

Locating Sancho through Westminster: A Topographical Reading of *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*

Ignatius Sancho'nun *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* Eseri Üzerine Topografik Bir Okuma

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Abstract

A topographical reading of Ignatius Sancho's letters, especially as it relates to his detailed account of the Gordon riots of 1780, remains a gap in Sancho's studies. Most of the earlier studies have only mentioned his account of the riots briefly. His account of the riots spans across four letters addressed to banker John Spink, which have all been, along with several other letters he wrote, posthumously published in the collection, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*. As part of my discussion, I will show how a mapping of the spaces described in Sancho's Letters reveals the unlikelihood of his account being solely eyewitness. Here, however, I aim to follow Sancho's movement through the disrupted spaces where the riots took place and examine his reactions to these spaces. My conclusion here is that Sancho associates with the largely unscathed spaces of Westminster, where he lived, an indication of the social wellness of the area, and himself.

Keywords: Space, 18th Century London, Identity, Topography, Blacks.

Öz

Ignatius Sancho üzerine yapılan çalışmalarda *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* adlı eserinin topografik okuması, özellikle 1780 Gordon Ayaklanması bağlamında irdelenmemiş bir konu olarak kalmıştır. Yapılan çalışmaların çoğu bu ayaklanmadan kısaca bahseder. Sancho'nun ayaklanmaya dair anlatıları Banker John Spink'le olan mektuplaşmalarında yer almaktadır. Bu mektuplar *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* başlığıyla daha sonra kitap olarak basılmıştır. Bu çalışma, Sancho'nun mektuplarında konu edindiği mekanların haritasını oluşturarak ayaklanma hakkında aktardıklarında yalnızca bir gözlemci olmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Sancho'nun ayaklanmanın yer aldığı mekanlardaki izlerini sürerek anlatısında bu mekanlara karşı verdiği tepkiler incelenmektedir. Kendisini yaşadığı yer olan Westminster'la ilişkilendirdiği ve bu bölgeyi sosyal refahı yüksek olarak gördüğü anlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mekan, 18. yy Londra, kimlik, topograf, siyahiler.

Introduction

The question of race and identity has been an unresolved issue among Ignatius Sancho's scholars for many decades. Sancho has been categorized either as an example of assimilation of British values, or a radically charged anti-slavery /empire critic (Ellis 2001). One thing these critics have in common is that they barely do a close reading of his work, *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an*

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African. Most of their analyses have been based on Joseph Jekyll's short biography of Sancho's life, "The Life of Ignatius Sancho." Sancho's letters have not been given the close readings that they deserve. The problematic in reading Sancho's Letters as a footnote to Jekyll's biography, like Brycchan Carey accuses Sancho's critics of, is that, "many of the 'facts' of Sancho's early life, as narrated by Jekyll, are almost certainly untrue" (Carrey 113). Vincent Carretta, in his article, "Three West Indian Writers of the 1780s Revisited and Revised," has cautioned against reading Letters as purely the writings of Sancho. Carretta insists that Frances Crew, the collector, and editor of Sancho's posthumously published Letters, "may have censored some of Sancho's views' about slavery and racial discrimination in Letters (81). In Carretta's opinion, Crew edited Sancho's Letters to serve a purpose: "Her motives for laying them [Letters] before the publick were, the desire of shewing that an untutored African may possess abilities equal to an European" (Letters 47). Recent discoveries of some manuscripts of Sancho's Letters prove Carretta's point. How then do we resolve the question of Sancho's identity when the two primary texts have been either diluted or simply unverifiable? Carey suggests we read both Letters and "Life" side by side. The problematics of Carey's approach is obvious, especially if we aim for a more accurate reading of Sancho and his works. In this paper, I will be focusing on an uncontended part of Sancho's Letters that have not been edited, censored, and is, verifiable through other available resources from Sancho's time, his identification and relationship with spaces in London, and particularly Westminster. It is my aim that a spatial reading of Sancho's Letters would potentially put to rest the debate on Sancho's identity.

