

Feelings of Sympathy: Hierarchies of Being and Belonging in Eighteenth-Century French Abolitionist Stories

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In her study of the relationship between French and English sentimental literature and the slave trade *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France*, Lynn Festa finds that French readers “turned inward” during the eighteenth century by reading sentimental novels at the very historical moment when their country was “looking outward,” building an empire and colonizing foreign lands. Festa’s theory is that encountering other cultures and peoples abroad necessitated a re-evaluation of what it meant to be French, or even human. Festa links the formation of a community to shared feelings of sympathy for an excluded object: “The sentimental community upholds a common identity, not by forging bonds directly between seemingly like individuals, but by creating a shared relationship to a common but excluded object about whom the community has feelings” (4). Obvious candidates for playing the role of “common but excluded object” during the French Enlightenment are the poor, the disenfranchised, the slave, or the woman. Feeling sympathy for an excluded object allowed the community of sympathizers to strengthen their bonds with each other.

Though some may have nonetheless unwittingly done so, abolitionist writers likely did not intend to undermine their cause by excluding the slaves who were the objects of sympathy in their literary texts from the community of French citizens. Rather, they (often) sought to prove that the slave was fully human, possessing human dignity, and therefore morally undeserving of slavery. As I argue here, the most important emotion at play in sentimental narratives written to further the abolitionist cause is not the reader’s feelings of sympathy *for* the slave, but rather the

feelings of sympathy experienced *by* the slave. Feeling sympathy for another is a hallmark of the human; animals and things do not have the imaginative capacity to feel sympathy.¹

Sympathy circulates promiscuously in slave narratives of the eighteenth century: the reader pities the fictional slave characters, while the character of the “good” or “model” master sympathizes with the brutalized slaves, and on occasion the slave sympathizes with his fellows or his master. Abolitionist writers use sentimental rhetoric in two ways to persuade their readers of their political cause: First, they create sympathetic ties between the reader and the oppressed-but-human characters through touching portrayals of the suffering characters, and perhaps thereby incite the reader to act on behalf of the cause. Second, the writers use sentimental literary tropes that elevate their subject to the level of sentimental hero, a literary figure who clearly belongs to the realm of the human. By portraying a slave as a sentimental hero, this rhetoric strongly suggests that it is wrong to enslave such a sensitive, sympathetic person.

These sentimental literary strategies can thus be narratively employed to destabilize the social hierarchies endemic to plantation life. As David Denby explains, sentimental literature and instances of subversion of the social hierarchy (like the abolitionist movement) are intricately connected because sentimental literature must reach “down the social ladder” (96) to find pitiful victims excluded from society who will move the reader.

Sentimental literature represents the discovery, and above all the popularisation and repeated celebration of the humanity of the excluded, and as such is part of the global project of Enlightenment humanism. [...] Not only that: it appears that one of the structural requirements of the process of sentimentalisation is a more or less explicit denial of the importance of social hierarchy. It is when social barriers are transgressed, when some kind of *déclassement* occurs, when a shift down the social ladder takes place, that true sentimental epiphany is provoked: it is as though the fullest statement of sentimental value—the absolute and

¹ For Enlightenment thinkers, animals are not capable of sympathy. In the longer version of this essay, I contrast the eighteenth-century stories examined here with Patrick Chamoiseau’s 1997 novel *L’Esclave vieil homme et le molosse*, in which Chamoiseau embraces a more naturalistic view, imbuing dogs with the capacity for sympathy.

unconditional humanity of every individual—were dependent upon a discursive denial of the validity of social hierarchy (96).

The textual space created by the author thus allows for a temporary erasure or even inversion of the social hierarchy and for the attribution of human qualities to these marginalized groups, while nonetheless allowing for other distinct hierarchies established around the experience of sympathy in these texts—evident in their evocation of condescending feelings such as pity. In this essay, I will compare and contrast the hierarchies of sympathy, sentimental heroes and sentimental tropes found in Jean-François de Saint-Lambert’s short story “Ziméo,” published in 1769 and Jean-Baptiste Picquenard’s novella “Adonis,” published in 1798.

