PARODIC ENGAGEMENT WITH (NEO) SLAVE NARRATIVES: BERNARDINE EVARISTO'S *BLONDE ROOTS* & ANDREA LEVY'S *THE LONG SONG*

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ABSTRACT

PARODIC ENGAGEMENT WITH (NEO) SLAVE NARRATIVES: BERNARDINE EVARISTO'S *BLONDE ROOTS* & ANDREA LEVY'S *THE LONG SONG*

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The aim of this thesis is to explore the employment of generic characteristics of slave narratives in *Blonde Roots* by Bernardine Evaristo and *The Long Song* by Andrea Levy in the light of Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody. While *Blonde Roots* is examined both as a parody of slave narratives and the kind of contemporary neo-slave narratives that do not problematize the thematic conventions and formal features of slave narratives, *The Long Song* is studied as a parody of slave narratives. This thesis explores how and to what ends both novels parody a number of generic characteristics of slave narratives. It is argued that in both novels parody functions to reveal the shared political agenda of the writers, which is bringing the slavery past of Britain and its legacy to the fore. Additionally, this thesis contends that in *Blonde Roots* parody

facilitates to accentuate the constructedness of race and a whole set of values related to it, whereas in *The Long Song* it serves as a means to empower the figure of the enslaved black subject.

Keywords: Slave Narratives, Neo-slave Narratives, *Blonde Roots*, *The Long Song*, Parody

ÖZ

(YENİ) KÖLE ANLATILARININ PARODİSİ: BERNARDINE EVARISTO'NUN *BLONDE ROOTS* VE ANDREA LEVY'NİN *THE LONG SONG* ADLI ROMANLARINA DAİR BİR İNCELEME

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Bu tezin amacı Bernardine Evaristo'nun *Blonde Roots* ve Andrea Levy'nin *The Long Song* adlı romanlarında köle anlatılarının türsel özelliklerinin kullanımını Linda Hutcheon'ın parodi kuramı çerçevesinde incelemektir. *Blonde Roots* köle anlatılarının ve onların tematik ve biçimsel özelliklerini sorunsallaştırmayan yeni-köle anlatısı türündeki romanların bir parodisi olarak ele alınırken, *The Long Song* köle anlatılarının bir parodisi olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Bu tez her iki romanın da nasıl ve hangi amaçlarla köle anlatılarının birtakım türsel özelliklerinin parodisini yaptıkları sorusuna cevaplar aramaktadır. Her iki romanda da parodinin Evaristo ve Levy'nin ortak politik gündemlerini, yani, Britanya'nın kölelik geçmişini ve onun mirasını vurgulamayı, açığa vurmada rol oynadığı ileri sürülmektedir. Ayrıca, bu tez *Blonde Roots*'ta parodinin ırk ve ırkçılığa dair değerler bütününün inşa edilmişliğini

vurgulamaya olanak sağladığını, *The Long Song*'da ise köleleştirilmiş siyahi özne figürünü güçlendirmek için bir araç olarak görev yaptığı düşüncesini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Köle Anlatıları, Yeni-köle Anlatıları, *Blonde Roots*, *The Long Song*, Parodi

To the memory of my grandmother, Nazife Sevinç

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to examine *Blonde Roots* by Bernardine Evaristo as a parody of both slave narratives and modern-day fictional narratives of slavery and *The Long Song* by Andrea Levy as a parody of slave narratives in the light of Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody. This thesis will, first, explore how and to what ends *Blonde Roots* parodies certain generic characteristics of slave narratives and the kind of contemporary neo-slave narratives that do not problematize the thematic conventions and formal features of slave narratives. Second, the way *The Long Song* parodies generic characteristics and conventions of slave narratives, and the possible reasons behind the act of parody will be scrutinized. In this thesis, it will be argued that in both *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song* parody serves as a means to bring the slavery past of Britain and its legacy to the fore. Apart from this shared political agenda of the novels, *Blonde Roots* emphasizes the constructedness of race and a whole set of values related to it while *The Long Song* puts emphasis on empowering the enslaved black subject.

Bernardine Evaristo, born in 1959 in London, is a Black British writer and currently works as Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University, London. She is

the writer of a number of publications including collections of poems, essays, non-fictional works, and many novels most of which received awards and honours or being nominated for. In her interview with Collins, Evaristo states that her being biracial "informed the greater project of my [her] writing" (1203), and adds:

> The division between black and white is more nebulous when you are the product of an inter-racial marriage . . . I am deeply interested in the connection between Africa and Europe and this is a dominant feature in my writing. I have thus far interrogated African history within a European/Western context, and also the past with the present, never one to the exclusion of the other. My preoccupations are in my DNA. (1203)

Evaristo's works are frequently informed by her African heritage while centralizing a number of themes related to race, sexuality, gender, and history. Her writing style is innovative; she favours transgressing conventional generic boundaries and blurring the lines between fiction and reality. She coined the phrase, "fusion fiction", which is characterized by "the absence of full stops" and "the long sentences" (Sethi). Evaristo describes it as a form which is "very free-flowing" and which enables her "to be inside the characters' heads and go all over the place – the past, the present" (Sethi). Additionally, the juxtaposition of humour and gravity is a hallmark of her writing since Evaristo believes that humour is a quite "powerful tool" to criticize and a "healing" notion (Bleijswijk 134). In her own words, it is "a very good response to pretty much everything" including "racism" (134).

In her early works, Evaristo, whose voice passes beyond the boundaries of the UK, seeks to reveal that "the fortunes of black peoples in history are not marginal or of interest only to black readers, but play a central part in the wider historical narrative of the British isles and make a mockery of notions of cultural and racial purity" (McLeod 177). Being a semi-autographical work written in verse, her debut novel *Lara*

(1997), which is republished in 2009 in a second edition with an extended description of family lineage of the protagonist, scrutinizes the family history of Lara, a young woman who is born to a Nigerian father and an English mother and in search of her identity. The exploration of the ancestry of Lara presents a genealogy that encompasses seven generations by traveling over 150 years back and involves three continents, thereby "plaiting together different strands of culture and ancestry" into the narrative (McLeod 178). *The Emperor's Babe* (2001) explores the story of Zuleika, a teenage Sudanese black girl living in Roman Londinium in AD 211. Through the personal story of Zuleika and her relationships, namely her marriage with the wealthy Roman senator Lucius Aurelius Felix and love affair with the Emperor Septimius Severus, the novel mainly invites attention to "the African presence in Roman Britain" (Evaristo, Collins interview 1200). *Soul Tourists* (2005) concentrates on the road trip of Stanley, a man of Jamaican descent, and Jessie, a character with an African heritage, from London to the Middle East. The journey involves the appearance of ghosts of the figures "from Europe's forgotten black history" (Velickovic 10) such as the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's sonnets and the mixed-race Alessandro de' Medici, Duke of Florence.

Hello Mum (2010), an epistolary novella written from the viewpoint of a fourteen-year-old black boy named Jerome living in London, examines gangs of teenagers and the violence accompanied. The protagonist of *Mr. Loverman* (2014) is a seventy-four-year-old homosexual Caribbean man, Barrington Walker, living in London. While touching upon immigrant experience, the novel raises questions regarding sexuality and black masculinity. Evaristo's most recent novel, *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019), is a polyphonic text, presenting the lives of twelve Black British women

who are very different from each other in many respects such as their socio-economic backgrounds, sexual preferences, and ages, to name a few. The novel won the Booker Prize in 2019, thereby making Evaristo the first Black British writer who is the recipient of the Booker.

Andrea Levy was born in London to Jamaican parents in 1956. Her father was among the Jamaicans who sailed to Tilbury, England from the Caribbean on the *Empire Windrush* in June 1948. Following him, Levy's mother came to England in the same year. Having worked as a graphic designer at the beginning of her career, Levy had her first writing experience in an evening writing class she took in her mid-thirties. Attending to this course for almost six years at the City Literary Institute, Levy realized her desire to write about her identity, experiences of living in the UK as a woman of a Jamaican descent, and her family heritage (Rowell 260). Being inspired by her readings of a number of African-American writers such as Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison, Levy contemplated on "the British experience of being a black Briton" (260). Having researched works of fiction on the experience of black Britishness, Levy noticed there were very few writers who focus on this issue; Caryl Phillips, Fred D'Aguiar, and Jackie Kay are some of them (260). This emerges to be the point where Levy decides to write about experiences of the Black British (260).

Levy is the writer of five novels, a short story collection, and a number of essays that she produced during her lifetime. Her debut novel *Every Light in the House Burnin'* (1994), a semi-autobiographical novel, examines the story of Angela, a British-born Jamaican young woman, and her family living in the 1960s in London. While the novel presents a portrayal of the family life of Jamaican immigrants in post-

war Britain, concurrently it addresses difficulties that the characters face in British society. Her second novel, *Never Far from Nowhere* (1996), long-listed for the Orange Prize for Fiction in 1996, revolves around the lives of two sisters of Jamaican parentage, Vivien and Olive, in the London of the 1970s. Notwithstanding the completely different life paths of the sisters, they have a shared experience of struggling against prejudice and adversity that they face as Black British women. Although these early novels concentrate on the difficulties confronted by British-born children of Jamaican parents, thereby offering a gloomy portrayal of the lives of the characters, both novels still give room to humour, scattered throughout the texts to a certain degree, which is a distinguishing characteristic of Levy's works. Levy contends "tragedy" should necessarily be accompanied by humour so that it can represent the real "human condition" (Morrison 332). Her third novel, *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999), depicts the journey of the Black British protagonist, Faith, from England to Jamaica to explore her familial history. Therefore, departing from the earlier novels, the setting includes both England and Jamaica. Levy, making use of the stories her mother revealed about her own family history, presents the adventure of the protagonist who desires to discover more about her identity. *Small Island* (2004), Levy's fourth novel, focuses on the time period of the Second World War and its aftermath by providing narratives written from the perspectives of four main characters. Levy amalgamates expectations, reality, and disillusionment in the lives of the characters in post-war Britain. Being a huge success and an international bestseller, the novel was chosen for the mass reading event in Britain in 2007 for the bicentennial anniversary of the abolition of British slave trade. It was the recipient of several awards, such as the

Orange Prize for Fiction in 2004, the Whitbread Book of the Year in 2004, and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best Book in 2005, to name a few. *Six Stories and an Essay* (2014) is Levy's latest work, which includes a short story collection and an essay written by her. It establishes a connection between Levy's act of writing and her Jamaican origins.

In "Negotiating the Ship on The Head: Black British Fiction", Dawes states Evaristo and Levy, being second generation Black British writers, are different from the writers of the earlier generation, who "carried a figurative 'ship on their heads'" (qtd. in Danaher 6-7), in the sense that both writers are among the ones who "are often either unwilling to or incapable of wearing that ship that points to an immigrant identity or an identity of 'otherness'" (Dawes 19). Both writers view themselves as British and their writings endeavour to "redefine the national character of Britain and to achieve this by expanding the conception of Englishness or Britishness" (20). These Black British women writers of the second generation share similar thematic concerns in a majority of their works while conveying their own black British experience, yet their treatment of the subject matter and form differs as their writing styles are peculiar to themselves. A fictional return to a particular time in history is something both writers embrace; for example, *Emperor's Babe* is set in Roman Britain and *Small Island* deals with the Windrush generation. Re-considering and re-writing the past imaginatively are linked with bringing the voices of marginalized characters to the fore in both novels. In Evaristo's *Lara* and Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*, there exists a similar attempt so as to explore the family lineage of the protagonists who are confused about their identity and race.

In *Blonde Roots* (2008) and *The Long Song* (2010) Evaristo and Levy respectively retrace the roots of anti-black racism by placing the transatlantic slave trade into the centre of their novels. Being Evaristo's first novel that concentrates exclusively on the transatlantic slave trade, *Blonde Roots* reverses the slavery history of Britain, thereby creating a world design in which Africans enslave Europeans. It follows the life story of a character named Doris, who is an enslaved English woman. In one of her interviews, Evaristo explains although American slave trade is widely acknowledged, the participation of Britain in the transatlantic slave trade is not entirely recognized. For that reason, Evaristo states she aimed to discover "a sort of hidden history" (Bleijswijk 133). Levy's last novel, *The Long Song*, describes the life story of July, a woman working both as a field and house slave, in nineteenth-century Jamaica. Engaging in a dialogue with the past, Levy goes to the heart of British and Caribbean relations by exploring the history of slavery. In the same vein with Evaristo, Levy, in her essay "The Writing of *The Long Song*" invites attention to the fact that: "the truth is that the story of the Caribbean cannot ultimately be divided into 'black' and 'white' or African and European, just as slavery cannot be filleted out of three hundred years of British history" (10). Therefore, the lives of her slave ancestors "are part of British history" (11), and through writing she underlines the involvement of Britain in slavery and demonstrates the enslaved ancestors "were much more than a mute and wretched mass of victims . . . they did more than survive, they built a culture that has come all the way down through the years to us" (11). To this end, writing fictions of slavery from the perspective of ex-slaves, namely creating neo-slave narratives, Evaristo and Levy give voice to the enslaved protagonists and provide alternative historical "her

stories" to the mainstream historical accounts in which the voices of slaves are silenced, and their presence is frequently ignored or downplayed.

The scholarship on *Blonde Roots* mostly focuses on the reversed racial design and issues in relation to it. Burkitt, for example, states Evaristo creates an alternative history through the employment of the reversed race parameters, thereby challenging "any sense of a fixed historical vision of Atlantic slavery" (406). Burkitt also argues Evaristo makes it visible that the Atlantic slave trade is not merely limited to the past, in that its scope is much wider. She exemplifies it by inviting attention to some twenty-first century anachronisms of the novel and the postscript's reference to today, which foregrounds present-day issues in relation to slavery. Being the first monograph on Evaristo's selected novels, Toplu's study, *Fiction Unbound: Bernardine Evaristo*, should also be mentioned. A chapter in her book dwells on *Blonde Roots*, which consists of a number of subtitles, through which Toplu focuses on various aspects of the novel. The arguments Toplu raises under the subtitle "Europa" are remarkable in the sense that she concentrates on some topics that are usually ignored in the scholarship on *Blonde Roots*. Toplu touches upon Evaristo's treatment of "poverty, patriarchy and class structure" (48-49) and how Doris's mother is forced into marriage, and the poverty of the Scagglethorpe family as opposed to "the estate in its affluence" (49). Toplu contends that "using the past," "Evaristo comments on the present; interspersing the timeless quality of patriarchy, poverty and class struggle between her lines" (50). *The Long Song* has been the focus of many studies that analyse it from a variety of viewpoints. Muñoz-Valdivieso's article examines the novel by putting emphasis on the bicentennial anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain.

Muñoz-Valdivieso states that while the 2007 bicentennial commemoration revealed "the 'uncomfortable truths'" of the British past ("'This tale'" 41), simultaneously "the centrality of slavery to the British experience" (Walvin qtd. in "'This tale'" 41) came to the fore, which can be observed in recent works of fiction published in Britain (41) including *The Long Song*. She adds that: "For many years these fictions have been analysed mostly within the Black Atlantic in a Caribbean context. They are finally beginning also to be considered in a British context" owing to the awareness the bicentenary provided regarding both the involvement of Britain in slave trade and its impact on the present (41). Lima's essay is another notable study on *The Long Song*. One of the main points Lima underscores is the novel's metafictional aspect, which "foregrounds narrative itself as a process, forever incomplete, of gathering the material that both is and is not her character's experience" (138). Lima claims metafiction enables to lay bare "agency and strength" that "characterise Afro-Caribbean peoples" (138) by providing an example from the birth story of July, which is narrated more than once in different styles. Lima states the playfulness and humour intertwined with metafiction "prevents us from feeling what I'm [she is] going to call conventional pity" (140). Throughout her essay, Lima presents a number of instances in relation to metafiction and "the unflinching humanity of enslaved peoples" (149).

There are a few studies that bring these two novels together. One of them is the book chapter titled "'Some Kind of Black': Black British Historiographic Metafictions and the Postmodern Politics of Race" by Sara Upstone in *Postmodern Literature and Race* (2015). Upstone applies the term "historiographic metafiction" coined by Hutcheon to *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song* as both novels utilize "satirical, self-

referential and consciously reflexive histories" (280). According to Upstone, one of "[t]he interruptions to realist verisimilitude" (281) in *Blonde Roots* is the presence of "the racial inversion of slavery itself" (281); and, as for *The Long Song*, it is the unreliability of the narrator. Upstone points to the fact that while re-writing the history, the novels similarly centralize the narration of a woman protagonist; therefore, inevitably the issue of gender comes to the fore. She claims both novels "oscillate between affirming marginalised voices and destabilising the notion of any singular historical truth" (292). Therefore, the histories Evaristo and Levy present do not "correct or interrogate" (284) the existing versions of history; instead, these "her stories" simply came into "being" (284). Lisa Ahrens in her doctoral dissertation, "The Transformative Potential of Black British and British Muslim Literature," allocates a chapter to *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song* by building her argument on the concept of the "interactive heterotopic space". By focusing on two aspects of slave narratives, which are the inclusion of "authenticating material" (189), and "[t]he position of the individual" (194), Ahrens examines how these are employed in both novels. She deduces that in the case of readers' awareness of this linkage between slave narratives and neo-slave narratives, an interactive heterotopic space can emerge (204), which disputes "Britain's exclusionary grand narrative of slavery" (203) and dismantles the general assumption of "Britain's role as an abolitionist rather than a beneficiary of slavery" (204).

Slave narratives are highly conventionalized writings. As a genre, slave narratives are characterized by a shared political agenda, which is to end slavery. In relation to this, in his pivotal essay, James Olney invites attention to a "triangular

relationship of narrator, audience, and sponsors" that has a considerable impact on the formation of the generic characteristics of slave narratives (52). Even though slave narratives emerged as first documents to provide a voice to the enslaved, the conventions of the genre, which were designed to meet the expectations of white abolitionist sponsors and white readership, simultaneously circumscribed that voice due to the obligation of ex-slave writers to stay within certain literary boundaries. This thesis contends that Evaristo and Levy, two Black British writers of the same generation, have similar preoccupations and purposes informing their writing of neo-slave novels, *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song*. Levy problematizes the genre of slave narrative in relation to this restricted and restricting essence of it in *The Long Song*; Evaristo, on the other hand, criticizes both slave narratives and a certain type of neo-slave narratives that are not critical of particular aspects of slave narratives. Furthermore, while doing this, both writers employ humour in their novels, which is quite unusual compared with a majority of writings of slavery including neo-slave narratives. In *The Long Song*, Levy aims to disclose that humour was a significant element in the lives of the enslaved as it is in any individual's life ("Writing" 10). Notwithstanding the fact that sorrow and pain certainly existed, there was also humour, craftiness, and vigour in order to subsist, as Levy states (11). Thus, Levy's use of humour provides another perspective to discover slavery. In *Blonde Roots*, Evaristo aimed to write an unpredictable novel, and humour is a significant element that aids her to achieve this. It is not an attempt to lessen the importance of the issues it included; rather, it contributes to lay bare problems, according to Evaristo (Bleijswijk 133). Additionally, in both novels, the employment of humour is linked with parody; to be

more specific, the playful engagement with slave narratives in *The Long Song* and with both slave- and a certain type of neo-slave narratives in *Blonde Roots.* Undoubtedly, in the case of both novels, humour emerges on the condition that the reader decodes this parodic engagement.

All the same, there are some points that distinguish these two novels. First, while in *The Long Song* Levy follows historicity in her re-writing experience of slavery, Evaristo in *Blonde Roots* deviates from it with a playful reversal strategy which presents the Africans as the enslaver and the British as the enslaved. Namely, Levy problematizes the way history is narrated; Evaristo, on the other hand, completely turns the history upside down. Second, *Blonde Roots*, parodies not only the conventions of slave narratives but also those of some neo-slave narratives such as *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) by Alex Haley, which are informed by a similar sentimental attitude as in slave narratives and are designed to appeal to the hearts of the reader by emphasizing themes that foreground victimization and aim to recover the humanity of the enslaved. This thesis argues that both neo-slave narratives establish a familiarity with earlier writings of slavery by imitating their thematic and formal features, which is the genre of slave narratives for *The Long Song* and both slave- and modern-day fictional narratives of slavery for *Blonde Roots*; however, these novels also undermine this familiarity at certain points to varying degrees. This act of undermining that we see in both novels can be explored in the light of Hutcheon's understanding of parody, which, she states, is "a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity" (*Theory* xii). Hutcheon claims parody is a very appropriate and powerful means of reacting, "critically and creatively"

to the hegemonic discourse, which tends to be white, patriarchal, and heterosexual (*Poetics* 35). Since its ironic nature tends to raise questions regarding conventions and authority, the parodic act can be a useful strategy for "ex-centrics" (35), who can be "black, ethnic, gay, and feminist artists" (35). Additionally, Hutcheon's conceptualization of parody is fruitful for this thesis in the sense that her conceptualization is a comprehensive one as opposed to a number of conceptualizations of parody suggested by other scholars. Her widening the scope of parody creates the opportunity to apply her conceptualization in the analysis of the novels in this thesis as she does not confine parody to texts with a certain length or specific genres and styles. Hutcheon's conceptualization of the term is also meaningful for the analysis of the novels since it particularly emphasizes parody's capability to provide revisitations of the past. Revisitations in the form are usually accompanied with critical revisions of the historical background, which culminates in rewriting history, as Hutcheon underlines postmodern parody is "a way of ironically revisiting the past – of both art and history" (*Politics* 99). Concurrently, her conceptualization's emphasis on the revision of history brings political focus of parody to the fore, which is relevant to the aim and argument of this thesis.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The following chapter, first, introduces the emergence of slave narratives by exploring the historical background of the genre. The major differences between the earliest examples of the genre and the subsequently developed forms such as the antebellum slave narratives are provided. Major generic characteristics of slave narratives are examined via an analysis of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (1789),

which is widely accepted as being a quite influential text in defining the patterns of the genre. Following this, the emergence of neo-slave narratives in both US and UK contexts is scrutinized. The main concerns and aims of neo-slave narratives are discussed. In the remaining of the chapter, there is an overview of Hutcheon's theory of parody, which constitutes the theoretical framework of this thesis. The chapter seeks to lay bare how her theory can be a useful framework for the analytical chapters of the thesis.

Chapter Three examines *Blonde Roots* as a parody of slave- and modern-day fictional narratives of slavery which use a number of conventions of slave narratives in a similar way. The differences that come to the fore in the employment of slave narrative conventions are pointed out. This chapter aims to explore the possible functions of Evaristo's parodying these features. Chapter Four similarly presents a textual analysis of *The Long Song* in an engagement with Hutcheon's theory of parody. The novel's parodic play with the generic characteristics of slave narratives is examined along with a discussion of its functions. Chapter Five concludes the study by providing a summary of the employment of parody in both novels and elaborates on further studies that can be carried out in relation to neo-slave narratives in general and these two novels in particular.

CHAPTER 2

SLAVE NARRATIVES, NEO-SLAVE NARRATIVES & PARODY

The aim of this chapter is twofold: first, to focus on the historical context of slave and neo-slave narratives in the US and UK along with an examination of generic characteristics of both genres. It is significant to explore these since a connection will be established between slave narratives and neo-slave narratives in the analysis of *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song*. While both novels employ a number of characteristics of slave narratives, concurrently they diverge from or reconfigure them in keeping with their own political positionings. Thus, it is essential to identify the major generic characteristics of slave narratives and explore the main concerns and aims of neo-slave narratives. The second part of this chapter aims to discuss the concept of parody mainly in the light of Linda Hutcheon's conceptualization of the term because it lends itself well to discuss both novels' parodic engagement with the genre of slave narrative.

2.1. Slave Narratives

2.1.1. The Emergence of Slave Narratives

In *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory*, slave narrative is defined by Fritsch as "an American literary genre of autobiographical accounts narrated and either

written or dictated by ex-slaves about plantation life as a slave, escape, and freedom" ("Slave Narrative"). In the first place, it is significant to acknowledge that slave narratives were written for an aim, which is putting an end to slavery. While early examples of the genre, which emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century, concentrated on giving an end to the slave trade, namely the transportation of slaves across transnational waters, the narratives that emerged in the later decades and centuries had a purpose of ending the institution of slavery completely. Notwithstanding the fact that Fritsch's definition above considers slave narratives as a genre of American literature, there are a number of "British" contributions to the genre, and the existence of narratives produced by "transatlantic figures" like "Equiano or Ignatius Sancho" (Öztabak-Avcı 121) should also be underlined.

In his essay, "The rise, development, and circulation of the slave narrative," Gould touches upon the following three significant factors, which, according to the historian David Brion Davis, contributed to "the rise of antislavery movements" in the eighteenth century: "the rise of secular social philosophy," "the rise of sentimentalism," "the proliferation of more radical and revolutionary ideas about natural rights vis-a-vis state and social forms of authority" (11). In an atmosphere imbued with several developments surrounding the slave trade and slavery, the first examples of slave narratives emerged in the late eighteenth century, more precisely "during the 1770s and 1780s" (11). The publication of early examples of slave narratives used to be patronized and managed by "Evangelical Christian groups" (11); in addition, in time, organizations with political purposes such as English Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1787) and the Pennsylvania Abolition

Society (1775/1784) supported the production and printing processes of these narratives (11). Due to the contribution of religious groups to the publication, the condemnation of slave trade was usually carried out on religious bases, and a slave's conversion to Christianity along with his "civilized" "identity" (12) constituted a significant part of the narrative. Besides, it can be claimed that slave narratives composed in this time period usually drew on a number of literary genres that were popular at the time. *The Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man* (1760) can set an example to this since, as Gould indicates, while the moral aspect of the text comes to the fore, it is also possible to categorize it as an "Indian captivity narrative" or an "adventure story" (13). This tendency in making use of popular genres such as "the providential tale, criminal confession", "the picaresque novel" (13) is closely attached with the political agenda of slave narratives, which is to capture the attention of a diverse readership.

