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Frontiers of Race, Frontiers of Freedom: the Fabrication of the "Negro slave" in Early Modern European Discourse[1]

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Abstract

Within the context of European expansion into other continents between the 16th and 18th centuries, the development of a 'common' European identity took place, which ran parallel to the formation of specific national identities. It was based on two principles: the notion of 'race', implying fundamental differences between various descent groups of mankind; and on the concept of "individual freedom" that during this period became the exclusive preserve of white people. In the formation of these intellectual developments, the institution of enslaving black Africans in America acquired great importance. Through the negative concept of the 'Negro slave', its antithesis – the 'free European' – was established, as were the impermeable legal, political, economic and cultural barriers between the groups. However, if black slaves were 'others', they were at the same time embedded firmly into the economic and social models of the Atlantic empires; not opponents of European settlers, but their auxiliaries in the colonial enterprise. Frontiers that separated the two were thus inner frontiers, a fact that encouraged Europeans to maintain their ideology of exclusivity.

Jedním z důsledků evropské zámořské expanze v 16. – 18. století byl proces formování společné „evropské" identity (jenž se rozvíjel paralelně s procesem formování identit národních). V jeho základech stál, na jedné straně, koncept „rasy" (jenž zároveň předpokládal zásadní rozdíly mezi jednotlivými větvemi lidského rodu), na straně druhé koncept „svobody jedince", jež se ovšem stal korporativním privilegiem jedné z ras, rasy „bílé". V těchto intelektuálních procesech nabývala zvláštní význam instituce otroctví. Černí obyvatelé subsaharské Afriky byli masivně zotročováni a dopravováni do Ameriky. Jejich práce umožnila stabilizovat a rozšiřovat koloniální državy; nepřímým důsledkem bylo bohatnutí a nárůst životní úrovně obyvatel evropských metropolí i nárůst jejich osobní nezávislosti. Otroctví obecně je velmi specifickou institucí, ztělesňující maximální podřízenost a faktickou dehumanizaci osob, které navždy a dědičně zůstávají mimo struktury společnosti, do níž byli násilím začleněni. Jestliže otrocká práce přináší svobodným příslušníkům společnosti značné hmotné i symbolické zisky, znamená zároveň přítomnost otroků trvalé ohrožení a stává se podnětem pro upevňování vnitřní solidarity dané společnosti. Trvalá závislost černých

otroků v amerických koloniích se pojila s jejich nápadnou fyzickou i kulturní odlišností a dědictvím negativních stereotypů Afriky a jejích obyvatel, které se v evropské cestopisné a historické literatuře rozvíjely již od antiky. To vše posilovalo sebevědomí obyvatel Starého světa tváří v tvář náhle rozšířeným obzorům a vědomí, že sami tvoří jen nepatrnou menšinu lidského rodu. Jestliže ale byli černí otroci vnímáni jako „ti druzí", zůstávali zároveň pevně včleněni do koloniálního systému, jenž na jejich přítomnosti a práci životně závisel. Černí otroci a bílí kolonisté fungovali ve vzájemné symbióze; zároveň se ale uvnitř koloniálních i metropolitních společností formovaly vnitřní bariéry, oddělující „černé otroky" od „svobodných Evropanů". Tyto bariéry pak v podobě rasových předsudků přetrvaly i do doby, kdy bylo otroctví samotné zrušeno.

As a direct consequence of European overseas expansion between the 15th and 18th centuries, the European public entered into direct, as well as indirect contact, with a wide variety of races, cultures and ethnic groups. Through this contact with the 'other', a process of 'European' self-identity formation was initiated. Of all the human groups encountered at this time by Europeans, the most distinctive and the most clearly identifiable were the black Africans. This was not only because of their physical characteristics, but also because they were enslaved in large numbers: transported *en masse* to the American colonies, where they were designated in legal terms as property. Precisely on the basis of the peculiar position of black Africans in relation to white Europeans, a complex process of fabricating difference took place. The fruits of this process included the creation of the concept of the Negro slave, and its antithesis, the free European, as well as the construction of impermeable legal, political, economic and cultural barriers between the groups. However, due to the integration of masses of black slaves into European colonies, these barriers were in fact inner frontiers, existing within the context of the 'Atlantic' societies that emerged between the 16th and 18th centuries.

The somewhat vague term, European, is herein used deliberately, in accordance with the broad scope of the analysis. The chapter aims to elucidate an important intellectual development of the early modern period, which was shaped in conjunction with European expansion – the establishment of real and imagined mental borders between Europeans and the natives of other continents. These barriers were based on two ideas: racial theory, which implied fundamental differences among various descent groups of mankind; and the concept of 'freedom' as a corporate privilege only applicable to certain races. In tandem, the two ideas were employed in the construction of a common European identity, strengthened by the abandonment of the medieval concept of a homogeneous and unified Christian community in favour of religious and national particularism. In spite of the divergent legal traditions of various European countries, the perception of the 'Negro slave' in the process of identity formation was surprisingly similar across the continent.

