"Everyone Breeds in His Own Image": Staging the *Aethiopica* across the Channel

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For a long time, the third-century romance *Aethiopica* by Heliodorus of Emesa fell exclusively within the critical purview of novel specialists. Over the last fifteen year, a rich body of scholarship has emerged and shifted attention from the important formal innovations that the discovery of Heliodorus's romance facilitated to the significance of the *Aethiopica*'s racial themes for the early modern cultural moment.[1] This recent scholarship has focused, on one hand, on the reception of the *Aethiopica* in early modern English literature and theater and, on the other hand, on the reception of Heliodoric materials in continental visual culture starting in 1610.[2] The present article means to connect those two discrete lines of critical inquiry by foregrounding a topic that has, to this day, received virtually no attention: stage adaptations of the *Aethiopica* in early modern France and their transnational influence on English seventeenth-century theater.

1. The gap between *Aethiopica* scholarship focused on novelistic form and *Aethiopica* scholarship focused on race remains conspicuous, with the exception of Elizabeth Spiller's efforts to bring together genre theory and racial taxonomies in *Reading and the History of Race in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

2. For the former type of scholarship, see Sujata Iyengar, *Shades of Difference: Mythologies of Skin Color in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). For the latter type, see Peter Erickson, "Invisibility Speaks: Servants and Portraits in Early Modern Visual Culture," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9, no. 1 (2009): 23–61; Joaneath Spicer, "Heliodorus's *An Aethiopian Story* in Seventeenth Century European Art," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art, Vol. 3: From the "Age of Discovery" to the Age of Abolition*, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 307–35; and Jonathan Crewe, "Drawn in Color: *Aethiopika* in European Painting," *Word and Image* 25, no. 2 (2009): 129–42. Beyond early modern scholarship, one must also acknowledge Wendy Doniger's anthropological approach to the *Aethiopica* in "The Symbolism of Black and White Babies in the Myth of Parental Impression," *Social Research* 70, no. 1 (2003): 1–44.

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It is well known that, starting with Jacques Amyot's 1547 translation, France was the epicenter of a Heliodoric phenomenon whose tremors were to be felt throughout western Europe. Yet the transnational dimension of Heliodorus's early modern reception, with which art historians and novel specialists alike usually reckon, has been ignored so far by English theater scholars.[3] By highlighting the strong discursive similarities that exist between early modern French Heliodoric plays and their English counterparts, I aim to show that the development of racial thinking in English theater during the first half of the seventeenth century can be productively explored in dialogue with contemporary theatrical reflections on racial heredity across the Channel. A comparative approach reveals that the histories of race proper to early modern England and France, while unique and distinct, are intertwined, for racial thinking developed transnationally in Europe, as racial tropes and paradigms morphed and circulated across borders.

In this article, I argue that early seventeenth-century playwrights in France and in England often rework the plot of the *Aethiopica* in ways that question the chromatic fluidity of human skin at the core of the Greek romance, and that those changes are informed by ideas of black heredity—or, to quote George Best in 1578, black "lineal descent"—which were gaining traction in the context of an incipient racialization of blackness.[4] Race, as it is understood in this article, is the power structure that allows a dominant social group to select a human group based on a variety of criteria (such as religion, class, ethnicity, physical appearance) and to imagine this group as endowed with a set of essential and hereditary traits that warrant its position in the social hierarchy.[5] Understood as such, race depends on the premise that essential traits will be transmitted across generations. In other words, blackness has to be thought of as hereditary to solidify into a racial category, and early modern stage adaptations of the *Aethiopica*, push-

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3. In his remarkable *Monsters and Their Meanings in Early Modern Culture: Mighty Magic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 168, Wes Williams discusses stage versions of the *Aethiopica* in early modern France and calls for work on the reception of Heliodorus in English theater.

4. "The most probable cause to my iudgemente is, that this blacknesse procéedeth of some naturall infection of the first inhabitants of that Countrey, and so all the whole progenie of them descended, are still poluted with the same blot of infection. Therefore it shall not be farre from our purpose, to examine the first originall of these blacke men, and how *by lineall discente*, they haue hitherto continued thus blacke." George Best, *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discouerie, for the Finding of a passage to Cathaya, by the Northvveast, vnder the conduct of Martin Frobisher Generall* (London: Henry Bynnyman, 1578), 30. Emphasis mine.

5. On this definition of race, see Geraldine Heng, "The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 5 (2011): 315–31. "[Race is] a tendency of the gravest import to demarcate human beings through differences among humans that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differentially to human groups . . . Race is *a structural relationship* for the articulation and management of human differences, *rather than a substantive content*" (324). Emphasis mine.

ing hereditary modes of thinking about skin tone to the foreground, helped integrate blackness as a category into the early modern racial matrix. Ultimately, I show how the *Aethiopica*, which was originally concerned with a relatively rare and narrow object (transracial births), becomes, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a space for thinking through the much larger and urgent issues of blackness and race on stage across the Channel. To do so, I consider a large corpus of plays and give special attention to two early modern Heliodoric plays, French and English, which rework the plot of the *Aethiopica* most boldly and radically in favor of black lineal descent.

I first give an overview of the French corpus of Heliodoric plays stretching over the whole century and contextualize the success of the *Aethiopica* by highlighting the relevance of its plot to the development of the racial matrix in early seventeenth-century France. In particular, I read closely Octave-César Genetay's 1609 *L'Ethiopique, ou les chastes amours de Théagène et de Chariclée*, in order to unpack its confident dismissal of maternal imprinting as a viable explanation for the birth of transracial children in favor of atavism. After this, I place Genetay's intervention in a larger current of theatrical and visual continental representations that use Heliodoric materials as a catalyst to implement a stricter vision of a black heredity. I then trace the influence of this intellectual trend onto contemporary English theatrical culture, giving credit to the queen consort Henrietta Maria, a transnational cultural agent who translated the French courtly fondness for and understanding of the *Aethiopica* into English performance culture. Finally, I examine some late 1630s Heliodoric plays within the context of early seventeenth-century English conversations on blackness and analyze at length Richard Brome's corrosive city comedy *The English Moor, or the Mock-Marriage* (1637), whose relentless sabotage of the *Aethiopica*'s plot speaks to two key concerns in the play: the inescapability of lineal descent and the threat of degeneration that miscegenation of all sorts poses to the English nation.

I. BLACKNESS, LINEAL DESCENT, AND THE RACIAL MATRIX IN FRENCH HELIODORIC PLAYS

Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* tells the story of Chariclea, a beautiful Ethiopian princess who was abandoned at birth with letters and tokens of royalty when her mother found out that the baby was white and grew afraid of being wrongfully accused of adultery. Heliodorus's novel uses maternal imprinting, the medical theory according to which perceptions that struck the imagination of a woman at the beginning of her pregnancy would influence the formation of the fetus.[6]

6. Endorsed in the early sixteenth century by authoritative figures in the world of medicine and philosophy such as Paracelsus in Germany, Ambroise Paré in France (1573), Fortunio Liceti in Italy (1613), Alonso de Sandoval in Spain (1627), and Malebranche in France (1670s), mater-

Indeed, in the romance, the baby was born white from black parents—a transracial child—because, during conception, the mother, Persina, had her eyes set on a portrait of her ancestor Andromeda, another breathtakingly beautiful Ethiopian princess whom most early modern artists represented as white, although Ovid had explicitly depicted her as black.[7] Chariclea survives: she is raised by a series of substitute father figures, grows into a virtuous young woman, who, together with her chaste Greek lover Theagenes, travels across the ancient world and eventually finds her way back to Ethiopia and to her biological parents. As she is about to be sacrificed to the Moon by king Hydaspes in order to celebrate the Ethiopians' military victory over the Persians, she demands a full trial, during which she spectacularly reveals her lineage by exhibiting the explanatory letters and the precious tokens (a royal ring, in particular) with which she was abandoned. She also stands next to the portrait of Andromeda that allegedly caused her whiteness and, finally, produces an intriguing black spot on her arm, which her mother recognizes. Scholars have noted that, during that scene, Chariclea mobilizes several of the tragic recognition tropes identified by Aristotle in the *Poetics*, which recur in most Greek romances.[8] Chariclea's letter, jewels, and birthmark are all demands of the genre, but Heliodorus puts those established recognition tropes to the test by using them in the extreme case of a transracial recognition scene. The old tropes work, Chariclea is spared, inherits the kingdom, and marries Theagenes. Thus, the novel is both set into action and eventually resolved by misguided and insightful readings of its heroine's body: Chariclea's body requires nuanced hermeneutics, for it is simultaneously deceiving (her white skin obfuscates her lineage) and evidentiary (her black spot, whether it be a mole or a synechochic patch of black skin, reveals her lineage).

