The Tentative Embrace: Slavery's Relationship with European Identity

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Introduction

William Blake's famous image, *Europe Supported by Africa and America*, produced in 1796, places slavery at the heart of an early attempt to reify European, African, and American identities. In the image, Europe stands in the centre limp (but not infirm) supported on both sides by the figures of Africa and America. The image notes how Africa and America provided critical, material buttresses to Europe's economy. The strength of these buttresses derived principally from the enslavement of Africans in America. For while Africa and America wear slave bracelets, Europe wears a string of pearls. While Africa and America stare at the viewer of the image, Europe's head and eyes are cast down. Blake records Europe's shame at the unattributed part played by African slavery in America in providing European prosperity and the African and American wish to have their suffering acknowledged and atoned for. For Blake wished to use European dependence on African and American subjection to compel his audience to support the abolition of the slave trade and slavery. While the chains represent the facts of the relationship between Europe,

America, and Africa at the end of the 18th century, Europe's affectionate response to the two other continents' support, and her hand shake with the bonded Africa confirm Blake's ardent wish to see slavery abolished as part of improving the relationship between the three continents.

Blake's image suggests four insights about the role slavery played in Europe's self-imagining at the threshold of modernity: first, that Europe owed much of its economic success to its contact with America and to the slave trade with Africa. Slave-produced American commodities like sugar, rice, indigo, and tobacco enjoyed huge markets throughout all of Europe just as European-produced goods, like guns, woollen clothes, iron, and alcohol, enjoyed large markets on the West coast of Africa. These trades produced economic benefits that help explain the growing importance of commerce and of economics in European politics and culture in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries and the development of an urbanised, middle class that sought a greater role in the political processes of most European countries from the late 1780s and throughout the 19th century.[1)]

Therefore, second, Blake muses on the ambiguous relationship between control and dependence in European empires. Europe's control of America and Africa was deemed to be imperialistic, but, in fact, Africa and America played a part, as Blake depicted, in supporting Europe and therefore, so Blake's implication goes, Europe owed a debt of gratitude towards Africa and America that could best be expressed, in the first instance, as Blake wished, by abolishing the trans-Atlantic slave trade and then slavery itself.

Third, Blake, unlike the majority of his contemporaries, graphically depicted a personified connection between Europe, Africa, and America to stress African

1) For an important analysis of the integration of one European, the British, with the economies of West Africa see Joseph Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development*, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

humanity. An enlightened Europe helped to stress the importance of extending natural rights to all human beings. This insight proved to be the most important attitudinal sea change in the fight to end slavery. Abolitionism would become, as a result, the unique intellectual and legislative achievement of Europe.[2)]

Fourth, Blake's depiction of the clear racial distinctions between the personified versions of each continent, allowed for African humanity, but provided a buttress for Europe's continued imperialistic attitude towards Africa and America in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. Sure enough, Blake offers a vision of inter-racial, and therefore cosmopolitan cooperation, but his depiction of distinct pigmentations for the personified continents is deliberate and clear. By the early 18th century, whiteness had become an essential part of a coherent European identity, helping to bridge the fundamental religious distinctions that had plunged Europe into a century of warfare after the Reformation and between the nation states that fought those wars. Contact with the non-European world from about 1500 onwards helped to convince the Europeans of the Old World that, despite their differences, they belonged together because they were not dark skinned. African slavery for the next 350 years would help to cement this belief in a shared, European identity. European 'whiteness' represents as important a European legacy of American slavery as abolitionism.

Blake's image therefore offers a useful insight into the imaginations of Europe at the turn of the 19th century: one which sees itself as defined by its relationship to Africa and America; one cohered by race; and one, most important, bound by a dependence on the transportation and exploitation of Africans in America and, according to Blake's sincere expectation, brought

2) For the most recent compelling analysis of the determinants of British abolitionism see Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*, University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

closer together by the ending of that slavery and that dependence.