Before embarking on a sustained analysis of the problem, two principles should be outlined. First, that any human community elaborates its identity in explicit contrast to

'others' of a different affiliation, language and ethnicity. In this context of identity formation, the institution of slavery acquired an important role in many societies throughout history. Slavery has always been a 'peculiar institution', structurally different from other forms of oppression and servitude (such as serfdom, helotism, debt servitude and peonage)[2]. It had always represented the ultimate limit of subordination, inferiority and alienation; the slave remained the outsider *within* the community. Slaves were foreigners – no society can enslave permanently large numbers of its own people without inflicting serious harm. Even when they became incorporated into kinship group-based societies, like the Roman *familia*, slaves remained kinsmen of a different kind. It was precisely the slave's isolation that made his or her labour so flexible and thus most valuable to the master. But it was this alienation that at the same time troubled the enslaving society[3]. It was frequently asserted in the historical literature dedicated to this problem that slavery presents enormous and unique moral problems to the slaveholding class, especially where there is a strong legalistic emphasis on the slave as chattel – subject to the will of the master. It was argued that it was difficult to reconcile the view of the slave as both a human being and as alienable property[4]. While the problem of the status of slaves has been discussed from antiquity to modern times, of equal importance is the impact of slavery on identity formation – as a means of creating clearly-cut inner borders, determining precisely the 'insiders' and the 'outsiders' within a community.

Second, however, it should be emphasized that the concept of the "outsider" – devoid of rights and liable to slavery – varied considerably in different cultures and periods. In pre-colonial Africa and the Americas, for example, such a status might include anyone who was not part of a powerful lineage. More frequently it was restricted to those not belonging to the tribe or "nation" – an extended community tied by bonds of language, culture, territory, and political authority[5]. In general this was the situation in Europe during and immediately after the Roman era. Classical authors differentiated clearly between 'citizens' and 'barbarians', between those enjoying full rights within the community and those deprived of them – be they foreigners or slaves[6]. But in the middle ages the line between outsiders and insiders, while still drawn predominantly in terms of communal, ethnic or 'national' allegiances, also began to include religious affiliation. A corporate Christian identity was established in contrast to Jews and Muslims. The formation of this identity was clearly demonstrated by the prohibition of Christians enslaving other Christians.

The attitude of Christian theologians towards slavery was largely supportive throughout the middle ages, and slavery remained firmly embedded within the legal systems of most European states, even though its importance as an economic institution declined substantially. In the early middle ages, enslavement of Christians by Christians persisted. In later centuries, however, Europeans at war departed from the precedent of enslaving captives and adopted instead the custom of ransoming prisoners. They began to conceive of all members of the *civitas christiana* as belonging, in a moral sense, to a single "household of Christ"[7]. Throughout Europe, states could take the lives of individuals, but enslavement was no longer an alternative to death; rather, it had become

a fate worse than death and, as such, was reserved for non-Christians[8]. Especially in regions where Christians rubbed shoulders with adherents of other religions, the presence of pagan slaves functioned as a permanent boost for the cohesion of the Christian community in a situation of war and uncertainty. (A similar pattern, in reverse, was established in the Islamic world).

The awareness of a common European identity intensified when European expansion brought Europeans into increased contact with other races. Of course, this was a gradual process, and was contemporaneous with the rise of the individual nation state. However, there were many forces that promoted a shared sense of mutual allegiance. First, there was an interconnected economy. There were also shared innovations. The new science and technology associated with the Renaissance – the growing use of the experimental method, the increased use of quantification as a scientific tool – led to scientific advances and technological achievements, for example in printing, warfare and navigation. Successful conquests promoted a widespread belief that Europe, for all its social and political problems, was "the sole home of Arts and Inventions"[9]. And there was also the indisputable fact of the distinctive physiognomies and ways of life of the inhabitants of distant places – which were mostly perceived in negative terms. The whole edifice of the colonial empires rested upon deeply held convictions of superiority – the superior governing capabilities of the Europeans and the superior culture of the metropolitan countries. The ultimate goal was to master and reorder the rest of the world along European lines, in the manner of Shakespeare's Prospero, or Robinson Crusoe[10].

The conviction of spiritual, moral and intellectual superiority underpinned the self-confidence of Europeans in their encounters with other races. However, there was an apparent paradox in their posture towards the inhabitants of other continents. For one thing, the supposedly inferior people were to be integrated into the colonial economic systems. Their work enabled an increase in the standard of living of some Europeans in the early modern period, as the Europeans could not possibly exploit the overseas natural resources by themselves. Second, the intense missionary activity that accompanied the colonial expansion aimed to enlarge the *civitas christiana* to all mankind. Such developments, however, would shatter the predominance of Europeans. Colonial wealth was not unlimited. It was necessary to delineate firmly the borderline between those who could enjoy it and those who would help produce it – between insiders and outsiders. Therefore, the inclusion of American Indians, Africans or Asians into the Christian world through missionary endeavour was accompanied by their simultaneous exclusion from the other aspects of European life. The concept of unequal races had been constructed on the basis of biological, as well as cultural, characteristics[11]. Together, slavery and race were crucial terms in the process of the creation of European identity[12].

