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Embodied Gestures of Human Rights: Remorse, Sentiment, and Sympathy in Romantic Regency Drama

This article demonstrates how the Enlightenment model of sentiment and sympathy is performed in embodied gestures of affective empathy-building, cross-cultural fraternity, and concern for human rights in three Romantic Regency tragedies: *Pizarro* (1799) by the Romantic dramatist August von Kotzebue, adapted from the German by the Irish dramatist Richard Brinsley Sheridan; *Remorse* (1813) by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge; and *The Apostate* (1817) by the Irish dramatist Richard Lalor Sheil. In these plays, protagonists are moved towards sympathy and solidarity with others across cultural divisions and conflict. The discussion also examines how human rights issues are addressed in two plays by Scottish dramatists: Archibald MacLaren's *The Negro Slaves* (1799) and Joanna Baillie's *Rayner* (1804). Here the protagonists express remorse for engaging in conflict, colonialism, slavery, violence, and human rights abuses against others. All these texts share a common internationalist desire to unite humanity against oppression, injustice, and inequality, advocating human rights, equality, religious tolerance, and cosmopolitan citizenship.

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Sheridan's *Pizarro* and Coleridge's *Remorse*

Several Enlightenment and Romantic plays share a common humanist model of building fraternity/sorority across conflict divisions, most famously *Nathan the Wise* (1779) by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. In the Romantic 'remorse tragedies' *Pizarro* (1799), adapted by Richard Brinsley Sheridan from August von Kotzebue's *Die Spanier in Peru, oder Rollas Tod* (1795),[1] and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Remorse* (1813), the protagonists express a combination of Enlightenment humanism and concern for human rights with Romantic sensibilities. This moves them towards sympathy and solidarity with others across cultural divisions and conflict.

In Coleridge's *Remorse*, Alvar, returning to Granada from exile after having survived his brother Ordonio's assassination attempt, renounces revenge. He sets out to provoke his brother's remorse – and eventually succeeds. Both plays are highly (meta)theatrical in their displays of tragic remorse and cross-cultural sympathy. According to Julie Carlson, 'as a play whose espoused morality and privileged interiority turn on sensational display (conjuring scenes, disguises, props of identity), *Remorse* displays the performative and transformative powers of remorse'.[2] Carlson also examines the contribution that the performative theatricality of Sheridan's *Pizarro* can make to the complex negotiation of human identities and to the potential to identify with others and with the Other across borders – ethnic and national as well as personal barriers:

> To recover *Pizarro*, then, is to confront alarms of invasion on multiple borders – between nations, between people, within persons – and to encounter

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conflicting times of identification through theatre's combination of text and vision. As we shall see, Sheridan answers these alarms by appealing to primal bonds of family as the paradigm for rendering the foreign familiar.[3]

Coleridge was no less concerned with this problematic relationship of the self with the Other and with the potential of provoking remorse to develop a 'consciousness out of conscience'[4] that recognizes the Other as equal in all their difference. As John Kerrigan explains, for Coleridge 'there is no original "*unity of man*", but an equality derived from difference. A revenge situation in which a wronged agent stirs painful remorse in a wrongdoer develops consciousness out of conscience because its equivalencing dynamic shadows the structure which, for Coleridge, defines conscience itself.'[5]

These remorse tragedies and their humanizing effects can be situated within a continued Enlightenment-Romantic philosophical tradition of cosmopolitan transcultural humanism, anti-colonial 'fratriotism', and human rights activism. 'Fratriotism' was coined by Murray Pittock: his concept describes the characteristic engagement in solidarity with other colonial subjects of travelling Scots and Irish who 'had a long diasporic tradition as soldiers of fortune, Jacobites, servants of empire, economic and forced migrants, merchants and traders'.[6] Pittock maintains that, on the one hand, 'sympathy with the colonized was a point of view in the British Empire in the period [and] one held by radical Whigs irrespective of national background'.[7] But, on the other hand, he also asserts that 'the strength of the connection of Scottish and Irish figures to global liberation struggles, and the very distinct talent they were said to have in sympathetic engagement with native peoples, is sufficiently evident to make us pause'.[8] He defines 'fratriotism' as 'a set of beliefs widely held among many prominent figures, spread through networks, and often complicit in, yet defiant of, imperialism':

Fratriotism is the term adopted here for the adoption of colonized nations and cultures as a means of expressing reservations concerning the nature and development of empire. Fratriotism affects not only the British, but also other empires, for example that of Spain, where many expatriate Scots and Irish (often identified with Native Americans in British propaganda) took an active role in the liberation of Latin America: the equation between this and the Irish struggle was sometimes made directly, as in Owenson's *Florence Macarthy* (1819).[9]

This concept applies most readily to Irish playwright Sheridan's critique of both the British and Spanish Empires and their cruelty towards their conquered colonial subjects as represented in *Pizarro*. It strikingly applies to the proud Scottish 'fratriotist' philosopher opposed to slavery in British-colonized Jamaica, McSympathy, in Archibald MacLaren's *The Negro Slaves* (1799) and to the anti-slavery sentiment and reciprocal solidarity between subaltern prisoners dramatized in Baillie's *Rayner* (1804). In *Remorse* the English poet Coleridge also engaged in the mindset of a cosmopolitan sense of fraternity and sisterhood in his critique of the Spanish Empire's oppression and the Spanish Inquisition's religious intolerance of the Muslim Moors. A similar sense of fraternal solidarity against oppression and religious intolerance operates in Sheil's *The Apostate* (1813).