More often than not, the gravitational center of French Heliodoric plays is the final trial and recognition scene, which suggests that the complex hermeneutics

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nal imprinting was to persist until the end of the eighteenth century, as Cristina Malcolmson shows in Studies of *Skin Color in the Early Royal Society: Boyle, Cavendish, Swift* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013). For Marie-Hélène Huet, "the incorporation into medical literature of the widespread belief that the maternal imagination played a major role in the formation of the fetus, whether normal or monstrous, was one of the most significant features of the transition from the Renaissance to the European classical age." Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 36.

7. On Andromeda's racial ambiguity in antiquity and in early modern visual culture, see Elizabeth McGrath, "The Black Andromeda," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 1–18.

8. For a detailed account of the Aristotelian *anagnorisis* tropes that the *Aethiopica* mobilizes in that scene, see Arthur Heiserman, *The Novel before the Novel: Essays and Discussions about the Beginnings of Prose Fiction in the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 198. For a thorough examination of the recognition scenes that punctuate the *Aethiopica* and their relation to ancient comedy and tragedy, see Silvia Montiglio, *Love and Providence: Recognition in the Ancient Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 106–58.

of Chariclea's African body constituted the main appeal of this source material for early modern French theater makers and consumers. As the case study of Genetay's play *L'Ethiopique* will show shortly, the hermeneutics of African bodies that moves Heliodorus's novel forward provided early modern French theater with an experimental space to consolidate modes of thinking about blackness along the lines of lineal descent. Early modern playwrights adapted the *Aethiopica* according to new modes of thinking about blackness: modes that undermined the fluidity at the heart of Heliodorus's romance.[9] The idea of black lineal descent, which those Heliodoric plays foreground, partakes in the history of racial thinking, to the extent that heredity is one of the necessary foundation upon which racial thinking is built. Early modern Heliodoric plays do not make the common contemporary moves of associating blackness with sin, servitude, or inferiority—yet they do crucial ideological work, laying the ground for the racialization of blackness.

The late sixteenth century social context of French aristocratic struggles explains, to some extent, the particularly strong interest that French theater producers and consumers developed for the question of lineal descent in the *Aethiopica*. Since the middle of the sixteenth century, the word "race," originally used to refer to French royal dynasties, had been extended to refer to good aristocratic pedigree understood in essentialist and hereditary terms. The old military nobility, *la noblesse d'épée*, had developed a discourse that insisted heavily upon this idea during the crisis of the French aristocracy, when they felt threatened in their prerogatives by the rise of *la noblesse de robe*, an ambitious bourgeois class that either purchased their aristocratic status or earned it by serving an increasingly domineering Crown.[10] According to this defensive racial discourse, true nobility was transmitted through blood, and its preservation required a policing of marriages and avoidance of miscegenation with the *nouveaux riches*—at a time when the impoverished old nobility often married into wealthy new noble families. In that sense, Guillaume Aubert writes, "the idea of race rapidly became an essential feature of the early modern French ethos."[11] This is what Jean E. Feerick describes as the "race-as-blood" system that was also dominant in late sixteenth-

9. Early modern Heliodoric plays call into question the strict periodization of concerns laid out by Elizabeth Spiller: "Renaissance interest in Heliodorus was dominated by questions of genre, but, from at least the nineteenth century, readers of Heliodorus have focused primarily on questions of race." Spiller, *Reading*, 90.

10. On the evolution of the term "race" in French, see Pierre Boulle, *Race et esclavage dans la France de l'ancien régime* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 63.

11. Guillaume Aubert, "'The Blood of France': Race and Purity of Blood in the French Atlantic World," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 61, no. 3 (2004): 439–78, 443. See also Robert Mandrou, *La France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), and Arlette Jouanna, *Ordre social: Mythes et hiérarchies dans la France du XVIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1977).

century England.[12] Within that racial paradigm, which obtained across the Channel and beyond, "to belong to a race was to belong to a family with a valorous ancestry and a profession of public service and virtue."[13] The heightened cultural sensitivity to issues of "blood" that permeated early modern French society constituted a most fertile ground for stage adaptations of the *Aethiopica*, the story of a princess who struggles to reclaim her rightful yet invisible royal lineage. It is not surprising then that the vogue for the *Aethiopica* should have started in courtly aristocratic circles.

The *Aethiopica* also resonated in early modern France because it spoke to the multifaceted nature of contemporary French racial thinking. Indeed, in late sixteenth-century France, a new racial paradigm emerges, slowly: the paradigm of race as skin tone (which had been in use in Southern Europe for over a century). Jean E. Feerick points out that, often, "the difference of skin color emerges in the context of a contestation of social hierarchies expressing a hereditary order."[14] Yet in the case of Heliodoric plays, the relation between the two racial paradigms of blood and skin tone is more analogical than dialectical. In Chariclea's story, blood (royalty) and skin tone (black heritage) align with each other: the same evidence (tokens, letter, bodily sign) is used to prove or disprove both of them simultaneously. This analogical relation would later inform the rise of the race-as-skin-tone paradigm to dominance, for, as Guillaume Aubert has shown, the racial discourse, tools, and terminology developed in the sixteenth century to protect aristocratic privilege in metropolitan France would be extended to protect white privilege at large in the overseas colonies in the second half of the seventeenth century.[15]

Already at the end of the sixteenth century, the French racial lexicon registers the emergence of the race-as-skin-tone paradigm. For instance, the term *métis* (mixed race) had existed since the thirteenth century to designate animals born from two different species, bastards, and people of low extraction; but in 1559, the term was used to define someone "whose mother and father belong to different people, among the Greek" by none other than Jacques Amyot, Heliodorus's very own translator.[16] Beyond its use in the realm of animal husbandry, the term *métis* could now designate ethnic mixing in addition to "blood" mixing, probably

12. Jean E. Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 6.

13. Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 175.

14. Feerick, *Strangers in Blood*, 6.

15. Aubert, "The Blood of France," 442.

16. "Dont la mère est d'un autre peuple que le père (chez les Grecs)." Jacques Amyot, *Les Vies des hommes illustres, grecs et romains, comparées l'une avec l'autre, par Plutarque* (Paris: M. de Vascosan, 1565), f76v. All translations from French to English are my own.

under the influence of the fast-growing Spanish racial lexicon (see *mestizo*) that actively sought to categorize the increasingly hybridized population of an empire replete with subjects of color. In Spain, since the promulgation of the statuses on the *limpieza de sangre*, blood had been used as a tool to racialize groups on the basis of religious difference (Jewishness, Moorishness, and Islam). With the phrase *sangre azul*, old Christians drew attention to the whiteness of their skin (translucent enough for their veins to show) in order to prove that there had been no intermarriage with Jews or Moors among their ancestors. This phrase suggests that, in Iberia, race as religion, the dominant racial paradigm, could sometimes lapse into race as skin tone.[17] That the French correlative of the Spanish phrase *sangre azul*, *le sang bleu* (blue blood), should refer, up to this day, to aristocratic lineage, that is, to the race-as-blood paradigm, bears witness to the circulation of racial concepts across national borders and to the interconnectedness of the various paradigms within the racial matrix in early modern Europe. In short, race was already polysemic in France at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the *Aethiopica's* interest in heredity as it applies to both blood and skin tone was most welcome in this context.

Numbers attest to the popularity of the *Aethiopica* on the French stage. In his seminal translation, Jacques Amyot repeatedly theatricalizes Heliodorus's romance. To give but one example among many, the first account of Chariclea's story, in book 2, is framed as pure theater, when Cnemon, urging Calasiris to reveal who the beautiful stranger is, declares: "it is time for you to put your comedy into words, as if you were to walk on a scaffold, or a theatre, and play it."[18] French playwrights were quick to pick up on Amyot's hints at the theatrical potential of the *Aethiopica* and its final recognition scene: French Heliodoric plays constitute a large corpus spanning the whole stretch of the seventeenth century. This corpus starts with the eight-play cycle of *Les Chastes et loyales amours de Théagène et Chariclée*, by Alexandre Hardy (Paris: Jacques Quesnel, 1623), presumably performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1601.[19] Hardy's marathon

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17. Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton, *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 16.

18. "Il est temps que vous commenciez à disposer de paroles votre comédie, comme si vous entriez sur un eschafaut, ou un théâtre pour la jouer." Jacques Amyot, *Histoire Aethiopique de Heliodorus, contenant dix livres traitant des loyales et pudiques amours de Théagène Thessalien et Chariclée Aethiopienne* (Rouen: Thomas Mallard, 1588), 136–37.

