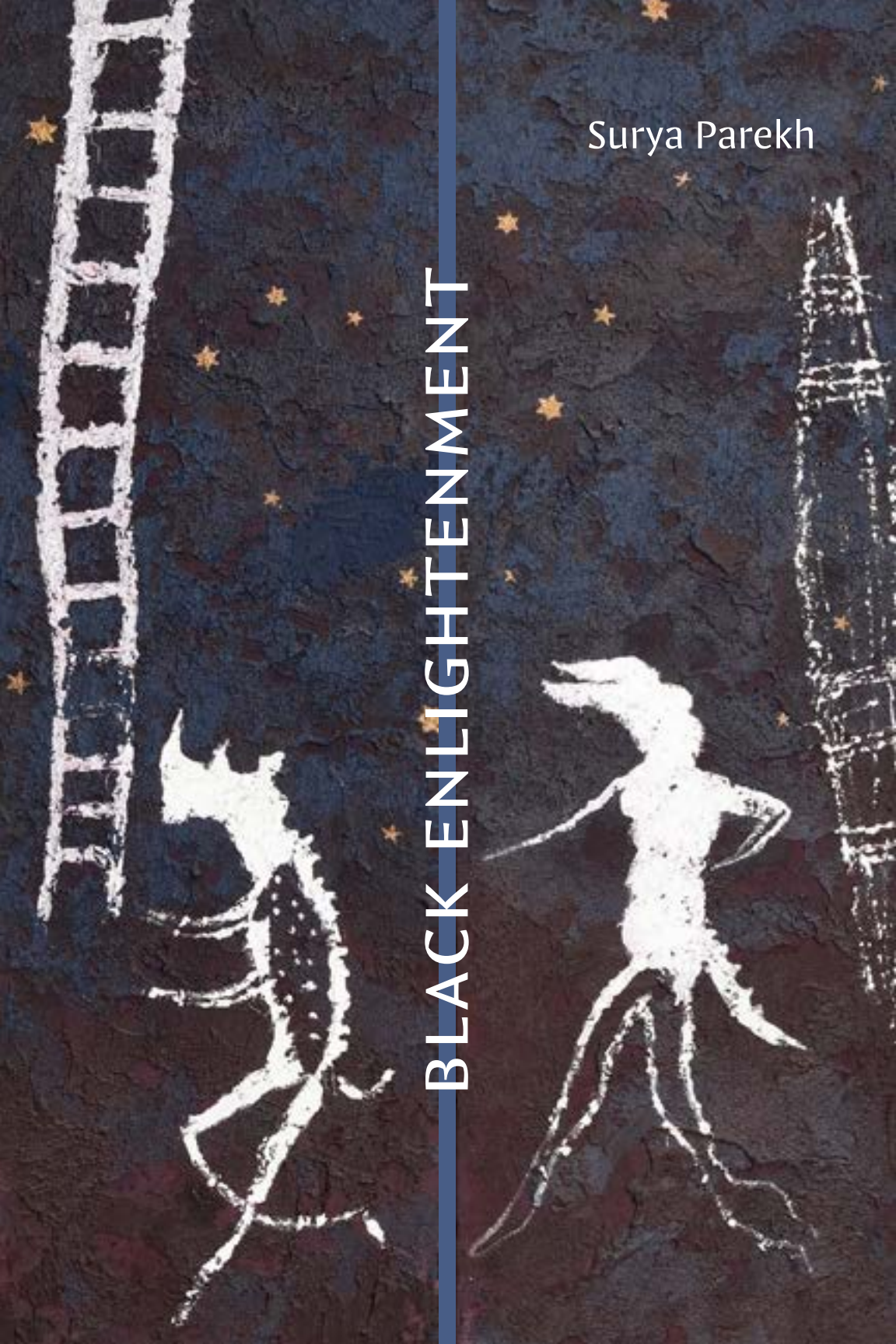
Surya Parekh
BLACK ENLIGHTENMENT

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Gavin Jantjes, *Untitled*, 1988. Acrylic on canvas; 4 panels, each 78 × 27 × 5 cm. From the *Zulu* series. © Gavin Jantjes. Photo by Anne Purkis.

To Gayatridi

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Introduction

I.

The 1782 posthumous publication of the *Letters* of Black intellectual and grocer Ignatius Sancho (c. 1729–1780) was an immediate success. It raised a sizable sum for his widow, Anne. The first run of the *Letters* sold out so quickly that a disappointed reviewer had to wait for the 1783 second edition. A commentator remarked that "[t]he first edition was patronized by a subscription not known since the days of the [Joseph Addison's] Spectator."[1] The confluence of the sudden popularity of abolition during the 1780s in Great Britain and the long-standing, sometimes titillating, public interest in the capacities of the Black mind fueled the sales of the *Letters.* By decade's end, the *Letters* (appearing in yet another edition) had been extensively reviewed and was invoked in prominent abolitionist tracts in Great Britain, France, and Germany. For most abolitionists, Sancho's *Letters* and the earlier publication of Black poet Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) were clear proof of Black genius, each a convincing demonstration that Black people were human according to prevailing Enlightenment and Christian conceptions. By the turn of the century, five editions of the *Letters* had appeared, the last one including an essay by the famous German Enlightenment scientist Johann Blumenbach, who had translated some of Sancho's letters.

But by and large, neither the general public nor abolitionists nor Enlightenment thinkers actually read Sancho's individual letters, aside from, perhaps, his correspondence with novelist Laurence Sterne. It was instead the posthumously written, unverifiable, and fanciful biography of Sancho that prefaced his *Letters* that captivated readers. The biography relates a tale of Sancho's birth on a slave ship, the early death of his parents (his mother from disease; his father by committing suicide rather than enduring slavery), and a peculiar story of Sancho's naming. He was christened Ignatius by a Spanish

bishop in Cartagena and later given the surname Sancho by three petulant sisters in Greenwich for his supposed resemblance to Don Quixote's famous sidekick Sancho Panza. The biography portrays Sancho as a suffering, enslaved Black subject, whose eventual success occurs through the recognition of his genius by British philanthropists. By contrast, the nonsensical wordplay in Sancho's letters, along with their startling and quick shifts in subject from commentary on literature to British politics to domestic matters at his grocery shop, turned readers away. Even the biography points readers away from the letters by devoting only one line to the letters that follow. This trend persists in contemporary scholarship, Brycchan Carey tells us, with the letters treated as a mere "footnote" to the biography.[2] The widespread circulation of Sancho's *Letters* paved the way, nonetheless, for the first robust narrative of freedom, a work that was more popular than the *Letters* and that satisfied the public demand for biography, namely Olaudah Equiano's autobiographical *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (1789).

