

Robert Paltock and the Refashioning of "Inkle and Yarico"

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Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins*, in the novel of the same name (1750), is as resourceful and ingenious a figure as eighteenth-century fiction has to show. One of his feats is to improvise a pair of spectacles out of "old Hat, pieces of Ram's-horn," and "an old crape Hatband."¹ This essay, though far luckier in the raw materials dealt it, attempts something similar. It grows out of the need I feel for some new lens through which to view and read Paltock's extraordinary novel. For us, it suggests, the famous eighteenth-century story of Inkle and Yarico might become just such a reading aid. For Paltock himself, this story seems to have functioned as a vital stimulus to invention in the testing interim between his novel's "Introduction"—where some shots which a ship's captain speculatively fires at the sky bring "an elderly Man" mysteriously crashing down into the sea (p. 6)—and the eventual explanation (deferred for fifty-two chapters) of that most memorable of openings.

We shall need to have the whole of Paltock's plot before us. Peter Wilkins, it emerges, is the name of the man so strangely shot from the sky in the South Atlantic, and picked up just in time to save him from drowning. When Wilkins then dictates his life-story to "R.S. a Passenger in the *Hector*," we travel back to his teenage years to learn of his marriage to Patty, his ruin at the hands of a cruel stepfather, and the start of his seafaring career. His subsequent adventures in Africa are only a prelude

¹ Robert Paltock, *Peter Wilkins*, ed. Christopher Bentley, with an introduction by James Grantham Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 123–25. References are to this edition.

to the drama of shipwreck off Patagonia, and what the novel's title-page describes as "his wonderful Passage thro' a subterraneous Cavern into a kind of new World." Wilkins finds that he must now make his home on the beautiful uninhabited island of Grandeviolet, where all links with the world he knew before are severed. Patty is duly consigned to the past when Wilkins dreams of her death, seeing her as an angelic figure who eludes his embrace (p. 104). But merged with the pain of Patty's passing, as if Wilkins's philosophical "come Life, come Death" (p. 105) at this point comprehended all the extremes of his experience, is the excitement of a fresh beginning. For immediately, in a reversal of the rescue at sea which gives the novel its frame, a loud thump announces that a beautiful female called Youwarkee has just delivered herself into Wilkins's hands by quite unaccountably landing on his roof.

When Wilkins finds and saves Youwarkee, he carries her over the threshold (p. 106) as if already aware that she is soon to be his wife. But first they must negotiate a means of communication. Even then, everything Youwarkee can slowly bring Wilkins to understand—that she fell accidentally to earth, having come on a jaunt (or "Swangean") from "the Country of ... Men and Women that fly"—further inflames his curiosity and ours. Necessarily, there are lengthy passages devoted to describing the "Graundee" that serves Youwarkee both as clothing and as means of flight, and to detailing "the Laws, Customs, and Manners" of her native country, Doorpt Swangeanti. When Wilkins, thus briefed, finally travels to Doorpt Swangeanti (on an elaborate flying chair which he himself designs and builds) he is well enough forearmed to make himself a considerable power in the land. He modernizes its industry, thwarts a rebellion against King Georigetti, and—helped by his own translation of the Bible—brings the Swangeantine people to that "rational Knowledge" of God which he has already instilled in Youwarkee (p. 156). In addition to removing "the Misery and Bondage of Idolatry" (p. 247), he proclaims the abolition of slavery. Wilkins by now has transformed the Swangeantine system and also transformed himself—from shipwrecked sailor into beneficent colonial administrator. He only tires of his work when he tires of his life, on losing Youwarkee to an undefined "lingering Disorder" (p. 374). For his return to England he devises a sort of intercontinental air raft; and it was this, he discloses, that was hit by the guns of the *Hector*.