19. The present catalogue of French Heliodoric and Andromeda-centered plays was obtained by compiling data from the fifteen-volume collection by Claude Parfaict and François Parfaict, *Histoire du Théâtre François depuis son origine jusqu'au présent* (Paris: P. G. Le Mercier, 1734–49), from the CESAR database (*Calendrier Electronique des Spectacles sous l'Ancien Régime et sous la Révolution*) at Oxford Brookes University (http://www.cesar.org.uk/cesar2/index.php), from Jean Loret's epistolary gazette *La Muse historique*, 1650–65 (Paris: P. Jannet, 1857), and from the irreplaceable catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

theater sequence was followed by *L'Ethiopique, Tragicomédie des chastes amours de Théagène et de Chariclée*, by Octave-César Genetay (Rouen: Théodore de Reinsart, 1609), performed shortly before its publication in a private castle in La Flèche, as well as the lost *Théagène*, by Gabriel Gilbert, performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1662, the never completed and unfortunately lost manuscript of *Théagène et Chariclée* by Jean Racine, presumably started between 1662 and 1664, and, finally, *Téagène et Cariclée*, a "*tragédie en musique*" by Joseph-Francois Duché de Vancy (Amsterdam: Antoine Schelte, 1695), performed by the *Académie royale de musique*. To this corpus, one can add the stage adaptations of the myth of Andromeda, which is part and parcel of the *Aethiopica*, to the extent that Chariclea is Andromeda's heiress and duplicate in whiteness. Those adaptations include the lost anonymous *Ballet d'Andromède exposée au monstre marin*, 1606 (of which virtually nothing is known), *La Perséeene, ou la délivrance d'Andromède* (Lyon: Simon Rigaud, 1618), by Jean Boissin de Gallardon, which may or may not have been performed, the anonymous *intermède Andromède delivrée* (Paris: Paul Mansan, 1624), which was performed in Paris, the much applauded *Andromède* (Rouen: Laurens Maurry, 1651), by Pierre Corneille, performed at the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon in 1650, and, finally, *Persée et Andromède* (Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1682), an opera by Lully and Quinault performed at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal in 1682–83. This is a substantial corpus, with a particularly strong segment in the first quarter of the century. Those twenty-five years also saw a boom of Heliodorus-inspired productions in French visual culture, including among other artifacts, illustrated editions, painting cycles, and tapestries, under the influence of royal patronage—in particular, the patronage of Queen Marie de Medici.[20] As the genres and performance spaces of the plays listed above suggest, in theatrical culture just as much as in visual culture, Heliodoric adaptations never developed far from the royal court in France.

II. OCTAVE-CÉSAR GENETAY'S *L'ETHIOPIQUE*: A FRENCH CASE STUDY

Octave-César de Genetay's *L'Ethiopique, Tragicomédie des chastes amours de Théagène et de Chariclée* deserves particular attention as the most radical rewriting of the *Aethiopica* in favor of lineal descent to be found in early modern French theater.[21] Genetay wrote *L'Ethiopique* in 1609 to celebrate the wedding of Catherine de la

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20. On Marie de Medici's patronage and taste for paintings of the *Aethiopica*, see Spicer, "Heliodorus's *An Aethiopian Story*," 311–15.

21. Lancaster Eugene Dabney writes "the author [Octave-César Genetay] is said to have been partly of negro blood," but he does not cite any source for this information in *French Dramatic Literature in the Reign of Henri IV: A Study of the Extant Plays Composed in French between 1589 and 1610* (Austin, TX: University Cooperative Society, 1952), 190.

Varenne, the daughter and youngest child of Guillaume Fouquet de la Varenne, one of King Henri IV's closest advisors—whom he had ennobled a decade earlier. The performance took place in La Varenne's luxurious brand new castle in the city of La Flèche. A chef's son, La Varenne had started his career as a cook in the service of Catherine de Bourbon and had been a portmanteau to the king before his military merits had propelled him to higher functions in the king's house.[22] In other words, La Varenne was a new aristocrat, of bad pedigree, or bad race: a 1607 portrait of the French royal family attributed to Frans Pourbus the Younger shows the grateful Fouquet de la Varenne at the king's feet, holding a sign that reads "He made me earn nobility and gave me wealth."[23] The French king most probably attended the wedding of his protégé's daughter. Indeed, the sonnet dedicated to the king "the great Henri, sun of the French kingdom" just between the prologue delivered by the goddess Diana and the beginning of the first act in the playtext was most probably delivered during the performance, addressing the king directly among the audience members in order to commend his generosity toward the city of la Flèche.

The bride, Catherine, had been ennobled indirectly, through her father, just ten years before her marriage. Born as she was in a solidly bourgeois family, Catherine's blood was hardly blue enough for her to marry Claude d'Avaugour, who, by contrast, belonged to one of the oldest baronial dynasties in Brittany. In 1609, this mixture of old aristocratic blood and new aristocratic blood would be read as an interracial marriage in accord with early modern French terminology and the children born from such a union, as *métis*. The Heliodoric material had a clear topical value in this context. In the prologue to the play, Genetay has the goddess Diana compare Theagenes and Chariclea to the virtuous newlyweds, creating an analogical structure in which the anxieties surrounding Chariclea's lineage, which are so happily resolved in the novel, provide a safe space for ad-

22. After saving the king's life on the battlefield, Fouquet de la Varenne was knighted (1598) and entrusted with diplomatic missions in England and in Spain. Fouquet became a member of the Royal Council, the governor of the town and castle of La Flèche, controller general of the post office, and lieutenant general of the province of Anjou. After Henri IV was assassinated, his heart was preserved in an urn in the church of the Jesuit school in La Flèche, whose constructions had been ordered by La Varenne himself; according to a promise made to the late king, La Varenne was buried at the foot of that urn when the time came. This anecdote gives an idea of La Varenne's closeness to the king and, by extension, to the royal family. For a full biography of La Varenne, see Gérard Morteveille, *Guillaume Fouquet de la Varenne, ministre de Henri IV, surintendant général des Postes* (Bonchamp: Imprim'Services, 2010).

23. "Il m'a fait acquérir l'honneur et m'a donné le bien." This painting, *Marie de Medici and her Family,* by Frans Pourbus the Younger (1607), is currently kept at the Auditoire Museum in the city of Sainte-Suzanne, of which Fouquet de la Varenne became baron in 1598.

dressing (and assuaging) anxieties surrounding Catherine de la Varenne's own aristocratic lineage in the validating presence of the French king.

Focusing, more than any other French Heliodoric play, on the recognition scene, Genetay's play dramatizes only the last book of the romance, the trial book, and summarizes the rest of the plot in a couple of monologues. Zooming onto the trial scene and the final deciphering of Chariclea's evidentiary body, the play paradoxically suppresses the moment when Chariclea produces physical evidence of her lineage. Indeed, in this adaptation, Persine dreams that the beautiful prisoner about to be sacrificed is her daughter, and narrates her dream to Sysimethres, the Ethiopian priest who received Chariclea as a baby from her mother's arms. Because Sysimethres has just had an illuminating conversation with Chariclea, he is able to confirm the queen's suspicions. Persine is overjoyed, embraces her long-lost daughter, and exits to impart the good news to her husband offstage at the end of act 4. Spectators are given indication, in the following act, that the king has seen the letters and tokens, but no one mentions Chariclea's black patch of skin. The mysterious black mark is simply evacuated from Genetay's play. This does not mean that the play renounces reading Chariclea's body—on the contrary, the play advocates for a radical re-reading of Chariclea's body. Indeed, the play inverts the bodily hermeneutics presented as correct by Heliodorus: while, in the romance, it is not Chariclea's whiteness but her black spot that reveals her lineage, Genetay's play boldly claims that whiteness actually is the true indicator. The chorus calls for this readjustment of bodily hermeneutics when they address the audience in-between the acts, while Persine is offstage, sharing the happy news with Hydaspes:[24]

Les Dieux par raison profonde	It is the gods, who, for some deep reason,
Ont fait l'homme blanc et noir	Have made Man white and black
Pour ornement du grand monde	To adorn the vast world
Luy donnant divers manoirs:	And have given him various mansions:
Ce n'est point ni la semence,	It is not semen,
Ni l'imagination,	Nor imagination,
Ni la chaleur trop immense,	Nor excessive heat,
Ni la froide région	Nor the cold climate of any region.
Chacun forme en son semblable	Everyone breeds in his own image,
Selon qu'il a la couleur,	Based on his own color,
En quelque endroit habitable	In some habitable part of the world
Qu'il juge à vivre meilleur:	That he deems fittest to dwell;
Et si quelqu'un vient à naistre	And if perchance someone is born

24. Octave-César Genetay, *L'Ethiopique, Tragicomédie des chastes amours de Théagène et de Chariclée* (Rouen: Théodore de Reinsart, 1609), 42–44. Translation my own. There is no lineated edition of this play at this time.