These concepts of slavery and freedom affected most proundly black Africans. Slavery was a vital component of pre-colonial African societies, both in the form of 'household' slavery and in the form of a large-scale labour recruitment[13]. A slave trade had existed

since antiquity. There were black slaves in Rome as well as in the cities of medieval France and Italy, although their numbers were relatively small. The spread of Islam in Africa, and the extension of trade routes in East Africa and across the Sahara, opened up a new source of slaves. Subsequently, an association between black skin and menial slavery developed in the Muslim and Arab world: the word *abd* [black] became synonymous with "slave"[14]. Therefore, in the eyes of early modern European colonizers, black slavery was a "longlived and general custom" carried out from "time immemorable", and thus was unquestioned[15]. Thus it is has been argued that colour prejudice pre-existed the legal establishment of slavery in the New World[16]. It is true that a generally negative tradition regarding Africa is evident in Leo Africanus, *Mandeville's Travels* and Isidore of Seville, Pliny the Elder and Herodotus; all pointed to the existence of preconceived fears, tensions and stereotypes against the inhabitants of Africa[17]. These authorities were drawn on by medieval propagators of the theory (unknown to the Classical world), that there was a link between blackness and sin, blackness and the devil and blackness and slavery[18]. According to some interpretations inhabitants of Africa descended from Cain (Gen. 4: 11-12) or from Canaan, the grandson of Noah (Gen. 9:25), and were therefore subject to eternal slavery[19]. But it should be remembered that the image of Africa in medieval European tradition was by no means altogether negative. In portrayals of the three kings paying homage to the infant Jesus, one was usually an African; there were also black saints (for example, St. Maurice), and notions of Africa as a land of grandeur and riches[20].

Alternative views explain the rise of African slavery in the New World as motivated primarily by economic and strategic reasons. Regardless of the – highly visible – factor of the demographic collapse of native populations in various regions of America shortly after the European conquest,[21] the enslavement of the local population would have probably constituted a threat to stability and inner coherence of colonial society. On the other hand, the ambitions of European colonizers in Africa were limited, and the local effects of enslavement did not harm their interests; at least until they began to penetrate the African interior at the end of the 18th century[22]. Additionally, it is frequently argued that the substitution of African slaves for the various forms of coerced native labour and European indentured servants in the plantation regions of the Americas was driven by relative costs, that it was a "rationalist economic solution"[23] and nothing more; and the discursive debasement of black bondsmen was only a subsequent rationalization of the system. Certainly, both developments were mutually inclusive: enslavement and the discursive degradation of Africans reinforced each other. In either case, of consequence for our present purpose is the fact that at the basis of the graded system of social subordination established in the American colonies – a system characterized by gross inequalities of status and opportunities, of material condition and social aspirations – was racial difference.

But race was not the only component of the novel typologies and modes of identification that crystallised during the period of overseas expansion. The dual concepts of slavery and freedom acquired equal significance. Ancient and medieval texts, in spite

of certain defamatory views of black Africans, portrayed Africa as an important part of the world. Ancient texts, medieval pilgrims' narratives and travellers' journals certainly found the natives of Africa to be strange; their religion was un-Christian and their manner of living was shocking. They were the 'others', but self-contained, independent others. At the dawn of the modern era Africa became an inferior, dependant constituent within the frame of calculations and projections of overseas empires, a part of the system of triangular trade whose ultimate aim was to enrich Europe, at the expense of the other continents. The black slave of the modern era is not the opponent of the white colonizer, but was interconnected with Europe, largely because African slaves entered not only into the American colonies, but in increasing numbers also into Europe itself. Their exotic appearance was utilized in courts and appeared as a favourite motif in art and literature. They were the 'internal others', omnipresent reminders of European identity.

Two aspects of Africans made the deepest impression: their blackness and their nakedness, which both placed them at the opposite physical and social spectrum from Europeans. The colour of the Africans' skin intrigued and challenged European writers more than any social characteristics, and it generated a need to explain why Africans looked both the same as, and different from, Caucasians. Before the 15th century, scriptural descriptions of the African's blackness, such as feature in the *Song of Solomon* and the *Book of Jeremiah*, and classical references in Hippocrates, Pliny and Ptolemy, were highly influential on people's perceptions of Africans[24]. Also, there was a conviction of many Christian authors that the exterior reflected the interior of a man: and as heathen souls did not partake of divine light, thus their skins were dark. However, it should be remembered that their colour acquired importance alongside other physical and mental characteristics, which apparently provided clues to the 'natural condition' of men and their proper place within society. While physical appearance testified, in the eyes of early modern commentators, to the disposition of the soul, this testimony could be loosely interpreted[25].