Criticism has never quite known what to make of *Peter Wilkins*. Because of its obvious oddness it resists incorporation into the literary canon; recently it was cited, along with Bage's *Hermesprong* and Coventry's *History of Pompey the Little*, as forming the very model of "a

brilliantly grotesque one-off."² For many readers it remains impenetrably wrapped in its cocoon of singularity, like Youwarkee when her Graundee frustrates Wilkins's amorous intentions and appears to mock his "divers Essays for unfolding this Covering" (p. 117). Yet the prospects for an unfolding of *Peter Wilkins* have dramatically improved since I first wrote on the book.³ Not only is there an edition of it in print—an advantage sadly surrendered in the 1980s—but there are scholars determined that *Peter Wilkins* should now at last put off its covering, as Youwarkee "of a sudden" consents to do, and show itself to us in its true colours. The text is proving to be of just the kind that best rewards such probing; and Paltock, sure enough, is coming to seem less marginal than before.

The current revival of interest in *Peter Wilkins* owes most to James Grantham Turner and Nora Crook, whose excellent essays (Turner's written as an introduction to the 1990 paperback reissue) complement each other perfectly.⁴ Crook considers the reception and "diffusion" of *Peter Wilkins*, finding that it sends ripples of influence far further over Romantic writing than was ever previously supposed. Turner, however, prefers to concentrate upon the main streams of influence flowing into the novel; "who are the parents?" he inquires (p. x), suggesting answers which are all the more instructive and intriguing because they take us beyond the familiar acknowledging nods at *Robinson Crusoe* (for the theme of survival after shipwreck) and *Gulliver's Travels* (for the journey to an imaginary land). Studying Paltock's presence in the work of later writers and exploring his dependence on his predecessors are, and have always been, equally valid approaches. One difference, perhaps, is that the latter exercise more easily admits of proof. (In chapter 14, for example, the similarity between the voices that Wilkins hears conversing in the air and those subsequently heard by Coleridge's ancient mariner is not in itself conclusive evidence of indebtedness;⁵ but the formula Paltock then uses to introduce the dream of Patty's death, "Methought I was....," at once effectively clinches Turner's telling link with the same motif in Milton's "Methought I saw....") And there is probably much more scope for

2 Jonathan Keates, "In the Comic Manner," *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 April 1994, 21.

3 See Peter Merchant, "Snatched from the Sea: The Survival of *Peter Wilkins*," *Children's Literature in Education* 21 (June, 1990), 67–82.

4 *Peter Wilkins*, pp. vii–xxxii; Nora Crook, "Peter Wilkins: A Romantic Cult Book," in *Reviewing Romanticism*, ed. Philip W. Martin and Robin Jarvis (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 86–98. See also Christine Rees, *Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), pp. 109–15.

5 See John Robert Moore, "Coleridge's Indebtedness to Paltock's *Peter Wilkins*," *Modern Philology* 31 (August, 1933), 79–83.

additional investigation, since the novel carries a fine freight of recon-dite reading and engages its sources rather irregularly. Like Wilkins with his various sealed chests, Paltock has whole trunkfuls of material laid by in case of need.

The story of Inkle and Yarico has never yet, so far as I am aware, been treated as an item in that inventory. But this oft-told tale is certainly part of the matrix in which *Peter Wilkins* develops. The best-known version is Richard Steele's—freely adapted from "*Ligon's Account of Barbadoes*" and published in the *Spectator* on 13 March 1711.⁶ Steele tells of a young London merchant called Thomas Inkle who sets sail for the West Indies "on the good ship called the *Achilles*" (a name of course recalling, like that of Paltock's *Hector*, a hero of the Trojan War) but makes a fateful shore stop "on the Main of *America*." After most of his ship-mates have been slain by savages, Inkle is rescued from the wilderness and tended "for several Months" by Yarico, "an *Indian Maid*," who "grew immediately enamoured of him." She believes herself no less beloved, but only until she innocently and helpfully accompanies Inkle "to a Ship's-Crew of his Countrymen, bound for *Barbadoes*." It is then that Inkle reveals his "prudent and frugal" nature by selling Yarico into slavery. Her pitiful pleading (which includes the disclosure that she is now "with Child by him") proves wholly ineffectual against his strongly reawakened "Love of Gain."