Along with possessing religious characteristics, the political aspect of early slave narratives is also worth mentioning as the problematization of slave trade and several issues related to it are embedded in these narratives. Focusing on *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukasaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince* as an example of a slave narrative that openly deals with the ills of slavery, Gould states that transatlantic organizations such as the English Abolition Society contributed to adding a political dimension to such narratives since they supported efforts of writers such as Equiano and Quobna Ottobah Cugoano (16). By producing considerable amount of antislavery literature, distributing audial and visual materials to divulge the predicament of slaves, these organizations aided to reinforce

the political emphasis of slave narratives, which can be perceived, for example, in Equiano's intertwining of the personal and the political in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789) (16-17).

Gould underscores, during the antebellum period[1] abolitionist movements developed into being more systematic, which might be assumed as a response to the act of colonization in Britain and America (18). In addition to the contributions of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in 1831 and the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) in 1833 to dissemination of antislavery ideas, the antislavery print culture enlarged, too, with the publication of various literary materials that were distributed broadly (18). As antislavery movements started to be carried out in a more systematic way, slave narratives were also influenced by this situation. The narratives developed during the 1830s and 1840s, known as antebellum slave narratives, were preoccupied with terminating slavery entirely. Juxtaposing previously written examples and the antebellum slave narratives, Gould puts forward: "While earlier narratives were published, read, reviewed, and reprinted as much for their religious as racial experiences, the antebellum slave narrative sharpened its focus and became an increasingly popular and effective political means of fighting slavery" (12).

It should be underlined that both earlier examples and the narratives produced later problematized slave trade and slavery and aimed to demonstrate atrocity and inhumanity of slavery to their readers. In order to achieve their purposes, writers of slave narratives needed to fulfil the requirements of abolitionist publishers and meet

[1] The antebellum period covers the five decades before The American Civil War (1861-1865) in American history.

expectations of readers. For instance, as Gould states (19), attention paid to the description of daily life was foregrounded upon the demand of publishers and readers since it could involve comprehensive information germane to evil aspects of slavery. Although Gould particularly sets this example for antebellum slave narratives, this was valid for a number of earlier examples, too, like *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African*. In relation to that, Gould divulges how certain subject matter was frequently employed in the American examples of these narratives such as "the depravity of Southern planters and the irrepressible fact of sexual miscegenation, the hypocrisy of Southern Christianity, scenes of brutal whipping and torture, rebellious slaves who are murdered" (19) to name a few. Referring to *Narrative of James Williams* (1838) as an example, Gould points out abolitionists also added some paratexts[2] to serve this aim; "[i]ts preface and appendices, written and compiled by abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier" which "are nearly half as long as Williams's story" describe the terrors of life in a plantation (19). Considering that the addressee of slave narratives was the white reader, Namradja calls attention to an observation made by Rushdy: "[s]uch narratives were written to make the white audience feel sympathy for the slaves" (qtd. in Namradja 9), thus moving them emotionally and reinforcing the necessity of abolition. It is remarkable that white abolitionists and sponsors had a huge role in the editing process of slave narratives, which can be connected with the assumption that they were well-informed about the

[2] Macksey and Sprinker touch upon Genette's definition of paratexts: they are "those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader"; "titles, forewords, epigraphs" (qtd. in Genette) are some examples.

expectations of white readers and the appropriate ways to appeal to them (Namradja 10). Namradja elaborates on this point as follows: "If the story was written eloquently, the reader would feel more sympathetic towards the slave and be more inclined to support the Abolitionist Movement" (10). Also, authenticity was highly significant for readers of slave narratives, for that reason, "antislavery reviewers usually defended the veracity of the slave narrative as well as the moral character of the slave narrator" with letters or other paratextual materials (Gould 25). That is why Goddu defines slave narratives as "'literature of fact and appeal'" which strives for persuading readers for "the slave narrator's reliability" and "creat[ing] empathy" (qtd.in Ahrens 180).

As it is mentioned earlier in this chapter, Davis invites attention to the fact that sentimentalism and antislavery movements were affiliated in the sense that the increasing interest in sentimentality in philosophy and literature in the eighteenth century aided to fortify the arguments antislavery movements and literature contended (qtd. in Gould 11). In the eighteenth century, sentimentalism in literature was a "highly innovative" concept (Carey 16) that is considered a reaction to the rationalism privileged in the Neoclassical era. Sentimental literature is marked by "an interest in feelings and emotional states" (18). Sentimental novels, in which the notions of sentiment and sensibility are cherished, particularly came to be popular in the eighteenth century. Literary works of the century, which employ elements of sentimentalism, tend to be dependent on the reader's capability to empathize, thereby being shaped in a way that appealing to the reader's emotions has an utmost importance. Theme and form are usually designed according to this aim. Characters, who are capable of exhibiting sentiments, are presented and kinds of situations and

events representing misfortunes, handicaps, or pleasure are included in order to achieve the expected effect on the reader. The novels such as *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* by Samuel Richardson, *Tristram Shandy* and *Sentimental Journey* by Laurence Stern, *Evelina* by Frances Burney are prominent eighteenth century works of sentimental literature. Herein, it is significant to underline that a number of slave narratives, whose early examples emerged in the eighteenth century, also make use of the conventions of sentimental literature. Carey touches upon this connection between the abolitionist discourse and sentimentalism by accentuating that the motifs of sentimental literature are employed in the abolitionist writings so as to convince "an audience that a person or group of people are suffering and that that suffering should be diminished or relieved entirely" (2). In relation to this, he argues that "sentimental novels and letters from as early as the 1760s contributed to the development both of a sentimental rhetoric and of a popular discourse of antislavery"; the slave narratives of Quobna Ottobah Cugoano and Ignatius Sancho are the examples that draw on the sentimental rhetoric (14). Herein, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), a world-wide known antislavery novel, is also significant to mention as being a work of abolitionist literature that highly foregrounds sentimentalism. Stowe both made use of slave narratives, such as *The Life of Josiah Henson* (1849) in her characterization of the protagonist Uncle Tom (Gould 23), and included a number of sentimental tropes in order to persuade the white reader of the evils of slavery and necessity of the abolishment.

Sekora in his article, "Black Message/ White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative", deals with the role white

abolitionists sponsors had in the writing process of the narratives. As suggested by the title of his work, Sekora contends that particularly slave narratives produced in America after 1830, usually focused on "what white abolitionist sponsors sought in the antislavery texts they would publish" (495). Considering that almost thirty white antislavery groups had a role in the process of publication in the antebellum era, narratives were bound to be supervised and designed by white abolitionists (495). In that sense, slave narratives "were recorded or edited or polished or reviewed or verified or completed" (495) by them to be presented to a white readership, thus, "the black message" was being "sealed within a white envelope" (502). When these points are taken into consideration, it can be claimed that "the tripartite dynamic between slave writers, abolitionists, and the public within which the narratives were produced" (Sinanan 62) led to the emergence of a set of literary conventions for slave narratives in order to achieve "*suitability*" (Sekora 496) in terms of fitting into "white social and literary forms" to be published (496).

2.1.2. Generic Characteristics of Slave Narratives: *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (1789)

Olney, in his article "'I was born': Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature" touches upon "the tripartite dynamic" that Sinanan (62) puts forward, and creates an outline for "both thematic and formal" (Olney 52) set of conventions, to which this interaction gave rise. Olney contends when one gets familiar with a few slave narratives or more, a sense of "*sameness*" rather than "uniqueness" is to be perceived notwithstanding the fact that slave narratives are supposed to be "unique production[s]" since they are regarded as autobiographies by

many (46). In that sense, problematizing the status of slave narratives as autobiographies, Olney at the same time invites attention to "the mere repetitiveness" (46) of slave narratives, which is tightly connected with the presence of a "preformed mold" (49), according to which slave narratives needed to be shaped. Olney states that this mold is imbued with "virtually obligatory figures, scenes, turns of phrase, observances, and authentications that carry over from narrative to narrative and give to them as a group the species character that we designate by the phrase 'slave narrative'" (49). In that sense, it can be claimed that slave narratives usually possess an array of common elements that are deliberately embedded into the narrative by their writers and publishers. Olney's outline, which he calls the "Master Plan for Slave Narratives" by stating "the irony of the phrasing being neither unintentional nor insignificant" (51), focuses on the generic characteristics of slave narratives in a detailed way. At this point, it can be useful to clarify these characteristics by drawing on a well-known slave narrative, *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (1789), which is regarded as a prime example of the genre. Olney's outline and opinions of other scholars regarding the generic characteristics of slave narratives will also be referred to during the examination of Equiano's narrative.

Considered as a "fundamental text" (Carretta, "Back to the Future" 18) of the genre of slave narrative by many, *The Interesting Narrative* was first published in 1789 in London by Olaudah Equiano, who was a former African slave commonly known by the name "Gustavus Vassa," a name given to him by his master Captain Pascal. Being "an international bestseller during Equiano's lifetime" (17), *The Interesting Narrative*

had nine editions during Equiano's life, and the number of editions reached thirty-six until the year of 1850 (Davis and Gates xvi). In addition, the narrative was translated into the languages of Dutch and German (Gates 153), which is another indicator of the popularity of Equiano's work. As a number of critics, such as Carretta ("Back to" 18), point out, *The Interesting Narrative* contributed to the abolishment of slave trade in England, which legislated in 1807, namely ten years after Equiano's death. Carretta also suggests the reputation of the book can be connected with "the timing of its initial publication at the height of the movement in Britain to abolish the slave trade" ("Back to" 18). Being a diligent and well-known African-British person in the abolitionist circle in England, Equiano endeavoured to demonstrate the ferocity of the transatlantic slave trade throughout his narrative. His work has generally been appreciated by many and is believed to have had significant influence on the structure and major conventions of subsequent slave narratives published in later decades.

The Interesting Narrative primarily focuses on Equiano's enslavement along with his conversion to Christianity, gaining his freedom, and involvement in pursuits to justify the necessity of the abolishment of the transatlantic slave trade. Born in 1745 in Essaka, possibly present day's "Southeastern Nigeria" (Carretta "Back to" 17), Equiano was kidnapped as a child and sold to English slave traders that transported him to the West Indies through the Middle Passage. Several days later upon this, he was brought to Virginia, where he was purchased by a plantation owner. Almost one month later, he was sold to an English marine officer in the British Royal Navy, Michael Henry Pascal, who called Equiano "Gustavus Vassa", a name that he used for the rest of his life. As Pascal brought him to England, he worked in the navy for several

years until the time he was carried back to the West Indies against his will. In the Caribbean, he took part in a number of commerce activities, and he managed to get manumitted in 1766 owing to the money he had saved. As a free man, he took on a number of jobs in different countries; he worked at various trading vessels and naval expeditions, to name a few. He went back to England in 1777 as a converted Christian and engaged in activities to oppose the transatlantic slave trade, one of which was publishing his autobiography.

The Interesting Narrative contains a number of generic characteristics of slave narratives, most of which were shaped so as to achieve certain purposes. To begin with, paratextual materials play a significant role. In his outline, Olney indicates that it is a typical characteristic of slave narratives to include "[a]n engraved portrait, signed by the narrator" (50). The inclusion of a portrait and signature is closely attached with the fact that these elements are clear signs of the existence of the writer-narrator indisputably, which can contribute to the credibility of the narrative in the first place. Before the beginning of Equiano's narrative, an engraved frontispiece signed by Equiano is notably situated (see fig.1.). The frontispiece, being a proof of Equiano's real existence, introduces an image of "an African man dressed as an English *gentleman*" (Carretta "Olaudah Equiano" 54).

Fig.1. Frontispiece, Olaudah Equiano, 1789.

If looked at the lower part of the portrait, it can be noticed that Equiano holds an opened Bible, whose pages indicate Acts: chapter four, verse twelve (see fig.2.). In that sense, along with the representation of a refined image of himself, the inclusion of the Bible points to Equiano's embracement of religiosity, which is a type of quality that can possibly evoke a sense of affinity in the readers, who are principally Christian. It should also be added that his image of reading the Bible indicates that Equiano is literate, which is an ability denied to slaves on the basis of the belief that they are incapable of performing an intellectual activity. Nevertheless, Equiano concurrently avoids appearing too bold about his literary abilities, which can be illustrated in the dedication part of the narrative. On that page, he apologizes for presenting "a work so wholly devoid of literary merit" and calls himself "an unlettered African" although he was capable of producing such an influential narrative, which highly contributed to the abolitionist movement. This can be seen as an intentional move considering that the realization of his cause was dependent to white readers; thus, humility always needed to be foregrounded. Concerning these details of the portrait, Carretta contends "Equiano's genius for marketing and self-representation" ("Olaudah Equiano" 53) is evident as there appears to be certain strategic choices in the design of the frontispiece.

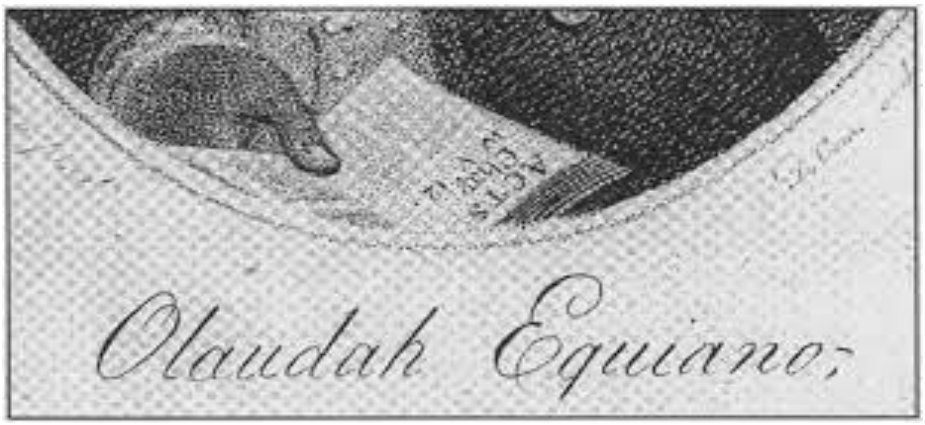
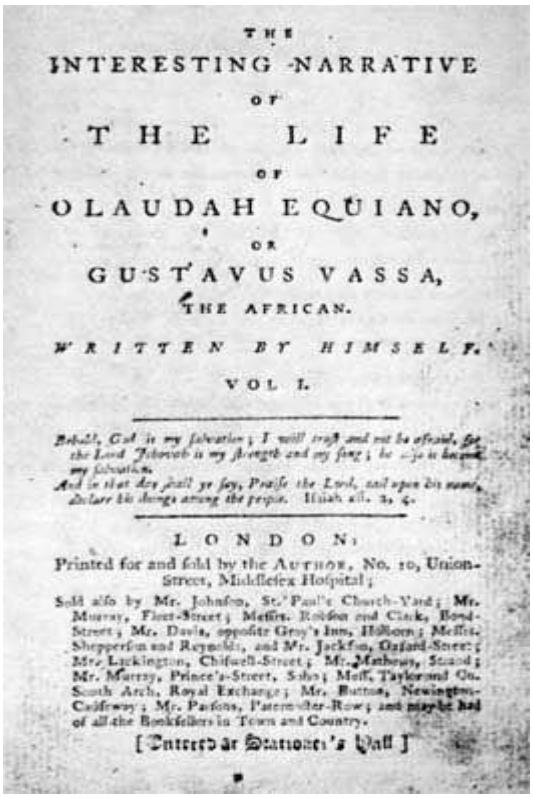


Fig.2. Acts 4:12, Olaudah Equiano, 1789.

The engraved frontispiece is frequently followed by "[a] title page that includes the claim, as an integral part of the title, 'Written by Himself' (or some close variant: 'Written from a statement of Facts Made by Himself'" (Olney 50). In some cases, "'Written by a Friend, as Related to Him by Brother Jones'; etc.)" (50) could also take place to indicate "the narratives were dictated to (white) members of the abolitionist societies" (Eckstein 31). Pointing to his narrative's being "self-authored and self-authorized" (Carretta "Olaudah Equiano" 54), in *The Interesting Narrative*, a title page that holds the claim that the narrative is written by Equiano is present (see fig.3.). The presence of such a phrase is closely related to the purpose of formerly enslaved writers for claiming authorship for their own narratives. It is a useful way of manifesting intellectual competency of the writer-narrator along with his literacy and credibility of the plot. Herein, Caretta's comment on this issue actually might reveal the concern behind the employment of the phrase. As he puts it, "The phrase "written by himself" appears in more than one thousand eighteenth-century titles of fiction and non-fiction, almost always of works attributed to authors whose presumed levels of education and

social status were likely to make readers suspect their authenticity" (54). In that sense, the voice of the black writer-narrator was bound to draw suspicion towards itself; and this phrase is placed to cast suspicions out. As Eckstein puts forward, although "Equiano was indeed one of the very few, and certainly the first, to manage to publish his tale without major editorial interference" (31), the presence of these sorts of phrases placed to claim authorship appears to be contradictory. Even in the cases where "the editors usually claimed not to have influenced the narrative content in any way", "de facto, of course, these editors explicitly or involuntarily manipulated the stories extensively" (31). Therefore, an entire claim of authorship is questionable in most cases.



THE
INTERESTING NARRATIVE
OF
THE LIFE
OF
OLAUDAH EQUIANO,
OR
GUSTAVUS VASSA,
THE AFRICAN.
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.
VOL. I.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.
And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people. Isaiah xii. 2, 4.

LONDON:
Printed for and sold by the AUTHOR, No. 10, Union-Street, Middlesex Hospital;
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Fig.3. "Written by Himself." Olaudah Equiano, 1789.

As authenticity is an integral part of slave narratives, various documents indicating this aspect also have a significant place. Olney lists materials such as "bills of sale, details of purchase from slavery, newspaper items" (51), which can be attached to the narrative as paratextual materials documents to prove authenticity of the text and its writer. In *The Interesting Narrative*, Equiano's inclusion of his manumission paper presented in Chapter Seven, in which Robert King approves of Equiano's freedom clearly, can be an illustration of this, which reinforces the truthfulness of Equiano's position as a free man. Apart from this, it is worth mentioning that the paratextual document located before the narrative, the long list of subscribers, can also serve to underline trustworthiness of the narrative. Carretta states: "publication by subscription, with its attendant lists, was itself traditionally a form of self- promotion", and "[a]uthors, publishers, and booksellers all clearly had motive for inflating the number and status of the names of subscribers" ("Olaudah Equiano" 55). For that reason, suspicion towards the credibility of these lists was not impossible to be mentioned (55). Nevertheless, as for *The Interesting Narrative* it can be observed that in different editions the number of subscribers grew and names are restated, which creates a trustable image of the narrative (55). Furthermore, Equiano's list of subscribers, which gives place to names such as "Richard Cosway", the painter of Prince of Wales, or earlier African British black writers like "Cugoano", is a clear indicator of his ability of "developing a constellation of influential and powerful contacts" (55). All in all, the paratextual materials, which are an engraved frontispiece signed by Equiano, the title page, the manumission document, and the subscription list reveal the endeavour of the writer to prove the truthfulness and credibility of his

account and his own self so as to earn the trust of the white readership. Formerly enslaved narrators were aware of the possible reservations on the part of the readers regarding their narratives, and this curbed them to design their narratives in a way that could have allowed more space for literary freedom.

Another formal characteristic that Olney underlines with regard to slave narratives is the employment of a linear time frame and episodic narrative structure (Olney 53). Referring to Ricoeur, Olney notes: "the act of emplotment combines in various proportions two temporal dimensions, one chronological and the other non-chronological" (qtd. in 47). "The first may be called the episodic dimension. It characterizes the story as made out of events. The second is the configurational dimension, thanks to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events" (qtd. in 47), which is carried out owing to the memory. Olney adds:

> I should imagine, however, that any reader of slave narratives is most immediately struck by the almost complete dominance of "the episodic dimension," the nearly total lack of any "configurational dimension," and the virtual absence of any reference to memory or any sense that memory does anything but make the past facts and events of slavery immediately present to the writer and his reader. (Thus one often gets, "I can see even now … I can still hear …" etc.). (48)

This is closely linked to the necessity of narrators to portray their experiences of "'slavery as it is'" (48). To this end, the narrator suggests that "he is not emplotting, he is not fictionalizing, and he is not performing any act of poiesis (=shaping, making)" (48). Throughout the narrative, Equiano proceeds in a chronological fashion while narrating his experiences. Eckstein's division of this narrative into "three major thematic sections" (26) is useful to observe the episodic nature of the narrative and progression of time in a linear fashion. The first phase spans his delineation of his

childhood in Eboe, his enslavement in the Caribbean, and his manumission in England. In that sense, a neat progression from childhood to adulthood and then from slavery to freedom is noticeable. The second section concentrates on his business life in a number of countries as a free man, which is followed by the third part that reveals his conversion to Christianity and his playing a leading role in the abolitionist movement. Applying "a clear-glass, neutral memory that is neither creative nor faulty-indeed" (Olney 48), Equiano avoids any sort of scepticism that may cast doubt upon the factuality of the narrative while using his memory. This is usually the case in a majority of slave narratives in which narrator-protagonists are forefended from employment of "memory that would make anything of his [their] narrative[s] beyond or other than the purely, merely episodic" due to "the very nature and intent of his [their] venture[s]" (48). Memory neither shapes the progression of the narrative, nor interferes with the advancement of the narrative; rather, it is utilized to aid the conveyance of observations and facts of the past within a chronological time frame.

As for the common thematic elements of slave narratives, one that can easily be noticed is the employment of the "I was born" phrase, which is usually situated at the very beginning of the narratives and can be followed by a place of birth (50). Olney believes this typical initiation along with the paratextual elements vouches for "the real existence of a narrator, the sense being that the status of the narrative will be continually called into doubt, so it cannot even begin, until the narrator's real existence is firmly established" (52). *The Interesting Narrative* exemplifies Olney's argument as in the second paragraph of the narrative from the beginning he notes: "I was born, in the year 1745, in a charming fruitful vale, named Essaka" (2). According to Olney, the

"I was born" phrase is essential in the sense that it is the very first step of establishing genuineness considering that being "the simple, existential claim: 'I exist'" (52), which paves the way for embarking on narrating. A great number of slave narratives, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs, *An Account of James Albert* by Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* by Henry Bibb, to name a few, also make use of this phrase to set about narrating the lives of formerly-enslaved narrators.

Olney points out in slave narratives "[t]he theme is the reality of slavery and the necessity of abolishing it; the content is a series of events and descriptions that will make the reader see and feel the realities of slavery" (53). In relation to this, one of the elements of slave narratives that is frequently foregrounded is the description "of families being separated and destroyed" (51). In *The Interesting Narrative*, for example, the second chapter includes Equiano's account of separation from his family as he touches upon how he and his sister were sundered when he was at the age of eleven. He states that in his neighbourhood kidnapping children was a common practice, and children were aware of this danger as Equiano mentions he witnessed an abduction by assailants in their neighbour's yard. One day, kidnappers, taking the advantage of the absence of his parents at home capture both Equiano and his sister. They covered the kids' mouths and tie their hands and bear them off from their neighbourhood. The dismemberment of family is a significant thematic element because it enables narrators to demonstrate the massive damage the institution of slavery gives to the enslaved. In *The Interesting Narrative*, the disruption of family bonds is narrated in a way that the concrete details of the abduction are clearly

provided. Although at some points Equiano also touches upon his grief due to the incident, it can be claimed that the tangible facts occupy more space than the emotional dimension of the event in the narrative. Noting that he was "in a state of distraction not to be described", he briefly explains he shed tears and lost his appetite (Equiano 17), and begins to give an account of the chieftain who took him and provides details about this man's family. A few pages later it is revealed that he comes across his sister later on, yet their happiness does not last long as just the day after their encounter they are divided permanently. So, it can be argued that sentiments tend to be left at the background while the incidents that can be narrated objectively are brought to the fore. Although there are explanations by Equiano concerning his feeling of sorrow regarding the events, sentiments are moderately reflected. This is a typical feature of slave narratives since the narrator was considered mainly a recorder of the events; and, the factual details rather than emotions were believed to have a higher potential to contribute to the abolitionist cause as they provided the objectivity expected by the reader. In the preface of *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man, Who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina and Georgia as a Slave* (1837), there are statements of John. S. Taylor, who is the publisher, which illustrate this point. By referring to the narrative of Charles Ball, an ex-slave, Taylor notes:

> Many of his opinions have been cautiously omitted, or carefully suppressed, as being of no value to the reader; and his sentiments upon the subject of slavery, have not been embodied in this work. The design of the writer, who is no more than the recorder of the facts detailed to him by another, has been to render the narrative as simple, and the style of the story as plain, as the laws of the language would permit. ("Preface")

This explanation by Taylor lays bare the mindset that lies behind the treatment of the emotional dimension in most of the narratives, as it can also be perceived in *The Interesting Narrative*.

Olney posits that the "description of a cruel master, mistress, or overseer, details of first observed whipping and numerous subsequent whippings" (50) often appear in slave narratives. Violence has a considerable part in *The Interesting Narrative,* which perhaps can be most visibly exemplified in the scene where Equiano is severely beaten by the master of his slave friends, Doctor Perkins, which brings him close to death. The idea of his master's defending him through legal procedures could not be actualized as lawyers remind him of the fact that Equiano is a black man and a slave, so any attempt would be in vain. Although Olney specifies the form of violence with "whippings" in his outline (50), various forms of violence can exist, and women are usually victims of violence in many slave narratives (50). In chapter five, Equiano particularly focuses on his observations concerning the plight of female slaves. In Monserrat, when he was a slave of Mr. King, Equiano asserts that he testified various brutalities and violence practised on women. He mentions the fact that some white people sexually abused female slaves and his incapability to save them was extremely upsetting for him. Apart from drawing attention to the fact that a white man's raping of an African woman is not regarded as an offence, he also lays bare that the children are abused, as well, who are not older than the age of ten. Herein, it is significant to state that no explicit detail that could unsettle readers is provided in the narration of violent events. The violence is depicted and mentioned in moderation, as it is the case in several other slave narratives. Although Equiano is manumitted at the end and gains

a prestigious position in society, he is the victim of slavery, too, and this image of him is actually needed in order to indicate the reality of slavery. In a number of slave narratives, violence underlines victimization and the representation of slaves is reduced to being merely victims by downplaying their individuality. This is also fortified with a number of stereotypical images and ways of representations in which the victimization along with violence is foregrounded. A main stereotype can set an example to this: "Toms —the Good Negroes, always 'chased, harassed, hounded, flogged, enslaved and insulted, they keep the faith, ne'er turn against their white massas, and remain hearty, submissive, stoic, generous, selfless and oh-so-kind'" (Bogle qtd. in Hall 251). The protagonist "Uncle Tom" in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became an epitome of the stereotyped ideal passive, modest, and a Christian slave.

