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Changing French Orientalism

Tarare (1790) and the Question of Slavery

Introduction

Tarare is orientalist only in the most superficial sense that it is an example of an eighteenth-century *alla turca* opera especially prevalent throughout Europe during the 1760–80s. Although largely unknown today, *Tarare* was a phenomenal success at the time of its Paris première in 1787, marking the high-point of Salieri’s Parisian career and propelling Beaumarchais to even greater fame.¹ Its plot follows in large measure the typical story line of “Abduction” operas, most famously epitomized by Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), in which a young Christian noblewoman is abducted by an oriental potentate and must be rescued by her lover.² *Tarare* is not orientalist in the sense made famous by Edward Said as an example of a discourse in which the occident “speaks for and represents” the orient in a “relationship of power, of domination, [and] of varying degrees of complex hegemony” (6; 5); the opera rather speaks for and represents French political, social and philosophical concerns in the final quarter of the eighteenth century. Although plans had been discussed in government circles to attempt to conquer parts of the Ottoman Empire, especially Egypt, in order to facilitate the acquisition, preservation, and development of French colonial posts in the East Indies, the opera has absolutely nothing *directly* to do with such issues.³ However, I believe that the opera is important in helping to understand the complex *discursive* genealogy of French orientalism, which underwent a sea change between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As is frequently noted, orientalist opera generally functioned in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France either as a tool for criticizing French society and institutions,

what Thomas Betzwieser has called a “kritisch-reflexiver Exotismus”, or as a form of escapist entertainment (an “exotische Entführungs- bzw. Ausstattungssoper”).⁴ In this work, I am interested in trying to determine what factors may have led from this earlier “kritisch-reflexiver Exotismus” to a later “colonialist orientalism” more characteristic of the nineteenth century. This later colonialist orientalism functions more clearly as an instrument of western colonialism, since the “orient” is represented in a manner that makes western colonialism appear natural and thus beyond critical reflection. Specifically, I will argue that signs of this change in orientalism can be perceived in the slave scene from the revised ending, *Le couronnement de Tarare*, used for the 1790 production.

Defining orientalism is notoriously difficult since there are both narrow and extended senses in Said’s work, senses that do not mutually exclude one another. Said’s theoretical debt to Nietzsche’s etymologies and Foucault’s discourse allows for a certain fluidity in which the genealogy of orientalist tropes can be more fully analyzed over broad historical periods in which the “orient” may in fact have held a dominant position. Perhaps the clearest example of what I’m terming a broad (discursive) versus a narrow (colonialist) orientalism is Said’s use of Aeschylus’ *The Persians* and Flaubert’s “Kuchuk Hanem” [*sic*] in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Although both examples may *ultimately* enrich what will constitute the discourse of orientalism, important differences exist between them. Aeschylus’ work never spoke for or represented Xerxes the Great and the Persia of the Achaemenid Empire in the same way that Flaubert’s spoke for and represented “little lady” (*küçük hanım*) and the Levant. Although, as Said notes in regard to *The Persians*, “Asia speaks through and by virtue of the European imagination, which is depicted as victorious over Asia” (56), Persia was the dominant *colonial* power of its time and would ultimately help to destroy Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian Wars in 404 BCE. However, by the nineteenth century western powers had become the dominant colonial powers and would rule over and represent parts of the Levant. A second important difference concerns the status and function of artistic representation itself. Understanding the social, religious and political functions of ancient Greek drama is a particularly thorny problem; however, what seems abundantly clear is that it was very different from a “naturalistic” or

“realistic” mimetic regime that would characterize literary and lyric productions in nineteenth-century France. Said speaks of Flaubert’s orientalist novels as “labored historical and learned reconstructions” (185). He is, in Said’s memorable expression, a “revivalist” since “*he* must bring the Orient to life, he must deliver it to himself and to his reading, and it is his experience of it in books and on the spot, and his language for it, that will do the trick” (185).

I should state explicitly that I am not arguing for a casual link between the revised ending to the opera and the development of French colonialism in the nineteenth century. As Said wrote in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994):

The first thing to be done now is more or less to jettison simple causality in thinking through the relationship between Europe and the non-European world, and lessening the hold on our thought of the equally simple temporal sequence. We must not admit any notion, for instance, that proposes to show that Wordsworth, Austen, or Coleridge, because they wrote *before* 1857, actually caused the establishment of formal British governmental rule over India *after* 1857. We should try to discern instead a counterpoint between overt patterns in British writing and representations of the world beyond the British Isles . . . No, cultural forms like the novel or the opera do not cause people to go out and imperialize . . . but it is genuinely troubling to see how little Britain’s great humanistic ideas, institutions, and monuments, which we still celebrate as having the power ahistorically to command our approval, how little they stand in the way of the accelerating imperial process. (97)

My argument is rather that within the revised ending, we can begin to see indications of, to reformulate Said, “a counterpoint between overt patterns in French writing and representations of the world beyond the metropolitan France” that does “little to stand in the way of the accelerating colonial process.”

Nearly from the beginning, it was recognized that behind the exotic accoutrements of *Tarare* lay a serious critique of French culture and politics. As early as 1878, Adophe Jullien noted that, “à partir de 1790, l’histoire de *Tarare* [est] beaucoup moins musicale que politique.”⁵ The insight, of course, was provided by Beaumarchais himself in the 1790 Preface to the revised work:

O citoyens! souvenez-vous du temps où vos penseurs inquiétés, forcés de voiler leurs idées, s’enveloppaient d’allégories et labouraient péniblement le champ de

la Révolution. Après quelques autres essais je jetai dans la terre, à mes risques et périls, ce germe d'un chêne civique au sol brûlé de l'Opéra. . . L'œuvre a reçu son complément dans le Couronnement de Tarare, l'an premier de la liberté; nous vous l'offrons pour son anniversaire. Ce 14 juillet 1790.⁶

In *Le couronnement de Tarare*, Beaumarchais makes explicit the import of the allegory “veiled” in the original opera: Tarare institutes laws to abolish celibacy and monastic orders, to allow divorce, and to encourage the more humane treatment of slaves. Whatever the validity of this statement concerning the original intentions of the 1787 version of the opera,⁷ it is clear that by 1790 Beaumarchais wanted to bring the opera “up-to-date” since all three of the issues he lists were or had recently been under discussion in the *Assemblée constituante* and, later, the *Convention nationale*. The *Constituante* had abolished religious orders only months prior to the premiere of the opera on 16 February 1790, divorce would be legalized on 22 December 1792, and the issue of slavery had been hotly debated in France since 1789.⁸