The Construction of the Sentimental Hero in “Ziméo” and “Adonis”

Saint-Lambert² wrote both “Ziméo” and the impassioned essay that follows it as a critique of the institution of “cruel” slavery while simultaneously arguing for colonialism as a way of sharing the cultural richness of France. As Youmna Charara has emphasized, Saint-Lambert’s stance is ambiguous: on the one hand, his pro-monarchical tendencies lead him to support a paternalistic model of “good” slavery; yet, on the other hand, his sympathetic portrayal of the enslaved nobleman Ziméo as a sentimental hero leads him to grant this character of noble African parentage a vaguely defined freedom at the end of the story. In contrast, writing at the end of the French Revolution, Picquenard³ believes strongly in abolitionism and equality as part

² Saint-Lambert is a poet best known for his anthology *Saisons*. He also wrote lesser known political pamphlets and essays arguing that plantation slaves should not be abused, but rather should be cared for like children. He supported the French monarchy, and believed that a “good” plantation owner is like a “good” king—a paternalistic fellow who cares for the weaker beings entrusted to him.

³ Picquenard is a little-known author who wrote of the French colonies and his travels in the Americas at the end of the eighteenth century. In the introduction to “Adonis,” he writes that he emulates the work of sentimental novelist Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, whose influence permeates his stories. After the success of « Adonis, » which describes the 1791 slave revolt in Saint-Domingue, an event he witnessed on his travels, Picquenard published two more

of his revolutionary republican values. However, his representation of the slave character Adonis is also ambiguous: Adonis is sympathetic, sensitive and tender, yet he is also infantilized—requiring classic French education to become a fully adult, moral man, and destined to wait for his master to free him rather than revolting like Ziméo.

In eighteenth-century abolitionist narratives, a clear indicator of personhood is any sentimental literary trope that elevates its subject to the level of sentimental hero, a literary figure who clearly belongs to the realm of the human. By portraying a slave as a sentimental hero, this rhetoric strongly suggests that it is wrong to enslave such a sensitive, sympathetic person. In sentimental novels, three tropes (among others) commonly distinguish sentimental heroes or *sensibles* characters from other characters. These tropes—that of the *sensible* character's tears, a kind of symbolic shorthand for his capacity to be easily moved; that of the dialogic tableau of the *sensible* character moved by a scene of pathetic suffering; and that of the scene of instant recognition that occurs between two *sensibles* characters—play a key role in defining the human in sentimental literature. Interestingly, despite his pro-slavery tendencies, Saint-Lambert applies these tropes to the slave protagonist in “Ziméo.” “Adonis” is a different case: although its anti-slavery narrator specifically describes the eponymous slave character as a “héros” (166), this isn't quite true: Adonis is courageous, kind, and sensitive like a (European) sentimental hero, but unlike the sentimental hero (and unlike Ziméo, who leads a slave revolt), he is completely submissive to his master, even to the point of routinely sitting at his master's feet, or rolling around in gratitude on the floor in front of his master and his master's wife. This submissiveness, and the paucity of sentimental tropes applied to Adonis, prevent him from attaining the status of

“exotic” novels: in 1800, *Zoflora, ou la bonne négresse, anecdote coloniale* and in 1807 *Montbars l'exterminateur ou le dernier chef des flibustiers. Anecdote du Nouveau Monde*.

full-fledged sentimental hero that is attained by Ziméo: the true sentimental hero of “Adonis” is instead the sensitive slave master d’Hérouville.

Following the convention, well-established in sentimental works by Marivaux, that two *sensibles* characters can recognize each other’s sympathetic nature at first sight, the narrator of “Ziméo,” George Filmer, quickly discerns the slave Ziméo’s true *sensible* character, even though Ziméo comes to the plantation as the leader of a violent slave revolt who exhorts Wilmouth’s slaves to join his uprising. George Filmer is a man of exquisite sensibility who is horrified by the brutality of neighboring plantations and who trembles at the sight of such cruelty inspired by greed, and this quality of sensibility allows him to recognize this trait in Ziméo. Here, George describes Ziméo’s physical beauty and imposing stature:

Les statues d’Apollon et de l’Antinoüs n’ont pas des traits plus réguliers et de plus belles proportions. Je fus frappé surtout de son air de grandeur. Je n’ai jamais vu d’homme qui me parût, comme lui, né pour commander aux autres : il était encore animé de la chaleur du combat ; mais en nous abordant, ses yeux exprimaient la bienveillance et la bonté, des sentiments opposés se peignaient tour à tour sur son visage ; il était presque dans le même moment triste et gai, furieux et tendre (53).