Soon after Equiano's being kidnapped and separated from his family, he is sold to English slave traders, and at this point one of the highly common thematic elements of slave narratives emerges, that is, his experience of the Middle Passage across the Atlantic. Carretta posits that these particular passages are the ones anthologized or referred to the most in literary or historical sources ("Olaudah Equiano" 45). "Indeed, it is difficult to think of any historical account of the Middle Passage that does not quote his purportedly eyewitness description of its horrors as primary evidence," he states (45). Equiano's observations are remarkable as he narrates the voyage in a quite detailed way directly from the point of view of a victim, himself. This is very significant because the Middle Passage descriptions are believed to affect readers the most. These descriptions are also crucial due to the fact that they illustrate Equiano's

familiarity with the Middle Passage experience, thereby strengthening the credibility of the text. At his first glance to the slave ship, he lets his audience know that he suspected if he was in "a world of bad spirits" (Equiano 24). Along with his attention directed to "a large furnace or copper boiling" (24), when an image of a large number of shackled black people with faces full of despair and grief caught his eyes, Equiano assumes that the black are going to be eaten, and he passes out. On account of his current state imbued with "horrors of every kind" (25), Equiano is doubtful of ever being back to his homeland in his life. He invites attention to stuffiness of the part of the ship where the enslaved are kept and the high temperature that hindered movements of bodies and air circulation, which culminated in producing illnesses that caused death of many slaves. He notes that actually they would prefer to die rather than live in these conditions, and it soon becomes clear that a few of slaves attempt to commit suicide by jumping into the sea to drown themselves. Upon their arrival to the island of Barbadoes, the enslaved people who are placed in "parcels" (28) are sold. Notwithstanding the fact that Equiano reveals the misery of the enslaved in the ship, which is a generic convention directly related to the major political agenda of a slave narrative, Eckstein believes that the Middle Passage voyage, widely known for the cruelties it bears, is narrated in *The Interesting Narrative* in such a way that it shows Equiano is "hesitant about articulating the brutality and inhumanity of Atlantic slavery" (33). Also, he states that his expressiveness regarding his emotions is quite limited due to "the *pragmatic* dimension" of slave narratives, namely "their political employment and the performance of authenticity" (33). Eckstein cites, at this point,

Toni Morrison, who contends "the pragmatic constraints" "suffocated all attempts at expressing a subjective, emotive relationship to events" (33):

> The milieu […] dictated the purpose and the style. The narratives are instructive, moral and obviously representative. […] But whatever the level of eloquence or form, popular taste discouraged the writers from dwelling too long or too carefully on the more sordid details of their experience. Whenever there was an unusually violent incident, or a scatological one, or something "excessive," one finds the writer taking refuge in the literary conventions of the day. (33)

Thus, Eckstein claims, even in the narration of Equiano's Middle Passage experience, which is unequivocally the part of the narrative where the horrors of slavery are explicitly given, there is a sort of reservation concerning representing this ferocity explicitly (33). He exemplifies it with an excerpt from the narrative:

> This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become unsupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying rendered the whole a scene of horror almost unconceivable (Equiano qtd. in Eckstein 33).

The word "unconceivable" gives the impression that Equiano slides over the issue. Eckstein believes although Equiano deals with "sordid details" at some points, he tends to present them "with a certain degree of detachment and come packaged in a rather functional, matter-of-fact style" (33). In addition, if this excerpt above is examined, it can be seen that an insight to Equiano's emotions are not thoroughly provided; rather, his observations and facts are shared with readers. Thus, apart from "a few descriptions of life aboard the slavers, he keeps silent about the emotions or trauma that such horrors may have induced"; and "[t]hese remain, as it were, silenced, absent" (34). To this end, while slave narratives need to include the horrors of slavery, they also avoid dwelling much on the disturbing details. Also, emotional dimension usually remains

at the background in relation to it. The silences or gaps arising of the veil drawn before these events can also be related to the caution taken by the narrators of slave narratives in that they did not want to make their narratives appear too threatening or unsettling to their predominantly white audience. Slave narratives denounce the cruelty of slavery; yet, at the same time, they try not to offend the audience as it can jeopardize the cause.

In conclusion, slave narratives are highly conventionalized texts with a particular aim of persuading the (white) reader to support the abolitionist cause as is exemplified by *The Interesting Narrative*. To summarize, a majority of slave narratives use various forms of paratextual materials to enhance the credibility of the writer-narrator and authenticity of the narration. The narrators' preoccupation with authenticity and producing a trustworthy image of themselves, which is revealed first with the employment of paratextual materials, is mostly scattered throughout their narratives, thereby shaping the texts. The narratives usually follow a chronological time frame and have an episodic nature, which prevents memory of the narrators to be involved as an active shaping force in the advancement of the narration. Memory simply emerges as a tool to convey the occurrences of the past; thus, a subjective way of narration is undermined. Slave narratives often include a clearly defined sentence beginning with "I was born …", whose employment, similar to paratextual materials, is imbued with the concern to prove the historical existence of the narrators, thus hindering the reflection of the narrator's own subjective decisions on the design of the text. Family separation and the detailed description of the Middle Passage are essential thematic elements of a number of slave narratives. The narration of these parts is built

on observations and facts, which suggest a representation of the reality of slavery in a neutral way; sentiments tend to be not foregrounded as they can both undermine the objectivity of the representation and would not attract readers' attention as much as the factual details would. Violence have a considerable place in the narratives, yet while describing the events in relation to it, there is avoidance of elaborating on too much on uncomfortable details that may not appeal to the taste of the white reader. Representation of violence is usually accompanied with the victimization of slaves, which gave rise to the emergence of stereotypical ways of representing slaves in relation to their position as victims of violence and slavery in general. When all these are considered, it can be argued that slave narratives, which are supposed to offer a voice to articulate experiences of the enslaved Africans, constrained their voice at the same time in various ways. The mindset lying behind the formation of the generic conventions and the way they are employed in slave narratives confined the writers of slave narratives, who are the enslaved narrator-protagonists, into a place in which their individual voices, internal lives, personalized experiences, self-representation, and sentiments either are situated at the background or simply do not appear to exist.

2.2. Neo-Slave Narratives

The term "neoslave narrative" was coined by Bernard W. Bell, who used the phrase in his work *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (1987) for the first time by defining it as "residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom" (289). Prioritizing the aspect of emancipation in the thematic design, Bell puts forward that *Jubilee*, an African-American novel written by Margaret Walker

(1966), can be regarded as "the first major neoslave narrative" (289), thereby pointing to the beginning of a new genre. Bell's study, focusing on African-American literature, is significant not only due to the fact that it represents "a turning point in the recognition of the genre as a new, distinct form" (Worrell 17), but also it lays the ground for the emergence of a number of notable studies in the field, some of which are particularly noteworthy due to their contribution to the definition of the term. In this respect, *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (1999) by Ashraf H.A. Rushdy, which in the first place hyphenates the phrase as "neo-slave narrative", stands out due to both being the first comprehensive work on the genre in African-American context and providing an alternative meaning to the genre by drawing attention to its connection with slave narratives: "contemporary novels that assume the form, adopt the conventions, and take on the first-person voice of the antebellum slave narrative" (3). It is remarkable that the studies of Bell and Rushdy, which formed the basis for the establishment of the genre, paved the way for the appearance of a growing number of works that bring new perspectives to the fore in company with differing ways of describing the genre. Another definition can be the one suggested by Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu in which thematic elements come to the fore: "'contemporary fictional works which take slavery as their subject matter and usually feature enslaved protagonists'" (qtd. in Hinton 51). Like Beaulieu, who, particularly, deals with the fictions of African-American women writers in relation to black feminism (52), Angelyn Mitchell, too, focuses principally on African-American woman-authored fictions and the representation of enslaved females characters in these works. She introduced the term "liberatory narrative" to be used in "the context

of Black womanhood" (Worrell 37), which reveals the fact that attention paid to different aspects of neo-slave narratives can lead to variations in terminology. Another different argument in the African-American context regarding the scope of the genre can be the one suggested by Valerie Smith in her entry in *The Cambridge Companion to the* African *American Slave Narrative* (2007). Favouring the employment of the term, neo-slave narrative, in a broader sense, she contends that the term involves "texts set during the period of slavery as well as those set afterwards at any time from the era of Reconstruction until the present" (Smith 168), thereby expanding the boundaries of the earlier definitions of the genre.

Although scholarship on neo-slave narratives initially developed in African-American context, it is Paul Gilroy's ground-breaking work, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), which led to increase in the scholarly attention paid to the transnational dimension of neo-slave narratives (Öztabak-Avcı 121). Arlene Keizer's *Black Subjects: Identity Formation in the* Contemporary *Narrative of Slavery (2004)*, which puts the emphasis on both African-American and Caribbean writers, is an example to this. Criticizing preceding definitions of Bell and Rushdy on account of their restrictiveness in covering the variety in content and form (Nehl 30), Keizer offers "the category of contemporary narratives of slavery" (30), which is comprised of literary works that move beyond the requirements of prevailing understandings of the genre in order to discover "'the nature and formation of black subjects, under the slave system and in the present, by utilizing slave characters and the condition of slavery as focal points'" (qtd. in Smith 170). In addition to Keizer's work, Lars Eckstein's *Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics*

of Literary Memory (2006) is another significant study, which focuses on examples of neo-slave narratives by writers based in Britain such as the work of Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen. In his work, Eckstein focuses on how literature functions as memory by establishing connections between slave narratives and neo-slave narratives. "[L]iterature is the realm of active designs of memory which engage critically with earlier literary recollections," he states (7). If the variety and abundance of scholarship on neo-slave narratives and differences in conceptions and approaches are taken into consideration, the difficulty of coming up with a precise and rigid definition that can ably cover this multiplicity can be clearly seen. For this reason, it might be useful to focus on the main concerns of this "large and diverse body of fiction" (Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives* 3) in order to come up with a unifying point. As Rushdy recurrently touches upon the fact that neo-slave narratives are "history-laden" (*Neo-slave Narratives* 228), exploring the emergence of the genre and outlining its development within the historical contexts of both the US and the UK can help unearth the main preoccupations and arguments that lie behind these works of fiction.

2.2.1. Historical Context of Neo-Slave Narratives in the US

Rushdy's *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form (1999)* and his entry in *Cambridge Companion to The African American Novel (2004)* are significant sources in terms of discussing "a set of intellectual and social conditions" (Rushdy *Neo-slave Narratives* 3) of the 1960s that are closely attached with the emergence of the genre. To start with, one of the points that Rushdy foregrounds in both works is how the Civil Rights Movement was an inspiration to the

growth of New Left historiography. Having embraced a variety of activism and approaches in order for ensuring the civil rights of African-Americans in the United States, the Civil Rights Movement represents a period imbued with the strive for equality and justice in a number of levels of institutions by problematizing racial discrimination and oppression that black people were faced with. Rushdy invites attention to a sort of awareness that quite a few New-Left affiliated students attained owing to the deeds of the Movement, which was the fact that a number of substantial achievements of the Civil Rights Movement were made up of the efforts of "the relatively powerless people" (Rushdy "The neo-slave narrative" 88). This recognition, namely the fact that the history is made from the "bottom up" victories, was a significant point in the sense that it also meant a change for historians as they embarked on considering "the possibility of revising their vision of the past and writ[ing] history 'from the bottom up'" (Rushdy "The neo-slave narrative" 88). The bottom-up approach gave rise to "reconceptualization of the historiography of slavery" (Nehl 24), and long-neglected slave testimonies started to rely on "the first-person testimony of slaves" (Dubey 333), which is very significant because "for the first time in the academic study" these texts were considered "legitimate historical evidence" (333). Nehl compares this newly-adopted attitude in historical studies with the treatment of slavery in earlier time periods and studies that prevailed for a long time. He draws on the explanations of the historian Nathan I. Huggins as follows:

> Like the Founding Fathers of the U.S., who refused to regard racial slavery as a structural element of American history and instead constructed a racially exclusive concept of the nation, up until the transformational 1960s, U.S. historians generally created a white master narrative of American history. According to Huggins, they produced a story of constant progress that

> considered "racial slavery and oppression as curious abnormalities—aberrations—historical accidents to be corrected in the progressive upward reach of the nation's destiny." In this dominant conceptualization of the past, there was no room for African Americans, no interest in the stories of and texts written by enslaved black men and women. In general, Huggins argues, historians "seemed to assume that a slave's testimony was self-interested special pleading and, therefore, uncreditable. (qtd. in Nehl 24)

On the other hand, the bottom-up approach puts the emphasis on "the perspectives of African Americans and other formerly marginalized groups, such as Native Americans, Asian Americans or women" (25). In the same vein, slave narratives gained significance and the formation of African American culture started to emerge as a proper object of academic inquiry. Thus, the historical research into the past gave rise to the understanding that slavery was not merely "an institution in which blacks labored under white dominion, mere victims subjugated to the rule and will of whites" (Huggins qtd. in Nehl 25). Similarly, Dubey invites attention to "the issue of slave agency" which was initiated to be underlined at the end of the 1960s (333). A number of studies produced in the 1970s such as *The* Slave *Community* by John Blassingame or *Roll, Jordan, Roll* by Eugene Genovese aimed to shatter Stanley Elkin's "account of the American slave as a 'Sambo'-like figure"[3], "whose personality was wholly shaped by the crushing victimage imposed by slavery," by drawing attention to "the resilience of the slave community" and their "rebellious agency" (333).

In addition to the substantial contributions of the Civil Rights Movement to end racial injustice and segregation and its influence on New Left historiography, Black Power Movement, whose main principles are "self-determination and cultural

[3] "Sambo" is a stereotypical image used to represent the enslaved black as docile, passive, child-like beings who are contented of their positions as being victims of slavery.

pride" (Joseph 9) emerged in the meanwhile. Being "a movement that empowered people of African descent" (Rushdy "The neo-slave narrative" 89), Black Power Movement is believed to have incited a sense of pride to take in their heritage for black people, whose influence can be marked in the intellectual area and educational institutions of the time period (89). One consequence of this is the establishment of Black Studies programs at principally white academic institutions in the late sixties in the US upon the "demand" of African American students, which led to the necessity for "a new set of curricula" and black-authored "new books and textbooks" that could be used in education (Rushdy "The neo-slave narrative" 89). This development urged the production of works penned by African American writers in the years 1969 and 1970 such as narratives of slavery and novels. Also, the sense of pride the movement evoked encouraged to discover the past of slavery and "pierce the myths and lies that have grown up around the antebellum period" (Williams qtd. in Rushdy "The neo-slave narrative" 89), which resulted in the publication of new scholarly historiographies that re-configure representations of African Americans and slavery. In that sense, it can be put forward that both the Civil Rights and Black Power movements sparked off "a return" to works of history so as to observe the position of African Americans in works of history and criticize it (Hinton 52).

Together with these social movements and the developments they produced, the publication of *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967) marks a significant point since it generated controversies surrounding representation of slavery, which is an issue evidently in connection with the concerns of both movements. Being a fictionalized narrative written by a white Southern author, William Styron, *The Confessions of Nat*

Turner, which "was perceived by the white literary establishment to be the first novel" written "from the slave's point of view" (Rushdy *Neo-slave Narratives* 4), was controversial in terms of a number of aspects. Rushdy touches upon the most debatable ones:

> its representation of a nonheroic slave rebel, its presumption of assuming the voice of a slave, its uninformed appropriation of African American culture, its deep, almost conservative allegiance to the traditional historiographical portrait of slavery, and its troubling political message in a time of emergent black empowerment. (4)

The fervently discussed aspects of the novel particularly by black intellectuals and Black Power supporters sparked off publication of several counter-stories to the novel such as *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond* (1968), in which the portrayal of Turner "as a hypersexual fanatic" and the employment of "the first-person voice of the slave" by a white author are problematized (Dubey 334). In addition, a number of fictional narratives were also written in a way to challenge Styron's text such as *Dessa Rose* (1986), a novel interpreted as a critical response to Styron's text (Rushdy "The neo-slave narrative" 98). Similarly, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971) can also be regarded "as a critique of Styron's *Confessions*" that raises questions about the form of the novel (98). Rushdy adds:

> The shift from the civil rights to the Black Power movement, the evolution from consensus to New Left social history in the historiography of slavery, and the development of a Black Power intellectual presence in the dialogue over Styron's Confessions of Nat Turner constitute the moment of origin for the Neo-slave narratives. (4-5)

So, it can be stated that all of these formations and developments undergirded a place for "literary focus on slavery" (Rushdy qtd. in Hinton 52) and influenced the constitution of its main political positioning and demands. As Rushdy puts forward,

the neo-slave narrative is “a specific literary form [that] emerged and evolved in response to developments in the public sphere” (*Neo-slave Narratives* 5).

One of the well-known examples of the neo-slave narrative genre is *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) by Alex Haley. The novel, recipient of the 1977 Pulitzer Prize, explores Haley’s own family history. It is the product of his twelve years research of the origins of his family. It initiates with a focus on the story of Kunta Kinte, a young Gambian man enslaved in the US, and continues to depict the life stories of his descendants. The novel was on “the New York Times bestseller list” for months and millions of copies were published (Armstrong). A year later upon being published, the novel was adapted into a mini-series that achieved a huge success worldwide. The novel and the TV series were important in the sense that they revealed the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery clearly to the white and black audience in the world. They are believed to have encouraged the descendants of immigrants to explore their genealogy and take pride in their ancestry. In that sense, it is an important work of African-American literature particularly in its attempt to uncloak the atrocity of slavery. Herein, the point that demands attention is the fact that the novel shares similarities with traditional slave narratives in terms of its formal features and thematic conventions. The novel has a somber tone and a language imbued with pain and suffering that can be perceived in the narration of each generation of the family, which proceeds in a chronological fashion. Sexual violence and familial elements are on the foreground. Similar to slave narratives, *Roots* aims to evoke the feeling of pity for the enslaved in readers. However, there is a difference in doing this: while slave narratives pursue appealing to sentiments of the white reader

through the narration of solid facts and concrete details, not through a focus on emotional dimension; *Roots*, as a neo-slave narrative, both focuses on the tangible points that slave narratives deal with and gives room to the narration of sentiments. Although their ways to achieve this effect is different, in the end, *Roots* embraces a parallel attitude with slave narratives as it is informed by a similar sentimental attitude.

Nehl posits that in contemporary era still "many whites [in the U.S.] deny or downplay the importance of slavery to the development of the country, justify the so-called 'peculiar institution' as a benevolent system or ignore the history of black enslavement altogether" (10). Referring to views of writers like Horton, Nehl notes "[o]thers view slavery as an exclusively southern phenomenon, trying to absolve the North from any responsibility or guilt" (10). Nehl mentions some literary works, such as *Open City* by Cole, challenge the tendency of ignoring or deemphasizing the history of slavery in the North and problematizes "myths, stereotypical assumptions and self-legitimizing interpretations of the nation's past" (10). Bunch also argues that "American slavery is one of the last great unmentionables in public discourse" (qtd. in Nehl 11), and there have been a number of attempts to challenge "this erasure of slavery from collective (white) memory" over the last decades (Nehl 11). For instance, a good many works of literary genres have responded to this amnesia. A graphic novel, *Nat Turner* (2008) by Kyle Baker, M. NourbeSe Philip's poetry book *Zong!* (2008), and Toni Morrison's neo-slave novel *Beloved* (1987) can be mentioned as notable examples (11). The play, *Gem of the Ocean* (2003), by August Wilson and the film, *12 Years a Slave* (2013), by Steve McQueen are also among the cultural products that bring slavery into focus (11). Also, attention is drawn to the enduring effect of the past

on the lives of the black people in the twenty-first century by scholars such as Saidiya Hartman, who calls it "the afterlife of slavery" (qtd. in Nehl 12) in her novel, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2007). At the same time, Hartman challenges "the naïve idea of history as progress and to focus on loss, dispossession and grief as defining features of the African diaspora":

> If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment. (qtd. in Nehl 12-13)

In that sense, "If the ghost of slavery still haunts our present," Hartman contends, "it is because we are still looking for an exit from the prison" (qtd. in Nehl 14).

2.2.2. Historical Context of Neo-Slave Narratives in the UK

Though earliest examples of neo-slave narratives emerged in the African-American context, starting from the end of the twentieth century up until present, there have been a number of British contributions to the genre that foreground slave trade and slavery. Before dealing with neo-slave narratives written in the British context, it is significant to focus on how slavery is viewed in the UK within the time period these narratives are produced and touch upon the contributions to bring British slavery and issues in relation to it to the fore. In her book, *Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar: Representations of Slavery*, Abigail Ward lays bare the difficulty of "taking an entirely historical approach" (1) to the British slavery. She mentions the obstacles in doing so: "most received historical accounts have downplayed, or ignored

completely, Britain's role as a slaving nation" and "if slavery *is* remembered, the focus falls on the abolitionists, so Britain's role in this past is remembered only in terms of ending, rather than perpetuating, the trade" (1). Britain embarked on participating in slavery in 1562 with John Hawkins' expedition to Guinea (2). Notwithstanding the slave trade was abolished in 1807, it is widely known that illegal forms of it continued for decades. Ward reminds readers of the fact that although its participation in slavery is frequently not accentuated by many, Britain had a prominent role in slave trade, and municipal buildings and grand houses in main slave seaports such as Liverpool, Bristol and London are its concrete evidence (2). According to James Walvin:

> It is generally true that historians of Britain have persistently overlooked or minimized the degree to which British life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was integrated into the Atlantic slave system ... British historians have tended to regard slavery as a distant (colonial, imperial, American, maritime) issue, of only marginal or passing interest to mainstream Britain[5]. (qtd. in Ward 3)

Ward elaborates on this by juxtaposing US and British slavery. She claims that being dissimilar to US slavery, Britain's slavery was practised in the Caribbean, namely "at a convenient distance which allowed the majority of sugar-consuming Britons to forget about the source and production of this staple" (3). Even in the event that slavery is acknowledged, the emphasis is usually on the abolishment of slave trade and the abolitionists of Britain who contributed to ending the trade (3).

Herein, the bicentenary of the abolition of the Slave Trade Act 1807 in 2007 in Britain is significant to mention because it foregrounds a confrontation with the transatlantic slave trade past of Britain. The commemoration is believed to be a significant event since many scholars underscore that preceding the commemoration

there had not been a good many public discussions on Britain's involvement in slavery in the past. It also signalled an acceptance of the leading role Britain had in the transportation of millions of Africans through ports of Britain across the Atlantic and the acknowledgement of the economic profits Britain had gained owing to the slave trade. In addition to bringing these issues to the fore, the 2007 bicentenary drew attention to the legacy of the slave trade by touching upon the fact that a number of the enslaved are ancestors of current British citizens; modern slavery, which includes human trafficking, forced labour, prostitution, is also overtly addressed. Moreover, a mass-reading project was conducted in 2007, whose main book was *Small Island* (2004) by Andrea Levy. A great number of copies were distributed to a number of cities as a part of the event "Small Island Read 2007", and especially to the ones that have historical connections with slave trade such as Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, and Hull. Kelly notes the project aimed to "'use reading to facilitate learning about the past' and 'bring diverse communities together through the act of reading and thereby foster[ing] a sense of shared identity'" (qtd. in Thomas 193).

Following the bicentenary, a number of scholars have focused on Britain's history of slavery by challenging a certain or received version of British history. One of the recent attempts to reveal Britain's connection with colonialism and slavery can be the publication of an interim report in September 2020, which was authorized by the National Trust, i.e. "Britain's largest membership organisation, with 5.5 million supporters" (Doward). Being a collective work of a number of academics, including Corinne Fowler, who is a professor of postcolonial literature at the University of Leicester, the ground-breaking report significantly divulges links between ninety-three

properties in the care of the National Trust and colonialism and historic slavery. According to an article of *The Guardian*, the report underlined that "93 trust properties, including Clandon Park in Surrey and Hare Hill in Cheshire, were linked to wealth from plantations and the slave trade, while others, such as Bateman's, Rudyard Kipling's home in Sussex, were important to understanding Britain's colonial history" (Doward). The report turned out to be a quite controversial one and has been highly criticized by senior politicians and the press. Fowler, the co-editor of the report, believes the report is assumed as a "threat to British identity and to the received version of history: the more familiar periods of history, World War II, World War I – the things where we seem to be on the right side of history and which we can feel fairly pleased with ourselves about" (Yeo). Thus, the findings of the research created tension, and some have not been pleased with the disclosure of these links. Nevertheless, Fowler invites attention to the significance of broadening our understanding of history rather than receiving merely a certain version of it, as she simply believes: "more history is better than less history" (Yeo).

Miranda Kauffman's *Black Tudors: The Untold Story* (2017) is another pivotal work that focuses on the black presence in an historical time period where black people's existence in Britain was truly unacknowledged. Kauffman, who worked with Fowler in the Colonial Countryside project, invites attention to the black presence in the Tudor and Stuart eras from the mid-sixteenth century to the 1620s, which was "unknown and untold" until her work was published (Mamata). Concentrating on stories of ten Africans, who arrived England from "Africa, Europe, and the Spanish Caribbean," the book mainly contends that these people were not slaves, rather, they

were citizens of Tudor society, who are "baptised, married and buried by the Church of England and paid wages like other Tudors" ("Black Tudors: The Untold Story"). Kaufmann lays bare that the differences in skin colour were not regarded at the time as a differentiating aspect that culminated in creating outcasts in society due to racial features. According to Kaufmann, instead of racial differences, "religion, class or talent" used to be the distinguishing elements ("Black Tudors"). Kaufmann's work is significant in the sense that it undermines the assumption that the Tudor England consisted solely of white people. It reveals a black presence at a specific period of history in England, where it is presumed that Africans did not exist. Thus, Kaufmann is doubtful that her work is appreciated by everyone as she believes the findings are unexpected for many since the "fantasy past" (Mamata) in which everyone was believed to have been white is dismantled in her book. At the same time, she fills in a historical gap that has not been acknowledged before where the black were viewed as equal to the white. Kaufmann links this with present day's concerns, and she hopes that "The knowledge that Africans lived free in one of the most formative periods of our national history can move us beyond the invidious legacies of the slavery and racism that blighted later periods in our history" ("Black Tudors").

