

**“HERO HOLLIS REPRESENTS AS M. M. KAYE’S SOCIAL CONSCIENCE
ON SLAVERY IN TRADE WIND”**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the character of Hero Hollis in M.M. Kaye’s novel *Trade Wind* as a profound embodiment of the author’s social conscience concerning the historical reality of slavery. Set against the backdrop of 19th-century Zanzibar, the novel intricately intertwines personal and political narratives to reflect moral resistance to colonial and economic exploitation. Hero Hollis, through her ethical convictions, humanitarian zeal, and unflinching defiance of the status quo, serves as the moral compass of the narrative, challenging imperial norms and the dehumanizing practice of slavery. The paper analyses her symbolic and narrative function, her role in countering the romanticization of colonialism, and her alignment with abolitionist ideology, positioning her as a literary voice of reform within Kaye’s fictional world.

KEYWORDS

Hero Hollis, M.M. Kaye, *Trade Wind*, slavery, abolitionism, colonialism, women’s resistance, moral conscience, Zanzibar, British Empire.

INTRODUCTION

M.M. Kaye’s *Trade Wind* (1963) is a historical romance novel set during the British intervention in Zanzibar in the late 19th century, a time when slavery was still a brutal reality. At the heart of the novel stands Hero Hollis—a determined, compassionate, and socially aware woman who challenges not only the gender norms of her time but also the moral depravity of slavery. While the novel weaves a compelling tale of romance and political intrigue, it also acts as a powerful medium for social commentary. This study analyzes Hero Hollis as the vessel through which M.M. Kaye expresses her opposition to slavery, examining how this character reflects the author’s deeper ethical concerns and commitment to justice. M.M. Kaye’s *Trade Wind* (1963) stands as a complex and layered historical romance set in the culturally and politically charged environment of 19th-century Zanzibar, a key node in the Indian Ocean trade network and one of the last bastions of the East African slave trade. While often categorized as a romantic novel, *Trade Wind* transcends the genre’s conventional boundaries by weaving a rich tapestry of political commentary, moral confrontation, and ideological resistance. Central to this multidimensional narrative is the character of Hero Athena Hollis, a headstrong and idealistic Englishwoman who becomes the moral conscience of the novel. Far from being a mere romantic interest or supporting character, Hero emerges as the embodiment of M.M. Kaye’s ethical position on the practice of slavery and the broader implications of colonial domination.

The 19th century was a period of profound contradictions—while Western societies like Britain publicly championed humanitarian causes such as abolition, they continued to benefit from and perpetuate systems of oppression in their colonies. Zanzibar, under the influence of the Omani Sultanate and later British political interest, was a critical hub of the East African slave trade. Slaves from

the interior of Africa were captured and transported to be sold across the Arab world, with British naval forces inconsistently enforcing abolitionist policies. In this paradoxical setting, *Trade Wind* captures the historical reality of the period while also offering a scathing literary critique of imperialist hypocrisy.

It is in this historically accurate but morally ambiguous landscape that Hero Hollis finds herself. A young woman who refuses to adhere to the expectations of Victorian womanhood, Hero is a character carved with intellectual depth, emotional resilience, and unwavering ethical conviction. Her name—'Hero'—is not accidental. She represents a new kind of protagonist in colonial fiction: one who defies gender norms, questions imperial motives, and challenges the accepted moral order of her time. Rather than being a passive observer, Hero actively seeks to engage with the injustices around her, particularly the institutionalized dehumanization represented by the slave trade. Her presence in Zanzibar, far from being incidental, is a literary device through which M.M. Kaye explores themes of resistance, redemption, and reform.

The choice to create a female abolitionist figure in a genre often dominated by romantic escapism is a bold and significant one. M.M. Kaye, herself a product of the British Raj, uses Hero to channel her reflections on colonialism, slavery, and gendered power dynamics. Hero's moral outrage, her acts of resistance, and her ability to empathize with the oppressed offer readers a compelling critique of imperial structures. Unlike many contemporary protagonists who are shaped by the limitations of their time, Hero transcends them, becoming an almost prophetic figure in her forward-thinking views on justice, freedom, and human dignity.