Like other sentimental heroes, Ziméo is handsome and proportioned like a Greek statue. Not yet revealed directly, Ziméo’s noble birth is already evoked by his physical beauty, his “air de grandeur,” and his innate capacity for leadership, “né pour commander aux autres.” The description of Ziméo’s character is contradictory; Ziméo is excited by the intensity of combat, yet his eyes reveal the kind and generous nature typical of a sentimental hero. He appears almost simultaneously “triste et gai, furieux et tendre,” and his quickly changing character seems almost schizophrenic in nature.

Ensuing dialogue reveals that Ziméo’s violent anger is the result of the horrific brutality he has endured in captivity. Talking later with the narrator, he explains how slavery has

transformed him, his hatred becoming animalistic rage: « La haine y devient de la rage. Le nègre né pour aimer, quand il est forcé de haïr devient un tigre, un léopard, et je le suis devenu » (54). Ziméo explains that even though he was born with a loving nature, being forced to hate turned him into an animal, a metaphor reinforced by the words “tigre” and “léopard.” The experience of slavery creates in Ziméo a dual nature that allows him to be in one moment a sensitive nobleman, and in the next a ferocious killer seeking vengeance. The reader sees these two sides of him in the self-portrait Ziméo paints, invoking both the violence of blood and the tenderness of tears. On one hand, thinking about the family, the position of royalty, and the wealth that he has lost, he cries tenderly: “Je me vois le chef d’un peuple, je suis riche et je passe mes jours dans la douleur: je regrette ceux que j’ai perdus; je les vois des yeux de la pensée ; je les entretiens et les pleure » (54). On the other, after experiencing this vision of loss, Ziméo reacts violently : « Après avoir versé des larmes, souvent je me sens un besoin de répandre du sang, d’entendre les cris des blancs égorgés » (54). Ziméo’s character is thus revealed to be part noble *homme sensible*, part animalistic killer, transformed by the inhumane institution of slavery.

In marked contrast to Ziméo’s dramatic transformation by the institution of slavery from a man into an animal or monster, Adonis’s (perhaps pre-slavery) past is never evoked, and his character does not evolve or develop over the course of the story, but rather demonstrates consistently the same traits of tenderness, submissiveness, *naïveté*, and sensitivity. His existence in the story seems circumscribed by his relationship with his master; even in the epilogue when he is “free,” he continues to live with his master and his master’s family, although this time not as a slave but as a (nominal) co-owner of the land (259). When his character is first introduced, Adonis is presented grammatically as a possession of his master in this sentence: d’Hérouville “avait pour commandeur, un jeune nègre de vingt-huit ans, bien fait et vigoureux, dans lequel il

avait particulièrement mis sa confiance. Cet homme estimable s'appelait ADONIS" (197). The name "Adonis" itself is flattering, as it is the name of a Greek god often associated with male beauty and vigor. The adjectives « bien fait et vigoureux » and the idea that he is worthy of his master's « confiance » denote positive traits, though not of an autonomous man with a life separate from that of the plantation, but of a good worker. Similarly, the subsequent description portrays his leadership in flattering terms as essential to the operation of the plantation: "Il était l'âme de l'atelier. Gai de son naturel, c'était lui qui, les jours de fête, faisait danser au son de son banza les nègres de son maître, après les avoir aidés, encouragés dans leurs travaux le long de la semaine » (197). Again, Adonis is portrayed as a cheerful leader of the other slaves, who is useful to the owner because he encourages his slaves to work hard.