On a more personal level, Beaumarchais had every reason for wanting to press his “revolutionary” and “*tiers*” credentials in 1790. The previous year, he had just completed his palatial residence in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, “une maison qu'on cite”⁹ (cited in Loménie, II: 424) that was located next to the Bastille itself and to the wallpaper factory and elegant residence of Réveillon, where the famous “affaire Réveillon” had occurred in April of 1789. During the same period, the Kornmann affair and the dispute with Mirabeau over the *Compagnie des eaux* linked Beaumarchais' name with both court intrigue and *agiotage*. As Thomas Crow has noted:

In the absence of the fugitive Calonne, Beaumarchais emerged as the most visible public opponent of the radicals. He had drawn their fire already in 1785 because of financial dealings he had with Calonne. In 1787, he used his influences at Court to have Mme. Kornmann released from prison (where her husband had placed her under a *lettre de cachet*). Already in retreat from the earlier attacks of the Kornmann group, he now faced public accusations of leading the woman into debauchery and using his corrupt friends to hound the aggrieved husband. He was singled out as a public symbol of corruption and tyranny.¹⁰

In light of Beaumarchais' connections to the traditional power structures of the *ancien régime*, it is perhaps not surprising to find

that the image of the slave in the original (1787) version of the opera largely corresponds to typical *alla turca* fare. Within the fictional world of the opera, there are no “actual” black slaves. According to the *didascalie* Tarare’s costuming and black *masque* are put on, on stage, thus implying rather simple changes to his costume in order to effect a transformation from “homme éloquent” to “vil muet” (561). It is likely that the *masque* was similar to those used by dancers of the opera.¹¹ It is precisely these masks that Noverre decries: “détruisons les masques, ayons une ame, & nous serons les premiers Danseurs de l’Univers.”¹² By masking the individuality of the “slave,” the spectator is distanced from whatever *intérêt* might have been felt. The despotic manner in which Atar treats the slave functions only as a sign of political tyranny, most particularly the oft-criticized “ministerial despotism,” rather than as a critique of slavery. Yet, whatever critical effect such a representation might have is, in part, undercut by the comic nature of the scene itself. Atar’s efforts to be despotic have all of the force of Osmin’s on Blonde in Mozart’s opera (Act II, Scene I). Atar possesses none of the traits of a *serious* character, so that his behavior maintains the character of comic bluster. Given this buffoon-like quality,¹³ whatever concern might have been generated for Tarare’s enslaved condition is largely extenuated, and no attempt is made to address the legal, philosophical, or ethical issues connected to the European enslavement of Blacks.¹⁴

By 1790, times had changed. Although the *Droits de l’Homme* had established the equality of all men within metropolitan France in August of 1789, rich merchants feared for their economic livelihood if slavery were abolished in the colonies. Faced with increasing pressure from mulattoes, the *Constituante* set up a dual system of “active” and “passive” citizens. “Active” citizens would possess all of the “rights of men”; passive citizens—the mulattoes—would not. It was, then, in the context of this debate about slavery that a disturbance occurred during the first performances of *Tarare* in 1790. The commotion was caused by the “young Americans”—French plantation owners from the sugarcane islands in the West Indies—who appear to have viewed the opera as supporting the position that the mulattoes be given full rights, which to their minds might entail the destruction of their economic livelihood.¹⁵

Despite the topicality of the issue, Tarare’s first act as legislator

will not concern slaves, but will be to dissolve the religious institutions of Hormuz: “De tant de retraites forcées/Que les barrières soient brisées! . . . Peuple heureux! Les vrais citoyens,/Ce sont les époux et les pères” (592). He will then legalize divorce so that Spinette and Calpigi may break the “nœuds insupportables” (592) of their marriage. The proclamation of this law prompts a “danse pittoresque, peignant le sentiment d’un divorce, ou de gens qui se fuient et prennent d’autres engagements” (593). There then follows Scene II when Africans arrive as part of the “Marche nationale” to offer Tarare tribute. The new king states with “majesty” that, “Plus d’infortunés parmi nous./Le despotisme affreux outrageait la nature;/Nos lois vengeront cette injure./Soyez tous heureux, levez-vous.” (593). This, it should be emphasized, is *all* that Tarare will say in regards to slavery. In the real world, a little over a year after the 03 August 1790 performance, the Haitian Revolution broke out on 22 August 1791 when the slaves of Saint-Domingue rebelled.

The appearance of the slaves appears, thus, to be completely gratuitous within the thematic context of the original opera and in relationship to Beaumarchais’ traditional gambit of concerns. His anticlericalism was well known and clearly present in the original opera, as was his position concerning the right to divorce to end ill-conceived marriages. Mme Kormann was legally disculpated in April of 1789 and would be able to divorce in 1793. However, nothing in the first version or in Beaumarchais’ previous writings would lead the spectator to suspect the existence of Tarare’s African slaves or their relevance to the story. The eruption of contemporary reality into the “marvelous” (503) world of the original opera is nothing short of jarring. Scene II of the revised ending opens when a “deputy from Zanzibar” arrives, followed by a group of chained slaves. Bowing, the deputy announces that, “Vos noirs sujets d’Afrique, aussi soumis que braves,/Vous offrent leur tribut d’esclaves” (593). The slaves prostrate themselves, before the deputy continues, “Enchaînés par nos mains et domptés par nos coups,/Flétris sous le poids des entraves,/Quoi qu’on ordonne d’eux, ils vous béniront tous” (593). Tarare then expresses the sentiments cited above. To Tarare’s command (“Soyez tous heureux, levez vous,” 593), the slaves express only gratitude to Tarare and the French audience in attendance for their new “sweet slavery”:

Holà! holà! holà! holà!
Holà! doux esclavage
Pour Congo, noir visage.
Bon blanc, pour nègre il est humain;
Nous, bon nègre, a cœur sur la main.
Nous, pour blanc
Sacrifie,
Donner sang,
Donner vie,
Priant grand fétiche Ourbala!
Pour bon grand peuple qu'il est là.
Ourbala! l'y voilà.
Ourbala! l'y voilà. *Montrant les spectateurs* (594)