Identity in terms of race, class, and gender is a complex phenomenon that cuts across various aspects of human life. Space, on the other hand, represents a locale of different possibilities for understanding power dynamics within class structures, race, and gender. Through the theoretical framework of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault's spatial theories, this paper will examine Ignatius Sancho's spatial representation of eighteenth-century London and neighborhoods as a reflection of his quest for recasting his Africanness. In one of my previous papers, "Recasting Africanness: Ignatius Sancho and the Question of Identity," I have described Africanness as the "predominant ideology in eighteenth-century Britain that blacks are immoral and unrefined people who lack mental abilities" (Olaleye 51). While it can be argued that applying contemporary theories to an earlier time is anachronistic, Lefebvre's notion of space as a social construct and Foucault's concept of heterotopia can and should be used to explain spatial relations in Sancho's Letters. Using applicable parts, rather than all proponents of these theories would be effective in interrogating Sancho's relationship with space. Space as a social phenomenon is as relevant in the eighteenth century as is now, and so also is the dynamics of heterotopic spaces. In examining Sancho's identity through a spatial reading of his posthumously published collection of letters, *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*, my argument is that rather than an exclusive example of total

assimilation or anti-empire radicalism (Ellis 2001), Sancho is best identified as occupying a space of alterity, an otherness characterized by his search for validation and the need to douse or recast Africanness.

Lefebvre and Foucault: Social Spaces and Heterotopias

Michel Foucault's theory of spaces unveils the dynamicity of topography as a tool of identity negotiation. Foucault mentions that Galileo's work instigated the agency of space as a performance of "extension" (and evolving into one of "arrangement") rather than localization (Foucault 22). Foucault explains spatial extension as the realization that "the location of a thing, in fact, was no longer anything more than a point in its movement, its rest nothing but its movement slowed down infinitely" (22). In other words, space is transient as its existence is time-bound. The temporality of space makes the definition of any space a snapshot of moments in time. However, space remains dynamic in that it "is saturated with [...] intrinsic qualities [...] in a set of relationships that define positions which cannot be equated or in any way superimposed" (Foucault 23). In the context of eighteenth-century London, Foucault's definition of space begs the need to examine snapshots of moments captured in the writings of blacks, however, few they are (in comparison with writings by whites in the same period), who, in their attempt to navigate the intrinsic qualities that define their physical location, find themselves defined by such attempts. These attempts, as is the case in Sancho's account of the Gordon Riots, point to London as an extension of the space of slavery, empire, and unveils the underlying set of relationships that define positions within it. Foucault categorizes space in two forms: utopia and heterotopia. Utopias are unreal spaces that "have a general relationship of direct or inverse analogy with the real space of society" (24). Heterotopias, on the other hand, are "other" (real) spaces that reflect reality in its "represented, challenged, and overturned" forms (24). While the idea of situating an enslaved African man in London, the center of Christian values and civilization, and granting him his economic and social freedom is utopian, Ignatius Sancho's experiences in London represent challenges and overturns this ideal society in its entirety. Hence, his otherness reverberates through London as a heterotopic space.

Foucault's concept of space is parallel to Lefebvre's notion of social space. While Foucault's theory of space is focused on why spaces are the way they are perceived, Lefebvre is more concerned with how these spaces came to be in the first place. Lefebvre's approach to space can be succinctly summarized thus: "social space is produced and reproduced in connection with the forces of production (and with the relations of production). And these forces, as they develop, are not taking over a pre-existing, empty or neutral space, or a space determined solely by geography, climate, anthropology, or some other comparable consideration" (Lefebvre 77). Lefebvre's concept of space is one of the economic power relations which in effect determines everything else in the society, including the literature such society produces: "the benefit to be derived from this conclusion is that it leaves us some prospect of discovering a dialectical

relationship in which works are in a sense inherent in products, while products do not press all creativity into the service of repetition" (77). To Lefebvre, space is "at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures" (85). Slavery as a precondition of an ex-slave like Ignatius Sancho can thus be regarded as the product of the British Empire as a social superstructure which itself emanated to meet an economic end. In this sense, neither Sancho's experiences as a slave nor his Letters are void of the influence of the social superstructures that produced them. The materialism Lefebvre attaches to the production of space informs his description of the role of the state as organizers of spaces per "property relationships (especially the ownership of the earth, of land) and also closely bound up with the forces of production (which impose a form on that earth or land)" (85). Space as a tool of the state is therefore not only "a product to be used" but also "a means of production" (85). Slavery as a product of empire is in this line of thought a social-economic space used by the British Empire to organize, produce social relations between not only the rich and the poor but also between slavers and the enslaved. The social spaces produced, however, "interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another. They are not things which have mutually limiting boundaries, and which collide because of their contours or as a result of inertia" (86-7). The fluidity of such social products like slavery thus typifies the literary product of a former slave like Sancho who, throughout his Letters, will oscillate between praises for the empire and sharp criticisms.