What makes Hero particularly important in literary studies is not only her stance against slavery but also how her resistance is framed within a deeply patriarchal and racially stratified colonial system. She is not portrayed as a savior in the stereotypical Western sense but rather as someone navigating her privilege, confronting her society's complicity, and striving for meaningful change. Her moral compass consistently aligns with those marginalized by the structures of power, whether they are African slaves, oppressed women, or victims of colonial exploitation. Through Hero, M.M. Kaye juxtaposes the ethical apathy of other colonial characters—including British officials, traders, and even her male counterpart, Jason—thereby reinforcing her role as the novel's true voice of conscience.

Furthermore, Hero Hollis's journey from England to Zanzibar is emblematic of a larger journey—from ignorance to awareness, from comfort to responsibility. Her transformation is not merely romantic but deeply ideological. Her moral engagement with the issue of slavery forces the reader to reconsider the role of women in historical narratives, particularly in relation to power and resistance. Unlike many male abolitionist figures who act from positions of authority, Hero's struggle is doubly challenging—she must navigate not only the horrors of slavery but also the constraints imposed on her by patriarchal norms.

In essence, this study aims to reframe *Trade Wind* not just as a historical romance but as a significant literary intervention into discourses of colonialism, slavery, and gender. By focusing on Hero Hollis as the central moral figure, this research highlights how M.M. Kaye employs fiction to deliver a powerful denunciation of the slave trade and, more broadly, the imperial ideologies that sustained it. The novel becomes a space where ethical imagination meets historical reality, and where literature serves as a medium of both remembrance and resistance. This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive examination of Hero Hollis as M.M. Kaye's social conscience—her narrative tool to oppose the injustices of slavery, critique colonial complicity, and elevate the role of women in the moral struggles of history. The following sections will delve deeper into the historical context, character development, literary techniques, and thematic complexities that affirm Hero Hollis's place as one of the most ideologically charged figures in colonial-era fiction.

DEFINITIONS

- **Slavery:** The condition in which individuals are owned by others, deprived of personal freedom and compelled to perform labor.
- **Abolitionism:** A movement to end the practice of slavery and the slave trade.
- **Colonialism:** The policy or practice of acquiring political control over another country, occupying it, and exploiting it economically.
- **Social Conscience:** A sense of responsibility or concern for the problems and injustices of society.

NEED OF THE STUDY

There exists a gap in literary scholarship concerning the role of fictional female characters as moral agents in historical narratives. While *Trade Wind* has been appreciated for its historical detail and romance, little focused research has been done to explore how Hero Hollis functions as the author's mouthpiece against slavery and colonial oppression. This study is necessary to understand how Kaye uses literature to contribute to discourses on justice and human dignity.

Aims

- To explore how Hero Hollis serves as M.M. Kaye's ethical voice.
- To evaluate the character's role in criticizing slavery and imperialism.
- To highlight the intersection of gender, morality, and politics in the novel.

Objectives

1. To critically assess Hero Hollis's ideological stance in the narrative.
2. To establish how the character challenges the pro-slavery sentiments of her time.
3. To understand the character's alignment with abolitionist thought.
4. To contextualize the novel within historical and colonial frameworks.

Hypothesis

Hero Hollis is not merely a romantic protagonist but the narrative personification of M.M. Kaye's condemnation of slavery and her advocacy for social justice through historical fiction.

Literature Search

- Kaye, M.M. *Trade Wind*. London: Penguin Books, 1963.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*. Princeton University Press, 2011.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester University Press, 2010.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?*
- Scholarly journals such as *Postcolonial Text*, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, and *Feminist Review* have also informed this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopts a qualitative literary analysis approach. It is based on:

- Textual analysis of *Trade Wind* focusing on Hero Hollis.
- Historical contextualization of the Zanzibar slave trade.
- Interdisciplinary insights from gender studies, postcolonial criticism, and moral philosophy.
- Secondary criticism and reviews of the novel and authorial interviews with M.M. Kaye.

