



[Home](#) < [Praxis Series](#) < [Obi](#)

LEE, GRAVE DIRT, DRIED TOADS, AND THE BLOOD OF A BLACK CAT: HOW ALDRIDGE WORKED HIS CHARMS

Obi

Grave Dirt, Dried Toads, and the Blood of a Black Cat: How Aldridge Worked His Charms Debbie Lee, Washington State University

1. When the great black actor Ira Aldridge took the role of Three Finger'd Jack, he stepped into a play that carried two of the most politically charged symbols of the day: sugar and obi. The pantomime opens against the elaborate backdrop of a sugar plantation with slaves fearfully whispering about the power of obi and Three Finger'd Jack, while the melodrama has the overseer saying, "let the sugar canes take care of themselves . . . and a fig for Obi, and Three finger'd Jack" (4). Both stage versions thus begin by reminding audiences that the tortured relationship between the two races could be summed up in the battle waged between white sugar and black obi. Jack binds these two symbols, but only because the reconciliation exists in the cultural history sandwiched between them. It is a rich history, one that I'd like to explore by turning to the story's source.
2. *Obi, or Three Finger'd Jack* originated with Benjamin Moseley, a British surgeon, who studied medicine in London, Paris, and Leyden before he settled, in 1768, in Jamaica. Moseley soon became surgeon-general of the island and made a fortune from his tropical medicine practice, with a clientele composed of plantation owners and slaves alike. He was respected enough to treat Lord Nelson for Malaria in 1780 and to see his best known work, the 1787 *A Treatise on Tropical Diseases and on the Climate of the West Indies*, go into five editions and be translated into German. But he steadily gained a reputation for losing the lives of patients rather than saving them, and things got worse once he returned to England. Although appointed to the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, he increasingly became known for his unscientific thinking, sparked by the embarrassingly vocal campaign he led against Edward Jenner's cowpox vaccination and by his *Treatise on Sugar*, published first in 1799 with a second edition in 1800. His main purpose in the *Treatise* was to give a history of sugar cane cultivation and consumption, but there are a number of aspects to the book that seem to make no sense at all, and others that are mired in subtle cultural nuances, including the story of *Obi, or Three Finger'd Jack*.¹
3. For instance, the story of *Obi* appears in the *Treatise on Sugar* under a section entitled "Medical Observations" along with other tropical diseases like yaws, yellow fever, and the plague.² This seems like an odd place to recount a story of obi and slave rebellion, until one realizes Moseley was just following conventional wisdom by classifying obi as a disease. Such a classification was, in fact, based on several well-founded reasons. For one, Europeans believed that obi practitioners, and particularly old women, had exclusive knowledge of herbs and plants, which they used as medicine to either cure or kill.³ This explains the scene in the melodrama when Jack's mother chants,

 Magic fire duly placed
 In square within a circle traced,
 Boil the mystic herbs I've brought,
 Till the Obi charm be wrought;
 Bones I've raked from the burial ground,
 When night and the storm were black around;
 Give strength to my work, till I've fixed my dart,
 Like a cankerous thorn in the white man's heart—
 Till I pierce him and wring him in nerve and spleen
 By the arrows felt, but never seen.
 Then by flame unbodied burn him,
 Then his sinews quiver and ache anew
 And the cold sweat falls like drops of dew,

I oil him and moi him again and again,
Sicken his heart and madden his brain;
Till strength, and sense, and life depart,
As I tear the last pulse from the white man's heart. (8)

The power of obi registered here shows up as early as 1788 in the Privy Council investigations into the practice in Jamaica. Here, testimony was heard from a number of white men thought be experts on such matters, like Edward Long, author of the infamous *History of Jamaica* in 1774. Long was called on to answer a series of questions that register the strange mixture of fear and ignorance that only obi could evoke, like, "By what Arts or by what Means, do these Obeah-Men cause Deaths, or otherwise injure, those who are supposed to be influenced thereby"; "What are the symptoms and Effects that have been observed to be produced in People who are supposed to be under the Influence of their Practices"; "Are the Instances of death or Diseases produced by these means frequent?" (329). Obi induced diseases were frequent indeed, especially as the period wore on, as literary and travel texts amply record. The 1823 fictionalized travel account *The Koromantyn Slaves*, for instance, describes one West Indian plantation's brush with obi:

I found indeed the Black population of the estate in a deplorable condition: and of those who survived, the largest proportion were evidently labouring under the pressure of mortal disease. And so it proved: the mortality continued after my arrival; several being frequently buried in one day; others sickening, and declining under the same symptoms. Thus the plantation seemed quickly becoming depopulated . . . I ventured to him my suspicion of the Obeah practice being the foundation of the evil; and was happy to find my suggestion attended to, both by the surgeon himself and several White residents on the estate; as the Obeah practice was known a long time to have existed in that part of the island. (179)

Diseases and deaths, and thus the depopulation of the slave labor force, were the subject of fiction because they were a terrifying prospect for planters, especially since purchasing new slaves could be expensive, and after the slave trade was abolished in 1807, illegal.

4. But what hit the raw nerve of medical men like Moseley trying to make a living treating tropical diseases was that obi practitioners threatened to run them out of business. As plantation owners put pressure on West Indian physicians to cure their slave populations, slaves themselves put little faith in Western medicine. They preferred instead to understand the constitution of their minds and bodies in terms of the traditional medical practices imported from Africa and then transformed in the West Indies. The little property and money slaves managed to scrape up was often spent on doctoring with obi men or women, who in turn became financially independent. The more profitable obi became, the more white medical men complained. Dr. Thomas Dancer, in his 1801 book *The Medical Assistant; or Jamaica Practice of Physick*, grudgingly wrote "these Obeah people are very artful in their way, and have a great ascendancy over the other negroes, whom they persuade that they are able to do many miracles by means of their art; and very often get good sums of money for their imaginary charms" (269). Even in Africa itself, writers moralized on obi as nothing more than a means to a financial end. John Adams, a sailing captain and trader along the Gold Coast, wrote that fetiche men and priests of Obeah made a handsome living by "cheating" tribesmen "out of their property." But the obi practitioner's self-commodification was also admired by people such as John Gabriel Stedman and William Blake. The most celebrated figure in Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, in fact, is "Graman Quacy," whom Blake ended up engraving for the narrative. Stedman describes Quacy as "one of the most Extraordinary Black men in Surinam and Perhaps in the World" (581-82): "By his insinuating temper and industry this negro not only Obtained his Freedom from a State of Slavery . . . but by his Wonderful artifice & ingenuity has found the means of Acquiring a verry Competant Subsistance." Quacy had evidently internalized obi's medical power and financial benefits. By selling his "*Obias* or *Amulets*" to the "Corps of Rangers & all fighting free negroes," Stedman writes, "he not only has done a Deal of Good to the Colony but fill'd his Pockets with no inconsiderable Profits Also" (582).⁴
5. Despite the perceived capitalist irony of obi practice, where practitioners seemed to chase money at the expense of real medical knowledge, obi, was considered a merciless disease that worked its way through the body with sinister swiftness. It also had the nasty habit of taking over the victim's mind. The Jamacian traveler Robert Renny wrote that obi's symptoms "arise from causes deeply rooted in the mind," and similarly, Dr. Adair reported to the Privy Council investigators in Antigua that obi was a "disease originating in a depraved Imagination" which could "suspend, and even destroy, the vital Powers" (Renny 192; Privy Council 337). European physicians had little choice but to root it in the recesses of the imagination because obi was such a medical mystery, and yet so powerful. Indeed, the medical power of obi completely overwhelmed European medicine for the duration of the Romantic period. This was true in 1788, when the Privy Council concluded that obi was a disease "which no Medicine can remove . . . whose Operation is slow and intricate, [and] will baffle the Skill of the ablest Physician" (330); it was true again in 1807, when Robert Renny wrote "A Negro, when seized with illness, inquires of the Obeah-man the cause of his sickness, whether it will prove mortal and within what time he shall die or recover . . . but if no hopes are given of recovery, immediate despair, which no remedy can remove, takes place, and death is the certain consequence" (192); it was true again in 1823 when the author of *The Koromantyn Slaves* observed of obi, "Every means were resorted to, of medicine, good nursing, rest, nourishment, indulgence, and kindness, to preserve the lives of the feeblest: still the mortality continued with little remission" (179). And, of course, it was true for Moselev, as he

lives of the rebellious and morally condemned with state permission" (277). And, of course, it was true for Moseley, as he said in his *Treatise on Sugar*: "No humanity of the master, nor skill in medicine, can relieve a negro, labouring under the influence of Obi. He will surely die; and of a disease that answers no description in nosology" (194).