Ignatius Sancho: A Biographical Snapshot

Sancho's biography, though not entirely verifiable, is an appropriate background for discussing his physical, social, and mental locale within London. The account we have of Sancho's life is majorly from the short posthumously published biography written by Joseph Jekyll in 1782, "The Life of Ignatius Sancho," details of which, unfortunately, and according to Carretta, cannot be corroborated (Letters 13), especially because some of Sancho's own words contradict Jekyll's account. Charles Ignatius Sancho, according to Jekyll, was born in 1729 on a slave ship crossing the Atlantic Ocean to the West Indies. Sancho tells one of his correspondents that he was "born in Afric," (Letters 272). Jekyll tells us Sancho's mother died of the disease in the Spanish colony of New Grenada where a bishop named her son Ignatius after baptizing him. Sancho's father, Jekyll tells us, committed suicide rather than endure slavery. Sancho's owner, whose name remains unknown, then took this two-year-old orphaned slave to England and handed him over to three unmarried sisters in Greenwich. The sisters gave Ignatius the name Sancho because they thought he resembled the fictional Don Quixote's squire, Sancho Panza. The sisters were not very keen on educating Sancho, whom they thought will no longer be submissive if schooled. However, Sancho won the favor of John, second Duke of Montagu, who had a house in nearby Blackheath, where he met Sancho accidentally. Montagu, impressed by Sancho's intelligence, brought him home frequently and encouraged him to read

by giving him books. Sancho fled from his owners to seek freedom under the protection of the Duchess of Montagu shortly after John, the duke, died in 1749. Initially reluctant, the duchess hired Sancho as her butler. Sancho was promoted to the position of a valet, under the authority of Ralph, son-in-law of the late duke who, in honor of the late duke's will, changed his family name to Montagu and became the new duke. Sancho married Anne in 1758 and fathered seven children through this marriage. From his birth to his death, Sancho's life is defined with slavery as a social product of the state. Even after his freedom, and centuries after his death, he continues to be identified by the product marker: slave, an ex-slave. The superstructure of slavery is in this regard transcendental. Foucault suspects the transcendence of spaces of localization when he submits that "it may be that contemporary space has not yet lost those sacred characteristics (which time certainly lost in the nineteenth century), in spite of all the techniques that assail it and the web of knowledge that allows it to be defined and formalized" (Foucault 23). Sancho's experience of slavery continues to be localized in the language of empire codified in the words slave and ex-slave, among other similar appellations.

Sancho's education helped elevate his social status. Sancho's exposure to the highest levels of British science and politics, is in part, due to the influence of Montagu's household. The Montagu was the governor and captain of Windsor Castle, and later governor of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. The Montagu was a member of the Royal Society, the Privy Council, and the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers, and Commerce. Many of the aristocrats and artisans Sancho later wrote to and about in his letters, were members of these societies. The Montagu, when Sancho became overweight, helped Sancho establish a grocery shop, near his London house in Privy Gardens, Whitehall, in early 1774 at 19 Charles Street, just next to Sancho's new house at 20 Charles Street. Charles Street, Westminster, is sandwiched directly in between two centers of power: The Prime Minister's house in Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament, both just a few minutes' walk away. Sancho's loss of physical mobility is one of the reasons why, Carey, in "The worse than Negro barbarity of the populace," claims, it is unlikely that he physically visited all the places he mentioned were affected by the Gordon riots of 1780 (156). In Lefebvre's mode of thinking, Sancho's education "masks not just one social relationship but a host of them that analysis can potentially disclose" (Lefebvre 88). Sancho's correspondents reflect the diversity in the age, class, and race of his social circle—an assortment that makes him uniquely positioned in the center of them all.