This is the end of Scene II. Tellingly, Scene III, the penultimate one, is the “mob scene,” where a disorderly crowd arrives and refuses to obey: “Tout est changé; quoi qu'on ordonne,/Nous n'obéirons à personne” (594). Such riotous crowds had, in fact, lightly damaged Beaumarchais' new home in 1789 during the Réveillon Riot, and later in 1792 crowds repeatedly entered the house in search of weapons and grain that the citizenry suspected Beaumarchais was hoarding.¹⁶ In the opera, such lawlessness is quickly dealt with. Upon a signal from the magistrate, four groups enter carrying signs with precepts on them. First, soldiers marching in battle array inform the audience that, “LA LIBERTÉ N'EST PAS D'ABUSER DE SES DROITS” (594). Then, a group of gentlefolk shows us that, “LA LIBERTÉ CONSISTE À N'OBÉIR QU'AUX LOIS” (594). Third, flower-crowned farmers proclaim that, “DE LA LIBERTÉ SANS LICENCE NAÎT LE BON-HEUR, NAÎT L'ABONDANCE” (595). Finally, a group of the “Priests of Death,” preceded by a tam-tam, sermonizes that, “LICENCE, ABUS DE LIBERTÉ, SONT LES SOURCES DU CRIME ET DE LA PAUVRETÉ” (595). This “imposing” spectacle quiets the mob. The scene ends with a *tableau* at the back of the stage in which, beneath “le livre de la Loi” crowned with a golden crown, Tarare and Astasie on their throne are surrounded by a seated “assembly” with the “peuple en bas.” In the front of the stage, the “autel de la Liberté” blazes. The opera ends with Scene IV when the original allegorical figures, the Spirit of Fire and Nature, who opened the opera, return.

Although the slave scene is very brief, there are hints of the ori-

entalism that will characterize some works of the nineteenth century. One of the most striking aspects of the scene is the language used by the slaves. In this Babel-like city of Homuz, all the characters speak perfect French; it is the slaves alone who are unable to speak properly. The use of a pidgin French for slaves functions both as a sign of greater “realism” in the portrayal of other cultures and of European “superiority” over them.¹⁷ Given the importance that Beaumarchais gives to language in his reform of opera, it seems particularly significant that the slaves are unable to express their own desires adequately and must rely on the benevolence of others.¹⁸ This change from having the foreigners speak either *sabir* or standard French, as was usual in earlier works, to using an extremely imprecise pidgin effectively reduces characters to dependence and helplessness, a helplessness that will require the “civilizing” mission of the French to redress and that will elicit “interest” in the spectator, an “interest” that calls forth benevolence.

This desire for greater “realism” is also apparent in the music. After Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne and André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry had declined the offer to provide music for the *Couronnement de Tarare*, Salieri was asked. In requesting the music from Salieri, Beaumarchais explained that, “Cette nation brûlée ne chante point comme les autres, elle a un chevrottement, une trépidation en chantant, qui exige que l’on s’en rapproche lorsqu’on veut la produire en scène” (Loménie II: 413, note 1).¹⁹ In the 1787 version of the opera, elements associated with “exoticism” in music are used, such as the inclusion of cymbals and bass drum, an opening theme from the overture with long initial notes followed by quicker ones, repeated use of raised fourths—the tritone or *diabolus in musica*—and faulty part writing (the use of parallel fifths).²⁰ Although the *alla turca* style was vaguely based on authentic Ottoman music (the *mehter* music of Janissary bands), it should be emphasized that this *European* style was an imaginative creation that did not attempt authenticity or realism.²¹ The music for Scene II remains largely in keeping with such traditional exoticism and does not suggest “authentic” African elements.²² However, Betzwieser concludes that,

Salieri also broke with traditional exoticism . . . It is difficult to avoid the impression that behind the “Air pour les Nègres” [one of the instrumental pieces included

in the new ending] lies a deliberate attempt to write unconventionally—that is, exotically—especially when we compare it with the “Air africain”. It seems very likely, in other words, that Salieri *did* follow Beaumarchais’ advice regarding the “trépidation” of black singing. (“Exoticism and Politics,” 108; *Exotismus*, 355)

There was thus an attempt also in the music to create a greater sense that the drama on stage *represented* an authentic “other” outside the boundaries of metropolitan France, an “other” in whom one should take a benevolent *intérêt*.

One of the most paradoxical facets of this faux “realism” in oriental-themed works from the last decade of the eighteenth century is how works clearly inspired by events taking place in the *Indes occidentales* are set in the *Indes orientales* or in North Africa. In a sense, this represents a natural fit between traditional themes of Turkish operas (the issues of slaves in abduction operas) and contemporary events in the French sugarcane colonies (the development of the abolitionist movement in France).²³ However, this surface similarity masks a rather momentous change in the nature of French orientalism. Although the plight of European slaves in earlier works also sought to elicit feelings of benevolence,²⁴ these feelings were based on sympathy for one’s equal: a fellow European suffering under Ottoman domination. In abduction operas, the non-European or the European-turned-Turk may be feared, hated, mocked, envied, or even respected, but the “Other” is never worthy of pity.²⁵ It appears that for the “oriental” to become an object worthy of pity will require that the socio-political context of the *Indes occidentales* infuse the *Indes orientales*. This elision may have been helped by the existence of a common term joining the West and East Indies: African slaves. Although the enslavement of Africans was common in Islamic cultures²⁶ and the slaves in *Tarare* are Africans, yet these “oriental,” presumably Muslim, slaves from Zanzibar appearing in the Persian city of Hormuz are marked by the political context of the time as referring to Saint-Domingue, a location that Laurent Dubois has called the “ground zero of European colonialism.”²⁷

The tradition of conflating the condition of native peoples in the New World with that of Muslims in the Old began before the eighteenth century. Nabil Matar in his work on the representation of Muslims in Renaissance England provides a useful means of understand-

ing this conflation of European experiences in the New World and the orient that I'm proposing is relevant to the slavery in this late eighteenth-century scene. He has argued that the relations between the English and the American Indian were very different from those between the English and Muslims. Although the American Indians continued to pose a threat to European settlers even into the nineteenth century, power relations between the two groups had also been much more asymmetrical than between Europeans and Muslims. An indication of this asymmetry was language. After 1622, according to Matar, few colonists apart from missionaries had any interest in learning Native American languages. However, during the Renaissance, Britons were required to learn Arabic and Turkish to interact with Muslims. By the 1630s, chairs in Arabic were established in Oxford and Cambridge. Because of these asymmetrical relations Matar has argued that the English "turned to the discourse of superimposition, whereby they yoked the defeated Indian to the undefeated Muslim."²⁸ Thus, joining the two peoples together into an undifferentiated "Other"—despite the vast differences in geography, culture, history, and power—should not be read as a ploy by colonial powers to appropriate the oriental, but as a reaction to the continued threat of Islamic power to the west.