Remorse is set during 'the reign of Philip II, just at the close of the civil wars against the Moors, and during the heat of the persecution which raged against them, shortly after the edict which forbade the wearing of Moresco apparel under pain of Death'.[10] This violent religious persecution and resulting pain and suffering is vividly and theatrically described by Alhadra, the wife of a Moresco Chieftain who has been forced to convert to Christianity by the Spanish Inquisition in Act I, Scene ii (p. 12–13):

ALHADRA: Five years ago the holy brethren seized me.
TERESA: What might your crime be?
ALHADRA: I was a Moresco!
They cast me, then a young and nursing mother,
Into a dungeon of their prison house,
Where was no bed, no fire, no ray of light,
No touch, no sound of comfort! The black air,
It was a toil to breathe it!

Through this deeply physical language and theatrical gestures of physical pain, Teresa and the audience are thus led to affectively

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identify and sympathize with Alhadra's suffering as a kind of sisterhood develops between the two women. Alvar had fought against this ethnic and religious oppression and acted as 'the advocator' of the Moors. In contrast, Ordonio uses the Moresco chieftain Isidore, who did not carry out his assassination order, as a scapegoat: he falsely accuses Isidore of the murder of Alvar. Ordonio is finally led to remorse, not only for betraying his own brother, but also for murdering the innocent and honourable Isidore: 'He would have died to save me, and I killed him—/ A husband and a father!' (V.i, p. 70). However, Alhadra, in the depths of grief, finally kills Ordonio in revenge for her husband's murder.

Similarly, in Irish playwright Richard Lalor Sheil's Romantic remorse tragedy *The Apostate*, loosely inspired by the Spanish playwright Pedro Caldéron de la Barca, the cruelty of the Spanish Inquisition is critiqued, and an appeal is made to the conscience and sentiment of remorse of the perpetrators of violent injustice. In this play, the Moresco Malec is to be burned alive by the inquisition for the 'heresy' of adhering to his Muslim faith. His protégé Hemeya, who is in love with the Christian Florinda and is thus a rival to the Spanish inquisitioner Pescara, asserts that the latter will not be able to escape his conscience and the feeling of remorse for his cruelty; the idea of remorse thus replaces vengeance:

> Guilt's poison'd shaft shall quiver in thy heart!
> And in Remorse's fires thy scorpion soul
> Shall writhe and sting itself![11]

Like Alhadra's physical description of her suffering, this is an extremely theatrical depiction of anticipated physical torture and bodily pain, which would be expressed in affective gestures by an eighteenth-century actor. The sheer agony of remorse is visualized and incorporated in a highly performative manner. These performance texts thus exemplify Sara Ahmed's argument that 'the emotionality of texts is one way of describing how texts are "moving", or how they generate effects'.[12] Eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century performance style involved the actors representing the emotional states so vividly conveyed in the dramatic text through embodied gestures on the stage. James Armstrong has shown that a miniature copy of some of these famous actors' stage postures and even facial expressions can be found in toy theatre versions of productions from the period, notably the 1813 production of *Remorse*.[13] This even adds an educational element to these performances.

For example, Angelica Goodden explores Enlightenment theories of 'gesture, attitude, and facial expression' as visual modes of persuasion, and according to Dene Barnett, 'The detailed picture of eighteenth-century acting which emerges from the descriptions by actors, teachers, and dramaturges of the time, reveals an art of gesture which was highly articulate and capable of both baroque intensity and grandeur, and the legendary subtleties of body language.'[14] Glen McGillivray has explored the empathetic responses of audiences to the emotional states embodied by famous eighteenth-century actors: 'Siddons, like Garrick, acted using well-established conventions; nonetheless, audiences wept and shuddered during her performances, just as they did for him.'[15] McGillivray also recounts the eighteenth-century critic Lichtenberg's physical reaction to Garrick's performance of Hamlet (according to a system of gestures developed by theorists such as Michel Le Faucheur and Charles Le Brun, but also responding to emotional reactions of the performer to his role), which included the bodily sensation of 'a cold shiver'.[16]

The feelings of remorse, as represented in the plays discussed, are connected both to positive human emotions, such as pity and empathy, and to human reason by Enlightenment philosophers. For example, Adam Smith argues that the feeling of remorse combines emotional reactions with rational reflection as it is 'made up of shame from the sense of the impropriety of past conduct; of grief for the effects of it; of pity for those who suffer by it; and of the dread and terror of punishment from the consciousness of the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures'.[17]