Ignatius Sancho's life gives an insight into the struggle of blacks in eighteenth-century England faced in navigating social-economic spaces that are in themselves fluid at best. A quick review of the way Sancho is perceived even by modern scholars, especially in his narration of the Gordon Riots, indicates layers of "intrinsic qualities" (Foucault 23) that are as dynamic as the space the man inhabited. Brycchan Carey, in his article "The worse than Negro barbarity of the populace': Ignatius Sancho Witnesses the Gordon Riots," notes that Sancho's supposed eye-witness account of the Gordon Riots was probably a literary

construct, based on reading in the newspapers (145). Similarly, Vincent Carretta has noted Sancho's efforts as a social critic, and generally, a man of the arts, who was as much a music composer as he was an actor and a man of letters. Carretta also noted that Sancho's account of the Gordon riots is a combination of both his experiences and contemporaneous press reports (Letters 273). Carretta and Carey's conclusion about Sancho's reliance on experience and knowledge of current affairs in his narration of the Gordon Riots underline a bigger question of space and identity: why would a man who saw first-hand how the riots unfolded depend on press reports at all? There are multiple answers to this question. First, his audience, or in this regard, the recipient of his letters. Second, his need to project his currency for reading both classical literature and current affairs. Third, the need to reference established sources in his adoption of spaces as an identity marker. Fourth, he did it because he could.

First, Sancho wrote most of his letters after he opened his shop and to people of different classes, races, and sex. Amongst his correspondents and friends were Duchess of Queensberry and Northumberland, artists like William Stevenson and authors like Laurence Sterne. Sancho also wrote to his former fellow servants, James Kisbee, Charles Browne, and other black Britons like Charles Lincoln, Juius Soubise, and so on. While Sancho corresponded with people all over the British Empire, from India to the Caribbean, most of his letters were addressed to people within England. The four letters where he accounts for the Gordon Riots were written between June 6 and June 13, 1780, to John Spink. John Spink (1729-94) was a draper and a banker in Buttermarket, Bury. Spink was a partner to John Scotchmer (1716-86) from about 1770 to 1775 when Scotchmer retired and Spink was left in control of the bank. Spink married Margaret Gough in March 1778, about seven years after he was elected Common Councilman of Bury Corporation. A wealthy and generous man, who donated hundreds of pounds to religious and medical charities as well as to individuals, Spink was the Receiver General for the Eastern Division of the County, County Treasurer, and founder of the Bury Sunday Schools. Spink, his wife, Margaret, and sister, Ann, all subscribed to Sancho's Letters (Letters 303). The four letters Sancho wrote to Spink were, like a piece of journalism, Sancho's careful attempt to present events as intellectually striking as possible.

William Stevenson, Sancho's friend, and a subscriber to Letters commenting on the level of Sancho's exposure to people across social strata notes that "few men had seen more of life, in all its varieties, from the Prince to the Beggar; and no one...ever made a better use than he did, of the knowledge resulting from his observations" (Letters 358). Stevenson's words highlight the social description of enlightened men in eighteenth-century Britain as people who are well versed in both the knowledge of classical literature and contemporary literature, including journals. Sancho's reliance on news reports would have very much signaled to his readers (Spink and anyone he shares the letters with) that he is not only educated but also an avid reader of news articles who deserves the serious attention of elitists like Spink. Second, his reference of lines from poet

laureates like Colley Cibber, and how he does this, projects his knowledge of literature as superior. Sancho quotes Colley Cibber's adaptation of Shakespeare's Richard III: "Off with his head—so much—for Buckingham" in the middle of one of his letters to Spink (Letters 277), just like he quotes other well-known writers (classical and contemporary) in his other letters. Third, his reference to political figures all through these letters presents him as a man who is very aware of the political climate of his time. Indeed, Sancho is the first known black man to have voted in a British election. While Sancho's intentions for writing these letters the way he did cannot be verified, he, however, and to my fourth point, enjoyed the benefits that came with his ability to read and write. He is the first black man to have his correspondence published. His posthumously published letters played a critical role, as an evidence of the intellectual abilities of Africans, in the Abolitionist movement that started shortly after his death. He became known as the "extraordinary Negro", a designation first used by Joseph Jekyll in "The Life of Ignatius Sancho." By 1780, the year he wrote the letters detailing the Gordon Riots, also the year of his death, Sancho was already a property-owning resident of Westminster. He died on 14 December 1780.