Matar's argument is relevant to the eighteenth century since a similar state of affairs can be seen in the French tradition. In 1669, Colbert set up a school for young students called *jeunes de langue* in order to help promote French economic and diplomatic efforts with the Ottoman Porte.²⁹ To speak with the Ottomans required learning the languages and conventions of the Ottoman court. However, in the west, France's power was such that it could impose linguistic hegemony on the slaves. Such linguistic hegemony would also be desired later when France was in possession of colonies in the Maghreb. In the opera, we see a striking example of such a "discourse of superimposition" in which presumably Muslim slaves are conflated with slaves from the New World.

A second paradoxical aspect of this putative "realism" is how it seemingly misdirects our understanding of the causes of the slaves' predicament. One of the essential questions posed by Said's analysis of orientalism is how European culture—a highly prized, though problematic, value in Said's work—could become so blind to its own colonial barbarity. In part, this question is determined by how the re-

sponsibility for the “pitiable” state of affairs in the “orient” is imagined. As we have seen, the first step in this process is to imagine the deplorable state of affairs of the slaves in the West Indies back onto the orient. In an important second step, we are encouraged to believe that the pitiable state of affairs of the Indian-African slaves is due to a misguided or perhaps even vicious use of free will. We are led to believe that the source of Tarare’s “goodness” is his character and the moderating influence of Astasie’s “*sensibilité*.” Character is central to the opera’s “grande idée philosophique” (503): “HOMME! Ta grandeur sur la terre/N’appartient point à ton état/Elle est toute à ton caractère” (589). And yet, this notion of character is marked by ambiguity. The primary meaning of “caractère” is a traced or written sign and thus marks something that is fixed or set, and it is only in a secondary, non-literal usage that the term came to mean a distinctive set of moral qualities. Yet, the term that Beaumarchais contrasts with character—“état”—also denotes primarily a condition of being that is fixed and lasting, and only secondarily comes to mean a social position, or as in the *ancien régime*, a social order.

The play between these two meanings of both “caractère” and “état” (i.e., engraved or fixed *and* indeterminate or variable) occurs throughout the opera without ever being resolved. For example, in the Prologue, the principal male and female characters display “natural” (i.e., fixed) tendencies before they are ever given an (e)state in society by the Spirit of Fire. After Nature has created the spirits, the Spirit of Fire asks Astasie if she wants to be beautiful. Astasie dumbly repeats the word; however, at the same time, she provides a “natural sign” of her essential, fixed character by blushing and then asking if she is “sans appas” (517). Caught like a guilty child, Nature must admit that, “J’ai tort; devant vous j’ai trahi/Sur ses plus doux secrets mon sexe favori” (518). It appears then that Nature has not in fact created all naturally equal (“égaux par la nature,” 520), but has rather engraved a fixed nature in some which will establish an “essential” difference between gendered characters. There are thus fixed traits that remain unaffected by one’s future (e)state. Yet, this is not always the case in the opera. When Tarare and Atar are questioned, they seem equally disinterested in their future social status. In chorus, they confess to feeling no “eagerness” (“empressement,” 519) to become king. Nature assures them, however, that, “Enfants, il vous manque de naître/

Pour penser bien différemment” (519). Later we are told that Brahma, through a “décret prémédité” (520), will bring the two spirits together in life in order to provide an object lesson to kings and humanity concerning the respective value of “character” and “(e)state” in the creation of “greatness” (589; 596). The text now appears to recognize a preponderant influence of (e)state over character (i.e., being born to a high estate will have a nefarious influence on one’s character) and the possibility that Brahma may foreordain events (i.e., the characters’ actions are not truly under their own control). Simply stated, the opera seems to suggest that Atar’s bad character derives from his high social status and wealth and Tarare’s goodness from his low one.

However, such hints that human behavior might be substantially determined by factors like gender or socio-economic position are opposed by the stated ideology of the work. The “grande idée philosophique” (503) of the opera is precisely that one’s freely developed character will always trump one’s estate. In a letter to the censor, Beaumarchais indicates that he originally intended to call the opera, *Le Libre Arbitre, ou Le Pouvoir de la Vertu*,³⁰ but decided that the title was too pretentious (1452). Thus, despite the numerous indications that the human condition is determined or, at the very least, heavily influenced by gender and socio-economic position, the overriding ideology of the opera is that “character”—moral worth—is dependent on free will. This ideology will have important ramifications in evaluating why masters are masters and slaves are slaves or, to state the same thing in a different manner, why the “west” is the “west” and the “orient” is the “orient”. Tarare’s good character will bring him kingship in the end just as the west’s superiority—moral, political, artistic, and technological—will bring it hegemony over the east: it is the natural outcome of the workings of sound character and free will.³¹

To return to the slave scene in the *Couronnement de Tarare* with this context in mind, it appears that the *unhappy* condition of the enslaved may be the fault of the slaves themselves. The interested *man* may view this unhappy state of affairs with compassion under the moderating influence of a “*sensible*” woman, but if the slaves are in a pitiable state ultimately they can blame only themselves. It is here, I would argue, that Beaumarchais’ potential revolutionary ideas morph into the type of orientalism associated with Edward Said’s critique. Earlier forms of the *alla turca* opera and exotic literature may have

been either escapist entertainment or a form of socio-political *self* critique. As such, it was only tangentially related to a western discourse in which the orient is represented in such a way as to help support western hegemony by providing enabling narratives for both westerners *and* for those living in the orient concerning why the orient is in a position of dependence and need. Western sensibility toward the “orient” *became*, in part, characterized by pity for the weak and underdeveloped—an “orient” that appears only in the slave scene of 1790. The East, that land of romantic ruins, was progressively viewed as empty and degenerate. However, unlike the natives, who might view this disastrous state of affairs as the outcome of colonization, the colonizer sees it as the intrinsic and unfortunate natural state of the native, bringing forth swells of sentiment and promises (or threats) to remedy the situation. Yes, the enlightened and sensitive westerner will say that these peoples and places are indeed piteous, but the disaster is due to the vitiated *character* of the natives. Pity in the “benevolent” will often necessitate intervention to help those who cannot help themselves and, perhaps as Nietzsche suggests, the pity of the “good man” may often lead to a cruelty far worse than that of the “man of prey”.³²