Both *Remorse* and *Pizarro* eschew any rigid separation of rational faculties from emotional qualities such as empathy and love, and

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consequently demonstrate a 'natural' link between Enlightenment thought and the Romantic tradition, instead of a radical rupture. This corresponds to JoEllen DeLucia's argument that 'the attention paid to feelings and their effects within the Scottish Enlightenment has made it possible to see emotion as an important framework through which eighteenth-century history and progress was imagined'.[18] This also aligns with William Reddy's critique of the dualism of 'standard histories of the eighteenth century', as cited by DeLucia:

> William Reddy in *The Navigation of Feeling* has argued that standard histories of the eighteenth century impose a Cartesian dualism on the period that creates a strict distinction between the mind and body, reason and emotion. These binaries are incompatible with the influential work of Shaftesbury, Adam Smith, and David Hume.[19]

DeLucia explains that 'Reddy uses this framework to investigate how the cultivation of emotion instead of reason was "the best protection against unruly passions".'[20] This is explicitly illustrated and advocated by the protagonists of Coleridge's *Remorse* and Sheridan's *Pizarro.* Sara Ahmed argues that emotional states have traditionally been interpreted as a bodily, feminine, and passive affliction, negatively contrasted with masculinized qualities of 'thought, will, and judgement'. She explains the different schools of thought that theorize emotions as either bodily sensations or cognitive functions, and argues for a more inclusive approach, a synthesis of both bodily sensations and cognitive judgement: 'So I might feel pain when I remember this or that, and in remembering this or that, I might attribute what is being remembered as being painful.'[21]

In *Remorse*, the Christian Alvar and Teresa (whom Coleridge modelled after St Teresa), as well as the Muslim Isidore, all represent balanced minds capable of negotiating passionate feelings with reason, and reason with empathy for others. Alvar seeks his brother Ordonio's remorse and eschews revenge for the latter's attempt to have him assassinated. Isidore did not carry out Ordonio's assassination order and thus demonstrated Kantian independent moral thought in defiance of authoritarian orders. His overall conduct in the play appears honourable, level-headed, measured, and emotionally aware. Teresa's emotions also guide her carefully reasoned understanding.

In contrast, both the Christian Ordonio and the Muslim Alhadra are unable to overcome their affective 'unruly' passionate responses, whilst apparently lacking emotional concern and sympathy for others. However, in *Revenge Tragedy*, John Kerrigan has drawn attention to the fact that Coleridge's earlier, more revolutionary version of the play, titled *Osorio* (1797), featured a philosophically reflective rebel Alhadra. In *Osorio*, Alhadra reflects on the capacity of the provocation of the feeling of remorse to function as a nuanced form of revenge and punishment for Osorio, 'that he might be spared and left to remorse': 'The more-or-less Tory author of *Remorse* is careful to blacken Alhadra by depriving her of those lines in which she thinks "to let [Osorio] live – / It were a deep revenge!" Instead, he has her recall her dead husband ("Isidore's spirit unavenged?") and stab Ordonio on stage.'[22] Alhadra's reflection recalls a philosophical argument made by the Scottish-Irish Enlightenment philosopher Francis Hutcheson about the capacity of remorse to function as an effective form of punishment, leading to reparation of wrongs:

> Our *Lenity*, *Forgiveness*, and *Indulgence* to the Weakness of others, will be constant Matter of *delightful Consciousness*, and *Self-Approbation*; and will be as probably effectual in most cases, to obtain *Reparation* of Wrongs, from an hearty *Remorse*, and thorow *Amendment of the Temper* of the Injurious, as any Methods of Violence.[23]

Alvar's gothic metatheatrical *mise-en-scène* in *Remorse* echoes Hamlet's *mise-en-scène* in Shakespeare's revenge tragedy. Whereas the latter is designed to expose Hamlet's uncle's guilt, Alvar, in the guise of a strange 'wizard', reveals his own (in reality, thwarted) murder in a staging crafted to provoke his brother Ordonio's remorse. It is every bit as carefully devised as the most intricate revenge plot. It is doubly metatheatrical in that Alvar, already disguised as an anonymous visiting 'stranger', twists Ordonio's original 'stage directions': Ordonio

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had hired the strange 'wizard' to stage a mystical spectacle (with 'Music, Altar, Incense') of conjuring Alvar's 'ghost' with Teresa's portrait to persuade her of her lover Alvar's death and to marry Ordonio (II.ii, p. 31–2). But Teresa remains steadfast in her loyalty to Alvar, and Alvar creates the illusion of an '*illuminated picture of* ALVAR*'s assassination*' (III.i, p. 38) rising from the flames of the altar instead. In a later conversation with Valdez (IV.ii, p. 55), Teresa vividly describes the effect of the scene on Ordonio, highlighting the physical expression of his feelings:

> saw you his countenance?
> How rage, remorse, and scorn, and stupid fear,
> Displac'd each other with swift interchanges?