Steele's version signalled a spate of later treatments, most of them poems or plays. These were first examined by Lawrence Marsden Price, whose view in 1937 was that "of all the well-known themes of the eighteenth century Inkle and Yarico is today most widely forgotten."⁷ But the splendidly stimulating recent commentaries of Peter Hulme and Mary Louise Pratt reaffirm the "mythic status" once enjoyed by this "story that English (and European) society chose persistently, over a period of seventy years, to tell itself."⁸ They also highlight some of the factors which, during the eighteenth century, made the story seem so compelling. As a classic example of the colonial encounter, between an Englishman and a Native American, it ideally lent itself to particular tendentious uses: "a critique of European behaviour," "an illustration of the evils of slavery."⁹ As a vision of transracial romance at its simplest

6 Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Spectator*, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1:49–51.

7 Lawrence Marsden Price, *Inkle and Yarico Album* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937), p. 48.

8 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 100; Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 228.

9 Hulme, pp. 254, 231

and starkest, it reformulated in more modern terms the legend of Dido and Aeneas: a seafaring adventurer accepting hospitality in a strange land, winning the love of a good woman, but then abandoning and betraying her. The combination of an idyllic courtship and a cruel desertion, an exotic location and a prettily named heroine, was in any case extremely enticing. It is not surprising that many poets and playwrights, clearly perceiving the sentimental and picturesque possibilities of this material, became interested in developing Steele's somewhat sketchy narrative very much as Steele had developed the still sketchier account of Richard Ligon. They accordingly added pathos, and added local colour, as the existing details of character and setting seized their imaginations.

One such writer, whose version of the story was probably composed ten to fifteen years after Steele's, was the Countess of Hertford. Frances Seymour, Lady Hertford, is one of the more invisible poets of the eighteenth century; an entry of barely ten lines in the latest massive reference guide to women's writing measures her obscurity.¹⁰ Today, indeed, she is less likely to be remembered for her poem "The Story of Inkle and Yarrico, a most moving Tale from the *Spectator*" than for her involvement during the winter of 1727–28 in a real-life drama of Savages and hair's-breadth rescues—when she procured the pardon of the convicted murderer (and fellow poet) Richard Savage. None of this could have been foreseen when, in 1725, Elizabeth Singer Rowe apparently put the "Story" forward, together with an accompanying "Epistle from Yarrico to Inkle," for inclusion in a verse miscellany.¹¹ The two poems were found impressive enough to be published as a separate pair of pieces in 1738, priced at one shilling and advertised as the work of "the Right Hon. the Countess of ****." Price included both in his *Inkle and Yarico Album*, where they are reproduced in facsimile.¹² But far more important, probably, in securing what faint recognition of Lady Hertford as a writer currently remains was the reappearance of the "Story" some fifty years later in Roger Lonsdale's pioneering anthology of eighteenth-century women's poetry;¹³ and it is from this edition that my quotations are taken. Without it, we should have lost a poem of quite considerable interest. The "Story" is vitiated, no doubt, by the racial and geographical impossibilities to which Lady Hertford casually subscribes—Yarico is

10 Claire Buck, ed., *Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), p. 1011.

11 See Henry F. Stecher, *Elizabeth Singer Rowe, the Poetess of Frome: A Study in Eighteenth-Century English Pietism* (Berne: Herbert Lang and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1973), p. 61.

12 Price, following p. 18.

13 Roger Lonsdale, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 106–9.

a "negro virgin" (line 24) as well as an "Indian maid" (line 84), and she uses "tigers' speckled skins" (line 41) to deck Inkle's bed—but it is structured very strongly around all of the defining oppositions of the typical colonial encounter. Almost every couplet sharpens the central antithesis between Yarico the "artless nymph" (line 28) and Inkle the heartless European.