De teint qui soit différent	Whose hue is different,
Il le tient de quelque ancestre	They inherited it from some ancestor
Qui l'a eu tel apparent.	Who had it of that color.
C'est donc chose bien aisée	Thus, it is easy to understand
Que Chariclée l'ait blanc:	Why Chariclea's hue is white:
De même l'avait Persée,	White was the hue of Perseus,
Premier de son royal sang.	Who founded her royal blood.
Et ne pensons qu'il procède	And don't think that her hue
De la vue d'un tableau,	Comes from viewing a painting,
Car noire était Andromède	For Andromeda was black,
Bien qu'elle eust le corps très beau.	Although her body was gorgeous.
Ainsi par longues années	In a similar way, for many years,
Les fondateurs des Thébains	The Thebans' ancestors
Laissèrent à leur lignée	Left clear indications of their lineage
De leur sang signes certains:	To their descendants:
Chacun portait une flèche	Each of them had a spear
Imprimée sur son corps,	Imprinted on his body.
Mais la nature qui pèche	But nature, which errs sometimes,
Un temps ne la mist point hors.	Stopped expressing it for a while.
Cette marque fut perdue	That mark was lost to their heirs
Un long âge en leurs neveux,	For a long time;
Enfin elle fut rendue	Eventually, it was restored
A Python descendant d'eux,	To their descendant Python,
D'une flèche la figure	Who had the shape of a spear
Sur la cuisse empreinte estoit	Imprinted on his thigh,
Par naturelle advanture	And while this was only natural,
Que pour miracle on contoit.	People deemed it a miracle.
Les blancs prétendent louange	White people mean to admire
Sur nous autres basanez,	Our blackness,
Mais à nous n'est pas moins estrange	But we wonder no less
De quoy ils ont ainsi nez:	Why they were born white:
Il est à croire facile	It is easy to believe
Que nous leur donnons façon,	That we fashion them—
Comme un vers de sa bobille	Like a black worm emerges
Sort de noir, blanc papillon.	From its cocoon as a white butterfly.

After debunking in the first stanza the most common early modern explanations for blackness (climate theory, black semen, and the alleged stronger heat of black bodies), the chorus delivers a hard blow to the theory of maternal imprinting to articulate a strong vision of heredity: we will never know why the gods created man of different colors, but each man transmits his own color to his heirs through lineal descent.[25] While some hereditary features re-

25. Early modern stage adaptations of the *Aethiopica* force us to qualify the narrative according to which maternal imprinting only started breaking apart as a valid explanation for the birth of transracial children in the eighteenth century. This narrative is most interestingly developed in

main unexpressed for a few generations, they can resurface anytime in the descendants: hereditary features are dormant, not lost. Thus, Chariclea was born white because she had a white ancestor, the Greek Perseus, whose whiteness resurfaced in her: through lineal descent, Perseus transmitted simultaneously his noble blood (*son royall sang*) and his skin tone (*le teint*).

The chorus claims to read in terms of natural philosophy (*naturelle advanture*) what too many contemporaries read as "a miracle"—this embrace of the scientific paradigm informs the mesmerizing image of the worm's biological metamorphoses into a butterfly at the end of the passage. Nine years after Genetay's play was published, Jean de Riolan the Younger, the influential Parisian anatomist, would produce the first dissection-based account of black skin in Western Europe: the chorus seems to capture the historical moment when blackness became an object fit for modern scientific discourse.[26] Based on such dissections, Riolan would note that "blackness does not go beyond the *cuticula* [skin outer layer] . . . below the black cuticula, the Ethiop's skin was whiter than snow."[27] The image of the flayed corpse revealing snow-white flesh under black skin in the theater of anatomy of the Parisian schools of medicine eerily connects with the worm leaving its black envelope as a white butterfly that Genetay's chorus evokes. The desire to tackle Chariclea's case in "natural" terms informs the emphasis that Genetay's play puts on lineal descent at the expense of maternal imprinting and geohumoralism regarding skin tone.

In the chorus' mouth, lineal descent is part of larger inchoate discourse on blackness that gives the reader a glimpse into what racialization in progress looks like. For instance, the last stanza of the chorus' *stasimon*, adopting the Ethiopians' viewpoint in a typically baroque perspectival shift, posits an equality between black and white people that resonates with other French plays informed by Montaignian cultural relativism such as *Les Portugaiz Infortunez* (which was published in 1608 by the same editor who published Genetay's play a year later).[28] At the same time, the idea that Andromeda was black "although" she had a gorgeous

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Werner Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). While maternal imprinting remained indeed important in the medical world, early modern theater reveals that skepticism on the matter was already spreading in the first half of the seventeenth century.

26. Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 120.

27. "At nigredo illa sola cuticulam inficit, ut nuper Aethiope ad anatomen dissecto vidimus: subjecta cutis nive candidior apparebat." Jean Riolan Fils, *Anthropographia* (Paris: Apud Hadrianum Perier, 1618), 139.

28. Nicolas Chrétien des Croix, *Les Portugaiz Infortunez* (Rouen: Théodore Reinsart, 1608). For an introduction to the Montaignian influence on the play, see the introduction to the play in Christian Biet, *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants en France, XVIe–XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Robert Laffont, Collection Bouquins, 2006).

body mobilizes the motif of the queen of Sheba, "black but comely" in the *Song of Songs*, and the long-standing ingrained esthetic prejudice against dark skin that it betrays. Similarly, while the last stanza posits a shared black origin for all human beings (inverting the common idea that the first Man was white), the image of the black worm turning into a white butterfly by leaving its cocoon behind is highly ambiguous. Indeed, on the one hand, it could easily evoke the silkworm industry and thus depict black-skinned Africans as skilled producers of very desirable goods and black skin itself as desirable in virtue of the silk / skin comparison (Henri IV, present in the audience, had enthusiastically introduced sericiculture into the country roughly a decade earlier, before James I did the same in England). But at the same time, the image suggests that blackness, associated with the earthiness and materiality of the worm, is but a stage on the way to a greater form of perfection that is whiteness, associated with the spirituality that the butterfly traditionally represents. In short, the chorus emits an inchoate racial discourse as it places black skin at the intersection of scientific, ethical, esthetic, spiritual, and economic discourses informed by various hierarchies. That the playwright should have put this inchoate racial discourse into the mouth of the chorus—the character in charge of voicing the doubtful, conflicted, and light-searching worldview of the commons in late Renaissance French dramaturgy—only gives it more cultural weight.

III. BLACK ANDROMEDAS, WHITE ANDROMEDAS, AND VERISIMILITUDE

In Genetay's play, lineal descent informs the chorus' account of Chariclea's whiteness, but it also colors their confident assertion that Andromeda, Chariclea's ancestor, was actually black. This assertion is not an isolated case in early seventeenth century French culture. For instance, in 1598, Jean Boissin de Gallardon had a black Andromeda in his *La Perséenne ou la délivrance d'Andromède*. When he first perceives Andromeda tied to the rock, Perseus wonders:

Serait-ce une statue ou quelque prisonnière?	Is it a statue or a prisoner?
Ce n'est rien de ces deux, ains un demon noircy . . .	Neither! 'Tis a blackened devil . . .
Cette esclave-cy me met en tel servage,	But this slave enslaves me so
Que mesme je ne puis ébranler mon pennage	That I can't even shake my feathers
Contre le naturel des Ethiopiens . . .	At the nature of Ethiopians . . .
Contemplant seulement ses cheveux frisotez,	I just take a look at her frizzy hair,
Le Paphien me rend jusqu'auz extremitez.	And Eros subjugates me entirely.[29]

29. Jean Boissin de Gallardon, *La Perséene, ou la délivrance d'Andromède* (Lyon: Simon Rigaud, 1618), 20–21. There is no lineated edition of this play at this time.

That Gallardon's should be, to my knowledge, the only play in which Andromeda was meant to be black-skinned makes the lack of information surrounding the performance history of this play particularly frustrating. Elizabeth McGrath's still authoritative article on the subject of black Andromedas in early modern continental visual culture attributes a fringe corpus of visual productions to the influence of Ovid: like the painters she mentions, Boissin de Gallardon found the argument of his play in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as he writes in the dedicatory letter. McGrath notes that the first visual reference to the attractiveness of black people in relation to the case of Andromeda appears in 1608 (one year before Genetay's play) in a book of emblems, *Emblemata amorum*, by Otto Vaenius, Rubens's teacher. The first representation of a black Andromeda, however, was an engraving by the Flemish Abraham Van Diepenbeeck published in the *Tableaux du Temple des Muses* (fig. 1). Although it was only published in 1655, McGrath mentions that Diepenbeeck created it during his stay in Paris in the early 1630s—black Andromedas would radiate from France to Germany and England later in the century.[30] The appearance of black Andromedas in France in the early 1630s can be productively understood in conversation with early seventeenth-century theatrical culture. Taken together, Genetay's Chariclea play, Boissin de Gallardon's black Andromeda play, and Diepenbeeck's black Andromeda engraving point toward the same trend across early modern French Heliodoric representations: the tendency to align Chariclea-Andromeda's hue with her parents' hue, laying the emphasis on lineal descent.