In this short exploratory essay, I propose to note the part played by the following three aspects of the teleology of Europe in the story of the rise and fall of African slavery in the Americas: first, the development of European identity and its relationship to the historical rhythms of European integration, disintegration, and re-integration; second, the civic ideals that bind modern Europe together; and third, the related development of cosmopolitanism. Each played an important part in the story of slavery's genesis and its downfall over the modern period. This essay argues that explaining where and when slavery emerged in history is most fundamentally a question and a problem of identity. Slavery thrives where labour supplies are low, desire for profits is high, and a distinct people, deemed culturally eligible for enslavement can be found. The supply of labour has often been too low in specific places, and the desire to profit from a labour force has almost always been strong, but the historically contingent factor explaining where and when slavery has emerged is the existence of a population who it has been cultural possible to enslave. The history of slavery is, therefore, the history of identity. Which groups can be identified as ripe for enslavement? What effect does that identification have on the group enslaving, or buying and selling the enslaved? Slavery's centrality to American self-imagining is well rehearsed.[3] This essay demonstrates that slavery has played a similarly important part in the development of European identity. The story of the rise and fall of African slavery in the Americas ought therefore to play, as Blake suggested, a more central role in Europe's modern self-perception.[4]

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3) Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Cornell University Press, 1997, p.1. See also Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery: American Freedom: The Ordeal of Virginia*, Norton, 1975, pp.4-5.

4) I view European identity as a historical process rather than a static monolith. It was constantly shaped by competition with intra-European national identities and extra-European continental identities. The determinants of identity are relational.

2. European Self-Definition, Christianity, and the Difference between Slavery and Freedom

European identity and cultural cohesion has derived as much from Europeans' contact with rival cultures outside its borders as it has resulted from the celebration of European values and institutions. Early incarnations of pan-European civilisation defined themselves with references to Eastern rivals. The Parthenon sculptures demonstrate the importance Ancient Athenians placed upon dramatizing their history in terms of an historic rivalry with ancient Persia. The first fully integrated European polity, that of Ancient Rome, continued this tradition and standardised the experience of European community with the help of Roman law (which continues to bind Europe together). By the early Middle Ages, the need to act together to compete with, repel or attack Islamic forces to the East played an essential part in binding Europe together into a common cause.

The difference between slavery and freedom came to play an essential part in the articulation and experience of this early European rivalry with the Islamic world. During the Roman Empire, the various peoples of the West European continent had willingly enslaved each other. But by the 11th century, once European identity had been fastened to Christianity, religious leaders, including Pope Gregory the Seventh connected subscription to Christian belief with freedom. As Muslim traders targeted non-Muslims for enslavement, Europeans began to define Europe as a slave-free area. To be European was to be

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For these reasons in this essay, I often extrapolate from competing national and international identities when reflecting on the meaning and development of European identity. In particular, much of my analysis builds from an understanding that the 'European enlightenment' involved dynamic interactions between burgeoning national stereotypes within Europe, especially the reification of and response to British and American identities.

something other than a slave. Europe prided itself on having ended slavery within its territories by the end of the 14th century (though pockets continued in Eastern Europe and in Southern Italy).[5]

So European identity remained, from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, the result of a contest between two cultural identities: Christian and Muslim. In penetrating into the heart of Islamic territory during the First Crusade in the late 11th century, the Europeans were to encounter something of huge importance for the future development of America. The Muslims had been using Slavic slave labour in the Levant to produce sugar and the Christian Crusaders copied them. As their control over Jerusalem and Acre waned, the Crusaders shifted their sugar plantations further and further West, from Cyprus to Sicily and then, in the 15th Century, out into the Atlantic on the Canary Islands, each of them staffed by non-Christian bondsmen and women. Thus the important connection between tropical plantations and slave labour that would become so crucial to the economic development of North and South America was itself the product of European rivalry with Islam in the Levant, a rivalry broadly conceived through religious difference and the differences between slavery and freedom. The American connection between plantation production and slave labour derived form European experiments in the Mediterranean.[6]

The eventual European arrival in the Americas highlighted weakening cultural cohesion of Europe in the 16th century. From the 16th century onwards, the development of European colonies in the New World helped to accentuate the greatest threat to the coherence of European identity since the fall of the Roman Empire – the religious schism of the Reformation. Until the middle of

5) Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, "Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era", *Past & Present*, Vol. 205, Issue 1, 2009, pp.3-40.

6) For the early development of plantation slavery in the Mediterranean see Herbert Klein, The *Atlantic Slave Trade*, New Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2010, Chapters 1-2.

the 17th century, America would remain the battle ground between rival Northern European Protestants: the Dutch and English, who worked together to develop plantation economies in Brasil, the Caribbean, and in Virginia and the Southern European, Catholic powers of Iberia who built huge empires in Central and South America. Rivals articulated the competition, as usual, in terms of slavery. For the Protestant English, the Spanish Empire in America was one of rapine and enslavement, while the Protestant Empire in America would be, for Richard Hakluyt the great promoter of the English presence in America, an empire of liberty.[7] Because of the strength of the medieval European connection between Christianity and freedom, however, the Catholic Spanish privileged the conversion of the Amerindian populations they encountered rather than enslaving them. They extended European identity to the Amerindians by converting them.

