in Falmouth; and indeed, any object [he] sees fills [him] with surprise" (48). In the same city,

he sees for the first time a church, a movement that is later developed in his baptism, which is also a form of acculturating him to the faith of the British. Another apt instance of introducing Equiano to such "new" sights consists in his reaction when he sees the element of snow for the first time in Falmouth, as he then notes:

> One morning, when I got upon deck, I saw it covered all over with snow that fell over-night: as I had never seen anything of the kind before, I thought it was salt; so I immediately ran down to the mate and desired him, as well as I could, to come and see how somebody in the night had thrown salt all over the deck. He, knowing what it was, desired me to bring some of it down to him: accordingly, I took up a handful of it, which I found very cold indeed; and when I brought it to him he desired me to taste it. I did so, and I was surprised beyond measure. I then asked him what it was; he told me it was snow but I could not in anywise understand him. He asked me if we had no such thing in my country, and I told him, no. (48)

Equiano is thus stripped of his realm of familiarity, and is therefore prepared for "new" experiences in the service of Empire. Attridge articulates this welcoming of "newness" by arguing that, "the act of breaking down the familiar is also the act of welcoming the other; the event of the familiar breaking down is also the event of the irruption of the other" (26). Right after his abduction from Africa, Equiano seems to penetrate new fields of vision, which I believe is the beginning of an entire process of change. Therefore, Equiano's transition from Africa to the New World, Virginia, and from thence to England is a process of "new" becoming. In what follows, I discuss Equiano's developing rhetoric in the face of processes of acculturation.

**Equiano's developing Rhetoric**.

Olaudah Equiano develops his rhetorical capacity in two different occasions. He first goes through a rhetorical process when he is introduced to the Seven Years' War, and that is further developed when he is introduced to the economic operation of the British Empire via the slave trade. I suggest that *The Interesting Narrative* highlights Equiano's developing sense of acculturation and his gradual allegiance to the British Empire. He in a sense constructs some kind of a rhetorical process, which I call "strategic Anglophilia". He embarks on such a strategy when he is first transported from Virginia to England under the captaincy and ownership of Captain Pascal. Equiano rhetorically shows that during this journey to England, he is well treated by the British, as he notes:

> When I was carried onboard a fine large ship, loaded with tobacco and just ready to sail for England. I now thought my situation much mended; I had sails to lie on, and plenty of good victuals to eat; and everybody on board used me very kindly, quite contrary to what I had seen of any white people before; I therefore began to think that they are not all of the same disposition. (45)

Equiano conveys that his situation improves as long as he is in English hands. Thus, I argue then that the process "Strategic Anglophilia" consists in Equiano's constructed sense of Englishness. He rhetorically constructs relations and connections towards England, and this is reflected for example in his baptism in England during the Seven Years' War by a connection of his captain, a Miss Guerin. Following his baptism in St. Margaret's Church in Westminster, Equiano establishes a bond with Miss Guerin, noting, "to my small grief, I was obliged to leave my school master, whom I liked very much, and always attended while I stayed in London, to repair on board with my master. Nor did I leave my kind patronesses, the Miss Guerins, without uneasiness and regret" (57). Equiano establishes bonds and attachments towards England, and

that I believe falls within the developing rhetorical strategies he devises for the sake of a better treatment, and especially his reception by Britain.

Equiano's developing sense of acculturation is further shown during his voyage from Virginia to England, when Captain Pascal gives him a new name which is "Gustavus Vassa". However, he initially resists this first step towards acculturation, as he notes:

> I at that time began to understand him a little, and refused to be called so, and told him as well as I could that I would be called Jacob; but he said I should not, and still called me Gustavus; and when I refused to answer to my new name, which at first I did, it gained me many a cuff; as at length I submitted, and was obliged to bear the present name, by which I have been known ever since. (45)

Paradoxically enough, his submission to the first step towards acculturation functions as an empowering rhetorical technique that Equiano does not fail using on several occasions. He in a very ambivalent gesture accepts acculturation so that he works his way to freedom in implicit ways. His acceptance of acculturation is reflected in his initial attempts to get absorbed into Britain from two different angles: First, he seeks admission into the faith of the whites so that he secures a religious acculturation, but when he tries to talk to the Bible and finds that it does not respond to him, that means he is not granted admission to the faith of the white people yet. Thus, his first attempt at acculturation is a failed one. Second, Equiano also tries to be acculturated to the British people from the angle of skin color. He then observes in Guernsey that when this mate's daughter has her face washed by her mother, her face turns rosy, but in his trying to do the same, he is disappointed as when he "washes his it did not look so: I therefore tried oftentimes myself if I could not by washing make my face of the same color as my little playmate, but it was all in vain; and now I began to be mortified at the difference in our complexions" (49). Equiano tries to acculturate, therefore, to get absorbed into whiteness, but

the latter does yet not admit his acculturation. After these two attempts of a failed acculturation, Equiano succeeds in acculturating himself to the British maritime service, which is voiced through his integration into the Seven Years' War. He proves his admission to the British naval service that is reflected through his initial amazement at the sight of the *Roebuck*, a British war vessel. He thus notes:

> When I went on board this large ship, I was amazed indeed to see the quantity of men and the guns. However, my surprise began to diminish as my knowledge increased; and I ceased to feel those apprehensions and alarms which had taken strong possession of me when I first came among Europeans, and for some time after. I began now to pass to an opposite extreme; I was so far from being afraid of anything new which I saw, that, after I had been some time in this ship, I even began to long for a battle. (50)