Let us open one of Sancho's letters. In early 1778, Sancho received a parcel of books sent by a Philadelphia Quaker to his Charles Street home in London. Among them were Phillis Wheatley's *Poems* and an abolitionist book or two, perhaps Anthony Benezet's *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies* (1766) and *Some Historical Account of Guinea . . . With an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave-Trade* (1771). Reading these books, Sancho, the only Black man known to have voted in the eighteenth century, writes to his benefactor that "if his Majesty perused one [of the abolitionist books]," then "though it might spoil his appetite . . . the consciousness of having it in his power to facilitate the great work—would give an additional sweetness to his tea" (LLIS 165).[3]

If these books should "produce remorse in every enlightened . . . reader," as Sancho writes, is their effect somewhat different if the reader is Black? Sancho feels "a double or mixt sensation," an uncanny sensation perhaps, which combines sorrow with gratitude, metaphorized in the powerful contrast between "heart" and "bosom":

> The perusal affected me more than I can express;—indeed I felt a double or mixt sensation—for while my heart was torn for the sufferings—which, for aught I know—some of my nearest kin might have undergone—my bosom, at the same time, glowed with gratitude—and praise toward the humane—the Christian—the friendly and learned Author of that most valuable book. (LLIS 165)

The horrors of the Middle Passage produce Sancho's uncanny reading.[4] Ignatius Sancho, for whom slavery was perversely one of the constituting factors of his Enlightenment subjectivity, is using these Enlightenment abolitionist tracts (Benezet mentioned the Caribbean and the thirteen colonies) to imagine the situation of his "nearest kin." Orphaned by enslavement, he has no firsthand knowledge about them.

Barred from such knowledge, Sancho turns to fellow Black writer Phillis Wheatley (c. 1753–1784), the Black woman who had survived the Middle Passage to become a poet. Sancho's pithy characterization of Wheatley as "Genius in bondage" (LLIS 166) (Sancho did not know that by 1778 Wheatley had been manumitted and was thus, formally, politically free) is well known. The one-line remark Sancho makes about Wheatley's poetry has received less notice. He remarks elliptically: "Phyllis's [*sic*] poems do credit to nature—and put art—merely as art—to the blush" (LLIS 165). Sancho may be articulating a limit to Enlightenment aesthetics—which distinguishes nature from art—in judging Wheatley's poetry.

For the "enlightened" white reader, abolitionist tracts, Sancho tells us, should "produce remorse" by bringing to light the evils of slavery. Identifying abolition with Enlightenment and Christianity, he holds out hope, prior to the mainstreaming of abolition, that the reading of such texts will lead to political change. He castigates Wheatley's master and the twelve men who had signed their names to attest to her authenticity at the beginning of her book as unchristian, akin to the Levites in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Sancho's own relationship to Enlightenment and Christianity—using abolitionist texts to imagine the plight of his "nearest kin" and claiming a limit to Enlightenment in his judgment of Wheatley's poetry—is more mysterious. The uncanny combination of horror, sorrow, and gratitude that Sancho feels is a difficult, perhaps impossible, perspective for us to imagine.

We have read writers such as Sancho in the wake of the appearance of robust narratives of freedom, beginning with Equiano's *Narrative*. Two centuries of our readings of those narratives have been influenced by the identification of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century abolition with the ideals of the Enlightenment. Equiano's narration of an inexorable push to freedom, his horrifying description of the Middle Passage, his portrayal of himself as a Christian moral person, his passionate fights against slavery, and his rational criticisms of emergent theories of race resonate with our received notions of an Enlightenment subject. The courageous and entrepreneurial Equiano overcomes his bondage through buying his manumission. He becomes an abolitionist near the end of his life. The sophisticated rhetorical strategies

employed by Equiano in his *Narrative* are compatible with Enlightenment notions of aesthetics and genius. They thus make possible complex readings. Equiano is read as a voice that both opposes Enlightenment schemas of race, particularly their denigration of Black subjects, and exemplifies the ideals of Enlightenment subjectivity, thus expanding the taxonomy of possible Enlightenment subject positions. Within such a frame, earlier Black writings appear impoverished, overly religious, complicit, and not political enough. The lack of available historical detail on a Wheatley or Sancho further exacerbates this situation.

Black Enlightenment takes this problem as its point of departure. It reads Black writers writing before the mainstreaming of abolition and the publication of Equiano's *Narrative*. It stages the (im)possibility of imagining the Enlightenment from the position of this Black subject for whom the Middle Passage is a condition of entry. It also articulates the limits of this staging—what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls "transform[ing] . . . (im)-possibility . . . into the condition of its possibility" through intellectual labor—so that it remains a continuing and open-ended effort.[5] Nahum Chandler, following W. E. B. Du Bois and Spivak, has insisted that our investigations of the Black subject oblige us to reformulate the production of the general or unmarked subject.[6] *Black Enlightenment* thus reconsiders the very idea of the Enlightenment subject from the position of the Black subject. It suggests that the concept metaphor of Enlightenment necessarily contains an imperfectly foreclosed Black subject. Let me offer a brief example.

Prior to appearing in a 1771 *Gentleman's Magazine* piece and Edward Long's *The History of Jamaica* (1774), the figure of the free Black Jamaican schoolteacher and poet Francis Williams troubled white Enlightenment philosophers David Hume and Immanuel Kant. News about him must have traveled informally, because in 1753, David Hume added a footnote to his already published essay "Of National Characters" to account for Williams. There, he writes, "In *Jamaica,* indeed, they talk of one negroe, as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly" (NC 291).[7] A dismissive Hume imagines Williams's speech as composed of a few "plain" words, whose underlying paradigm of repetition suggests a subject, "like a parrot," of no intelligence. The note circulated, perhaps via private translation, to Immanuel Kant, who cited it in his 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*.[8] As Kant distortedly reproduces Hume's note, he erases the figure of Williams, unable even to countenance the possibility of a Black Enlightenment thinker. Hume's note in "Of National Characters" and Kant's *Observa-*

tions are widely considered to have inaugurated an Enlightenment discourse of race.

Scholars have noticed the contradictions of Enlightenment philosophers on the Black subject. Understanding the ideals of Enlightenment conceptions of the human as being in opposition to Enlightenment discourses of race, they have tried to resolve these contradictions either by dismissing these philosophers for racism or by trying to save them from such accusations. Rather than resolving these contradictions, we must learn to read them. A tremendous anxiety shows up in white Enlightenment thinking on the Black subject. Such anxiety spans abolitionist and proslavery authors as well as moderate and so-called radical Enlightenment thinking. As news about Williams circulates informally across the Atlantic, Hume produces a belated note, which he then revises seventeen years later, expressing sentiments found nowhere else in his oeuvre.

Kant's anxieties about the Black subject spanned his career. Two years before the publication of the concluding work of his Critical Philosophy, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), he publishes an essay considered his last published theorization of race. In this late work, as also in his early work, he ignores passages from the very pages he is directly quoting, to produce distorted accounts. As Kant's strategies suggest, far from being marginal, anxieties about the Black subject are central to Enlightenment thinking and, in turn, the use of Enlightenment thinking by abolitionist and proslavery authors. *Black Enlightenment* shows that the possibility of the Black subject is both necessary to these philosophers and, at the same time, foreclosed by them. The Black subject undoes the philosophical equilibrium of a Hume or Kant, disturbing their philosophical discourse.

Over the last fifty years, scholars have productively complicated our understanding of the Enlightenment. We no longer think of it as a unified Western European intellectual movement. The significance of Eastern and Central Europe and of the colonial enterprises in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australia has been demonstrated. The agents of Enlightenment have expanded beyond well-known canonical philosophers. Roy Porter has written that "The Enlightenment is necessarily rather amorphous and diverse . . . we should face up to this diversity."[9] At the same time, at the heart of Enlightenment remains an unfinished project. As Jacques Derrida and Dorindra Outram tell us, the very notion of becoming enlightened is always placed in the future.[10] In many ways, we can say that this unfinished project, calling out to the future, is about learning to read. Thus, *Black Enlightenment* reads early Black writers and follows figurations of the Black subject by ca-

nonical Enlightenment thinkers, teasing out singular practices of reading. It looks at how heterogeneous subjects are transformed into a singular Black subject. It also considers these thinkers in their own, constituted normality. In line with other recent works, such a focus takes in an expanded geography, opening onto larger coordinates that map Enlightenment, slavery, and the production of Black subjectivity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, moving from North America and the Caribbean to Germany, France, Spain, and Holland; to West and South Africa, including what is now Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire; and to South and Southeast Asia. I offer here one instance of the expanded geography and history that this book reads and that will be elaborated in the chapters that follow.