Individual European nations used America as a means to undermine pan-European identity. The English in particular used America as an intellectual space to help them develop a means to resist pan-Europeanism. Sir Thomas More, to take one example, located his Utopia in America to help separate his brand of humanist thought from the consolidating pan-European traditions of the European continent. This connection between Anglo-Saxon interest in America and a suspicion of European identity would become a central feature of British politics up to the present. The introduction of African slavery onto mainland North America in Virginia 1609, however, was the result of European collaboration between Dutch slave traders and English colonist purchasers. Europeans worked together to develop African slavery in America. But in the early 17th century, enslaved Africans formed the minority of the colonial labour force, as many Europeans fled religious conflict and civil war.

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7) On the ideology of early English promoters of Empire in the Americas see Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of English Colonisation*, 1500 – 1625, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

By the second half of the 17th century, these rivalries between Europeans had become more uniformly nationalistic rather than religious, as mercantilist economic policies saw nations use international trade to expand their national interests. England was the principal victor in this struggle as it used its Navigation System to exclude its former collaborators - the Dutch, from Atlantic trade. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Europe became bound together in a competition between its nation states to command the world's resources. The geopolitical ideology of mercantilism produced a worldview that saw Europeans view wealth as being as finite as power. Incessant war, assisted by religious differences, therefore engulfed the continent from the early 17th century to the early 19th century. This competition included the development of an ideology that celebrated the national interest at the expense of all others. Nations like England, who had prided themselves in not participating in the enslavement of Native Americans, as the Spanish Conquistadors had done, but such reserve was soon neutralised by the prospect of financial gain. This national interest emerged to become the strongest supporting buttress for participation in the trade in enslaved Africans. If France, for example, did not dominate the labour supply of the colonies, then Britain would, and vice versa.

Military conflict between Europeans during the Nine Years War and the War of Spanish Succession absorbed the excess European population which had, since the early 17th century been developing the American economy. Religious warfare within Europe and increasing national rivalry reduced the supply of European labour for the American colonies. European nations uniformly turned to enslaved African labour with greater determination by the early years of the 18th century. African slavery therefore accelerated in importance as the solution to the colonies' problem of labour supply as a result of the disintegration of European Christian culture in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries due to the rising importance of national interests.

These rivals continued to express their competing identities with reference to

slavery and freedom. For the Protestants, and most famously John Locke, Catholicism and its secular corollary, absolutist government, became the worst species of slavery.[8] These expressions occasionally provided cultural justifications for the enslavement of rival groups. For a brief period, in the middle of the 17th century the Protestant English sought to use Irish Catholics as perpetual slaves.

Such examples of Europeans justifying the enslavement of each other remained very rare. Remarkably, despite the Reformation and the intensification of nationalism in the 16th and 17th centuries, Europeans sustained a culture that prevented Europeans from enslaving each other. Instead Europeans continued to fear enslavement from Muslim traders. In 17th and 18th century England, communities bound together to raise the money to ransom members of their community who had been enslaved by Islamic slave traders. When former captives returned to England, their redemption ceremonies, conducting by Christian churches, in which they shed their Islamic appearance and regained their European garb, became celebrated features of urban life.[9] Europeans fixated on their freedoms and defined themselves with reference to them. They did so as they developed the largest forced intercontinental migration in human history – the transatlantic slave trade in enslaved Africans to the Americas.

When Europeans reinvented slavery in the 16th and 17th centuries, it would be for non-Europeans, and especially Africans. As early as the 15th century, Europeans had begun to turn to the Western coast of the African continent for a supply of slaves for the sugar Islands of the Canaries, and the Cape Verde Islands, as their Muslim counterparts had been doing for centuries on the Eastern coasts of the African continent. As in America, the African coast would become a battle ground for ruthlessly competitive European nations bent on

8) John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, London, 1690. p.1.