A majority of neo-slave narratives produced in Britain foreground the concerns already indicated in relation to slavery and history. *Cambridge* (1991) by Caryl Phillips, *The Longest Memory* (1994) by Fred D'Aguiar, and *A Harlot's Progress* (1999) by David Dabydeen can be mentioned as some well-known examples. In the twenty-first century, recently published novels such as Andrea Levy's *The Long Song* (2010) and Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots* (2008) emerge as some other

remarkable examples of the genre. These novels by Evaristo and Levy particularly draw attention as they diverge from other neo-slave novels with their employment of humour while dealing with a serious subject like slavery. The act of writing of neo-slave narratives is tightly linked with the present as they bring racism, identity problems, social and economic inequalities to the fore. Caryl Phillips also underlines how his preoccupation with the legacy of slavery has an influence on his work:

> I suspect that the vast majority of what I have so far written has been an attempt to understand not just the actual details of the "institution" of slavery but, more importantly, the continued, corrosive, troubling and inescapable legacy of what happened on the coast of Africa, on the plantations in the Americas, and on the high and low streets of Europe. (qtd. in Muñoz-Valdivieso "Neo-Slave Narratives" 46)

In that sense, neo-slave narratives contribute to the overall effort in the cultural arena in Britain, underlining "Britain's collective amnesia" (Ball 8) regarding its history of slave trade and accentuating the impact of slavery on the structures of the present British society. While concentrating on the experience of slavery, the late twentieth and twenty-first century novels usually make use of a number of diverse styles and own "a measure of creative and rhetorical freedom" (Smith 169) that writers of slave narrative did not possess. Pointing out "the contemporary authors write from a perspective informed and enriched by the study of slave narratives" (169), Smith elaborates on the distinctive aspects of the contemporary neo-slave narratives such as their critical attitude to hegemonic discourse on the history of slavery and creative ways through which they discover "the unacknowledged and elusive effects of the institution of slavery upon slaves, slaveholders, and their descendants" (169). In other

words, flexibility in form and content inform the writing of neo-slave narratives and thereby "liberating static representations of slave experience" (Eaton 2).

2.2.3. Main Political Concerns of Neo-Slave Narratives

The problem of coming up with a clear-cut definition of the neo-slave narrative also stems from the difficulty of listing its major generic characteristics. Being restricted to follow certain conventions is against the nature of neo-slave narratives that aim to liberate the highly conventionalized writings of slavery in particular ways. Neo-slave narratives have varying characteristics in terms of both their thematic elements and formal structure. It is observed that a number of examples of neo-slave narratives make use of first-person narration, in which an enslaved or a formerly-enslaved narrator gives an account of her/his life, which is perhaps the most specific feature of slave narratives, as is the case in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1974). There are, however, some exceptions to this: *Jubilee* (1966), the novel which is considered by many as the first neo-slave narrative employs a third-person narration. *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) also uses third-person narration. These examples on their own uncloak the complexity of making generalizations in relation to defining the generic conventions of the genre. In addition, the fact that neo-slave narratives are quite innovative complicates it further to find unifying points that can be identified as generic characteristics. For instance, Spaulding, who coined the term "the postmodern slave narrative" for contemporary examples of the genre instead of utilising the term, "neo-slave narrative," draws attention to the inventive inclusion of satire, science fiction, parody imbued with "polyphony, temporal gaps and shifts,

haunting, and elements of the fantastic" in neo-slave narratives (Kennon). If these points are taken into consideration, it can be put forward that any attempt to enumerate a conclusive array of generic characteristics emerges to be problematic. For that reason, it seems more reasonable to focus on several political concerns that lie behind this fictional act of re-writing slavery experience.

Both in earlier examples of the genre and the ones produced in several decades later, preoccupation with history, to be more precise, problematization of a number of aspects of established versions of history can be perceived. Challenging both historiography of slavery and traditional narratives of slavery, neo-slave narratives "claim authority over the history of slavery and the historical record" (Spaulding qtd. in Ahrens 183) by re-writing slavery experience. Revisiting history of slavery entails calling into question of "the past's values, contents, conventions, and aesthetic forms" (Hogue qtd. in Worrell 53). In that sense, neo-slave narratives can bring into question a number of aspects of slavery writings of the past including slave narratives. Embracing the bottom-up approach to history that is consolidated by the New Left and Black Power Movement, Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* (1966), for instance, problematizes the attention paid solely to some well-known figures of history. Walker predominantly puts the emphasis on the world of slaves as their perspectives and feelings are so substantial that even a major "'world historical figure' like Lincoln become a 'minor character seen through the mind of the major characters,' who in this novel are the slaves themselves" (Rushdy, "The neo-slave narrative" 90). Taking on "the voice of the slave" (Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives* 4), writers of neo-slave narratives at the same time can unearth "the hidden or missing stories of history,

including taboo subjects like interracial rape and sexuality, in order to unlock our understanding of the past" (Worrell 58). Another common preoccupation of the writers of neo-slave narratives can be "the concern with the 'black subject'" (Ahrens 182). Neo-slave narratives aim to re-examine representations in order to lay bare "intricacies of black slave experience" (Eaton 3). Rushdy expresses the contribution of several writers of African-American neo-slave narratives as follows:

> In the works of the writers closest in time to the Black Power Movement, Jones, Reed, Butler, Colter, and Williams, their project was one of reclamation of those historical subjects who had suffered first at the hands of owners and then in the intellectual programs of revolutionaries. Reed wished to salvage the "Uncle Tom," as Butler and Williams did the "Mammy," not to celebrate quiescence in the face of suffering but to be just in their assessment of what those who lived through it experienced, and what we, "who never was there," as Morrison puts it (31), did not. ("The neo-slave narrative" 103)

Herein, it can be claimed that neo-slave narratives aim to shatter the view "of slavery as the root of stereotypes of the Mammy, the Sambo, or the Uncle Tom" (Goyal 21), thereby pointing to the fact that black identity cannot be reduced to these figures and what they represent. Similarly, a new way of representing slavery is adopted that transcends "the binaries of slaves and masters, victims and victimizers, to show the pervasiveness and complexity of a social system" (Babb 218).

One of the aspects that is closely related to the main concerns of neo-slave narratives and useful to touch upon in terms of this study's argument is the connection between neo-slave narratives and slave narratives because slave narratives can be considered a departure point both for the design and political agenda of neo-slave narratives. Nehl's argument provides insight into this: contemporary black writers "do not write in a vacuum but enter into an energetic and fruitful dialogue" with slave narratives (23) because they write of "formerly ignored or marginalized aspects of

slavery" (32). A parallel can be established between Nehl's statement and Sekora's argument that he voices in his article on slave narratives. Sekora underscores the fact that "[th]e history of the slave narrative reveals a curious movement of centers and margins. What remains ever at the center is an institutional form or experience. What is meanwhile pushed to the periphery is the unique and distinctive experience of an individual life" (503). In that sense, it can be claimed that neo-slave narratives aim to focus on the aspects that are swept under the carpet, thereby seeking for "meaning" (503) "where it is hidden, excluded, repressed, taboo" (503). Neo-slave narratives pursue exploring "the raw experience of slavery" (503) that is either rendered as an enmeshed entity with religion in earlier examples of slave narratives or subservient to abolitionist purposes in the ones produced in the antebellum era (in the American context). Toni Morrison, in her essay "The Site of Memory" (1987), sheds light onto this issue by accentuating her role as a contemporary black female writer. Inviting attention to the "dictated" (90) aim of slave narratives, Morrison notes:

> they were written to say principally two things. One: 'This is my historical life - my singular, special example that is personal, but that also represents the race.' Two: 'I write this text to persuade other people - you, the reader, who is probably not black - that we are human beings worthy of God's grace and the immediate abandonment of slavery.' (86)

The clear rhetorical effect sought by slave narratives inevitably sculpted the content and form accordingly. Morrison states that in the case of an event or situation that is not supposed to be elaborated on as a consequence of the obligations the enslaved narrator had, "[o]ver and over, the writers pull the narrative up short with a phrase such as, 'But let us drop a veil over these proceedings too terrible to relate'" (90). This concealment led to the presence of certain gaps and silences in slave narratives, which

stems from "authorial compromises to white audiences and to self-masking from a painful past" (Anim-Addo and Lima 1-2). Morrison contends:

> In shaping the experience to make it palatable to those who were in a position to alleviate it, they were silent about many things, and they 'forgot' many other things. There was a careful selection of the instances that they would record and a careful rendering of those that they chose to describe. (91)

In this situation, Morrison states, her task is to discover "how to rip that veil drawn" (91). She believes that this is crucial for "any person who is black, or who belongs to any marginalized category" due to the fact that they were "seldom invited to participate in the discourse," whose "topic," however, is of them (91). Therefore, according to Morrison, neo-slave narratives function as "a kind of literary archeology" based on imagination (92) for they attempt to rebuild slave experience and to "fill in the blanks that the slave narrative left" (93). The statement of Saidiya Hartman in one of her interviews is in parallel with Morrison's view: "'every attempt to emplot the slave in a narrative ultimately resulted in his or her obliteration,' then the task for contemporary artists becomes a struggle to 'repeat the unrepeatable, to present the unpresentable'" (qtd. in Goyal 19).

3.Parody

The aim of this section is to discuss primary aspects of the concept of parody mainly in the light of Linda Hutcheon's understanding of it so as to display how her conceptualization of parody can be a useful framework for the forthcoming analytical chapters of this thesis, in which the parodic engagements of Evaristo's *Blonde Roots* and Levy's *The Long Song* with the conventions of slave narratives will be discussed. Hutcheon reveals her lasting interest in parody evidently in *A Theory of Parody* (1985),

to which she refers as “obsession” (xi). Her enthusiasm for the analysis of the concept can also be discerned in her later published works, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) and *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), in which she elaborates on the concept, and a substantial connection between parody and postmodernism is established.

In *Theory*, Hutcheon reconsiders the concept of parody by concentrating on the form and theme of the twentieth-century art including literature, film, music, and architecture. She defines parody as “a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity” (*Theory* xii). The critical distance between “the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work” (32) is indicated by irony in the main. In that sense, parody may be regarded as imitation, which is distinguished by ironic inversion. It is significant to point out parody cannot be assumed as merely “nostalgic imitation of past models” (8), rather, a critical attitude towards the previous form is foregrounded, which allows for ironic play with various conventions. Hutcheon contends while parody can take place between individual works of art, such as two different texts, a set of conventions of a genre or characteristics of a movement or time period can also be the target of parody. This may allow us to deduce that her understanding of the parody surrounding the area of the application of the term appears to be a quite comprehensive one since parody does not remain at the textual level in her use of the term. In the same vein, she problematizes any attempt that restricts the scope of parody, such as that of Gerard Genette. Hutcheon states Genette aims to confine parody “with poems, proverbs, puns, and titles” (18) that are not very long texts, and explains the concept as “a minimal transformation of another text” (21), which sets up a contrast with Hutcheon’s conceptualization of

parody. Hutcheon significantly favours a far more inclusive concept of parody that ably covers a wide range of art works regardless of length, and her conceptualization foregrounds functional and ideological aspects of the parodic act as it is treated as a critical tool that cooperates with postmodern art.

Hutcheon's understanding departs from a number of theories of parody due to her opposition to the prevailing tendency of establishing a connection between parody and ridicule. She posits that this conventional association possibly stems from the etymological analysis of the Greek word, "parodia", which stands for "counter-song" (*Theory* 32). Hutcheon believes there exists a point that is inclined to be overlooked, which legitimizes a return to the root of the word. While it is commonly agreed that the "odos" stands for "song", scrupulous attention should be paid to the prefix "para" as it has two possible meanings (32). According to Hutcheon, there is predilection in terms of putting emphasis solely on one possible meaning of *para*, which is "counter" or "against" (32). This led to the way to view parody as a notion that takes place between texts one of which is placed against the other with the purpose of mockery (32). To lay bare this further, she touches upon the definition of parody in *The Oxford English Dictionary*:

> A composition in prose or verse in which the characteristic turns of thought and phrase in an author or class of authors are imitated in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous, especially by applying them to ludicrously inappropriate subjects; an imitation of a work more or less closely modelled on the original, but so turned as to produce a ridiculous effect. (qtd. in *Theory* 32)

Rather than confining the analysis of the word to this meaning, Hutcheon brings another possible meaning of "para" to the fore, which is "beside" (32), thereby offering a sense of "an accord or intimacy" as an alternative to "contrast" (32). In that sense,

she aims to reveal parody is not necessarily accompanied with ridicule or laughter if this unheeded meaning is prioritized. Thus, Hutcheon's parody foregrounds the "ironic", which can be playful but not unavoidably comic. On the other hand, several critics, such as Margaret Rose, do not advocate separation of ridicule from parody. Rose underscores the inextricability of parody and the comic effect by juxtaposing it with other forms of art: "pastiche has never necessarily involved humor" while parody does (qtd. in Salomon 72). Nevertheless, according to Hutcheon, the compulsory involvement of ridicule may restrict the boundaries of parody, for that reason, she privileges a broader and more pragmatic definition that fits to debates of contemporary art. In other words, she believes it is significant to reconsider parody in the context of present concerns. Therefore, rather than regarding parody as "short, occasional, satiric jibes of the nineteenth century" (*Theory* xii), she focuses on recognizable lengthy ironic formations which re-examine precedent art works. Notwithstanding the fact that she disagrees with Genette in terms of a number of aspects of his theory, she supports his "omission of the customary clause about comic or ridiculing effect" (21), which is a point criticized by Rose, as she states: "[Genette's definition of parody] omits reference to its comic functions and to their many particular complexities as well as to other of its characteristics" (qtd. in Sadrian 32). Hutcheon's recurrent references to other contemporary critics in her works provide insight into comprehension of her own interpretation of the concept and lay bare at which points hers differs from the other existing arguments.

As her definition accentuates repetitiveness of parody together with the notion of critical difference, Hutcheon calls parody "a form of" "double-voiced discourse"

(*Theory* xiv) in the sense that while transforming or redesigning earlier works, its "differential" attitude is accompanied with reliance on the parodied text at the same time. Still being dissimilar, these voices, one of them is "conservative" (26) and the other one is "revolutionary" (26), do not fuse into each other, yet they do not invalidate one another, either, thereby operating together. In that sense, while parody diverges from "an aesthetic norm" (44), simultaneously, it involves "that norm within itself as backgrounded material" (44). Nonetheless parody may criticize the parodied background, it does not aim to attack it, which would be "self-destructive" (44) in this case. Therefore, the main goal is to construct "a new series of ideas upon its target and hence the target text has to remain within the body of parody" (Önal 9). For that reason, Hutcheon does not repute parody as an "aggressive" (*Theory* xiv) act; rather, she puts emphasis on its dependence onto the backgrounded text although it keeps its critical ironic distance. That is why she states parody happens to be "a way to preserve continuity in discontinuity" (97). The conservative aspect of parody refers to this continuity, whereas discontinuity is the product of double-voicedness of parody; namely, it is connected with regeneration in consequence of the amalgamation of continuity and its presence in a new coded discourse. To put it another way, the existence of parody necessitates the presence of a "law", which refers to repetition, and "transgression" of this law, which stands for "difference", namely the transformative aspect of parody. The repetitiveness of parody does not draw attention to "sameness and stasis" (101); rather, it significantly highlights difference and variation, which are embedded in this similarity. As Hutcheon notes, parody achieves pursuing "continuity" while allowing for "critical distance and change" (102).

Therefore, the dual essence of parody can be entitled “double and divided” (26), as a result of which a new context is constructed.

Hutcheon states parody is not simply correlation of texts or a set of conventions in a particular way because, she argues, randomness does not have a place in the parodic recall. To her, the intention of authors or texts, the impact of it on readers, skills included in the processes of encoding and decoding, and “the contextual elements” that intercede or influence apprehension of “parodic modes” should also be taken into consideration (*Theory* 22). Hutcheon particularly introduces two significant elements, which are “encoder” (i.e. producer) and the “decoder” (i.e. reader) of the parody. According to Korkut, this attention paid to the significant presence of the encoder in Hutcheon’s conceptualization distinguishes it from intertextuality theories owing to the fact that “intentionality” of an encoder does not have to be that crucial in all kinds of intertextuality (11). Korkut adds: “That is why focusing on the relationship between texts and between decoder (reader) and text suffices in theories of intertextuality. Parody, on the other hand, ‘demands that the semiotic competence and intentionality of an inferred encoder be posited’ (Hutcheon 1991a: 37)” (11). In addition to the importance given to the intentionality of the act of parody on the part of the encoder, Hutcheon recurrently invites attention to the significant engagement of decoders in the creation of parody. To Hutcheon, parody is reliant on recognition of intention and competence for deciphering the connection between the parodied text and parody; therefore, the competency of the decoder and the ability of the encoder are significant. In instances where the acquaintance of receivers of the parodied background is not helpful enough to hear the echoes of parody, the “pragmatic ethos”

and “doubled structure” (*Theory* 27) inevitably end up being nullified. For that reason, Hutcheon accepts the presence of “a very real threat of elitism or lack of access in the use of parody in any art” (*Politics* 101). Nevertheless, Hutcheon implies that some elements or materials in several forms of art such as the “title” (101) or “the acknowledgement pages” may serve as a clue to provide access to parody to some extent. “These may not provide all the parodic allusions, but they teach us the rules of the game and make us alert to other possibilities” (101). In that sense, the decoder’s consciousness of the presence of codes rendered by the encoder in the discourse is a crucial aspect of parody to Hutcheon as she stresses the extent of participation of readers “in the intertextual ‘bouncing’ (to use E. M. Forster's famous term) between complicity and distance” (32). Therefore, only if decoders are familiar with the target parodied background, which can be a target text or a set of conventions, can the encoded parody be figured out.

In *Poetics* and *Politics*, Hutcheon reveals the connection between parody and postmodernism in a very clear way as she recurrently underlines parody, being a self-reflexive ironic act that reappropriates preceding discourses, conventions, or representations, can be regarded as an essential element of postmodernism. In terms of several points, she forms a link between parody and postmodernism, one of which can be the very act of “us[ing]” and “abus[ing]” of postmodernism (*Poetics* 3). On account of postmodernism’s initially “installing” and then “subverting” what it was installed, Hutcheon notes “postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon” (3), which can be associated with the paradoxical nature of parody as it similarly draws on an earlier form or discourse, thereby establishing it, in order to criticize it and put forward

the argument of its own, which at the end culminates in a sort of undermining of the parodied background. In that sense, the contradictory intertextuality of parody both provides and undermines the context, which "makes it apt mode of criticism for postmodernism, itself paradoxical in its conservative installing and then radical contesting of conventions" (129). As Hutcheon points out "one of the postmodern ways of literally incorporating the textualized past into the text of the present is that of parody" (118); another aspect that correlates postmodernism and parody can be the tendency of parody for "opening the text up, rather than closing it down" (127) just like postmodern intertextuality defies "closure and single, centralized meaning" (127). In that sense, parodic return to history can be useful for problematizing certain values and so-called truths of the past, or traditional ways of representations. By evoking the past textually, parody can also shed light on the history of the formation of the parodied background in terms of the impact of the historical and social contexts that shaped the theme and formal features of the parodied text or set of conventions. In that sense, parody can lay bare engagements with social and political discourse owing to its dialogue with the past, and this can be illuminating for arguments of the present as the past can be recontextualized from the perspective of the present.

The major points discussed in this chapter can be summarized as follows: the slave narrative genre has a number of formal and thematic characteristics that are forged so as to contribute to the abolitionist cause. The narrative agency of the writers to represent their own experiences of slavery and themselves in their own ways was restricted and considerably influenced by these generic characteristics that are designed according to the demands of "white envelope" abolitionists and expectations

of a white readership. Neo-slave narratives, fictional writings of slavery, tend to criticize several aspects of slave narratives in relation to these problematic points. Hutcheon puts forward: “Parody in postmodern art is more than just a sign of the attention artists pay to each others’ work and to the art of the past” (*Politics* 102). As Hutcheon’s theory of parody suggests acknowledging the past is significant so as to problematize it or comment on it critically in the present, *Blonde Roots* by Evaristo and *The Long Song* by Levy establish a connection with the past both in their forms and themes through parody. The novels intend to unmask the “interactive powers” (*Theory* 86) participated in the production of the generic characteristics, raise questions regarding their formation, and accommodate them according to the preoccupations of the present-day through parody.

CHAPTER 3

BLONDE ROOTS AS A PARODY OF (NEO) SLAVE NARRATIVES

Evaristo's first prose novel, *Blonde Roots* (2008), focuses on the life story of an English woman, Doris Scagglethorpe, who is captured and enslaved by Africans. *Blonde Roots* engages with the transatlantic slave trade by reversing the historical circumstances, in that in this new fictitious world order Europeans are enslaved by Africans. *Blonde Roots* is a "'[w]hat if'" and "'[t]his is what was'" novel (Collins 1201) in Evaristo's words; namely, while presenting a reversed and imaginative design of the historical events, the novel also brings to the fore Britain's slavery past. The novel's epigraph, "Remembering the 10 to 12 million Africans taken to Europe and the Americas as slaves . . . and their descendants, 1444–1888", recalls "the long history of Portuguese chattel slavery" (Newman 284) as "[i]n 1444 Lançarote de Freitas landed 235 enslaved Africans in Lagos, Portugal, the first large group of slaves to be brought to Europe" (285). The epigraph also invites attention to the abolishment of the transatlantic slave trade in Brazil, which was the last country that banned the trade in 1888. Notwithstanding the novel is a prose work, it can be perceived that Evaristo's "natural poetic voice" still bears its presence (Collins 1200). In *Blonde Roots*, while Evaristo presents a fictionalized account of an enslaved protagonist, she draws on

several generic characteristics of slave narratives and some neo-slave narratives such as *Roots* (1976) by Alex Haley by mimicking them in an ironic way. This chapter aims to examine *Blonde Roots* as a parody of slave narratives and modern-day fictional narratives of slavery in the light of Hutcheon's theory of parody and pursues to explore possible political functions of the employment of parody. It will be argued that Evaristo parodies these narratives in order to make the reader face Britain's slavery past, invite attention to the legacy of slavery, and reveal the constructedness of race and a whole set of values in relation to it.

Blonde Roots consists of three parts: Books One, Two, and Three, each of which has a number of subtitles. Book One concentrates on Doris' failed attempt to escape from the household of Chief Kaga Konata Katamba (K.K.K) in Londolo, where she works as his secretary. Doris' childhood and her enslavement through the experience of the Middle Passage along with the present time she is in her master's household are presented in Book One. This part is narrated by Doris, but in Book Two, Bwana, Doris' master, appears as the narrator. Book Three, continuing with Doris as the narrator, describes the aftermath of Bwana's capturing Doris and her life as a cane-cutter in Bwana's plantation in West Japanese Islands. Doris' second effort to escape results in her liberation, with which Book Three concludes. A postscript following Book Three gives a brief account of Doris' life upon obtaining her freedom.

The narrative is preceded by a map (see fig.4), which demonstrates how the world geography is dramatically distorted by Evaristo. The apprehension of the redrawn map emerges as prerequisite to proceed to Doris' narration. Along with

alterations in the names of continents such as “Aphrika” (Africa) and “Europa” (Europe), their location is notably twisted: Europa is situated to the south of Aphrika.

Fig. 4. Map redrawn, *Blonde Roots*

“Aphrika” and “United Kingdom of Great Ambossa” lie on the Equator. The U.K. of Great Ambossa, whose shape and name evoke today’s UK, is located on the west of Aphrika. The name of the West Indies is changed as “West Japanese Islands”; “New Ambossa” and “Little Londolo” are clearly indicated. The Americas is renamed as “Amarika”. The transatlantic slave trade is revitalized on the imaginative map between the renamed territories, namely United Kingdom of Great Ambossa, Europa, and the West Japanese Islands, all of which are in the southern hemisphere. In this distorted geographical design, the enslavement of the “whyte” substantially contributes to the economy of Aphrika, in which the “blak” corner the slave trade market.

As pointed out in the preceding chapter in relation to Equiano's narrative, in slave narratives, families' "being separated and destroyed" (Olney 51) is foregrounded so as to invite attention to the destructiveness of the institution of slavery. Similarly, in *Roots*[4] by Haley, which is a neo-slave narrative, family is a main theme and the separation of the family members also has a significant place. For instance, the major character Kunta Kinte's desire to continue his bloodline is underlined at several points in *Roots*. This leads him to start a family with Bell, who gives birth to their daughter, Kizzy, which makes Kunta feel "a deep pride and serenity in the knowledge that the blood of the Kintes, which had coursed down through the centuries like a mighty river, would continue to flow for still another generation" (ch.68). Nevertheless, Kizzy is taken away from her family to be sold, and the narration of the event is imbued with sorrow and pain; Kizzy begs Kunta to save her, yet Kunta, moved to tears, is incapable of rescuing her (ch.83). In both slave narratives and neo-slave narratives imitating their generic conventions like *Roots*, the employment of these sentimental thematic characteristics invite attention to the humanity of the enslaved and seek to invoke the reader's empathy. Their purpose is to invite readers to identify with the pain and suffering of the black families. Echoing these narratives in this respect, *Blonde Roots* touches upon the separation of family; yet, there is an element of ironic distance, which

[4] Besides *Roots* (1976), there are some other neo-slave narratives that bring sentimentality to the fore such as *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison, *Kindred* (1979) by Octavia E. Butler, *Dessa Rose* (1986) by Sherley Anne Williams, and *Zong!* (2008) by M. NourbeSe Philip. Films like *Gone with the Wind* (1939) by Victor Fleming, *Amistad* (1997) and *Lincoln* (2012) by Steven Spielberg, *12 years a Slave* (2013) by Steve McQueen and the TV series *Roots* (1977) are some of the cultural products that perpetuate stereotypical representations of the enslaved black. The references to Alex Haley's novel, *Roots*, and a number of examples from the novel provided in this chapter, stem from the fact that in *Blonde Roots*, Evaristo explicitly alludes to Haley's neo-slave narrative, which is implied by the title of her novel in the first place.

creates the novel's parodic engagement with both slave narratives and modern fictional narratives of slavery which adopt the formal and thematic conventions of slave narratives. This ironic distance is created through the inversion of race and racial parameters. In the novel, the subtitles, "Oh Lord, Take me Home" and "The Gospel Train", include a plethora of dialogues and emotions regarding the family and its separation. Doris is kidnapped while playing hide-and-seek with her sisters, which marks the beginning of familial separation. The unity of her family is disrupted up until Doris' later union with her sister, Sharon. Although Doris is kidnapped at the age of ten, it is seen that her memories provide her with a clear picture of her family. The points, such as character traits of Doris' sisters or the past of her mother, have a place in the novel; even details like the appearance of Doris' father, whose "cheeks were blistered from where the bitter winds had rubbed them raw" and beard has an untrimmed "bushy scrag-end" are touched upon ("Oh Lord"). Doris mentions a song her father used to sing:

> Are you going to Scarborough Fayre?
> Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme,
> Remember me to one who lives there,
> She once was a true love of mine. ("Oh Lord")

The riddle Doris sings to her sister, Sharon, is also given room in the novel:

> Lavender blue, diddle daddle
> Lavender green,
> When he is king, diddle daddle
> You shan't be queen. ("Gospel Train")

Doris mentions how her mother used to teach her and her sisters how to cook "cabbage", "muffins, gingerbread", "jam from gooseberries and strawberries"; Doris reveals she craves for "a cabbage" at the time she is in Londolo ("Gospel Train").

