

Leng's biography of Benjamin Worsley provides insight into the attempt by one man to maneuver through the challenges of this period and who, by being many things but not one single thing, avoided being pigeon-holed. His service to the state, and what he promoted, corresponded to very important political and economic changes; thus Worsley was one of many who advocated important changes within England with long-term consequences. The actual biography of Worsley, what we actually know that he did, provides a small part of the work with the larger being a case study of one individual and how he created a place for himself within the radical changes taking place.

Derek Hughes, ed. *Versions of Blackness: Key Texts on Slavery from the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2007. V + 381 pp. Paperback \$24. Review by BABACAR M'BAYE, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

Derek Hughes' *Versions of Blackness: Key Texts on Slavery from the Seventeenth Century* brings together important European literary and historical representations of New World blacks and Native Americans from the mid-Sixteenth century to the third quarter of the Seventeenth century. These accounts show the effects of slavery and imperialism on these populations which Europeans either enslaved, massacred, or colonized

The book's major objective is to resist the revisionist practice of interpreting the past mainly through the lenses of modern theories of racial interactions between blacks and whites. Opposing this current academic trend, Hughes argues "that the oppressions of the Seventeenth century were driven by imperatives and anxieties that are not the same as those of more recent times and that it is a mistake to read the earlier period entirely in the light of the later one" (xvi). Using this theory, Hughes takes us back to a Seventeenth-century world in which the relationships between Africans, Europeans, and Native Americans were determined by "non-Christianity" (or the attempt of Europeans to use religious difference as a reason for conquering others) and not by race (xiv-xv). Hughes depicts the Seventeenth century as a historical context in which the interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans were not as rigid as they are currently perceived.

Referring to major works such as Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) and Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko* (1696), Hughes argues that they "all portray black characters in conflict with—and generally destroyed by—white Europeans. All portray the alien with open-minded imaginativeness, and all treat the contrasts between alien and European as unstable, complex, and reversible" (xii).

Behn's *Oroonoko* is about a Moor prince who is captured from a sea port located in a region that was then known as Coromantine (in current Ghana), and brought to the English colony of Surinam in the West Indies. Behn describes the enslavement of Oroonoko as a tragic incident in which a European Captain tricked a group of Coromantine traders into visiting the belly of his ship and threw them in the dungeons. Behn writes: "The Captain, who had well laid his Design before, gave the Word, and seiz'd on all his Guests; they clasped great Irons on the Prince, when he was leap'd down in the Hold, to view that part of the Vessel" (150). This incidence suggests the neglected history of royal and noble Africans like Oroonoko who were enslaved not because they were captured at war or were sold into bondage by other Africans, but simply because they were kidnapped by greedy Europeans with whom they had traded goods and people.

A major trait of Behn's character of Oroonoko is his ability to offset his enslavement through strong bonds with the other enslaved Africans, especially with a Coromantine woman named Imoinda whom he knew in Africa. These connections allow him to gain the respect and admiration of the other blacks and counter the Europeans' attempts to take away his dignity and pride. Oroonoko has a strong leadership role among these blacks. When the treacherous English Captain promises to free him if he can encourage the other slaves in the vessel to eat (152), Oroonoko uses this invitation as a means to strengthen his fellow Africans by encouraging them to gamer the spirit that is necessary to survive the terrible voyage. Behn describes the following scene in which Oroonoko and his fellow Africans reunite in the ship: "Oroonoko, who was too generous, not to give Credit to his Words, shew'd himself to his People, who were transported with Excess of Joy at the sight of their Darling Prince, falling at his Feet, and kissing and embracing' em to bear their Chains with that Bravery that became those whom he had seen act so nobly in Arms;

and they cou'd not give him greater Proofs of their Love and Friendship, since 'twas all the Security the Captain (His Friend) cou'd have, against the Revenge, he said, they might possibly justly take, for the Injuries sustain'd by him" (153). As Behn suggests, after this reunion the other blacks "no longer refus'd to eat, but took what was brought' em, and were pleas'd with their Captivity" (153). This passage suggests Oroonoko's roles as both a political and a spiritual leader who had the unwavering support and faith of his fellow Africans during the Middle Passage. The quotation also shows the passive and subtle resistance that Oroonoko teaches his fellow Africans by convincing them to eat. This consensus allows the Africans to better prepare their resistance against the gullible European Captain by preventing him from suspecting the deceptive solidarity between Oroonoko and them and the mutiny they are secretly organizing in the ship.