The Gordon Riots: Ignatius Sancho and the Politics of Space

The Gordon Riots of 1780 started on June 2 as a peaceful anti-Catholic protest in London against the Papists Act of 1778—an act designed to officially reduce discrimination against British Catholics. The act granted Roman Catholics minor relief from legal restrictions which were earlier imposed on them through the Popery Act of 1698. Lord George Gordon, the President of The Protestant Association of London and a member of parliament for Ludgershall, with his strong propagandist speeches, led several protestants in London to believe having Catholics in the military might cause them to join forces with co-religionists across Europe and attack Britain. He incited in these Protestants the fear of Papism and the likelihood of a return to absolute monarchical rule. His words were so inflammatory that it sparked up a movement of about 60,000 Protestants who marched on the Houses of Parliament to deliver a petition demanding the repeal of the Act. The protest soon degenerated into full-blown riots that led to the destruction of several properties, among which were houses of influential people, Catholics, and Catholic sympathizers; Catholic churches, and several others. Prisons were attacked with several prisoners freed, and the death of at least one thousand people, with several more injured, was recorded. The army eventually intervened in the riots, after they were given the order, on June 7, to fire upon any groups of four or more who refused to disperse. About 285 people were shot dead, with another 200 wounded. Around 450 of the rioters were arrested. Of those arrested, about twenty or thirty were later tried and executed. Gordon was arrested and charged with high treason but was found not guilty (Babington 27). Nicholas Rogers considers the Gordon riots the most destructive riot in the history of London (Rogers 152).

Sancho's description of the riots reveals the identity he associates with spaces in London. Although by June 1780, Sancho was already terribly suffering from gout that would eventually claim his life six months later, and his mobility greatly reduced, the location of his house at Charles Street, meant that he most likely would have experienced first-hand the initial events that led to the riots. Sancho's house, as stated earlier, is sandwiched directly in between the Prime Minister's house in Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament. The protests that led to the riots took place at the front of these Houses. The debate over the Papists Acts also started here. Considering Sancho's knowledge of the current political affairs in London, as evident through the comments all through his Letters, he most likely must have been following the issue right from its onset. Sancho states, in Letters that the protest began at the Palace-yard, a few blocks away from his house at Charles Street, at around eleven (Letters 271). Sancho described the mob "of at least a hundred thousand poor, miserable, ragged, rabble, from twelve to sixty years of age thus" (271):

I was obliged to leave off—the shouts of the mob—the horrid clashing of swords—and the clutter of a multitude in swiftest motion—drew me to the door—when every one in the street was employed in shutting up shop [...] Lord S[andwic]h narrowly escaped with life about an hour since;—the mob seized his chariot going to the house, broke his glasses, and, in struggling to get his lordship out, they somehow have cut his face;—the guards flew to his assistance [...], and guarded him bleeding very fast home. This—this—is liberty! genuine British liberty! [...]. About two this afternoon, a large party took it into their heads to visit the King and Queen, and entered the Park for that purpose—but found the guard too numerous to be forced, and after some useless attempts gave it up. (271-2)

Sancho's words here suggest the posh identity he ascribes with the space in and around Westminster. Sancho considers Westminster space of and for class, royalty, social and political success—a space for the ruling class. Westminster is meant to be a space for all that is the opposite "of the maddest people—that the maddest times ever plagued with," the "Negro barbarity of the populace" [of other spaces in London]. It is certainly not a space for the "poor, miserable, ragged, rabble...ready for any and every mischief." It's a space of serenity, not "shouts;" a site for order, not "the clutter of a multitude," nor "anarchy" (270-2). Lord George Gordon, a member of this space of grace and class, must have certainly been consumed with "insanity" to desecrate a space marked with the fashionable House of Lords, House of Commons, state-of-the art Westminster Bridge, the haven called St. James' Park, the one-of-a-kind Palace, and all the other paragons of architectural designs home to men of noble and refined character, with his "deluded wretches." Therefore, Sancho would rather have the parliament immediately "expel him the house—commit him to the Tower [the Tower being the most secure prison in London—the protesters would later unsuccessfully attempt to break into it]—and then prosecute him at leisure—by

which means he will lose the opportunity of getting a seat in the next parliament—and have decent leisure to repent him of the heavy evils he has occasioned” (271). Gordon’s evils were not that he opposes the Papists Act of 1778, of which Sancho, all through the four letters refused to comment on; Gordon’s evils were that he brought “Foul Discord and her cursed train” near Sancho’s “blessed abode!” (272). The location of Sancho’s house, I argue, influenced his lifestyle, writing, and identity. His narration of the Gordon riots shows a bias for Westminster.