A little more work on *Peter Wilkins* ought to indicate not only in what precise respects but, first of all, in which version or versions the Inkle and Yarico story is likely to have been significant for Robert Paltock. My emphasis on Lady Hertford's version, and on the version by Steele from which it claims descent, of course needs to be justified. It is fortunate, therefore, that Paltock himself reveals how strongly predisposed he was to take special note of what Lady Hertford had written. For he dedicates *Peter Wilkins* to the Countess of Northumberland (pp. 3–4), thanking her both for her past "Benignity" and for the hints which their acquaintance necessarily gave him for a heroine so loving and so lovable as Youwarkee:

Madam,

FEW Authors, I believe, who write in my Way, (whatever View they may set out with) can, in the Prosecution of their Work, forbear to dress their fictitious Characters, in the real Ornaments themselves have been most delighted with.

This, I confess, hath been my Case, in the Person of *Youwarkee*, in the following Sheets; for having formed her Body, I found myself at an inexpressible Loss how to adorn her Mind in the masterly Sentiments I coveted to endue her with; 'till I recollected the most aimable Pattern in your Ladyship. (p. 3)

All that this dedication leaves unstated is that in 1750, long before the brushes with Boswell which led him to describe her as "a fallacious hussy" or the verses which Johnson would greet with such lofty indifference,¹⁴ the Countess of Northumberland was in the public eye principally as the daughter of a famous mother; and that mother was the former Lady Hertford (now, however, the new Duchess of Somerset). In these circumstances, it is tempting to conclude, Paltock decided that it behoved him to pay homage to his patroness not just in a prefixed dedication but inside the novel proper, where some discreet and graceful allusion to one of her mother's poems might show him still more profoundly dependent upon the family's "Benignity." Alternatively, we could regard the dedication to Lady Northumberland as resembling Wilkins's

14 James Boswell, *London Journal, 1762–1763*, ed. F.A. Pottle (London: Heinemann, 1950), p. 238; James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill and L.F. Powell, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934–50), 2:336–37.

rehearsed expressions of florid apology to Youwarkee's father "for taking his Daughter to Wife without his Leave" (p. 206); when Paltock came to draft it, his sudden nervousness about having presumptuously made free with something more hers than his own inclined him to intensify every dedicatory compliment which suggested itself. Yet how far this was conscious would also be open to question. It is possible that the dedication's manifest emphasis (on a supportive and enabling relationship, at a wholly proper distance, with the daughter) doubly displaces a feeling (of having fetched inspiration and support from a work written by the mother) too cloudy for Paltock ever to have detected it in himself. Since there is no reliable external evidence to show us where any borrowing from Lady Hertford began and ended, or how Paltock viewed such borrowing, we can only seek answers from the text of *Peter Wilkins* itself.

There is one particular section of Paltock's novel, the courtship of Wilkins and Youwarkee, that sees Inkle and Yarico—or Steele and Lady Hertford—coming to the fore, and even temporarily taking over from the other pairs of possible "parents" identified by James Grantham Turner. This is the section which for Turner qualifies as a full-fledged "erotic idyll" (p. xvi) and which commentators traditionally extol as the most distinctive and successful part of the book. Here, Paltock's line of approach to the prototypical transracial romance of the eighteenth century—that of the English merchant and the Indian maid—is implicit merely in the names he has assigned to his own main characters. Instead of an Inkle, he gives us a Wilkins; and in place of Yarico we have Youwarkee. Paltock is far enough away from the original names to oblige all his readers to treat the characters of the novel as substantial and separate imaginative creations, but still sufficiently close to fasten a suggestive *prima facie* link between the lovers presented in *Peter Wilkins* and those appearing in Lady Hertford's poem. For these are not the outlandish and unrecognizably different names which some later adaptations of the Inkle and Yarico story, such as Claude Dorat's in the 1760s, chose to substitute.¹⁵ Rather, they are produced by a simple structural rearrangement—as if Paltock had some convenient phrase-making machine, like the one Gulliver observes at the grand Academy of Lagado, on which to turn and manipulate the constituent sounds and syllables of any names fed into it. "Wilkins" incorporates a virtual anagram of "Inkle"; and "Youwarkee" preserves the consonantal pattern of "Yarico," while filling it up with fresh vowels.