The English perception of racial differences had a sharper edge to it than the Spanish or Portuguese, especially where people of colour were concerned. The Iberians were more familiar with Africans, more attentive to different shades and conditions of those of African or partly African descent. But almost all of the commentators of African physiognomy and culture, regardless of their nationality, concurred in the belief that the skin colour, hair texture and facial features of Africans were associated somehow with their way of life. Once this association was made racial views became unconsciously linked with social views, and with the common assessment of African culture. Cultural prejudice thus moved easily towards colour prejudice[26]. From the 16th century the generally accepted explanation of African's black skin was related to the sun's rays – whereby the sun was assumed to have scorched the skin, drawn the bile or blackened the blood. In the long run, of course, the colour of Africans attained greatest significance, not primarily as a scientific problem, but rather as a social fact. The skin colour served as a highly visible identification label of their peculiar social situation.

As European intellectuals began regarding man as a natural creature, the analysis of physiognomic and eventually anatomical traits became the only logical method of determining rank on Nature's scale. The theologically oriented explanations, notably the curse of Ham, gradually lost their popularity. In spite of this changed approach, however, the posture towards the black Africans did not alter substantially. Enlightenment thought no longer held the skin colour of the slave to be a mark of God's condemnation, but perceived it as a distinguishing mark of innate craftiness and indolence, an inability to think rationally and an excess of emotion. As such, the concept of the black African ran counter to the Enlightenment concept of man as a rational being, and he was considered to belong more to the animal than the human genus. The theory of the homogeneous origin of the human race did not alter this perception. This was clear in the French *Encyclopédie*, which denounced slavery, and yet, in the entry '*Nègre*', degraded the black African on the basis of science[27].

The degradation of the African into slave is clearly documented in terminological changes. The Latin term *mauri*, referring to the inhabitants of North Africa, had an almost purely political connotation in antiquity. Its medieval derivations – English *moor*, French *maure*, Italian *moro*, Spanish *moro* and Old High German *môr* – included the general notion of the Africans being dark-skinned. Also inherent was the implication of the word heathen[28]. In the early modern era the variations of 'Moor' gave way to other terms: *Negro, negro, nègre, Nigger*. These vernacular variants did not stem from the Latin *niger*, but from Portuguese. The Portuguese, the first slaveholders of the modern era, began to use this term in the middle of the 15th century. This fact in itself alluded to the changed position of the black African in the eyes of his European contemporaries. The displacement of the term Moor/Mohr/mauro by Negro in European texts between the 16th and 18th centuries was more than a change in language – it embodied a transformation of posture towards the black African. 'Ethiopia' – Africa of the Antiquity – acquired in literature of the period many positive traits. By contrast, the 'Guinea' of the modern era, was solely a land of slaves[29]. Deprived of their individual ethnic characteristics, its inhabitants were lumped together under the single badge of 'Negroes'; and by the end of the 17th century, "these two words, Negro and Slave, [had] by custom grown homogeneous and convertible"[30].

It remains a firm conviction of many contemporary authors that the history of Western Europe underwent a reasonably consistent and unique progression from 'unfreedom' to 'freedom'; that the multi-faceted philosophy of freedom, with its celebration of possessive individualism, unfolded as the ideological foundation of the bourgeois epoch and the modern world[31]. A crucial aspect of this development was the shift from 'freedom' as corporate privilege to 'freedom' as natural right of every individual. The roots of this new concept of freedom have been traced by historians to various intellectual developments: economic transformation towards capitalism, Renaissance-humanism, the Reformation, the development of technology and science, the rise of nationalism, and also the overseas expansion. Within this stream of thought, slavery is commonly understood as the antithesis of freedom, of individual autonomy, an ideal which reached its

mature development in the latter part of the 18th century. Some historians have even argued that in European discourse, freedom as a social value could not exist without its antithesis, slavery, or some other extreme form of dependence, since societies define what is central in relation to what is marginal[32]. In real life the dichotomy of slavery/ freedom was by no means unbridgeable. Europeans from antiquity to early modernity were accustomed to the idea of varying degrees of human enslavement, so that the antithesis of "free" was not "slave", but "unfree"; and within the conditions of unfreedom, law and practice recognized numerous gradations[33].