In the final scene of the play, Ordonio most powerfully expresses remorse for his violent and treacherous actions after his betrayal and murder of the honourable Isidore: 'He would have died to save me, and I killed him – / A husband and a father!' (V.i, p. 70).

In the first scene of Sheridan's *Pizarro*, we are introduced to the Spanish general Pizarro's lover Elvira's remorse for her entanglement with him upon discovering the cruelty committed against the Peruvians by Pizarro's army. In answer to Valverde's criticism of Elvira's love for Pizarro, Elvira maintains that her error, which resulted from passion and infatuation, is morally superior to Valverde's cold calculations: 'Passion, infatuation, call it as you will; but what attaches *thee* to this despised, unworthy leader? – Base lucre is thy object, mean fraud thy means.'[24] This approach recalls Coleridge's criticism of the dishonourable motives of leaders in 'The Statesman's Manual', in which he lists 'Violence with Guile' and 'Temerity with Cunning' amongst the key attributes of what he calls 'the masters of mischief, the mighty hunters of mankind':

> who are characterized by a total want of principle, and who surpass the generality of their fellow creatures in one act of courage only, that of daring to say with their whole heart, 'Evil, be though my good' . . . All *system* so far is power; and a *systematic* criminal, self-consistent and entire in wickedness, who entrenches villainy within villainy, and barricades crime by crime, has removed a world of obstacles by the mere decision, that he will have no obstacles, but those of force and brute matter.[25]

In contrast to the rational systematic and yet physical power of 'force and brute matter', *Pizarro* shares Shelley's emphasis on a combination of reason, empathy, and love to achieve true morality and happiness. 'Unruly' passion without reason, and reason without emotion, both fail to lead to moral conduct. Elvira, overcoming her own blind passion, expresses her regret at not having allied herself with the humanist priest Las-Casas, who vividly describes the injustice committed against the Peruvians: 'Generously and freely did they share with you their comforts, their treasures, and their homes: you repaid them by fraud, oppression, and dishonour' (I.i, p. 8).

In contrast, Pizarro explains how Las-Casas influenced Alonzo towards a conviction of universal humanism and fraternity that made him join the Peruvian defence against the Spanish invasion: 'Much he spoke of right, of justice and humanity, calling the Peruvians our innocent and unoffending brethren!' (I.i, p. 5). In a moving speech, the priest pleads with Pizarro to cease their violence against the Peruvians and goes on to offer Pizarro the redemption and peace that could be gained from expressing remorse for his cruelty: 'Oh! Let me be the messenger of penitence from you, I shall return with blessings and with peace from them. Elvira, you weep! – Alas! and does this dreadful crisis move no heart but thine? (I.i, p. 8–9).

In this scene, Elvira – arguably – physically and metatheatrically enacts the traditional Christian figure of a weeping, repenting, remorseful Mary Magdalene, as represented throughout the history of religious art. Julie Stone Peters has explored the play's roots in the Trial of Warren Hastings (1788–95): 'Las-Casas was Burke, the raging "old moralist", "canting precepts of humanity".'[26] Carlson has outlined in detail how Sheridan's English adaptation of Kotzebue's history play *Die Spanier in Peru oder Rollas Tod* utilizes the play's original setting of the sixteenth-century Spanish invasion of Peru to critique eighteenth-

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century British imperialism and the colonization of India.[27]

Whilst Carlson focuses on the political details of the trial, Peters examines the fascinating *mise-en-scène* by Sheridan and Edmund Burke of Hastings's trial before the House of Lords. Warren Hastings, the governor general of Bengal, was tried for seven years for 'high crimes and misdemeanours' as colonial administrator of the East India Company.[28] It is somewhat ironic that Sheridan's earlier play, *The School for Scandal* (1777), had been staged in 1782 at the Calcutta Theatre by East India Company officials as an imperialist amateur production with a script prepared by London theatre professionals: Mita Choudhury has explored this in detail.[29] Sankar Muthu has explained that Burke made 'legislative attempts to curtail and to regulate the activities of the East India Company' and pursued a 'lengthy, zealous prosecution of the Impeachment of Warren Hastings'. He argues that Burke's concerns (accusing the British of having 'failed to respect the sovereignty of local Indian powers' and to have 'accordingly enriched themselves through illegal and unjust means') 'were shared by a number of his contemporaries'.[30]

As Peters has described in detail, in their prosecution of Hastings, Sheridan and Burke staged the violence and cruelty that had allegedly been inflicted under his administration in an extremely theatrical and physicalized manner during the trial, with passionate speeches detailing instances of torture with corresponding gestures in order to awaken the trial audience's sympathy with the mistreated colonial subjects. In this they followed, as Peters argues, 'the centrality of the eighteenth-century aesthetic of theatrical sympathy in the trial [as] articulated by Burke himself', as well as corresponding to Lessing's 'true function of the tragic drama: catharsis was not so much a purgative process as a process in which pity bound the spectators into a moral community capable of benevolent action':[31]