15 See Price, pp. 52–56.

The naming of Wilkins and Youwarkee and the plotting of their "erotic idyll" involve, essentially, the same manoeuvres. As he moves his own story forward, Paltock again keeps to the tenor of the tale told by Lady Hertford—but disposes certain of its elements differently, or happens to move them into new configurations. For both writers, of course, the fulcrum is the growth of love between a young Englishman who, having lost his companions, is struggling to survive in utterly unfamiliar surroundings and a woman of another race whom he meets there. Particular interest attaches to their early attempts at conversation, although Steele had treated this very lightly (with just a passing remark about the lovers "learn[ing] a Language of their own").¹⁶ Paltock indeed reserves some of his most sensitive description for the episodes in which Wilkins and Youwarkee, determined "to learn each others Dialect" (p. 122), begin by meeting each other half way: "she spoke part *English*, part her own Tongue, and I the same" (p. 111). They thus initiate exchanges which become ever more meaningful: first, of "Signs and Gestures" (p. 108); soon, of "mutual solemn Engagements" (p. 116). And the germs of this description are contained in lines 37 to 40 of Lady Hertford's poem:

Mutually charmed, by various arts they strove
To inform each other of their mutual love;
A language soon they formed, which might express
Their pleasing care and growing tenderness.

Such congruities, which in *Peter Wilkins* are distributed over the whole courtship narrative, invite frequent reference back to the Inkle and Yarico story. This becomes extremely useful to Paltock, either by accident or by design, whenever he is moved to some adjustment of that story's emphases. The incident of the rescue represents the first important variation; instead of meeting because she comes forward like Yarico to save him from the dangers of the wilderness, Wilkins and Youwarkee meet when he gathers her in his arms after her accidental fall. He, however, shows himself as willing to waive any obligation owed to him as Inkle is eager to forget the obligation that he owes. Wilkins never descends to the greed and ingratitude which Yarico encounters in Inkle, but maintains an apparently sincere and selfless devotion to Youwarkee. Although Yarico's pathetic plea on being sold into slavery—"if thou hate me, rather let me meet / A gentler fate, and stab me at thy feet" (lines 97–98)—finds Inkle quite stony-hearted, Youwarkee's appeal to Wilkins—"take away my Life now, rather than let me live to see my further Misery" (p. 128)—moves him to floods of tears. Whereas Inkle cruelly betrays

¹⁶ *Spectator*, 1:51.

Yarico after just a few months, to leave her bitterly bemoaning his falseness, the loss and the "Melancholy" felt in the final chapter of *Peter Wilkins* (p. 375) belong to Wilkins himself and arise because the death of his beloved spells the end of a marriage that was long, faithful, and delightful: "tho' I had now been married about sixteen Years, *Youwarkee* was ever new to me" (p. 327). In Paltock's transracial romance, therefore, the European's return to Europe is an act of despair and not an act of desertion. Wilkins is no absconding opportunist, but the model husband and father whose grotesque antithesis was realized when Inkle sold his own unborn child (as well as Yarico herself) into slavery.

It seems clear that Paltock's intense and recurrent concern with the domestic happiness which his hero both creates and enjoys is what produces, in *Peter Wilkins*, an increasing divergence from the Inkle and Yarico pattern. Just as Wilkins takes Glanlepze's noble words about man's capacity for the conquest of obstacles (p. 50) as an indispensable *vade mecum*—he even uses a burnt stick to copy them onto his cupboard door (pp. 212–13)—so his own mother's "Sort of prophetick Speech" desiring him "to be a very good Husband" (p. 18) reverberates powerfully through the novel. Eventually Wilkins fulfils the prophecy, or the wish, by becoming to Youwarkee what he failed to be to Patty, and so achieving what no other character in the book except for Glanlepze is able to approach. Of course Youwarkee, "the faithfullest and most loving Creature upon Earth" (p. 128), richly repays such husbandly "Tenderness and Affection" (p. 190); and their relationship indeed takes on an idyllic quality. It redeems the failure of the relationship depicted in Lady Hertford's poem. There, the "mutual love" (line 38) of which so much is made becomes a ruthless exploitation of one partner by the other: "The Inkle and Yarico story thematizes the breakdown of reciprocity by capitalist greed and highlights contradictions of the ideology of romantic love."¹⁷ Here, reciprocity is restored and finds fit expression, as Crook beautifully suggests,¹⁸ in the two joined English pronouns which make up Youwarkee's pet name (first bestowed on her in the twenty-second chapter) of "Youwee." Lady Hertford's tale of a disempowered female and a ruthlessly dominant male receives constructive amendment, to become in Paltock's hands the tale of what we might term a differently powered female—burdened but also blessed with a "Graundee"—and a hero upon whose finely considerate romantic attentions the heroine can always rely.