In 1657, the first group of enslaved people was brought to the newly formed Dutch Cape of Good Hope in South Africa from Dutch colonies in Bengal and Java (indeed, a ditty was composed at the time about "Thomas von Bengalen"). These enslaved people were part of an effort to displace the local Khoikhoi groups into the hinterland, groups who had earlier been displaced by Bantu-speaking peoples, thus paving the way for the formation of cattle farms intended to meet the nearly insatiable demand for beef by mercantile Dutch vessels. The German astronomer Peter Kolb describes the situation of the Khoikhoi from 1705 to 1713 in contradictory ways: the Khoikhoi in the new settlement are "lazy," but those in rural areas are living in an enviable idyllic freedom. His portrayal is translated into Dutch, French, and English, and appears also in popular travelogues compiled by John Green and Antoine François Prévost.[11] These descriptions influence both Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of the noble savage and Immanuel Kant's claim of Black "laziness." In his last essay on race, Kant, looking for a more contemporary example to bolster his claim of Black "laziness," adds a description of the "Black Poor"—a group of homeless people in London comprising former slaves who had fought for the British in the War of American Independence and Lascars from South Asia, sailors stranded by the British East India Company, who had been given the name the "Black Poor" by the popular press. A Barbadian planter had denigrated this group in a proslavery tract as idle and criminal. Kant publishes his essay, with a footnote citing this Barbadian planter, in two installments in the exact same months that a politicized Equiano, in the year before his *Narrative* is published, criticizes the same passage in British newspapers. This occurs shortly after Equiano has himself been fired from a philanthropic mission to resettle the Black Poor in Sierra Leone (indeed a later effort at colonizing Sierra Leone included Maroons expelled from Jamaica). That same year, as Kant

secures his reputation among the natural scientists and Equiano emerges as the most prominent Black abolitionist in Great Britain, the settlement in Sierra Leone is destroyed by a nearby ruler who was retaliating against double dealing by British slave traders.

Within this expanded geography and complex political situation, *Black Enlightenment* examines how eighteenth-century Black authors in Great Britain and its colonies, among them Francis Williams, Phillis Wheatley, and Ignatius Sancho, imagine themselves as Enlightenment subjects and how they are subsequently foreclosed by white European thinkers. In their imaginings, they do not necessarily think of the Enlightenment as concerned solely with narratives of freedom: abolition of slavery and decolonization. Wheatley, Sancho, and Williams are generally overlooked today, because of the tendency to relate the Enlightenment only to narratives of freedom. *Black Enlightenment* argues against a frame that prioritizes narratives of freedom without diminishing the important difference made by the publication of Equiano's *Narrative* in 1789, the founding of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Great Britain in 1787, the founding of the Société des amis des Noirs in France in 1788, and of course, the issuing of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789.

There have been recent efforts, particularly with Wheatley, to read a covert subject of freedom into her work. Such an approach, as it tries to identify resistance, nonetheless performs the foreclosure I have been describing. If we do not consider the general frame within which only a certain kind of resistance is seen as being of value—a general frame influenced by Enlightenment—we cannot but continue to repeat this gesture. My own aim here, however, is not to offer an alternative frame. Instead, it is to look at scenes of complicity without too quickly reading them as assimilation or covertly resistant. By questioning a certain determination of the Black subject in relation to a certain determination of Enlightenment, I try to learn from Williams's, Wheatley's, and Sancho's own appropriations of and embrace of Enlightenment, Christianity, and contemporary politics. I also read the many contradictions, anxieties, and inconsistencies of canonical Enlightenment thinkers. It is my sense that the continued usefulness of the latter writers, too, is to be found in their complicity, by acknowledging and reading their racism.

The first section of *Black Enlightenment,* chapters 1 and 2, considers the many attempts by Francis Williams to exercise political subjectivity against efforts by David Hume and Immanuel Kant to transform the specter of Black political subjectivity, through Williams, into a foreclosable notion of Black

genius. The skeptical Hume and the critical Kant, perhaps our two most rigorous Enlightenment philosophers, also initiate an Enlightenment discourse of race. In this section, I show how an anxiety about Black political subjectivity both shapes these discourses of race and is covered over by the figure of Black genius. In reading Hume and Kant, I consider, too, an intertextuality that traces anxieties about Black subjectivity in Africa and Europe to the earliest texts of Enlightenment.

The second section, chapters 3 and 4, examines how, as large-scale Black political participation through emancipation becomes a palpable possibility in the 1780s, the politics of racial exclusion change. Many white abolitionists shared with Enlightenment thinkers and proslavery advocates a fear of multiracial polities in Europe. In order to manage this fear, abolitionists continued to prioritize the figure of Black genius, while proslavery planters changed emphasis from Black genius to the predication of Black people as "bad" political subjects—lazy, criminal, needy—and therefore unfit for citizenship. Such change could accommodate exceptional Black thinkers and a certain notion of humanism while still endorsing large-scale exclusion. The politics of Black racial exclusion, distinguishing between so-called good and bad subjects, continues to resonate for us. In chapter 3, these politics show up in the chance "confrontation" between Olaudah Equiano and Immanuel Kant mentioned above. The opposition between Equiano, advocating a multiracial polity, and Kant, claiming a "scientific" Black inferiority, is familiar to us, even if this chance "confrontation" is not. But what goes unnoticed is that the example used to "prove" Black laziness and "bad" political subjectivity is the Black Poor.

These politics of exclusion show up differently in chapter 4. Against an abolitionist frame, our own readings of Sancho cannot but read him as a "bad" political subject whose musings on art and domestic matters appear to us as trivial and as proof of assimilation. Yet Sancho is also the only Black man whom we know to have voted in the eighteenth century. Having critically worked through Enlightenment discourses of race and abolition from the position of the Black subject, chapter 4 tries to produce a reading of Sancho's politics, as expressed in his letters, through a frame that is not so structured by a binary opposition between resistance and assimilation.

Black Enlightenment concludes with Phillis Wheatley. Wheatley stands as a kind of limit to this book's project of imagining the Enlightenment from the (im)possible perspective of the Black subject. This chapter puts the possibilities of imaginative reading to the test. Unlike Williams, Equiano, and Sancho, Wheatley was enslaved when she wrote most of the work by her

that has been published. Since it is not clear that political freedom was (or could have been) the main goal for an enslaved Wheatley, the reading in this concluding chapter is more delicate. It tries to access Wheatley's subjectivity through a Christianity that uses Enlightenment. After manumission, Wheatley is much more legible to us as a Black Enlightenment subject. She publicly advocates abolition and, contrary to the loyalties of her former owners, supports the American Revolution. She also corresponds with such figures as Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington. Although enfranchisement is denied to her by way of race and gender, in the last poem she writes, she nonetheless figures herself as a free subject of the new republic.