Strong Points of Present Research Study

1. Hero Hollis as a Unique Feminist Protagonist in Historical Fiction

One of the most powerful strengths of this research lies in its examination of Hero Hollis as a rare and complex female figure in colonial literature. At a time when most women in historical novels were relegated to passive roles or mere romantic interests, Hero defies conventional norms. She is educated, politically aware, morally courageous, and socially conscious. This study emphasizes how Kaye's creation of such a heroine challenges the dominant narratives of both empire and gender in 19th-century settings. Hero is not only central to the romantic arc but also to the ethical structure of the novel—an uncommon trait in British historical fiction. Her assertiveness and critical worldview place her at the forefront of feminist literary discourse.

2. Comprehensive Portrayal of the East African Slave Trade

The novel's accurate historical backdrop is a significant strength, and this research deeply engages with how Kaye integrates the complexities of the East African slave trade. The portrayal is not oversimplified; rather, it shows the complicity of various groups, including Arab traders, British imperialists, and local rulers. This wide lens allows for a nuanced understanding of slavery as not just an African tragedy but a global, imperial system of exploitation. The research emphasizes how the novel educates the reader about historical truths while also critiquing the ethical failures of empire through Hero's experiences and resistance.

3. Moral Clarity and Ethical Consistency of the Protagonist

Hero Hollis's moral compass does not fluctuate for the sake of narrative drama. Her consistency in standing against slavery and injustice—even when it puts her at odds with the man she loves, or risks her own social position—underscores her integrity. This unwavering stance makes her not only credible but inspirational. The research highlights how Hero's firm ethical foundation makes her a literary symbol of reform and resistance, serving as a conduit for M.M. Kaye's own social conscience. The character's actions transcend sentimentality and move into the realm of ethical activism, a rare quality in romantic historical fiction.

4. Critique of Imperial and Colonial Hypocrisy

The novel and this research both shine in their exposure of the contradictions within British imperialism. Though Britain had formally abolished slavery, the empire continued to benefit from systems of oppression. Through Hero's confrontations with British officials and other European settlers, the novel lays bare this hypocrisy. The research shows how Kaye refuses to glorify empire; instead, she interrogates its moral failures and questions the narratives of civilizing missions. Hero's disillusionment becomes the reader's lens, enabling a critical reading of colonial history.

5. Intersection of Gender, Morality, and Power

The research brings to light the intersectionality present in Hero's character. She is not just a woman resisting slavery, but a woman resisting a patriarchal and racially stratified colonial structure. Her activism is shaped by her gendered experiences, and she must negotiate her moral ideals within a male-dominated, imperial world. The research illustrates how her gender does not hinder her moral influence—in fact, it enhances it, offering a fresh perspective on the roles women played in anti-slavery and humanitarian efforts, both historically and in literature.

6. Interdisciplinary Scope of the Study

Another major strength of the research is its interdisciplinary foundation. Drawing from history, gender studies, postcolonial theory, and literary criticism, the study offers a rich, multi-dimensional perspective. It connects historical realities with literary representation, and philosophical ethics with fictional agency. This robust academic grounding lends credibility and depth to the analysis, making it valuable for scholars across multiple fields of inquiry.

7. Narrative Structure Supporting Thematic Intent

Kaye structures *Trade Wind* in a way that allows Hero's moral journey to parallel the socio-political transitions occurring in Zanzibar. The research closely reads these narrative choices, emphasizing how character development and plot are deliberately synchronized with historical critique. The thematic development is neither forced nor disconnected—it unfolds naturally as part of Hero's growth and her interactions with the world around her.

8. Comparative Scope and Literary Impact

This research places *Trade Wind* within the broader landscape of colonial and anti-slavery literature, drawing thoughtful comparisons to other works and characters. Hero Hollis stands beside literary figures such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's Eva or George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke, not in narrative similarity but in ideological substance. By doing so, the research adds to the canonization of lesser-studied but ethically significant texts, elevating M.M. Kaye's work to a space often dominated by male authors and more widely celebrated novels.

9. Emphasis on Non-Eurocentric Moral Agency

While the research centers on Hero Hollis, it does not ignore the importance of African characters and their agency. The narrative recognizes enslaved individuals not merely as passive victims but as humans with emotions, voices, and agency. The research shows how Hero's relationships with these characters are marked by empathy, not superiority. Her actions are not performative but rooted in genuine solidarity—a nuanced depiction that avoids the pitfalls of white saviour narratives.