The emergence of black Andromedas on stage and in visual culture constitutes a victory of lineal descent-oriented thinking over the imperatives of the dominant esthetic discourse, in which female beauty and blackness were hardly compatible. But esthetic imperatives often could not be ignored: in those cases, Andromeda was represented as white—just like her Ethiopian parents. This was the case in all subsequent theatrical stagings of Andromeda in seventeenth-century France, where Ethiopian characters were performed as white. For instance, the anonymous *intermède, Andromède delivrée*, 1624, contains no allusion to skin tone whatsoever, using white as setting by default period. Similarly, the engraving with which Lully and Quinault's opera *Persée et Andromède* was published in 1682 depicts Ethiopians as white. Those productions seem to have followed the rationale articulated by Corneille in the *Argument* of his 1651 *Andromède*:

> I will just tell you that Cepheus's kingdom must have been by the sea, his capital too, and his people must have been white, although they were Ethiopians. Of course, the blackest Moors too have their own kind of beauty, but it is not verisimilar that Perseus, who was a Greek born in Argos,

30. McGrath, "The Black Andromeda," 13.

Figure 1. Bernard Picart, “Perseus en Andromeda,” Amsterdam, 1731. After Abraham van Diepenbeeck. Etching and engraving. 249 × 175 mm. Rijksmuseum.

should have fallen in love with Andromeda if she had been of that hue. All painters agree with me, and I can invoke the authority of the great Heliodorus, who bases his divine Chariclea's whiteness solely upon a painting of Andromeda.[31]

Clearly, not all painters agreed with Corneille, but more importantly, Corneille enlists hereditary thinking in the service of "verisimilitude," the keyword of French neoclassical dramaturgy. The same verisimilitude that requires whitening Andromeda requires whitening all Ethiopians. While Corneille justifies Andromeda's racial metamorphosis on esthetic and erotic grounds, he does not justify the metamorphosis of the Ethiopian people, for the premise that Andromeda must have the same skin tone as her parents and vice versa is self-evident to him. In other words, if interracial desire and miscegenation were worthy of discussion in 1650, the transmission of blackness through lineal descent was not any longer. Ultimately, on stage, both early seventeenth-century black Andromedas and later seventeenth century white Andromedas participate in the same continuous foregrounding of lineal descent in French thinking about blackness across the period.

Naturally, the early modern period did not invent the notion of black lineal descent. In Heliodorus's own text, Persina's certainty (strong enough for her to expose a child she loves) that "thy colour woulde procure me to be accused of Adulterie, and that none woulde beléeue me, when I tolde them the cause" suggests that in Heliodorus's own world, maternal imprinting was far from being the most common way of understanding the birth of transracial children: interracial adultery was.[32] The Latin poets Martial and Juvenal make allusions to the mulatto children born to unfaithful white wives (or aborted before their skin could expose their mothers' fault), which denotes a keen awareness of the mechanisms of lineal descent with respect to skin tone in the first century AD.[33] Plutarch and Pliny use another strand of lineal descent to explain the

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31. "Je me contenterai de vous dire qu'il fallait que Cephée regnât en quelque pays maritime, que sa ville capitale fût au bord de la mer, et que ses peuples fussent blanc, quoiqu'Ethiopiens. Ce n'est pas que les Mores les plus noirs n'ayent leur beauté à leur mode, mais il n'est pas vraysemblable que Persée qui était Grec et né dans Argos fut devenu amoureux d'Andromède si elle eût été de leur teint. J'ai pour moi le consentement de tous les peintres, et surtout l'autorité du grand Héliodore qui ne fonde la blancheur de sa divine Chariclée que sur un tableau d'Andromède." Pierre Corneille, *Andromède, Tragédie représentée avec les machines sur le théâtre royal de Bourbon* (Rouen: Laurens Maurry, 1651), argument.

32. Thomas Underdowne, *An AEthiopian Historie Written in Greeke by Heliodorus: Very Wittie and Pleasaunt* (London: Henrie Wykes, for Fraunces Goldocke, 1569), 53.

33. Sollors, *Neither Black nor White*, 50. See also Frank M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 194.

birth of transracial children: they invoke black atavism to explain why people such as the famous boxer Nicaeus can have dark skin while both their parents are white—there is always an Ethiopian grandfather.[34] And even then, Aristotle had already theorized atavism in *De Generatione Animalium*, book 1.18 almost five centuries earlier. In the thirteenth century AD, Wolfram von Eschenbach explores the mechanisms of black lineal descent when he imagines the character of Feirefiz Angevin, Perzival's spotted half-brother, whose father Gamuret is white and whose mother is the black African Queen Belakané: Feirefiz "was dark and light / For in him had God wrought a wonder, at one while he was black and white / . . . as a magpie the hue of his face and hair" (bk. 1, 901–6).[35] Those precedents clearly show that the rivalry between lineal descent and maternal imprinting that we find in Genetay's *Ethiopique* did not oppose a modern interpretive paradigm to an ancient one: both had existed since antiquity, had been mobilized, and would still be mobilized later on, well into the eighteenth century, in different contexts, for different purposes, and with different effects. The emphasis that Heliodoric and Andromeda-themed cultural productions in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries specifically lay on black lineal descent must be understood in the particular context of an incipient racialization of blackness: the emergence of the race-as-skin-tone paradigm within the racial matrix.

IV. TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCE: THE *AETHIOPICA* ACROSS THE CHANNEL

This emphasis on lineal descent influenced English theater a couple of decades after Genetay's *L'Ethiopique* was performed. Indeed, in the 1630s, we can observe a distinct surge of Heliodoric stage adaptations in English theater, with plays such as Richard Brome's *The English Moore* (1637), John Gough's *The Strange Discovery* (1640), and the unpublished Caroline play *The White Ethiopian* (1625–40). Naturally, the popularity of the *Aethiopica* in England was not new: Heliodorus's romance had started permeating English literature as early as 1567, with James Sandford's *Amorous and Tragicall Tales of Plutarch. Whereunto is annexed the Hystorie of Cariclea and Theagenes* (London: H. Bynneman, for Leonard Maylard, 1567), based on Jacques Amyot's work, and with Thomas Underdowne's translation (London: Henrie Wykes, for Fraunces Goldocke, 1569), based on the Polish

34. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 194.

35. Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival, a Knightly Epic, Vol. I*, trans. Jessie L. Weston (New York: G. E. Stechert and Co., 1912), 31. For a sharp analysis of Feirefiz as a mixed race character, see Thomas Hahn, "The Difference the Middle Ages Makes: Color and Race before the Modern World," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 1–37, 16–17.

Jesuit Stanislaw Warschewiczki's Latin translation from the Greek *Heliodori Aethiopicae historiae libri decem* (Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1552).[36] Most famously, the *Aethiopica* informed Sidney's *Arcadia* and Robert Greene's *Pandosto*.[37] In 1620, in *The Honor of the Married Clergy*, Joseph Hall exclaimed, "What schole-boy, what apprentice knows not Heliodorus?"[38] The dissemination of Heliodoric motifs across theatrical productions also popularized the *Aethiopica:* in 1582, antitheatricalist Stephen Gosson claimed that "the Aethiopian Storie" had been "thoroughly ransackt to furnish the playe houses in London."[39]

Nevertheless, the previously mentioned three Heliodoric plays from the 1630s stand out as full-fledged stage adaptations of Heliodorus's romance, the first to be found in the extant corpus since the lost plays *Theagenes and Cariclea* (1572) and *The Queen of Ethiopia* (1578), both performed (together with *Perseus and Andromeda*, 1574) shortly after the publication of Sandfold and Underdowne's translations. More importantly, those plays stand out in their distinct engagement with the racial component of the *Aethiopica*, which most previous literary appropriations of Heliodoric materials ignored. The 1630s English stage adaptations of the *Aethiopica*, I argue, manifest a new interest in skin tone and lineal descent, which betrays a French influence. This Heliodoric vogue in 1630s London can be productively understood in relation to the reflection on black lineal descent that had developed in French theater for the last thirty years and was spreading then through continental visual culture and theatrical culture.[40]

While, given the lack of biographical data, it is impossible to know at this time whether playwrights Richard Brome or John Gough had any personal familiarity with French stage adaptations of the *Aethiopica*, a larger vortex of interest in Heliodorus seems to have opened with the arrival of Henrietta Maria on the English throne in 1625. Wolfgang Stechow has shown that the spread of Heliodoric themes from France throughout Northern Europe (Holland, Denmark, Sweden) in visual culture developed "along lines of personal dynastic connexions," and I argue that this mode of influence seems to have operated in performance culture

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36. Gerald Sandy has shown that the pairing of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* and Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* on Sandford's part is informed by his familiarity with Amyot's two most famous translations. Gerald Sandy, "The Heritage of the Ancient Greek Novel in France and Britain," in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling (New York: Brill, 1996), 735–74.