However, there was a clear understanding throughout European history that only those who dominated could indeed be 'free'. Freedom implied dominion, rule, superiority or preeminence, as opposed to dependency and a lack of free choice. In fact, independence was thought to be necessary not only for citizenship rights but for "manhood"[34]. Full rights of participation in a community and nation, as well as the capacity to perform legal transactions, for example, to vote or make a will – one of the fundamental definitions of "freedom"[35] – had always been denied to all dependents and "people without discretion", including servants, women, children and those without property. Thus, "freedom" was more a privilege than a natural and fundamental right of every human being. Overseas colonization enabled former dependents to become independent masters – at the expense, of course, of another group of dependents. It has already been explained that the work of African slaves added the much needed labour input that enabled the development of European economies and the progressive increase of the standard of living in the Old World. Similarly, Western European economic and intellectual development brought social differentiation, mobility and greater personal freedom to peasant proprietors and urban and rural labourers – at the price of the inhabitants of the rest of the world becoming more "unfree"[36].

This was the central argument of Edmund Morgan[37], who analysed the transition from indentured servitude to slavery in colonial Virginia. Morgan argued that, after completing their term, servants applied for full membership into society, where the opportunities for advancement were great, but nevertheless limited – a fact that brought about a constant destabilization of colonial communities. In this sense, it was thought more profitable to employ slaves who would remain forever in a subordinate position than to introduce to colonial society such disquieting elements. Slavery, once established, offered incomparable advantages in keeping labour docile, while, at the same time, the slaves were prevented from applying for a share of American riches and political rights. And face-to-face with the permanently enslaved population, poor and rich colonists enjoyed the feeling of equality in not being slaves, enjoying personal liberty as a birthright. Morgan's theory is exemplified in the Spanish colonies of America, where a complicated system of *castas* – racially and judicially defined social strata – was constructed, forming the basis of the power and wealth of the white colonists. The Spaniards were ranked at the top, followed by the racially mixed but free colonists. Next were the Indians, and finally the African slaves. While each group retained its own internal social divisions within the general ranking system – and thus not all Spaniards shared a com-

mon social status within their own sector – Spaniards as a group were ranked higher than everyone else in the society[38]. The same theory can be expanded to cover the whole of Western Europe during the period of overseas expansion.

Thus, there was no substantial inconsistency in the simultaneous increase of 'European freedom' and 'American slavery'. Contemporaneous with modern slavery was the spread of the bourgeois idea of property and its respect for the autonomy of the individual: both were the result of the same impulses. The close and, at first sight, paradoxical association between the *bürgerlichen Freiheiten* of Europe and colonial enslavement, had already been noted by some 18th-century writers – for example, the German philosopher Christoph Meiners[39]. With the Protestant Reformation, the idea of equality – an inseparable component of the changing notion of liberty – became a major force for intellectual change in Europe, and also in North America. But, as Aristotle observed, "equality consists in the same treatment of similar persons"[40]. Such equality could flourish in modern Europe only behind the frontiers created by race and slavery. The visions of Greek and Roman societies, whose members enjoyed the ideal of freedom and democracy, acquired an important meaning in the discourse of modernizing Europe. But, as modern historians conclude, the republics of antiquity could afford their citizens ample rights precisely due to the presence of enslaved labourers. Similarly, the medieval and early modern notion of equality required that each should receive his just reward, a doctrine perfectly compatible with an unequal ordering of social groups. And, even after the rise of the abolitionist movement as a dominant doctrine of European intellectuals at the close of the 18th century[41], the degradation of blacks was maintained in discourse as well as in practice. In order to enjoy the material and spiritual privileges that arose from the new world order, the inhabitants of Europe had to maintain their exclusivity.

Notes

1 The research that stands as the basis for the present study has been funded by the Grant Agency of the Czech Academy of Sciences (KJB8101403). The problem of modern slavery and the image of the "other" in the process of overseas colonization will be dealt with in detail in my monograph: Markéta Křížová, *"The strength and sinews of this western world..." (African slavery, American colonies and the effort for reform of European society in the Early Modern Era)* (forthcoming).

2 Such a denomination of slavery was upheld by K.M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution. Slavery in the Antebellum South*, New York 1956.

3 For some considerations on the "permanent alienation" of the slave, see O. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, Cambridge Mass. – London 1982. The Justinian Codex as well as medieval legal norms stated unequivocally that "all men are either slaves or free". (W.W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery: The Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian*, Cambridge 1908, p. 1). For the 18th-century Anglophone world, one of the principal meanings of "liberty" could be "freedom, as opposed to slavery" (S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language, in which the Words are deduced from their originals, Explained in their Different Meanings, and Authorized by the Names of the Writes in whose Works they are found*, London 1773, 5th ed., abstracted form the folio edition by the author), vol. 2, unpag., quoting Joseph Addison. The dictionary of the Accademia della Crusca of 1612 gave a classical image of *schiavo*, using the antithesis of "liberty" in order to define it: "someone in the

complete power of another, having lost his liberty". (*Quegli, che è in intera podestà altrui, avendo perduta la libertà. Lat. captivus, mancipium.* The entry is based on Dante, Boccaccio and San Chrysostomo. *Vocabolario degli Accademia della Crusca*, 2nd ed., Venezia 1623, unpag.). The Spanish dictionary of the same period defined "slaves" (*esclavos*) as "those without liberty" ("*Esclavo, va. El hombre o muger que son siervos ó cautivos, y no tienen libertad." Diccionario de la lengua castellana... compuesto por la Real Academia Española, reducido á un tomo para su mas fácil uso*, Madrid 1780, unpag.).