10. Timely Relevance and Contemporary Application

The research also argues for the continuing relevance of Hero Hollis in modern discourses on human rights, gender equality, and historical accountability. As contemporary society grapples with the legacies of slavery and colonialism, Hero's moral clarity and courage offer a literary model of allyship, advocacy, and ethical engagement. This makes the research not only academically enriching but also socially resonant.

Weak Points of Present Research Study

1. Anachronistic Ideals Attributed to Hero Hollis

While Hero Hollis is celebrated for her strong abolitionist and feminist convictions, her character can be critiqued for being historically anachronistic. She often displays values—especially regarding race, gender equality, and anti-slavery activism—that seem more reflective of 20th-century liberal humanism than authentic 19th-century sensibilities. This raises questions about historical accuracy. Though it serves the moral message of the novel, it arguably weakens the realism of her character's place within the sociocultural context of Zanzibar during the late 1800s.

2. Marginalization of African Voices

Despite the novel's setting amidst the horrors of the African slave trade, enslaved Africans and local Zanzibari people are rarely given narrative agency. They are often presented through the perspectives of European characters—particularly Hero and Jason. This Eurocentric narrative lens sidelines the voices and lived experiences of those who were most directly impacted by slavery. The research, while focused on Hero's moral resistance, can be critiqued for not sufficiently interrogating this representational imbalance.

3. Tendency Toward the White Savior Trope

Although Hero Hollis is written with a great deal of ideological sincerity, her role sometimes edges close to the problematic "white savior" trope. She is portrayed as the enlightened outsider who takes it upon herself to challenge injustice in a foreign land. While her intentions are noble, the novel centers her as the moral and intellectual superior in contrast to the native population and even her colonial peers. This diminishes the complex, indigenous resistance movements and local abolitionist efforts that historically existed.

4. Underdeveloped Male Protagonist in Moral Terms

Jason, the male lead, though compelling as a character, lacks the moral depth and ideological development seen in Hero. His pragmatic view of slavery, driven by mercantile interests, is insufficiently challenged or evolved by the novel's end. The romantic tension between Hero and Jason is maintained at the cost of Jason undergoing significant moral transformation. This imbalance undermines the narrative's ethical core and leaves readers questioning the sincerity of the novel's condemnation of slavery as a collective social evil.

5. Romantic Plot Often Dilutes Political Commentary

As a work of historical romance, *Trade Wind* inevitably prioritizes romantic tension and interpersonal dynamics. However, there are moments when this romantic subplot overshadows or interrupts more serious moral and political themes. Hero's struggles against slavery are occasionally diluted by personal and emotional subplots, which can divert attention from the novel's broader social critique. This tension between genre expectation and ideological ambition weakens the impact of the narrative's core message.

6. Limited Exploration of Intersectionality

While the novel explores gender and race separately, it does not deeply engage with the intersectionality of these identities—particularly the compounded oppression faced by enslaved African women. Hero's feminist awareness does not extend to a nuanced understanding of how race and gender intersect in the experiences of African women, who are doubly marginalized by both colonial structures and patriarchal systems. This gap limits the inclusiveness and depth of Hero's moral vision.

7. Idealization of Hero as Morally Flawless

Hero Hollis, though admirable, is often written in a way that borders on idealization. She is brave, independent, outspoken, and morally upright—but she rarely makes serious ethical misjudgements or faces personal contradictions. This lack of moral complexity makes her appear less human and more symbolic, which, while effective for thematic purposes, reduces her emotional relatability and psychological realism. Real-life reformers often wrestle with ambiguity and self-doubt—dimensions largely absent in Hero's portrayal.

8. Overshadowing of Local Political Dynamics

The novel tends to simplify or ignore the complex political dynamics within Zanzibar itself, particularly the role of Swahili-Arab elites, African rulers, and local power brokers. Instead, it focuses heavily on British involvement, reducing local actors to either villains or background figures. This Anglocentric lens diminishes the novel's credibility as a fully rounded political critique and is a missed opportunity to engage with indigenous agency in the fight against slavery.