37. On the tremendous influence of the *Aethiopica* over the development of English narrative plotting techniques, see Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

38. Joseph Hall, *The Honor of the Married Clergy* (London: W. S. for H. Fether, 1620), 175.

39. Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Fiue Actions* (London: Thomas Gosson, 1582), D6v.

40. See the publication in Spain of Juan Pérez de Montalbán's *Teágenes y Clariquea* (Madrid: Antonio Vazquez, 1635), and in the Low Countries of Matthys van de Velden's *Calasiris' Sterfdagh* (Amsterdam, 1631).

as well.[41] Henrietta Maria was the youngest child of Marie de Medici, Henri IV's spouse, the queen who had single-handedly launched the craze for the *Aethiopica* in French culture by commissioning a cycle of fifteen paintings for her chamber in the royal palace at Fontainebleau, completed by Ambroise Dubois in 1610.[42] As a matter of fact, Marie de Medici was probably indirectly responsible for Octave-César de Genetay's own *L'Ethiopique*. Indeed, if, as the playtext suggests, Henri IV was among the audience members at the La Flèche celebrations, then the queen consort probably was too—pregnant with Henrietta Maria by a few months—and La Varenne was close enough to the royal family to know of the queen's fondness for the *Aethiopica*. It is likely that, by the time La Varenne started planning the celebrations for his daughter Catherine's wedding, the queen had already commissioned the Fontainebleau painting cycle, and that the king's protégé knew about it. While Marie de Medici's role in popularizing Heliodoric motifs in visual culture has received sustained scholarly attention, Genetay's play brings to the fore the hitherto neglected role that the queen played in extending the influence of the *Aethiopica* to the French early modern stage. Genetay and his patron, La Varenne, probably seized upon the *Aethiopica* to please the tastes of the foreign French queen consort in the 1600s, and so did English playwrights for the foreign English queen consort a couple of decades later.

Henrietta Maria's role as assertive sponsor for French culture in London and her love for theatrical productions both as spectator and performer are well-known: she has been described in this respect as an "exigent mediatrix of her native French culture."[43] I read the multiplication of Heliodoric plays on English stages in the 1630s as the result of the cultural climate created by Henrietta Maria's well-publicized tastes. For instance, Arthur Wilson's tragicomedy *The Inconstant Lady* (1630) is an adaptation of the *Aethiopica* set in France, in which Cloris, the modern Chariclea, is the long-lost daughter of the Duke of Burgundy.[44] Emplotting the assimilation of the *Aethiopica* into early modern French culture, the play was premiered at Hampton court by the King's Men in September 1630, catering to the tastes of a French-born queen at the English court. Melinda Gough notes that, in the *Chloridia* ballet that Henrietta Maria danced

41. Wolfgang Stechow, "Heliodorus' Aethiopica in Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16, no. 1/2 (1953): 144–52, 147.

42. On the royal French cycle paintings commissioned by Marie de Medici, see Spicer, "Heliodorus's *An Aethiopian Story*," 311.

43. John Peacock, "The French Element in Inigo Jones's Masque Designs," in *The Court Masque*, ed. David Lindley (Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1984), 149–68, 155. See also Karen Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Henrietta Maria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

44. Arthur Wilson, *The Inconstant Lady* (Folger Shakespeare Library Ms. J.b.1).

in February 1631 when she was pregnant with Mary, she played the part of Chloris, the queen of flowers. One wonders whether the choice of "Chloris" as name for the queen's character just a few months after the premiere of Wilson's *Inconstant Lady*, which assimilates "Cloris" to Chariclea, was coincidental—especially given the association of Chloris with chlorosis, greensickness, which caused maids to turn particularly pale-skinned. Henrietta Maria's fondness for the *Aethiopica* caused William Lisle to dedicate his 1631 English verse rendition *The Faire Ethiopian*, to her:

> O branch of flowring golde the best that growes
> On face of earth, consorted now with Rose
> Both white and red; Sith Helicon is thine,
> Me grant a sip of liquor Castaline;
> That I in verse this Romant so endight
> As may thee and thy daintie buds delight:
> Thy rare endowments ever will I sing;
> For Queen is patroness where Patron King.[45]

In the metaphorical context of emblematic royal flowers (the French lily and the English rose) the "buds" to which Lisle is alluding are the royal children Charles II and Mary, who were both born by 1631. Using botanical images, Lisle is framing his rendition of the *Aethiopica*—a story that bridges the intergenerational gap created by visible difference with the invisible bond of blood and lineage—with a comment on the French-born queen's organic bond with her English children. If Henrietta Maria is the Helicon-dwelling Muse of Lisle's *Faire Ethiopian*, it is of course because she is a powerful patroness familiar with Heliodorus's novel—but also perhaps, because, in light of the *Aethiopica*'s plot and association with the French court and with Henrietta Maria's parents (especially her mother, with whom, it has been noted, Henrietta Maria had a particularly strong connection), Lisle perceived this text as a useful vehicle for the foreign-born queen to negotiate issues of displacement, translation, marriage, motherhood, and intergenerational bonding across obvious difference.[46]

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45. William Lisle, *The Faire Ethiopian* (London: John Haviland, 1631), 2.

46. Specialists have commented on the particularly strong mother-daughter connection that transpires in several ballets danced by Henrietta Maria, whether it be the 1624 *Ballet de la reine*, in which Henrietta Maria's verse are addressed to Marie de Medici and reassert lineage (Melinda J. Gough, "A Newly Discovered Performance by Henrietta Maria," *HLQ* 65 [2002]: 435–37); the 1631 *Chloridia*, which thematizes Marie de Medici's delicate position at the French court (Karen Britland, "All Emulation Cease, and Jars's: Political Possibilities in Chloridia, Queen Henrietta Maria's Masque of 1631," *Ben Jonson Journal* 9 [2002]: 87–108); or *Salmacida Spolia* (1640), which

V. HELIODORUS IN ENGLAND: LINEAL DESCENT, ENGLISH MOORS, AND STRANGE DISCOVERIES

No more than the *Aethiopica* itself was the notion of black lineal descent, so present in continental cultures, a novelty in 1630s England. Black lineal descent comes to the fore in English conversations on the origin of black skin, both in cases of regular births and in cases of transracial births. In cases of regular births, lineal descent is usually invoked at the expense of climate theory, or geohumoralism, which comes under criticism in texts by English travel writers, such as George Best (1578; reprinted in Hakluyt, 1600) and Samuel Purchas (1613).[47] In cases of transracial births, lineal descent is invoked at the expense of maternal imprinting, in treatises such as *The Spanish Mandevile of Miracles* (translated in 1600), in which Antonio de Torquemado argues that maternal imprinting might explain the birth of hairy monsters but not the birth of transracial children.[48] Or *Mikrocosmographia* (1615), in which physician Helkiah Crooke prudently argues that, most of the time, children get their skin tone through lineal descent (which includes cases of atavism), except in the very few cases when the mother's "fancy," or desire (usually for a "fig or a mulberry," never for a black man) was so strong that imagination prevailed, setting "a new seale upon the tender and soft nature of the child."[49] A brief look at treatises by Best, Purchas, Torquemado, and Crooke, among others, indicates that, in most cases, in order to explain blackness, one could invoke either the power of descent, the power of imagination (maternal imprinting), or the power of the earth (geohumoralism).

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compliments Marie de Medici in her own presence (Karen Britland, "An Under-stated Mother-In-Law: Marie de Médicis and the Last Caroline Court Masque," in *Women and Culture at the Courts of the Stuart Queens* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 204–23. Jessica Bell also finds such a mother-daughter connection in visual culture, focusing on Marie de Medici's influence over Henrietta Maria's use of Marian imagery. Jessica Bell, "The Three Marys: The Virgin, Marie de Médicis, and Henrietta Maria," in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics, and Patronage,* ed. Erin Griffey (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 89–114.

47. See Lynda Boose, "The Getting of a Lawful Race," in *Women, Race, and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (New York: Routledge, 1994), 35–54. Mary Floyd-Wilson insists that George Best does not fully break away from the tradition of geohumoralism but does not deny that an epistemological shift toward hereditary thinking was slowly happening. See Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

48. "This was of another sorte, Nature making as it were a iumpe from the Grandfather to the Nephewe, for his Mother vvas begotten by an Ethiopian in aduoutry, which Nature couering in her byrth being white, discouered in the byrth of her sonne beeing black." Antonio de Torquemado, *The Spanish Mandeuile of Miracles: Or The garden of Curious Flowers Wherin Are Handled Sundry Points of Humanity, Philosophy, Diuinitie, and Geography, Beautified with many Strange and Pleasant Histories* (London: James Roberts for Edmund Matts, 1600), 10.

49. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia a Description of the Body of Man* (London: William Jaggard, 1615), 311.