[4] This supposed dilemma is at the core of D.B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, New York 1977, especially pp. 46-47.

[5] N. Huggins, *Black Odyssey: The Afro-American Ordeal in Slavery*, New York 1977, p. 20, responded to the familiar question of how Africans could enslave other Africans and sell them into the slave trade by pointing out that the native traders did not see themselves or their victims as "Africans".

[6] For the problem of slavery in antiquity, and the definition of slave as 'outsider', see for example M.I. Finley (ed.), *Slavery in Classical Antiquity: Views and Controversies*, Cambridge 1960; J. Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man*, trans. T. Wiedmann, Oxford 1974; T. Wiedmann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, London 1981.

[7] In 1492 the Jews were expelled from Spain, not enslaved. Between the late 15th century and 1808, the Spanish Inquisition burned a large number of *conversos* (Jewish converts to Christianity) for false conversion; nevertheless, enslavement for this group was not an issue. (D. Eltis, *Europeans and the Rise and Fall of African slavery in the Americas: An Interpretation*, in "American Historical Review" 1993, 98:5, p. 1409). Similarly, the English seized land in Ireland for their plantations and subjected the Catholic natives to many harsh impositions; but they did not enslave them. (R. Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800*, London - New York 1997, p. 159).

[8] Numerous travellers in the early modern era commented on the existence of "enslaved" domestic peasantry in the eastern part of the continent (namely in Poland or Russia). Their reports, however, constituted part of the generally negative image of these regions, perceived as barbarous and backward; according to the opinion of most historians, the institution of "slavery proper" did not in fact exist in Poland. As for Russian *chlopstvo* of the 16th and early 17th centuries, see R. Hellie, *Slavery in Russia, 1450-1725*, Chicago 1982, who argued that the situation in Russia was specific, as local aristocrats there succeeded in distancing themselves to a large degree from the common people, and creating a gulf unbridged by any sense of common identity. At the same time, the criticism of western intellectuals towards the "enslavement" of men in some territories of Europe confirmed the conviction that this institution should not be applied to its inhabitants.

[9] S. Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus* (1625), quoted by J.P. Greene, *Imperatives, Behaviors and Identities (Essays in Early American Cultural History),* Charlottesville 1992, p. 354. See also S. Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, Chicago 1991, p. 9.

[10] Shakespeare's duke-philosopher Prospero subdued the original inhabitant of the enchanted island, Caliban – "a savage and deformed slave", incapable of speech and culture – and established a civilized, utopian order instead. (See Z. Stříbrný, *The New World in Shakespeare's "Tempest"*, in A. Housková, M. Procházka (eds.), *Utopías del Nuevo Mundo/Utopias of the New World*, Prague 1992, pp. 70-80).

[11] In the 1730s Linneus took the decisive step of classifying mankind as an integral part of animal creation, thereby dramatically underlining the fact that man was, after all, a physical being. But, by 1758, *homo sapiens* had been divided into four varieties with obvious gradations that combined physical and cultural aspects: "Afer (Black, phlegmatic, relaxed; Hair black, frizzled. Skin silky. Nose flat. Lips tumid; Women without shame. Mammae lactate profusely; Crafty, indolent, negligent; Anoints himself with grease; Governed by caprice); Americanus (redish, choleric, erect; Hair black, straight, thick; Nostrils wide; Face harsh; Beard scanty; Obstinate, nervy, free; Paints himself with fine red lines; Regulated by customs); Asiaticus (Sallow, melancholy, stiff; Hair black. Eyes dark; Severe, haughty, avaricious; Covered with loose garments; Ruled by opinions); Europeanus (White, sanguine, muscular; Hair flowing, long. Eyes blue; Gentle, acute, inventive; Covered with close vestments; Governed by laws)". (C.

Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae, sistems regna tria naturae, in classes et ordines, genera et species* (1758-59), English translation of the section on "Homo" in J.S. Slotkin (ed.), *Readings in Early Anthropology*, Chicago 1965, pp. 177-178).

[12] See N.I. Huggins, *The Deforming Mirror of Truth: Slavery and the Master Narrative of American History,* in "Radical History Review" 1991, 49, p. 41; P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge (MA) 1993, p. 2.

[13] For a detailed description of varied forms of African slavery, see for example C. Meillassoux (ed.), *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale,* Paris 1975; S. Miers, I. Kopytoff, Slav*ery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, Madison 1975; P. E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, Cambridge 1983; J. R. Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, London 1985.