¹⁷ Pratt, p. 100.

¹⁸ Crook, p. 96n6.

If *Peter Wilkins* took over nothing more from the Inkle and Yarico story than a set of memoranda to which a specific part of Paltock's own plot might respond, studying the one in relation to the other could still be very productive. Certainly it would prove more productive than continuing to think of *Peter Wilkins*, in the time-honoured manner, as a modified *Robinson Crusoe* or a *Gulliver's Travels* *manqué*. But the impact upon *Peter Wilkins* of the Inkle and Yarico story extends beyond Paltock's management of character and action in the book's courtship narrative. It has the additional effect of opening issues large enough to be carried over into several other sections or strands of the novel. We may miss some of these issues unless, like Paltock, we have Lady Hertford's poem to alert us to them first. The most obvious issue, however, is slavery. And the context in which Lady Hertford sets it enables her to combine the sentimental complaint of a forsaken Indian woman with distinctly unsentimental warnings about the evils of colonialism, if the colonizer regards himself as owning the colonized, and about the need for us to rethink easy assumptions of white supremacy.

Transferred into *Peter Wilkins*, such questioning comes to constitute much of the novel's ultimate thematic interest. Paltock shows that it is not just the institutionalized slavery which Wilkins abominates (p. 252) that brings about an "unequal Distinction ... of Man and Man" (p. 301); so can any encounter between Europeans and foreigners. He thus induces his readers to examine the moral basis of the colonial project which Wilkins pursues in Doorpt Swangeanti, and to ponder Wilkins's responsibilities towards the people of that land. Might not a culture like theirs be damaged, just as easily as improved, by the various "Imbellishments of Art" (p. 373) that the white man is able to introduce? Was it wise, even though some of the Swangeantine people were "extreamly desirous" (p. 226), to bring them such gifts as gunpowder? It is possible, Wilkins concedes, that despite our inclination to think of ourselves as "Heavens peculiar Favourites" true "Sagacity" may reside elsewhere (p. 151); and that he may have taught the Swangeantine nation very little except for a groundless dissatisfaction with its former condition. "I am afraid, I have put them upon another way of thinking," he reflects (p. 215), "tho' I aimed at what we call civilizing of them." Wilkins's father-in-law in fact pronounces himself glad and grateful to have been "put ... on a new way of thinking" (pp. 231-32). But there are others who refuse to see this as a benefit, and even refuse to see Wilkins as benevolent: "that mad Fellow *Peter* ... sets up for a Conjuror, and wants us all to dance to his Pipe" (p. 286). As the doubts grow, he has to defend himself quite strenuously: "Mighty Sir, says I, don't think I came hither to possess, but redress a Kingdom" (p. 283).