European relations with the Ottoman Empire throughout most of its history were characterized primarily by a mixture of fear and envy, and it was only toward the end of the eighteenth century that one can begin to discern a sense of pity. That this nascent “pity” should come from the far west (Hispaniola) rather than the far east (Hormuz) might seem paradoxical; yet, it is Hispaniola—for Europeans in general and for the French in particular in the 1790s—that most starkly represents a partially repressed *lieu de mémoire* of both the barbarity of European culture and of its material, cultural and spiritual “superiority” over other peoples. It is thus not surprising that the work of culture-colonization, rather than being an occasion for the celebration of shared benefits, should become one of pleasurable and very much *self-interested* feelings of pity on the part of Europeans, thereby fuelling a desire to portray the natives as evincing gratitude for the *interest* shown.

The value of “pity” as a moral, and ultimately legal, category is one of the highly contested themes of the Enlightenment.³³ It may be, as Jean Ehrard has argued, that pity is a necessary step preceding the recognition—legal and moral—of full human dignity:

Nous ne ferons pas nôtre non plus le reproche d'avoir exprimé pour les esclaves de la *compassion* avant de leur reconnaître simplement la *dignité* d'hommes: parce que le chemin de cette pleine reconnaissance est historiquement passé par la pitié; parce qu'avec l'amour-propre celle-ci, selon la philosophie du [dix-huitième] siècle, est l'un des deux sentiments élémentaires à partir desquels se construit la richesse humaine; enfin parce qu'il est contradictoire de récuser la pitié tout en fondant son propre discours sur la dénonciation de la souffrance des Noirs.³⁴

Although such an argument might be questionable, it seems clear that “pity” functioned as a “noble moral sentiment” that could *also* be used to whitewash current barbaric colonialist practices in the West Indies and future ones in the Islamic world.

In the original version of the opera from 1787, Beaumarchais’ orientalism largely conforms to a pattern of using oriental themes to critique the socio-political conditions within France itself and is not intended as a “realistic” presentation of people or cultures in the “orient.” He turns aspects of exotic customs that were often satirized or feared in the western imagination back upon French customs in order to highlight French hypocrisy: the “*infâme*” of church-state relations, the condemnation of couples to unsuitable marriages, and the mutilation of men (castrati) for the aural pleasures of dazzling vocal range and agility. What is new in the 1790 version of the opera is an attempt to represent the non-French realistically. Although none of the characters in the original version of the opera was “French”, this is a function of the “veiling” within the *alla turca* French tradition. The appearance of the slaves in the revised ending, when the veil has been lifted, implies that opera is able now to represent those who are unable adequately to represent themselves. It is able, as in the creation myth used in the beginning of the opera, to give life to a new people, and this is one of the key features of orientalism:

It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries. (*Orientalism*, 57)

Sylvie Chalaye notes a similar state of vital dependence concerning the “image of the Black” in French theater of the eighteenth-century:

Tant que le nègre est agi, parlé, plaint, protégé par le Blanc, celui-ci se donne bonne conscience sans faire l'effort de reconnaître en l'autre son égal; bien au contraire, puisque cet autre continue d'avoir besoin du Blanc pour être défendu.³⁵

The image is, of course, the same as that of the slaves in the revised ending where the native expresses gratitude for their renewed form of dependence on European political and economic interests. Despite the less than noble basis for colonialism, the slaves are shown to have “le cœur sur la main” (594) and are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the colonizer. The rhetorical ploy used in the 1790 Preface that following 1789 thinkers need no longer “veil” their ideas, that art and opera could finally represent naturally and authentically, is a key element in the “vitalism”—that “life-giving power”—that Said associates with orientalism. Beaumarchais was, of course, cognizant of the falsity of his representation: “Le mot de *liberté* n’y [in the slave scene from *Le couronnement de Tarare*] est même pas prononcé, tant j’eus peur d’offenser la politique et la cupidité” (“Réponse de l’Auteur au Comité de l’Opéra,” 1173). The liberty tree—the symbol of renewed life planted at the beginning of “year one of liberty”, of a renewed order in which truth can be shown bare—is clearly just another form of mummery. Political and economic forces will still require masquerading and veils. Although Beaumarchais’ articulation of the “orient” comes from a space that will soon no longer be under French domination—Saint-Domingue in the New World—the contours of this articulation are largely those of a future French colonial creation: the “orient”, where artists will again veil their ideas—though this time perhaps not unwillingly—since the barbarity of the colonial situation will require justification and consolation for both colonized and colonizer.

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Notes

1. *Tarare* was performed a total of 131 times at the Opéra in Paris. The last performance was in 1826. See John A. Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 402. Its Italian version by da Ponte, *Axur, re d’Ormus*, was Joseph II’s “favorite opera” (Rice, *Salieri*, 418) and became extremely popular in Vienna and in other German-speaking lands in German translation, and later throughout Europe and even the New World. Upon

his return to Vienna, Salieri was made “Kapellmeister” by Joseph. See the official “Dekret” in Rudolph Angermüller, *Antonio Salieri: Dokumente seines Lebens* (Berlin: K. H. Bock, 2000) 2: 106–7. The dominant issue of concern in restaging *Tarare* remained its political and philosophical content (i.e., its constitutional monarchism, anti-clericalism, and the “grande idée philosophique” contained in the Prologue and original final scene (Act V, scene 10). The first revisions by Framery in 1795 may have made the opera more radical than Beaumarchais would have liked, but certainly the final revisions for the 1819 performance were entirely too conservative. What all of these later revisions share is the continued use of “orientalism” as an integument, which was a standard feature within the French tradition. However, Beaumarchais’ revised ending from 1790 does, in my view, represent a break with this older tradition. It should be remembered that in the original opera the good king Tarare comes from within the world of “Hormuz” itself and that his primary qualification is his military prowess that he will use *against* the invading Christians. (See *Œuvres* [Paris: Gallimard, 1988], 590. All further references to Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais’ work will be to this edition unless otherwise noted). The implication is that with Tarare as king the Christians will not be successful in their attempt to conquer Hormuz.