6. But if Moseley called obi a disease, he called sugar a cure. In fact, the whole idea behind the *Treatise* was that sugar was good for Europe. He insisted that sugar and disease carried a direct relationship, that sugar had "considerable influence in disposing the body to receive or resist disease" (165). And this had always been true, according to Moseley. As he provided a history of sugar, he chronicled its curative properties. "When first introduced into every country," he wrote, sugar "was only used medicinally" (75). It helped moisten the mouth of people with fevers and opened the bowels. "There is more nourishment in a pound of sugar, than in a load of pulse, or vegetables," he said (165). Even more, "the inclination of the mind" depended on sugar (166), and in this way, sugar was like obi: both worked through the body and in the mind. For this reason, both sugar and obi were more than just medicine; Moseley considered both an "art." But while he called obi a "nefarious art" (194), he conversely called sugar an exemplary one, saying, "every kind of sugar whatever is made by art . . . the art of refining sugar, and making what is called loaf-sugar, is a modern European invention" (64).
7. In trying to promote sugar consumption, and thus the continuance of slave culture, Moseley associated himself with those who discouraged meat eating. Among the voices in this camp was the natural historian Edward Bancroft, whose 1769 *Essay on the Natural History of [Dutch] Guiana*, compared British meat eating with Caribbean cannibalism. Though Bancroft claimed that the "Carribees" of Guiana "never eat any of the human species, except their enemies killed in battle," he argued that the casual consumption of chicken and beef, in which the average Briton daily indulged, was actually worse than the flesh-eating Caribs who at least ate only their enemies (260). Bancroft asked his readers to "survey, without an involuntary horror, the mangled carcasses of inoffensive animals, exposed in a *London* market, who have been killed to gratify our appetites" (262). And so in one swift move, Bancroft conflated native cannibalism with British consumption. Writing thirty years later, Moseley implicitly used the cannibal metaphor to discourage meat eating. Animal food, he said, referring to the slaughters in London of swine and cattle, "is not necessary for the pleasurable existence, and bodily health of man; for mental pleasure and health, perhaps, quite the contrary. Yet the streets of London seem to oppose these facts with proofs shocking to reflecting minds. Blood flows in every gutter" (159).
8. Then, Moseley went far beyond the claims of Bancroft. In Moseley's twisted logic, eating meat turned Londoners into blood-thirsty savages, while sugar transformed them into a refined civilization. "The sugar plantation," he hyperbolically stated, "represents the days of Saturn . . . [who] collects his rays from equatorial climes; diffuses their genial warmth over frigid regions of the earth, and makes the industrious world one great family" (173). By comparing a diet of sugar with one of meat and blood, Moseley hailed "SUGAR CANE" as "the heart of the solar world," by which he meant the "civilized world," since "the savageness of the wildest animals is softened by diet; and it sometimes appears as if ferocity would sleep quietly in the frame, unless awakened by sensation excited by the colour, scent, and taste of blood" (1800, 166). To illustrate this, Moseley's *Treatise on Sugar* carried the remarkable story of a vegetarian tiger and its dramatic plunge from sugared civility to blood savagery:

A Mr. Benjamin Parker in Kingston Jamaica "had a Spanish-main tyger, which he brought up on milk and sugar, and bread,—from the time it was newly born, until it was nearly full grown. It slept in his room, frequently on his bed, and went about the house like a spaniel. He was taken ill of a fever. I directed him to be bled. Soon after the operation he fell asleep, with the tyger by his side, on the bed. During his sleeping, the arm bled considerably. The tyger, which as yet had never seen blood, or tasted animal food, while Mr. Parker was sleeping, had gnawed his shirt sleeve, and the bloody part of the sheet into a thousand pieces. He had also detached the compress, and got at the bleeding orifice of the vein, and licked up the blood running from it. The impatient animal, forgetting in a moment his domestic education, and the kindness of his master, began to use the arm with some roughness with his teeth, which awaked Mr. Parker. On his rising up in his bed, the tyger and master were in mutual consternation. The tyger gave a spring, and jumped on a high chest of drawers on the room; from that, to the chairs, and tables, and ran about the house in wild and horrible phrenzy. I arrived at the house at the time of this confusion. The tyger escaped into the garden:—where he was shot. (167-68)

