

Chapter 1

Enslaving the Barbarian

In the sixteenth century, Western European states consolidated power over subjects who were beginning to articulate the imagined communities of their nations. Governments used rhetoric to present themselves as protectors of the liberty of their subjects. (Blackburn 61) New social arrangements developed as a strengthening market affected the general economy. In England, "the peasants were able to assert their freedom, but the lords retained control of the greater part of the land. The English serfdoms became landlords, engaging tenant farmers to work their estates with the aid of free wage labour." (Blackburn 56) Robin Blackburn argues that this system of labor in England combined with new declarations of subjects' rights and liberties led to a virtual extinction of outright slavery in England concurrent with the rise of African slave trading in the Americas. However, Orlando Patterson points out that despite the almost universal insistence that slavery was non-existent in Europe, slavery did exist in the form of penal slavery and other similar institutions.

In France, Spain, England, and the Netherlands a severe form of enslavement of Europeans by Europeans [penal slavery] was to develop and flourish from the middle of the fifteenth century to well into the nineteenth. ... It is truly extraordinary that European scholars have either neglected this whole aspect of the subject or *defined it as something other than slavery when they have recognized it.* (Patterson 44, emphasis mine)

The enslavement of Europeans within Europe was and still is represented as indicative of strong government rather than an indication that European subjects did not always have consistent rights and liberties. This contradiction in terminology that so surprises Patterson is precisely what enabled both Africans and Englishmen to be enslaved at the same time by the

same culture, yet produce opposite meanings of the same action. Penal slavery demonstrated a strong government that could restrict and control the internal barbarian that the criminal represented. The ideology of superiority that developed out of colonial plantation sociology made "true" slavery a "black" versus "white" system, so slavery within Europe needed to represent something else. Because the English could control and manage their own barbarian (i.e., most frequently the lower classes), penal slavery became an argument for the English ability to rule others. The English spent the sixteenth century trying to suppress and control the barbarian within themselves¹ and in the seventeenth could project their suppressed barbarity onto African nations that functioned as "other" while they glorified their own "model of civility." (Helgerson 243)

The competing meanings for slavery are constructed through contrast just as the competing identities of native Englishman and foreigner are constructed against one another. The key to this seemingly contradictory set of events is the construction of an identity that created English subjects, whose freedom was a natural right based on their identity, in opposition to whomever they enslaved. As a need developed for slave labor in the growing plantation economy, the identity of potential slaves was produced by the discourse that denied them those natural rights. This construction happened in a way that naturalized the power relations and contradiction in values. The image of the barbarian combined with existing tropes of blackness could perform this work of identity. "The Renaissance could lead to a sense of shared cultural superiority [with Classical authorities] which dovetailed with the Aristotelian doctrine that barbarians were natural slaves." (Blackburn 62)

¹ Helgerson argues in *Forms of Nationhood*, "[The English] had to know themselves as the barbarous or inferior other, know themselves from the viewpoint of the more refined or more successful cultures of Greece, Rome, and contemporary Europe, before they could undertake the project of national self-making." (243)

The use of barbarian imagery, while commonly used to describe Africans and African nations, was at first not exclusively applied to people with dark skin pigmentation. Before colonial slavery, the institution of slavery was not based on skin color, but was frequently based on whether or not the captives were Christian versus "pagans." The word "slave" derives from the "Slavs," who were captured by the Vikings and Italians and resold around Europe as slaves. These people were either captives of war or stolen by slave raiders and were presumed to be heretical non-Christians. The main criterion for this type of slavery was that the slaveowners and the enslaved people were not the same ethnicity. At this point in time, the notion of "race" was a commonality that involved primarily religion, plus customs and ethnicity. Notions of "race" as generally physical or specifically linked to dark skin were developing from existing stereotypes, but were fundamentally challenged by several discourses. The most common feature of European slavery was that the slaves were foreigners, preferably non-Christians. With the development of the particular institutions of the plantation coupled with notions of individual rights in Europe itself, slavery shifted from acceptable for all "foreigners" to an institution that needed to be justified. In other words, because slavery was challenged as unacceptable² those who were enslaved needed to be constructed as naturally born to be slaves. As the plantation economy solidified using African slaves as the most practical, cheap, and functional source of labor, slavery and race gradually changed meaning to become primarily based on physical characteristics. Numerous discursive reasons behind the development of African slave trading combined to produce Africans as naturally created for slavery. Biblical reasons were found in the story of Noah's sons; political reasons were found in the existence of slave trading in Africa; descriptions of Africans as barbarians were produced.