2. For general characteristics, see Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 4th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 324. As Rice notes, *Tarare* in fact is “a subtype of oriental opera in which all or most of the leading characters are oriental” (388).

3. In 1777–78, Baron François de Tott was sent on a voyage to inspect the “échelles” and to complete reconnaissance of Egypt for a possible “conquest”. See Jean-Pierre Bois, *Deux voyages au temps de Louis XVI, 1777–1780. La Mission du baron de Tott en Égypte en 1777–1788 et le Journal de bord de l’Hermione en 1780*. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2005), 15–16. If space permitted, it would be fascinating to compare the functions of oriental themes in the Beaumarchais/Paris version and the Lorenzo Da Ponte/Vienna version. Concerning the performance of *Axur* and Favart’s *Soliman second* in 1788 as part of the celebrations for marriage of Archduke Francis, Rice notes that, “The concurrence of these oriental dramas on such an important occasion could hardly have been accidental. At a time when diplomatic relations between the monarchy and the Ottoman Empire were steadily deteriorating, Joseph must have hoped that unflattering depictions of Middle Eastern despots in *Axur* and *Soliman* would strengthen the public’s support for the war against Turkey that he was to declare almost exactly a month later” (416).

Da Ponte’s ending is essentially a translation of Beaumarchais’ 1787 ending with the notable exception that any hint of Beaumarchais’ constitutional monarchism is removed: “. . . du grand nom de roi si j’acceptai l’éclat/Ce fut pour m’enchaîner au bonheur de l’État” becomes “. . . se il peso accettai,/fu per incatenarmi . . . all’onor, alla gloria, al ben del regno,” and “Nous avons le meilleur des rois:/Jurons de mourir sous ses lois” becomes simply “Tutti tutti morremmo per te,/il miglior abbiám noi d’ogni re” (588; Da Ponte’s text is from <http://www.librettidopera.it/axur/axur.html>, 54–55; emphasis added).

4. Betzwieser distinguishes between an “exotische Entführungs- bzw. Ausstattungsooper” and “die von Montesquieu etablierte Lesart eines kritisch-reflexiven Exotismus”. Thomas Betzwieser, *Exotismus und Türkenoper in der französischen Musik des Ancien Régime* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1993), 335.

5. Adolphe Jullien, *La cour et l’Opéra sous Louis XVI* (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1878), 269. In general, see Jullien (269–276). On the changes to opera made to reflected new political conditions, see Louis de Loménie, *Beaumarchais et son temps* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1858),

II: 399–421. On the 1790 ending, see Thomas Betzwieser’s “Exoticism and Politics: Beaumarchais’ and Salieri’s “Le Couronnement de Tarare” (1790)” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6:2 (1994): 91–112. On the 1795 ending, see Mark Darlow’s *Nicolas-Etienne Framery and Lyric Theatre in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: SVEC, 2003), pp. 103–105. On the 1819 ending, see Mark Darlow’s “L’esthétique du tableau dans les ballets de *Tarare*, version de 1819” (249–261) in *Musique et Geste en France de Lully à la Révolution: Études sur la musique, le théâtre et la danse* (ed. Jacqueline Waeber) (Berne: Peter Lang, 2009). On the Da Ponte version, see John A. Rice in *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera* (416–418).

6. The “burnt ground” may refer to the fire that had destroyed the Opéra in the Palais-Royal in 1781. *Tarare* was performed in the new Opéra of the Salle de la Porte-Saint-Martin. Cited in Grimm et al., *Correspondance philosophique et critique* from August 1790 (Paris: Chez Furne, 1831), XV: 155. Also, cited in Thomas Betzwieser’s “Exoticism and Politics,” 93. See notes 1 and 2 for page 592, (1474). See contemporary documents on the incident in Angermüller, *Salieri*, II: 204–207.

7. As will be clear from what follows, I do not believe that slavery was one of the “veiled” ideas of the 1787 version of the opera. It seems likely that Beaumarchais included it as part of *Tarare*’s lawgiving in order to re-align the original opera as fully as possible with important political issues of the early revolutionary period.

8. In fact, a point of criticism at the time of the *reprise* was precisely the speed with which *Tarare* was able to legislate: “On a été surpris de voir ce Soldat, devenu Roi, faire une nouvelle Constitution en moins d’une minute . . . Enfin *Tarare*, en un quart-d’heure, décrète des objets constitutionnels qui sont soumis depuis un an aux discussions de douze cens personnes. N’est-il pas ridicule de voir ce personnage, dont le caractère est lâche, stupide & insignifiant dans l’Opéra, ce Héros qui vient de courber son dos sous le pied d’un Despote, trancher du Législateur, & bouleverser sans réflexions, toutes les loix d’un Etat! l’Auteur qui fait une pareille bétise pour capter les suffrages de la partie ignorante ou exaltée de ses Concitoyens, seroit croire qu’il ne connoît pas les convenances. Son Couronnement paroît être plutôt une Parodie qu’un Ouvrage sérieux, & s’il vouloit faire un Opéra patriotique, il ne falloit pas nous donner *Tarare* pour Législateur!”

I have not modernized the spelling; cited in Angermüller, II: 203. *Journal Général de France*, No. 218, Vendredi, 6. août 1790, p. 896. A similar point is made in the *Moniteur*:

Quelques personnes ont vu, dans ces additions, le projet de parodier ou même d’improver quelques-uns des décrets de l’Assemblée nationale; d’autres au contraire, n’y ont vu que l’intention d’y rendre hommage, et de présenter le vœu public sur quelque question non encore discutée. Le succès par conséquent en a été partagé, suivant la diversité des opinions et les passions différentes des spectateurs. (Angermüller, II: 204; *Réimpression de l’Ancien “Moniteur”, seule histoire authentique et inaltérée de la Révolution française*, Paris, Henri Plon 1860, tome 5, Samedi, 7. Aout 1790, p. 328)

9. Cited in Loménie, II: 424.

10. Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 225. A particularly vicious contemporary attack can be found in Jean Baptiste Marie Louis La Reynie de Bruyère(?), *Le Livre rouge, ou Liste des pensions secrètes, sur le trésor public* (Paris(?): De L’Imprimerie Royale, 1790): “Doit-on être étonné que *Beaumarchais* fût millionnaire, quand on considère que ce scélérat fut toujours le fauteur ou le ministre de tous les forfaits? Poison, poignard, espionnage, calomnie, persécutions, flagorneries,

trahisons, perfidies, tout lui fut familier, tout servit à grossir son opulence” (spelling not modernized, 9).

