This is to certify that the
dissertation entitled

'MAKE HASTE & LET ME SEE YOU WITH A GOOD CARGO OF NEGROES': GENDER, HEALTH, AND VIOLENCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY MIDDLE PASSAGE

presented by

SOWANDE' MUSTAKEEM

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph.D. degree in HISTORY

Daisa R. Berry
Major Professor's Signature

29 April 2008

Date

'MAKE HASTE & LET ME SEE YOU WITH A GOOD CARGO OF NEGROES': GENDER, HEALTH, AND VIOLENCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY MIDDLE PASSAGE

VOLUME I

By

Sowande' Mustakeem

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

2008

ABSTRACT

'MAKE HASTE & LET ME SEE YOU WITH A GOOD CARGO OF NEGROES': GENDER, HEALTH, AND VIOLENCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY MIDDLE PASSAGE

By

Sowande' Mustakeem

The introduction of the Atlantic Slave Trade in the latter part of the fifteenth century forged the beginning interface between Europeans and Africans. In result a slave based enterprise gained worldwide acclaim. As different countries vied for monopolistic control of this expanding venture, enslaved Africans made up the centerpiece of the then emerging Atlantic economy. This project calls attention to the infamous 'Middle Passage' which effectively brought together diverse populations of people - captains, surgeons, seamen, and enslaved Africans. It conducts a socio-cultural investigation of the slave ship experience common between Europeans and their African captives.

Make Haste builds on the idea that the Middle Passage began at the point of procurement and ended at the point of sale within slave societies of the New World. Slave ships operated as mobile micro-cultural and micro-political systems crossing the Atlantic. However, encased within these transportable societies of Atlantic vessels are the innumerable experiences of enslaved men, women, and children; which this study utilizes as a trajectory to highlight factors of gender and age to put forth a much needed conversation regarding female captives as well as those deemed elderly/"old" by their captors. Drawing upon a variety of sources to uncover this dynamic history, this dissertation complicates the traditional perspective of the Middle Passage experience by posing new questions in order to highlight the diverse human testimonies of bondage. As

such, it contributes to the growing body of Middle Passage studies by examining critical factors of gender, violence, self-sabotage, motherhood, illness, psychological trauma and death.

A variety of important themes arose within the trade. Foremost, recognizing the widespread decline of captive's physical health, this project considers the influence of unsanitary conditions at sea, malnutrition, ship cleanliness, and inclement weather to provide another angle in analyzing the relationship of disease and mortality as well as physical disabilities widespread in the lives of bondpeople. Likewise, amidst their enforcement within the trade, many captives responded to their enslavement through a diversity of methods including: self-sabotage, poisoning, abortion, and ship revolts in order to defend their lives, in some cases to protect their young offspring, and ultimately to obtain freedom. Being a study of the African Diaspora, this dissertation argues that the exchanges carried out at sea established a microcosmic foundation of interaction between Africans and sailors that further magnified on land within New Word slave communities.

I humbly dedicate the following testimonies of strength, and ultimate survival to the countless and forever nameless women, men, and children who stood as human beings despite being forcibly bartered and sold within a system entrenched in greed. May your spirits be appeased and rightfully liberated in knowing the varied stories of your lives do not go untold.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To whom much is given, much is expected. Throughout the many years this project has taken shape I have benefited enormously from a multitude of people that have graced my path; to which I can only humble myself in hopes that I have exceeded at least some expectations as a grand/daughter, student, colleague, friend, and most of all as an always evolving scholar. My heart is filled with sincere appreciation for the beautiful spirits (both ancestral and human) that have contributed to making me an even better person. I first give thanks to the Creator for guiding me ever forward and always granting endless blessings as well as important lessons necessary to making all of this possible. I would be remiss if I did not express my sincere gratitude for the varied entities that walk with me, always lighting my path. I acknowledge your blowing this topic at my feet of which I am eternally honored in standing on the shoulders of many that came before me in continuing to tell the stories.