² Blackburn provides a representative sample of English discourse that does not support slavery for philosophical reasons.

All of them work together to naturalize the economic and political forces of colonial and plantation development that produced a demand for African slaves.

Multi-Racial Slavery

Many different groups of people were exploited for their labor power during the initial phase of colonization and plantation development. Slaves originally sent to the English New World colonies throughout much of the seventeenth century included Irish captives of war, English poor who were arrested as vagabonds, drunkards who were tricked onto the ships, and women from poor houses. These types of laborers were typically indentured servants or bond-laborers who worked for a number of years for an employer for only subsistence meals and housing. The bond-labor conditions gradually required longer typical lengths of servitude and greater opportunities existed for employers to secure longer terms of service. While legally the laborer was to be set free after a certain number of years, usually four or five, owners frequently succeeded in retaining laborers in bondage. "Thus a laborer who had completed the full period of servitude still bore the burden of proof of his or her liberty." (Allen 135) In the Virginia colonies, the conditions of the indentured laborers were similar to chattel slavery in terms of oppressive conditions and lack of control over their own labor.³ Despite the similar power relations between a slave system and the bond-laborer system in the English colonies, the ideology surrounding the system, particularly back in England, was distinct. Just as penal slavery in Europe could be constructed as a stabilizing factor, bond-laborers sent because they were lower class vagabonds would ultimately provide a rationale that England is a more stable nation because it could discipline its poor. When contractual laborers wrote

³ Allen argues that the conditions were identical to slavery and should be considered non-racially based slavery.

letters from the colonies to relations in England reporting the lack of necessities and revealing the deplorable conditions, those relations lodged protests about the unfair conditions to English officials.⁴ Despite the actual slave-like power relations in the colonies, the ideology still supported legitimate English workers' rights. When the workers were non-criminal English laborers, with family ties in England, subsistence conditions were articulated as unfair.

One source of non-English bond-laborers was captured Irish. The English finally won the Nine Years War against the Irish as Elizabeth I was dying and James acceding to the throne. While the English tried to reduce the Irish to servitude and colonize Ireland, they were unsuccessful. "In 1609 English and Scots settlers were sent to the 'Plantation of Ulster' to develop Irish land, either by displacing the natives or by reducing them to the status of tenants and labourers. ... The English could defeat the Irish in battles, but could not then fix and exploit them as peasants; ... many returned to England." (Blackburn 222) When direct colonization failed, the English colonizers sometimes enslaved the unruly Irish and sent them to the New World where they worked alongside Africans and indentured servants. They were more successful using Irish men and women in the Virginia colonies than in Ireland.

In addition to European bond-laborers, Native Americans captured as slaves were exploited as much as possible by the New World plantations. Colonists secured Native American slaves primarily through trade with the tribes "in the course of which captives of intertribal warfare, along with deer skins and beaver pelts, were exchanged for English commodities." (Allen 37) Eventually, colonists encouraged wars between the tribes to ensure a steady

⁴ Allen provides numerous examples of letters and complaints from family members in England, as well as complaints brought to local courts in Virginia and Maryland.