Doris laments for not knowing the whereabouts of her sisters: “Madge. Sharon. Alice. / Beloved. Beloved. Beloved” (“Gospel Train”). These instances indicate Doris’ longing for her family by apparently focusing on emotions, as modern-day fictional narratives of slavery do, and have the capacity to evoke the feeling of pity for Doris, which would be a desired impact in slave narratives. However, the fact that these events and circumstances are a part of an imaginative reversed design prevents readers of the novel from being emotionally engaged with the happenings. Instead, these points relate slavery and Britain by inviting attention to Britain’s involvement in slavery in a reversed way. The fact that the family of an enslaved girl is British is accentuated, which creates an ironic distance between the story here and that of Britain’s slavery past, as well as modern-day realistic stories of slavery. If these points above mentioned in Doris’ narration of her family is examined, it can be noticed that Jack Scagglethorpe, Doris’ father, sings a traditional English ballad, “Scarborough Fair”; Doris’ riddle has British references like “king and queen”; traditional British food have a place in Doris’ memory of her childhood and family. Additionally, the way Doris express her sorrow about her sisters can also be a parodic reference to Toni Morrison’s well-known neo-slave narrative *Beloved*, which is another twentieth-century example of the genre making use of a number of sentimental conventions of slave narratives. *Blonde Roots*, as a postmodern satirical novel, has different aims than creating sympathy on the part of the reader for the enslaved black or seeking for the ways to underline their humanity. Evaristo does not produce another narrative of slavery that laments the predicament of the enslaved black by presenting them as victims or attempts to arouse pity to create sympathy in the reader. This particular design of the novel might be informed by the

idea that slave narratives and some modern-day stories of slavery do not empower the figure of the enslaved black; rather, they continue representing slaves as victims. The reason why the novel parodies sentimentalism in both slave narratives and their modern counterparts in the use of thematic convention of the narration of family and its separation seems to be to invite attention to the fact that claiming the humanity of the enslaved black (and hence the sympathy of the reader) is a politically problematic endeavor; instead, the novel highlights the slavery past of Britain, which is still not well-acknowledged today, through a reversed story of slavery and racism, without representing Africans as slaves.

Another point where a similar attitude can be observed is in the narration of the Middle Passage in the novel. The narration of the enslaved's experiences of the Middle Passage can be regarded as the most fundamental element of slave narratives in the sense that the voyage is imbued with conditions and events that can conveniently lay bare the horrors of slavery. As discussed earlier, the inclusion of facts and observations are significant in the sense that it can solidify the factuality of the writer's participation in the voyage. Also, the painful experiences of the writer/narrator can stir humane sentiments in the white reader, thereby bringing about the rightfulness of abolition. The narration of the Middle Passage is also represented in a very similar way in *Roots*. It is replete with vividly described images regarding the condition of the slave ship. Sexual violence towards women, stuffiness and darkness of the ship, and insanitary environment are underlined. Kunta and other slaves are chained together in a "nightmarish bedlam of shrieking, weeping, praying and vomiting" (ch.34). In *Blonde Roots*, the part under the subtitle "The Middle Passage" in Book One deals

with the voyage across the Atlantic, whose destination is the paradise island of New Ambossa in West Japan. Although the novel remains faithful to some conventional representations of the voyage in slave narratives and its modern counterparts in the sense that the passage across the Atlantic is described in a solemn manner and concrete details in relation to the observations of the narrator are provided, *Blonde Roots* also departs from the generic conventions in terms of the following points: as it is pointed out earlier, in relation to Equiano's narrative, Morrison states that the writers of slave narratives avoid "dwelling too long or too carefully on the more sordid details of their experience" (90). In case of the existence of "something 'excessive'" writers draw a veil over it (90). In *Blonde Roots*, in contrast, the description of the Middle Passage is replete with explicitly unsettling details. It is revealed by Doris that the men are handcuffed and their ankles and wrists are tied with chains; there are maggots on these wounds caused by the chains, and men are incapable of getting rid of them because they are handcuffed. Doris' friend Samantha dies next to her, and she is unable to move Samantha's body away due to the tight fit, "less than eighteen inches" ("Middle Passage"). In a condition where the bowels of both have "emptied", their bodies have to be adjacent and Doris suffers from the attempt of the maggots on Samantha's body parts to proceed to her body ("Middle Passage"). Doris touches upon their predicament by inviting attention to "bedsores, cuts, maggots, hunger, dehydration, asphyxiation", as a result of which if a whyte gets insane, their body is thrown to the ocean ("Middle Passage"). Another very sobering point to which Doris draws attention to is the condition of Garanwyn, another enslaved whyte, who is persecuted as a consequence of his involvement in a failed rebellion:

> Then I saw Garanwyn, dragging himself on the ground with one arm. His kneecaps had been smashed in. His eyes were buried beneath bruised swellings. The right side of his face was twice its normal size. His left ear had been severed. His right one a bloodied pulp. His chest had collapsed as if all the ribs had been extracted. One arm dangled from its socket. He had no fingernails. He had no toenails. His genitalia were a mess. ("Middle Passage")

These examples show that the veil drawn to the "sordid events" in slave narratives does not appear at all in *Blonde Roots*. On the contrary, these are unsettling descriptions of violence. In these passages, Evaristo completely dehistoricizes slavery; strips it off completely of the historical circumstances through the reversal of race and racial parameters, and instead invites the reader to witness the atrocity of slavery itself only; namely, what some human beings are capable of doing to some other human beings whom they see inferior to themselves. In other words, these passages go beyond the issue of the historical power relationship between black and white races by underscoring the atrocity of violence directed on humankind as a result of slavery and uncloak the capacity of the ones in power to oppress the others. The novel parodically engages with violence, which is explicit in the portrayal of the enslaved in slave and some neo-slave narratives such as *Roots*, by not presenting an image of Africans as slaves and/or victims. It seems the novel refuses to give room to yet another portrayal of a suffering enslaved black person; instead, suffering is there, but only as a decontextualized incident, demanding condemnation from the reader, regardless of whom it is actually imposed on. The dark, bitter humour that arises from the reversal of the relationship between the enslaver and the enslaved undermines sentimentality. Yet, at the same time, the novel so explicitly alludes to British slavery that the reader inevitably decodes all the references to what happens to whites in the novel as actually

an account of what happens to black enslaved people. This gives birth to dark humour and a call to remember the slavery past of Britain.

As it is argued in the preceding chapter, in both slave narratives and a number of neo-slave narratives written in the twentieth century such as *Roots*, which adopt thematic and formal features of slave narratives, sentimentalism is on the foreground although their ways to present this are different. While in slave narratives moderately narrated concrete details of violence are present, in a number of modern-day narratives of slavery, pain is accompanied by sentiments on the part of the narrators reflecting on this pain. In that way, both aim to appeal to the reader's heart by inviting attention to the humanity of the enslaved. Similar to earlier neo-slave narratives, in *Blonde Roots*, too, there are certain points that emphasize the inclusion of sentiments as it can be seen in the description of Doris' family. In the narration of the Middle Passage, there is a similar attitude, as well. For instance, immediately after Doris' plight of being exposed to "bedsores, cuts" ("Middle Passage"), it is shared with the audience that Doris misses "wintry breezes", "homemade lemonade", "grass smell after rain" ("Middle Passage"). Apart from the horrors of the voyage, she also reveals her emotional bond with her motherland. Also, the death of her friend, Samantha, emerges as an important point because her death is not glossed over with a simple declaration given by Doris; rather, a detailed account of her past is shared with the reader. Samantha's familial bonds are established; her husband and one-month-old daughter, Rosie-May, and her painful loss are mentioned. Doris states, for instance,

> Her eyes never travelled far from that warm English morning.
> I was the girl her child might have become.
> When she stroked my cheek, it was her daughter's.

When she looked into my eyes, she didn't see me.
When she spoke, it was to Rosie-May. ("Middle Passage")

These are clearly moments in the novel where emotions are on the foreground, which becomes much more apparent if they are juxtaposed with Bwana's contrasting description of the Middle Passage in his own account: "Dear Reader, There is little reason to trouble you with the minutiae of the long and tiresome journey to New Ambossa. Suffice to say that running a slaver meant having to be responsible for the welfare of the cargo—rather as a parent for its children" ("Sailing the Seas of Success"). Nevertheless, rather than celebrating sentiments or interiority of the enslaved Africans as opposed to some neo-slave narratives, the novel reminds the reader of the fact that the enslaved are British through the inclusion of specifically Britain-related references mentioned above regarding the things Doris yearns for. While reading both the accounts of cruelty and violence directed to the enslaved white, as well as the passages attempting to invoke sympathy in the reader for the enslaved white, readers are made aware that this is an imagined world, a reversed story. The kind of emotional involvement of the reader sought by many neo-slave narratives such as *Roots* is undercut here. The reversed design disorients the reader instead of inciting identification. Evaristo parodies the attempt to lay bare the humanity of the enslaved black in slave- and neo-slave narratives by underscoring the humanity of the white, thereby refusing to reiterate the old narratives of slavery. In that sense, rather than creating empathy for the recognition of the humanity of the enslaved African by appealing to the heart of the white reader, through the reversed design, the novel is interested in making the reader just face and remember the unsettling slavery past of

Britain. In that sense, as Hutcheon's theory of parody underlines the criticism that lies at the heart of similarity, the narration of the Middle Passage, which usually involves details of violence in slave- and neo-slave narratives and gives room to sentiments in neo-slave narratives, is parodied in *Blonde Roots* so as to problematize the mindset behind the employment of the convention in slave- and neo-slave narratives.

Olney states that in slave narratives failed and/or successful attempt(s) to escape can be considered being among the common thematic elements (51). The narration of the escape contributes to the adventure-story aspect of the genre particularly in its early examples, thereby attracting the attention of the reader due to the tension and excitement it bears. Both in successful and failed attempts, there are certain difficulties. In the narration of the act of escaping, physical challenge of the journey to freedom is usually on the foreground and in the event of the unsuccessful attempts usually severe punishments are unavoidable. In a number of modern-day fictional narratives of slavery, it is possible to observe the use of the same thematic convention in a similar way. For instance, in *Roots*, Kunta is sold one week after his ship voyage to America. Kunta has a few failed attempts to escape upon his being sold, in one of which he is whipped and in another, his leg is shot twice. Another one results in his obligation to make a choice a between his male sexual organ and foot to be cut off. His right foot is cut off partially as a result, which evidently underlines the presence of violence, invoking pity on the part of readers. In *Blonde Roots*, this thematic element also has a place. Doris is given a note by "the Resistance" that offers her a chance to go to her motherland, England; she escapes from Bwana's house in Londolo as soon as she receives this encouraging note. She is neither guided by "the

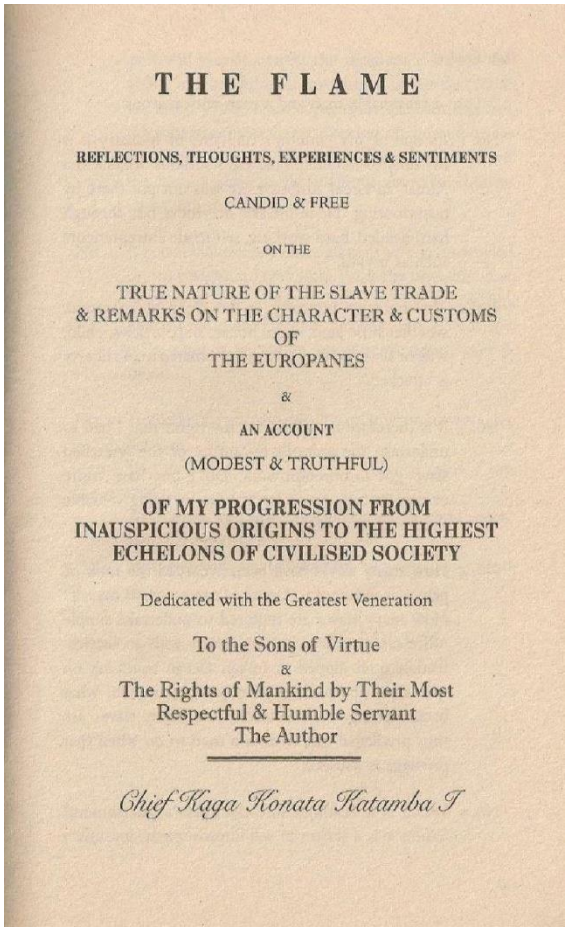
North Star" nor helped by "Quakers", which are the common figures in the narration of escape moments in slave narratives; unusually, Doris needs to go to "Paddinto Station" ("Oh Lord"), which is obviously an anachronism for "Paddington Station" in present-day London. On her way to the station, she passes through "Vanilla Suburbs" ("Oh Lord") in which free whytes live. Her hesitation and fear of being seen by anyone is imitated parodically as if she is a narrator of traditional slave narratives; however, the escape moment as a thematic element appears to be placed by Evaristo to invite attention to different points than dealing with the emotional display or violence she is exposed to as a consequence of her failed attempt. On her way, Doris begins to mention the whyte hairdressers in the Burbs ("Oh Lord"). She explains that in her hometown, whyte women are called "Barbee", an evident anachronism for "Barbie" dolls, and the physical characteristics that lead women to be called with this nickname cause them being humiliated in Ambossa ("Oh Lord"). Their thin blonde hair and pale complexion are jeered at and belittled by male Aphrikans. To change their appearance, whyte women spend time in whyte hairdressers; they wear "the perms, twists and braids of Ambossan women" and have "nose-flattening job" ("Oh Lord"). While these details invoke laughter in the novel due to the reversed features, they are significantly related to Evaristo's argument in one of her interviews. In the interview, Evaristo puts forward that image issues are still "alive" (Bleijswijk 137); in present day "the myths of what is beautiful, what is attractive" (138) are a part of stereotypes of the past, which works against the black (138). Here, the reversal Evaristo employs parodies the adventure-narrative aspect of slave narratives, which is imbued with violence, hardship, and conveyance of emotions, by making use of this motif to articulate a present-day

concern: how the ideal of beauty is constructed and shaped in favour of the ones in power. The narration of the escape also leads to the enunciation of the following points. While walking through Paddinto District to arrive at the station, Doris passes several chain coffee shops, "Coasta Coffee, Hut Tropicana, Cafe Shaka, Demerara's Den, Starbright" ("Oh Lord"), all of which bring to mind well-known cafés in contemporary London. Some posters of "dramas of yore" are placed on the walls of "tubes" of Londolo: "the classic Guess Who's Not Coming to Dinner, To Sir with Hate, Little Whyte Sambo, Esq., and the famous tragedies The Tragic Mulatto, The Tragic Quadroon and The Tragic Octoroon … The Whyte and Blak Minstrel Show" ("Gospel Train"). Some of these are obviously references to well-known stereotypes of black people such as "sambo, the tragic mulatto, the tragic quadroon"; minstrel shows are mentioned and the names of some of these dramas are playfully created. It can be posited that instead of attempting to evoke a sense of excitement and thrill in the reader or appealing to the sentiments of the reader by underlining violence, the novel parodies this generic convention to facilitate an active reading process for the decoders of parody. By both "distanc[ing]" and "involv[ing]" the reader "as perceivers" (Hutcheon, *Theory* xiii), parody, herein, is firmly linked with the reversal, and it is expected to be discerned by the decoder, which is a prerequisite for parody to work according to Hutcheon. Similar to the reversal of the ideals of beauty, the playful changes on the names of the posters indicate the constructedness of these according to the advantage of those who are in power. Doris' escape journey is imbued with twenty-first century anachronisms such as the names of the coffee shops, which connects the past with the contemporary era, thereby "bring[ing] this story alive" (Evaristo,

Bleijswijk interview 144). In that way, slavery, seemingly an issue of the past, can be linked to the present-day so as to consider its impact on the contemporary era. Doris' use of British slang and colloquial expressions such as "damn!" ("Oh Lord"), "bloody hell" ("Daylight Robbery"), "lad" ("Gospel Train"), "piss someone off" (Wade in the Water"), "couldn't be arsed" ("Oh Lord") also contributes to this as it can create intimacy with contemporary readers. The British references such as "the tube" and the names of the tube lines like "Bakalo Line", reminiscent of Bakerloo Line, connect the issue of slavery and Britain firmly, thereby reminding us of British involvement in slavery once again. Here, the reversal is also responsible for parody, as it is for each parodied convention of slave narratives in the novel. It produces humour, as well, yet, it is replete with critical distance, and becomes a means to underline these points. In that sense, parody "replay[s]" and "recontextualize[s]" (Hutcheon, *Theory* xii) the convention of the narration of the escape journey, which is a thematic element related to the adventure-story aspect of the genre, in order to enunciate the contemporary concerns owing to the parody, which is a tool that "fit[s] the needs of the art of our century" (11).

As slave narratives prioritize the notions of authenticity and reliability of narratives, paratextual elements and additional documents are of prime importance, among which a signed frontispiece of a writer-narrator, a number of documents to verify his/her existence, and the claim "written by himself" (Olney 50) as an umbilical part of the title may appear prior to the narration. As discussed in the previous chapter through examples from *The Interesting Narrative,* these materials attached to the narration aim to contribute to the abolishment of slave trade and slavery by

underscoring the credibility of the writer-narrator and his/her narrative. In *Blonde Roots*, neither a title page with a statement of Doris' authorship nor an engraved portrait of her is provided. Nevertheless, Chief Kaga Konata Katamba's essay published in "The Flame" is included in Book Two, and it has a title page, which can be considered a fictional paratextual material. Interestingly, the cover page imitates that of a slave narrative in terms of some points (see fig.5).


THE FLAME

REFLECTIONS, THOUGHTS, EXPERIENCES & SENTIMENTS

CANDID & FREE

ON THE

TRUE NATURE OF THE SLAVE TRADE
& REMARKS ON THE CHARACTER & CUSTOMS
OF
THE EUROPANES

&

AN ACCOUNT

(MODEST & TRUTHFUL)

OF MY PROGRESSION FROM
INAUSPICIOUS ORIGINS TO THE HIGHEST
ECHELONS OF CIVILISED SOCIETY

Dedicated with the Greatest Veneration

To the Sons of Virtue
&
The Rights of Mankind by Their Most
Respectful & Humble Servant
The Author

Chief Kaga Konata Katamba I

Fig. 5. Title page, *Blonde Roots*

The way the account defines itself as "candid & free" and "modest & truthful" is reminiscent of slave narratives in the sense that "truthfulness" is a required

specification, and the notion of humility, connected with both the personality of the formerly-enslaved writer/narrator and the emphasis on the absence of any exaggeration of the events and conditions, is significantly foregrounded in these writings. The expression preceding the writer's name on the dedication part, "Respectful & Humble Servant," is also evocative of that of a number of slave narratives such as the dedication in *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, as Related by Himself*, which is "Most Humbly Dedicated, By her LADYSHIP's Most obliged And obedient Servant, JAMES ALBERT". So, it seems Evaristo parodies a generic characteristic of slave narratives, which is the use of a highly regulated cover page. Upstone also touches upon this similarity and states that "it serve[s] to enact a kind of Brechtian alienation" (281). This is parallel to Hutcheon's statement: "Like Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt, parody works to distance and, at the same time, to involve the reader in a participatory hermeneutic activity" (*Theory* 92). That is, through parody "a dialogical relation between identification and distance" (*Poetics* 35) is established: a title page is used as if it belongs to a slave narrative, yet it pertains to a narrative penned by a master. If this parodic act is to be examined through Hutcheon's conceptualization of parody, then it is necessary, first, to trace how the claimed modesty and truthfulness is reflected in Bwana's account so as to explore the possible purpose of the parody. In his account, Bwana brings about his pro-slavery ideas; narrates his voyage to the Gray Continent; mentions some details about his family, and explains how Doris betrays him by escaping. One of the remarkable points is his frequent address to the reader and recurrent efforts to convince them of his rightfulness and the truthfulness of his

experiences. This looks more interesting if juxtaposed with Doris' narration. Doris neither addresses her audience explicitly nor pursues to justify herself or her account, which, actually, creates a distance between her voice and that of the actual narrators of slave narratives. In Bwana's account, however, this is simply the opposite. Unlike Doris, he aims to persuade the reader of his account's reliability. The account itself, however, fails to prove his claims. Both the notions on the cover page and his endeavour to create an image of himself as "a reasonable man and a man with reasons" ("Book Two") are belied by the account. First of all, throughout his narrative Bwana constantly brags about his achievements and is truly aware of his own power. Thus, the notions of being "humble" or "modest" that are underlined on the cover page are not exemplified by the content. Bwana's account's "truthfulness" is also contested since at certain points in the novel there are contradictions, which lead him to be called an unreliable narrator by some scholars such as Ahrens (238). The account's truthfulness is further impaired as a consequence of some unreasonable explanations he makes. For instance, under the subtitle "Some are More Human than Others", he shares with his readers some information regarding the classification of the human skull on the basis of its size, which is proved by what he calls "Craniofaecia Anthropometry" (p.n.). Bwana mentions three categories: "No. 1—The Negro, who is indigenous to the Aphrikan continent. No. 2—The Mongolo, who is indigenous to the Asian territories. No. 3—The Caucasoi, who is indigenous to the hellhole known as Europa" ("More Human"). As the "Negroid skull" is the most convenient one for brain development due to its size along with the existence of "the prognathous jaw" ("More Human"), the Negro unavoidably acquire "a highly sophisticated intelligence" ("More

Human"), having characteristics such as "ambition, self-motivation, resourcefulness, self-discipline, courage, moral integrity, spiritual enlightenment and community responsibility" ("More Human"). On the other hand, The Caucasoi, possessing the "Caucasoinid skull" and the "orthognathous jaw," are bound to own characteristics of "infantilism, aimlessness, laziness, cowardice, poor coordination, moral degradation and a nonsensical language or languages" ("More Human") According to Frederickson, historical pro-slavery writings included "an early form of biological argument, based on real or imagined physiological and anatomical differences – especially in cranial characteristics and facial angles – which allegedly explained mental and physical inferiority" (qtd. in Hall 243). In her novel, Evaristo turns these pseudoscientific rationalizations for racial discrimination upside down through Bwana's account, which both lays bare their constructedness and underlines Bwana's irrationality in the eyes of contemporary readers. In relation to this, the Nietzsche epigraph used in the novel, which is, "All things are subject to interpretation: whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth" underlines the fact that the white had the power to form their conception of the truth, which is merely subjective and could have been built the other way around, too, as it is demonstrated by Evaristo. In that sense, Evaristo parodically engages with a paratextual material of slave narratives, the cover page, characterized by its emphasis on the notions such as "modesty" and "truthfulness". This engagement, assigning the task of struggling for legitimizing both the narrative and himself to a slave-trader, instead of a slave, as opposed to what happens in traditional slave narratives, lays bare how the master's attempts emerge to be in vain. The title page parodies these notions

by showing how the points Bwana struggles to prove are actually constructed in favour of the ones in power, who are the black in the novel. “Bwana appears to be African, but he isn't” (Evaristo, Collins interview 1202); he is a representative of a British slave trader; thus, it can be claimed that, through the inversion of the race of a master and a slave, Evaristo reminds us of the irrationality of these pseudoscientific explanations “to provide an ideological basis for the trade” (1202) in the history of British slave trade.

Another fictional paratextual material is the postscript written by Doris. Focusing on the lives of a number of other characters and hers, it reveals the liberation Doris obtains years later, and her loneliness is underlined. Her children are not found; her sister, Sharon, prefers to stay with Bwana and passes away months later. Although both Frank and Qwashee escape with Doris, she is not in a relationship with either of them. Whilst slave narratives make use of “postscripts or supplements to appeal to the Queen or publish arguments against slavery” (Ahrens 202), *Blonde Roots* foregrounds Doris’ personal life as her relationships and the connection with her friends and family comprise the main points that are dealt with. The postscript also brings up the condition of the descendants of Bwana in the twenty-first century in the United Kingdom of Great Ambossa. “In the twenty-first century,” states Doris, “Bwana’s descendants still own the sugar estate and are among the grandest and wealthiest families in the United Kingdom of Great Ambossa, where they all reside” (“Postscript”). This can be considered being a reference to the slavery past of the great country houses in Britain. As pointed out in the preceding chapter, the report supported by the National Trust indicates that a great number of country estates or properties are known to be linked

with Britain's history of slavery and colonialism (Doward). The novel similarly establishes a connection between the residence of Bwana's descendants and the slavery past of the United Kingdom of Great Ambossa. The historic links between the sugar estate and their wealth and slavery are made clear. In the postscript, Doris adds: "The cane workers, many of whom are descended from the original slaves, are paid", which hints at "contemporary cane workers' metaphoric slavery" according to Toplu (48). In the novel, although in the twenty-first century the institution of slavery is not active, Bwana's descendants preserve their eminent position while the descendants of cane workers end up being subordinate to them as a consequence of the slavery past. As race and class are intertwined in the novel, this situation can be a reference to the inequality, discrimination, and racism for people of African heritage living in contemporary Britain, which is a legacy of slavery. The slave trade of United Kingdom of Great Ambossa apparently implies the slavery past of United Kingdom in history as the whole text is an ironic satire on the UK's involvement in slave trade and slavery. Thus, it can be claimed that by linking the story to the twenty-first century in the postscript, Evaristo's novel alludes to the post-slavery condition of the present-day UK. In the novel, the cane workers' position only "differs from that of their forerunners only in terms of payment" (Burkitt 407) and the descendants of Bwana are still very affluent owing to the money obtained by slavery. In one of her interviews Evaristo states: "Britain was at one point the world's major slave trading nation and a lot of the British economy, especially the ports towns of London, Liverpool and Bristol, were build up into great cities on the proceed of the slave trade" (Bleijswijk 132). However, "at the same time, it is a history that is not fully acknowledged in Britain" (132).