Empire marvels and engulfs Equiano with a sense of wonder and amazement, which I believe is the beginning of his acculturation. This is reflected in his further fascination with the British warships, or rather as he calls them "men of war", noting that "There was a very great fleet of men of war of every description assembled together for this expedition, and I was in hopes soon to have an opportunity of being gratified with a sea-fight" (52). Equiano's familiarization with the British constitutes a successful attempt to acculturate to their maritime culture, and this is reflected through his participation in The Seven Years' War, which is another step towards acculturating him to the British Empire. He develops his attachment to England on a gradual basis: at first, he manages to affiliate himself with British naval forces, and afterwards he affiliates himself with the ever-growing economy of the British Empire.

Thus, Equiano's transition from Africa to the New World and to England is not only a transition in terms of place, but also a transition in terms of national allegiance: from the "our" of Africa, to the "our" of Britain and the West. His attachment to England and to the British Empire

generally starts with the successful British victory over French tropes in the Seven Years' War in which he develops a sense of belonging to the British soldiers, as he notes, "I was in a small measure gratified in seeing an encounter between our men and the enemy" (52). The Seven Years' War contributes to Equiano's development of a sense of "new nationalism" vis à vis Britain, as he then notes "I now not only felt myself quite easy with these new countrymen, but relished their society and manners" (56). The War is consequently the first step towards Equiano's absorption into the ideals of Empire as Britain emerged in the War as the greatest naval power in the world. He is thus introduced to the glories of the British Empire that facilitates his absorption into "Englishness", and this is made clear when he reveals his developing skill on board ships: "from the various scenes I had beheld on ship-board, I soon grew stranger to terror of every kind, and was, in that respect, almost an Englishman" (56). The expression "almost an Englishman" validates the fact that Equiano himself reinforces his sense of acculturation. Thus, the Seven Years' War (re)locates and (re)positions Equiano in the world, as he no longer feels the rupture or deracination from Africa but instead feels the rupture whenever he is distanced from England. He undergoes a process of delocalization (and this is the working of diaspora) but he turns this forced delocalization into a (re)localization in different parts of the Atlantic. After an engagement with the French in the Seven Years' War, England establishes itself as "home" for Equiano who then notes: "As soon as everything here was settled Admiral Boscawen sailed with part of the fleet for England … It was now winter; and one evening during our passage <u>home</u>, about dusk, when we were in the channel, or near soundings, and were beginning to look for land, we descried seven sail of large men of war, which stood off shore" (54, my emphasis).

Equiano absorbs his (re)location in England, and this is made clearer when he later notes "It was now between two and three years since I first came to England, a great part of which I had spent at sea; so that I became inured to that service, and began to consider myself as happily

situated" (56). Thus, he absorbs this delocalization (delocalized from Africa, acculturated to Britain). He accepts being delocalized, but at the same time, he works his way through (re)localizing himself in different parts of the world. Therefore, by having acculturated himself to the British via the Seven Years' War, Equiano is consumed by and absorbed into the British imperialist ventures. In fact, this kind of rhetorical acceptance of acculturation and absorption is reflected in Critic Christopher Apap's article entitled "Caught between two opinions: Africans, Europeans, and Indians in the *Interesting Narrative*". Apap develops the concept of "self-annihilation," which I understand as the entire giving of oneself to an "other" or the complete submission to an "other" who is often more powerful than oneself rhetorically and strategically. The aim of such a concept is to destabilize the power of the "other" from within his system, as Apap argues, "in the end one does have to play by the rules of the system that one finds oneself in, even a system whose rules are as nebulous and shifting as the 18th century Atlantic world" (16). Equiano rhetorically turns the forced acculturation into a desire to be acculturated, and that constitutes his strategic means to secure his survival.

Moreover, Equiano performs acts of self-annihilation and belittlement by presenting himself as a slave who seeks improvement by the English. This is reflected when he conveys his changing perception towards the Europeans, as he then notes:

> I have often reflected with surprise that I never felt half the alarm at any of the numerous dangers I have been in, that I was filled with at the first sight of the Europeans, and at every act of theirs, even the most trifling, when I first came among them, and for some afterwards. That fear, however, which was the effect of my ignorance, wore away as I began to know them … I now not only felt myself quite easy with these new countrymen, but relished their society and manners. I no longer looked upon them as spirits, but as men superior to us; and therefore I had the stronger desire to resemble them; to imbibe their spirit, and imitate their manners. (56, my emphasis)

Equiano conveys his inferiority to the Europeans, and that I believe falls within his strategies of self-annihilation that permit him to work his way to freedom while he feigns belonging to the British.