supply of Native American slaves. Ultimately Native Americans did not work well as slaves because of two primary reasons. Native Americans successfully resisted bondage through escape and the colonists needed to maintain friendly relations with nearby tribes who provided food, supplies, and a buffer zone from more hostile tribes. Similar to the effective exploitation of the Irish requiring them to be shipped overseas, most of the Native American slaves were shipped to one of the British colonial islands away from their tribes. "The tribal Indians in continental situations did resist enslavement successfully, and in the process provided the frustrated colonists with the sour-grapes argument about the 'unfitness' of Indians for plantation labor." (Allen 39)

Over the course of the seventeenth century, bond-laborers of many nationalities were still used, but their numbers gradually decreased in the later part of the century and African slaves became the predominant source of labor in the plantation environment. For example, "the European population of Barbados in 1640 was around 25,000, of these 10,000 were 'servants,' while the non-European bond-laborers, including a few Amerindians, numbered 6,400. By 1680, the total number of Europeans had fallen to 17,000 ... and the number of European bond-laborers in the island had shrunk to 2,000." (Allen 228) African slaves were more profitable since in most cases they could be held for life, while bond-laborers needed to be set free after a period of time requiring the purchase of replacements. As the economic forces towards African enslavement developed, discourse needed to justify life-time slavery. The constraints of ideological construction developed hand in hand with economic pressures.

One piece of literature written in the later part of the century and set in the slave economy of the colony of Surinam sheds some light on the ideological justifications for African enslavement. In Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, written in 1688 and probably based on events as early as the 1650s, an African

prince is captured as a slave and brought to the colony of Surinam. Oroonoko is presented to the reader as noble and yet exotic, dangerous, and significantly non-Christian. In the text, Oroonoko is tricked onto the slave ship and surprised into capture along with all of his men, including a Frenchman. When the slave ship arrives at Surinam, the Frenchman is set free. Instead of being sold into slavery, the Frenchman is "set on Shore to seek his Fortunes; and of whom they cou'd not make a slave because a Christian." (40) The religious justification of why the Frenchman is set free obscures the color line that is drawn between the Africans and the Frenchman, who cannot become a slave because he is European. This reasoning also hides the captain's inability to sell the Frenchman without the truth of the ship captain's trickery being exposed, as the captain admits he "cou'd not pretend to keep [him] prisoner," because he is European. (33) Selling the European would expose the means by which the slaves are obtained. One of the premises that colonizers used to justify African slavery was that the slaves they purchased were either captives of war or criminals. "The argument that all slaves purchased in Africa had originally been captured in war or sentenced for crimes was increasingly used once slavery was challenged, until it became an article of faith among slaveowners." (Craton 174)

The discourse of slavery based on physical characteristics, while clearly in place, is justified by the text that constructs a dichotomy of Africans as heathens versus Christians. While the narrator of *Oroonoko* provides numerous positive descriptions of Oroonoko (renamed Caesar as a slave), he is definitively non-Christian. "But of all the discourses Caesar liked [Christianity] the worst, and wou'd never be reconcil'd to our Notions of the Trinity, of which he ever made a Jest, ... one could not make him understand what Faith was." (41) While at times the narrative seems to oppose Oroonoko/Caesar being held a slave, the text accepts the slavery of the other "Negroes" who "were by Nature Slaves, poor wretched Rogues, fit to be used

as Christian tools." (56) A discourse of heathenism justifies the institution of slavery, even in a text that challenges some parts of the slave system.

The tensions surrounding the question of whether African slaves should be allowed to convert to Christianity reveal ideological contradictions in this reasoning. Christianity was used to justify slavery by constructing Africans as heathens and specifically linking them to the story of Noah's son Cham.