At the turn of the century, English playwrights seize upon the undecided contest between those three powers. Ben Jonson, in the *Masque of Blackness* (1605), tries to reconcile lineal descent and geohumoralism before he weighs in favor of the latter. Indeed, "a river in Æthiopia, famous by the name of Niger; of which the people were called Nigritæ, now Negroes; and are the blackest nation of the world" (16–19) is the father of Ethiopian nymphs both allegorically (the river makes human life and prosperity possible in that region) and literally, for he is represented as human, "in form and color of an Æthiop; his hair and rare beard curled" (49–50), like "the masquers, which were twelve nymphs, negroes, and the daughters of Niger" (54–55).[50] Blackface ties Niger with his daughters visually: in the spectators' perception, blackface can suggest simultaneously that Niger passed on his blackness on to his daughters through lineal descent, and that the blackness of Ethiopians comes from their natural environment. In that sense, the blackfaced allegorical figure of Niger merges the notions of black lineal descent and geohumoralism—but not for long. The whitening of Niger's daughters effected in-between the *Masque of Blacknesse* and the *Masque of Beauty* uses the language of geohumoralism: the black daughters will be whitened upon reaching Britannia, which is "Ruled by a sun, that to this height doth grace it: / Whose beams shine day and night, and are of force / To blanch an Æthiop, and revive a corse" (253–55). The plot eventually separates lineal descent from geohumoralism, giving precedence to the latter over the former.

By contrast, black lineal descent is favored over geohumoralism in *Titus Andronicus*, for the child of Aaron the Blackamoor was born "blacke . . . among the faire fast breeders of our clime" (4.2.68), in a region that should only produce white children in virtue of geohumoralism.[51] Moreover, Aaron, who cannot be accused of lacking either intelligence of pragmatism, does not even consider invoking maternal imprinting to explain the birth of the child he has with the Gothic queen Tamora, for "where the bull and Cow are both milke white, / They neuer doe beget a coleblacke Calfe" (5.1.31–32). Aaron knows full well that, in Rome—and by analogy, in Shakespeare's England—maternal imprinting is unlikely to prove a convincing explanation: instead, "thy hue bewray whose brat thou art" (5.1.28). By omission, Aaron discards the notion of maternal imprinting—the force of imagination—as clearly as geohumoralism in favor of black lineal descent.

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50. Ben Jonson, *The Masques of Blackness and of Beauty*, in *The Sad Shepherd, The Fall of Mortimer, Masques and Entertainments*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson, Vol. 7 of *Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), 161–202.

51. William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Eugene M. Waith, in *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

In short, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, English theater was already permeated with Heliodoric motifs and familiar with the idea of black lineal descent, which informed many conversations on the origin of blackness. The late 1630s constitute a distinct moment when those two features of English theatrical culture, Heliodoric motifs and black lineal descent, suddenly come together in full-blown might under French influence.

Focusing on John Gough's *The Strange Discovery* (1640) and the unpublished Caroline play *The White Ethiopian* (1625–40), Sujata Iyengar's argues that early modern English writers reworking the *Aethiopica* for the stage found "the blackness of the royal Ethiopian family to be problematic" and tend to "retroactively blanch Chariclea's parents" in order to "stabilize Chariclea's sex and race through her heredity rather than through her actions."[52] For instance, she notes that in *The Strange Discovery*, stage directions are used to make Chariclea's mother blush, which was considered impossible for a black person at the time. When, during the trial, Persina peruses the letter she herself had written to disclose the baby's identity, "she knowes it and is amazed," causing King Hydaspes to ask: "What meaneth this Persina, that thy blood / Thus comes and goes, and that thy countenance / Weares such an alteration?"[53] At this moment, Gough chromatically connects Persina to her daughter, who, when she first met Theagenes, "smiled a little and blush'd and then became pale againe."[54] Later on during the trial and recognition scene, a pun is used to wash Chariclea's father white at the symbolical level: Hydaspes states that "you strive to wash me white an Aethiopian / In hindering this sacrifice" just a few minutes before he renounces sacrificing his daughter.[55] This whitening of Chariclea's black parents tends to align them chromatically with their daughter, which is reminiscent of the ongoing realignment of Ethiopian parents' hue on Andromeda's white skin tone in contemporary French theater.

But John Gough's dramatization of the *Aethiopica* also invokes geohumoralism, when Nebulo declares, upon learning of his master Caricles's resolve to go to Ethiopia in order to find his adoptive daughter who has eloped with Theagenes: "To Aethiopia, what strange land is that / (I marvell) oh, oh now I doe remember / Sysimethres was borne there as he said; / We shall be blacke as divels if we goe there!"[56] Nebulo belongs to the tradition of the Fool: the audience cannot take what he says seriously—except when they can, for the fool often

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52. Iyengar, *Shades of Difference*, 20.

53. John Gough, *The Strange Discovery, a Tragicomedy* (London: Edward Griffin for William Leake, 1640). There is no lineated edition of this play at this time.

54. Ibid., Ev.

55. Ibid., M2v.

56. Ibid., K4.

speaks popular wisdom. Finally, *The Strange Discovery* invokes maternal imprinting as the explanation for Chariclea's birth, remaining faithful to Heliodorus's plot in that respect. As late as 1640, Gough's play strives to balance the power of lineal descent (or ascent), the power of imagination, and the power of the earth in order to account for Chariclea's and her parents' skin tone.

Although it has generally received very little, if any, recognition as a Heliodoric play, the most radical English rewriting of the *Aethiopica* in favor of black lineal descent over any other interpretive paradigm is Richard Brome's 1637 city comedy *The English Moore, or the Mock-Marriage*, which engages with both the *Masque of Blacknesse* and the *Aethiopica* on a satirical mode. The play was performed at Salisbury Court theater by Queen Henrietta's Men in 1637 and published some 20 years later in the *Five New Plays* collection. Surely, that this stage adaptation of the *Aethiopica* should have been performed by the acting company directly sponsored by the French-born queen consort is no surprise. The play focuses on smart Millicent's attempts at getting a divorce from her old Jewish usurer of a husband, Quicksands, and on the latter's attempts at preventing his young beautiful wife from cuckolding him. To that effect, Quicksands disguises Millicent as a Blackamoor maid, Catelina, assuming, wrongly so, that no Englishman could possibly be drawn to a black woman. The pretense lasts for a month, during which the young lads who have publicized their intention to cuckold the old usurer come to believe that Millicent is dead. When, a month later, Quicksands stages a masque in his house and casts his wife in the main part in order to celebrate his triumph over his enemies, he chooses a plot based on the *Aethiopica*.

Quicksands is a good reader of the *Aethiopica*: to orchestrate his revenge in theatrical form, he chooses an anti-adultery plot, a story that is set in motion and sustained over hundreds of pages by the fear of women's unfaithfulness only to finally assuage that fear—a choice informed by wishful thinking.[57] Brome's play is similarly set in motion by Quicksands's fear of becoming a cuckold, a fear whose threatening implications in a patriarchal order are made clear by Millicent herself, when she sings a bawdy song and indirectly threatens Quicksands to give him bastard children. Yet disappointment ensues for, ironically, Quicksands is doubly cuckolded during the masque performance. First because Millicent, having traded places with her maid Phillis, escapes Quicksands's house and joins the gallant young man to whom she was engaged. Second, because Phillis herself, unrecognizable in blackface, has sexual intercourse with Nathaniel Banelass, a dissolute "wencher" who fetishizes the blackness of Quicksands's servant.

57. Wendy Doniger notes that maternal imprinting fulfills "men's desperate needs for some sort of assurance of paternity," serving "the agenda of male insecurity" in *Black and White Babies*, 18.

Finally, as the bachelors crash his masque and produce Quicksands's illegitimate son on stage, Timsy, whose existence was kept secret in Norfolk so far, Quicksands is exposed as already having a bastard.

To a certain extent, Quicksands brings this disappointment upon himself, by proving also a bad reader of the *Aethiopica*. Indeed, to celebrate his marriage to a Christian woman, the Jew chooses an antimiscegenation tale, an ancient story that first denies the fact that Chariclea's real father might have been white, second, rejects the possibility of a dénouement with a black-white marriage (after the recognition scene, Chariclea refuses to marry the Ethiopian prince that king Hydaspes had chosen for her in favor of the white Theagenes), and third, dispels any fear of misalliance by ensuring that Theagenes's origins are noble enough for his blood to match Chariclea's blood (he descends from Achilles). Both within the race-as-blood paradigm and the race-as-skin-tone paradigm, the *Aethiopica* forecloses possibilities for mixed breeding. By having Millicent elope with the well-named Christian Theophilus, and Phillis seduce Banelass, Brome's play replicates the original antimiscegenation policy of Heliodorus's romance.