This book tries to produce readings of these writers, however imperfect, in their own normality, offering theoretical commentary by way of and contingent upon these readings. The tacit argument of this book is that we must learn to read and, through reading, theorize these thinkers in their heterogeneity. What we finally learn is how to find openings in their works that call out for future readers to respond. *Black Enlightenment* thus asks us to read and reread early Black writers, foregrounding their heterogeneity, who by convention we are obliged to posit as singular Black Enlightenment subjects again and again.

II.

In the chapters that follow, I read Williams, Wheatley, and Sancho in their differences. Here let me offer some shared details of their lives as I examine the abolitionist frame that has influenced our readings of them. Since this book reads Equiano before the publication of his *Narrative* (1789) and since he has been cast as an exemplar of Black Enlightenment subjectivity, I do not discuss him below.

The works and lives of Williams, Wheatley, and Sancho have had a troubled historical reception. Although starting in difficult, sometimes tragic, circumstances (Wheatley was kidnapped into slavery at age seven or eight; Sancho was supposedly born on a slave ship), they each attained a relative degree of privilege. Williams was born free, studied in London, and owned property; Wheatley had a room of her own and was given an education that was unique even for the rich, educated, white men of Boston; and Sancho was befriended by the Duke of Montagu. All attained a minor level of fame during their lives. Wheatley was patronized by Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon; Sancho's correspondence with Laurence Sterne was published;

and Williams was proposed for membership in the Royal Society, albeit denied. Written from this tenuous privilege, the works by this eighteenth-century cohort feature contradictory comments about slavery and colonialism.[12] Williams's patriotic ode to a colonial governor, Wheatley's teenage poems praising Christianity, and Sancho's familiar, often jocular, letters to white intimates, alongside Lucy Terry's short poem about a Native American raid, John Marrant's zealous and self-incriminatory diaries, and Jupiter Hammon's sermons, cannot be generalized as expressing a subject of freedom. They thus uneasily bear the position of progenitors of Black letters and arts.[13] It is here that I see the mark of a general foreclosure.

These writers have typically been read as assimilationist (although the situation has recently changed somewhat for Wheatley), a reading bolstered by the portraits of Williams, Wheatley, and Sancho painted in the eighteenth century: the colonial scholar in a private study, the faithful Christian servant, and the portly gentleman dandy. Yet the precariousness of their privilege is also evident. All died in varying degrees of penury. Williams lost his fortune; manumission left Wheatley impoverished in the recession that followed the War of American Independence, without a publisher for her second book of poetry; and Sancho and his descendants never gained independence from their benefactors. Somewhat paradoxically, the unfortunate circumstances of their deaths have undermined attempts at heroic figuring and have contributed to a paucity of scholarship on these writers, especially Williams and Sancho.

There is also a distance between the lives of this group and the people they sometimes claim to be representing. Confronting colonial and metropolitan racism as well as exoticization by "benevolent" masters, as in Wheatley's case, they are nonetheless able to move away from the violence of chattel slavery. In singular ways, these thinkers not only have continuities with the lot of enslaved people writ large but also exhibit the kinds of discontinuities that constitute the predicament of the Black intellectual: taken in positive as well as derogatory ways as representative of Africans; facing varying degrees of racism, prejudice, and oppression in their personal lives; and, as it happens, having the leisure time required to undertake intellectual labor.

On the one hand, the itineraries of these authors are enabled by acts of private philanthropy and benevolence that perpetuate both slavery and, later, certain strands of abolition. As beneficiaries, they attain a relative and unique social mobility that permits learning. On the other hand, this mobility is tenuous, and historical circumstances constrain its reach. It is out of this complicity that Williams, Wheatley, and Sancho claim themselves as the appropriate

readers of Homer, Horace, Vergil, Milton, Locke, Addison, Pope, and Sterne, among others, inhabiting in varying and resonant ways an Enlightenment subject position. Mary Prince's claiming of abolition discourse or, much later, Frantz Fanon's use of Hegel's Lord Bondsman dialectic can be placed in the wake of this gesture.[14] As this cohort claims the Enlightenment, they are animated by (as they animate) the promise of this conjuncture: namely that a conception of the human strong enough to access a generic "anyone" might be produced by and for the Black Enlightenment subject.

It is here that I look at a divergence between a continuing discourse of racism—shared by proslavery advocates, some Enlightenment philosophers, and abolitionists—and the Black writers that I read. For the continuing discourse of racism, Williams, Wheatley, and Sancho are plotted upon the limits of the human to which their obvious genius brings them close, while still denying them entry. Abolitionists and Enlightenment philosophers used these writers to explicitly combat notions of inferiority, proclaiming them Black geniuses. Their own self-characterizations do not enter into these polemics. Indeed, what may have unnerved Hume, Kant, Thomas Jefferson, and many other Enlightenment authors across Europe and the Atlantic is the staging of a more felicitous position to think the human through these Black subjects. Let us look at how Williams uses the figure of the "Moor" through a melancholy self-irony.

In 1759 Williams welcomed the incoming governor of the island, George Haldane, the Scot distinguished for his military achievements during the War of Austrian Succession, with a Latin ode. Near the end of the poem, the lyrical speaker breaks into song. Bidding the "blackest muse" to rise, the speaker sonorously chants, "Integritas morum *Maurum* magis ornat" ("[T]he integrity of mores [*morum*] more adorns a *Moor*").[15] The Latin teacher Williams takes this sonic play of "mores *Maurum* magis" ("mores more . . . *Moor*") to figure an ethical Black subject as the most appropriate citizen of Jamaica. The poem challenges the governor to be a learned addressee who might perceive his integrity. The prevailing English translation by the Jamaican planter Edward Long (whose Latin was less learned than Williams's and whose translation has been anthologized in volumes of Caribbean, Afro-American, and Afro-British literature) misses this complex play, translating Williams's line as figuring a subject of racial and moral purity: "[m]anners unsullied . . . Shall best the sooty *African* adorn."[16] Williams's self-staging as a Black citizen through the figure of a Moor is lost in translation.

An unnoticed dimension in these thinkers is that of claiming access to the generic in oneself and others as a claim to the polity. Francis Williams

declared in various legal petitions that he had been naturalized; Ignatius Sancho was perhaps the only Black British man during the eighteenth century to have appeared in the voting rolls; and Phillis Wheatley's poetry figured its lyrical speaker as citizen, asserting access to a public sphere from which Wheatley herself was ostensibly barred. In a more general sense, the submission of legal petitions by enslaved people, in the face of almost inevitable defeat, is perhaps also an instance of this claiming.[17]

In my estimation, it is this claim to the polity and the anxieties of European philosophers around the specter of the Black citizenship that are most obscured by the privileging of a certain determination of Black genius. From our vantage point, these are not radical politics. We must instead learn to read them in their complicity and within their normality. The efforts by Francis Williams and his father, John, to secure citizenship are private efforts limited to the Williams family. Indeed, among the rights that they secure (and later restore) is the right to disqualify any testimony brought against them by enslaved people. Sancho's involvement in British politics and Wheatley's vision of a new America whose influence is global can also be placed here. How do we read a politics that cannot be easily valorized according to our received distinctions of radical and assimilationist?