Sir Edward Coke's authoritative *Institutes of the Laws of England*, published in 1628 and then much reprinted [explains,] "This is assured, that Bondage or Servitude was first inflicted for dishonouring of parents: for Cham the Father of Canaan ... seeing the Nakedness of his Father Noah, and showing it in derision to his Brethren was therefore punished in his Sonne Canaan with Bondage." (Blackburn 236)

This one biblical interpretation constructed Africans as the descendents of Cham, perpetually cursed with bondage by divine law. It supported existing notions of Africans as heathens because it argued their ancestor was punished for lewdness and immorality. However, trouble arose when a few English ministers started campaigns to Christianize African and African American laborers during the seventeenth century. While they were not interested in freeing the slaves from bondage, the idea of "common humanity as children of God" was threatening enough to be forbidden. (Allen 191) "The ruling elite in the plantation colonies found such notions so threatening that despite Quaker disavowal of any intent to incite Negro insurrection, respective Colony legislatures enacted stern measures against the sect." (Allen 192) By the end of the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth century, laws were passed that specified that a slave remains enslaved even after conversion to Christianity. Before this shift could occur, slavery needs to change from appropriate for non-Christians to non-Europeans.

By the time *Oroonoko* was written, slavery had been solidified as an institution (at least in the plantation society itself) with some people

constructed as naturally slaves and others as free with rights as English subjects. Allen argues that the need to control the large numbers of African slaves produced "class collaboration of Europeans that required a new term of social distinction, namely 'white,' that would include not only laborer and capitalist but also bond-labor as well as free-labor. The alternative or redundant term 'Christian,' was sometimes applied to European bond-laborers, despite complications that arose regarding the Christian conversion of African bond-laborers; or the belief that some Europeans, namely the Irish, though Europeans had yet to be made Christians." (Allen 228) However, the justification of Africans being non-Christians, regardless of conversion, betrays the newness of this construction and hints at the various rationales that would be used to develop the notion of a "white" race. Ultimately the establishment of opposing races with associated privileges rested not on how convincing the various arguments were, but on the discursive construction of self-identity that established power relations beneficial to the English.

The Mythological Currency of the Barbarian

Fundamental to this shift from multi-ethnic servitude to chattel slavery based on skin color is discourse about the "barbarian." Numerous travel narratives and journals of explorations were published in which Africans are repeatedly referred to as barbarous or having no religion. Two of the most widely distributed travel narratives were Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, published in 1600, and Leo Africanus' *A Geographical History of Africa*, which was translated by John Pory into English in 1600, but published earlier. Both of these travel narratives relate travels through Africa through the lens of existing ancient myths about Africa.⁵ Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* was written by an Englishman specifically about English voyages around the world to promote the idea that they were enterprising explorers.

⁵ Several authors trace exotic images back to Pliny's *Natural History*.

Hakluyt's work was a compilation of previously published adventures as well as newly gathered travel narratives. From a different source, Leo Africanus was an African man who traveled extensively through Africa and then converted to Christianity. His *Geographical History* is framed by John Pory's introduction and comments which serve to structure Leo's tales of the African interior safely within a European perspective. Leo Africanus himself must negotiate a position between the European values to which he converted and the actual experiences he had when he lived in Africa. While he describes people living in the interior of Africa (instead of the monsters of ancient texts), he imbues those descriptions with European values. He carefully associates various degrees of darker skin color with inner character. For example, the text describes people living in Zanzibar as "tall in stature and extremely blacke, their visages are broad, and their dispositions most savage and brutish." (qtd. in D'Amico 51) "The almost automatic association of blackness with uncouthness and ugliness appears in his work and in the observations of many other sixteenth-century travelers." (D'Amico 50)

Despite actual encounters with Africans that described complex social systems or possible non-Christian religion, ancient perceptions of the exotic barbarian still shaped traveler's interpretations of encounters. Both Hakluyt's and Pory's newly published accounts combined existing values of blackness and barbarism with actual occurrence while travelling through Africa. Introductions, summaries, and commentary still consistently generalized about the barbarity of Africans. Some such myths from antiquity that carried over into the Renaissance were the Anthropophagi, who were supposed to be cannibals; Arimaspi, who had one eye; Ethiopians with impossibly disfigured noses, lips and faces; Blemmyis, who have no heads; and other assorted people who share women in common, have a dog for a leader, walk on their hands, or are eight feet tall. (Jones 6) All of these diverse people were seen by the Europeans as idolaters without any religion. Even in the face of obvious

governmental or religious practices, the Europeans interpreted what they encountered through their own views of the one "true" God.