The title of Picquenard's story may be "Adonis," but it is clear that he is not its protagonist. Charara states, "Le héros du roman est un colon [d'Hérouville], un 'juste' favorable à l'affranchissement des esclaves, promis au supplice, toutefois, rangé, comme blanc, dans la catégorie des oppresseurs » (177). According to Charara, the generic category of the « biographie du noir » does not completely disappear, but is shortened and moved to the end of the story, and limited to a short anecdote when Adonis is briefly captured from d'Hérouville by pirates, sold as a slave, bought back again and freed by d'Hérouville. Even as the main character of this episode, however, Adonis is still not the hero; he needs d'Hérouville to rescue him. Adonis is, as the title "Adonis, ou le bon nègre" indicates, "le bon nègre," which according to Charara means that he is "un personnage ordinaire, ni prince ni noble" (178). Charara states that Picquenard wanted Adonis to be as ordinary as possible because he wanted to create a more realistic story than "Oroonoko or the Royal slave," or even "Ziméo," wherein the slave hero is of noble African

descent, but an unintentional effect may be that Adonis becomes a more passive secondary character as an “ordinary” slave, a “bon nègre.”

Sentimental Tableaux and Their Temporary Subversion of Sentimental Hierarchies

An important means of indicating a character’s sympathetic qualities is through his or her response to sentimental tableaux, which are an essential aspect of the portrayal of sympathy because, as Jay Caplan and David Denby demonstrate, sympathy is necessarily dialogic, requiring an observer and an external object to observe. As Martha Nussbaum writes, “Compassion takes up not the actual point of view of any and every sufferer, but rather the point of view of an onlooker who appraises the seriousness of what has happened” (372). The staging⁴ of a sympathetic response requires first an individual victim whose vivid suffering provokes the response in the observer. In both “Ziméo” and “Adonis,” various moving tableaux freeze the action of the rebels’ invasion of the plantation to portray the sympathetic bonds between slaves and their masters, as the slaves cry for mercy for their masters.

Both Philip Fisher and David Denby believe that sentimental tropes like tableaux are or have historically been socially instrumental in determining which beings should be considered full citizens with human rights. Fisher suggests that because members of marginalized social groups had less power and fewer rights, they therefore had more in common, in the eyes of society, with the category of “things” than with people. Explaining that cultural work is essential

⁴ Denby explains that an author must translate the tableau from the visual realm of painting and theater to the realm of narrative: “In the textual context, the notion of *tableau* therefore implies the use of certain linguistic procedures the purpose of which [sic] is to immobilise the action and to highlight those features which imply a visual perception of the described reality: the relative positions of characters amongst themselves, gesture, facial expression, arrested movement, as well as situational features constituting background or setting. Here, the textual *tableau* may be said to operate in a manner comparable to that of the print: its function is to freeze narrative, to suspend temporal progression so that the set of forces which the narrative has brought together in a particular moment may be allowed to discharge their full affective power” (75-6).

to redefining the human to encompass such marginalized groups, Fisher states: “The redesign of the boundary between the categories of man and thing was an act of cultural work, as well as a legal and military matter, because the moral and perceptual change that alone could make effective a formal change had to be done by means of moral and perceptual practice, which includes repetition and even memorization” (4). Fisher argues that sentimental tropes trigger familiar emotional patterns of sympathy that are then applied to new objects previously considered less than human and unworthy of pity (97); e.g., women, children, and slaves. For Fisher, these feelings of sympathy on the part of the reader facilitate the inclusion of new objects in the category of the human.

Fisher’s conception of the sympathetic relationship between reader and object implies that inclusion in the category of the human depends upon being an object of literary sympathy. According to Fisher, a slave in an abolitionist novel attains human status because the sentimental tropes of the novel make people feel pity for him. This sympathetic relationship forces the slave into the position of a passive object of the reader’s pity. In contrast, Denby’s theoretical model equates the status of human with being the subject of a sympathetic experience, actively feeling sympathy for others. In his theoretical model, Denby, like Jay Caplan, posits the existence of a spectator inside the tableau, who witnesses the spectacle of suffering, and whose visceral response to the suffering is evident to the reader. Denby describes the spectator’s role in this way: “As well as representing a reality, the sentimental text represents the reaction to that reality of an observing subject, and in that sense we are witnessing the codification of a kind of reception aesthetic” (4). As a codified trope that appears repeatedly in sentimental literature, the subject who is visibly moved by a display of suffering signals to the reader his presence as a virtuous, sensitive member of society. According to Philip Fisher, being the object of a

sentimental tableau is sufficient for inclusion in the human family, while for Denby, the observing subject of the tableau is elevated by his role of judge. My hypothesis is that subjects who feel sympathy for those whom they observe have a higher social standing, or a greater degree of humanity, than the passive victims who are observed.⁵