In another article entitled "Consuming Africa: Geography and Identity in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*", Critic Michael Wilay explains the acculturation of Africa into Europe in anatomical ways. He thus develops the idea of consumption and "digestion" of Africa within the European bodily system, as he argues:

> Equiano's very process of being consumed and incorporated into the European 'body' lessens his fear of being consumed. Soon he can announce that the fear which was the effect of my ignorance [of Europeans], wore away as I began to know them. And soon, wishing to consume more of Europe into himself so as to become a more constitutive part of the European 'body' (if not to become European himself). (175)

The process of accepting consumption and "digestion" into the European bodily system carries much ambivalence, which consists in Equiano's strategic attempt to turn the forced European proclivity of absorbing and consuming him into Europe, into a desire to be incorporated and consumed as if he himself has chosen to be so. He in a sense accepts being consumed and digested by Europe, which is reflected already in his acculturation to Britain. Thus, Equiano's acceptance of being consumed turns out to be one of his strategies of self-defense against an absorbing imperial rhetoric. Equiano, Wilay argues, "becomes part of the body that has consumed him … In as far as you are what you eat, the consumed comes to constitute the consumer who continues to consume" (167). In The *Interesting Narrative*, Equiano shows on several occasions how he is prone to be eaten, thus consumed by the whites, and in one striking moment during his voyage from Virginia to England, he notes:

> In our extremities, the captain and people told me in jest they would kill and eat me; but I thought them in earnest, and was depressed beyond measure, expecting every moment to be my last. While I was in this situation one evening they caught, with a good deal of trouble, a large shark, and got it on board. This gladdened my poor heart exceedingly, as I thought it would serve the people to eat instead of their eating me; but very soon, to my astonishment, they cut off the tail, and tossed the rest over the side. (46)

The quote above posits a power relation between the consumer and the consumed, as the one who eats or consumes is the one who is possessive of power in contrast to the one who is consumed, thus, disempowered. Equiano purposefully and rhetorically presents himself as being fully consumed, "digested", thus, fully acculturated to Britain, so that he works his way out to freedom while feigning disempowerment. At the same time, by having accepted consumption, he enmeshes the whites in his strategic acceptance of being digested, thus, disempowers them rhetorically. The following section discusses Equiano's further development of rhetorical capacities in the Atlantic.

**The Atlantic: A space for negotiation.**

Equiano converts the Atlantic into a space for negotiation, thus for the conduct of rhetoric. He expansively operates in the Atlantic where he negotiates for his freedom. Following his transition to the West Indies, which officially marks his integration into the slave trade service, Equiano rhetorically intensifies his sense of acculturation to Britain. This is reflected in his construction of allegiance in his service of his masters. For example, in his knowledge that Captain Doran will leave him for a west-India bound ship under the mastery of Mr. King, Equiano longs to be onboard with Doran whose ship is sailing for England, noting that "when she weighed anchor I went to the waterside and looked at her with a very wishful and aching

heart, and followed her with my eyes and tears until she totally out of sight" (74). This kind of theatrical gesture consisting in Equiano's crying reflects what Alan Rice calls "trickery [that] works particularly well as an allegory of the slave's position in the slave economy" (27). Equiano stages his rhetoric or his sense of acculturation to Britain, so that he does not reveal his aspirations to freedom while serving his British masters. In fact, such an attempt at constructing relations within Empire can also be understood in terms of what I have already developed as "Strategic Anglophilia", as Equiano seems to be attached to anything that is English or related to Englishness. In yet other instances of establishing connections to his slave masters, Equiano expresses his gratefulness to Captain Doran and to his master Pascal "for the character they had given [him]" (74), which by way of paradox, conveys how his mature sense is established and his character is constructed thanks to his absorption into the service of his masters. After having been owned by Mr. King, Equiano needs also intensify his rhetoric so that he gains his master's gratitude. He believes that Mr. King "possesses a most amiable disposition and temper, and is very charitable and humane … and that if any of his slaves behaved amiss he did not beat or use them ill, but parted with them, and as he treated his slaves better than any other man on the island, so he was better and more faithfully served by them in return" (74).

Equiano establishes a sort of favoritism towards Mr. King. He even contrasts him with other slave masters on the island, when he notes "The slaves used to like this [the fact that the other planters do not feed their slaves, while Mr. King provides victuals for his slaves] very well; and as they knew my master to be a man of feeling, they were always glad to work for him in preference to any other gentlemen" (75). Equiano believes that his service with Mr. King is a kind of privilege, noting that "from thus being employed during the time I served Mr. King, in going about the different estates on the island, I had all the opportunity I could wish to see the dreadful usage of the poor men; usage that reconciled me to my situation, and made me bless

God for the hands into which I had fallen" (76). Equiano signals himself out from among his fellow slaves by giving himself to the service of his masters, and this I believe is his sole strategy to negotiate for freedom within his experience of serving others.

Equiano paradoxically consumes a certain imperial rhetoric that he works towards its intensification even after experiencing the realities of slavery in the West Indies. He detaches Britain and its metropole England from the inhumane practices of slavery in the West Indies, and this I believe is part of his rhetorical and negotiating strategies. Equiano tends to delocalize/dislocate the feeling about slavery from Britain and localizes/relocates this sentiment to America and the West Indies. In other words, he detaches the metropole (England, London) from its overseas territories and colonies, and resituates a feeling about slavery in the British colonies and not in Britain. For example, he enumerates the injustices of the slave trade in the West Indies, writing that:

> Surely this traffic cannot be good, which spreads like a pestilence, and taints what it touches! Which violates that first natural right of mankind, equality and independency, and gives one man a dominion over his fellows which God could never intend! For it raises the owner to a state as far above man as it depresses the slave below it; and, with all the presumption of human pride, sets a distinction between them, immeasurable in extent, and endless in duration! Yet how mistaken is the avarice even of the planters? Are slaves more useful by being thus humbled to the condition of brutes, than they would be if suffered to enjoy the privileges of men? The freedom which diffuses health and prosperity throughout Britain answers you- No. (83)