9. Throughout his works, Moseley is particularly bad at matching up his claims with appropriate examples, and this story is certainly no exception. The vegetarian tyger is not convincing as an example of sugar tamed savagery because the story strikes readers as poignant and tragic: it is the domesticated tiger, not Mr. Benjamin Parker's ravaged arm and bloody bed sheets, and certainly not Moseley's mock-heroism, that has readers' sympathy. However, what is most interesting about the story is that it appeared only in the second edition of the *Treatise on Sugar*, where it completely replaced the story of *Obi, or Three Finger'd Jack*. It seems that Jack was originally meant to illustrate this same principle: that sugar cures innate savagery. No one can say for sure why Moseley replaced Jack with the tiger, but perhaps in his revision of the *Treatise* between 1799 and 1800, when the story of Jack became a hit on the British stage, Moseley understood that Jack embodied sugar tamed savagery even less than the vegetarian tiger did, and thus he deleted Jack as his prime example.⁵
10. Yet curiously enough, a key scene in the melodrama carries these provocative connections, originally brought together by Moseley, between tigers and slaves, sugar and blood. Jack stands in front of his mortal enemy Rosa, the plantation owner's daughter, whom Jack has just made his slave in an underground cavern. He refers to himself as "Karfa" (his African name) as

he menacingly says to Rosa, "I suffer not the eye of mortal to track the haunt where, like the tiger of his native deserts, Karfa crouches till fate places the victim in his grasp" (18). Though he evokes Moseley's tiger, Jack's character argues against Moseley's call for a sugared civilization because it is sugar, and not blood, that ignites Jack's savagery. When Ormond, the plantation owner, explains Jack's history, the audience gets a glimpse of the sugar estate's role in Jack's psychologically tortured life:

Long had he been on the estate, and long had every art been tried to soothe his savage nature, for Heaven knows I pitied the unfortunates, and strove by kindness and humanity to mitigate their cruel lot. With Karfa, alone, my efforts failed; each day but added to his ferocity; crime followed crime, until the villain dared to attempt the honour of my wife. The signal punishment which awaited him drove him to madness, and under the shade of night he burst his bonds, broke into my chamber, and before my sight murdered my unhappy wife. (5)

For his part, Jack is completely clear about the role of blood and sugar in his life, about what element he most thirsts after, and why, as he tells Rosa, "You have doubtless heard of Karfa's cruelties; but know, it is not merely thirst of blood that fires me,—a nobler passion nerves my arm—vengeance!" (17).

11. Jack was not the only one to contradict Moseley's claim that sugar was the cure to European ills. Moseley, in fact, represented simply one side of a debate about sugar and blood in Britain's antislavery movement, a debate that early nineteenth-century audiences would have been fully aware of, as Timothy Morton and Peter J. Kitson have recently discussed. In this antislavery view, sugar was produced at the expense of slave blood, and thus eating sugar made British consumers cannibals. Much antislavery literature of the period was concerned with sugar's intimate link with slave blood. In so doing, it emphasized the dismemberment, brokenness, and complete consumption of the slave body, as in the single most popular antislavery poem of the period, William Cowper's "The Negro's Complaint," which addresses the pain of Africans from their own point of view:

Why did all-creating Nature
Make the plant, for which we toil?
Sighs must fan it, tears must water,
Sweat of ours must dress the soil.
Think, ye Masters, iron-hearted,
Lolling at your jovial boards;
Think how many backs have smarted
For the sweets your Cane affords. (lines 2-15)

The slave's body fluids and his emotions—sweat, tears, and sighs—nurture the sugarcane which, in turn, the unthinking white consumer drinks down. Sugar and slave brokenness were major themes in *The Anti-Slavery Album*, a volume printed in 1828, but which included poetry from throughout the period by a number of prominent poets, such as Cowper and Hannah More. Amelia Opie's "The Black Man's Lament," for example, considers that the sugarcane's "tall gold stems contain / A sweet rich juice," and for this "the Negro toils, and bleeds, and *dies*" (1-4). And sugar's sweetness opposes the bitter life slaves endure in Timothy Touchstone's *Tea and Sugar, or the Nabob and the Creole*.