9) For more examples of this practice and its special importance in England, see Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain and the World, 1600-1850*, Random House, 2003.

cornering as much of the supply of African labour as possible. But unlike in America, Europeans would not enjoy the power to develop territorial presence in Africa. They would instead develop maritime trading relations with the slave vendors they encountered on the African coast. These vendors, as David Eltis has shown, did not subscribe to a continent-wide identity, like the Europeans and were, therefore, content to enslave and sell people from within their own continent.[10] Unlike in America, the Europeans would not, on the whole, establish large-scale missionary operations in Africa during the period of the slave trade. They would not, on the whole extend that most important feature of European cultural freedom – Christianity, which had been extended to Amerindians and had prevented their enslavement. European colonists in America would often baptise their slaves. Because of Europe's historic association of Christianity and freedom, such baptism often brought manumission in the 17th century. But by the 18th century, slave traders and owners fixated on the indelible cultural differences between Europeans and Africans to perpetuate African slavery in America. Again, curiously, the belief that African culture was incapable of understanding the difference between slavery and freedom became the European justification for purchasing enslaved Africans. As one English employee of the Royal African Company, Sir Dalby Thomas stated in 1709 of the African peopled he had encountered, '[they have no] knowledge of liberty and property, nothing being more common than the strongest to dispose of and inslave the weakest, might is their right.'[11] By the middle of the 18th century, the perceived racial differences between Africans and Europeans would be used to supplant for religious or cultural differences.

10) David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

11) For Sir Dalby Thomas see The National Archives, Kew, Great Britain, Treasury Series, 70: *The Records of the Royal African Company*, T70/175, Sir Dalby Thomas to the Royal African Company, Nov., 26, 1709, 202.

The strength of this cultural cohesion is also recorded by the important insight that it overrode national economic interests – as it would have been considerably cheaper to enslave Europeans in either Africa or America, than transport enslaved Africans across the oceans to America.[12)]

In the broadest possible way, then, it is possible to posit a connection between the extent of European integration (in multiple formats) and the extent of Europe's modern involvement in slavery. The prototype for European integration, and the creator of shared European culture, the Roman Empire, helped to export slavery throughout Europe. The Empire's conversion to Christianity assisted the cultural integration of these territories and formulated a powerful tradition associating European identity with freedom derived from Christianity. It became culturally problematic for Europeans to enslave one another. Together with the increased European contact with West Africa and then, from the late 15th century, the North and South American continents, Europeans became convinced of their superiority because of their discovery of alternative civilisations. Because of this cultural solidarity, the Black Death that created the most important cause of slavery in any society – chronic labour shortage, did not lead to the re-establishment of slavery in Europe in the 15th century. Europeans did, however, develop the model for American plantations in Italian controlled-Cyprus, the Spanish controlled, Canary Islands and English controlled, Ireland. But they either used non-Europeans, or they did not use slave labour in these early plantations. Once slave labour became the acknowledged means of developing the European economies of America, Europeans had consolidated their traditional view that slavery was for non-Europeans, and by the 18th century zenith of the European slave trade to America, non-European meant African. Religious then mercantilist, national competition within Europe escalated the scale of European trading in enslave

12) For the recognition of the cost benefits of enslaving Europeans rather than Africans, see Eltis, op.cit., 2000, p.70.

Africans to the Americas. But this fragmentation of European culture served, ultimately, to strengthen the maxim that European equalled 'free'.[13]

3. Modern Liberal Politics and the Entrenchment of African Slavery in the Americas

European identity therefore fixated on freedom. This freedom derived from Christianity. By the 17th century, however, Europeans began to develop liberal, modern, civic ideals that were to become the backbone of European modernity and the constitutional tradition that continues to inform the European Union and its member states. Natural rights came to substitute for belief in a Christian god as the cultural determinants of pan-European identity. These same ideals proved formative for the entrenchment of African slavery in the Americas in ways that have been too often ignored by historians.

The pan-European renaissance of interest in the Ancient world produced a new version of politics in the 15th and 16th centuries. Ultimately these ideas helped to fracture European political identity. The secular liturgy of the nation state in Europe produced a new science of politics, with Niccolo Machiavelli leading the way. But the European encounter with America also helped to produce new economic opportunities that generated new, liberal, economies that sought to sustain these opportunities.[14] This liberal ideology cross-fertilised with Machiavellian insights to produce a political ideology that understood the power of a system of government based on consent. They provided, in the first instance, new political groupings to challenge absolutist monarchy in European

13) Several of the observations in this synthetic paragraph derive from David Eltis, op.cit., at 7(Black Death), at 29(Canary Islands).