That this claim to the polity does not take shape by passing through familiar Enlightenment determinations of the human is among the surprising discoveries of this book. Perhaps the most startling and perverse instance of a recognition of a possible Black citizen is the following advertisement, discussed in chapter 4, printed during the War of American Independence in the *South Carolina Gazette* of February 27, 1777:

> To be sold by private contract, a likely young negro fellow, as good a porter as any in the state: He is sold for no fault, but his objecting to live with a tory; therefore none but a profound whig need apply to purchase him.[18]

As the population of enslaved people grew, this claim to the polity was a source of tension for abolitionists and proponents of slavery alike, and a common discourse was found in the figure of Black genius. It must be noticed that the general white abolitionist discourse of the late eighteenth century was focused more on abolition of the slave trade than on emancipation. When they thought about emancipation, it was to prioritize schemes to move both free Blacks and enslaved people to Africa; white abolitionists and proponents of slavery alike shared a general horror of a multiracial cit-

izenry in Great Britain. Thus, the antiracism of abolitionists was often confined to lauding a Wheatley or Sancho as examples of Black mental capacity.

This is a period in Europe and its colonies when citizenship was expanding, educational mandates were broadening, and moral development was increasingly pinned upon obligations to the nation. In a time of insecure political boundaries, persistent war and skirmishes, and a changing public sphere, the borders of the political subject were unstable, loosening in one moment and hardening in another. In chapter 2, I show how the nearly constant revolt by Maroon societies in Jamaica from 1655 to 1740 played a role in the freedoms that Francis Williams sued for, as an anxious Jamaican Assembly see-sawed between granting more rights to free Blacks in one moment, only to take them away in another.[19] And, as chapter 4 argues, the possibility of discerning Ignatius Sancho as the proper gentleman reader of Sterne in the 1780s, during a moment of turbulence and uncertainty in British governance, disappeared some ten years later, as abolitionist discourse prevailed and schemes to repatriate enslaved people to Africa were privileged. Here, the ephemeral promises of one historical moment are recoded as accommodational tendencies in another.

Let us briefly look at how the emergence of Black genius as a discursive figure is used to contain these possibilities.

III.

The possibility and anxiety occasioned by non-European, particularly Black and indigenous subjects of Enlightenment, was there at its so-called beginning. In a 1688 essay, the early Enlightenment thinker Bernard Fontenelle was troubled by the possibility of Black and indigenous subjects. He partially forecloses this possibility, claiming the differences of climate are too great, wondering if "one must not despair of ever seeing great Lapp or Negro authors" (*de grands Auteurs Lappons ou Négres*).[20] Ten years later, he revises his essay, reducing the differences of climate and suggesting an expanded view where one might "hope" one day to come across such authors.[21] For Fontenelle, such possibilities had political implications. He argues that reading would reduce the natural determinations wrought by climate among humans and thus allow for parity across the species. Both versions of Fontenelle's essay circulated in the eighteenth century, setting up a contested discourse about the possibility of Black genius. This discourse shifted from Africa to Black people in Europe as the century progressed. The Black phi-

losopher Anton Amo defends his dissertation in Halle-Wittenberg in 1734, and the Black theologian Jacobus Capitein defends his controversial thesis about slavery in Leiden in 1742. In the social and intellectual milieus that span Tacky's Revolt in Jamaica (1760–1761) and its aftermath, the various theaters of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), the War of American Independence (1776–1783), the emergence of Prussia on the global stage, and the colonial expansion in India and Africa in the late eighteenth century, Black interiority becomes an object of public fascination. The growing unease about slavery in the 1770s, at the onset of the Age of Revolutions, is met by a growing abolitionist discourse. This discourse accelerates with the publication of Williams's poem and Wheatley's and Sancho's books. In response, a public proslavery discourse comes to the fore in the 1780s. These discourses come together under the vexed sign and figure of Black genius, taking shape in the purported consideration of Black intellectual labor by slavery proponents, abolitionists, and philosophers. Throughout the later part of the eighteenth century, Black genius recurs as a contested discursive formation. This is a figure of genius that prioritizes questions of innate capacity over the aesthetic or moral excellence of genius's product. The meaning of Blackness oscillates between the positive pole of an affirmed Black genius and a denial of Black genius that supports notions of scientific inferiority, between a providential subjectivity and a typological objectivity—that is to say, God's gift of individual genius over against general Black inferiority.

Hume and Kant initiate a discourse in which the purported absence of Black genius blocks Black access to the Enlightenment. In counterfactual, subjunctive, and conditional discourses, Black genius is repeatedly denied by proslavery and Enlightenment authors, and Williams, Wheatley, and Sancho are proclaimed imitators. Abolitionist tracts vigorously attempt to disprove such assertions by casting Williams, Wheatley, and Sancho as exemplars of genius. Black genius becomes a privileged site of opposition between proponents of slavery and white abolitionists. A contradictory and paradoxical figure, Black genius holds together competing discourses and temporalities, appearing ambiguously as a site of historical possibility and Enlightenment equality, a political proposition, and a commercial icon. Black genius also confers celebrity status on Phillis Wheatley and Ignatius Sancho.

These familiar dynamics of Enlightenment, slavery, and race—where philosophical, canonical denunciations of Black genius are criticized by abolitionist tracts—do not tell the whole story. A generation of scholars has painstakingly investigated this discourse, chipping away at historically and

philosophically sedimented layers of interpretation particularly inflected by nineteenth-century schemas of race. As the dynamism and peculiarity of the eighteenth century have come into sight, certain mainstays that have guided readings of this moment have been questioned.[22] Thus historians of slavery have noticed that emergent theories of race, the practice and polemics of slavery, and abolitionist Enlightenment humanism were sometimes aligned in ways that appear contradictory to us. That some defenders of slavery conceded a common humanity and the existence of Black genius while abolitionists were sometimes motivated by fears of miscegenation has significantly complicated our understandings of this period.

What is actively suppressed through the figure of Black genius is the question of Black polities in the New World. Here, it is necessary for us to turn to the rich scholarship on the political promises and limits of the Enlightenment and its relationship to Black subjects and freedom in the Caribbean. A generative body of work has emerged over the last thirty years, perhaps since Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* (itself following C. L. R. James's *Black Jacobins*) on the Haitian Revolution.[23] This scholarship has allowed us to consider the centrality of the Haitian Revolution to the French Revolution, especially the close and intertwined relationship of chattel slavery in the colonies to the activities in the metropole and the ways in which the political struggles for freedom in Haiti and France affected each other and related to the Enlightenment.[24] Because of this important work, it is now a commonplace that the revolts begun in 1791, which led to the abolition of slavery in the French colonies in 1794, "represented the most radical political transformation of 'the Age of Revolution,'" and that "They were also the most concrete expression of the idea that the rights proclaimed in France's 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen were indeed universal."[25] *Black Enlightenment* supplements such work by demonstrating how the very notion of universality is marked by racial thinking. Fontenelle, considered above, is often identified as one of the early forerunners of Enlightenment thought in France. In chapter 1, I look at how his conception of a universal human—for whom reading is a formative activity—is constituted by a thinking of the Black subject.