This is the sweet ingredient, SUGAR call'd.
Made by the sweat and blood of the enthrall'd,
Bitter their cup, alas! who makes this sweet,
Poor Slaves! whose hearts, in sad affliction beat . . . (2:63-66)

The "sweat and blood" signals the dismemberment and mutilation of the slave body which had been made explicit in the popular press. The speaker in "The Dying African," a poem printed in *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1791, says

Here my faint limbs have borne the bloody gash,
Here have I sunk beneath the tyrant's lash:
But still, while rolling on the parched land,
I felt the tortures of his ruthless hand:
Soft sons of luxury, I toil'd for you,
To grace your feast, and swell your empty shew:
The rich ingredients of your costly boards,
Our sweat, our pangs, our misery affords:
Think, think, amid your heaps of needless food,
How much is tainted with your brother's blood. (lines 31-40)

The bloody, gashed limbs echo another poem by Cowper, "Charity," in its grim description of "merchants rich in cargoes of despair," who "buy the muscles and the bones of man" (138, 140). But as Cowper's poem—and hundreds like it—indicate, the jarring equation of refined sugar and sacrificial blood ignored slaves' power at the expense of emphasizing their brokenness.

12. The remedy for this powerlessness and brokenness was, ironically enough, obi itself. For while Europeans called obi a disease, much of the cultural knowledge of the practice indicated that rebel slaves like Jack classified it as a cure to the condition of slavery. After all, the object of obi's healing practice was the obi bag, itself a symbol of brokenness *and*

political power. This would have been extremely important to the role of Jack, since the all the stage adaptations make clear by their very title that Jack is synonymous with his obi: "Obi **OR** Three Finger'd Jack." And, it is by way of the obi bag that Moseley introduces the story of Jack in his *Treatise on Sugar*. He begins, "I saw the obi of the famous Negro robber, Three finger'd Jack, the terror of Jamaica in 1780 . . . His Obi consisted of the end of a goat's horn, filled with a compound of grave dirt, ashes, the blood of a black cat, and human fat, all mixed into a kind of paste. A cat's foot, a dried toad, a pig's tail, a lip of virginal parchment of kid's skin, with character marked in blood in it, were also in his Obian bag" (1799 edn, 195).

13. Moseley's striking description of Jack's obi is indicative of the times. The obi bag became an obsession for early travelers to the West Indies, so much so that it is almost impossible to find an account that does not list these macabre objects. Robert Renny records in 1807 "Obi is usually composed of a farrago of materials, most of which are enumerated in the law made against the practice of this art, in the year 1760, such as blood, feathers, parrots' beaks, dogs' teeth, alligator's teeth, broken bottles, grave dirt, rum, and egg-shells" (192). Another account adds to this list "images in wax, the hearts of birds, liver of mice, and some potent roots, weeds, and bushes, of which Europeans are ignorant."⁶ And Moseley, in his *Treatise*, describes how obi doctors heal their patients with these fragments: "These magicians will interrogate the patient, as to the part of the body most afflicted. This part they will torture with pinching, drawing with gourds, or calabashes, beating and pressing. When the patient is nearly exhausted with this rough magnetising, Obi brings out an old rusty nail, or a piece of bone, or an ass's tooth, or the jaw-bone of a rat, or a fragment of a quart bottle, from the part; and the patient is well the next day" (1799 edn, 172).
14. In the eyes of many Europeans, the health of rebel slaves like Jack depended specifically on refuse, broken pieces, fragments, partial objects; that is, obi bags that were powerful in their very brokenness and detachment from wholeness. Although the obi charm stemmed from African religious practices, once it was transplanted to places like Jamaica, the bag took on a new range of symbolic meanings. It came to stand as a stark example of the condition of slaves all over the colonies. And of all the West Indian characters depicted in the period, Jack himself best exemplifies the symbolic connection between slavery and the fragmented quality of the obi bag. Having only three fingers, he is identified with and yet powerful through dismemberment. Dismemberment is the metaphor for his life, too. When he defends his actions to Rosa, it is in terms of broken homes, broken bodies, broken spirits and broken lives. He says,

I had a daughter once; did they spare her harmless infancy? Where is my wife? was she spared to me? No! with blood and rapine the white man swept like a hurricane o'er our native village, and blasted every hope! Can aught efface the terrible remembrance from my soul, how at their lordly feet we begged for mercy and found it not. Our women knelt, our infants shrieked in vain, as the blood-stained murderer ranged from hut to hut, dragged the husband and father from their homes, to sell them into bondage! the vext spirits of my wife and child hover o'er me like a holy curse, and claim this due revenge. (22-23)