Equiano puts the metropole and the overseas territories on two different axes. He juxtaposes Britain with its overseas colonies in the West Indies, in showing that the metropole is liberating while its overseas colonies are enslaving. He thus notes, "I determined to make every exertion

to obtain my freedom, and to return to Old England" (91). He rhetorically contrasts two worlds: Old England versus the New World Slavery. Following his manumission, which is signed by his master Mr. King in Montserrat, Equiano finds himself torn between two different worlds: between the New World (the colonies) in which he procures his freedom and to Old England (the metropole), on which his "heart is fixed" (106). He is in other words torn between the overseas territories, which though enslaved him granted him his freedom, and the metropole (London, England) which he associates with the principles of freedom, justice, and democracy.

By this kind of association, Equiano complicates our understanding of imperial centers and metropoles. After his manumission, Equiano expresses his emotional attachment to Old England and the metropole (London) and his detachment from the New World and the colonies, as he writes: "I began to think of leaving this part of the world, of which I had been long tired, and returning to England, where my heart had always been …" (112). Thus, he is convinced (though by way of a rhetorical self-delusion) that overseas colonies and territories do not necessarily reflect a metropolitan attitude towards slavery, the metropole which Equiano has always associated with the rights of man and with the values of justice and democracy.

I further argue that Equiano styles himself as British as a necessity in an Atlantic framework, so that he works his way to freedom, while still feigning allegiance to Britain. He is a negotiator, and he works on both sides. After his manumission by British means in Montserrat, Equiano notes, "and now <u>being as in my original free African state</u>, I embarked onboard the Nancy, after having got all things ready for our voyage" (107, my emphasis). In other words, Equiano styles himself British, but deep inside he knows he is operating in the Atlantic by British means, so that he regains his former freedom in Africa. Equiano is aware that in order for him to secure freedom, he has to embrace or endorse a model of freedom and not of slavery. That is why he is attached to metropoles and not to the margins (colonies, West Indies, Caribbean).

Equiano has thus (re)located his nostalgia and his sense of longing towards London. After having received a "certificate of behavior" (123) from Mr. King, Equiano embarks on a journey to London with one Captain John Hamer, noting, "We had a most prosperous journey, and, at the end of seven weeks, arrived at Cherry-Garden stairs. Thus were my longing eyes once more gratified with a sight of London, after having been absent from it above four years" (124, my emphasis). This (re)location of nostalgia towards London, I believe, falls within Equiano's strategic allegiance towards Britain. Equiano's attachment and affiliation to imperial centers also fall within his strategies of adopting the rhetoric of Empire, and his accommodation in the context of the Atlantic paradoxically grants him the mobility of a free slave. In other terms, he is activated and mobilized in his trade service, and this is what the following section discusses.

**"Activated by Empire"**

I argue that Empire functions cohesively in Equiano's diasporic life by communicating him to the world and by preparing him for a dynamic life in the Atlantic. Equiano's diasporic life in the final analysis is permitted by an ever-expanding Empire that grants him the chance to expansively draw his "routes" and his sense of mobility. Empire's activation of Equiano is voiced in his trade service in the West Indies, which is marked by a British colonial presence in the colonies of Montserrat, Barbados, and Georgia, a French presence in the colonies of Guadeloupe and Grenada, and to a lesser degree, a Dutch presence in St. Eustatia. Equiano participates in the slave trade and he is thus activated by the British Empire. He partakes in a dynamic chain of charging and discharging cargoes between different places, reflecting an activity and a mobility in the slave trade service. He helps trading the slaves between the different colonies in the West Indies. For example, he helps charging a cargo of slaves in Monserrat and discharges it in both Georgia and Charlestown, saying: "we arrived at Georgia,

and, having landed part of our cargo, proceeded to Charlestown with the remainder" (95). Equiano extends the trading of the slaves as he helps charging a cargo of slaves in Montserrat, which is a British overseas territory, and discharging it in a Dutch overseas territory called St.Eustatia. Therefore, Empire activates and animates Equiano by way of a transatlantic trade that paradoxically grants him the freedom of movement through the French colonies (Grenades) to the Dutch colonies (St.Eustatia) and from thence to another French colony which is Basseterre.

Based on these interactive movements throughout the colonies, I argue that in *The Interesting Narrative,* Empire has a potential for cohesiveness and accumulation. This potential is clarified by Ian Baucom in his book *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005) through his designation of what he calls "spaces-of-flows" (36), which convey the fact that the Atlantic potentially links empires, colonies and overseas territories all to one another. Baucom, indeed, clarifies the function of these "spaces-of-flows" and he thus argues:

> They serve to link one place to another and so to define the operative territories of capital, the geographies of circulation that supersede and interrupt the borders of the nation-state, these spaces-of-flows thus belong less to the particular cities or states they link or to the individual places in which they happen to have come to rest than to the expansive territories of circulation they govern. (36)

Conceived in this vein, Empire connects Equiano with different ports, which function as signals or "signposts", connecting him to various spheres of communication. He moves to and fro between nations as the ship brings him to different ports, worlds, and territories. I find it relevant here to engage with Paul Gilroy who emphasizes the role of ships and their cohesive function in the transatlantic world. Gilroy argues that ships "were the living means by which the points

of the Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected" (17). Gilroy focuses on the "image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa and the Caribbean" (4). Ships, in this sense, contribute to shrinking and decompressing the Atlantic, as if the Atlantic is brought into a single global geography.