Therefore, it can be claimed that Evaristo reflects her ideas about the British involvement in slavery and its impact on the present in the novel through the postscript. It is significant that the account of a formerly-enslaved narrator enables to establish this connection. The voice of an ex-slave, which is repressed and highly regulated in slave narratives of the past so that they cannot utter any political statement to unsettle the white reader, reaches out in the novel to the twenty-first century and becomes a means to enunciate inequalities still existing in the present day. These make it clear that Evaristo parodies a generic characteristic of a past form, i.e. paratextual materials in slave narratives, so as to comment on the present-day. As Salomon underlines in relation to the functions of postmodern parody,

> The essential in Hutcheon's claim of the existence of a postmodern parody is that . . . it has been used by contemporary writers to establish a contact with the past. Hutcheon defends that there is a "postmodernist refocusing on historicity both formally (largely through parodic intertextuality) and thematically" (1988, p.16). This is in agreement with Dentith's view when she contends that parody is "the mark of a gameful but productive relationship with the past" (2002, p.157). Thus, the claim of postmodern parody seems to be that the past must be not only questioned, but also rethought and used in the light of our own concerns. (73)

In *Blonde Roots*, Evaristo shapes the convention of a form of writing that was used in the past to articulate her preoccupations regarding the present-day. In that sense, the postscript puts the emphasis on individuality of the narrator and invites attention to the legacy of slavery through voice of an ex-slave narrator.

To conclude, in *Blonde Roots*, Evaristo mimics a number of generic characteristics of slave narratives and modern-day fictional narratives of slavery in an ironic way. The modifications of and departures from the conventions are not carried out to achieve a ridiculing effect; rather, the aim is to recontextualize them from within

a critical attitude. The thematic conventions of slave and neo-slave narratives such as *Roots*, which are family separation, the Middle Passage, and the act of escaping, which bring sentiments and victimization of the enslaved to the fore, are parodied. These thematic elements are employed in an unsentimental manner by Evaristo, and she creates a satirical narrative of slavery by reversing racial hierarchies. These narrative strategies enable Evaristo to write a narrative of slavery without representing the enslaved Africans as victims of slavery. The thematic conventions that are followed function to remind the reader-decoder of the slavery past of Britain. For that reason, the reversal Evaristo employs has a role in the act of parodying and decoders' recognition of the presence of parody. Additionally, the race reversal and values in relation to it in the treatment of the escape motif, contribute to reveal the constructedness of racial values. Paratextual materials used in slave narratives are parodied through the employment of the cover page of Bwana's essay and the postscript. The exploration of the content according to the claims of Bwana's essay's cover page provides an insight into pseudoscientific justifications for slavery in a reversed way, thereby ending up uncloaking the constructed nature of these rationalizations. The postscript focuses on the personal story of the enslaved narrator-protagonist and establishes a connection between the legacy of slavery in the novel and in contemporary Britain.

CHAPTER 4

THE LONG SONG AS A PARODY OF SLAVE NARRATIVES

Set in Jamaica in the early 19th century, *The Long Song* (2010) centers on the life story of July, who is born into slavery on a sugarcane plantation named Amity. July's narration is presented retrospectively; that is, her memories are penned during the time period in which she is an elderly woman living with her son, Thomas Kinsman. Levy engages in a dialogue with the past and fictionally rewrites a part of slavery history from the perspective of a former slave. In her essay "Writing *The Long Song*", Levy touches upon an event that urged her to write a novel on slavery. At a conference in England on the legacy of slavery, a young woman asked how she could be "proud of her Jamaican roots" considering that her ancestors were slaves (1). Levy states: "Of Jamaican heritage myself, I wondered why anyone would feel any ambivalence or shame at having a slave ancestry? … 'If our ancestors survived the slave ships they were strong. If they survived the plantations they were clever.' It is a rich and proud heritage" (1). Levy draws attention to the fact that notwithstanding the presence of "hardship, cruelty and humiliation", their ancestors "from their tiny islands, have made a mark on the world" (11). "[A] a rich fusion of oral stories; complex festivals of dance and costume that echo today on our own streets; A musical

tradition that has spread across the globe; religious innovation; fabulous cuisine; world-class sporting prowess; a strong literary canon" (11) are among their legacy that reach out to the present-day. In *The Long Song*, Levy introduces a fictionalized account of an enslaved narrator-protagonist in which the adoption of a number of generic characteristics of traditional slave narratives invites attention. In this act of adoption, there is also a departure from the established way of usage of these conventions. This chapter examines this mimicry that includes critical distance in the light of Hutcheon's theory of parody. It will be argued that Levy parodies a number of conventions of slave narratives so as to empower the enslaved black figure and invite attention to the legacy of slavery in Britain.

Being separated from her mother as a child, the narrator-protagonist of *The Long Song*, July, grows up in the house of John Howarth, the owner of the plantation. She serves Caroline Mortimer, John's sister, for many years. Upon John's death, a number of overseers work at Amity, the last of whom is Robert Goodwin, an English clergyman's son. His arrival to the Amity emerges as a notable point in the novel as both Caroline and July are attracted to him. Notwithstanding Robert is charmed by July, he firmly resists not to be involved in an extramarital sexual relationship; therefore, he conceives a plan to be with July, which is marrying Caroline. Since his marriage with Caroline allows him to have rights on his wife's possessions, including slaves, he justifies his affair with July despite it is outside marriage. To this end, he both takes the control of the plantation into his hands and achieves to maintain his love affair with July, who after a while gives birth to his child, Emily. Upon a number of management problems of the plantation and finally an economic failure, Caroline and

Robert return to England with Emily meanwhile July and other slaves of Amity are abandoned on the plantation. July's other child from a black man, Thomas Kinsman, who is left to a white Baptist minister as a baby by July, learns the predicament of his mother and asks her to live with him. When July reveals to her son that she has a story to convey to him, which is actually her own life story; Thomas, a black Jamaican printer, edits and publishes her story.

In *The Long Song*, Levy re-writes experience of slavery from a standpoint of the present-day by putting an enslaved protagonist to the centre. Diverging from traditional slave narratives, in the novel, the narrative switches between first-person and third-person narration since July narrates her own life as a tale and views herself as a storyteller. While she narrates the life story of July in the third-person, her dialogues with her son in the present moment of the narrative are conveyed in the first-person. Time also proceeds in harmony with this; there is both the narration of the past, which deals with the time period between the conception of July and her encounter with Thomas, and a more recent time slot that encompasses July's writing process and her narration of the events and situations belonging to that period.

The narrative is preceded by a foreword written by the publisher-editor of the book, Thomas Kinsman, in 1898 Jamaica. In *The Long Song*, the presence of an introductory material, a foreword written by a Britain-educated black editor, can be considered an example of the act of "parodic reprise" (*Politics* 89) of paratextual materials in slave narratives. Although the use of an introductory paratextual material is reminiscent of traditional slave narratives, it can be detected that the foreword differs from the paratextual documents of slave narratives in terms of several points; namely,

the critical distance is preserved in this similarity. Olney invites attention to the presence of paratextual materials written by "a white amanuensis/editor/author" in slave narratives who is "actually responsible for the text" (50). White editors were actively involved in the process of a number of adjustments such as appropriating the language of ex-slave narrators to fit into the format of the standard English language or rectifying writing mistakes, and all in all designing narratives in a proper way to be published. Introductory paratextual materials are usually the documents where the existence of these sorts of rectifications can be mentioned. To exemplify, the presence of editorial corrections are overtly stated in the preface of *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave. Related by herself,* which is a Caribbean slave narrative that Levy mentions in the acknowledgements of the novel. In her interview with Rowell, Levy notes there are only a couple of Caribbean slave narratives, and these narratives were produced to solely contribute to abolishment and usually recited to a white editor who shaped these to be published (266). Therefore, they were insufficient to present the life of a slave (267). In that sense, Mary's narrative, the first published slave narrative written by a black woman in the British context, can be one of these narratives that Levy has in mind during the interview. In the preface of Mary's narrative, the involvement of the white editor can be clearly seen: Thomas Pringle, the editor, posits that the narrative belongs to Mary; however, he does not neglect to add that it was necessary to "exclude redundancies and gross grammatical errors, so as to render it clearly intelligible" ("Preface"). Taking account of the undeniable influence of editors on slave narratives, it can be assumed that Pringle's interference to the narrative was possibly much more extensive than the language mistakes he mentions in the preface.

In *The Long Song*, similarly, Thomas' attempt to apply some corrections to his mother's writing is evidently stated in the foreword. In the foreword, Thomas explains how his mother strives for conveying a story to him. Suggesting his mother to present her story in a written form that can be edited by him, Thomas states that he, being both her editor and one of the most talented printers in Jamaica, encouraged his mother by promising her to "make her tale flow like some of the finest writing in the English language" ("Foreword"). This suggestion immediately brings to mind traditional slave narratives, in which one of the responsibilities of white editors used to be applying corrections to the language of the ex-slave writer so as to present a refined English to the white reader. However, Levy seems to be playfully parodying editors' interferences to narratives and their authority over the writers of slave narratives, considering that while Thomas claims that he aims to appropriate July's language, her patois, which could be adapted into standard English as it is frequently done in slave narratives, imbues the whole narrative, thus being preserved. Despite Thomas' editorial statements in the preface, in which he praises his skills about appropriating the language, the novel is replete with Jamaican patois: a number of nouns such as "bakkra" (ch.2), "likkle" (ch.3), "nyam" (ch.14), "renk" (ch.10), "pickney" (ch.12), "pickaninny" (ch.17) and colloquial expressions like "cha!" (ch.19) are recurrently used. This can be linked with Levy's appreciation of her ancestors' creation of "a vibrant language" and her desire to demonstrate this richness. While in slave narratives divergences from standard English can be observed only in a few slave narratives, and this dependence on the use of standard English evidently hides the writers' own manner of writing and use of language, in the novel July has full control over her

narrative, thereby she can include her patois without being obstructed by her editor-son.

Furthermore, in the preface, Thomas states that his mother gets accustomed to writing "to the point where my [Thomas'] advice often fell on to ears that remained deaf to it" (Levy, "Foreword"). Noting the fact that albeit he resolutely asks her to modify her style of writing at a number of points, Thomas adds his mother persists to proceed in "her way", thus, ""the tale herein is all my [his] mama's endeavour" ("Foreword"). This is unusual in the sense that the foreword divulges the existence of the narrator's opposition to the interference of the editor to her own manner of writing, which is not observed in traditional slave narratives. In that sense, while there are some instances in which Thomas' interference to the writing process of his mother can be seen, which is reminiscent of slave narratives, Levy playfully replaces the figure of the editor of traditional slave narratives, who has utmost control over the narrative, with an editor, whose authority is frustrated by the ex-slave narrator. There are a number of instances throughout the novel where his authority is unsettled by July. Although Thomas warns her in the event of a change or omission is needed, July's control over her own narrative can be perceived more or less, to varying degrees, in each attempt. Muñoz-Valdivieso's comment is in line with that as she states while the voice of Thomas appears to be "poised, dignified and restrained, like that of Equiano;" interestingly, July "is the storyteller who decides what is told, and her voice is whimsical, forthright and at points indelicate, like that of Tristram Shandy", hence, "hers is the voice that prevails" ("'This tale'"42) in the novel. Muñoz-Valdivieso's statement suggests that July's act of writing can also be a criticism of writers/narrators

like Equiano who had a role in the formation of the generic conventions of slave narrative genre, which restrict the literary agency of themselves and others who also employ these conventions in their works. The fact that Thomas is a black editor is significant to underline here in the sense that he might also be considered a representative of writers/narrators like Equiano. In that sense, Levy parodies introductory paratextual materials of slave narratives, which are written by white editors and inevitably reveal their influence on narratives, by including a foreword written by an editor in the novel, the presence of whom is reminiscent of a former genre, yet also divergent from the conventional introductory materials of slave narratives. The foreword is different than that of slave narratives in the sense that it serves to accentuate July's authority on her own narrative in the face of the constrictive presence of editors over narrators of slave narratives which can be explicitly perceived in both precursory materials and the narrative itself. Thus, parody, suggesting "imitation and transformation" (Sardenberg 8) both "installs and subverts" (8) a previous discourse so as to contest the convention from a point of view of the present day. Being a neo-slave narrative, the novel pursues to bestow the control of writing to the ex-slave narrator herself to represent her own story, not to an editor, which can be observed much more clearly as the novel progresses.

As a number of slave narratives begin with the details of the birth of the narrator (Olney 50), in *The Long Song* a similar pattern is followed, yet the convention is undermined in particular ways. The chapters One and Two deal with July's birth story. In the novel, quite unusually, the first chapter presents an account of the narrator narrating her own conception:

> IT WAS FINISHED ALMOST as soon as it began. Kitty felt such little intrusion from the overseer Tam Dewar's part that she decided to believe him merely jostling her from behind like any rough, grunting, huffing white man would if they were crushed together within a crowd. Except upon this occasion, when he finally released himself from out of her, he thrust a crumpled bolt of yellow and black cloth into Kitty's hand as a gift. This was more vexing to her than that rude act—for she was left to puzzle upon whether she should be grateful to this white man for this limp offering or not. (ch.1)

This excerpt describes the intercourse between the overseer Tom Dewar and Kitty, July's mother. Similar to slave narratives, this part of the novel deals with sexual violence to an enslaved woman; however, Levy's approach to the convention is different from what happens in slave narratives. Lima states that this beginning "does not sound like a rape since the white man's penis, like the yellow and black cloth offered in exchange, is 'a limp offering,'" and "Kitty seems more upset about the gift than the 'rude act'" (139). Here Lima draws attention to Levy's employment of humour in this scene of rape. Referring to Susan A. Fischer, Önder-Arabacı states "the way July depicts the rape scene suggests the incapacity of Dewar's manhood and 'minimizing hegemonic power'" (67), which can be considered an impairment of the power of Dewar to some extent. Öztabak-Avcı invites attention to the fact that it is "Kitty's 'decision' to believe that Tam Dewar is 'merely jostling her from behind'"; thus, Levy points to "the strength and pride on the part of slaves" (123). In that sense, if these comments are taken into account, it can be posited that Levy includes an incident of rape, but parodies its narration imbued with sentimentalism in slave narratives. Being presented in an unsentimental manner, sexual violence is not placed to evoke the reader's sympathy by portraying Kitty as a victim; rather, it can be claimed that Kitty even emerges to be empowered in particular ways and humour is involved. This can be Levy's preoccupation about not to represent the enslaved as

merely victims of slavery; thus, she foregrounds the significance of "strength" and "humour" in the narration of their lives. This attitude of Levy can be exemplified with some other instances in the novel which foreground particularly humour. For instance, Godfrey, the head of the slaves working in the house, deliberately places a "bed sheet" on the table when Caroline asks him to lay an "Irish linen" (ch.8) by mischievously pretending that the difference between these two is not "within a field nigger's grasp to understand" (ch.7), which creates humour for the reader of the novel and can be considered as a way of withstanding the commands of a mistress. Similarly, in the narration of this rape scene, humour also emerges if it is taken into consideration that July narrates her own conception. Additionally, this emerges as a challenge to authenticity in slave narratives as it is apparently a fictional detail.

In chapter two, the typical "I was born" phrase of slave narratives, which is used for solidifying the existence of the writer, can be observed as in "July was born . . ."; nevertheless, it significantly sets up a stark contrast to the narration of birth details in slave narratives in terms of the following points. In slave narratives, this phrase is frequently followed by a birthplace and sometimes a birthdate; it is a means to underline the actual existence of the writer and solidify the authenticity of the narrative. The inclusion of the phrase and the details following it is an example of slave narratives' attempt to represent the truth, which is problematic considering that these narratives are adapted according to the expectations and requirements of editors and readers. "[A]n autobiography is an act of rhetoric," Carretta ("Olaudah Equiano" 46) states. Namely, "any autobiography is designed to influence the reader's impression of its author" (46). Carretta adds: "No autobiographer has faced a greater opportunity

for redefinition than has a manumitted (freed) slave" (46). In relation to this, he invites attention to some recent research that raise questions about the birthdate and place and early years of Equiano. He contends that Equiano "may have invented" (46) his African identity and "disguised an American birth" (47). The reason for this can stem from the fact that so as to achieve abolishment, there was a need for an "African voice" instead of "African-American" because this could be a means to demonstrate how "the millions of people forcibly taken from Africa and brought to the Americas as slaves" (47). In the case that Equiano is not African-born, then the narration of the Middle Passage, which is the most renowned part of his narrative, ends up being all fabricated (47). In that sense, it can be claimed that even in a slave narrative like Equiano's, which is a widely well-accepted one, slave narratives' assertion of representing the truth seems problematic. Slave narratives are historical writings highly influenced by the ones in power at the time, thereby being shaped by the white and for the white. In the narration of the birth of July, there are some points that can be connected with this aspect of slave narratives. In the novel, the typical "I was born" phrase is rendered as "July was born", which awaits to be identified by the decoder who are familiar with this typical phrase used at the beginning of slave narratives. As in slave narratives, it is also followed by the place of birth: "JULY WAS BORN UPON a cane piece" (ch.2). First of all, the birth place, "a cane piece", is interesting in the sense that as opposed to rigidly defined places of birth in slave narratives, which can include clearly stated city and/or country names, July's birth place is playfully vague. It also significantly invites attention to the main plantation product of the trade, which is sugar, thereby foregrounding British slave trade. The things narrated following this sentence lay bare

that there are certain disparities with the narration of the details of birth and/or early life in slave narratives. It can be seen that multiple different versions accompany this birth story: “With some tellings it was not the rain that beat down upon July’s tender, newborn body, but the hot sun, whose fierce heat baked the blood from her birth into a hard scabrous crust upon her naked flesh” (ch.2), the narrator says. She adds: “Other times, it was a wind that was blowing with so fierce a breath that her mother had to catch July by one leg before her baby was blown out of the cane field, over the big house, and off into the clouds”, which is followed by “a further version” that “had a tiger, with its long, spiky snout and six legs, sniffing at the baby July, thinking her as food” (ch.2). Following this birth story, the narrator recounts another story of her birth, which is “the actual truth” and “you [readers] may take my [her] word upon it” (ch.2). This version takes place in a “dwelling hut” (ch.2) in the company of Rose, who is another woman slave, and Tam Dewar, who simply exists there to warn them to be quiet. Although this version of her story appears to be much more realistic, July includes the details that she cannot know as a new-born. In that sense, Levy’s inclusion of such a birth story imbued with possibilities and fictional details challenges the so-called absolute truthful way of recording events and circumstances in slave narratives and creates humour. Additionally, the fact that July is born in December, yet she is called “July” is playful, which can be interpreted as an unsettling detail for the scrupulous attention paid to authenticity in slave narratives. Moreover, her name also possesses “a symbolic meaning” (Muñoz-Valdivieso, “‘This Tale’” 43): Kitty is taught to write the names of the months by Miss Martha secretly, and the month July is the one that Kitty recalls in a written form, this is the reason why she names her baby as

July. Namely, it is connected with literacy, a forbidden skill, which is denied to slaves. In that sense, the narration of July's birth can be considered a parody of slave narratives' preoccupation with the rendition of absolute and stable "truths," which are, however, inevitably influenced by the ones in power, written according to them and by them. At the same time, Levy, herein, bestows imagination and creativity to the narrator-protagonist in her own act of writing, which cannot be observed in traditional slave narratives.

There is another point in the novel where a similar attitude on the part of Levy to slave narratives and history writing in general can be perceived. Thomas' attempt to modify July's description of the night in which Caroline and her guests have dinner can set an example to this. In chapter eight, while one of the guests is searching July's body upon blaming her for theft, the news that some of the sugarcane plantations are set to fire by the slaves is delivered to the dinner table. The guests leave the house in haste while Caroline stays at home accompanied by July. Chapter nine opens with a correction made by Thomas, the editor: "'But this is the time of the Baptist War, Mama'," he explains, "'The night of Caroline Mortimer's unfinished dinner in your story is the time of the Christmas rebellion, when all the trouble began'" (ch.9). Feeling perplexed with the information Thomas provides, July reveals that her son bids her to include a number of details such as "whether the firing of plantations started in Salt Spring when the negro driver refused to flog his own wife" or "whether it began at Kensington Pen, up near Maroon Town", and Sam Sharpe, "the leader of this rebellion" must be mentioned in depth (ch.9). July adds that her son continues with these "requirements" (ch.9) that gives her headache and notes that in the past the news

were delivered neither in the same way with the present, as it was conveyed by little children or through gossip, nor with the same speed because communication tools such as the telephone was not yet invented (ch.9). Thus, her being aware of things happening concurrently was not likely (ch.9), as she herself states. July does not dwell on these points her son asks her to do. Instead, she merely suggests her audience read a pamphlet which is titled "*Facts and documents connected with the Great Slave Rebellion of Jamaica* (1832)" penned by George Dovaston, a Baptist minister, if they desire to learn about "this Baptist War (as my [her] son does name it)" (ch.9). Herein, the juxtaposition of the experiences of July and the information given in this official account is remarkable: "nothing that appears within this minister's pages was witnessed by my eye, and what my eye did see at the time does not appear in this man's report," she tells the reader (ch.9). In that sense, she actually downplays the importance of this official source as it is not able to convey her own experience. Similarly, July strictly warns her reader not to read another official source written by a white planter called "*A view from the great house of slaves, slavery and the British Empire*" as she thinks he slants facts in favour of his own benefits (ch.9). It is also significant that July's attitude here as a narrator towards her audience is in a stark disparity with that of the narrators of slave narratives. Addressing her audience, July casts any reader away if they agree with the account of this white planter; she simply "no longer wish[es] you [them] as my [her] reader" (ch.9). Since narrators of slave narratives were in desperate need of the support of their readers, their tone had to be mild and modest. On the contrary, in *The Long Song*, July's assertiveness and forthrightness are on the foreground as this particular instance shows. Although Thomas insists that July should

convey events as it is recorded in official history, July emphasizes her own experiences rather than statements in any authorized historical document:

> What I do know is that when those fires raged like beacons from plantation and pen; when regiments marched and militias mustered; when slaves took oaths upon the Holy Bible to fight against white people with machete, stick and gun; when the bullets sparked like deadly fireflies; and bare black feet ran nimble through grass, wood and field—at Amity, the loudest thing your storyteller could hear was Miss Hannah gnawing upon the missus's discarded ham bone. (ch.9)

There takes place a row between July and her son/editor, Thomas, concerning how to write about a historical event, which is the Baptist War with its well-known historical circumstances and figures for Thomas, yet it is experienced quite differently by July and presented in the way she desires. The emphasis Levy puts on the inclusion of July's own account points to the significance given to the representation of a historical event given by a marginalized figure, a black woman slave, whose personal life story is invisible in official history. As indicated earlier, slave narratives are characterized by a preoccupation to provide "first-hand information and facts" (Ahrens 201); and in relation to this, official historical sources are significant for them in the case that there is a need to refer to a certain historical event or condition. On the other hand, in the novel, The Baptist War, both its name and its account provided by the official history, stays at the background and the incidents described by an individual serve as a means of historical information. In so doing, Levy appears to be parodying the significance given to the official history and authenticity in slave narratives as she highlights that official history is simply a version of history out of many, which is written by the ones in power. Therefore, instead of presenting the narrative in line with the facts given by the official history, July's narrative provides an account of past events from her

perspective, which is an ex-centric position in history. She presents for her audience a "her" story instead of "history" by denying Thomas' attempt to correct her. To this end, the significance of "the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as the much sung few, . . . of women as well as men" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 63) is underlined. This can also be supported with some other instances in the novel as in the dialogue between Dublin Hilton, a distiller-man, and a white painter. Seeing him painting the Amity one day, Dublin Hilton asks the artist the reason why he does not include the dwellings of the slaves in his picture. When the artist states they spoil the beauty of the lands, Dublin Hilton says: "'But they are there before you'"; "you paint an untruth" (ch.28). This actually lays bare how the ones who are privileged to represent (as artists/writers/historians and so on) can write history in the way they deem fit, thereby accentuating the significance of the representation of the experiences of July who is a marginalized character. Moreover, Levy, parodying the significance of official history itself and its interaction with slave narratives, enables readers to see how these editorial intrusions could have possibly affected the writing process of slave narratives and how voices of the Other may have lost.