I have been very fortunate to be surrounded by a rigorous yet always encouraging circle of wisdom within my dissertation committee. To begin, I was truly blessed to gain my advisor and mentor Dr. Daina Ramey Berry who through her own life/work demonstrated the art of professionalism and the importance of always being unafraid to strive for greatness. I thank you for your patience with my growth and your untiring commitment to my training/success which has undoubtedly helped to make me an even better student, researcher, and scholar. You are truly a remarkable scholar/historian in your own vein. In many senses, Dr. Pero Dagbovie has been much of a co-advisor to me

during my time at Michigan State. He always went out of his way to instill even more confidence in my capabilities as a young scholar humbly looking to operate in the same vein as the 'old school' tradition of earlier professional scholars. Thank you for being a model professor, mentor, and more importantly a cherished friend that constantly encouraged me to 'grind it out'! Both Dr. Peter Beattie and Dr. Laurent Dubois equally helped to further broaden my understanding of the experiences of African descended people beyond traditional boundaries of North America; I send many thanks to you both for always encouraging me further with my own work and most of all for sparking my constant excitement in Latin American and Caribbean studies. Dr. Darlene Clark Hine graciously exposed many of us within the Comparative Black History to wider world of academia both within the classroom setting and also through professional conferences; Thank you immensely for further inspiring my own drive and reinforcing the necessity of a hard-work ethic. I am undoubtedly grateful for the unanticipated hallway conversations shared over the years with Dr. Jeffrey Wray who also held a important place on my dissertation committee; I thank you for the insightful criticism you offered in helping me to think even more broadly about my growing project.

Along with professors, I also have grown tremendously through relationships formulated and maintained with graduate students at Michigan State University. Among my cohort of colleagues I am extremely grateful for having the chance to befriend David Carletta, Ronald Desuze, Piril Atabay, Keina J. Staley, Mike Pfister, Fumiko, Carlos Aleman, Jason Friedman, Lauren Kientz, Kelly Palmer, Amy Hay, Dan Dalrymple, John Grant, Nothkula Cele, Bethany Hicks, Ibra Sene, Asaan Starr, Leslie and Eric Washington. I was always fortunate to be apart of a supportive writing group comprised

of Mary Clingerman, Marcie Cowley, and Mona Jackson to whom from each of them I grew in my own scholarship but even more I was able to stay sane by their friendship and continued support. As the circle of students working under my advisor grows my net seems to further widen permitting me the chance to gain new colleagues that I am also proud to call my friends especially Nik Ribianzsky and Jennifer Barclay. Being the 'social butterfly' that I have always been cast, my ties within the university extended beyond History and into the African American & African Studies Program which has provided a much needed balance to my life. I am eternally grateful for the ties/close connections shared with Rashida Harrison, Bayyinah Jeffries, Da-Da, Mary Phillips, Darcia Grant, Harry Odamtu, Austin Jackson, Walter, and Brittany O'Neal. There have also been several students who each amidst their own growth reminded me of my purpose in lifting as I climb. For that I wish to humbly thank: Meagan Mason, Ileana Cortez, Ashley Eigner, Jenae Chinn, Eric Washington, Okechukwu, Jamal Williams, Jessica Shawver, Raven Jones, and Courtney Griffith. I wish you continued success in each of your own lives. Likewise, people often come and go with the ever changing years and despite the lapse in time I will forever hold dear to the friendships shared at MSU with Yared Desta and Osie Lee Gaines, III.

During my time at Ohio State I was extremely privileged to have been surrounded by and always able to interact with a large circle of dynamic people, who all walk their various paths now, but the circle forever remains tight! Foremost I have to thank three former students who I learned from amidst their own education: Jamie Columbine, Ricardo, and Brandi Hogan. I also wish to thank the circle of fellow graduate students who further enriched my life: Veianca Millet, Ezemenari Obasi (you both showed me

kindness and true friendship then and over the years that can never be replaced.) Charles "CP" Pryor (you have been a strong force in my life always offering the insightful wisdom and support needed to help a sistah through), Leon Stevenson (My biggest fan by far; thank you for always being a beacon of pure light and friendship. The world is honored to have such a beautiful soul such as yourself and Rebecca too!), Michael 'Mike J' Jackson (thank you being the big brother I needed; I love you man!), John Nathaniel Singer (despite the many miles you have always been that big "brother" and dear friend with whom I will always cherish the memories), Esther Jones (thank you for always checking on me even during those low points of the dissertation and offering a laugh), Jelani Favors (I am eternally grateful for your friendship and for always breaking down this often chaotic process of academia to me), Alvin Conteh (I appreciate you always checking on me and always striving to keep the OSU circle in touch), Staceyanne Headley, Corey Posey, Travis, Javonne Paul, April Peters (thank you for the encouragement and diva dinner came at the right time!), Rich Milner (thanks to you for exposing us to all to the finish line of finishing the Ph.D. first!), Derrick White, Cicero Fain, and Ernest Perry. I would be remiss if I overlooked Linda James-Myers, Dr. Mphande, Dr. Magbaily Fyle, Mrs. Shirley, Dr. William E. Nelson, (three of the latter whom without them I would have never received my M.A. I am eternally grateful for your untiring support then and still now!).