14) See Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550 - 1653*, Princeton University Press, 1993, p.684.

nations, especially England in the mid 17th century, and then the power of those European states' control over their American colonial holdings, as with the United State of America.[15]

The rise to prominence of these ideals, however, and the institutions they buttress, played an instrumental part in the development of African slavery in the Americas. Most European slave-trading operations developed their trades with the help of monopoly companies: the Dutch with the Dutch West India Company; the English with the Company of Royal Adventurers and then the Royal African Company; and the French Guinea Companies. The liberal ideology generated in the Atlantic world helped to advance opposition to these monopolies, based on modern, liberal, civic ideals that modern Europe continues to fixate upon. This opposition proved critical to enlarging the scale of the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans.

The case of England provides the best and pioneering example. As a result of the constitutional changes of the 17th century, England abandoned absolutist monarchy and began to celebrate devolved and deliberative politics as the best means to protect the natural rights of English subjects. Independent slave traders deployed these arguments to deregulate the English slave trade. They made the right to trade in slaves coeval with the right to political representation, the right to trial by jury, and the right to habeas corpus. Lobbyists deployed these ideals against the Royal African Company, which had been given a monopoly over England's trade with Africa, including the trade in slaves, for a thousand years, by King Charles II in 1672.

The Glorious Revolution deprived the Royal African Company of the royal political support that sustained its business and also produced administrative

15) The most eloquent and compelling introduction to the rise of liberal politics and economics that these two paragraphs contain can be found in the work of Joyce Appleby. See especially, *Ideology and Economic Thought in Seventeenth Century* England, Princeton University Press, 1978.

and cultural reforms that provided a platform for opposition to the company's monopoly and an arena which favoured them. As a result of placing parliament at the centre of the management of the English economy, more efficient political means existed to help new interest groups further their economic ambitions. The African Company's opponents used these new, deliberative, and outward-looking institutions like the reformed Parliament to advance their economic interests. The highly politicized and institutionally pluralist world of the post-1688 constitutional settlement saw the company tarred as a deplorable relic of a bygone age, while the independent slave traders who opposed the company expressed every British subjects' right to trade. The Glorious Revolution, which established modern British politics, helped to increase the capacity of the English slave trade by at least three hundred per cent and allowed for the provision of an adequate supply of enslaved Africans to the North American mainland (which the African Company had neglected) as independent slave traders prioritised the tobacco colonies there. In this way, a revolution associated with a Declaration of Rights celebrating the 'indubitable rights and liberties of the people' therefore proved instrumental in the development of an open trade in human beings.[16]

Although conceived in Europe, these liberal ideals began to operate transatlantically in the 18th century. They reflected institutional changes that

16) For a fuller exposition of the ways in which liberal political economy assisted the development of Britain's supreme contribution to the trans-Atlantic slave trade see William A Pettigrew, "Free to Enslave: Politics and the Escalation of Britain's Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1688-1714", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, Vol. 64, No. 1, Jan, 2007, pp.3-38. For an introduction to Parliament's role in the escalation of Britain's transatlantic slave trade see William A. Pettigrew, "Parliament and the Escalation of the Slave Trade, 1690-1714", Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin(eds.), *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People, Parliamentary History* Vol. 26, 2007, Supplement. See also *Pettigrew, Freedom's Debt: Politics and the Causes of America Slavery*, 1672-1752, University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming.

brought the American colonies closer to their European mother-countries. An increasingly inclusive transatlantic political system victimized the African Company and the thousands of extra Africans enslaved as a result of the monopoly company's demise. The partial devolution of overseas commercial initiative to its merchant practitioners and the increased involvement of the provincial and colonial peripheries in the metropolitan political process proved to be crucial to the liberalisation of the English slave trade. This trade pivoted on a decentred Atlantic moment when, during the latter years of the seventeenth century, British American interests engineered transatlantic political changes to expand their Atlantic economy. Similar anti-monopoly movements which celebrated 'laissez-faire' gathered pace in France and in the Netherlands, but not until later in the 18th century. The earlier rise to prominence of these civic ideals: the celebration of individual rights; representative government, and, market economics, in England ensured that Britain shipped more slaves across the Atlantic than any other European nation in the 18th century. What started in England became, by the middle of the 18th century a pan-European phenomenon. During the second half of the 18th century, free-trading European slavers hugely escalated the scale of human trafficking across the Atlantic.