11. According to Ivor Guest, “Continuing his comment on the abolition of masks [worn by the leading dancers], Castil-Blaze added that their use was ‘retained for several years for the corps de ballet (*les choristes dansants*), for Shades, whose dead-white mask seemed perfectly in keeping with the character, and for Winds and Furies. In 1785 [*sic*, 1787] the Winds were still depicted in the prologue of *Tarare* with puffed-out masks, although they did not carry bellows in their hands.” (Ivor Guest, *The Ballet of the Enlightenment* [London: Dance Books, 1996], 52; the citation from Castil-Blaze [François-Henri-Joseph Blaze] is found in *La danse et les ballets depuis Bacchus jusqu’à Mademoiselle Taglioni* [Paris: 1832, pp. 208–9]).

12. Jean-Georges Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse, et sur les ballets* (Lyon: Chez Aimé Delaroche, 1760), 260.

13. “C’est le premier livret des temps modernes dans lequel on ait osé réunir la bouffonnerie au tragique, alliance heureuse qui permit au musicien de varier ses couleurs en déployant toutes les ressources du génie et de l’art. Les routiniers de l’Académie française, les pédants, les gacheux se révoltèrent contre l’œuvre nouvelle, et son auteur chargea Figaro du soin de la défendre” (Castil-Blaze, *Académie impériale de musique* [Paris: Castil-Blaze, 1855] I: 495).

14. Although Beaumarchais did, in the traditional Enlightenment fashion, write verse that included noble sentiments about the humanity of slaves, he also offered to take over the slave trade for the Spanish Bourbons—to “fournir de nègres toutes les colonies espagnoles.” See Loménie, I: 137–138 for the poem and Beaumarchais’ various business proposals while in Spain. Also, Beaumarchais had a mulatto slave in his service. See Paul d’Estrée, “Le Nègre de Beaumarchais (1766),” *Nouvelle revue rétrospective*, 5 (September 1896), 182–192. Finally, in the “Réponse de l’Auteur au Comité de l’Opéra,” Beaumarchais claims that *Tarare* “ne dit point [to the slaves]: *vous êtes libres*, comme il eût pu le prononcer, si tel eût été mon avis, car je suis du conseil de ce bon roi d’Ormus! il leur dit seulement: *soyez moins malheureux*” (1174).

15. See report by the Académie Royale de Musique to Beaumarchais dated 1 August 1790 in Angermüller, *Salieri*, 2: 204. In 1789 Olympe de Gouges’ play *L’Heureux Naufrage* had also run afoul the “Americans”: “tous les protecteurs, fauteurs du despotisme américain” (cited in Chailay, 94). Dubois has commented that, “By the eve of the revolution Saint-Domingue was ‘the world’s leading producer of both sugar and coffee.’ It exported ‘as much sugar as Jamaica, Cuba, and Brazil combined’ and half of the world’s coffee, making it ‘the centerpiece of the Atlantic slave system’ . . . The livelihood of as many as a million of the 25 million inhabitants of France depended directly on the colonial trade. The slave colonies of the Caribbean were an engine for economic and social change in metropolitan France . . . In 1780, 15 percent of the 1,000 members of the National Assembly owned colonial property, and many others were probably tied to colonial commerce” Laurent Dubois, *The Story of the Haitian Revolution: Avengers of the New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 21.

16. On these incidents, see Maurice Lever, *Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), III: 168–171; 254–257. In a letter to his daughter, Beaumarchais makes a direct connection to *Tarare* and the disorder of the crowds (Lever, *Beaumarchais*, III: 256).

17. A partial list of works with pidgin French might include *Paul et Virginie* (Favières, 1791), *Nègre aubergiste* (Guillemain, 1793), and *Paulin et Virginie* (Dubreuil, an II). See Jean-Claude Halpern, “L’Esclavage sur la scène révolutionnaire,” *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 293: 1 (1993): 409–420. For an overview of the slave in eighteenth-century French theater,

see Sylvie Chalaye, *Du Noir au nègre: L'image du Noir au théâtre* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), 67–142.

18. In this regard, Béatrice Didier has noted in relation to the 1787 Preface to *Tarare* that, “La prédominance de la parole semble nécessaire pour qu’un message idéologique de contenu précis puisse s’exprimer.” *Écrire la révolution 1789–1799*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 168. Although Beaumarchais clearly desires to valorize the importance of words in the long-standing *Prima la musica e poi le parole* debate, his general position to my mind relates more directly to the progressive *embourgeoisement* of the arts and a desire for greater “realism” in the arts rather than a desire to express “un message idéologique de contenu précis.” However, in the revised ending to the opera, he clearly intends to present an “ideological message” in order to emphasize his revolutionary credentials, though this desire does not seem related to his program for reformed opera.

19. Beaumarchais may even have provided some musical suggestions for Salieri, though this is impossible to prove given philological problems associated with the transmission of the musical material. On the philological problems, see Betzwieser’s “Exoticism and Politics,” 101; 104.

20. See Rice (393–400). Although she discusses *Tarare* only briefly (200), the classic work on exoticism in western music is *Exoticism in Dramatic Music, 1600–1800* by Miriam Karpilow Whaples (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1959). Betzwieser (*Exotismus*, 332–352) provides a more extensive musical analysis of *Tarare* (1787). A musical analysis of the *Couronnement de Tarare* is provided in Betzwieser (“Exoticism and Politics” 101–112 and *Exotismus* 352–358).

21. The distance between *mehter* and *alla turca* music can be gauged by a passage from the eighteenth-century Schwabian writer Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart: “Die türkische Musik welche seit vierzig Jahren auch in Deutschland bei verschiedenen Regimentern eingeführt wurde, hat auch das Studium der musikalischen Instrumente der Türken veranlaßt. Der Charakter dieser Musik ist kriegerisch, da er auch feigen Seelen den Busen hebt. Wer aber das Glück gehabt hat, die Janitscharen selbst musizieren zu hören, deren Musikchöre gemeinlich achtzig bis hundert Personen stark sind, der muß mitleidig über die Nachäffungen lächeln, womit man unter uns meist die türkische Musik verunstaltet.” (*Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* [1784], [Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam, 1977] p. 253.)