I would not be where I am without my formative years at Elon College. I was never given a public space to verbalize my eternal thanks for Dr. Mary Jo Festle who saw the potential in me much earlier than many others who would come later. It is because of her "Introduction to African American History" class during my sophomore year that I

finally got direction on my path. I will continue to thank you endlessly for pushing me beyond the talents I even knew I had in order to pursue higher education. In fact, it is because of her that I enrolled at Michigan State. I also have greatly benefited from the support of countless others within the Elon family that continue to hold me up always nudging me towards my greatness: Dr. Wilhelmina Boyd (without your early rigor I may have fallen by the way side; thank for always keeping AAAS first), Mrs. Janice Ratliff (who made me promise to strive only for greatness!), L'Tanya Richmond (thank you for the countless years of support), Robert Springer (I will forever cherish the conversations and laughs that got me through the rough times), Dr. Iris Chapman, Gayle Drew (I appreciate the enthusiasm/potential you saw in me even as a naïve undergraduate student), Mrs. Sara Peterson, Pam and Chalmers Brumbaugh(you both encouraged me like my own family!), Prudence Layne, Dr. Leo Lambert, Thomas Erdmann (your influence on the love of music is filtered throughout this project; thank you) Steven House, Tom Henricks (thank you for the continued support during my earlier and recent years), and last but certainly far from least I want to thank Dr. Helen Mackay for her unwavering kindness and support as I continued to move further in my studies. There have also been several people encouraging onward who have remained important constants in my life emanating from these earlier years: Susan A. Mahoney (who'd have thought we'd come this far. Thank you for being a beautiful friend in my life), Akilah Owens (my girl who was always ready to shout my endeavors from the mountain top; I cannot thank you enough for always being there. I love you sistah!), Shannon & Mike Thurman (and family of course), Jonathan Terrell, Mike Woodson, Rashida Bynum, my main man Tory Cason, Lanzie M. Howard & family, Brad Brooks, Edward Cook &

family, Danielle Dixon & family, Mrs. Lorena Williams, Nikell Bassett & family, Asiyah Sarwari, Lina Tahmass, Charles Berry, Jason Grier, Chad Belafonte & family, Mark Henderson, Genya Erling, Michelle Palma, and Mrs. Janie Williams.

I also benefited from interacting at a host of archives and libraries across different parts of the country/world which allowed me to befriend both Danielle McGuire and Lashawn Harris – many thanks to you both for encouraging me to the finish line! Along with colleagues I am immensely grateful to the entire staff at the Duke University Special Collections (most notably Karen Jean-Hunt for helping to give me the first chance to be awarded to do research); the Rhode Island Historical Society (most especially Phoebe Bailey for keeping me motivated), and the entire staff at the South Carolina Historical Society (most especially Jane Aldrich for being my biggest cheerleader – the world needs more archivist like yourself), Medical University Archives of the University of South Carolina, John Carter Brown Library (especially Richard Ring), South Carolina Department of History & Archives, South Caroliniana Library, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New York Public Library, New York Academy of Medicine (especially Arlene Shaner for showing excitement for my project's potential), New York Historical Society (most especially Lorraine for always offering encouraging words and support for my ever growing project), Liverpool Record Office, National Maritime Museum in London, University of Liverpool Sydney Jones Library, Public Record Office, Royal College of Surgeons, Wellcome Medical Library, Royal Bank of England Archives, National Maritime Museum in Liverpool.