In this way, liberal ideology, political reform and the decentralisation of authority helped to escalate the transatlantic slave trade and the scale of African slavery in the New World. The political and constitutional milestones that we associate with modernity and those that the European Union continues to hold aloft as the panaceas for the world's ills, played an instrumental part in escalating the trans-Atlantic slave trade. From Ancient Greece, to contemporary Moldova and Ukraine, where human trafficking has been re-established after the fall of the USSR, slavery and slave trading has always enjoyed a profitably relationship with political decentralisation. Democracy has had as ugly a formative relationship with slavery as it has had, more recently,

with ethnic cleansing.[17]

4. The Development of Modern European Cosmopolitanism and the Abolition of Slavery

Such liberal ideals and transatlantic political partnerships were also at the heart of the changes that produced the movement to abolish the trade in enslaved Africans and slavery itself – an intellectual and political crusade born of a distinctively European context. We can associate many of these liberal political and economic ideals with 17th century England. They began to inspire intellectual comment in Europe in the 18th century as part of the pan-European enlightenment. The enlightenment's contribution to abolitionist thinking was, at best, ambiguous, as David Brion Davis long ago noted. The enlightenment undermined slavery in two important ways. First slavery obstructed the route to human happiness by fettering individual action. The enlightenment also noted that slavery prevented the realisation of societal benefits as it impeded individual economic incentives and contradicted man's necessity to empathise with fellow man in a properly functioning society.[18] But Davis also records the enlightenment's intellectual support for the perpetuation of slavery: "The secular enlightenment… contained countervailing tendencies which encouraged the defense of Negro slavery on grounds of utility, racial inferiority, ethical relativism, or the presumed rationality of wealth-giving institutions."[19] The

17) For the connections between democracy and ethnic cleansing see Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

18) David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, Cornell University Press, 1966, p. 412, 433.

19) David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, Cornell University Press, 1975, p.48.

pan-European enlightenment's contribution to abolitionism appears more ambivalent than liberalism's contribution to the escalation of the slave trade.

These alternative effects of enlightenment thought on slavery differed on the Western (American) and Eastern (European) sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The development of an exceptionalist European identity did much to assist the maturation of a politically credible abolitionist struggle in Europe. Although Denmark abolished slavery earliest, Britain helped to re-establish Europe's deep-rooted connections with antislavery ideas as a result of its civil war with the colonists in British North America. Once new American nations states formed from European colonies in America, both the new states and the mother country faced challenges to their identities – how to define themselves as separate from their cultural forebears. This was especially true for Britain. Long trumpeting an empire of liberty, the British Empire's contest with the American revolutionaries encouraged Britain to realise the full potential of its fetish for liberty by severing its ties with slavery, while dismissing the new American nation state as built on the rotten foundations of African slave labour. The American War of Independence did much to assist British abolitionism, as Christopher L Brown has shown.[20]

In Britain, from the late eighteenth century onwards, African slavery was therefore something that happened in America not Europe. American scholarly work on the development of slavery has, because of its obsession with the history of racism, largely embraced this view. The issue of slavery became a source of contention between separatism Creole movements, such as that led by Thomas Jefferson, in the colonies and their mother countries: the British author, Samuel Johnson, could famously ask why 'we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of negroes' because of a growing cultural condescension from freedom-loving Europeans to their Creole, slaveholding equivalents in

20) Brown, op.cit.

America. Slavery became the centre of a broader dispute about conflicting European and American identities. Thomas Jefferson, for example responded in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), to European condescension from enlightenment European thinkers like the French Comte de Buffon who suggested that America's inferior natural endowment had led to a degeneration of its animal species, including human beings, and especially America's native and African population. The successful independence movements that became Brazil and the United States of America went onto continue slavery, while those that remained within the domain of European power, like the British Caribbean islands, ended slavery. Slavery was an American phenomenon, while Europeans prided themselves on their abolitionist statutes and their seemingly disinterested attempts to suppress other nation's slave trades.[21]