In the same volume that describes eyewitness accounts of the elaborate courtesy of some of the inhabitants of the Guinea Coast, we read in this 'gathered' preface: "But all the regions of Guinea are pure gentiles and idolaters without profession of any religion, or other knowledge of God, than by the law of nature."
(Jones, *Elizabethan Image* 11)

This insistence on the lack of religion comes despite the fact that a later passage of the same account describes respect given to the King of Benin as greater than that "we would give ... our Saviour Christ." (12) The Europeans failed to see a *difference* in beliefs and Gods and instead saw a *lack* of religion and government.

Pierre d'Avity's *The Estates, Empires and Principalities of the World* (published in 1615) presents various nations for comparison of political systems of government, history, and religion. This text reveals a clear hierarchy of government and religion that produces some nations as superior to others. The text praises Venice "as the best of all commonwealths," primarily because of its form of government. "Equally important is the praise given to England because of the sovereignty of Parliament and gradual diminution of the role of the monarch over the centuries, so that the sovereign is not even required to attend sessions of Parliament until they are nearing their end. Also to the nation's credit is ... the flourishing of Protestantism under James." (Hadfield 106) The ideas of Protestantism as the true religion and a rational government that represents the people's interests became intertwined in English discourse and produced an image of a more evolved and superior place to live. But superiority is always relative to other places, in this case other nations. In relation to a participatory, effective government and the "correct" religion, the myth of the barbarian functions as "other" to which the English judge themselves superior.

Images of Africans

The African presence in England had a great symbolic impact on English politics and literature from the sixteenth century forward. As Eldred Jones clearly shows, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Lady Mary Wroth, and other authors of the time would have had exposure to the travel writings that were extensively printed and summarized and probably had exposure to actual Africans residing in England.⁶ In addition to narratives of foreign voyages, English subjects had contact with Africans brought back from foreign lands, either as servants or merchant's assistants. Several English trading ships recorded using native Africans whom they brought with them to ease trading relations at African ports. For example, one description in *Principal Navigations* of John Locke's voyage in 1554 relates the kidnapping of five natives. "They brought with them certaine black slaves, where of some were tall and strong men, and could wel agree with our meates and drinckes. The colde and moyst aire doth somewhat offend them' (H, 6:176)." (D'Amico 10) In addition, Moors were used as exotic servants or entertainment by wealthy Englishmen. "As the baroque epoch dawned, representations of African slaves or servants increasingly came to adorn precious objects, and black pages act as a foil in portraits of aristocratic ladies or gentlemen: the black has become an object of value, an adornment and an exotic pet." (Blackburn 79)

In response to the influx of Africans to England, Queen Elizabeth issued two statements, one in 1599 and one in 1601, banishing Moors from England. Not only do the statements indicate growing numbers of Moors in England, but they show ideological tensions about them living on native soil.

⁶ While some authors argue that Shakespeare and other Renaissance authors were not referring to actual Africans when they represented Moors, this position seems highly unlikely given the evidence of African presence in England.

The Queen's Majesty, tendering the good and welfare of *her own natural subjects* greatly distressed in these hard times of dearth, is highly discontented to understand the great numbers of Negars and Blackamoors...; as also for that the *most of them are infidels, having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel*, hath given especial commandment that the said kind of people should be with all speed avoided and discharged out of the Her Majesty's dominions. (Jones 20, emphasis mine)

This statement constructs native English citizens as a natural category with the phrase, "her own *natural* subjects." The nationalization of identity involves imagining a natural community that includes citizens of a particular idealized nation. Elizabeth's edict created an identificatory process by contrasting "Blackamoors" who have come to live in England with "natural" English subjects. It does not need to define subjects other than in relation to the Moors, who are defined as non-subjects. As with the travel summaries, the edict constructs them as non-Christians using existing stereotypes to produce a material identity for the Moors currently living in England. The edicts were problematic and ultimately not obeyed, in part because they contradicted Elizabeth's own policies of passive encouragement of African trade.