22. Loménie indicates that Beaumarchais “envoie un projet d’air noté par lui-même d’après un chant nègre” (II: 413, note 1). Although François Lesure (“A propos de Beaumarchais,” *Revue de Musicologie* 53: 2; 1967, 175–178) suggests that Beaumarchais did not write any of the compositions often attributed to him, it may be that Salieri attempted to create music that sounded more “African.” Betzwieser notes: “The musical setting of the ‘Scène des Nègres’ largely follows contemporary [exotic] conventions (see Ex. 1). The use of chromaticism to keep the tonality ‘open’ (bars 21–3), sequences and prominent bass cadences in the vocal part (‘Holà! doux esclavage,’ bars 25–7), large leaps (‘Ourbala’, bars 54–8, etc.) and irregular phrasing were characteristic of musical exoticism in the eighteenth century. It nowhere suggests an ‘authentic’ [African] source . . . It is difficult to see in this any kind of ‘foreign’ melody inspired by Beaumarchais’ suggestions” (“Exoticism and Politics,” 104).

23. A partial listing of works in which slavery in Muslim lands appears to refer to events in Saint-Domingue includes: *Abufar, ou la famille arabe* (Jean-François Ducis) (and a parody of the same work: *Abuzar, ou la famille extravagante* [an III]), *Les Africains, ou le Triomphe de l’humanité* (Larivallière, an III), *Adonis, ou le Bon Nègre* (Béraud et Rosny, an VI), *Elisca ou l’Amour maternel* (Favières, Grétry, an VII). Halpern, “L’Esclavage,” 409–420.

24. Captivity narratives often played a very practical “benevolent” function in that by the mid-eighteenth century redemptionist orders, such as the Trinitarian and Mercedarian orders, became the primary means of collecting moneys to ransom European captives and would use the “auto-biographical” narratives of redeemed slaves as a form of publicity. See Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 177ff.

25. Compare, for instance, the celebratory ending to *Les Trois Sultanes, ou Soliman II* (1761), a comedy by Charles-Simon Favart and music by Paul-César Gibert in which three slaves of differing nationality (a French woman (Roxelane), a Spaniard (Elmire), and a Circassian (Délia) vie for the Sultan’s affection: “*Les Odalisques et les esclaves du sérail, de l’un et de l’autre sexe, forment plusieurs danses variées. Entrée de baladins et baladines turcs. Ils exécutent une pantomime selon la coutume du pays. Proclamation et couronnement de Roxelane. Contredanse générale, pendant laquelle les Francs chantent: Vivir, vivre Sultana; Vivir, vivre Roxelana [Long live the Sultan; Long live Roxelane]. ET LES TURCS. Eyuvallah, Eyuvallah,/Salem alekim/Sultan Zilullah,/Sultan Padichaim,/Eyuvallah, Eyuvallah, (Sens des paroles turques. Gloire, gloire, félicité./Salut, salut, honneur, honneur,/A notre sublime Empereur,/A Soliman, miroir de la divinité./Salut, gloire, félicité.) FIN.*” *Théâtre Choisi de Favart* (Paris: Léopold Collin, 1809), III: 282. The words used by the Europeans (“les Francs”) are *sabir*; the “Turks” use real Turkish words, though the French “translation” is inaccurate. In modern Turkish spelling, the lines would read: “Eyvallah, Eyvallah/Selamünaleyküm/Sultan zillullah/Sultan padişahım/Eyvallah, Eyvallah” (Many thanks, many thanks./May peace be upon you/Sultan, God’s shadow on earth/Sultan, my king/Many thanks, many thanks).

26. See, for example, Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New Amsterdam: New Amsterdam Press, 1989), 144–145; 182–191, and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch’s “La colonisation arabe à Zanzibar” in *Le livre noir du colonialisme* (Paris: Pluriel, 2003), 603–624.

27. Dubois, *The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 13.

28. Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 106.

29. During the visit of the Ottoman envoy to Paris, Süleyman Ağa, in 1669, Laurent d’Arvieux reports that the court’s translator, François Pétis de la Croix (the elder, 1622–1695), was unable to interpret the discussions since he had learned Turkish only from books and was unable to understand what the envoy said. The French translator “ne fit que bredouiller de telle sorte, que l’Envoyé ne put rien comprendre dans ce qu’il lui dit; ce qui fut cause que l’audience finit bien plutôt qu’elle n’auroit dû faire” (*Mémoires du chevalier d’Arvieux, envoyé extraordinaire du Roy à la Porte*, ed. by P. Labat, 6 vols (Paris: Chez Charles-Jean-Baptiste de Lespine le fils, 1735), IV:136–7).

30. A manuscript in the Beaumarchais family archives has the title *Tarare ou le Libre Arbitre*. See note 2, page 1452.

31. Olympe de Gouges’ treatment of this theme is markedly different in *Zamore et Mirza, ou l’Heureux naufrage* (Paris: Chez L’Auteur, 1788). She clearly views the European enslavement of others as an effect of the west’s technological superiority. When asked by Mirza about the difference between Europeans and slaves, Zamore explains that, “Cette différence est bien peu de chose, elle n’existe que dans la couleur; mais les avantages qu’ils ont sur nous sont immenses. L’art les a mis au-dessus de la nature; l’instruction en a fait des Dieux, & nous ne sommes que des hommes” (6).

32. For one example, see Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, eds. (München: de Gruyter, 1999), 5: 274–275; 368.

33. In the *Essai sur le genre dramatique sérieux*, Beaumarchais writes: “Car qu’est-ce que moralité? C’est le résultat fructueux et l’application personnelle des réflexions qu’un événement nous arrache. Qu’est-ce que l’intérêt? C’est le sentiment involontaire par lequel nous nous adaptons cet événement, sentiment qui nous met en la place de celui qui souffre, au milieu de sa situation” (126). This definition of “intérêt” is clearly closely related to Rousseau’s idea of “pitié”.

34. Jean Ehrard, *Lumières et esclavage: L’Esclavage colonial et l’opinion publique en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Bruxelles: André Versaille, 2008), 16.

35. Chalaye, *L’image du Noir*, 88.