15. Jack may be broken, but like the obi bag, he is full of rebellious energy. He is therefore undeniably linked to Obeah ceremonies where slave rebellions, insurrections, and other threatening acts were organized, as Alan Richardson has shown in a groundbreaking article. In fact, running parallel to the discourse that joined obi and disease was another that merged obi and rebellion. Such discourse offered up images of Europeans in mental chains and blacks at liberty. For instance, M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Mery, in his two volume *Description de la partie française de Saint-Domingue* of 1797-98, described how during *Vaudoux* ceremonies slaves would explicitly ask for "the ability to manipulate the spirit of their masters." One of the ways this happened was through what he called "the magnetism" created in white masters who gazed too curiously on this practice of blacks and slaves (1:68). Then, in 1809, the abolitionist poet James Montgomery warned his fellow Britons of obi's power in his poem *The West Indies*:

Tremble Britannia! While thine islands tell
The appalling mysteries of Obi's spell;
The wild Maroons, impregnable and free,
Among the mountain-holds of liberty. (4:316)

Besides white slavery and black freedom, obi ceremonies also performed the more symbolic function of resurrection. Not suprisingly, this aspect of obi was noted in the 1788 Privy Council investigations, where obi practitioners claimed they could raise the dead. The Council reported that "to prepossess the Stranger in favour of their Skill, he is told that they can restore the Dead to Life; for this Purpose he is shewn a Negro apparently dead, who, by Dint of their Art, soon recovers; this is produced by administering the narcotic Juice of Vegetables" (333). Though the Privy Council doubted these claims, to cast doubt was to miss the point and thus the central paradox of the practice. Because slavery was not just a disease, but a form of social death, obi could both cure and reanimate—through medicine, rebellion, or the symbolic power of the obi bag.

16. Which brings us back to Aldridge. One of the marks of a first rate actor is his or her ability to animate. Another is the talent to embody two conflicting ideas at once, and the role of Jack, filled as it is with the vast cultural knowledge about the ironies of obi and the contradictions of sugar, certainly would have provided Aldridge with this. For no matter how much

Benjamin Moseley wanted, in his *Treatise on Sugar*, to classify obi a disease and sugar a cure, to replace the rebellious Jack with the vegetarian tiger, to promote plantations and defend slavery, these things were beyond his control once they hit the stage. The fascinating power of the obi bag, the brokenness that longed for the no longer attainable whole, emerged complete in the character of Jack as played by Aldridge.