> The intimate detailing of tortured body parts, enacted through Burke's 'embodied stand in defence of the rights of man against man's oppression' (as Sheridan termed it), would communicate itself somatically to the listeners, whose tears (mixing pathos with pathology) would realize this bodily transmission and offer visible proof of their sympathy.[32]

Burke and Sheridan thus staged a piece of political performative human rights activism in an eighteenth-century legal and political setting, which Sheridan later transformed into an actual play. After Hastings was finally acquitted of all charges, Sheridan adapted Kotzebue's *Pizarro* by transferring Burke's 'fratriotist' and universalist humanism against British colonial oppression in India to the setting of Peru during the sixteenth-century Spanish invasion: 'Set in sixteenth-century Peru rather than eighteenth-century India, it was loosely based on the Hastings affair, and included, verbatim, Sheridan's most notable speeches from the trial.'[33]

Archibald MacLaren's *The Negro Slaves* and Joanna Baillie's *Rayner*

Remorseful 'fratriotist' sympathy with mistreated colonial subjects is also represented by the Scottish dramatist Archibald MacLaren's archetypal Scottish Enlightenment philosopher McSympathy's vigorous stance against slavery in his *The Negro Slaves*, which was staged in the same year as *Pizarro.* In the words of Richard Gale, in this play 'can be found the seeds and fruits of the Scottish Enlightenment'.[34] As Gale explains, 'the majority of the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment (excluding Hume)' supported universal human rights and were opposed to slavery.[35]

MacLaren's play, set in Jamaica, features a slave, Quako, who is an educated Enlightenment philosopher in his own right. Gioia Angeletti and Ian Brown have argued that 'the relationship between McSympathy and Quako, the Black slave, immediately suggests a link between subalterns: the deracinated Highlander, possibly a Jacobite or a victim of the Clearances, and the deracinated African violently snatched out of his native country'.[36]

A similar sense of cross-cultural fraternity between subalterns occurs in Joanna Baillie's

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1804 remorse tragedy *Rayner*, where the protagonist, who describes himself as a philosophizing wanderer, is unjustly accused of murder, imprisoned, and condemned to be executed. He gives up his coat in a physical gesture of sympathy to an enslaved African prince working in the prison who is suffering from the cold (thus evoking the generosity of St Martin). Deeply moved by this unexpected solidarity, the long-suffering African Prince, who has had to endure much racism and degradation, returns the sympathy ten-fold by stopping Rayner's execution. It could be argued that the African Prince acts out Joanna Baillie's enlightened sympathy with the human rights of prisoners and those condemned to the death penalty. As Julie Murray has examined in detail, Baillie's concern with corporal punishment extends sympathy, in the manner of Adam Smith, to all those condemned to violent execution:

> The upwardly directed Smithean sympathy of the 3rd crowd member is apparent, moreover, in his narration not of the axe falling, but of the sight of the condemned man 'lift[ing] up the handkerchief from his eyes', and taking his last look of the daylight, and all the living creatures about him' . . . these particular crowds are adept at sympathizing and imaginatively identifying with *anyone* doomed to death.[37]

But McSympathy's fratriotism is also colonial and imperialist. As Angeletti and Brown go on to highlight, 'in the Caribbean context, however, McSympathy, despite his liberal principles, is on the colonizer's side'.[38] Both Quako and McSympathy (despite his Scottish patriotism and sympathy with slaves) express unionist British sentiments, as do the other characters in the play. When Quako and his lover Sela are both liberated by Firmlove, Quako jubilates: 'Then we shall go to England, and be free Britons.'[39] In their discussion of the play, Angeletti and Brown remark that the history of Scotland's participation in the British Empire and in slavery is contentious: 'Then, Jacobites – or even the very Highlanders who were evicted from their lands during the Clearances – often became settlers in the colonies or joined the British army to oppose the revolts of the colonized.'[40]

An element of women's liberation and a sense of fratriotist sisterhood is prominent in this play as Lucy and Phoebe are shown to fend for themselves in solidarity. Phoebe is described as the educated, persuasively lecturing 'chief advocate' of the slaves by Captain Racoon, who eventually comes to regret his involvement in slavery and express his remorse: 'I believe I was too harsh. . . . . custom has a wonderful effect upon our manners. . . . My father left them as slaves, and as slaves I kept them, till. . . . . aye, egad, till I cou'd keep them no longer; for you all seem'd so interested' (p. 23, original ellipses).