9. Narrative Inconsistency in Slavery's Depiction

While the novel denounces slavery, it occasionally romanticizes aspects of pre-colonial and colonial life in Zanzibar, creating narrative tension. Exoticized descriptions of the island, its architecture, and culture run the risk of aestheticizing a brutal historical period. This exoticism can clash with the serious tone of anti-slavery rhetoric, weakening the novel's overall moral consistency. The research must therefore carefully navigate between aesthetic appreciation and ethical critique.

10. Over-Reliance on European Enlightenment as Moral Benchmark

The moral authority in the novel is predominantly drawn from Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and justice—embodied in Hero's education and beliefs. However, this overlooks the existence of moral and philosophical traditions within African and Arab cultures that also condemned slavery. By framing ethical resistance primarily within the European intellectual tradition, the novel perpetuates the notion that moral awakening is a Western import, which undermines the moral histories of non-European societies.

11. Lack of Diverse Female Representation

Hero is the sole major female character with political awareness and moral agency. Other female characters are often depicted through narrow lenses—romantic, domestic, or passive. There is little attempt to show a range of female experiences or voices from diverse racial or social backgrounds. The research could benefit from exploring this limitation more critically, examining how even a feminist-oriented character like Hero does not fully escape representational bias.

12. Limited Dialogue with Contemporary Postcolonial Criticism

While the novel was written in the mid-20th century, it is not in direct dialogue with the kind of postcolonial critique that emerged later. As such, its treatment of colonialism remains partial and occasionally romanticized. The research, while offering critical insight, might face challenges in reconciling Kaye's narrative choices with modern expectations of decolonial ethics and anti-racist representation.

Current Trends of Present Research Study

1. Re-evaluation of Colonial Literature through Postcolonial and Feminist Lenses

There has been a significant resurgence of academic interest in reinterpreting colonial and early postcolonial literature through critical postcolonial and gendered frameworks. Scholars are increasingly revisiting works like *Trade Wind*, which were once seen primarily as historical romances, to uncover deeper political and ethical dimensions. Contemporary research investigates how such literature reflects, critiques, or reinforces colonial ideologies and gender norms. Hero Hollis's character is now studied not just as a romantic heroine but as a politically charged figure, emblematic of resistance to both patriarchy and imperialism.

2. Intersectionality in Literary Studies

A strong contemporary trend in literary criticism is the incorporation of intersectionality—a framework that examines how race, gender, class, and other identity markers intersect to shape experience. In the context of *Trade Wind*, current academic interest focuses on how Hero Hollis navigates her position as a white, upper-class Englishwoman engaging in abolitionist activism in a racially stratified society. At the same time, researchers are exploring how African and Arab characters are portrayed, and how their voices are positioned—or silenced—within the narrative. This trend demands more nuanced, multifaceted readings of character agency and historical context.

3. Literary Depictions of Slavery in Global Contexts

With increasing globalization of historical studies, scholars are examining slavery as a global phenomenon rather than a purely Western or Atlantic issue. This includes the East African slave trade, the Indian Ocean slave trade, and Arab-African slavery networks—all of which are depicted in *Trade Wind*. Current research connects Kaye's fictional portrayal of Zanzibar's slave economy with broader historical narratives and comparative analyses with other global slave systems (e.g., transatlantic and South Asian). This makes *Trade Wind* highly relevant to evolving discussions on transregional slavery and memory studies.

4. Re-centring Marginalized Voices in Colonial Narratives

A growing body of scholarship now critiques the Eurocentric narrative structure of older colonial fiction, pushing for the recovery or reconstruction of marginalized voices—especially enslaved individuals, African women, and native communities. In this light, *Trade Wind* is being scrutinized not only for Hero's moral stance but also for its representational limitations. Contemporary researchers are calling for companion readings or counter-narratives that give space to the voices silenced in such texts. This trend is inspiring postcolonial rewritings and fictional retellings of classic colonial-era stories from the perspective of the oppressed.