Wilkins's unshakeable belief in himself as a redresser of wrongs—he views slavery, in particular, as “an Evil that ... cries for Redress” (p. 300)—colours much more of our reading, probably, than he or Paltock can have imagined. Above all, it leads us to a fresh evaluation of the “erotic idyll” with Youwarkee. For this was where that drive towards “Redress” with which Wilkins appears to meet anything foreign had its peculiarly literal beginning. Wilkins instructed Youwarkee to make herself “a fine flowing ... Gown”—which took her two weeks of working “Day and Night”—and then “shew’d her how she should put it on, and also how to Pin it before” (pp. 142–43). He was plainly delighted by her prompt adoption of the English style of dress: “I kissed her, and called her my Country Woman” (p. 143). The scene is all the more revealing because it closely corresponds to a detail in the Inkle and Yarico story as told both by Steele and by Lady Hertford. Each writer has Inkle mentally reclothing his Indian maid—and doing so, moreover, as he mentally ships her back to England. In Steele’s version, “the Voyager communicated to his Mistress, how happy he should be to have her in his Country, where she should be Cloathed in such Silks as his Wastecoat was made of.”¹⁹ In Lady Hertford’s poem,

He oft would to th’attentive virgin say:
 “Oh, could I but, my Yarico, with thee
 Once more my dear, my native country see!
 In softest silks thy limbs should be arrayed,
 Like that of which the clothes I wear are made;
 What different ways my grateful soul would find
 To indulge thy person and divert thy mind!”;
 While she on the enticing accents hung
 That smoothly fell from his persuasive tongue. (lines 58–66)

The evidence from Steele and Lady Hertford does not quite suffice to equate Wilkins with Inkle, but it considerably increases the likelihood that his motives in busying himself about Youwarkee’s “new Gown” had to do with proprietorial pride and a desire to erase her difference from himself. And we become bound to look a little more sceptically at everything which contributed to, or followed from, the idyll of their courtship. So blatant an urging of English costume and English customs might make it hard to maintain that Wilkins’s love for Youwarkee was truly based upon reciprocal exchange, and that his romantic attentions did not mask an egoism distinguished from Inkle’s only by being (in Meredith’s terms) more “civilized.” His need to dictate what Youwarkee

¹⁹ *Spectator*, 1:51.

should wear attaches itself in the reader's memory to a string of passages in which Wilkins envisages taking over something foreign and moulding it to European specifications. Grandevole, for instance, is seen as "capable of great Improvement" (p. 175); and Wilkins likewise regards the people among whom he is to live as ripe for "a little artificial Improvement" (p. 155). The pleasure he obtains from Youwarkee's docility, when, in the matter of her English gown and many other matters besides, she indicates that "she would absolutely submit to my Direction" (p. 124), is a pleasure also afforded him as "the absolute and sole Lord" (p. 84) of his own desert island and then as the power behind the throne in Doorpt Swangeanti. Just as Youwarkee "proved very tractable" (p. 136)—effortlessly matching her own Graundee for "Plyableness" (p. 138)—so her nation proves gratifyingly responsive to all of Wilkins's schemes of reform. Just as when Wilkins goes to bed with Youwarkee "the softest Skin and most delightful Body ... presented itself to my Wishes, and gave up itself to my Embraces" (p. 118), so when he comes to his island it obligingly yields its bounty up to him: "from Day to Day I found out something new to add to my Repasts, either in Substantials, or by way of Desert" (p. 90). Each fresh location visited is virgin territory that Wilkins can set himself to farm, or that he can annex—like Mount Alkoe—as a "new Colony" (p. 347).

My hope is that by adding to the list of its putative parents I shall make *Peter Wilkins* seem a more, and not a less, coherent novel. Its hero is conceived in such a way that Paltock's view of him in love, for which the transracial romance of Inkle and Yarico is an invaluable point of reference, establishes the terms for all else included in the portrait. And Paltock moves easily on from here to studying the European traveller as a type: eternally hopeful that all around him will fall obediently into place, so long as he can call the tune; genial, yet convinced that he knows best. Thus, in Doorpt Swangeanti, "don't think I came hither to possess, but redress a Kingdom." The Inkle and Yarico story is so thoroughly and so fruitfully absorbed into Paltock's book that it would be hard to say whether Paltock made himself its possessor or became possessed by it. But *Peter Wilkins* is in every sense an eminently worthwhile "redressing" of the tale told, a quarter of a century earlier, by Lady Hertford.

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