Let us examine first the humanity (and nobility) of Ziméo to test that hypothesis. George Filmer, narrator of “Ziméo,” cries when he sees the abused slaves of neighboring plantations.⁶ Because Filmer and Ziméo are both observing subjects of various touching tableaux in the story, these tableaux create a parallel between George, a nobleman with full human rights; and Ziméo, who used to be a prince, but in slavery has lost his title, property, family, even his status as a free human being. The contrast created by this parallel positioning between Ziméo’s former life (as represented by George) and his current state as the desperate leader of a slave revolt heightens the reader’s sense of how much he has lost in slavery, and it elicits pathos for Ziméo’s fall.

The tableau in which Ziméo figures as observing subject is complex and multi-leveled: Ziméo is so visibly moved by Wilmouth’s slaves’ tearful insistence that they are treated well on his plantation and do not want to leave, that Ziméo himself in turn becomes a sympathetic tableau to be observed and described by the narrator George. This kind of sympathetic chain reaction is described by Diderot in his “Eloge de Richarson,” when the spectacle of a person crying over a pitiful scene in a novel touches a third party who also begins to cry. In the spectacle that initiates the chain of sympathetic reaction in « Ziméo », Wilmouth’s slaves cry dramatically as they refuse to join Ziméo’s revolt: “Tous ces nègres juraient qu’ils perdraient la

⁵ Interestingly, women and slaves are both subjects and objects of the sentimental tableaux in the texts studied here, and the role of their tableaux as shifting signifiers of social power is explored in the longer version of this paper.

⁶ For example, observing the carnage of the slave revolt, Filmer cries and even falls into a depression at the sight of such suffering contrasted with the beauty of nature: “Ces beautés tranquilles de la nature et ces cris du désespoir ou de la fureur, me jèterent dans des pensées mélancoliques et profondes; un sentiment mêlé de reconnaissance pour le grand Etre et de pitié pour les hommes, me fit verser des larmes” (52).

vie plutôt que de se séparer de nous: tous avaient les larmes aux yeux et parlaient d'une voix entrecoupée : tous semblaient craindre de ne pas exprimer avec assez de force, les sentiments de leur amour et de leur reconnaissance » (53). Here, the slaves too are endowed with tears as an outward sign or trope of sensibility, suggesting that they, like Ziméo, are fully human, sensitive beings. They speak desperately of their love and gratitude for their owners because if they do not convince Ziméo of the Wilmouths' goodness, he will kill them in the upheaval of the revolt. In this scene, power is reversed, and it is the slaves who decide Wilmouth's fate.

Ziméo's response to the slaves' persuasive display of affection marks a key turning point in the novel. Ziméo is so moved by the demonstration of extreme devotion that he is visibly tearful, breathless, and agitated. The narrator describes his physical appearance and speech as follows:

Ziméo était attendri, agité, hors de lui-même, ses yeux étaient humides; il respirait avec peine; il regardait tour à tour le ciel, les esclaves, et nous. [...] O grand Orissa, dieu des noirs et des blancs ! Toi qui as fait les âmes ; vois ces hommes reconnaissants, ces vrais hommes, et punis les barbares qui nous méprisent et nous traitent come nous ne traitons pas les animaux, que tu as créés pour les blancs et pour nous (53).

His feelings so strongly moved that he is momentarily beside himself, or "hors de lui-même," Ziméo spontaneously exclaims to the god Orissa. Ziméo's short prayer emphasizes the slaves' humanity, as he explicitly describes them as "ces hommes reconnaissants, ces vrais hommes," true men with souls made by Orissa.