The edict issued by Elizabeth, regardless of whether or not it was extensively followed, emphasizes the difference between the isolation policies of Elizabeth and the opposite actions of James I. Entertainment at James I's court included both actual African men and women and representations of "blacks" framed as the exotic. "Blacks were a common feature in the Scottish court, kept there as dehumanized alien curiosities, on par with James's pet lion and his collection of exotic animals." (Hall 128) This entertainment continued when it became the English court and authors such as Shakespeare, Lady Wroth, and Jonson all had access to the court of James I where they were involved with the entertainment that featured the exotic. Literary representations helped the English subjects negotiate this change from relative isolation under the reign of Queen Elizabeth to an active policy of foreign alliances and support of colonization under King James. James's

policies encouraged the slave trade as well as created "Great Britain," which promoted James to king of Scotland, England, and Wales. (Hall 127) As this shift in political policy occurred, images of blackness help produce an identity in relation to an expanding political horizon and work to distinguish between the English and the foreigner, as well as specifically the African.

Exotic Othering

Africans and Native Americans hold a symbolic place in English history that balances between the dangerous primitive and the exotic site of discovery and exploitation. Africans and Native Americans were never fully separated from the exoticism represented by their physical appearance. This exoticism can range from attractive, when the foreigner is represented as part of the European society, to dangerous, when the foreigner is denied full access to European society because of his or her difference. Shakespeare relies upon the exotic myths of Africa circulating at the time to create Desdemona's attraction to Othello. Othello describes how he wooed her:

Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field;
Of hairbreadth scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach;
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence
And portance in my travel's history; ...
And of Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. (I.iii.149)

Othello's speech about his past and the tales he told Desdemona employ the notion of the exotic African who lures Desdemona with tales of adventure. In this instance, Othello is accepted into Venetian society and can articulate his past within a European framework. Several scholars compare to Leo Africanus' life the similarities of Othello's history of travelling through Africa and then converting to Christianity. This passage uses the existing mythological currency of Africa when it relates stories of cannibals and deformed monsters. It also relies on the travel narrative's use of danger when

it refers to near death escapes and accidents. These descriptions of the Anthropophagi and the "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders" use the popular travel descriptions. But beyond the references to current accounts of Africa, this speech distances Othello from his own past. Just as Leo Africanus interprets African culture using language imbued with European value judgements, Othello's tales call attention to the difference between the typical monstrous African and the noble Moor who is standing in front of the court speaking eloquently. The first act very precisely demonstrates his character as calm, poised, articulate, and integrated into European culture. Othello is allowed into Venetian society and accepted by its government so his differences are attractive rather than dangerous.

Shakespeare uses the image of the barbarian (or the monstrous) throughout the play as an ever-present threat, but it is not necessarily only attributed to Othello because of his physical characteristics. In this particular scene, the barbarian is carefully differentiated from Othello's character despite the fact that the speech above refers to Othello's own slavery. Othello is able to escape from slavery and become an accepted part of Venetian society, chosen to command troops and protect the city. This freedom could not occur within a discourse of race that produced slavery as natural for someone with Othello's physical characteristics. Eighty years later, colonial planters will start to develop discourse that argues Africans and their descendents should be bound into a lifetime of slavery regardless of past nobility in Africa.

While the use of exotic imagery in *Othello* can simultaneously distinguish Othello and attract Desdemona, in a later text, Behn's *Oroonoko*, the exotic descriptions produce the Africans (and Native Americans) as primitive and barbaric. The difference between the culture that produces *Oroonoko* and *Othello* is more than just 80 years, it is the economic and social structure of the newly developing plantation mentality.