Westminster validates Sancho’s social status as a man of refined character just as much as Sancho validates the space. In Lefebvre’s view, space is produced per a representation in which users only experience passively in as much as it has been thoroughly inserted into, or justified by their representational space (Lefebvre 43). Westminster is a representational space: It represents royalty, the elite, and the site for refined people—it was socially organized by the state for this. The architecture and the social functions of the infrastructure in Westminster, from the Parks to the Palace, all lend credence to the production of the space as such. The caliber of people who live in this area, Kings, members of the parliament, rich and learned people, all contribute to the production of Westminster as a representational space for the ruling class and the elite. For Sancho to cross from slavery into this class, there must be a revolutionary social transformation. In Lefebvre’s words, “a social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and space—though its impact need not occur at the same rate, or with equal force, in each of these areas” (54). Sancho’s social transformation from the lowest rung of the social hierarchy, slavery, into the highest order of the elite, is manifested through its mental effect on his daily life, his language, and the space he inhabits. Sancho runs a shop and owns a house at Charles Street—a space most slaves can only dream of inhabiting. He engages himself, like the average elite does, in social commentaries, reading, going to the theatre, and sometimes performing there. He also composes musical pieces. His knowledge of literature, his writing skills, his gentle-man-gestures and his knack for writing carefully drafted letters to members of the elite class all reveal how much he has mentally constructed Westminster as a space for the social validation of his social transformation. He does not just live in Westminster; he acts like people from Westminster. The movement in Sancho’s social transformation is “slowed down infinitely” (Foucault 22), but active. He relies on the space as a certification of his new identity.

Even after Gordon and his mob disturb the stateliness of Westminster with their noise and an unruly attitude, Sancho’s Westminster must be left unscathed. Sancho tells Spink, “about two this afternoon, a large party took it into their heads to visit the King and Queen, and entered the Park for that purpose—but found the guard too numerous to be forced, and after some useless attempts gave it up” (Letters 272). In another letter, he continues: “We have a Coxheath and Warley of our own; Hyde Park has a grand encampment, with artillery, Park, &c. &c. St. James’s Park has ditto—upon a smaller scale. The Parks, and our West end of the town, exhibit the features of French government” (Letters 276).

Vincent Carretta, the editor of *Letters*, in his notes to this letter explains that Sancho is here alluding to the military camps the French set up in Cavenham, Coxheath, and Warley after they formed a military alliance with the American colonists against the British in 1778. When Sancho writes about Westminster exhibiting the features of French government, he is referring to the professional police force of France; Britain did not have one—most Britons saw this as a threat to individual liberty (227). The Gordon riots, among other things, would on March 27, 1782 influence British government to establish the Home Department—the ministerial department responsible for immigration, security, and law and order in Britain—and introduce an armed and salaried foot patrol. Sancho, a staunch patriot, does not mind the French-like policing of Westminster if only because it helps preserve the social identity of the area—his area, the one that validates his identity.

Sancho's choice of the personal pronoun "we" reveals his association with the social identity of the people and places in Westminster. Sancho creates a "we" against "them" narrative that sets the people of Westminster (including members of the Houses) against the wider populace of London. Sancho is irritated "to hear the execrable nonsense that is industriously circulated amongst the credulous mob—who are told his M[ajest]y regularly goes to mass at Ld. P[et]re's chapel—and they believe it, and that he pays out of his privy purse Peter-pence to Rome. Such is the temper of the times—from too relaxed a government; and a King and Queen on the throne who possess every virtue" (275). Robert Petre, ninth Baron Petre, the man whose name is used to designate the chapel referred to above, according to Carretta, was a leading Roman Catholic whom the George III and Queen Charlotte visited at Thorndon, Essex, on October 19-21 1778, shortly after the passage of the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. The rumor among the rioters was that King George III resumed the tradition of paying the annual penny (Peter's pence) tribute to the pope at the feast of St. Peter, an action which had been abolished by Henry VIII as far back as 1534. Sancho dispels this rumor in favor of the King. Even though he knows the riots erupted because the government failed to settle issues within its Houses, Sancho, unlike what he said of the rioters, would not directly insult the government, some members of which are residents of Westminster. His choice of words here shows he is sympathetic toward them. When he, therefore, uses "we" as he speaks of the efforts of the government to curb the riots, he is signaling his identity with the space and people of Westminster, the ruling class: "We have taken this day numbers of the poor wretches, in so much we know not where to place them. Blessed be the Lord! we trust this affair is pretty well concluded" (277). This is the same attitude he displays when he talks about the rioters from the third-person perspective. They are the "poor wretches" (277), "the credulous mob," "the insurgents [who] visited the Tower, but it would not do" (275). Sancho is Westminster embodied just as much as Westminster defines the nature of the man.