[14] R. Blackburn, *The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery*, in "William and Mary Quarterly" 1997, 54:1, pp. 98-99.

[15] In 1685 the Spanish Council of the Indies, after meeting with theologians, jurists, and prelates of the church, assured the king that "there cannot be any doubt as to the necessity of those slaves for the support of the kingdom of the Indies; ... and [that] with regard to the point of conscience [the trade may continue] because of... its longlived and general custom in the kingdoms of Castile, America, and Portugal, without any objection on the part of his Holiness or ecclesial state, but rather with the tolerance of all of them". (Minutes of the Council of the Indies (1685), published in E. Donnan (ed.), *Documents illustrative to the history of the slave trade to America*, Washington 1930, vol. 1, p. 351).

[16] W.D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, Chapel Hill 1968; and C.N. Degler, *Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice*, in "Comparative Studies in History and Society" 1959, 2, pp. 49-66.

[17] Leo Africanus in the middle of the 16th century declared that blacks not only led a beastly life but "were utterly destitute of reason". (Quoted in M. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Philadelphia 1971 (1st ed. 1964), p. 412).

[18] Although there is no evidence in the Bible for a black devil, Satan appeared as an Ethiopian or Moor as far back as the days of the church fathers. A black face was a permanent feature of the medieval representation of the Devil. (M. Rudwin, *The Devil in Legend and Literature*, New York 1931) Even the 18th-century dictionary of the Spanish Academy offered for "negro", among others, the following definitions: "unhappy, unfortunate and disgraced; the Ethiopian, because has this colour; crafty and sly". (*Negro. met. Infeliz, infausto y desgraciado; Negro. El etiope, porque tiene ese color; Negro. germ. Astuto y raymado. Diccionario de la lengua castellana... compuesto por la Real Academia Española, reducido á un tomo para su mas fácil uso*, Madrid 1780, unpag). Several decades earlier Samuel Johnson, in his dictionary, based on the works of respected English authors, explained the word black as "1. Of the colour of night. (*Proverbs*); 2. Dark (*Kings*)...; 4. Horrible, wicked. (Dryden)". (S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language, in which the Words are deduced from their originals, Explained in their Different Meanings, and Authorized by the Names of the Writes in whose Works they are found*, London 1773, unpag.). However, the assertion of historians that the contrast between black and white, dark and light is deeply rooted in us as representing in all respects the ethical contrast between sin and virtue is challenged, for example, by the text of Isaiah 1, 18, where red and white are presented as the irreconcilable, absolute opposites: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool". (H. Baudet, *Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on European Images of Non-European Man*, trans. E. Wentholt, New Haven 1965, p. 30).

[19] George Best, an Elizabethan adventurer who sailed with Martin Frobisher in 1577 in search of the Northwest Passage, in his discourse demonstrating the habitability of all parts of the world, addressed the problem of the colour of Africans. "Noah commanded his sons and their wives to behold God with reverence and feare, and that while they remained in the Arke, they should use continencie, and abstaine from carnall copulation with their wives... which good instructions and exhortation notwithstanding his wicked sonne Cham disobeyed". To punish this "wicked and detestable fact", God willed

that "a sonne should bee born whose name should bee so blacke and lothsome, that it might remain a spectacle of disobedience to all the worlde. And of this blacke and cursed thus came all these blacke Moores which are in Africa". (Best's discourse was published separately in 1578 and reprinted in R. Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation, Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1600 Yeeres*, London 1598-1600, vol. 7, pp. 263-264); also the 17th-century Franciscan chronicler J. de Torquemada, *Monarquía indiana*, México 1965, vol. 1, pp. 72-73, thought of blacks as being descendants of Canaan, and thus embodying a divine curse.

[20] See P. Martin, *Schwartze teufel, edle Mohren*, Hamburg 1993; F.M. Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks*, Cambridge 1983; J. Devisse, *From the Early Christian Era to the "Age of Discovery": From the Demonic Threat to the Incarnation of Sainthood*, vol. 1., Pt. 1 in L. Bugner (ed.), *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, New York 1979. The predominantly positive image of Africa (though with necessary mentions of pagan religions superstitions and human monsters) prevailed even in 16th century cosmographies. See, for example, Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographie universalis libri VI…*, Basel 1550, or Sebastian Franck, *Wahrhaftige Beschreibung aller theil der Welt…*, Frankfurt 1567.

[21] On the topic of the demographical collapse of the Native American population, see the classic work of S.F. Cook, W. Borah, *Essays on Population History: Mexico and the Caribbean*, 3 vols., Berkeley 1971.

[22] See C. Verlinden, *Esclavage mediévale en Europe et esclavage colonial en Amérique*, in "Cahiers de l'Institut des Hautes Études d'Amérique Latine", 1964, 6, pp. 29-45.

[23] M. Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio. El complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, Havana 1978, vol. 2, p. 15.

