

*Fictions of Consent: Slavery, Servitude, and Free Service in Early Modern England.*  
Urvashi Chakravarty.

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Urvashi Chakravarty's *Fictions of Consent: Slavery, Servitude, and Free Service in Early Modern England* is a fresh primer for understanding beliefs about enslavement during the seventeenth century. Focusing on English schoolrooms and playhouses, Chakravarty explores attitudes about servitude that related much to familial obligations based upon Roman traditions. These "natural fictions" presented in the "primary contact zone" of the schoolroom provided English children a way to conceptualize the changing nature of a servant society as it entered upon the Atlantic World (2–3).

Following a long historiographical tradition related to Marxist analysis and the Vagrancy Act of 1547, *Fictions of Consent* also considers the making of race within categories of servitude. Reading often from postmodern interpretations by Kim Hall, Chakravarty explores "genealogies of race-making" that underwrote emerging categories of how the somatic marked someone as supposedly fit for enslavement (8–9). Chapter 1 engages with these concepts through ideas of livery, as presented within literature and various households. Chakravarty employs livery to set up an overarching theme of the monograph, related to how "willing servitude" was produced within narrative (18).

The badges, heralds, and blue coats of different livery worked not only to show that someone was a servant but also to offer protection as part of a specific household. Obligations, in that sense, always went both ways, whereby servants were understood to be accepting subservience to earn the freedom of being part of an important home. This idea—the volition of the servant—is vital to understand Chakravarty's broader assertions, as read in the first chapter through *The Merchant of Venice* (1598), John Cooke's *Greene's Tu Quoque* (1611), and Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore, Part II* (1605).

The second chapter heads into the schoolroom and Latin recitations of enslavement that also informed English texts read by privileged children. Reading much from Terence, *Fictions of Consent* offers that Roman comic plays have been undervalued when thinking about how English consciousness conceptualized enslavement for the Atlantic World. Chakravarty engages with etymological links between terms for children and terms for slaves, the strangeness of the schoolboy as akin to the foreignness of the slave, and the fear of Mediterranean captivity common within English discourse. This terminological "malleability of slavery" is consistently analyzed through readings of William Cartwright's *The Royall Slave* (1636) and concepts of apprenticeship that would have been familiar to schoolchildren (60). The chapter ends with a valuable reading of imagery related to the transposition of Ethiopians in classical texts to "blackamoor" within early modern prints.

In the third chapter, which starts with the interesting case of trumpeter John Blanke on the Westminster Tournament Roll of 1511, Chakravarty argues that scholars need to attend more to English concepts of family, as based on Roman traditions, to better

understand concepts of servitude. Thinking through *Othello* (1603), the chapter offers how ideals of the family incorporated concepts of the parasite, blood, and service. Following through Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622), Chakravarty shows how ideas of blood kinship increasingly became prominent during eras that saw an increase in enslavement of the other. This highlight chapter of the work then offers discourses on *Twelfth Night* (1602) and William Heminge's *The Fatal Contract* (1639) to engage questions of obligation and the fear of tainted bloodlines related to modern concepts of racism.

Chapter 4 focuses on *Paradise Lost* (1667) and ideas of indentured servitude related to settlement within English environs of the New World. Thinking about "voluntary service" through Adam and Eve, Chakravarty offers that discourse at the time idealized that more freedom could be gained through service than through ownership (137). Following a brilliant reading of the X used as signatures for many indentures of the time, Chakravarty then turns to questions related to indebtedness, gratitude, and concepts of antinatalism buried deep in the lines of *Paradise Lost*. Chapter 5 follows to analyze servitude in *The Tempest* (1611) and concepts of "cheerful bondage" as a requirement for possible emancipation in the case of Adam, a servant of John Saffin in Bristol, Massachusetts, in 1694 (194–96). The book ends with connections to broader scholarship in an interesting epilogue that includes interpretations of images related to obligations of masters.

*Fictions of Consent* includes masterful readings of early modern texts. It proposes that those texts created forms of English consciousness related to understanding changes in enslavement within the Atlantic World. One must ask, nonetheless: To what extent did the literate classes use ideas of volition to justify enslavement through a purposeful production of knowledge? To what degree did servants and enslaved individuals listen to what the literate classes were educated to believe about livery, service, and bondage? Regardless of these simmering questions, *Fictions of Consent* succeeds in conducting a selected analysis of readers and texts, and should be read by all scholars of early modern discourse and slavery in the Atlantic World.

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*Middle English Medical Recipes and Literary Play, 1375–1500*. Hannah Bower. Oxford English Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. xii + 260 pp. \$80. Open Access.

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Historical medical recipes open a window into contemporary therapeutic practices in formal and household-level settings. They allow us to trace social information sharing networks and capture the rise and decline of medical authorities and particular treatments. Lists of suitable herbs and other ingredients—together with preparation techniques—are perhaps the clearest information we can glean from these historical