By the late seventeenth century, the role and status of blacks in English society had changed, and the discourse of racism was fully established. No longer "spectacles of strangeness" and monstrosity who occupied unstable, exotic, and mythic ideological roles, they were slaves, situated in a growing capitalist economy which their exploited labor sustained. (Newman 135)

As in Shakespeare's texts, Behn's descriptions of Oroonoko's body employ popular reports from Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*:

Those who are Nobly born of that Country, are so delicately Cut and Rac'd all over the fore-part of the Trunk of their Bodies, that it looks as if it were Japan'd. (40)

His body becomes a symbol of the exotic, even though other parts of the text present Oroonoko as noble. This passage distances the European reader from empathizing with Oroonoko as a person by equating him with objects such as lace and laquerwork on furniture. The text of *Oroonoko* employs a recognizable discourse of exoticism surrounding descriptions of Oroonoko and his actions. Whether he is fighting in battle or mourning the loss of Imoinda, his actions are extreme and beyond the limits of a normal man. For example, the actions of Oroonoko while entertaining the women of the colony are feats of incredible strength and bravery. Oroonoko places himself in grave danger to steal a tiger cub from its mother's den and kills "a Tiger, which had long infested that part," that the other men of the colony had been unable to kill. (45) These actions represent his bravery and strength at the same time that they show his dangerous potential if his skills were used against the Europeans instead of for their entertainment. Within the text, this language of the exotic is always contained by the system of slavery that diffuses the threat of the noble African and thereby guarantees the safety of the Europeans.

Native Americans

Behn's descriptions of the Indians on Surinam are filled with tropes of exoticism, particularly more graphic references to physical deformity and mental naiveté. The English colonists take a trip inland with Oroonoko and a

navigator and visit the natives of Surinam. Behn's narrator describes the "naked" Indians who begin examining their clothing in childlike wonder and she says they "much esteem any shining things. ... I soon perceiv'd, by an admiration, that is natural to these People, and by the extream Ignorance and Simplicity of 'em, it were not difficult to establish any unknown or extravegant Religion among them; and to impose any Notions or Fictions upon 'em." (49) Simplicity is represented as natural. The Native Americans are described as primitive and compared to Adam and Eve, innocent before the fall into sin.

The war captains are related as disfigured, in the same way ancient myths of Africans related horribly disfigured bodies.

For my part I took 'em for Hobgoblins, or Fiends, rather than Men; but however their shapes appear'd their souls were very humane and noble; but some wanted their Noses, some their Lips, some both Noses and Lips, some their Ears, and other Cut through their cheek, with long Slashes through which their teeth appeared; (Behn 50)

These images resemble the monsters that are described in travelers tales of Africa. They do not look like men, they look like "hobgoblins" and "fiends." She carefully separates their souls as "humane" and "noble," and explains that they wound themselves to prove they are worthy to lead in battle. But she then proceeds with the graphic description of their bodies as deformed. "Bakhtin has suggested that the grotesque bodies of these monstrous races serve in this period to affirm dialectically the ordered, classical body of the European elite (325)." (qtd. in Hall 26) Despite her insistence on inner nobility in both the Indians and Oroonoko, the structure of her discourse represents them as savage and barbarous. For Europeans, "public acceptance of nakedness or the communal living that indicates promiscuity creates the image of a people lacking in social restraint, or a loose or casual acceptance of the body and the senses that is radically opposed to Western, Christian inhibition." (D'Amico 64) Both the graphic physical descriptions and the

extreme naiveté set up a contradictory affirmation of European intelligence, sophistication, and physical beauty. While innocence may seem to denote a type of morality, it is ultimately used in a discourse of colonialism that justifies the European conquest of the land by appeal to their more evolved culture. Similar discourse represents both the primitivity of African tribal living and the tribes of the Native Americans.