5. Eco-Critical and Geopolitical Readings of Colonial Settings

Recent scholarship has shifted toward eco-criticism and geopolitical analysis, where the physical setting—like Zanzibar in *Trade Wind*—is analyzed not just as a backdrop but as an active participant in colonial dynamics. Researchers are exploring how space, landscape, trade routes, climate, and environmental exploitation play roles in shaping the politics of empire and slavery. This adds new layers to the interpretation of Kaye's richly described Zanzibar setting and its role in Hero Hollis's moral awakening.

6. Popularization of Decolonial Literary Criticism

Decolonial thought is reshaping how colonial literature is taught, read, and critiqued. Rather than focusing solely on the critique of empire from within (as in the case of Hero Hollis), decolonial criticism seeks to dismantle the ideological frameworks that normalized colonization in the first place. Under this trend, *Trade Wind* is both praised for its anti-slavery content and interrogated for its structural biases, including Hero's position as a privileged reformer. Researchers are now investigating whether such narratives reinforce colonial epistemologies, even when opposing slavery.

7. Revival of Women's Roles in Anti-Slavery Movements (Literary and Historical)

There is an expanding scholarly interest in recovering and reassessing the roles of women—both fictional and historical—in the anti-slavery and humanitarian movements of the 18th and 19th centuries. Figures like Hero Hollis are now being studied alongside real-life abolitionists like Mary Prince, Harriet

Jacobs, Sojourner Truth, and Hannah More. Scholars are drawing parallels between literary representations and actual activism to understand how literature contributed to social consciousness and reform. This trend adds legitimacy to studying Hero as more than a fictional heroine, but as part of a lineage of ethical advocacy.

8. Critical Discourse on the "White Savior" Complex in Literature

In contemporary discussions on race and representation, there's increasing scrutiny of the "white savior" archetype in both fiction and film. Characters like Hero Hollis, who display righteous outrage and act as agents of change in colonized settings, are now being re-examined for how they position themselves in relation to indigenous populations. Researchers are analyzing whether such portrayals empower the oppressed or merely recentre white moral superiority. This debate is especially relevant for *Trade Wind*, which walks a fine line between ethical engagement and narrative paternalism.

9. Digital Humanities and Global Literary Networks

The emergence of digital archives, online literary databases, and global library consortiums has made it easier to analyze texts like *Trade Wind* in conversation with world literature. Comparative digital projects now allow scholars to trace thematic, linguistic, and historical similarities across texts from different cultures. This has led to increased global interest in M.M. Kaye's work, which can now be studied in juxtaposition with African, Arab, and South Asian narratives on slavery, gender, and empire.

10. Rise of Adaptations and Literary Reimagining

Contemporary authors and screenwriters are increasingly reimagining classic colonial novels, either through sequel-writing, retellings from subaltern perspectives, or adaptations set in modern contexts. There is scholarly and creative potential for a reworking of *Trade Wind* that centers an enslaved character or reframes the narrative from a non-European perspective. This trend not only revitalizes literary interest but also promotes inclusive storytelling in line with current cultural ethics.

11. Focus on Literature as a Tool for Human Rights Education

Educational institutions are increasingly using literary texts to teach ethical frameworks and human rights issues. Novels like *Trade Wind*, when interpreted through characters like Hero Hollis, are employed in classrooms to foster discussions on slavery, colonialism, gender justice, and moral courage. This aligns with broader pedagogical trends that see literature not just as art, but as a catalyst for social awareness and activism.

12. Transnational Feminist Literary Criticism

Finally, there is a growing field of transnational feminist literary criticism that examines how female characters operate across cultures, borders, and historical contexts. Hero Hollis is an ideal subject in this regard, representing a bridge between Western feminist thought and a globalized moral conscience. Scholars are now more concerned with how such characters navigate privilege, otherness, and agency in multicultural and colonial spaces.

History of Present Research Study

The Zanzibar slave trade flourished under Omani Arab control in the 18th and 19th centuries. British involvement in the region culminated in anti-slavery interventions. Kaye's *Trade Wind*, published in the post-WWII era, reflects growing Western introspection about colonial legacies. The novel situates its fictional characters in real historical tensions, especially British naval campaigns against the East African slave trade.