Thus I suggest that Equiano's movements with high speed through port cities on a number of ships have a potential for "errancy", a term that is essentially developed by Glissant in *Poetics of Relation*, and is later reused and redefined by Baucom in *Specters of the Atlantic* as follows:

> [Errancy is] an acknowledgement of our multiple entanglements in the world of modernity, an interested engagement with an inveterately worldly's modernity's multiple networks of relation should not be confused with a one-way ('vectoral') movement of thought or connection. It implies neither a simple moving out into the world nor a mere extension of interest from one of modernity's mixed poles (or metropoles) to one of its zones of agony. Far conceived thus, errancy would amount to little more than a unilinear trade in affect, a centripetal market of feeling headquartered in the world's 'centers' of political sympathy as they radiate the spokes of concern to the global 'peripheries' of modern experience. (313)

Based on the above quote, "Errancy" has a potential to accumulate, gather and unify a number of juxtaposing and discordant elements or systems or beliefs (which also speaks to the concept of "Opacity" as already developed in relation to the space of the sea in the first chapter). I therefore suggest that "Errancy" provides a relational ground for a number of conflicting unities. As it is now applied to my reading of Equiano's narrative, "Errancy" is reflected in his economic dealings since he represents a hegemonic British economy, but this hegemony is converted into a kind of "entangled" and "errant" connections among the people he encounters

in his trading ventures. Conceived in this vein, Empire sustains economic hegemony, but "entangled" and "errant" relations are still made possible within asymmetrical and vertical paradigms. For example, Equiano' economic encounter with the Turks in a port city called Smyrna (modern day Izmir, a seaport and a naval base in Western Turkey) functions as such an "errant" and "entangled" encounter. Equiano is in a profitable process of accumulating wealth for the prosperity of England (since he returns with profit from different port cities), but that does not inhibit him from establishing cultural connections amidst his essentially economic and imperial ventures. In yet another instance of creating "relations" while sustaining Empire, Equiano marvels at the Italian city of Genoa, when he notes, "this was one of the finest cities I ever saw; some of the edifices were of beautiful marble, and made a most noble appearance" (128). However, that does not again inhibit him from imposing himself in his economic dealings with the Italians, and the fact that he "gets [the goods] cheap as [he] wanted" (128) shows the working of an imperialist mercantilist who uses the power of economic negotiation in his trade. Based on the above examples, I suggest that Empire in Equiano's narrative functions as a cohesive and accumulative system that unifies rather than disperses, though by way of "errant" and "entangled" relations. Consequently, the following section deals with a (re) thinking of Empire, and thus of the Atlantic.

**(Re) thinking Empire/ (Re) thinking the Atlantic**

*The Interesting Narrative* brings different overseas territories together which function as spheres of communication around which cultures and peoples overlap. For example, while he is engaged in the task of charging cargoes in the West Indies, Equiano is assisted by "four people that would work with [him] at the oars; and they consisted of three black men and a Dutch Creole sailor …" (114). This instance shows how two natives of Africa (Equiano and the

Dutch Creole sailor), working in the service of two different Empires which are the British and the Dutch, are gathered together in the same enterprise which is the slave trade. I find it relevant here to engage with Glissant's definition of creolization in his interrogation in his book *Poetics of Relation*:

> What shall we say about those composite cultures whose composition did not result from a unity of norms, but rather was built in the margins with all kinds of materials that by their very nature were exceptions to the patience of the rule, to be thrust headlong into the world by necessity, oppression, anguish, or an appetite for adventure? (91, my emphasis)

Glissant argues that creolized experiences are brought together and linked as they are scattered and displaced. Conceived in this vein and as applied to Equiano's narrative , different nations of Africa are scattered throughout the colonies of the British, French, and Dutch Empires, yet they are united (even though dispersed from Africa) under the same global terrain, which is the further expansive slave trade. More than this, Glissant develops the concept of the "échos-monde", which he also refers to as the "aesthetics of the universe", and believes is the outcome of joining variant pieces together to form a unity of relations. (92-93). He adds that "in order to express confluences, every individual, every community, forms its own échos-monde, imagined from power or vainglory, from suffering or impatience" (93, my emphasis). Thus I argue that Equiano and the other creolized individuals he encounters in the course of his travels as an incorporated subject in the slave trade, form their own "échos-monde" which is constructed out of dispersion, displacement, and marginalization. They manage to establish confluences as they are scattered in different margins serving the British, French, and Dutch overseas territories.

Thus, the Atlantic in Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative* is reconfigured as a "contact zone" that (dis)places, places and (re)places people across different nations and cultures. Commenting on Edouard Glissant's thoughts, Ian Baucom writes in *Specters of the Atlantic* that:

> For Glissant, the paradigmatic modernity of black-Atlantic history is thus a function not only of the abysmal sufferings and disorientations of the slave experience but of the creole, relational cultures that emerge from within the world of slavery. To have been drawn within the networks of trans-Atlantic slavery may have been to become encamped within a permanent state of exception, but slavery's very spaces of exception- its abysmal waters and plantations- are also those spaces in which the relational, creole, metissage cultures of modernity are forced into a sustained and intense existence. (315, my emphasis).