In her essay, Levy posits that slavery "have been boiled down to the potted version", which includes: "the middle passage, the cruel plantation life, and the perhaps disproportionate attention paid to the struggle for its ending" ("Writing" 4). "It could almost be a morality play with the planters as the villains, Wilberforce[5] as

[5] William Wilberforce (1759-1833) was a British politician, philanthropist, and an abolitionist who was the leader of the abolishment campaign to abolish British slave trade. He had a significant role in the enactment of both the Slave Trade Act 1807 and the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 (britannica.com).

the white knight and the slaves as simply a mass of wretched voiceless victims", Levy adds (4). She criticizes this simplification in representing slavery as "a two-act play" (4) and draws attention to the fact that it was not simply about "the wails of anguish and victimhood that we are used to" (5). In the novel, at certain points, Levy parodies slave narratives' tendency to represent the enslaved as merely victims of slavery. The way July desires to finish her narrative can exemplify this. It is stated by Thomas that when he meets July, she was "half-starved" (ch.34) and accused of stealing chicken upon their encounter. This image Thomas creates for July is evocative of the ones in slave narratives in which representing the victimization was important as the predicament of the slaves would "mak[e] the general public aware of the sufferings a slave goes through" (Eve 16), which "was a way of securing their support in the fights for abolition" and could contribute to the sales rate of the books (16). Levy parodies this image with a playful and an inaccurate ending provided by July. July's ending claims that upon her child's being taken to England she leaves Amity. July states that she has set up her own business, which is producing the best jams and pickles in Jamaica in her own shop that even surpasses Miss Clara's. Also, she manages a "boarding house" (ch.34) where visitors of the island contently stay, which brings her fame even among the white people. Thus, July notes:

> So reader, do not feel pity for the plight of our July, for my tale did not set forth to see her so wounded. And though other books and volumes (wrapped in leather and stamped in gold) might wish you to view her life as worthless, I trust you have walked with her too long and too far to heed that foolishness when it is belched upon you. No. July's tale has the happiest of endings—and you may take my word upon it. (ch.34)

This passage refers to slave narratives which solely focus on sorrow and pain so as to represent the enslaved in a pathetic way. Levy parodies this white understanding that

the enslaved were simply victims of slavery by showing that suffering and sorrow cannot sum up July's life. Although this playful version of the ending is not the truth as the way novel progresses shows it and pain certainly exists in July's life, Levy seems to invite readers' attention to the fact that July manages to overcome the difficulties of the past to a certain extent, making a new start in her life by living with her son and his family, and publishing her story to make her voice heard. Thus, her life is not all about the victimization as is represented so in some accounts of slavery; it is in fact their "foolishness" (ch.34) in July's words. This is in line with Levy's argument that it is undeniable that the enslaved "were suffering and dying", yet they "were living and surviving as well" ("Writing" 5). The rest of July's narration is also in line with this attitude held by Levy. Notwithstanding the fact that July later on admits there were "two stolen fowls" (ch.34) and briefly goes through her appearance in the court, the points Thomas would like her to narrate, namely the events happened in plantation after Emily was taken to England, such as "the trouble that those free negroes had to endure", "the earthquakes rattle and the floods pour", starvation, "the yellow fever" that killed a lot of them (ch.35), are never elaborated in July's narration. She concludes her narrative by declaring: "July's story will have only the happiest of endings and you [the reader] must take my word upon it", and she playfully adds so as not to continue writing: "And, reader, I have not the ink" (ch.35). In that sense, there is also a sort of opacity on the part of July as the pain of the past is not revealed. Thus, victimization usually attributed to the enslaved, such as the "half-starved" image of July that Thomas puts forward, is parodied by Levy since the whole story clearly empowers her in particular ways such as the authority of her over the narrative and her mischievous,

playful voice in contrast to the humility and submissiveness of writers of traditional slave narratives. Levy replaces the image offered by Thomas with the one created by July, who is "old and happy" (ch.34). In that sense, "the double-voiced" parodic form (*Theory* xiv), including both the miseries of the past and the defiance against it through alterations, can be related to Levy's urge to make the form "'refunction'" (4) to put forward her argument.

As slave narratives can include a number of conclusionary paratextual materials, similarly, Levy includes an afterword written by Thomas, which can be considered "parodic in its reappropriation of existing meanings and its putting them to new and politicized uses" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 180). Olney denotes: "[a]n appendix or appendices composed of documentary material", "further reflections on slavery, sermons, anti-slavery speeches, poems, appeals to the reader for funds and moral support in the battle against slavery" are among these materials (51). Banner states that similar to the function of introductory documents in slave narratives, conclusionary materials frequently verify "the slave's story was a true-to-life, factually accurate portrait of the horrors of slavery" (298). As it is argued earlier, the novel has a parodic approach to these notions that Banner mentions (298). The authenticity that slave narratives seek is parodied by the novel's emphasis on fictionality and the significance it gives to an unauthorized version of history writing, namely that of July. The brutality of slavery and victimization are replaced by the attention given to the strength of the enslaved as in Kitty's rape scene or July's firm resistance to appear as a victim since Levy aims "to go past the horror" (Levy, Rowell interview 268). In *The Long Song*, the afterword written by Thomas, can be considered a parodic paratextual

conclusionary material shaped according to Levy's present-day concerns as a Black British writer. In the afterword, it is exhibited that on occasion July unveils her unease regarding Emily; she is curious if she "lives as a white woman in England" or if she is "a servant" (Levy, "Afterword"). This, in relation to the points about victimization argued earlier, implies that the pain is not glossed over; it still exists, yet it is not allowed to dominate the narrative as it is also seen when July pretends to seem unconcerned and in a way hides her distress regarding Emily. It is also significant to invite attention to the fact that the afterword written by Thomas centers on personal aspects of the narrative, as opposed to slave narratives, by mentioning Emily Goodwin. Thomas, who also ponders over the situation of his sister, calls for the help of readers, asking if any of them knows Emily's whereabouts. Following this, Thomas does not neglect to add that:

> But here I would also give one word of caution to any wishing to eagerly aid me with this request. In England the finding of negro blood within a family is not always met with rejoicing. So please, do not think to approach upon Emily Goodwin too hastily with the details of this story, for its load may prove to be unsettling. ("Afterword")

The novel concludes with this final remark made by Thomas. To this end, the afterword, which is about the personal life of July, invites attention to the Jamaican blood Emily possesses. In that sense, what is stressed is her personal story and her individual connections, either of which would not possibly have a place in official accounts of slavery history or slave narratives. Through this familial connection, Levy links the history of Jamaican-descent people with Britain. In her essay, "This is my England", Levy touches upon the common misbelief that the post-war immigration was the beginning of the relationship between the West Indies and Britain. This

assumption concurrently overshadows the slavery past of Britain, and masks the fact that "not only do black people have ancestors who are white, but also some ordinary British white people are connected by family ties to the black people of the Caribbean or to the estimated 20,000 black people who settled in Britain as a result of the trade" (Levy, "This is my England"). This can be exemplified by Emily's mixed origins in the novel. Thus, Levy disapproves of any insular understanding of the history of the Caribbean and Britain. Levy states that there are certain "silences and gaps in our knowledge and understanding" of British slavery ("Back to My Own Country"). The fact that British slavery was practised "3,000 miles away from Britain" has made it "possible for it to quietly disappear from British mainstream history" ("Back to"). Although Britain's role in the abolition of the slavery is usually foregrounded, its slavery past "is as much a part of British history as the Norman Conquest, or the Tudors" ("Back to"). For that reason, Levy believes "[i]t is time to put the Caribbean back where it belongs – in the main narrative of British history" ("Back to") in order to understand the past and see its impact on the present. Levy's concern with the legacy of slavery can be perceived in the novel through Thomas' hesitation about the possibility of discomforting Emily with the revelation of her links with Jamaica. This underlines the abolishment did not put an end to discrimination or prejudice, which is one of the lasting effects of slavery. In that sense, the afterword, which is a commonly used material of traditional slave narratives, emerges in Levy's novel as a means to unravel the connectedness of the histories of Britain and Jamaica, which is deeply in keeping with racial prejudices that still linger in contemporary Britain.

In conclusion, in *The Long Song*, a number of conventions of traditional slave narratives are parodied by Levy. To begin with, introductory paratextual materials of slave narratives written by white editors are parodied by mimicking rectifications and interferences of editors, which are usually stated in prefaces and can be perceived throughout narratives, with an ironic distance. Levy creates a narrator-protagonist who appears self-ordained in the face of an editor whose authority is disrupted with the narrator's denial of his attempts to interfere. In addition, the way violence is narrated in slave narratives is parodied with a description of a rape scene imbued with metafictional details, thereby challenging the significance of authenticity in slave narratives; and humour is employed instead of sentimentalism. Furthermore, the preoccupation of slave narratives with claiming authenticity and putting emphasis on official historical sources are parodied with multiple birth stories, each of which is fictional and challenging the conveyance of a certain truth; and, attention is paid to a version of history written by a marginalized character. Lastly, slave narratives' tendency to represent the enslaved as victims of slavery is parodied by representing July as a strong character who has the agency over her narrative and life. If all these parodied characteristics are taken into consideration, it can be claimed that parody is applied mainly to revisit and empower the figure of the enslaved in narratives of slavery. Additionally, by imitating conclusionary paratextual materials of slave narratives with a critical distance, Levy invites attention to the legacy of slavery and unites the histories of the Caribbean and Britain.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed *Blonde Roots* by Bernardine Evaristo as a parody of both slave narratives and modern-day fictional narratives of slavery and *The Long Song* by Andrea Levy as a parody of slave narratives. The theoretical background of this thesis is based on Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody. It has been argued that Evaristo and Levy parody a number of generic characteristics and conventions of slave narratives so as to engage critically with Britain's slavery past and its legacy today. Additionally, it has been argued that parody enables Evaristo to underline the constructed nature of race and a whole set of values related to it in *Blonde Roots*; whilst in *The Long Song* it is employed as an efficient tool by Levy to empower the figure of the enslaved black subject.

In *Blonde Roots*, some thematic generic characteristics and conventions of slave narratives and neo-slave narratives are parodied. One of them is family separation. Similar to slave and some neo-slave narratives adopting the formal and thematic conventions of the earlier narratives of slavery, the employment of this thematic feature is replete with sentimentalism. The inclusion of this thematic characteristic in the novel, however, neither seeks to highlight the humanity of the

enslaved nor attempts to evoke sympathy in the reader. Rather, the reversal embedded in the employment of this convention brings to mind the slavery past of Britain. Another thematic element is the narration of the Middle Passage, which is a very common trope in slave narratives and also included in a number of neo-slave narratives. As in the parodic treatment of the motif of family separation, the inclusion of the details of the voyage in the novel does not function to evoke sympathy for the enslaved, either. A number of extremely disturbing matter-of-factness are involved without putting emphasis on which race tyrannizes the other. These descriptions of the voyage imbued with violence show the potential of human beings who have power to oppress the other and point to the root of cruelty of slavery in a decontextualized way. However, these unsettling accounts of violence and the reversal strategy of the novel simultaneously remind the reader of the fact that these are actually experiences of the black people as a result of Britain's involvement in the slave trade. Therefore, here, the reversal also sparks off acerbic humour, which undermines sentimentality, and reminds the reader of the uncomfortable facts of Britain's slavery past. Additionally, although sentiments are on the foreground in the narration of the Middle Passage, the reversed design thwarts sentimentality quested after in slave and some neo-slave narratives, and emphasizes instead British slavery. The narration of the escape is another thematic element of slave narratives that is parodied in Evaristo's novel. Unlike slave narratives, which foreground sentiments in both failed and/or successful attempts to escape, Doris' escape is imbued with reversed set of values in relation to race, which lays bare their constructedness. The fact that Doris' journey involves twenty-first century anachronisms connects the slavery past of Britain with the present

day so as to highlight its lasting effects. In addition to the parody of these thematic features, paratextual materials of slave narratives are also parodied. In the novel, there are two fictional paratextual materials: Bwana's essay's cover page and the postscript of the novel. The cover page necessitates an examination of Bwana's essay, which is particularly characterized by pseudoscientific rationalizations for legitimization of slavery. The fact that these justifications are inverted invites attention to their constructed nature and absurdity. The other fictional paratextual material, the postscript, puts emphasis on Doris' individual issues and draws attention to the legacy of slavery through her narrative voice, which is capable of enunciating political issues.

In *The Long Song*, the thematic elements that are parodied in *Blonde Roots*, the narration of the Middle Passage and the escape journey, do not appear mainly due to the fact that *The Long Song* revolves around the life of a plantation slave who is born to slavery. Also, while *Blonde Roots* parodies modern-day fictional narratives of slavery that do not problematize thematic and formal features of slave narratives, in *The Long Song*, the focus appears to be on traditional slave narratives. Unlike *Blonde Roots*, the novel begins with a fictional paratextual material, which is the foreword written by July's editor-son, Thomas. Levy mimics editors' interferences particularly stated in introductory paratextual documents in slave narratives and their authority over the narratives so as to assign agency to an ex-slave narrator-protagonist instead of an editor. The power and role of the editor in the writing process of the narrative are significantly undermined. The typical "I was born" phrase of slave narratives, which reinforces authenticity of the narrative and credibility of the writers, is imitated by employing fictionality so as to problematize "truths" that slave narratives claim to

posit, thereby simultaneously celebrating narrative freedom of the narrator-protagonist characterized by imagination and creativity. Similarly, the commitment to official history, first-hand information, and so-called facts in slave narratives are parodied by the significance given to the metafictional account of an unreliable narrator who is in a marginalized position to official history. Victimization attributed to the enslaved in slave narratives is parodied with Levy's inclusion of instances in which the victimization of the enslaved is mocked and/or rejected as in the description of Kitty's rape and July's playful manner to changing facts to seem strong. A conclusionary fictional paratextual material is placed, in which Thomas asks a favour from readers by touching upon the obscurity of the whereabouts of Emily, but also invites attention to the problems that this inquiry might give rise to. The afterword highlights the interconnectedness of the histories of Jamaica and Britain and invite attention to legacy of slavery.

If both novels are juxtaposed, it can be observed that the parodic employment of these generic characteristics is carried out with a critical attitude; in other words, the novels comment on the backgrounded form (i.e. slave narratives), which has an impact on the construction of a new context. The deliberate employment of parody on the part of the encoder can be observed in both novels since certain political positionings come to the fore owing to the parodic structures. Although political concerns of both writers appear to be similar, in terms of their employment of parody there are some differences. The main differences between the two novels in relation to parody stem from the fact that while Levy reflects historicity in the novel, Evaristo dehistoricizes her rewriting the slave experience with a reversal strategy. The reversal

is a significant tool in the novel that is also responsible for parody in *Blonde Roots*, which leads to the differences in both novels' way of putting forward their political messages although similar points are posited. For instance, both Evaristo and Levy avoid representing the enslaved as victims. In *Blonde Roots*, this is achieved through the reversal strategy, which enables Evaristo to write the experience of slavery without portraying the Africans as the victims. Since the Africans are parodically the enslavers in the novel, this creates dark humour and averts sentimentality. In *The Long Song*, Levy similarly abstains invoking sentimentality towards the enslaved and portraying the enslaved as victims, yet in her case strength bestowed to characters and humour Levy makes use of are on the foreground, which is accompanied by a sort of opacity in terms of divulgement of the pain. In that sense, in both novels humour has a significant role, in *Blonde Roots*, acerbic, bitter humour, which stems from the playful reversal, hinders identification of the reader with the enslaved; in *The Long Song*, characters are capable of creating humour with their playful, mischievous manners, and events and situations, including the plight of the enslaved, are narrated in a humorous way, which similarly defies tendencies of sentimentality. Humour that both novels include in their acts of parodying does not particularly serve the aim to entertain the decoders; rather, it is used as a critical tool to criticize certain issues. Also, it is significant to underscore that humour emerges on the condition that decoders of parody discern the presence of parody. Nevertheless, as Hutcheon's theory suggests, there is a need to go past the immediate impulses and look for the reasons and consequences of parody.

Another point that can be seen in both novels is the common political agenda Evaristo and Levy have, which is revealed in their parodic use of paratextual materials of slave narratives. The (fictional) postscript in *Blonde Roots* and the (fictional) afterword in *The Long Song* reflect similar concerns of the writers of the same generation. Evaristo raises awareness particularly about the economic inequalities in the present-day Britain in a reversed way, which is a consequence of the slavery past of Britain. The afterword in *The Long Song* accentuates racial discrimination, which is another legacy of slavery, and offers an intertwined understanding of the histories of Britain and the Caribbean. Lastly, both novels bring the slavery past of Britain to the fore in their own peculiar ways. Evaristo creates a text that functions as a looking-glass to highlight British slavery and remind the reader that how "the Other" can be readily inverted. Levy underscores British involvement in slavery by presenting a narrative that problematize traditional ways of conveying history and a certain and favoured view of the past. In both novels, parody is detached from creating laughter primarily; the act of parody functions to criticize and replay the conventions of an earlier form. The familiarity to slave narratives in *The Long Song* and slave- and neo-slave narratives in *Blonde Roots* are not nostalgic, at all; deliberate twists are applied by the encoders of parody with a distance to the original way of use, which gives room for criticism.

Both *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song* were published after the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade, which was a significant commemoration event as Britain's role in slave trade and slavery was clearly brought to the fore for the first time in British history. After the 2007 bicentenary, there

appeared a growing awareness about Britain's involvement in the institution of slavery and its legacies. The publication dates of *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song*, which are respectively 2008 and 2010, appear to be meaningful in this respect as they can be considered to represent the writers' preoccupation to accentuate the uncomfortable truths about Britain's past. In that sense, both novels are closely connected to the time period of their publication. Reading both novels is still significant in today's contemporary context since the slavery past of Britain continues to be tightly linked with the present-day. In 2018, the Windrush scandal broke, which affected commonwealth citizens in Britain most of whom were members of the Windrush generation. They were falsely faced with the risk of being deported from Britain and debarred from their legal rights due to the lack of official documents that they had not been actually asked for when entering the country. Focusing on British slavery, *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song* both reveal the presence of pre-Windrush black British past, which tends to be overlooked, and remind us of how and why Britain created its own links with Africa and the Caribbean, thereby uncloaking the fact that the Windrush generation and its descendants are rightful citizens of Britain. In addition, in recent years there have been a number of issues and events in Britain in relation to slavery that brought the topic to the fore, which lays bare how both writers' attempts to highlight Britain's participation in slave trade and slavery can contribute to our understanding of slavery and its impact on the present. One of them is the information that HM Treasury shared in 2018: "The amount of money borrowed for the Slavery Abolition Act was so large that it wasn't paid off until 2015. Which means that living British citizens helped pay to end the slave trade" (Williams). This underlines the fact

that when slavery was abolished in 1833, slave owners were paid compensation for their loss of property by the government, and the explanation made by the Treasury lays bare slavery's connection with the present-day. In recent years, the presence of monuments to slavery in the UK have also led to controversies. In 2020, Black Lives Matter protesters pulled down the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, who was a British slave trader. A number of statues and monuments that honour perpetrators of British slave trade and slavery were taken out. All these points mentioned significantly reveal how both writers' novels offer a meaningful reading for the contemporary issues and problems.

This study aims to contribute to the scholarship both on these novels in particular and slave- and neo-slave narratives in general by examining comparatively how and to what ends *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song* make use of generic characteristics of slave narratives in the light of Hutcheon's theory of parody. In this regard, further research can be made on the parodic employment of the generic conventions of slave narratives in the neo-slave novels of other Black British writers such as Caryl Phillips, Fred D'Aguiar, and David Dabydeen. Comparative studies can be carried out between the neo-slave novels of these writers. In that way, similarities or differences of concerns of Black British writers in relation to slavery and its legacy can be revealed. In addition, both Evaristo and Levy deal with similar themes in some of their other novels. The travel of the protagonists' to their familial pasts in *Lara* by Evaristo and *Fruit of the Lemon* by Levy, to exemplify, can create a connection with the topic of slavery in *Blonde Roots* and *The Long Song*. Thus, the writers' foci on slavery can be examined in these earlier works and a comparison can be made with

these later published neo-slave novels of these writers. As this thesis touches upon the fact that both women writers place women ex-slave protagonists at the centre of their stories, some further research can be made in relation to slavery and women in literature, and the intertwinement of race and gender can be explored further.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı Bernardine Evaristo'nun *Blonde Roots* romanını köle ve yeni-köle anlatılarının parodisi olarak, Andrea Levy'nin *The Long Song* romanını ise köle anlatılarının parodisi olarak Linda Hutcheon'ın parodi kuramı çerçevesinde incelemektir. Bu tez, ilk olarak, *Blonde Roots*'un nasıl ve hangi amaçlarla köle ve köle anlatılarının tematik ve biçimsel özelliklerini sorunsallaştırmayan yeni-köle anlatılarının parodisini yaptığını inceler. İkinci olarak, *The Long Song*'un nasıl köle anlatılarının parodisini yaptığını ve bu parodi eyleminin altında yatan sebepleri araştırır.

1959'da Londra'da doğan Bernardine Evaristo, şiirler, denemeler, kurmaca olmayan eserler ve çoğu ödül ve onur ödülü alan veya aday gösterilen birçok romanı içeren bir dizi yayının yazarıdır. Evaristo eserlerinde sıklıkla ırk, cinsellik, cinsiyet ve tarih ile ilgili temalar üzerine yoğunlaşır. Yazma stili oldukça yenilikçidir; türler arasındaki geleneksel sınırları aşmayı ve gerçeklik ile kurgu arasındaki çizgiyi bulanıklaştırmayı tercih eder. Mizah ve ciddiyeti yanyana getirmek yazılarının ayırt edici bir özelliğidir. Andrea Levy 1956'da Londra'da doğmuştur. Kariyerinin başında grafik tasarımcı olarak çalışan Levy, ilk yazı deneyimini otuzlu yaşlarının ortalarında aldığı bir yazma kursunda edinmiştir. Bu kursta Levy, kimliği, Birleşik Krallık'ta Jamaika kökenli bir kadın olarak yaşama deneyimleri ve aile mirası hakkında yazma

arzusunu fark etti. Levy, yaşamı boyunca ürettiği beş romanın, bir kısa öykü koleksiyonunun ve birkaç denemenin yazarıdır. Her iki yazar da kendilerini İngiliz olarak görür ve yazıları "Britanya'nın ulusal karakterini yeniden tanımlamaya ve bunu İngilizlik ya da Britanyalılık kavramını genişleterek başarmayı" hedefler (Dawes 20). Her iki ikinci-kuşak siyahi İngiliz kadın yazar da, eserlerinin çoğunda kendi siyahi İngiliz deneyimlerini aktarırken benzer tematik kaygıları paylaşırlar, ancak yazı stilleri kendilerine özgü olduğu için bu konuları ele alış biçimleri farklıdır. Örneğin, tarihte belirli bir zamana kurgusal bir dönüş ve kimlikleri ve ırkları konusunda kafası karışık olan kahramanların aile soylarını keşfetmek her iki yazarın da benimsediği konular arasındadır.

Blonde Roots (2008) ve *The Long Song* (2010) romanlarında Evaristo ve Levy transatlantik köle ticaretini romanlarının merkezine yerleştirerek siyahi karşıtı ırkçılığın köklerinin izini sürerler. Evaristo'nun yalnızca transatlantik köle ticaretine odaklanan ilk romanı olan *Blonde Roots*, Britanya'nın kölelik tarihini tersine çevirerek, Afrikalıların Avrupalıları köleleştirdiği bir dünya tasarımı yaratır. Roman, köleleştirilmiş bir İngiliz kadın olan Doris adlı karakterin hayat hikayesini takip eder. Levy'nin son romanı *The Long Song*, on dokuzuncu yüzyıl Jamaika'sında hem plantasyon hem de ev kölesi olarak çalışan bir kadın olan July'nin hayat hikayesini anlatır. Geçmişle diyalog kuran Levy, köleliğin tarihini keşfederek İngiliz ve Karayip ilişkilerinin temeline inen bir yolculuk sunar. Eski-kölelerin bakış açısından kölelik kurguları yazarak, yani yeni-köle anlatıları yaratarak, Evaristo ve Levy, köleleştirilmiş kahramanlara ses verir ve kölelerin seslerinin susturulduğu tarihsel anlatımlara alternatif tarihsel hikayeler sunar.

Köle anlatıları oldukça gelenekselleştirilmiş yazılardır. Bir tür olarak, köle anlatıları, amaçları köleliği sona erdirmek olan ortak bir siyasi gündem ile karakterize edilir. Bununla ilgili olarak, James Olney makalesinde köle anlatılarının türsel özelliklerinin oluşumu üzerinde önemli bir etkisi olan "anlatıcı, okuyucular ve sponsorlar arasındaki üçlü ilişkiye" dikkat çeker (52). Köle anlatıları, köleleştirilen siyahilerin sesini duyurmak için ortaya çıkan ilk belgeler olsa da, türün beyaz kölelik karşıtı sponsorların ve beyaz okuyucuların beklentilerini karşılamak için tasarlanan gelenekleri, aynı zamanda eski-köle yazarlarının belirli edebi sınırlar içinde kalması yükümlülüğü nedeniyle bu sesi kısıtlamıştır. Bu tez, aynı kuşaktan iki siyahi İngiliz yazar olan Evaristo ve Levy'nin, yeni-köle romanlarını yazarken benzer kaygılara ve amaçlara sahip olduklarını iddia etmektedir. Levy, köle anlatısı türünü, bu kısıtlanmış ve kısıtlayıcı yapısını ön plana alarak sorunsallaştırır. Öte yandan Evaristo, hem köle anlatılarını hem de köle anlatılarının belirli yönlerini eleştirmeyen belirli bir tür yeni-köle anlatılarını eleştirir. Ayrıca bunu yaparken her iki yazar da mizaha yer vermektedir, ki bu, yeni-köle anlatıları da dahil olmak üzere kölelik yazılarının çoğuyla karşılaştırıldığında oldukça sıra dışıdır. Ayrıca her iki romanda da mizahın kullanımı parodi ile bağlantılıdır; mizah, okuyucunun bu parodik etkileşimi çözmesi koşuluyla ortaya çıkar.