In contrast to some of this scholarship, however, *Black Enlightenment* argues for the (im)possible imagining of the Enlightenment from the position of the Black subject rather than for understanding the Enlightenment only as an already constituted phenomenon and body of texts. Discussing the Haitian Revolution, Nick Nesbitt has argued, "Never having read a word of Spinoza—though inspired indirectly by the intellectual climate descended

from his thought—the former slaves of Saint-Domingue proceeded in exact consonance with the axioms of the *Ethics*."[26] Nesbitt here furthers Jonathan Israel's notion of a radical strain of Enlightenment founded in the work of Spinoza. Whereas Israel ignores the colonies almost entirely, Nesbitt suggests that the enslaved people of Saint-Domingue are the true inheritors of the radical Enlightenment of Spinoza, negating the "model of education and enlightenment" to be found in a Locke or Rousseau.[27] Yet Nesbitt strains to make the connection, arguing by analogy ("proceeded in exact consonance") and speculation ("inspired indirectly") to place Spinoza as the intellectual founder of the revolts of 1791 that ultimately led to the establishment of independence in Haiti in 1804. Nesbitt's romanticization of the enslaved leads him to ignore not only the limits of Enlightenment but also the presence of a complex precolonial culture in Haiti and the extreme heterogeneity between the Jacobins and the "masses."[28] This was compounded by the recurrent waves of people brought from Kongo and Benin who had received martial training in the wars conducted by the Dahomey and those in Kongo, allowing for a kind of loose and collective militarization not possible elsewhere. This is not to discount the extraordinary events in Haiti but rather to look at Revolution through cultural difference and heterogeneity.

Toussaint Louverture is, of course, a far more plausible Black Enlightenment figure. The most iconic instance of Louverture's relationship to Enlightenment is the perhaps apocryphal story, recounted by James, of Louverture reading and literalizing the prophetic call for a Black Spartacus in the Abbe Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* (1770).[29] We might also include here Louverture's exacting insistence on precision in his letter writing, often writing two to three drafts, and as Sudhir Hazareesingh notes, "wear[ing] down his five secretaries."[30] Nonetheless, even as the Abbe Raynal's *Histoire* and other abolitionist tracts were sometimes found among enslaved people in Haiti, the relationship of Enlightenment to the Haitian Revolution and its buildup was not unidirectional.

The various Maroon societies in Jamaica, Guadeloupe, Brazil, Surinam, Haiti, Martinique, and the Carolinas are an ever-present margin to the Black Enlightenment subjects I examine in this book. *Maroon*, Carolyn Fick reminds us, is an unstable concept. As a descriptive term, it can be used in many diverse contexts.[31] Despite attempts to distinguish between *grand* and *petit marronage*, the concept falls short of the complexity of historical circumstances. The many reasons for flight, the differing compositions of groups called Maroons, and the responses by these groups to the changing times make generalization difficult. Prior to the late eighteenth century, they

were at once cut off from access to the European Enlightenment as they also influenced its struggles for freedom.[32] As noted above, in chapter 1, I look at how Francis Williams's attempts to sue for restoration of rights comes against the backdrop of the intensification of the Maroon Wars, particularly from 1720 to 1738, the moment when treaties with the Windward and Leeward Maroons were negotiated. The two treaties, signed in 1738/39 and 1739, obliged the Maroons to help the British capture enslaved people who had run away. How do we understand, for instance, Captain Cudjoe's insistence that his group speak English rather than the African languages that they have brought with them? Or Mavis Campbell's sense about the Maroons in Jamaica, that "[w]e respect them for their fierce independent spirit, but we cannot see them as true revolutionaries or even as reformers."[33] She cites another commentator who remarks that "Maroon communities had a 'restorationist or isolationist, rather than a revolutionary content.'"[34] Such complicity has been difficult to read. The varying alliances formed by Maroon communities in Haiti after the French Revolution are similarly difficult. As more and more research is conducted in this area, our thinking of the Enlightenment and its politics must also be transformed accordingly.

IV.

By foregrounding the heterogeneity of the Black Enlightenment subject, *Black Enlightenment* reconsiders familiar Enlightenment discourses. The putative silences of canonical Enlightenment thinkers of humanism on slavery have perplexed contemporary critics. I look at the myriad ways that slavery is circumscribed by texts that appear to be notes, citations, and marginalia. Rather than silence, I show how discourses of slavery are perpetually present and yet barely perceptible, probing the relationship of slavery to Enlightenment.

Let us return to the unease of Enlightenment thinkers with the Black subject. David Hume's unease is carried forward by his readers. His note to "Of National Characters" is widely cited, critically commented upon by those with abolitionist sympathies, and affirmed by proslavery authors frightened by the prospect of abolition. A year after the famous Mansfield decision in 1772 that offered de facto freedom to enslaved people in Great Britain, the Barbadian planter Samuel Estwick published *Considerations on the Negro Cause Commonly So-Called, Addressed to the Right Honorable Lord Mansfield*. In a footnote, Estwick affirmatively cites Hume's note about Francis Williams (proclaiming Williams's racial inferiority), using it as a justifica-

tion for slavery.[35] Like Hume, Estwick's note about racial inferiority never names Williams, casting him instead by the representative term "Negro." Yet Estwick must also contend with Enlightenment humanism. He thus posits a peculiar structure of perception in which Williams is perceived as a depthless human. Estwick writes that Williams is "sensible and acute . . . yet . . . incapable of moral sensations."[36] This strange figuration of Williams splits into an analogy. Estwick likens the purportedly profound difference between a moral man and "a Negro" to the difference between "a Negro" and "the highest species of brutes."[37] In this analogy, Williams is portrayed as lacking moral or subjective depth, on the one hand, while appearing scientifically or epistemologically human, on the other. A moral and a scientific conception of the human are joined as they are differentiated through the figure of a flat Black subject. The basis for this joining (the presumption that the "Negro" on both sides of this analogy is self-evidently identical) is never elaborated. The threat of a Black citizen/subject is negotiated through a discourse that casts the figure of Francis Williams as objectively human and incommensurably different from animals, and as subjectively incapable of morals and incommensurably different from the white subject, who is represented as an unmarked moral man. In Enlightenment discourses, moral subjectivity and aesthetic subjectivity are tightly linked, disqualification from one nearly always implying disqualification from the other. Yet such a peculiar equation, which casts the Black subject as depthless and thus makes Enlightenment humanism compatible with race, is marked by unease, given here in a footnote to a footnote. Such moments reverberate in Enlightenment discourses of race.

V.

By paying attention to the anxiety occasioned by the possibility of a Black subject, we can also better acknowledge the role that gender plays. Rather than considering race and gender as distinct, I look at the formation of race, gender, and class-marked subjects and the possibilities and limits of their expansiveness. In Kant's 1764 *Observations*, a foreclosure of the Black subject is staged through his distorted citation of an account from Jean-Baptiste Labat. Kant's fictive reproduction of Labat invents the abject figure of a Black woman in deepest slavery. In a perverse scene, animated by the tensions that I explore in this book, it is the treatment experienced by this woman from her husband, described as a deeper slavery than chattel slavery, which indicts the Black subject as inferior and blocked from Enlightenment. By contrast,

there is in this work an opening for the white female dominant, however limited it might be—the book was found among women in fashionable literary salons in Germany and, indeed, Mary Wollstonecraft cites Kant's *Observations* positively in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (she is also the first reviewer of Equiano's *Narrative*), ignoring how the Black woman is actively produced as marginal. I investigate the marks of that production in chapters 1–4 of this book—the Blackest muse invoked by Williams in chapter 1; the woman in deepest slavery, as noted above, in chapter 2, alongside Kant's own sexual politics; in chapter 3, the Khoikhoi laundress in the Cape Town encampment whose actions are noted in passing by Peter Kolb as an instance of laziness in contrast to his valorization of sexual equality among the rural Khoikhoi; and in chapter 4, the many traces of Anne Sancho's efforts to run the grocery story as Ignatius devotes time to intellectual labor. Chapter 5 looks at Phillis Wheatley, the first Black woman to publish a book.