Sancho's definition of people by the space they inhabit speaks to the nexus between the identities of space and humans within his letters. Sancho writes about Caen Wood, the country house of William Murray, Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, at Highgate: "Lord M [ansfield]'s house in town suffered martyrdom; and his sweet box at Caen Wood escaped almost miraculously, for the mob had just arrived, and were beginning with it—when a strong detachment from the guards and light-horse came most critically to its rescue—the library, and, what is of more consequence, papers and deeds of vast value, were all cruelly consumed in the flames" (274). Here, Sancho personifies Caen Wood as escaping the riot, as though Caen Wood is Lord Mansfield depersonalized. Similarly, he writes: "Ld. N[orth]'s house was attacked; but they had previous notice, and were ready for them." Here, not only does the house become a metaphor for the household of Lord North, but also an insignia of the social identity of Lord North—a symbol of wealth, power and good education. Another example is "Langdale's spirits" which Sancho claims have "decently knocked on the head" and "half-killed" "about fourscore or an hundred of the reformers" (276). Thomas Langdale, according to Carretta, was a Roman Catholic who owned one of the largest distilleries in London. "Langdale lost more than £100,000 when the mob set fire to his distillery. Many rioters were poisoned by drinking the unrectified gin released into the streets by the heat of the flames" (Letters 277). Sancho claims "the greatest losses have fallen upon [Langdale] the great distiller near Holborn-bridge" (276). "Langdale's spirits," rendered in the plural form, are arguable, the inseparable but distinct spirits of both the physical man and his space, the distillery. The space of Langdale's distillery is thus as much alive, even though in the ethereal world, as is the man that owns it.

The riots that took place across the spaces of London is appropriated as a tool for Sancho's attempt at re-negotiating the intrinsic qualities of Westminster as an indication of the wellness of all its residents (Whites, Blacks, Jews), rather than the elitists alone. Lefebvre argues that in "the illusion of transparency [...] space appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving action free rein. What happens in space lends a miraculous quality to thought, which becomes incarnate through design (in both senses of the word). The design serves as a mediator -- itself of great fidelity - between mental activity (invention) and social activity (realization); and it is deployed in space" (Lefebvre 27-8). Elsewhere, I have argued Sancho's Letters is a revelation of his struggle for identity, for himself as well as other blacks in Britain (Olaleye 51). Drawing from these two arguments, it is my opinion that the events of the Gordon riots that took place on the physical space of Westminster serve as illumination into the encrypted reality of Sancho's thoughts—his struggle to recast Africanness ("the predominant ideology in eighteenth-century Britain that blacks are immoral and unrefined people who lack mental abilities" (Olaleye 51)). Even though Sancho lives and acts like a man from Westminster, this has not stopped the racial discrimination he faces from people like the white man who called him "Smoke Othello!" (359). Hence, his outburst in the first of the four letters, "I am not sorry I was born in Afric" (272). The four letters were written to explain "the worse

than Negro barbarity of the populace" (271). Lefebvre's assertion succinctly describes Sancho's struggle for identity: "In the realm of becoming, but standing against the flux of time, every defined form, whether physical, mental or social, struggles to establish and maintain itself" (22). Sancho is here trying to show that a black man, like himself, can and does possess all the qualities, mental, physical, and social, associated with the class of people in Westminster.

My mapping of spaces mentioned in Sancho's account of the Gordon riots shows a bias for Westminster. Even though the events that led to the riots started at Westminster, Sancho mentions just one place in Westminster that was successfully attacked by the rioters, Tothill Fields (Bridewell) Prison, a place spatially and literally for community's outcast (Tothill Fields is located towards the extreme South of Westminster). Similarly, the formidable spaces he mentions, St. James' Park, House of Lords, and Hyde Park, are all spaces within the space he identifies with—Westminster. Regarding the riot actions in Westminster, my mapping of Sancho's account stands in contrast to the map used by the Quarter Master General who was responsible for sending troops to the affected areas (Map of the Gordon Riots). In Sancho's account, the most affected spaces were outside Westminster; however, the Quarter Master General's map indicates there may have been more sites within Westminster than Sancho acknowledges (Map of the Gordon Riots). For the Grub Street Project, I have mapped spaces outside of Westminster that Sancho mentions (spaces which, with his dilapidating health, he could not have all experienced the events that took place there, and most likely relied on press reports for his narration like Carrey has argued) are like those on the Quarter Master General's map (Olaleye 2017). Sancho's Westminster is left unscathed because, unlike "the worse than Negro barbarity of the [larger] populace" (271), Westminster stands for the civilization Sancho identifies with but struggles to be socially accepted for.