While both groups were seen as barbarians, critical differences between Native Americans and Africans shaped European actions. The essential argument supporting the slavery of both groups involved the Aristotelian humanist idea that "natural" law maintains some humans are superior to others and the superior humans have a right to reduce the inferior groups (or barbarians) to servitude. Indicators of difference such as the lack of clothing and physical disfigurements, the absence of Christianity, the cyclical movement of some Native American tribes, and the multitude of other cultural characteristics totally alien to Europeans were taken as proof of inferiority. While both groups were enslaved to different degrees, Native Americans were recognized to some extent as nations that already lived on the land being colonized. On a fundamental level, key debates shaped notions of the civility of the Native Americans and the brutality with which the Europeans, specifically the Spanish, were killing them. Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566) argued that the Spanish method of subjecting natives to slavery was immoral in a Christian sense. Las Casas lived in the colonies and based his argument in Christian laws and his own experiences with Native Americans.

From the fact that the Indians are barbarians it does not necessarily follow that they are incapable of government and have to be ruled by others, except to be taught about the Catholic faith. ... They are not ignorant, inhuman or bestial. Rather, long before they had heard the word Spaniard, they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion and custom. (qtd. in Dickason 208)

Las Casas managed to change the nature of the debate such that new laws were passed in 1542 stating Native Americans could not be enslaved. However, other forms of indentured servitude still existed and hostilities towards Native Americans continued despite these debates. "The law that prevailed was not the natural law that Las Casas upheld so vigorously, but one that was rooted in the politics of power." (Dickason 214) The Spanish debates, translated into English, influenced English colonial discourse. English colonists rationalized their claims to land by defining the Native Americans as nomadic and arguing they were not using the land productively. This rationale meant the colonists could say that "since it was a duty to make the earth productive, those lands that were not being cultivated could be taken without injustice to anyone, 'especially where the people is wild, and holdeth no settled possession in any parts.'" (Dickason 234)

The text of *Oroonoko* describes extensive trading between the colonists and natives that seems mutually beneficial. She also relates that the Native Americans help show the colonists where to seek food and hunt. "They being, on all Occasions, very useful to us, we find it absolutely necessary to caress 'em as Friends, and not to treat 'em as Slaves, nor dare we do other, their Numbers so far surpassing ours in that Continent." (Behn 11) The narrator's description of the Indians has revealing contradictions. On the one hand, the skill of the hunters and knowledge of the waters is respected and described elaborately. However, the last sentence "nor dare we do other" undercuts her elaborate descriptions of respect and exposes the weakness of the colonial force as the real reason the Native Americans are not enslaved. It simply is impractical to enslave natives whose numbers so far surpassed the colonists on an island that they knew better. Africans who were imported were more effective and safer than starting a war with the natives who were so useful to the colonists. The system of colonists arriving on foreign soil to run plantations was founded on a forced system of labor, the question became

who was the most practical source. The Native Americans are admired for their abilities and positive traits, but essentially the reason for this esteem was that the colonists were unable to use them as their main source of agricultural labor. Clearly, some Native Americans were enslaved (e.g., their guide down the river is an Indian slave), but they are not the primary agricultural workforce only because it is not ultimately workable.

The contradictions between assertions of superiority and competing ideologies is questioned and gradually naturalized over the course of the seventeenth century. New power relations are born out of existing images of blackness and barbarity as the images expand and develop into more specific assertions of African inferiority and specifically Africans as naturally produced to be slaves. Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark* discusses her effort to explore how the images of blacks in America shape the development of "literary 'whiteness.'" (Morrison 9) She explores the "impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored, or altered those notions ...[and] what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters." (Morrison 11) The question for early modern England then is how defining Africans as "barbarian" or the race "fit" for slavery produces the English? A new meaning of race as physical and "biological" differentiates English from Africans and Native Americans in a way that provides an ideology to support the profitable slave trade and plantation economy. But beyond that, this discourse boosts the English identity into a position of the superior race, which is civilized, naturally meant to rule because of a superior form of government, and linked culturally with Greco-Roman civilization (i.e., law and high culture). A closer look at the literary images that naturalize this identity show how closely linked this notion of superiority is with older ideals of the English patriarchy.