Another aspect of Behn's Oroonoko is the power that he seems to have over women, especially the wealthy ones he meets. In Behn's version, this power stems primarily from Imoinda, an African Coromantine woman who preferred Oroonoko's gifts from those of a polygamous king who tried so hard to woo her. Behn writes: "She [Imoinda] express'd her Sense of the Present the Prince had sent her, in terms so sweet, so soft and pretty, with an Air of Love and Joy that cou'd not be dissembi'd; insomuch that 'twad past doubt whether she lov'd Oroonoko entirely" (134). Like Behn's, Southeme's Oroonoko is also loved by Imoinda who is later enslaved in the same plantation in Surinam where he, too, becomes a slave. Southeme describes the reunion between the two Africans as follows:

*Oroonoko.*            Never here;  
                           You cannot be mistaken: I am yours,  
                           Your *Oroonoko*, all that you wou'd have,  
                           Your tender loving Husband.  
*Imoinda.*            All indeed  
                           That I wou'd have: my Husband! Then I am  
                           Alive, and waking to the Joys I feel.            (229)

Southeme's Oroonoko is similar to Behn's because he maintains his African roots and sense of memory and his love for Imoinda despite the slavery which oppresses them both. Moreover, like Behn's Oroonoko, Southeme's is a black man whose diplomatic skills and savvy

allows him to bear the verbal violence of white slaveowners without loosing his sense of African pride. These qualities of nobility are apparent when Southeme's Oroonoko resists the racist insults of an English Captain by holding on to his unshakable sense of African dignity and identity. When the Captain portrays himself as a "better Christian" who is different from "a Heathen" and "a Bloody Pagan [that] he [Oroonoko] is," Oroonoko replies "I know my Fortune, and submit to it" (213). Yet Oroonoko counters the Captain's insults by reclaiming his royal ancestry. Oroonoko tells the Captain, "I am above the rank of common Slaves ... Let that content you" (213). Oroonoko's reference to his special class in Africa allows him to satisfy the elitist whims of the racist Captain and keep him unaware of the strong bonds between the other blacks in Surinam and their Coromantine prince. Oroonoko rebuffs the Captain's prejudices by saying, "I am my self; but call me what you please" (214), signifying his ability to mentally reject the Captain's racism while pretending to tolerate it.

The remaining parts of *Versions of Blackness* include excerpts from works such as Bartolome de las Casas's "A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies" (1542), Richard Ligon's "A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados" (1657), and "The Germantown Protest" (1688). Las Casas's narrative suggests the treacherous ways in which the discovery of the West-Indies in 1492 brought chaos to the peaceful and prosperous inhabitants of the islands as Spanish soldiers replaced the missionaries who had preceded them in Hispaniola and killed and pillaged most of the populations of the island of Hispaniola. Las Casas writes: "To these quiet Lambs, endued with such blessed qualities, came the Spaniards like most cruel Tygres, Wolves, and Lions, enrag'd with a sharp and tedious hunger, for these forty years past, minding nothing else but the slaughter of these unfortunate wretches, whom with divers kinds of torments neither seen nor heard of before, they have so cruelly and inhumanely butchered, that of three millions of people which *Hispaniola* it self did contain, there are left remaining alive scarce three hundred persons" (283). Though it was written centuries ago, Las Casas's account was one of the first and strongest indictments of European genocide of non-Europeans in the name of greed, power, and tyranny. While it focuses on the barbarity of the Spanish soldiers, Las Casas's remonstrance also emphasizes

the inhumanity of a colonial Christianity which paved the way to a brutal conquest of Native Americans. A comparable indictment of European colonial Christianity is apparent in “The Germantown Protest” (1688), written by four German immigrants to Pennsylvania as a protest against the hypocrisy of the Christianity of Pennsylvania Quakers who were then involved in slavery. In their manifesto, the four authors (Garret Henderich, Derrick up de graeff, Francis Daniell Pastorius, and Abraham up Den graef) accuse these Quakers of treating blacks as “cattle” and lament the fact that “Christians have liberty to practice such things” such as adultery, “separating wives from their husbands and giving them to others” (369). These grave accusations are comparable to those of Las Casas because they reflect the irreconcilable contradictions, ignorance, and evil that Europeans institutionalized in their Christianity by preaching religiosity which turned a blind eye to the inhumanity of slavery and colonialism.

Derek Hughes’s *Versions of Blackness* is an invaluable book because it represents the history of slavery and colonialism through the voices of multiple European authors who understood the systemic contradictions of such imperialisms and were able to criticize them vehemently. Hughes’s book makes excellent contributions to the study of slavery and colonialism by allowing scholars and general readers of multiple disciplines, such as history, literature, and anthropology, to study pivotal accounts of the history of European oppressions against peoples whom they viewed as “uncivilized” between the mid-sixteenth century and the third quarter of the seventeenth century.

Alix Cooper. *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xiii + 218. \$80.00. Review by CELESTE CHAMBERLAND, ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY.

In the decades since Alfred Crosby first identified the socio-environmental consequences of the Columbian exchange, the impact of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century trans-oceanic encounters has garnered much attention from historians of the Atlantic World. In their efforts to address the intellectual and cultural effects of coloniza-