In the words of Sela, Phoebe personifies the concept of Enlightenment sympathy for the tortured victims of slavery: 'you always pity when the white-man's lash poor negros' (p. 23). McSympathy then vouches that her enlightened sentiment is common amongst women. This statement echoes Smith. According to DeLucia, 'Smith declared humanity to be "the virtue of a woman".'[41] She also highlights the important contribution of 'women writers' such as Elizabeth Montagu and Mary Wollstonecraft to critical Enlightenment thought about 'gender and progress'.[42] She clarifies that such conceptions included diverse cultural forms of society, and focuses on currents in the Scottish Enlightenment of 'what Sankar Muthu has called an "anti-imperial" strain of the European Enlightenment': 'According to Muthu, the "anti-imperial" perspective employed a comparative approach to understanding "cultural difference" and saw non-European people – particularly Native Americans and Africans – not as "acultural" or "asocial" examples of natural man, but as representatives of alternative social orders.'[43]

Muthu illuminates the late eighteenth-century anti-imperialist thought of 'a number of prominent European political thinkers' who 'attacked imperialism, not only defending non-European peoples against the injustices of European imperial rule, as some earlier modern thinkers had done, but also challenging the idea that Europeans had any right to subjugate, colonize, and "civilize" the rest of the world':[44]

> Enlightenment anti-imperialist thinkers crafted nuanced and intriguingly counter-intuitive argu-

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ments about human nature, cultural diversity, cross-cultural moral judgments, and political obligations. . . .[45] A study of Enlightenment anti-imperialism offers a richer and more accurate portrait of eighteenth-century political thought and illuminates the under-appreciated philosophical interconnections between human unity and human diversity, and between moral universalism and moral incommensurability.[46]

However, in contrast to *Pizarro*, there is no trace of sympathy or fratriotism with the violently colonized Jamaican population in *The Negro Slaves.* While there is remorse for the slavery imposed on African-Americans, there is none for the violent conquest of the land of indigenous Jamaicans. But arguably McSympathy is more outspoken against slavery than Smith, even if he 'ambivalently never openly objects to British colonial occupation in the Carribean'.[47] Indeed, I would agree more with Gale's comparison of McSympathy with another Scots-Irish Enlightenment philosopher who was openly opposed to slavery, Francis Hutcheson:

> Throughout, McSympathy remains as a constant, fearless, level-headed spokesman for the liberal line of abolition and moral sense. In many ways he echoes the sentiments of Francis Hutcheson in that he has a personal interest in the general interests of all mankind. For McSympathy, Quako's superior moral code shows through in all of the slave's actions.[48]

Gale argues that Hutcheson 'helped spawn the American abolitionist movement'.[49] However, there is no doubt that the characters reveal a violent attitude towards the indigenous Jamaican population and support the colonial forces against them. Muthu has highlighted the contrast between the ways in which anti-slavery writings were firmly established in political discourse and activism versus a failure of Enlightenment anti-imperialism to 'take root in the broader political cultures in which it was presented and in the intellectual writings of later thinkers':

> Anti-slavery writings of the eighteenth century, from Montesquieu onward, provided much of the political language and principles that were used by anti-slavery activists and by newly formed anti-slavery societies; accordingly the immorality of slavery became a common (though, of course, by no means a universal) presumption of nineteenth-century European social and political thought. Eighteenth-century anti-imperialist arguments, on the other hand, almost always went unheeded.[50]

However, the indigenous population, referred to as 'Indians' in the play, appears to be respected as a mighty and equal enemy, which appears to somewhat support Muthu's theory of respect for alternative social orders in Enlightenment thought. This perhaps also reflects MacLaren's own complex history. As Ian Brown has pointed out, 'like many post-Culloden Highlanders, MacLaren was recruited into the new Highland regiments in which he served under Generals Howe and Clinton in the American War of Independence (1776–83)'.[51] It might also reflect his own attitude to the effects of British colonialism and imperialism, as it might, on the other hand, be read as a critical commentary on the contradictions of the Scottish Enlightenment and its prominent thinkers in their engagement with the injustices committed by colonial powers. Brown astutely describes MacLaren's political complexity, his multilingualism, and the moralizing wandering, even cosmopolitan highland Celt characters who populate his plays:

> Himself a displaced Highlander, some of his plays reflect the wandering lives of, and the alienation inflicted on, many of his post-Culloden Highland peers . . . a drover in *The Highland Drover* (1790) or a colonist in the West Indies, McSympathy, in *The Negro Slaves* (1799). While the former speaks only Gaelic, the latter speaks Scots . . . Maclaren's Highlanders . . . represent positive values . . . the Highlander is represented as embodying common sense and (however many Scots, including Highlanders, may in fact have engaged in aspects of the slave trade) compassionate humanity.[52]

The Scots-speaking McSympathy is such a travelling Highland philosopher, who is derogatorily described as 'this mountain philosopher, this Highland Cynic' by Captain Racoon (I.i, p. 6). However, he is both a Scottish patriot and a cosmopolitan humanist whose concept of international fratriotism is best expressed in the following dialogue:

RACOON : Oh, you're like the rest of your countrymen, never happy but when you're up to the ears in politics.