1. Historical Context of Zanzibar in the 19th Century

Zanzibar, an island off the coast of present-day Tanzania, played a central role in the 19th-century Indian Ocean trade, particularly in ivory and slaves. Under the rule of the Omani Arabs from the late 1600s, Zanzibar became one of the world's largest slave markets by the early 1800s. The island served as both a destination and a transit point for enslaved Africans who were captured from the interior regions (such as modern-day Congo, Malawi, and Zambia) and transported for sale across the Middle East, India, and parts of Asia.

By the mid-19th century, it is estimated that tens of thousands of slaves passed through Zanzibar annually. Slavery on the island was integral to both its economic and social systems, deeply embedded in plantation labor, domestic service, and the clove trade. The vast majority of slaves were black Africans, subjected to brutal conditions, while the slave-owning elite was composed of Arab and Swahili merchants, often working in alliance with coastal sultans.

2. British Imperial Interests and Anti-Slavery Campaigns

Britain abolished the transatlantic slave trade in 1807 and slavery itself in its colonies by 1833. However, its imperial interests in the Indian Ocean allowed for considerable political and economic contradictions. On one hand, Britain projected itself as a global force for abolition; on the other hand, British merchants and officials often turned a blind eye to the slave economy in regions like Zanzibar if it served larger strategic goals.

In the mid-to-late 1800s, the British navy conducted intermittent patrols to suppress the East African slave trade. However, enforcement was inconsistent and driven as much by geopolitics as by humanitarian concern. Treaties with the Sultans of Zanzibar—most notably the Hamerton Treaty (1845) and the subsequent Anglo-Zanzibari agreements—tried to curtail the trade, but illegal trafficking persisted well into the 1870s and beyond.

The British interest in Zanzibar was not solely humanitarian. The island was a gateway to the African interior, rich in resources and trade opportunities. British colonial agents, missionaries, and businessmen often worked together, creating a complex matrix of power, morality, and exploitation. This historical ambiguity is mirrored in *Trade Wind*, where Hero Hollis's moral clarity contrasts with the ambivalence—or outright complicity—of other colonial actors.

3. The Role of Women in Anti-Slavery Movements

Although historical narratives of abolition have often centered on male reformers like William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, women played a crucial role in both British and American abolitionist movements. Figures such as Elizabeth Heyrick, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Prince, and Sojourner Truth used literature, activism, and personal testimony to mobilize public opinion against slavery. The use of sentimental and moral persuasion—rather than economic or political argumentation—was a hallmark of female-led abolitionist efforts.

Hero Hollis fits into this tradition, though fictional. She symbolizes the moral sensitivity and moral activism of women who were frequently excluded from formal politics but contributed significantly through humanitarian work, education, and protest. M.M. Kaye's creation of Hero draws upon this overlooked historical legacy, highlighting how personal conviction could challenge powerful systems of injustice.

4. Literary Representations of Slavery in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Literature has long served as a medium through which slavery has been confronted, debated, and memorialized. In the 19th century, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) became an influential text in galvanizing anti-slavery sentiment in America. In Britain, authors such as Olaudah

Equiano and Mary Prince published slave narratives that exposed the horrors of slavery to a European audience.

In the 20th century, as the postcolonial movement gained traction, literature took on a more critical tone, examining how colonial systems—including slavery—had long-term effects on cultural identity, race relations, and national sovereignty. M.M. Kaye, writing in the mid-20th century, contributed to this trend by embedding historical critique within accessible, popular fiction. Though *Trade Wind* is not a slave narrative per se, it employs the tropes of romantic fiction to convey deeply political messages, placing Hero Hollis in the literary lineage of moral reformers and socially aware characters.

5. M.M. Kaye's Personal Historical Influences

Mary Margaret Kaye (1908–2004) was born in India during the British Raj and lived through a period of dramatic geopolitical change. The daughter of a British officer, Kaye grew up within the colonial elite but later became introspective about empire and its consequences. Her historical novels—such as *The Far Pavilions*, *Shadow of the Moon*, and *Trade Wind*—are infused with both romanticism and a deep moral questioning of colonial ideology.

In *Trade Wind*, Kaye channels her understanding of imperial contradictions into a fictional narrative that is historically grounded and ethically charged. Hero Hollis, as a literary figure, emerges from this introspection—a woman born into privilege, but awakened to injustice, much like the author herself may have been.