Like in "Ziméo," where the slaves' tearful pleading persuades the intruders that their master is undeserving of death, in "Adonis," it is the touching tableau created when d'Hérouville's slaves intervene silently to protect him that finally moves the rebel leader Biassou to halt his attack. At the beginning of this climactic confrontation, d'Hérouville, like Wilmouth,

calmly awaits the arrival of the rebelling slaves, and the description of the scene that follows their arrival emphasizes his humanity and refinement. Struck by the beauty and « élégante simplicité » (200) of d'Hérouville's plantation, Biassou stops mid-raid to ask after its owner. He approaches the house and « aperçut en effet cet intéressant colon assis tranquillement au milieu de son atelier, tenant un livre à la main, et ayant son fidèle Adonis à ses pieds⁷ » (200). Here, the orderly beauty of the plantation, as well as the presence of the book in d'Hérouville's hand, are outward signs of d'Hérouville's "civilized" nature, which becomes important as he emphasizes his shared humanity and equality with Biassou in a long philosophical discourse. When Biassou asks who he is, d'Hérouville answers, « Je suis ton frère, [...] et si tu as le courage de m'entendre un seul instant avec calme, je serai bientôt ton ami » (200). Biassou's comrades take offense, « stupéfaits et indignés d'une pareille hardiesse » (200), because they believe that Biassou is d'Hérouville's superior, not his equal, and they « n'attendaient que le signal de leur maître pour massacrer ce héros » (200). At this moment, all of d'Hérouville's slaves move to protect him: « Par un mouvement aussi prompt que l'éclair, tous les noirs de d'Hérouville s'étaient jetés autour de lui, comme pour faire un rempart de leurs corps à ce maître chéri ; et l'on voyait le courageux Adonis offrir le premier sa large poitrine aux coups des assassins » (200). This display of devotion, of the slaves risking their lives to protect their master, so moves Biassou that he stops the attack and allows d'Hérouville to speak: « Jamais spectacle plus fait pour attendrir ne s'était offert à Biassou. Un moment il en fut ému, et il permit à d'Hérouville de parler » (200). As the subject of a sentimental tableau, capable of being moved by the suffering of others, Biassou is revealed to have human qualities despite his cruelty. Unlike Ziméo, however, he does not cease his rampage, but rather destroys d'Hérouville's plantation and takes him prisoner.

⁷ As always in these tableaux, Adonis is at his master's feet. The repeated trope of Adonis's servile pose is discussed in the longer version of this paper.

In a scene at Biassou's headquarters, Biassou is again moved by a sentimental tableau, this time in the midst of an extended description of the violence he inflicts on his white prisoners in a public display. To set the scene, the narrator describes, with a level of morbid detail that recalls the tortures of Dante's *Inferno*, each class of prisoners' degree of culpability and the corresponding torture—for example: raping the young women, until they lose consciousness and die; hanging the elderly men, who are the most guilty because they have been abusing slaves their whole lives, on pointed stakes by their chins, then giving them a brief reprieve and hanging them again; pulling out the middle-aged women's entrails and forcing them to eat their own flesh; and boiling the children, considered least culpable of all, in vats of water or roasting them on a spit. Finally, the narrator decides not to recount the rest of the horrible details:

Oui, j'épargne au lecteur une foule de détails non moins effroyables encore, mais qui ne serviraient qu'à inspirer la haine des hommes, et un profond mépris pour l'humanité. Mon but n'est pas de flétrir son cœur en révoltant son imagination ; et le récit du fait suivant, en offrant un aliment savoureux à sa sensibilité, lui prouvera que l'homme même le plus farouche, le plus altéré du sang de son semblable, est susceptible, par intervalles, de se laisser attendrir, aux seuls accents de l'innocence, de la faiblesse et de l'ingénuité (222-3).

The narrator claims that his motive in describing this horrifying episode is not to enrage the (French) reader to a paroxysm of vengeance, but rather to convince him that every man, even the most blood-thirsty and uneducated (i.e., Biassou, who is moved in the following scene), is capable of tenderness and *sensibilité*.

Biassou, the exemplar violent savage, shows signs of tenderness and humanity in the scene that follows. In this touching tableau, two small naked white children, aged five or six, are brought out, and their two small black friends greet them:

[D]eux négrillons du même âge, qui, accourant de toutes leurs forces, vinrent se précipiter dans les bras des petits blancs en s'écriant à la fois :

Ah v'là toi, *Joseph* ! ah v'là toi, *Paulin* ! et les petits blancs de s'écrier à leur tour, et dans le même langage : Ah v'là toi, *Zéphir* ! ah v'là toi, *Zozo* ! et aussitôt ils tombent dans les bras de leurs amis, se serrent, s'embrassent, se caressent, sautent, et font retentir l'air de leurs cris de joie. Biassou était présent à ce spectacle; il le regardait même avec une sorte d'étonnement mêlé d'intérêt, quand, pour achever de l'émouvoir, le négrillon *Zozo* se détache de ses petits amis, et va se jeter à ses pieds, en lui criant de toutes ses forces (223).