Works Cited

- Adams, John. *Sketches taken during ten voyages to Africa, including Remarks on the Country Extending from the Cape Palmas to the River Congo*. London, 1822.
- The Anti-Slavery Album: Selections in Verse from Cowper, Hannah More, Montgomery, Pringle*. London, 1828.
- Bancroft, Edward. *An Essay on the Natural History of [Dutch] Guiana with an account of the Religion, Manners, and Customs of several Tribes of its Indian Inhabitants*. London, 1769.
- Bewell, Alan. *Romanticism and Colonial Disease*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- Bush, Barbara. *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1832*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Cowper, William. "Charity." *Poems in Two Volumes* 2nd ed. London, 1782. Reprinted in *The Poems of William Cowper*. Ed. John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp. Vol 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-95. 337-53. 3 vols.
- . "The Negro's Complaint." *The Anti-Slavery Album: Selections in Verse from Cowper, Hannah More, Montgomery, Pringle*. London, 1828. 6-7.
- Dancer, Thomas. *The Medical Assistant; or, Jamaica Practice of Physic designed chiefly for the use of families and plantations*. Kingston, 1801.
- "The Dying African," *Gentleman's Magazine* 61, part 2 (1791): 1047.
- Fawcett, John. *Obi; or, Three Finger'd Jack (pantomime)*. London, 1800. Reprint in *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*. Gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee. Vol 5, *Drama*. Ed. Jeffrey Cox. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999. 202-19. 8 vols.
- Kitson, Peter J. "'The Eucharist of Hell'; or, Eating People Is Right: Romantic Representations of Cannibalism." *Romanticism on the Net* 17 (February 2000) <<http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2000/v/n17/005892ar.html>>
- The Koromantyn Slaves; or, West-Indian Sketches* By the author of "The Solace of an Invalid." London, 1823.
- Lee, Debbie and Tim Fulford. "The Beast Within: The Imperial Legacy of Vaccination in History and Literature." *Literature and History* 9.1 (Spring 2000): 1-23.
- Long, Edward. *The History of Jamaica* 2 vols. London, 1774. M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Mery. *Description de la partie française de Saint-Domingue*. 2 vols. Paris, 1797-98.
- Montgomery, James. *The West Indies, a Poem in Four Parts* 1809. In *Poems on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* by James Montgomery, James Grahame, and E. Benger. London, 1809. Reprint in *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*. Eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999. Vol 4, *Verse*. Ed. Alan Richardson. 279-332. 8 vols.
- Morton, Timothy. *The Poetics of Spice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Moseley, Benjamin. *A Treatise on Sugar with Miscellaneous Medical Observations* 1st ed. London, 1799. 2nd ed. London, 1800.
- . *A Treatise on Tropical Diseases; on Military operations; and on the Climate of the West Indies*. 1787. London, 1803.
- Obi; or, Three Fing'ed Jack: A Melodrama in Two Acts*. London, 1850[?].
- Opie, *The Black Man's Lament*, in *The Anti-Slavery Album: Selections in Verse from Cowper, Hannah More, Montgomery, Pringle*. London, 1828, 4.
- Privy Council Papers of 1788. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century* Part III, "Treatment of Slaves in the West Indies." Vol 69. Ed. Sheila Lambert. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975.
- Renny, Robert. *A History of Jamaica with observations on the climate, scenery, trade, productions, negroes, slave trade, diseases of Europeans*. . . London, 1807.
- Richardson, Alan. "Romantic Voodoo: Obeah and British Culture, 1797-1807." *Studies in Romanticism* 32 (1993): 3-28.
- Songs, Duets, & Choruses, in the Pantomimical Drama of OBI, OR THREE FINGER'D JACK: invented by Mr. Fawcett, and Perform'd at the Theatre Royal, Hay Market, To which are prefix'd Illustrative Extracts, and a Prospectus of the Action*. 3rd ed. [1800?].
- Stedman, John Gabriel. *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*. Eds. Richard Price and Sally Price. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.
- Timothy Touchstone, Gent. [pseud.]. *Tea and Sugar, or the Nabob and the Creole*. London, 1792.

Notes

¹ Moseley has been mentioned in several recent scholarly works. See Bewell, Morton, and Lee and Fulford.

² This is from the 1800 edition. All quotations are taken from the 1800 edition unless otherwise indicated.

³ See Bush, 75-76; Privy Council Papers, 333.

⁴ Curiously, Stedman also credits Graman Quacy with discovering a root. "Besides these & many other Artful Contrivances he had the Good Fortune to find out the Valuable Root known Under the name of *Qwacy Bitter* of Which this man Was Absolutely the first Discoverer in 1730, & Notwithstanding its being less in Reput in England than formerly is Highly Esteem'd in many other Parts of the World for its Efficacy in strength'ning the stomach, Restoring the Appetite &c." (582).

⁵ Moseley doesn't entirely remove the story of Jack from the second edition, but puts the story of the vegetarian tiger, which does not appear at all in the

first edition, in place of Jack. In the second edition, Moseley relegates the story of Jack to an appendix called "Miscellaneous Medical Observations."

⁶ From *"Songs, Duets, & Choruses, in the Pantomimical Drama of OBI, OR THREE FINGER'D JACK* invented by Mr. Fawcett, and Perform'd at the Theatre Royal, Hay Market, To which are prefix'd Illustrative Extracts, and a Prospectus of the Action."



Obi

[About this Page](#)

[Abstract](#)

[About the Author\(s\)](#)

General Editors



Paul Youngquist



Orrin N.C. Wang

Technical Editor:

[Dave Rettenmaier](#)

Site Managers:

[Cayla Eagon](#) and [TJ. McLemore](#)

Published by



University of Colorado **Boulder**

[About Romantic Circles](#)

[Advisory Board](#)

[Archives](#)

[History of the Site](#)

[Index of Authors & Editors](#)

CONTACT US

Your name *

Your e-mail address *

Subject *

Category *

Message *

CAPTCHA

We just want to make sure you're a human and not a bot.

SEND MESSAGE