These new American nation states, and their liberal political traditions, helped to cement the association between liberal politics and the perpetuation of slavery in ways that have become emblematic for American identity.[22] How can we explain this shift in the European context? How can we account for the changing role of these ideals in assisting and then ending African slavery in the Americas? Another, crucial 18th century insight helped to ensure that they would not endorse slavery for long: that ideal was and is, in a very generalised sense, cosmopolitanism. It was the absence of a cosmopolitan outlook that allowed Europeans to re-invent slavery in the Americas. The creation of a racial category – the European, and the reification of the American and, in particular, the African, allowed the requisite 'other' who would be the victim of enslavement, just as the reified African who benefited from the slave trade

21) The best single volume account of the rise and fall of African slavery in the Atlantic world is David Brion Davis's, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

22) For the classic discussion of this American paradox see Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery: American Freedom*, Norton, 1975, pp.4-5.

would, until the middle of the 20th century, be partly blamed for the slave trade, even though this insight forgets the absence of a pan-African identity in Africa during the period of the slave trade and, to some extent, today.

The pioneers of this antislavery cosmopolitanism were the Quakers. Extreme Protestants with ambivalent attitudes to the English nation state, the Quakers developed an abolitionist logic with powerful, moral connotations. They also developed the transatlantic, and transnational, cosmopolitan political networks to bring the issue of slavery to the fore in the mainstream political process. Romantic thinkers like William Blake, who celebrated the altruistic 'man of feeling' who wished to end African suffering, and a new breed of evangelical Anglicans, including William Wilberforce, helped to use their political capital to encourage the British nation to identify the ending of slavery in the British Empire with a purification of British morals. The discovery of African humanity, as Blake's image records, allowed for the perception of cosmopolitanism that encouraged the civic ideals of Europe to undermine rather than support the slave trade and slavery. For European cosmopolitanism allowed Europeans, for the first time, to view Africans as human beings, not goods. The European acknowledgement of African humanity noted how Africans, like Europeans, bore rights, by virtue of their humanity. For the first time the paradox of ideals connecting freedom to slavery became clear for Europeans to see and morally unacceptable and therefore a political movement to abolish the slave trade emerged throughout Europe.

This cosmopolitanism could not, however, prevent the European conquest of Africa during the century after abolition. The slave trade had been a reflection of African strength, its abolition, ironically, led the European powers to show more of an interest in African territory beyond the coastline. It would lead the Europeans to seek to and succeed in weakening African sovereignty. The ideals associated with the movement to end slavery provided a fig leaf for 19th century imperialism that would endure until the Second World War. They

would also inform the process that led to the subsequent creation of the European Union and the separate African nation-states themselves (developments that occurred simultaneously in the 1950s and 60s). Nonetheless, the 18th century development of cosmopolitanism, in its broadest sense, proved pivotal to the universal realisation of the civic ideals that had, before then, operated within national, not international frameworks.[23)]

5. Conclusions

Placing this broad narrative about the rise and fall of African slavery in the Americas into to the context of an even broader history of European integration and European political ideals provides a number of insights for modern Europe to ponder. First, if we are to organise Europe around a civic identity that subscribes to civic ideals as well as to cosmopolitanism, we must be ready to note those ideals' culpability in the development first of slavery and then, of racism. The shift from monarchical sovereignty to people's sovereignty at the turn of the 18th century helped to develop the trans-Atlantic slave trade and entrench African slavery in the Americas, just as their role in slavery's ending helped endorse the reputation of these civic ideals throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and up to today. During the course of the eighteenth century, freedom acquired economic and humanitarian meanings to add to its 17th century political definition. These additions helped to undermine the connection between liberalism and slavery. All of the definitions of slavery became determinants of modernity. These liberal ideologies: the celebration of individual rights; representative government, and, later on, market economics remain at the centre of the European Union's political creed and its identity. They allow,

23) For the observation that the African slave trade resulted from African strength not weakness see Eltis, op.cit., 2000, p.356.

as with the United States of America, a cosmopolitan community to achieve cultural solidarity via subscription to these shared civic ideals. These ideals became standardised for the nation states of the European Union, indeed subscription to them remains a condition of membership. They came, however, to play a role in the development of African slavery in America as well as their better-understood contribution to European abolitionism. We must therefore note the historic tensions between these civic ideals and cosmopolitanism. These ideals: the celebration of individual rights; representative government, and, market economics, are, to some extent, being challenged by the economic success of undemocratic China. Their part in developing African slavery offers additional reasons to be careful not to celebrate their utility in an unthinking, ahistorical manner.