In this tableau, Biassou is cast in the role of the observer moved by the scene of tender affection between two groups of children who were raised together as brothers, ignorant of the racial and economic distinctions that would separate them as adults. *Zozo* separates himself from the spectacle to beg “Grand papa-nous” Biassou to have mercy on his friends. *Zozo* explains (in Picquenard’s broken version of Creole French) that “c’est bons blancs qui pas zamais tuer nègres; c’est maman à moi, qui nourrice à eux” (223). As *frères de lait*, nursed by *Zozo*’s mother, the children share an intimate bond that defies the divisive logic of the plantation; as innocent children, *Paulin* and *Joseph* have not yet participated in the atrocities of their parents. In an abrupt turn of events, hard-hearted Biassou responds with sobs:

Biassou, qui avait résisté aux larmes de tant de milliers de familles, qui avait repoussé avec dureté les supplications touchantes d’une foule de jeunes filles, de mères tendres et de respectables vieillards, ne put résister à ce premier cri de la nature, de l’innocence et de l’humanité : son cœur fut ému, peut-être pour la première fois de sa vie ; des sanglots l’oppressèrent, et des larmes abondantes inondèrent son visage. Plus la sensibilité avait eu de peine à se faire jour dans son cœur, plus son explosion fut forte et expansive... (223).

In a dramatic show of affection that shocks his lackeys, Biassou hugs the children to his chest and requests to his « satellites »: “qu’on leur soigne, et qu’on les respecte comme s’ils étaient mon sang ». (224). In the new role of generous adoptive father to the children of his enemies, Biassou is temporarily redeemed as a civilized man fully capable of sympathy and tenderness.

His character remains ambiguous, not wholly redeemed because he is still a “naturally” or “inherently” violent man, foolishly manipulated by scheming French royalist planters into leading a rebellion that would weaken the republic and preserve the institution of slavery. I believe that Picquenard includes Biassou’s sympathetic response to these two tableaux—of d’Hérouville’s slaves’ devotion, and of the *frères de lait*—to support his thesis that even the most violent brute is still human, and with the proper education, can be “civilized” or rehabilitated.

Despite Picquenard’s republican values of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, the sentimental hierarchy erected in his story places the eponymous Adonis (always observed, never observer) at the bottom, with the bloodthirsty yet sensitive rebel Biassou in the middle and sentimental French hero d’Hérouville at the top. Elsewhere in the longer version of this essay, I examine other hierarchies implicit in the subtly different ways that sentimental tropes are applied to different characters. For example, in “Ziméo,” neither the narrator, George Filmer, nor the other white members of the plantation are ever the object of a sympathetic tableau; Filmer is always in the position of observing subject, while the others are not described. Similarly, the slaves are always in the position of suffering object, and Ziméo, like Biassou, is the only character to occupy both positions.

While I have argued that sympathy is the hallmark of the human, it is nonetheless important to note that all human ways of demonstrating sympathy are not equal. A stoic bourgeois *homme de famille* who shows sympathy for those less fortunate than he has a higher social status than a woman experiencing pleasurable aesthetic sympathy or demonstrating sympathetic hysterical sobbing, or a slave whose sympathy represents naïveté or intellectual weaknesses. In the oral discussion, if the audience is interested, I would like to explore Picquenard and Saint-Lambert’s philosophical arguments regarding slavery, the latter explored

briefly in Andrew Curran's *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment*. Also of potential interest is Edith Stein and Mette Lebeche's twentieth-century suggestion that sympathy—or the ability to recognize that a person is another « I », a subject like oneself who thinks and perceives the world—is a uniquely human trait separating humans from animals. If time remains, I would like to discuss how in the full dissertation chapter I compare these Enlightenment stories with Patrick Chamoiseau's novel *L'Esclave vieil homme et le molosse*, to highlight their shared narratological techniques and the way that Chamoiseau in 1997 enlarges the field of those capable of sympathy to include dogs, just as the abolitionist writers sought to include slaves.

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