An apt example of such "relational cultures emerging from within the world of slavery" shows Richard Baker who is a Native of America and his established friendship with Equiano who is a native of Africa, in the course of a trip from the New World, Virginia, to Old England. During his passage from Virginia to England under the command of both his master and captain Pascal and Mr. Campbell respectively, Equiano is connected to Baker who is a:

> Native of America [and] has received an excellent education, and is of a most amiable temper. Soon after I went on board he shewed me a great deal of partiality and attention, and in return I grew extremely fond of him. We at length became inseparable; and, for the space of two years, he was of great use to me, and was my constant companion and instructor. (46)

As the quote suggests, both natives of America and Africa are displaced from their original dwellings, and are therefore (re)placed in the world of the slave trade, thus, "enter into new relations through historical processes of displacement", as Clifford explains in his book *Routes*:

*Travel And Translation In The Late Twentieth Century* (1997). He argues that an experience of displacement, which means living in the diaspora, can paradoxically culminate in a new belonging. His point is that, when an individual or a group of people (dis)place or change their original locations, that means they are still dynamic and on the move. Clifford further explains:

> *Routes* begins with this assumption of movement, arguing that travels and contacts are crucial sites for an unfinished modernity. The general topic, if it be called one, is vast: a view of the human location as constituted by displacement as much as by stasis … *Routes* attempts to trace old and new maps and histories of people in transit … human difference articulated in displacement, tangled cultural experiences, structures and possibilities of an increasingly connected but not homogeneous world. (2, my emphasis)

Therefore, Equiano stages an identity globally formed out of scattered and diasporic experiences as a slave serving the British Empire. He manages to transform this experience of displacement and dispersion into a profitable experience of (re)placement and (re)settlement in different parts of the world. Paradoxically enough, the British overseas territories and colonies that enslave Equiano, connect him at once to the world, to journeying and navigation, and to a lived experience across different oceans, thus, leading to such a configuration in our understanding of the Atlantic.

The Atlantic, though it is characterized by asymmetrical relations of power, "emerges as a Contact zone" (Clifford, 8) around which the experiences of the slavers and their enslaved overlap, or "entangle" in Ranjan Ghosh's words in "The figure that Frost's Poetics Makes". Ghosh conceives of the specifically "aesthetic imaginaries … as entangled figurations that

> aggregate around dwellings in culture, social practice, characters of imaginative reconstruction, affiliations to religious and spiritual denominations and preferences. An aesthetic imaginary is built inside the borders of a nation, a culture, a society, a tradition

> or an inheritance, but it disaggregates and reconstructs itself when exposed to the callings and constraints of cross-border epistemic and cultural circulations. Aesthetic imaginaries then are entangled figurations bearing out the promise of 'shared realities' and what Toni Morrison calls 'shareable imaginative worlds. (134)

Ghosh addresses realities that entangle, aggregate and assemble in order to come up with a shared and lived cultural experiences, and he develops a thought that is based on a plurality of voices within relations of power. In a similar sense, the Black Atlantic is a formation of "entangled realities" of different races, cultures, peoples and backgrounds; all are entangled (while dispersed) and presented in a mutually shared history.

Seen from the angle of "entangled realities", Olaudah Equiano is a black man who undergoes a "whitening" process in the space of the Atlantic. The very fluid and changing waters have contributed to his cultural mutation resulting in his adherence to whiteness as a cultural color. The Atlantic functions as a space of hybridization, allowing for this kind of information between blackness and whiteness, which are no longer seen (in his text) as opposed within a racial paradigm. Thus, Equiano operates within the changing and versatile nature of the Atlantic world, and this I believe falls within his potential for negotiation in an 18$^{th}$ century Atlantic world. Srinivas Aravamudan stresses the hybrid nature of maritime culture, and she argues that, "Maritime culture was a secret sharer in the fluid identity formations of the eighteenth century. Seafaring vessels mobilized goods and populations, also serving as ships of passage that enabled syncretic practices and shifting identities" (239). In light of this argument, Equiano is aware that there is no room to be the same in the Atlantic, which functions as a fluid space of multitude, of entanglement, of "errancy" and complex relations. That is why he undergoes a process of (re) coloring himself in the space of the Atlantic, thus he goes beyond binaries of black versus white.

There is in the narrative a striking example that shows Equiano's adoption of this kind of color mutation, reflected in his encounter with a black woman from Georgia. Equiano recounts this encounter and notes, "Before I left Georgia a black woman, who had a child lying dead, being very tenacious of the church burial service, and not able to get any white person to perform it, applied to me for that purpose" (121, my emphasis). The Atlantic in a sense contributes to "whitening" Equiano, which is reflected in another instance in the narrative, when the Indian Prince asks Equiano, "How comes it that all the white men onboard who can read and write, and observe the sun, and know all things, yet swear, lie, and get drunk, only excepting yourself?" (154, my emphasis). The Indian Prince conceives of Equiano as being white because he gives him a religious instruction in the manner of the whites. Another example of the "whitening" process reflects Equiano's use of the masking technique in his visit to one Mr. Kirkpatrick. Equiano notes, "My being known to them [the patrol that guards Mr. Kirkpatrick's dwelling] occasioned me to use the following deception: I whitened my face that they might not know me, and this had its desired effect" (136).