Beyond the comfortable confine of MSU I have continued to expand my growing network of colleagues and friendships gathered along the way. I am fortunate to have

established ties with Abimbola Cole, Holly McGee, Matt Stevenson, Laura Sandy, Kevin Dawson, and Marisa Fuentes. Additionally there are several people/families who opened their home to whom without it much of my research would have never been completed. I humbly thank: Holly Smith & Makhan, The Pighet Family (for having my back from Elon and beyond!), The Berry Family, Saba, Beryle & Ancil Clarke (London), Jennifer Reid (Liverpool), Elwyn Hall, Verdi Hall, Freddie, and Reese (London), Renata Smialek & Charles (London), Uncle James "Sly" Sanders, Laura Sandy (I'm still coming to Manchester!), Von Parnell & Family, The Hammond Family, and Jamie Thomas and Mary Clingerman both who allowed me set up camp at their respective homes whenever I need to come back to MSU for often extended stays.

Several years away from my MSU home have permitted me the opportunity to formulate friendships with a host of other dynamic people including: 'Jady' Jumani Raschid, Andreas "Kwaw" Woods, Jeff Fortin, Kyles Perry, Robert Smith, Colleen Valenscensos, Kathleen Hillard, Jessica Millward, Yvelyine Alexis, Jessica Johnson, Seneca Vaught, Tramaine Anderson. I am equally excited to see my circle of mentors always growing who are forever pushing me in my work and everyday life. Thank you for being a constant source of inspiration both near and afar: Elder Moriba & Mama Kelsey, The Kambon Family,The Baruti Family,The Buie Family, Mama Bernice, Queen Nzinga, The Grantham Family, Adisa Ajamu, Greg Kimathi Carr, and especially Mario & Valethia Beattye. I would like to remiss if I did not recognize and graciously thank Dr. David Roediger, Dr. Todd Savitt, Dr. Michael Tadman, Dr. Tera Hunter, Dr. Lisa Norling, Dr. Leslie Harris, Dr. Jeffrey Bolster, Dr. Amilcar Shabazz, and most of all Dr. Vincent Harding for encouraging me and sparking further excitement through their

scholarship to filter into my own work. Likewise, a special thanks is given to Dr. Robin Kelley, Dr. Komozi Woodard, Dr. John Bracey, Dr. Wade Nobles, Dr. Na'im Akbar, Dr. Marcus Rediker, and especially Dr. David Barry Gaspar who each individually extended themselves to help with my own growth personally and professionally – thank you to all of you for continuing to pave the way for the next generations just short ahead.

My time within graduate school has also granted me the opportunity to garner a significant number of lifelong friends who have given the high fives, and offered the listening ear when my spirit needed it most. For this I am forever grateful for: Talitha LeFlouria (we've come a long way sistah in this colleagiate struggle; know that I am most grateful that you are on my path; by the way the Frankincense & Myrrh double pack helped the brilliance to flow!), Anjulet Tucker, Maurice Hobson, Jakobi Williams, Jeff Brentley (my NYC homie that always kept me motivated), Jarett Fields, Obasi Kitambi (thank you for always sending texts checking on me; remember to keep the faith in your own often daunting process), Frank Pierce (from MI to GA you have had my back; Thank you for always helping to keep my spirits up when I was hitting that wall), Jackie Pryor (thank you for always flowing with positive energy sistah!), Adisa, Michele Reid, Reggie Bradford (I am continually inspired by your talents in the classroom. Although you came later on my path I have to thank you for reminding me of the balanced life beyond the dissertation; I remain appreciative of the growing friendship), Lawrence Jackson, Jamila Moore (keep on striving for the best sistah!), Tim Moore (what a friend/fellow scholar/world traveler I have found in you; thanks for being so patient with me and my work), Curtis Austin, Errol Bullock (thanks to you for stepping it up when I needed it most always daily asking "how much did we get done today" even when I did not want to

hear it!), Stephan Bradley (your advice was always right on time. Know that I will forever cherish the friendship that continues to be cultivated), Nzinga Kemp & Roshmond (my favorite couple who doned me an "academic rockstart" before anyone else but all in all you both continue to keep me culturally energized as you rock the world with your collective brilliance. I love you both.), Kwasida & family (my sistah, thanks for always keeping me encouraged and excited about the future ahead), Melvin Shelton (thanks for always reminding me of my "superstar" status...keep on keeping on brotha!), Jamie Thomas (thank you for always having my back. I wish you continued success as you also strive further on your path within and beyond MSU.) and I must especially thank Rick Mizelle, Jr. (from NJ to Florida you have been a tremendous force on my path always offering the professional and life advice when you least expected it I am sure; I am grateful for who and how you are and especially for always probing me on the 'methodology.')