Brome's play is saturated with motifs of miscegenation, which it construes as a cause of degeneration for the English nation. The comic servant Buzzard, exemplifies miscegenation within the blood-as-race paradigm as he claims, in drunken prose, an ancient and noble ancestry in order to assert his superiority over his much-hated Jewish master: "Why then, all friends, I am a gentleman, though spoild I'che breeding. The Buzzard are all gentlemen. We came in with the Conqueror. Our name (as the French has it) is Beau Desert, which signifies—Friends, what does it signifie?" (3.1.508).[58] Buzzard's blood, "spoild I'che breeding," that is, through mixing with people of lower extraction, has degenerated to produce a clownish character who literally does not know the meaning of his own name and origins any longer. Within the race-as-religion paradigm too, miscegenation is present. Quicksands's bastard son Timsy, a half-Jewish half-Christian child, is an idiot, a simple boy whose nickname, "the changeling," evokes ideas of degeneration. One of the lads comments: "Note the punishments / that haunt the miscreant for his black misdeeds; / That his base offspring proves a natural idiot." (3.3.558–60). That Timsy should be an idiot because of his mixed heritage certainly raises the stakes of Quicksands's interracial marriage with Millicent. Finally, within the race-as-skin tone paradigm, Banelass's and Catelina-Phillis's union conjures up the specter of miscegenation, like most bedtrick

58. Richard Brome *The English Moor, or the Mock-Marriage, in Five New Playes* (London: J. T. for A. Crook and H. Brome, 1658). Citations follow the lineation established in Richard Brome, *The English Moor, or the Mock-Marriage*, Modern Text, ed. Matthew Steggle, in *Richard Brome Online* (http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome, accessed July 12, 2016), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

scenes using a Blackamoor, according to Virginia Mason Vaughan.[59] The connection between Jewish-Christian and black-white miscegenation is not new: those two forms of mixed breeding were already compared and found harmful to "the commonwealth" in *The Merchant of Venice*—which is probably on Brome's mind when Quicksands declares that he borrowed the "quaint device" of the Blackamoor disguise from "a Venetian merchant" (3.1.431–32).[60] A comedy must end well: the play dissolves Quicksands's unconsummated interracial marriage, and Phillis's whiteness underneath her makeup dissipates threats of black-white miscegenation, preserving the English nation from further degeneration.

This obsession with mixed breeding and degeneration is encapsulated in the plot of the masque-within-the-play, which reworks the *Aethiopica* and embeds the key concerns of Brome's play: emphasizing black lineal descent and rejecting miscegenation. The story goes thus:

> The Queen of Ethiop dreamt upon a night
> Her black womb should bring forth a virgin white . . .
> She told her king; he told thereof his Peeres.
> Till this white dream fil'd their blackheads with fear,
> For tis no better then a Prodegy
> To have white children in a black countrey.
> So 'twas decreed that if the child prov'd white,
> It should be made away. O cruel spight!
> The Queen cry'd out, and was delivered
> Of child black as you see . . .
>
> (4.5.783–90)

The masque's inductor, who "made the speeches last year / Before my Lord Marquess of Fleet Conduit" (4.5.789), that is, for the Lord Mayor's pageant—quickly frustrates the expectations of an audience familiar with the plot of the *Aethiopica*. Indeed, contrary to Chariclea, the Queen of Ethiop's child is born black: maternal impression fails to produce any transracial child in *The English Moore*—black lineal descent is stronger than imagination, inescapable. Brome's comedy dismantles the transracial fairy tale of the *Aethiopica* to align the skin tone of the daughter on her parent's, in a movement symmetrically opposite to John Gough's in *The Strange Discovery*.

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59. Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 75.

60. When Lancelot reproaches Lorenzo with marrying a Jew's daughter, Lorenzo responds: "I shall answer that better to the commonwealth than you can the getting up of a negro's belly: the Moor is with child by you, Launcelot" (3.5.34–36). William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Jay L. Halio, in *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 185.

The masque-within-the-play offers a solution to the problem of Chariclea's blackness and ironically subverts the plot of the *Masque of Blackness* as it does so:

> Yet Wizards sed
> That if this damsel liv'd married to be
> To a white man, she should be white as he . . .
> The careful Queen, conclusion for to try,
> Sent her to merry England charily
> (The fairest Nation man yet ever saw)
> To take a husband; such as I shall draw . . .
> (4.5.790–92)

Chariclea will thus turn white . . . unless the English husband she chooses is as black as her. The inductor, according to his patron's script, chooses Quicksands as fit husband for the black Chariclea, turning him into a mock version of James I, the sun who could whiten Niger's daughters. At that moment, an embedded spectator, Vincent, glosses the action thus: "The moral is, If Quicksands marry her, / Her face shall be white as his conscience" (4.5.791). But what is the color of Quicksands's conscience according to Vincent? Quicksands is a "Babilonian tyrant," a completely immoral Jewish usurer: his name is "Quicksands Mandevil," a name that speaks to the unethical nature of his business practices, associates him with the devil, and even with the foreign parts of the world described in the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*: Egypt, Persia, Turkey, India—and Ethiopia. Quicksands has committed "black misdeeds," and Banelass even thinks that he should be hoisted "into the high commission for his blacker arts" (1.2.56)—necromancy or witchcraft. The tale of racial transformation lifted from *The Masque of Blacknesse* is doomed from the start, just like the tale of maternal imprinting lifted from the *Aethiopica*, for the audience would imagine Quicksands's soul as black. His interactions with Millicent-Phillis-Catelina make visible his invisible moral blackness: if Chariclea's hue is the mirror of Quicksands's conscience, the predictable absence of transformation upon marriage will expose Quicksands's moral blackness. This prophecy within the masque echoes the scene when the jealous Quicksands literally paints his wife's face black. In both cases, Quicksands Mandevil's moral blackness produces the woman's physical blackness, tightly weaving together the incipient paradigm of blackness and the older paradigm of Jewishness within the racial matrix.[61]

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61. On Jewishness as a racial paradigm in medieval England, see Geraldine Heng, "The Invention of Race," and "England's Dead Boys: Telling Tales of Christian-Jewish Relations Before and After the First European Expulsion of the Jews," *MLN* 127 (Suppl., 2012): S54–S85.

The paradox at the core of *The English Moor* is that, while the corrosive masque-within-the-play debunks the idea of physiological blackness as fluid in favor of the threatening notion of strict lineal descent, the play itself foregrounds technologies of racial cross-dressing that necessarily construe skin tone as a portable property circulating fluidly, from actor to actor, from Millicent to Phillis. Physiological, cosmetic, and moral blackness are analogical (and Brome certainly plays on this analogical framework), but they are not identical; the play's emphasis on blackface does not void its position on real blackness. There is a double tension then between the discourse on blackness, lineal descent, and miscegenation developed in the play, and the means of production of blackness used on stage. First, blackface, as a cross-racial performance technique, represents what Ian Smith calls "denigration," the anxiety-provoking vision of a white body turning black, and, maybe worse, the pleasurability of this crossing the color line for both actors and spectators.[62] Second, blackface may rely on a few props—makeup, wooly wigs, gloves, and tights—but most importantly, like any stage convention, it relies on the spectators' imagination: it is the audience's ability to read the grimed white performers' bodies as black that produces blackness. By dismissing the power of imagination (through maternal imprinting) in his masque-within-the-play, Brome puts pressure on the foundations of cross-racial performance.

VI. CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING IMAGINATION

Its plot may have focused on a relatively small and rare object (transracial births), yet, in early seventeenth-century theater, Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* became a vehicle for thinking through the larger and urgent issue of heredity, or lineal descent, in relation to black skin primarily, but also in relation to other older racial paradigms, such as race as blood (nobility) or race as religion (Jewishness), to which the emergent paradigm of race as skin tone was analogically related. Because they reveal so clearly the interconnectedness of the various paradigms in the early modern racial matrix (both dominant and emergent), the transnational circulation and reconfiguration of those racial paradigms and tropes across Europe (especially across the Channel), and the pull of the idea of lineal descent in the context of the ongoing racialization of blackness, Heliodoric plays offer a special window into early modern racial thinking.

Upholding the idea of lineal descent over maternal imprinting certainly had implications for the status of imagination. As previously mentioned, discarding

62. Ian Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks: Racial Cross-Dressing on the Early Modern Stage," *Renaissance Drama* 32 (2003): 33–67. On the pleasurability of blackface, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

on stage the role of imagination in the production of blackness was at odds with the practices of cross-racial performance that were in use across early modern Europe. But it had another type of implications. If severing blackness from imagination to the benefit of lineal descent was a necessary step in the turning of blackness into a racial category comparable to nobility or Judaism, it was also a step toward reifying the idea of a black race, endowing it in collective perceptions with a degree of reality and solidity that has proved hard to dissolve to this day. In a sense, the work of race scholars is to revisit over and over again that early modern moment when blackness and imagination seem to part ways for people such as Octave-César Genetay or Richard Brome, committed as we are to showing how such a severing never really took place—how blackness, whiteness, and other racial categories have always been produced by the power of imagination.