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McSYMPATHY: My country! Ye shou'd dight your gab when you speak of my country.[53] Love and loyalty shall always be our motto, and if we throw a few grains of humanity in the compound, the devil a hair the worse it will taste.

RACOON: And do you think I'll give up my property to humour your false humanity.

McSYMPATHY: False humanity!

RACOON: Aye, false humanity! You need not start at the word. I'll get some of the first rank in your own country, to make use of the same expression.

McSYMPATHY: Will ye! . . . . weel, weel, let that flee stick in the wa'. . . . False humanity! Very weel, false let it be; but for a' that, I wad na change my false humanity, for a' your real barbarity. . . . Part wi' your property! [. . .]

JUSTICE: Why, McSympathy, you're a general lover of mankind.

McSYMPATHY: Yes, any man that's not an enemy to my king and country. . . . mind I say my king and country.

(I.i, p. 7)

There is a certain ambiguity in McSympathy's repetition of 'my king and country' here, which could suggest that he clandestinely expresses Jacobite loyalty to Scotland rather than the British Empire and King George III, who is hailed by Lucy in the final song. Gioia Angeletti draws attention to the fact that this kind of ambiguity was a common attribute of post-Union Scottish Highlanders:

> Imperialism, that is, served as an opportunity for Scots, many of them ex-Jacobites, to make a career in the army or in various commercial enterprises. . . . many Highlanders fighting against the Union in 1715 and 1745 could not resist the alluring favours and promotions they were promised by the British army, so that, as Colley underlines, they were 'transformed into the cannon-fodder of imperial war'.[54]

McSympathy's expression, 'but for a' that', is strongly reminiscent of Robert Burns's universalist humanist song 'A Man's a Man for A' That' (1795), as is McSympathy's subsequent metatheatrically staged anti-racist song which also rejects class distinctions:

> I will never speir what country,
> If he has an honest heart,
> White, or black, or brown, or yellow,
> If he's wrang'd, I'll take his part.

(I.i, p. 8)

To conclude, all the plays examined above strongly argue for humanity, humanitarian values, and for the vigorous defence of universal human rights – ideas developed in Enlightenment philosophy and revolutionary Romanticism.

Notes and References

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2. Julie Carlson, 'Remaking Love: Remorse in the Theatre of Baillie and Inchbald', in *Women in British Romantic Theatre: Drama, Performance, and Society, 1790–1840*, ed. Catherine Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 285–310 (p. 285).
3. Julie A. Carlson, 'Trying Sheridan's *Pizarro*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, XXXVIII (Fall/Winter 1996), p. 359–78 (p. 363).
4. John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Press, 1996), p. 252.
5. Ibid.
6. Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2008), p. 235.
7. Ibid., p. 137.
8. Ibid., p. 138.
9. Ibid.
10. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Remorse*: *A Tragedy in Five Acts* (London: W. Pople 1813), [p. ix].
11. Richard [Lalor] Sheil, *The Apostate* (London: J. Murray, 1817), IV.iii (p. 61). My thanks to James Armstrong for drawing my attention to this play at the Regency Theatre Conference at Downing College, Cambridge University, 2016.
12. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 13.
13. James Armstrong, 'Protagonists in Paper: Toy Theatres and the Cultivation of Celebrity', *Theatre Notebook*, LXXIII, No 3 (2019), p. 158–84 (p. 159).
14. Dene Barnett and Jeanette Massy-Westropp, *The Art of Gesture*: *The Practices and Principles of 18th-Century Acting* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1987), p. 7. See also Angelica Goodden, *'Actio' and Persuasion: Dramatic Performance in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); and Nicholas Dromgoole, *Performance Style and Gesture in Western Theatre* (London: Oberon Books, 2007).
15. Glen McGillivray, *Actors, Audiences, and Emotions in the Eighteenth Century: Communities of Sentiment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), p. 4.
16. Ibid, p. 5.
17. Adam Smith, 'Of the Sense of Justice, of Remorse, and of the Consciousness of Merit', in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759); fifth edition (London: W. Strahan, J. and F. Ravington, T. Longman, 1781), p. 145.

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18. JoEllen DeLucia, *A Feminine Enlightenment: British Women Writers and the Philosophy of Progress, 1759–1820* (2015; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p. 9.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 7.

22. Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 253.

23. Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (London: J. Darby and T. Browne, 1728), p. 189–90.

24. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Pizarro*; *A Tragedy, in Five Acts; As Performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane; Taken from the German Drama of Kotzebue*; *And adapted to the English Stage* (Dublin: Burnet [*et al.*], 1799), I.i (p. 2).

25. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Statesman's Manual' (1816), in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 2012), p. 505.