There are a few other individuals with whom I indebted to for their encouragement, support, and committed friendship. To my fellow writers in the struggle: Eric Kimball & family (Thank you for keeping me focused on the bigger picture of finishing; as we both know the haters can take that long walk . . . .), Abou Bambara (keep gracing the world with your positivity!), Kafentse Chike (thank you for always having my back and reminding me that it is ok to just breathe after all the hardwork;), Christina Webb (thank you for demonstrating true friendship and always being able to look at the other side on virtually every issue), Erik Wilson (continue to keep it real; thank you for always offering a laugh and comical story to keep me light-hearted). I have to give a special shout out to Deirdre 'Dee-Dee' Cooper Owens and Thabiti Willis who on

different sides of the country however simultaneously both offered countless shoulders, listening ears, and positive thoughts and prayers for my progress in finishing. The phone calls and late work nights will forever be cherished. Watch out world here we come! To my beloved CBH family: Kennetta Hammond & Brandon Perry (thank you for being my dear friends and KP for always engaging in "the larger scheme of things" conversation which continue to keep me grounded), Eric Duke (where would I be without your unwavering support; thanks for always keeping it real and echoing my sentiments towards getting it done!), Chantalle, Meredith Roman, and Ken Marshall (thank you to you all for showing me the model of true discipline!).

Unfortunately during the writing of this project several people have exited this realm forever affecting the lives of those they left behind. May your spirits continue to guide us all: Elder Bob Donaldson, Baba Jacob Carruthers, Ossie Davis, Chaka Dagbovie, Baba George Jolly, Aunt Florence Vaughn, James Brown, Mama Franklin, Baba Maay Roosevelt, Max Roach, and especially Baba Asa Hilliard. This dissertation is also put forth in dedication and loving memory of Shawnell "Shawn" Yates (1977 – 2007) who across the many miles stood firmly by my side as a friend and dearly loved God-brother. You graced this world for far too few years, yet amazingly touching an incalculable many. For this may your gentle yet loving spirit remain ever close, smiling upon me and encouraging me further on my earthly path; I'll look for you in the whirlwind.

To my beloved family I thank you all for lifting me up and remaining patient amidst my waning phone calls, emails, and visits. I am forever enriched to have each of you in and apart of my life: Grandma Marjorie Wood, Grandma Helen Leggette,

Grandma Lena Benton, Grandpa "Dad" Preston Benton and the entire Benton family, The Hsi Family, The Harris-Eades Family, Jackie Shealey & family, Dion Shealey (and the growing family), Aunt Missie & Janiyah, Uncle Mike Shealey, Uncle James 'Tony' Shealey, Uncle Kenny & Aunt Shirley, Lil' Kenny (and the beautifully expanding family), The Mustakeem Family, The McMillan Family, Kenneth Butler & family, Aunt Selma, Aunt Euzelle & Uncle Bert, Cousin Woody, Cousin Diane, Aunt Rose & Uncle Bill, Grandma Laverne, Cousin Larry, Erskine, Mack, Sandy, CJ, Neece, Sakeena, Aunt Juanita & Family, The Justice Family, The Terry Family (Aunt Bug & Uncle Lowell, Angie, Rodney, and Daniel), Conchita & Jai Battle, Evelyn Lynch & Deirdre, Doobi, Aunt Donnie, Aunt Gloria Jean, P.J, Chelse, Denise Holloway (I appreciate the reminders to stay healthy amidst the work; you are a dynamic addition to our family). Kayleigh, and Julie, In closing I thank both of my parents – Velma & Mohammed Mustakeem - for serving as the portal for my entrance to do the work and begin to live out one of my many purposes in this life. To my mother and beloved friend, I especially thank you for initially opening my eyes and heart to the study of African American history as a young child. Your continued dedication to my growth throughout the years has helped keep me sustained mentally, culturally, and intellectually, for which I am eternally grateful. Thank you to you and my line of matriarchal grandmothers (that walk with us both) for keeping me encouraged and loving me amidst and beyond the current project. I love you all infinitely.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

In 1770, at the age of thirteen, West African Quobna Ottobah Cugoano visited an uncle who lived close to his birthplace of Agimague.[1] Once there, he befriended "some of the children of my uncle's hundreds of relations" which eased the transition to his new locale. On many occasions they ventured into the surrounding areas to engage in various amusements. One afternoon Cugoano explained, "I refused to go with the rest being rather apprehensive that something might happen to us" during their normal escapades. A fellow playmate jeered at him declaring, "you are afraid to venture your carcase, or else of the *bounsam*, which is the devil." Although he remained fearful, the young man's taunting prompted Cugoano to join his friends and set out for their usual site in the wooded area.