These examples suggest that Equiano is a negotiator, and that he seeks common grounds between blackness and whiteness, between Africa and Britain, more generally between Africa and the West. Therefore I infer that in our narrative Africa and Britain are put on the same axis, and they keep informing each other in Equiano's life in the Atlantic, which makes possible this kind of information and "entanglement". Equiano complicates our understanding of the stability of lineage and he foregrounds the "multi-layered complex nature of personalities in the Black Atlantic" (Rice, 9). He constructs a hybrid identity that encompasses both African and Western backgrounds. Therefore, the Atlantic is the perfect space that articulates this kind of information, it (re) colors and thus hybridizes Equiano.

Equiano tries to establish "relations" between Africa and Europe and he wants to establish a common framework that enables the economic exchange between the two different

backgrounds. In the beginning of the narrative, he mentions that "We have also spices of different kinds, particularly pepper; and a variety of delicious fruits which I have never seen in Europe …" (24). He communicates the fact that Africa has products and materials that Britain does not have access to, implicitly inferring that Africa is ready to sustain Britain with these goods, thus enter into commercial relations with it. I find it relevant here to engage again with Glissant's concept of "errancy," which ensures the conduct of "relations" between discordant elements (in this sense Africa and Britain). As argued in *Poetics of Relation*, errancy "follows neither an arrow like trajectory nor one that is circular and repetitive, nor is it mere wandering-idle roaming. Wandering, one might become lost, but in errantry one knows at every moment where one is- at every moment in relation to the other" (xvi). Employed as a device that guarantees confluence and exchange between different varieties, "errancy" reflects Equiano's potential of participation and inclusion, as he eventually brings the Britons and the Africans into a unified system of commerce, reflected thus in his claim:

> As the inhuman traffic of slavery is to be taken into the consideration of the British legislature, I doubt not, if a system of commerce was established in Africa, the demand for manufactures would most rapidly augment, as the native inhabitants will insensibly adopt the British fashions, manners, customs. In proportion to the civilization, so will be the consumption of British manufactures. (177, my emphasis)

Equiano demands the British Empire to (re) think its operation and functioning in Africa. By this kind of newly-adopted "system of commerce", both backgrounds enter into relations of exchange and information.

## Conclusion

This chapter has essentially attempted to (re) think the economic operation of Enlightenment in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African Written by Himself* (2001). It has sought to present the interrogatory, rhetorical, and negotiating potential of Olaudah Equiano who manages to go beyond the horrors of the Middle Passage, seeking adjustments through his full-time employment in the service of Empire, and through his residence in the Atlantic. I have argued that Equiano has (re)formulated the conception of the Atlantic and of Empire, turning them into spaces of negotiation and accumulation respectively. Such a potential for negotiation and accumulation has eventually culminated in establishing common grounds between Africa and the West.

## Conclusion

Patricia Eakins' *The Marvelous Adventures of Pierre Baptiste, Father and Mother, First and Last* and Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* provide two additive approaches to (re)think and to (re)configure Enlightenment thinking. Most importantly, they do not attempt to displace Enlightenment ideals or beliefs or doctrines in as far as they have conducted an experimental and aggregating research, the aim of which is to start from a fixed model or paradigm (Enlightenment). Instead, they have tried to (re) operate with that same paradigm in order to formulate a better and more democratic structure.

The two texts stress the continuity of Enlightenment thinking, but the nature or the character of such a persistence is negotiated and interrogated. Both Eakins and Equiano provide two agendas showing the echoes of Enlightenment and urging for an operation from within these ambivalent echoes reflected through its continued legacy. Glissant's theory in *Poetics of Relation* (1997) provides one with the tools of interrogation or negotiation from within established systems or paradigms. He makes it clear that he "had no interest in rejecting the language he speaks (French); his purpose would be better served by actions within it, by interrogating it. By the passionate intensity of his way of being in this language, he would force the Other to know his difference" (xii, my emphasis). What both Eakins and Equiano achieve in this regard is that they start from established orders (18th century science and 18th century economy) then they "(re)constituted the elements [of these orders] in a new order" (Glissant xiv). The process of (re) constitution aims at the (re)trieval of something that is lost through acceptance rather than through refusal. Such a technique is referred to as "Utilization (outilization) [that signals the] tooling of the past to serve the present" (Glissant xvii). Glissant suggests "utilization" as a resistant mode that interrogates the imposed French language on his Martinican background, and "utilizes" it in order to search for adjustments and configurations

from within such an imposition. In a similar context, I employ this resistant mode to represent two slaves' interrogatory experiences of imposed systems. This interrogation culminates in a (re)consideration of coercive paradigms.