İki romanı birbirinden ayıran bazı noktalar vardır. Birincisi, *The Long Song*'da Levy köleliği yeniden yazma deneyiminde tarihselliği takip ederken, *Blonde Roots*'ta Evaristo, Afrikalıları köleleştirici ve İngilizleri köleleştirilmiş olarak sunan mizah içeren bir tersine çevirme stratejisiyle tarihsellikten sapar. İkincisi, *Blonde Roots*, yalnızca köle anlatılarının geleneklerini değil, aynı zamanda Alex Haley'nin *Roots:*

The Saga of an American Family (1976) gibi köle anlatılarına benzer bir duygusal tavır benimseyen bazı yeni-köle anlatılarının da parodilerini yapar, ki, bu anlatılar mağduriyeti ön plana çıkaran ve köleleştirilenin insanlığını kurtarmayı amaçlayan temaları vurgulayarak okuyucunun kalbine hitap edecek şekilde tasarlanmıştır. Bu tez, her iki yeni-köle anlatısının, kölelik yazılarıyla bir ilişki kurduğunu ancak aynı zamanda bu aşinalığı belirli noktalarda değişen derecelerde zayıflattığını öne sürmektedir. Her iki romanda da gördüğümüz bu eylem, Hutcheon'un "ironik eleştirel mesafeli, benzerlikten çok farklılığa işaret eden bir tekrar biçimi" (*Theory* xii) olan parodi anlayışının ışığında keşfedilebilir. Hutcheon, parodinin beyaz, ataerkil ve heteroseksüel olma eğilimindeki hegemonik söyleme "eleştirel ve yaratıcı" bir şekilde tepki vermenin çok uygun ve güçlü bir yolu olduğunu savunur (*Poetics* 35). Parodik eylem, sahip olduğu ironik yapısı ve gelenekler ve otorite ile ilgili sorunları gündeme getirmeye yönelik olan eğilimi sayesinde "siyahi, etnik, gey ve feminist sanatçılar" (35) için yararlı bir strateji olabilir.

Bu tez beş bölüme ayrılmıştır. Bir sonraki bölüm, köle anlatılarının ortaya çıkış sürecini tanıtır. Köle anlatılarının başlıca türsel özellikleri *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African (1789)* metni üzerinden incelenmiştir. Bunu takiben, yeni-köle anlatılarının temel amaçları tartışılmıştır ve Linda Hutcheon'ın parodi teorisi incelenmiştir. Tezin üçüncü bölümünde *Blonde Roots* köle anlatılarının bir dizi geleneğini benzer şekilde kullanan köle ve modern zaman kurgusal kölelik anlatılarının bir parodisi olarak incelenmiştir. Köle anlatılarının türsel özelliklerinin kullanımında öne çıkan farklılıklara dikkat çekilmiştir. Bu bölüm, Evaristo'nun bu özellikleri parodileştirme eyleminin olası

işlevlerini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Dördüncü Bölüm, benzer şekilde, Hutcheon'un parodi teorisiyle bağlantılı olarak *The Long Song*'un metinsel bir analizini sunar. Romanın köle anlatılarının türsel özellikleriyle olan parodik oyunu ve bunun işlevleri tartışılarak incelenir. Beşinci Bölüm, her iki romanda da parodinin kullanımının bir özetini vererek çalışmayı sonuçlandırmakta ve genel olarak yeni-köle anlatıları ve özelde bu iki romanla ilgili olarak ileride yapılabilecek çalışmaları detaylandırmaktadır.

Köle anlatıları, köleliğe son vermek amacıyla yazılmıştır. Türün on sekizinci yüzyılın sonlarına doğru ortaya çıkan ilk örnekleri, köle ticaretine, yani kölelerin uluslaraşırı sularda taşınmasına son vermeye odaklanırken, sonraki onyıllar ve yüzyıllarda ortaya çıkan anlatıların amacı, kölelik kurumunu tamamen sona erdirmektir. Köle anlatılarının ilk örneklerinin yayınlanmasında dini grupların etkisi büyüktü; bu sebeple, köle ticaretinin kınanması genellikle dini temellere dayanıyordu ve bir kölenin "uygar" "kimliği" (Gould 12) ile birlikte Hristiyanlığı kabul etmesi anlatının önemli bir bölümünü oluşturuyordu. Kölelik karşıtı hareketler daha sistemli bir şekilde yürütülmeye başlayınca köle anlatıları da bu durumdan etkilenmiştir. "Savaş öncesi köle anlatıları" olarak bilinen 1830'lar ve 1840'larda geliştirilen anlatılar köleliği tamamen sona erdirmeyi hedefliyordu. Gould, daha önce yazılmış örnekleri ve savaş öncesi anlatılarını yan yana getirerek şunları öne sürüyor: "Daha önceki anlatılar, ırksal deneyimler kadar dini deneyimler için yayınlanır, okunur, gözden geçirilir ve yeniden basılırken, savaş öncesi anlatılar odağını keskinleştirdi ve giderek daha popüler ve kölelikle mücadelede etkili bir siyasi araç haline geldi." (12).

Sekora (495) makalesinde beyaz kölelik karşıtı sponsor/ editörlerin köle anlatılarının yazım sürecinde sahip oldukları rolü ele alır. Sahip oldukları etkin rolden dolayı köle anlatılarını "beyaz zarfın içindeki siyah mesaj" (502) olarak adlandırır. Yazarlar, kölelik karşıtı sponsor/editörler ve beyaz okuyucuların arasındaki üçlü dinamik ilişki, köle anlatılarının bir dizi edebi tematik ve biçimsel geleneğine göre şekillenmesine yol açmıştır. Bu tezde bu özellikler köle anlatılarının temel karakteristiklerini belirlediği kabul edilen Olaudah Equiano'nun *The Interesting Narrative*'ine (1789) göre açıklanmıştır. *The Interesting Narrative* çoğu belirli amaçlara ulaşmak için şekillendirilen köle anlatılarının bir dizi tipik özelliğini içerir. İlk olarak, yan metinsel materyaller önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bunlardan biri "anlatıcı tarafından imzalanmış bir oyma portre"dir (Olney 50). Bir portre ve imzaya yer verilmesi, bu unsurların tartışmasız bir şekilde yazar-anlatıcının varlığının açık işaretleri olduğu gerçeğiyle yakından bağlantılıdır ve bu da ilk etapta anlatının inandırıcılığına katkıda bulunabilir. Oyulmuş ön yüzü, sık sık "başlığın ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak 'Kendisi Tarafından Yazılmıştır' (ya da yakın varyantı: 'Kendi Tarafından Yapılan Gerçeklerin Bir Açıklamasından Yazılmıştır') iddiasını içeren başlık sayfası izler" (50). Bazı durumlarda, "'Bir Arkadaş Tarafından Yazıldı, Brother Jones tarafından O'na Bildirildi; vb.)" (50), "anlatıların kölelik karşıtı toplumların (beyaz) üyelerine dikte edildiğini" (Eckstein 31) belirtmek için de yer alabilir. Böyle bir ifadenin varlığı, daha önce köleleştirilmiş yazarların kendi anlatıları için yazarlık iddiasında bulunma amaçlarıyla yakından ilgilidir. Aynı zamanda, yazar-anlatıcının okuryazarlığı ve olay örgüsünün güvenilirliği ile birlikte entelektüel yeterliliğini göstermenin yararlı bir yoludur. Gerçekliği yansıtma çabası köle anlatılarının ayrılmaz

bir parçası olduğundan, bu yönü gösteren çeşitli belgeler de önemli bir yere sahiptir. Metnin ve yazarının güvenilirliğini kanıtlamak için anlatıya yan metinsel belgeler olarak "satış faturaları" ve "gazete öğeleri" (Olney 51) gibi dökümanlar eklenebilir.

Olney'in köle anlatılarıyla ilgili olarak altını çizdiği bir başka biçimsel özellik, doğrusal bir zaman çerçevesi ve epizodik anlatı yapısının kullanılmasıdır (53). Köle anlatılarında bellek ne anlatının ilerlemesini şekillendirir ne de anlatının ilerlemesine müdahale eder; daha ziyade, geçmişe ait gözlemlerin ve gerçeklerin kronolojik bir zaman çerçevesi içinde aktarılmasına yardımcı olmak için kullanılır. Köle anlatılarının ortak tematik unsurlarına gelince, kolayca fark edilebilecek şeylerden biri, genellikle anlatıların en başında yer alan ve doğum yerinin belirtilebileceği "... doğdum" ifadesinin kullanılmasıdır (50). Yan metinsel unsurlarla birlikte bu başlangıç cümlesi, "anlatıcının gerçek varlığına kefil olur" (52). Başka bir tematik unsur "ailelerin ayrılıp yok edilmesinin anlatımıdır" (51). Ailenin parçalanması önemli bir tematik unsurdur çünkü anlatıcıların kölelik kurumunun köleleştirilenlere verdiği büyük zararı göstermesini sağlar. Ayrıca, şiddet içeren olayların ve durumların tasviri köle anlatılarında büyük bir yer kaplar. Bu noktada, şiddet olaylarının anlatımında beyaz okuyucuyu rahatsız edebilecek ayrıntılara yer verilmediğini belirtmek önemlidir. Şiddet, ölçülü bir şekilde tasvir edilir ve bahsedilir. Başka bir öne çıkan tematik özellik "The Middle Passage" yolculuğunun anlatımıdır. Bu yolculuğun anlatımında da köleliğin zulmü ifşa edilir; ama aynı zamanda, şiddet unsurlarıyla dolu olan bu yolculuğun betimlenmesi köle anlatılarının asıl amacı olan köle ticaretini ve kölelik kurumunu kaldırmayı riske atabileceği için beyaz okuyucu gücendirilmemeye çalışılır; bu nedenle, bu detaylar her zaman ölçülü bir şekilde dahil edilir.

"Yeni-köle anlatıları" terimi ilk kez Bernard W. Bell tarafından 1987'de kullanılmıştır. Daha sonra birçok kritik terim üzerine çeşitli çalışmalar ortaya koymuş, böylece terimin kullanım alanını genişletmişlerdir. Yeni-köle anlatıları, gerek tematik öğeleri gerekse biçimsel yapısı açısından farklı özelliklere sahiptir. Yeni-köle anlatıları için, köle anlatılarında olduğu gibi belirli gelenekselleşmiş türsel özelliklerden bahsetmek mümkün gözükmemektedir. Ancak, bu kurgusal kölelik deneyimini yeniden yazma eyleminin altında yatan birkaç politik kaygıdan söz edilebilir. Hem türün daha önceki örneklerinde hem de birkaç on yıl sonra üretilenlerde, tarihle meşguliyet, başka bir deyişle, tarihin yerleşik versiyonlarının birtakım yönlerinin sorunsallaştırılması göze çarpar. Hem kölelik tarihçiliğine hem de geleneksel kölelik anlatılarına meydan okuyan yeni-köle anlatıları, kölelik deneyimini yeniden yazarak kölelik tarihi ve tarihsel kayıtlar üzerinde otorite talep eder. Yeni-köle anlatı yazarlarının bir başka ortak kaygısı, "'siyahi özne' ile ilgili endişe" olabilir (Ahrens 182). Yeni-köle anlatıları, "[k]öleliğin Mammy, Sambo veya Tom Amca klişelerinin kökü olduğu" görüşünü (Goyal 21) yıkmayı, böylece siyahi kimliğinin bu figürlere ve onların temsil ettikleri değerlere indirgenemeyeceğine işaret etmeyi amaçlar.

Tezin ikinci bölümü aynı zamanda Linda Hutcheon'un parodi kavramının bu tezin gelecek analitik bölümleri için nasıl yararlı bir çerçeve olabileceğini göstermek için parodi üzerinde de durur. Hutcheon parodiyi "ironik eleştirel mesafeye sahip, benzerlikten çok farklılığa işaret eden bir tekrar biçimi" olarak tanımlar (*Theory* xii). "Parodisi yapılan arka planlı metin ile yeni çalışma" (32) arasındaki kritik mesafe, esas olarak ironi ile gösterilir. Bu anlamda parodi, ironik ters çevirme ile ayırt edilen taklit

olarak kabul edilebilir. Parodinin yalnızca "geçmiş modellerin nostaljik taklidi" (8) değil, daha ziyade, ironik oyuna izin veren önceki forma yönelik eleştirel bir tutumun ön plana çıktığı bir form olduğunu belirtmek gerekir. Hutcheon, parodinin, iki farklı metin gibi bireysel sanat eserleri arasında yer alabilirken, bir türün özelliklerinin veya bir akımın da parodinin hedefi olabileceğini savunur. Bu, Hutcheon'ın parodi anlayışının oldukça kapsamlı olduğu sonucunu çıkarmamıza izin verebilir, çünkü parodi kullanımı sadece metin düzeyinde kalmamaktadır. Hutcheon'a göre, parodinin sıklıkla hiciv ile ilişkilendirilmesi, parodiyi kısıtlayabilir, bu nedenle Hutcheon çağdaş sanat tartışmalarına uyan daha geniş ve daha pragmatik bir tanımlamaya ayrıcalık tanır. Başka bir deyişle, parodiyi, onu kodlayanların günümüz kaygılarının bağlamında yeniden düşünmenin önemli olduğuna inanır. Bu nedenle, parodiyi "on dokuzuncu yüzyılın kısa" "hicivli alayları" (Theory xii) olarak değerlendirmekten ziyade, önceki sanat eserlerini yeniden inceleyen tanınabilir ve uzun ironik oluşumlara odaklanır.

Hutcheon'ın parodi anlayışı, hem eski form üzerine yapılan eleştirinin yeni formdaki yansımasını hem de eski formun kendisini vurguladığı için, Hutcheon parodiyi "bir tür" "çift sesli söylem" (*Theory* xiv) olarak adlandırır. Yani, parodi önceki çalışmaları dönüştürürken veya yeniden tasarlarken, takındığı yenilikçi tavrına eski metne olan bağlılık eşlik eder. Biri "muhafazakar" (26) diğeri "yenilikçi" (26) olan bu sesler yine birbirinden farklı olmakla birlikte, birbirleriyle kaynaşmadıkları gibi, birbirlerini de geçersiz kılmadıkları için birlikte hareket etmektedirler. Hutcheon, özellikle parodinin "kodlayıcı" (yani yapımcı) ve "kod çözücü" (yani okuyucu) olmak üzere iki önemli unsurunu tanıtmaktadır. Hutcheon'a göre parodi, parodisi yapılan metin ile parodi arasındaki bağlantıyı deşifre etmek için niyet ve yetkinliğin

tanınmasına bağlıdır; bu nedenle, kod çözücünün yetkinliği ve kodlayıcının yeteneği önemlidir.

Blonde Roots, Afrikalılar tarafından köleleştirilen İngiliz bir kadın olan Doris Scagglethorpe'un hayat hikayesine odaklanır. *Blonde Roots*, bu yeni hayali dünya düzeninde Avrupalıların Afrikalılar tarafından köleleştirildiği tarihsel koşulları tersine çevirerek transatlantik köle ticaretini ele alır. Tezin üçüncü bölümü *Blonde Roots*'u Hutcheon'un parodi teorisi ışığında köle anlatılarının ve günümüzün kurgusal kölelik anlatılarının bir parodisi olarak incelemeyi ve parodinin kullanılmasının olası politik işlevlerini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. *Blonde Roots*'ta Evaristo, köle anlatılarının ve modern zamanların kurgusal kölelik anlatılarının bir dizi türsel özelliklerini ironik bir şekilde taklit eder. Türsel özelliklerin kullanımındaki değişiklikler ve bunlardan sapmalar, bir gülmece unsuru olmaktan ziyade, onları eleştirel bir tavır içinde yeniden bağlamlaştırır. Kullanılan tematik türsel özelliklerden biri ailenin ayrılığının anlatımıdır. Köle anlatılarına ve kölelik anlatılarının biçimsel ve tematik geleneklerini benimseyen yeni-köle anlatılarına benzer şekilde, bu tematik özelliğin kullanımı duygusallıkla doludur. Bununla birlikte, bu tematik özelliğin romana dahil edilmesi, ne köleleştirilenin insanlığını vurgulamaya ne de okuyucuda sempati uyandırmaya çalışır. Aksine, bu özelliğin uygulanmasında saklı olan ırkın tersine çevrilmesi durumu, Britanya'nın kölelik geçmişini akla getirir. Bir diğer tematik unsur, köle anlatılarında çok yaygınca kullanılan ve aynı zamanda birtakım yeni-köle anlatılarında da yer alan "The Middle Passage" anlatımıdır. Aile ayrılığı motifinin parodik olarak ele alınışında olduğu gibi, yolculuk ayrıntılarının romanda yer alması da kölelere sempati uyandırma işlevi görmez. Hangi ırkın diğerine zulmettiğine vurgu

yapılmadan, son derece rahatsız edici bir dizi şiddet unsuru yer alır. Şiddet yüklü yolculuğun bu tasvirleri, diğerini ezme gücüne sahip insanların potansiyelini göstermekte ve bağlamından koparılmış bir şekilde köleliğin zulmünün kökenine işaret etmektedir. Bununla birlikte, bu rahatsız edici şiddet unsurları ve romanın ırkı tersine çevirme stratejisi aynı anda okuyucuya bunların aslında siyahilerin Britanya'nın köle ticaretine karışmasının bir sonucu olarak yaşadığı deneyimler olduğu gerçeğini hatırlatır. Bu nedenle, burada ırkın tersine çevrilmesi, duygusallığı baltalayan ve okuyucuya Britanya'nın kölelik geçmişinin rahatsız edici gerçeklerini hatırlatan sert mizahı da ateşler. Ayrıca "The Middle Passage"'ın anlatımında duygular ön planda olsa da, ters çevrilmiş ırksal değerler, köle ve bazı yeni-köle anlatılarında aranan duygusallığı engellemekte ve bunun yerine İngiliz köleliğini vurgulamaktadır. Evaristo'nun romanında, parodisi yapılan köle anlatılarının bir başka tematik öğesi de kaçış anlatısıdır. Hem başarısız hem de başarılı kaçma girişimlerinde duyguları ön plana çıkaran köle anlatılarından farklı olarak, Doris'in kaçışı, onların inşa edilmişliklerini ortaya koyan, ırkla ilgili tersine çevrilmiş değerler kümesiyle doludur. Doris'in yolculuğunun yirmi birinci yüzyıl anakronizmlerini içermesi, Britanya'nın kölelik geçmişini günümüzle ilişkilendirir. Bu tematik özelliklerin parodisine ek olarak, köle anlatılarının yan metinsel materyalleri de parodi edilir. Romanda iki kurgusal yan metinsel materyal vardır: Bwana'nın denemesinin kapak sayfası ve romandaki not kısmı. Bwana'nın denemesinin kapak sayfasındaki iddialara göre içeriğin araştırılması, köleliğin sahte bilimsel gerekçelerine tersten bir bakış açısı sağlar ve böylece bu rasyonalizasyonların inşa edilmiş doğasını açığa çıkarır. Kitapta

yer alan not kısmı ise köleleştirilmiş anlatıcı-kahramanın kişisel hikayesine odaklanır ve romandaki kölelik mirası ile günümüz Britanya'sı arasında bir bağlantı kurar.

19. yüzyılın başlarında Jamaika'da geçen *The Long Song*, Amity adında bir şeker kamışı plantasyonunda köle olarak dünyaya gelen July'ın hayat hikayesine odaklanır. *The Long Song*'da Levy, köleleştirilmiş bir anlatıcı-kahramanın kurgusal anlatımını sunar; burada geleneksel köle anlatılarının bir dizi türsel özelliğinin benimsenmesi dikkat çeker. Ancak, bu benimseme eyleminde, bu özelliklerinin geleneksel kullanım biçiminden de bir ayrılma söz konusudur. Tezin dördüncü bölümü, Hutcheon'un parodi teorisi ışığında eleştirel mesafeyi içeren bu taklitçiliği incelemektedir. Levy'nin köleleştirilmiş siyahi figürü güçlendirmek ve Britanya'daki köleliğin mirasına dikkat çekmek için köle anlatısının parodisini yaptığı tartışılır. *The Long Song*, July'ın oğlu Thomas tarafından yazılan önsöz olan kurgusal bir yan metinsel materyal ile başlar. Levy köle anlatılarındaki editörlerin müdahalelerini ve anlatılar üzerindeki yetkilerini taklit eder. Ancak, köle anlatılarındaki durumun aksine, July'ın kendi anlatısı üzerindeki yetkinliği ön plandayken, editörün gücü ve rolü önemli ölçüde zayıflatılmıştır. Köle anlatılarının, anlatının özgünlüğünü ve yazarların inanılırlığını pekiştiren tipik "Ben ...'da doğdum" ifadesi, köle anlatılarının ortaya koyduğunu iddia ettiği "gerçekleri" sorunsallaştırmak için kurgusallık kullanılarak taklit edilir. July'ın doğum hikayesi olasılıklar ve kurgusal detaylar ile doludur. Bu aynı zamanda Levy'nin nasıl July'a hayal gücü ve yaratıcılık bahşettiğini gösterir. Benzer şekilde, köle anlatılarındaki resmi tarihe, ilk elden bilgilere ve sözde gerçeklere bağlılık, resmi tarihe göre marjinalleştirilmiş bir konumda olan güvenilmez bir anlatıcının üstkurmaca anlatımına verilen önem ile parodileştirilir. Köle anlatılarında

köleleştirilenlere atfedilen mağduriyet, Levy'nin Kitty'nin tecavüzünün anlatımında olduğu gibi köleleştirilenlerin mağduriyetinin alay edildiği ve/veya reddedildiği ve July'nin gerçekleri güçlü görünmek için değiştirmeye yönelik şakacı tavrıyla alay ettiği örnekleri içermesiyle yapılan parodiyi açığa vurur. *Blonde Roots*'ta olduğu gibi, bir kurgusal yan metinsel materyal de romanda yer alır. Thomas'ın Emily'nin nerede olduğunun belirsizliğine değinerek okuyuculardan bir iyilik istemesi, ancak aynı zamanda bu soruşturmanın yol açabileceği sorunlara da dikkat çekmesi Jamaika ve Britanya tarihlerinin birbirine bağlılığını vurgular ve köleliğin mirasına dikkat çeker.

Her iki yazarın siyasi kaygıları benzer görünse de, parodi kullanımları açısından bazı farklılıklar vardır. İki roman arasındaki parodi ile ilgili temel farklılıklar, Levy'nin romanında tarihselliği yansıtırken, Evaristo'nun, ırk ve ırksal değerleri tersine çevirme stratejisiyle tarihsellikten sapmasından kaynaklanır. *Blonde Roots*'taki tersine çevirme stratejisi parodiden sorumludur ve her iki romanın politik mesajlarını ortaya koyma biçiminde farklılıklara yol açan önemli bir araçtır. Örneğin, hem Evaristo hem de Levy, köleleri kurban olarak göstermekten kaçınır. *Blonde Roots*'ta bu, Evaristo'nun ırk ve ırksal değerleri tersine çevirme stratejisiyle elde edilir. Afrikalılar romanda parodik olarak köleleştirici olduklarından, bu kara mizah yaratır ve duygusallığı önler. *The Long Song*'da Levy de benzer şekilde köleleştirilen siyahi özneye karşı duygusallık uyandırmak ve kurban olarak göstermekten kaçınır, ancak bunu karakterlere verdiği güç ve mizah ile yapar. Bu anlamda her iki romanda da mizahın önemli bir rolü vardır: *Blonde Roots*'ta tersine çevirmeden kaynaklanan kara mizah, okuyucunun köleleştirilmiş olanla özdeşleşmesini engeller; *The Long Song*'da karakterlerin tavırları ve olaylara karşı tutumu Levy'nin mizahının bir parçasıdır. Her

iki romanın da parodileştirme eylemlerine dahil ettiği mizah, özellikle okuyucuları eğlendirme amacına hizmet etmez; daha ziyade, belirli konuları eleştirmek için eleştirel bir araç olarak kullanılır. Ayrıca mizahın, okuyucunun parodinin varlığını fark etmesi koşuluyla da ortaya çıktığının altını çizmek önemlidir. Bununla birlikte, Hutcheon'un teorisinin öne sürdüğü gibi, parodinin nedenlerini aramaya ve sonuçları üzerinde düşünmeye ihtiyaç vardır.

Her iki romanda da ortak olan bir diğer nokta, Evaristo ve Levy'nin köle anlatılarının yan metinsel materyallerini parodik olarak kullandıklarında ortaya koydukları ortak siyasi gündemdir. *Blonde Roots*'taki (kurgusal) not ve *The Long Song*'daki (kurgusal) sonsöz, aynı kuşağın yazarlarının benzer kaygılarını yansıtmaktadır. Evaristo, özellikle günümüz Britanya'sındaki ekonomik eşitsizlikler hakkında farkındalık yaratır. *The Long Song*'daki sonsöz, köleliğin bir başka mirası olan ırk ayrımcılığını vurgular ve Britanya ile Karayipler'in tarihlerinin iç içe geçmiş durumuna dikkat çeker. Son olarak, her iki roman da Britanya'nın kölelik geçmişini kendilerine özgü yollarla öne çıkarır. Evaristo, köleliği vurgulamak ve okuyucuya "Öteki"nin nasıl kolayca tersine çevrilebileceğini hatırlatmak için ayna işlevi gören bir metin yaratır. Levy, tarihi aktarmanın geleneksel yollarını ve tarihe dair kesin görülen yargıları sorunsallaştıran bir anlatı sunarak Britanya'nın köle ticaretindeki payına dikkat çeker.

Bu çalışma, *Blonde Roots* ve *The Long Song*'un köle anlatılarının türsel özelliklerinden nasıl ve hangi amaçla yararlandığını karşılaştırmalı olarak inceleyerek hem özelde bu romanlar hem de genel olarak köle ve yeni-köle anlatıları üzerine yapılan çalışmalara Hutcheon'ın parodi teorisi çerçevesinde katkıda bulunmayı

amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Caryl Phillips, Fred D'Aguiar ve David Dabydeen gibi diğer siyahi İngiliz yazarların yeni-köle romanlarında köle anlatılarının türsel özelliklerinin parodik kullanımı üzerine araştırma yapılabilir. Karşılaştırmalı çalışmalar yapılarak, siyahi İngiliz yazarların kölelik ve onun mirasına ilişkin kaygılarının benzerlikleri veya farklılıkları ortaya çıkarılabilir. Bunun dışında, bu tezde tartışılan romanlarla ilişkili olarak edebiyatta kölelik ve kadın ile ilgili daha fazla araştırma yapılabilir ve ırk ve cinsiyet arasındaki bağ daha fazla araştırılabilir.

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): PARODIC ENGAGEMENT WITH (NEO) SLAVE NARRATIVES: BERNARDINE EVARISTO'S *BLONDE ROOTS* & ANDREA LEVY'S *THE LONG SONG*

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