A disappointment runs through our readings of Phillis Wheatley: if a turn to Wheatley promises the possibility of encountering the Black woman under slavery during the Age of Revolutions and Enlightenment, our readings of her work and life express the failure of that promise.[38] Wheatley has been hailed as "the foremother of the African-American literary tradition," but "she has also been critiqued for being a poor imitator . . . not reflecting the black experience,"[39] her poetry a "ludicrous departure from the huge [male] black voices that splintered southern nights."[40] In this book, I consider how, following the poet June Jordan, we might produce a reading of Wheatley rather than remaining disappointed.[41] In chapter 5, I stage Wheatley as a certain kind of limit to our (im)possible attempts to imagine a Black subject.

VI.

A question remains to be asked. Why spend so much time on the work of Immanuel Kant in a study of Black Enlightenment?

Kant is at once perhaps the central figure of the European Enlightenment (which is sometimes metonymized through Kant) and, as scholars have discovered more recently, a pivotal figure in the establishment of a "scientific" theory of race.

As we try to make Kant useful, our readings of Kant must take into account his racism. In the last thirty years, scholars have established the pivotal role of Kant in the history of race, arguing that he is the first to systematically theorize race. Emmanuel Eze's work in the 1990s first revealed the extent of Kant's racism—work carried forward by Robert Bernasconi, Bronwyn

Douglas, and others.[42] Far from being marginal to Kant's philosophy, the conviction of race, I will argue, following Spivak, affirms for the white critical subject the objective reality of his moral action in the world. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, these dynamics are condensed, as Spivak has elaborated powerfully, into a "casual rhetorical gesture" as Kant is considering the purpose of humans.[43] Spivak's point is that Kant's most important antinomy can only be solved if the indigenous is not human. This does not require extensive demonstration because it occupies a methodological crux. General Kant scholarship should be aware of this and of the other racial matters in Kant in the interest of disciplinary correctness. There is no moral argument here but a professional one. Citing Kant's many observations against colonialism and exploitation is not going to make these passages go away.[44] Kant scholars have, by and large—even as they have acknowledged his involvement with the history of race—tried to downplay the significance of Kant's racism.[45] A more complete account of Kant cannot afford to ignore the Black difference written into his mainstream accounts of Enlightenment. Can anything be gained by recognizing Kant's limits so as to make him useful rather than only assailing him for his bad politics?

In African American literary studies, Africana philosophy, and Black Studies, criticism of Kant has been central to the production of the Black subject as an object of study and field of inquiry. Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s pioneering work, along with R. A. Judy's *(Dis)Forming the American Canon,* engages with Kant's racist remarks about the "Negro" in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*—and, in Judy's case, with Kant's Critical Philosophy—to establish the prominence of early Black thinkers.[46] For such philosophers as Adrian Piper and Charles Mills, Kant's Critical Philosophy might be used against xenophobia and racism. One of Mills's last essays, titled "Black Radical Kantianism," calls for a revision of Kant's normative political principles "*in the light of* a modernity structured by racial domination."[47] Acknowledging Kant's racism, Mills nonetheless highlights how Kant has, over the last half century, become one of "most significant normative political theorists" of modernity, in part because of his "deontological/contractual liberalism."[48] For Mills, not only would an engagement with Kant put "Afro-modern political thought in conversation with Euro-modern political thought," but also, "The key principles and ideals of Kant's ethico-political thought are, once deracialized, very attractive."[49] For Mills, the Black radical tradition might develop a Black radical Kantianism.

For Fred Moten, "the black radical tradition, on the one hand, reproduces the political and philosophical paradoxes of Kantian regulation and, on the

other hand, constitutes a resistance that anticipates and makes possible Kantian regulation."[50] Indeed, Moten goes on to say:

> There is an enduring politicoeconomic and philosophical moment with which the black radical tradition is engaged. That moment is called the Enlightenment. This tradition has been concerned with the opening of a new Enlightenment, one made possible by the ongoing improvisation of a given Enlightenment, improvisation being nothing other than the emergence of "deconstruction in its most active or intensive form."[51]

Black Enlightenment looks at how we might "improvise" by examining an early and a late point in Kant's theorizing of race: his remarks on the "Negro" in *Observations* and in his last essay on race, "On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy" (1788). By foregrounding the position of the Black Enlightenment subject, I show how a complex politics of race in Kant is disguised as a simple racism attributable to others. I also show how, against the grain, Kant's own examples of a Black subject move against his explicit intentions and return his text to chattel slavery in the Americas and the Caribbean. In the twenty-five years that separate these two works, as Black citizenship becomes a concrete possibility, Kant's politics of race change, moving from an emphasis on Black genius to the predication of the Black subject as "lazy." Here, in his attempts to protect a certain understanding of the human, Kant invents a drive found nowhere else in his oeuvre. In both texts, as Kant moves to foreclose the Black subject, his rhetorical mode changes. It is through textual play rather than argument that the reader is asked to accept Kant's foreclosure. In chapter 2, I look at how we might read this textual play to make Kant useful.

Kant is at once an example and a warning. That such a brilliant intellect is caught in racism, as an instrument to protect the understanding, gives us a sense of the limits of Enlightenment, of its compatibility with hierarchical schemas, and of our own complicity in thinking related thoughts today. We must constantly supplement the Enlightenment, rather than trying to either dismiss or protect it.

I close this introduction with a somewhat playful appropriation of Kant by Moten. Perhaps this is the kind of affirmative sabotage that should be performed upon Kant, locating the moment of unguarded transgression or vulnerability in the definition of nonsense and claiming it, turning it around for Black creativity. I have taken the liberty of placing Sancho in that moment in order to end this introduction where I began.

Moten's essay, "Knowledge of Freedom," begins with a citation of a citation of Kant's discussion of nonsense in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Nonsense is conceptually and discursively located within the sections on genius. For Kant, nonsense belongs to a domain of pure genius that has not yet become legible through the institutionalized labor of the understanding. He calls it a space of "lawless freedom." Here, then, Moten traces another, unacknowledged trajectory of genius in Kant through the notion of nonsense. Moten reads Kant in a way that does not explicitly pass through the rather fraught and vexed canonical discussions of genius as they govern interpretations of Black intellectual labor. This trajectory of genius moves on the edge of decipherability. Moten appropriates Kant's own phrase to call this trajectory "lawless freedom."[52] Moten thus never uses the term *genius*. His own reading simultaneously undermines the value of the traits of originality and authorship typically associated with the term. This appropriation of nonsense in Kant opens up for Moten a meditation on political and imaginative freedom through a rereading of well-known and obscure narratives of slavery, among them Equiano's *Narrative*.

I return now to Sancho. In his last essay on race, Kant reads an excerpted German translation of James Tobin's proslavery tract. The German translator of the tract had excluded Tobin's consideration of the most prominent Black Englishman of the day: "Even the sentimental Ignatius Sancho himself, the humble friend and imitator of Sterne, continued to prefer the station of a menial servant, till the infirmities of obesity disqualified him."[53] Sancho's purported "choice" to remain in servitude persists in interpretations of Sancho, whose preference for textual play over the labor of activist or liberatory politics has long disappointed critics. One letter begins, "Sir, he is the confounded'st—dunderhead—sapscull—looby—clodpate—nincompoop—ninnyhammer—booby-chick—farcical—loungibuss—blunderbuss" (LLIS 150). As my chapter 4 will explore, Sancho employs a technique to stage the ethical—variously iterated as providence and omni-benevolence—through the ostensibly contingent and nonsensical.