26. Peters, 'Theatricality, Legalism', p. 30.

27. 'Responsible at its first hearing for bringing Hastings [the Governor-General of Bengal] to trial, Sheridan's Begums speech is partially responsible for bringing the "oppressions of millions of unfortunate persons in India" to the attention of the English public' (Carlson, 'Trying Sheridan's *Pizarro*', p. 359). Sheridan then integrated his own passionate activism into the rallying cry of his play's Peruvian commander Rolla against the Spanish invasion in *Pizarro.*

28. Peters, 'Theatricality, Legalism', p. 15.

29. Mita Choudhury, *Interculturalism and Resistance in the London Theatre, 1660–1800: Identity, Performance, Empire* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), p. 87–108. See also Amal Mitra, *Calcutta's Foreign Theatre* [in Bengali], trans. Mita Choudhury (Calcutta: Prakash Bhavan, 1967), p. 13; and H. E. Busteed, *Echoes from Old Calcutta: Being Chiefly Reminiscences of the Days of Warren Hastings, Francis, and Impey* (London: W. Thacker & Co., 1908) p. 143–4. 'Using the evidence in the *Bengal Gazette*, Amal Mitra lists the following plays that were performed in the Calcutta Theatre c. 1780: *Venice Preserv'd*, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, *Bon Ton*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard III*, and many others' (Choudhury, *Interculturalism and Resistance*, p. 191). See also Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, 'The English Theatre in Calcutta', in *The Story of the Calcutta Theatres, 1753–1980* (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi, 1982), p. 2.

30. '[T]he diverse group of thinkers who assailed the injustices and countered the dominant justifications of European Imperialism include Jeremy Bentham, Condorcet, Diderot, Herder, Kant, and Adam Smith. Moreover, such denunciations of what Herder liked to call "the grand European sponging enterprise" were complemented by more specific attacks upon European imperial or quasi-imperial activities in particular regions. Along these lines, the most notable efforts are Edmund Burke's legislative attempts to curtail and to regulate the activities of the East India Company and his lengthy, zealous prosecution of the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, a senior East India Company official and the Governor General of Bengal' (Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (2003; Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 4).

31. Peters, 'Theatricality, Legalism', p. 19.

32. Ibid., p. 20, citing 'Speech of R. B. Sheridan', *The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings, Esq. Late Governor General of Bengal* (London: J. Debrett and Vernor and Hood (1796), Part 1, p. 74.

33. Ibid, p. 16.

34. Richard Gale, 'Archibald MacLaren's The Negro Slaves and the Scottish Response to British Colonialism', *Theatre Survey*, XXXV, No. 2 (November 1994), p. 77–93 (p. 77).

35. Ibid., p. 79.

36. Ian Brown and Gioia Angeletti, 'Cultural Crossings and Dilemmas in Archibald Maclaren's Playwriting', in *Gael and Lowlander in Scottish Literature*: *Cross-Currents in Scottish Writing in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Christopher MacLachlan and Ronald W. Renton (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International: 2015), p. 41–55 (p. 52).

37. Julie Murray, 'Joanna Baillie's *Rayner* and Romantic Spectacle', *European Romantic Review*, XXI, No. 1 (2010), p. 65–76 (p. 70).

38. Brown and Angeletti, 'Cultural Crossings and Dilemmas', p. 52.

39. Archibald M[a]cLaren, *The Negro Slaves: A Dramatic Piece, of One Act, with Songs* (London, 1799), p. 23.

40. Brown and Angeletti, 'Cultural Crossings and Dilemmas', p. 52.

41. DeLucia, *A Feminine Enlightenment*, p. 4.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p. 8 and 17, citing Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, p. 3 and 70.

44. Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, p. 1.

45. Ibid. See also *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa (2009; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), in particular the editors' Introduction, and the chapter by Doris L. Garraway, 'Of Speaking Natives and Hybrid Philosophers: Lahontan, Diderot, and the French Enlightenment Critique of Colonialism', p. 207–39.

46. Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, p. 3.

47. Brown and Angeletti, 'Cultural Crossings and Dilemmas', p. 53.

48. Gale, 'Archibald MacLaren's *The Negro Slaves*', p. 89.

49. Ibid., p. 79.

50. Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, p. 5.

51. Ian Brown, 'Theatricality, Bilingualism, and Metatheatricality in Archibald MacLaren's *The Highland Drover*', *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*, IX (December 2016), [n.p.].

52. Ibid.

53. Perhaps compare the exclamation by the Irish Captain Macmorris in Act III, Scene ii of Shakespeare's *Henry V* ('Of my nation? What ish my nation? . . . Who talks of my nation?'). I am grateful to Nick de Somogyi for drawing my attention to this possible allusion.

54. Gioia Angeletti, *Emancipation, Liberation, and Freedom: Romantic Drama and Theatre in Britain, 1760–1830* (Parma: Monte Universitá Parma, 2010), p. 17, citing Linda Colley, *Britains: Forging the Nation: 1707–1837* (2005; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 103.

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