[24] J.B. Walvin, *The Black Presence: A Documentary History of Negro in England, 1555-1860*, New York 1972, p. 32.

[25] J.H. Elliott, *Spain and Its World, 1500-1700: Selected Essays*, New Haven-London 1989, p. 49.

[26] P. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1840*, Madison 1963, p. 30.

[27] *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers, par une Société de Gens de Lettres*, Paris 1765, vol. 11 (CD rom, REDON).

[28] S.L. Gilman, *On Blackness without Black: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*, Boston 1982, p. xii.

[29] This process of degradation from Moor to Negro was rather slow, if we can judge from the prolonged way through which the term 'Negro' entered reference books. But it entered in an indisputably clear fashion. The dictionary of Antoine Furetière at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries did not include the term *Nègre*; but the subsequent edition of 1727 included the following definition: "The black slave brought from the African coast and sold to the American islands for cultivation of the country, and to the mainland for the work in mines, sugar refineries etc." (*Nègre, adj. m. et f. Esclave noir qu'on tire de la côte d'Afrique, et qu'on vend dans les Isles de l'Amérique pour la culture du païs, et dans la Terre Ferme pour travailler aux mines, aux sucreries etc*. Quoted by S. Delesalle, L. Valensi, *Le Mot 'Nègre' dans les Dictionnaires Francais d'Ancien Régime. Histoire et Lexicographie*, in "Langue Francaise", Paris 1972, n. 15. 'Langage et Histoire', p. 86).

[30] M. Goodwyn, *The Negro's and Indians Advocate*, London 1680, p. 36.

[31] "In the wake of the 18th century Enlightenment the previously held general notion of the course of history as one of perpetual decline had been replaced by a new idea: that mankind as a whole had been steadily improving thanks to a collective quest towards clarity and liberty". (E. Tängerstad, *"The Third World" as an Element in the Collective Construction of a Post-Colonial European Identity*, in B. Strath (ed.), *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, Brussels 2000, p. 157); I. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty,* Oxford 1969, pp. xl-xli, asserted that the "notion of individual liberty in this sense first became explicit in the West", as, perhaps, a "product of a capitalist civilization".

[32] "The concept of freedom as autonomy from personal and social obligations was perhaps possible only if an antithetical slave status defined as total dependence on another also existed". D. Eltis, *The Rise of*

African Slavery in the Americas, Cambridge-New York 2000, p. 277. Davis, *Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* cit., p. 262, was convinced that the "rhetoric of freedom" cultivated in the English colonies of North America throughout the 18th century was "functionally related to the existence of Negro slavery".

[33] For antiquity, see for example M.I. Finley, *Between Slavery and Freedom*, in "Comparative Studies in Society and History", 1964, 6, pp. 233-249. S. Drescher, *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective,* London 1986, p. viii, who asserted that even in the 18th century "freedom, not slavery, was the peculiar institution". For the Englishmen of the 16th century, a slave (Sklaw) could be anyone who was not a "gentleman": a low-born labourer. In this sense, Hamlet (Act II, Scene 2) calls himself a "slave". (See O. Handlin, M. Handlin, *The Origins of the Southern Labor System*, in "William and Mary Quarterly" 1950, 7, pp. 199-222).

[34] Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* cit., unpag., included among the definitions of the word "man" also "wealthy or independent person". Such identification raises the possibility that the key word in phrases like "all men are created equal" may not have been equal but *men* – not all humans were equal, but those who could meet the full requirements for being a man were. (See Greene, *Imperatives, Behaviors, Identities* cit., p. 256).

[35] P.P. Wiener (ed.), *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, New York 1973-74, vol. 2, p. 249.

[36] This link between modernity and slavery is perceived by many authors as one of the "dark sides of progress". "Modern social powers can conduce to highly destructive and inhuman ends", warned Blackburn, *Making of the New World Slavery* cit., p. 5.

[37] E. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, New York - London 1975.

[38] See M. Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America*, Boston 1967; I. Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in 18th-Century Mexico*, New Haven 2004.

[39] C. Meiners, *Ueber die Natur der Afrikanischen Neger, und die davon abhangende Befreyung, oder Einschränkung der Schwarzen*, in "Göttingisches Historisches Magazin", 1790, 6, p. 386; see U. Sadji, *Der Negermythos am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland: Eine Analyse der Rezeption von Reiseliteratur über Schwarzafrika,* Frankfurt - Bern - Las Vegas 1979, p. 107.

[40] P.P. Wiener, *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, New York 1973-74, vol. 2, p. 140.

[41] Of the ample literature on the topic of abolitionism, see for example, J.L. Thomas (ed.), *Slavery attacked: The abolitionist crusade*, New Jersey 1965; R. Antsey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810*, Cambridge 1975, R. Anstey, P.E.H. Hair (eds.), *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition*, Liverpool 1976; and S. Drescher**,** *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective,* London 1986.

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