This day proved far different than the rest. Less than two hours into their playtime "troubles began, when several ruffians came upon us suddenly," and declared to the children they "committed a fault against their lord, and we must go and answer for it ourselves before him." To any young person this confrontation probably seemed intimidating. Therefore, Cugoano and his playmates "attempted in vain to run away, but pistols and cutlasses were soon introduced, threatening, that if we offered to stir we should all lie dead on the spot." Fearful of the deadly warning, they obliged and their capturers "immediately divided [them] into different parties" bound towards the coastal shoreline.

This dissertation study of the Middle Passage charts a process similar to Cugoano moving from capture to the sales of other bondpeople within the New World. Amidst the

[1] This area is located in present-day Ghana.

coast bound journey that Cugoano's captors forced he and his friends, they arrived at a place described to have "a great multitude of people, [along with] having different music playing." The children's fears momentarily subsided, according to his recollection that, "all the day after we got there, we were very merry with music, dancing and singing." At the conclusion of the evening festivities, the children were "separated into different houses with different people." Unbeknownst to Cugoano, this represented the last time he would see his former playmates and family. The next day he asked about their whereabouts and learned that they went with natives "to the sea side to bring home some rum, guns and powder" for later use. Even in his tender years he recognized "there was some treachery" embroiling, which forced him to reason "that my hopes of returning home again were all over" and thereafter he refused all food and drink. His apprehension intensified further upon realization that he "would be then missing at home above five or six days."

Cugoano's captors kept him in the unfamiliar village for six more days. Prior to his next relocation he overheard a conversation between two local men regarding his fate. The next morning he traveled towards Cape Coast with a new abductor. During the trek he observed that the man "carried a large bag with some gold dust," which he learned would serve "to buy some goods at the sea side to take with him to Agimague." As the two neared the coast Cugoano saw several white people interspersed within different communities. In so doing, he recalled that they "made me afraid that they would eat me" perhaps due to hearsay among his family and friends. Once on the coast he bore witness to the spectacle of captivity that stretched across the shoreline. He observed, "many of my miserable countrymen chained two and two, some handcuffed, and some with their

hands tied behind." Probing his own fate, the man leading him remarked that they took him "to learn the ways of the *brow-sow*, that is the white faced people."

In Chapter 1, I examine this same part of the slave trade experience showing the arrival of captives on the coast and the transactions conducted to determine their fate beyond their homeland. It begins by addressing merchants' expectations regarding sailors' involvement in slaving activities. Once in Africa, the analysis follows the delicate relationships that unfolded between Europeans and Africans, granting foreign traders full-scale participation in the business of slave dealings. The discussion explores the platform of racial and cultural biases, trickery, and more importantly violence which equally shaped the lives of African people. Moving beyond a linear view of the "slaves" carried to the coast; the chapter explores various categories of captives, according to age, gender, and health.

Cugoano gained a better sense of his own bonded future during his coastal holding. It is difficult to determine where the native man carried him. Once on the shoreline he observed his captor "take a gun, a piece of cloth, and some lead" off his person, which afterwards the man explained to the young Cugoano that he must leave him alone. "This made me cry bitterly," he professed, however his cries went unanswered. Another native probably transported him to the nearby prison where they stowed him for three days while awaiting a foreign vessel's arrival. Confined within the darkened fort, we can only speculate upon the sense of terror he underwent, especially in hearing "the groans and cries of many," other captured Africans. As expected, he grew considerably sensitive to his unfamiliar surroundings. According to him "there was nothing to be heard but rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and the groans and cries of

our fellowmen." At other times his captivity exposed him to the relentless violence indigenous to the trade. He witnessed that "some [bondpeople] would not stir from the ground," perhaps to prevent being taken elsewhere, to which any displaced disobedience caused them to be immediately "lashed and beat in the most horrible manner." Exposed to these graphic testimonies of aggression, this likely enforced a radical thinking of Cugoano's own young life.