Let us turn away from nonsense, now, and step into the life of Francis Williams. As we read familiar Enlightenment texts from the position of the heterogeneous Black subject, questioning the distinctions of art and nature that produce the figure of genius, let us consider the politics of the Black genius as citizen.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 *A New and General Biographical Dictionary*, 11:247.
2 Carey, "'The Extraordinary Negro,'" 1.
3 References to Ignatius Sancho's letters are to Frances Crewe's 1782 first edition, which can be found in Vincent Carretta's critical edition in *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho* (2015), unless otherwise indicated. Hereafter these *Letters* will be abbreviated as LLIS. Vincent Carretta identifies the benefactor, listed as "Mr. F," as "probably Jabez Fisher (1717–1806) of Philadelphia, who may have been the 'Mr. Fisher' who subscribed to Sancho's *Letters*" (LLIS 165). The dates Carretta gives, though, are for a Jabez Fisher of Massachusetts. My sense is that Carretta is correct to identify Mr. F as Philadelphia Quaker Jabez Fisher, but that this Jabez Fisher may have been Jabez Maud Fisher (1750–1779), the Philadelphia Quaker who lived in England from 1775 to 1779 and who was a correspondent of Benjamin Franklin. If that is the case, then the Mr. Fisher who subscribed to Sancho's *Letters* would be someone else, perhaps a family member.
4 Although we know of Sancho's own origins only through Joseph Jekyll's unverifiable biography, we do know that he was a servant to the Duchess of Montagu. And from his letter here we can certainly infer that he was brought across on the Middle Passage.
5 Spivak discusses an "(im)-possibility" that is transformed "into the condition of its possibility" through intellectual labor. Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, 263.
6 Chandler, *X—The Problem of the Negro.*
7 The essay first appeared in David Hume, *Three Essays, Moral and Political* (1748), and was incorporated into the third edition of Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (1748). The note first occurs in the version of "Of National Characters" that appears in the 1753 edition of Hume, *Essays and Treatises*, vol. 1 (hereafter NC).
8 Kant, *Observations*, in Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 59.
9 R. Porter, *Enlightenment*, 9.
10 Derrida, "The 'World' of the Enlightenment to Come," 27; Outram, *Enlightenment*, 1–3.

11 Kolb, *Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum*. See Green, *A New General Collection*, 322–386, and Prévost, *Histoire général*, 109–208.

12 I take this notion of complicity from Spivak, "Responsibility," 19–64. See also Spivak, "Global Marx?," and Spivak, "Margins and Marginal Communities," for a notion of complicity as a "folded together[ness]." Her notion of complicity has most recently been developed in "Complicity."

13 We might add here, too, as Christine Levecq does in *Black Cosmopolitans*, 19–51, Jacobus Capitein's endorsement of Calvinism and his equivocation about slavery.

14 Prince, "The History of Mary Prince"; and Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.*

15 Gardner, *A History of Jamaica*, 512 (the translation, by E. J. Chinnock, is slightly modified). The Latin is from Long, *The History of Jamaica,* 2:480.

16 Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 2:483.

17 An instance of such an attempt to use the law, discussed in chapter 5, is the petitions for freedom submitted by enslaved people in Massachusetts.

18 Advertisement as reprinted in the *London Chronicle*, July 17–19, 1777.

19 Patterson, "Slavery and Slave Revolts."

20 "[S]i l'on ne doit pas desesperer de voir jamais de grands Auteurs Lappons ou Négres." My translation. Fontenelle, "Digression sur les anciens et les modernes," in *Poésies pastorales* (1688), 233.

21 Fontenelle, "Digression sur les anciens et les modernes," in *Poésies pastorales* (1698), 201 (my translation); "esperer de voir jamais de grands Auteurs Lapons ou Négres." Donald Schier inverts the order of "Lapp or Negro" in his English translation, "A Digression on the Ancients and the Moderns" (360). Schier identifies his source as the 1688 edition; but, examined closely, he has translated the 1698 version. For Fontenelle's importance to the Enlightenment, see Gay, *The Enlightenment*, 317–318; and Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 359.

22 See Davie, "'Nothing of Humanity"; Kitson, "'Candid Reflections'"; and Drescher, "The Ending of the Slave Trade."

23 See James, *Black Jacobins*; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation*; and Daut, *Tropics of Haiti.*

24 Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery.*

25 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 3.

26 Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation*, 35.

27 Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation*, 34; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment.*

28 See Fick, *The Making of Haiti.*

29 James, *Black Jacobins*, 25. The Abbe Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* was available in Saint-Domingue. Hazareesingh cites the anecdote of a slaveowner who, upon returning to his burned estate, was surprised to see that the formerly enslaved commander had left a copy of this book in the one building remaining. See Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus*, 11. About Toussaint Louverture, Hazareesingh emphasizes that his African background must be taken into account when considering his formation; his parents were Allada, and Louverture spoke Fon. Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus*, 24–26.

30 Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus*, 13.

31 Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 6–9.

32 Neil Roberts's efforts to trouble conventional oppositions of freedom and slavery through marronage are salutary but ignore the historical specificities of Maroon societies, opting instead to focus only on Haiti, and then moving from there to a consideration of Frederick Douglass and Angela Davis. See Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*. In the 1730s, for instance, it was the Maroon War that led the Jamaican Assembly to grant more statutory rights to free Black subjects (although denying them to Jewish subjects); and in turn, the treaty of 1738/1739 with the Windward Maroons and the Treaty of 1739 with the Leeward Maroons included provisions for them to capture and return those who had escaped slavery.

33 M. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica*, 13.

34 Eugene Genovese, quoted in M. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica*, 13.

35 In 1772, Chief Justice Lord Mansfield ruled in *Somerset v. Stewart* that the escaped slave Somerset could not be forcibly returned to Jamaica. The ruling was popularly interpreted as abolishing slavery in England.

36 Estwick, *Considerations on the Negro Cause*, 79.

37 Estwick, *Considerations on the Negro Cause*, 79.

38 I am informed by Hortense Spillers's powerful investigations in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" and "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words," both in *Black, White, and in Color*, 203–229 and 152–175, respectively.

39 Walker, "The Defense of Phillis Wheatley," 235.

40 Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka), "The Myth of a Negro Literature," 166, quoted in Gates, *Trials of Phillis Wheatley*, 76.

41 J. Jordan, "The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America or Something like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley," in *Some of Us Did Not Die*, 174–186.

42 See Eze, "The Color of Reason"; Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism"; Bernasconi, "Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up"; Douglas, "Climate to Crania"; Mills, *Blackness Visible*; Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race;* and Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*.

43 Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 30, 112.

44 Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*, 180–199.

45 See Louden, *Impure Ethics*, 93–106; and Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race."

46 See Gates, *Figures in Black*; and Judy, *(Dis)Forming the American Canon*. I also add here Simon Gikandi's *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*.

47 Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism," 3. For Piper, see "Xenophobia."

48 Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism," 3.

49 Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism," 3.

50 Moten, "Knowledge of Freedom," 3.

51 Moten, "Knowledge of Freedom," 41.

52 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 197; cited in Moten, "Knowledge of Freedom," 1.

53 Tobin, "Cursory Remarks," 117–118.