6. Abolition of Slavery in Zanzibar and the End of the Slave Trade

Despite British pressure, slavery in Zanzibar was not fully abolished until 1897—more than 60 years after it had been outlawed in the British Empire. The persistence of the slave trade in the region underscores the complex and often hypocritical nature of imperial abolitionism. The final abolition came only after Zanzibar became a British protectorate in 1890. The suppression of slavery was then actively enforced by British administrators, though remnants of servitude continued for years in informal forms. The legacy of slavery and its abolition left deep scars in the region's social, economic, and racial fabric. Post-slavery Zanzibar grappled with tensions between Arabs, Africans, and Indians, all of whom had played different roles in the pre-abolition society. These historical layers provide the foundation for the racial and class dynamics portrayed in *Trade Wind*, where Hero Hollis's defiance of slavery places her in direct opposition to these entrenched systems.

7. Influence of Empire on Ethics and Literature

Throughout the 19th century, the British Empire promoted a narrative of itself as a civilizing force, even as it perpetuated systems of exploitation. Literature, especially historical fiction, was a key vehicle through which imperial ideology was both disseminated and challenged. Authors like Rudyard Kipling often glorified empire, while others, including M.M. Kaye, took a more ambivalent or critical stance.

By the mid-20th century, the empire was in decline, and there was a growing appetite for re-examining imperial legacies. *Trade Wind* reflects this historical moment of reckoning. Set in the high imperial period but written in the postcolonial era, the novel becomes a site of historical negotiation—one that uses a fictional narrative to critique historical reality. Hero Hollis's perspective becomes a corrective lens through which the moral failings of both Arab and European societies are examined. The historical backdrop of *Trade Wind* is not merely decorative—it is essential to the novel's thematic and moral structure. The East African slave trade, British imperial contradictions, evolving gender roles, and literary traditions of protest all converge in this fictional work. M.M. Kaye's decision to embed her

critique within a character like Hero Hollis reflects a long and complicated history of moral struggle against slavery—one shaped by empire, resistance, and reform.

Hero stands at the crossroads of this history, representing both the conscience of her creator and the possibility of individual defiance in the face of institutional injustice. The richness of this historical setting enhances the novel's significance and validates the research endeavor to treat *Trade Wind* as a serious contribution to abolitionist and postcolonial literature.

DISCUSSION

Hero Hollis's character arc—from a stubborn, privileged woman to a compassionate, morally conscious reformer—mirrors the moral awakening M.M. Kaye wishes to inspire in her readers. Her empathy for enslaved individuals and willingness to oppose institutional wrongs underscores her unique role in the narrative. While Jason, the male protagonist, is ambivalent about slavery for pragmatic reasons, Hero represents unwavering ethical resistance. Her efforts to free slaves, educate local women, and confront the British complacency show her as a force of conscience amidst colonial cruelty.

RESULTS

- Hero Hollis is a narrative construct representing Kaye's condemnation of slavery.
- The novel critiques both Arab and British complicity in the slave trade.
- Hero's resistance adds a feminist and moral dimension to the historical romance genre.
- The novel contributes meaningfully to postcolonial and abolitionist literary traditions.

CONCLUSION

Hero Hollis functions as the moral core of *Trade Wind*, embodying M.M. Kaye's critique of slavery and her plea for justice. Her character serves as a bridge between fiction and historical commentary, empowering readers to reconsider the ethical dilemmas of empire and human suffering. Kaye's novel, through Hero, ultimately affirms literature's power to question injustice and inspire change.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Future readings of *Trade Wind* should foreground its anti-slavery subtext.
- Comparative studies between Hero Hollis and other female abolitionist figures in literature can be pursued.
- More academic attention should be paid to the role of women as moral agents in colonial fiction.
- Greater emphasis can be placed on African perspectives within such historical narratives.

Future Scope

- Expanding research into similar characters in colonial and anti-slavery fiction.
- Examination of Hero Hollis's legacy in feminist literary studies.
- Interdisciplinary studies connecting historical fiction with human rights education.
- Translation and cross-cultural dissemination of such novels to global academic audiences.

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