Second, the European Union has, like the United States, wilfully ignored the discussion of the far-fetched but politically charged issue of reparations for slavery. Re-orientating the debate about this pertinent issue around the causes rather than the effects of slavery will help the European Union to advance discussion in a way that assists its avowed celebration of civic ideals and cosmopolitanism. Despite Europe's penetration of the African interior during the second half of the 19th century, African-American slaves who sought their freedom in the 19th century, often looked to enlightened Europe for support. One of the most eloquent of them, Frederick Douglass, toured Great Britain as part of a successful bid to prevent the UK intervening in the American Civil War against the anti-slavery Union. Friction between the United States of America and USSR also helped to advance the cause of civil rights for the descendants of slaves in America. A more open, historically informed discussion of the issue of reparations will perhaps help, however, provide an opportunity to cement the bonds of friendship between Europe, America, and Africa, as William Blake desired and depicted. Such a discussion would help dispute those who have viewed the consensus around these civic ideals as part of a new

imperial dispensation.[24] Third, regarding political decentralisation and slavery. Human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world with a global annual market of about 15 billion dollars. This industry is becoming a major concern within the European Union and has, again, a pronounced European dimension. The break up of the Soviet Union has led to a resurgence of human trafficking in Eastern Europe. Western European states have been destinations for many of these people. A fuller appreciation of the connections (historical and contemporary) between political decentralisation and slave trading will help inform European policy on the issue.[25]

Stressing the part played by slavery in the long process of generating European identity offers essential correctives to a smug-pan European sense of detachment from the sins of slavery. In a much-anticipated speech to the House of Commons that was designed to set the tone for Britain's bicentennial of the abolition statute in 2007, British Prime Minister Tony Blair expressed 'our deep sorrow' about British involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade on behalf of the British government. Blair stopped short of a full apology to avoid accepting responsibility. Blair deployed a modicum of reflection to begin the long process of atonement. He wondered why it was that the slave trade emerged at a time when 'the capitals of Europe and America championed the Enlightenment of Man'. Rather than confront this well-posed conundrum head on, however, Blair was quick to retreat into a familiar truism and rush to the defence of European modernity: 'Racism, not the Rights of Man, drove the horrors of the triangular trade'. But modernity, and the European, liberal

24) For an anthology of reparationist writings since emancipation see Michael T. Marton and Marilyn Yaquinto, eds. *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States: On Reparations for Slavery, Jim Crown, and Their Legacies*, Duke University Press, 2007.

25) For the recent development of human trafficking in Europe and the scale of the global problem see Audrey Guichon and Christien Van der Anker, *Trafficking for Forced Labour in Europe Report on a Study in the UK, Ireland, the Czeck Republic, and Portugal*, Antislavery International, November 2006, 3.

political institutions and ideologies that define it, lose this defence. The 'rights of man' contributed as much to the escalation of the slave trade as they did to its abolition. Slavery is as much a problem for European identity as it is for American. It is as much a problem for liberal modernity as it is for an ancient, unreformed, mythical past.[26]

26) *Hansard* HC (House of Commons), Ministerial Statements, Nov. 28, 2006, col. 103ws.

국문 초록

우유부단한 수용: 노예와 유럽 정체성의 관계

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본 논문은 고대 시기부터 오늘날까지 유럽 정체성 형성과 노예제의 관계를 살펴본다. 노예제는 아메리카 정체성의 형성만큼이나 유럽 정체성에 커다란 영향을 끼쳤다. 이 둘의 관계는 세 가지 시기로 구분할 수 있는데 우선 기독교와 중세의 자유 개념으로부터 파생된 유럽 정체성은 유럽인들이 다른 유럽인들을 노예로 삼는 것에 대한 문화적 걸림돌이 되었다. 둘째, 유럽의 근대 자유주의의 정치적 이상은 아메리카 대륙에서 아프리카 노예제의 형성과 폐지에 있어서 중요한 역할을 맡았다. 마지막으로 유럽 세계주의는 노예제 철폐에 있어서 유럽 전체의 계몽운동이 달성한 집합적인 성과보다도 더 크게 기여했다. 나아가 본 논문은 유럽 정체성 형성의 핵심적인 결정요소로서 노예제의 정체성 만들기 작업이 오늘날 유럽 정체성 변화를 가져올 수 있는 방식들을 논한다.

주제어(Key Words)
노예제, 정체성, 유럽, 세계주의, 자유주의
Slavery, Identity, Europe, Cosmopolitanism, Liberalism

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