It is in this chain of thought, that I consider Westminster a heterotopic space. Michel Foucault describes heterotopias as "real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about" (24). Sancho's Westminster is a real space, but also an unreal space. It is real in the sense that it is a physical space, an effectively enacted utopia, the dream space of every slave in London. Within Westminster as a heterotopic space, the cultures of slavery, empire, colonialism, wealth, politics, power structures, and education are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. The culture of slavery, for instance, is simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted by Sancho's presence within the space. Westminster symbolizes the center of the British Empire. It is the space within which decisions on slavery are made. Slavery

thrives on the notion of Africanness. However, Africanness is contested by Sancho's abilities to read and write and inverted by his presence as a property-owning member of that society. Westminster as Sancho's other space is a placeless place—a heterotopia that embodies all the qualities that Sancho needs to recast the notion of Africanness associated with his race. Foucault describes such “mixed experience” that exist in reality and imagination through his example of a mirror: The mirror is a utopia in that “it is a place without a place [...] a sort of shadow that makes my appearance visible to myself, allowing me to look at myself where I do not exist”, but it is as well heterotopia because it “really exists and has a kind of comeback effect on the place that I occupy” from where I “find myself absent from the place where I am, in that I see myself in there” (24). Like Foucault's mirror, from the standpoint of Westminster, Sancho discovers his absence from the place that he is (the physical space) since he sees himself over there—the mental space, a place he needs to validate his identity as a man of refined qualities.

Conclusion

The heterotopic nature of Westminster as a real social space as well as a representational space positions Sancho in a position of alterity. Even though Sancho associates himself with Westminster, relying on the space to validate his identity, his experiences within the space, and his intentional placement as an outsider of Westminster, particularly when he is about to pass a critical comment, makes his claim to the insider-Westminsterian identity neither cohesive nor consistent. Sancho, throughout his lifetime, and even after his death, faced episodes of racial discrimination within Westminster from people like the white man who called him “Smoke Othello!” or “the haughty Creole” who eyed him disdainfully for delivering a message on behalf of his master (359). Hence, his outburst in one of his letters, “I am not sorry I was born in Afric” (272). Sancho conveniently situates himself as an outsider to address the ignorance and hypocrisy of whites in the belief in Africanness. In several of his letters, Sancho uses the words, “your country (88, 147, 188),” especially when he is writing a critical comment about Britain to a white man. One such, which reveals his state of alterity is in his letter to Jack Wingrave. Sancho writes:

I am sorry to observe that the practice of your country (which as a resident I love—and for its freedom—and for the many blessings I enjoy in it—shall ever have my warmest wishes—prayers—and blessings); I say it is with reluctance, that I must observe your country's conduct has been uniformly wicked in the East—West-Indies—and even on the coast of Guinea. (188)

Sancho's alterity makes him a better critic of power structures globally and locally. He can switch at will between the positions of outsider and insider of Britain and Africa. Sancho condemns the “petty Kings” (188) of Africa for their “hellish means of killing and kidnapping” “the poor wretched natives”, just as much as he condemns the British empire for their involvement in the slave trade (188). He is, however, not against a globalized trade. He claims, “Commerce

attended with strict honesty—and with Religion for its companion—would be a blessing to every shore it touched at” (188). Sancho could effortlessly relate, at a personal level, with people and discourse concerning those of the middle and lowest economic class, slaves, just as much as he could engage and relate with people of the upper and ruling class. He could engage with global discourses about the politics and economics of British colonies and other European countries, just as much as he participates in the discourse on local politics and economy. This kind of balanced criticism is made possible because of his peculiar identity, his otherness.

From his comments on slavery, his switch between insider and outsider positions, and his physical and mental locations, Sancho shows that he is not a victim to total assimilation, neither is he completely against the British empire. He is in a position of alterity, a space in itself, marked by the struggle to recast Africanness.

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