The two texts moreover provide "the basis for a [new] system and gather together its scattered elements" (Glissant 92). Both Eakins and Equiano work on the idea of aggregation, which consists in starting from a flawed paradigm, then configuring it based on its flaws and incompleteness. Eakins' fictional representation starts with a flawed scientific model that imposes a kind of taxonomic approach to nature and to the world. She provides through a slave's story a critique of paradigmatic systems (taxonomic) which fail to study nature as a lived experience, and which also fail to study nature in its entirety: rotten elements, slaves, fauna and flora, and all the other varieties. The alternative to such a flawed and incomplete model consists in Pierre's additive approach that succeeds in studying nature as an experiment. Eakins' ultimate concern is to (re)insert and (re)add the slaves in relation to 18$^{th}$ century science. In so doing, she clearly starts from a scientific model and aggregates all the scattered elements caused by that model, keeping to the same model. The achievement behind such an inclusion or addition is to come up with a third version or a third solution, which consists in establishing a participatory, inclusive, and democratic Enlightenment's paradigm. As far as Olaudah Equiano's narrative is concerned, he employs the very same methodology. His fellow slaves are scattered in the dominant British economy, and their presences have no place in the economic ideals of Empire. Equiano's concern is to (re)consider the position of the slaves in the 18$^{th}$ century economy. For this to be thus achieved, he departs from a powerfully established economic model, and then he seeks negotiations from within the same model in order to gather its scattered elements for the aim of achieving a participatory economic paradigm. Consequently, both narratives contribute to the emergence of a reconfigured model based on

the tools of the old paradigms or structures or hierarchies. What is thus achieved in the end is a (re) configuration of hierarchies.

Both narratives provide us with a political alternative that consists in the establishment of a new model of resistance manifested through a rhetorical interrogation of systems without necessarily destroying old paradigms of power. The narratives in addition equip us with a more efficient pedagogy in the resistance of systems through the provision of the necessary tools of constructive criticism. The legacies of Enlightenment are to be thus criticized, negotiated with, and interrogated by building on its "remains". The political alternative that the two narratives suggest consists in the (re) construction of societies via (re) thinking their systems without leading to their destruction. Olaudah Equiano eventually stresses the (re) building of the British society and of the African nations. He thus notes:

> In proportion to such increase will be the demand for manufactures. Cotton and indigo grow spontaneously in most parts of Africa; a consideration this of no small consequence to the manufacturing towns of Great Britain. It opens a most immense, glorious, and happy prospect- the clothing of a continent ten thousand miles in circumference, and immensely rich in productions of every denomination in return for manufactures (178, my emphasis).

The very same potential for (re) construction also applies to *The Marvelous Adventures*. Pierre opposes the slave revolt in the French Anduves, suggesting a new model of resistance that negotiates with hierarchies rather than destroys them. Thus, he reflects: "Yet if crops and stores, docks and boats had been burned, mill-house and curing-house and kitchen-house, if all by which men gain a livelihood were ash, then how could men continue to thrive in the Anduves?" (233). He responds, "Pierre must go to the people, offering his strong hands and back and his mind of a savant, to help them rebuild all, better than before, but for our own benefit" (233, my

emphasis). In both cases (Equiano's and Pierre's) there is an access to a new methodology of resistance that is grounded upon diplomacy, rhetoric, and the practice of consent for the sake of (re) configuring an established hierarchy.

I have suggested the element of the sea or the Atlantic in general terms as an alternative space for "Utilization". The two narratives develop two slaves' "watery" experiences that are modified in the process of slavery. Conceived in terms of "Utilization" and as it is applied to *The Interesting Narrative* , the element of the sea first introduces Equiano to slavery, yet in the process of his enslavement, it functions as an arena where he pursues his economic ventures, and where he practices his rhetoric in the service of those who enslave him. I have wanted to show that the means that accessed Equiano to slavery are the same means that introduced him to freedom. Equiano is aware that in an Atlantic framework, freedom(s) are continuously bought and sold. Therefore, he needs to work his way to freedom by operating within the powers that enslave him. In other words, Equiano snatches his freedom via slavery. I want to show through Equiano's story that in an 18$^{th}$ century Atlantic world, the same hands that enslave one are the same hands that yet grant one his freedom. As my analyses suggest, Equiano successfully operates within this nexus.

Further conceived from the angle of "Utilization", the sea in *The Marvelous Adventures* constitutes Pierre's disempowering and enslaving element in the beginning of his narrative. However, in the process of Pierre's enslavement, the sea undergoes a reformulation, as it accesses the slaves to a utopian submarine world beyond the restrictions of the plantation, reflected in the slaves' practice of transmigrating their dead fellows to Africa via the sea. I want to show through Pierre's story that the means of his initial enslavement are the same means that introduce his eventual liberation, reflected in his construction of a utopian submarine world.

I want to show that these "watery" slave experiences reflect an Enlightenment thinking that is represented as empowered by an Atlantic framework in the form of a plantation located in the Caribbean in *The Marvelous Adventures*, or in the form of a maritime trade, that finds its ground on a more expansive Atlantic world in *The Interesting Narrative*. In light of the above, my conclusion functions as a hyperlink to my foreword, which already reflects the "watery" experiences of my countrymen. I want to show that their experiences are subject to abeyance, since there is yet no such a scholarship that voices these experiences. Therefore, I want to suggest a future vision that perhaps studies the encounters between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. These two geographies should be studied as "entangled" and overlapped "watery" experiences. As far as the Mediterranean is concerned, the shadows and the legacies of Enlightenment still hold sway. Therefore, I suggest that these legacies or "remains" should also be (re) interrogated in relation to a Mediterranean culture, geography, and background. What is thus required from the Mediterranean scholar is to "have the wind of world history in his sails. To think for him means to set sails. It is the way they are set that matters. Words are his sails. The way they are set turns them into concepts" as Walter Benjamin puts it. The Mediterranean scholar should exploit the profusion of his sails, of his ships, and of his "watery" geography to shed the light on yet many unvoiced "watery" experiences.

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