His transfer and stowage on ship created further alarm. Chapter 2 of the present study similarly moves aboard slavers, calling attention to the range of environmental factors influential to captive's physical decline. It also reveals how unhealthy conditions began during their coastal confinements and continued within the bellows of slave vessels. Although traders sought to employ precautionary measures to preserve captives in a healthy state, captains and surgeons often proved powerless in countering the manifestation of various ailments that arose in bondpeople's health. As such, this chapter contends that interrelated factors of ship cleanliness, diet, and inclement weather all collectively affected the health of different bondpeople.

The commander aboard the ship that Cugoano found himself stowed, he continued boarding slaves after placing him in the hold. Cugoano somehow noticed that they stayed "several days in sight of our native land." He tried soliciting help from other people aboard however as he relayed, "I could find no good person to give any information of my situation to Accasa at Agimague." The gravity of his situation seemed to weaken him further. In doing so, he realized therein "I was thus lost to my dear

indulgent parents and relations, and they to me." To which he added, "[a]ll my help was cries and tears, and these could not avail."[2]

Cugoano's story offers a rare glimpse into slave trade as experienced by a younger captive. Not only does it expose the intricate web between inland capturers, coastal men, and foreign traders, but it also provides another personal testimony to our own understanding of the trade.[3] *Make Haste & Let Me See You With a Good Cargo of Negroes* seeks to uncover similar stories of other bondpeople forcibly hurled into the trade that flourished across the 18th century Atlantic.[4] Interrogating the social history of the infamous 'Middle Passage,' the following study sets out to trace other aspects of trade

---

[2] The summary of Cuogano's experiences are extracted from *Thoughts and Sentiments On the Evil of Slavery,* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999; formerly published 1787), 12-16.

[3] This idea is built upon the fact the classic narrative of Olaudah Equiano is regularly cited as a primary source in reference to the trade. Historian Vincent Caretta recently offered the first challenge to Equiano's history. See, Caretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Penguin Books, 2007). Contemporary scholars are often challenged with finding additional testimony of the slave trade from the perspective of bondpeople. However, the author of this study contends that it is important to fully appreciate and integrate other available accounts to gain a broader understanding of this complicated history.

[4] This study attempts to use other terms in place of "slave' wherever possible in order to better highlight the lives of those enslaved *as* people. I view them as bound within a state of bondage rather than as slaves, especially when one recognizes that every person did entered the trade previously enslaved. In most cases, I use terms: "bondmen," "bondwomen," "bondpeople," "bonded people," "captives," "captive Africans," "enslaved," and "enslaved Africans"; These terms are employed interchangeably throughout the project.

A hierarchy existed aboard different slave ships with captains at the top of the social ladder followed by sailors, surgeons, and other crew. Ship captains served the most important role aboard ships by typically leading a respective ship throughout its designated voyage to and from Africa. I use "ship captain," "ship commander" and "shipmaster" throughout the study in describing these men. My use of these terms, particularly the latter reference, does not imply they were commander or masters over bondpeople held on their vessels. Instead it used to suggest the holding of control or mastery with guiding a ship in their ocean voyage. The author recognizes that every seamen on ship did not serve in the same capacity of captain, therefore where an officer's role is understood I use the term most applicable. In addition to captains, carpenters, boatswains, stewards, cooks, as well as first and second mates worked aboard slavers. In many cases I use the terms "seamen," "sailors," and "crewmen" as collective references to those employed on ship that may not have served the role of captain or of a higher ranked official. Finally,, surgeons made up another group included on some ships. Although listed as "surgeons", their roles involved more than just surgery and amputations; they regularly took on the normal duties expected of physicians on land. Therefore, the terms used with this group include "surgeons," "physicians," and "medical practitioners."

In an effort to clarify other terminology, there are several terms used within the study to characterize ships. Where I am able to recognize the actual type of vessel I use the term most befitting, including "schooners," "brigantines," and "sloops." At points where I cannot determine the type of ship sailing I employ "vessels," "ships," and "slavers" interchangeably.

Cugoano may have personally endured or witnessed to during his own Atlantic passage. As such, Chapter 3 charts the appearance of physical diseases that manifested aboard slave ships often weakening captives and leading to their deaths. The discussion examines the social history of disease and mortality by drawing upon 18th century medical literature to better speculate on the diversity of physical symptoms captives presumably underwent through their sickness. Highlighting the methods used to combat slaves' poor health, it explores notions of power and treatment, arguing that physicians faced significant challenges with tensions from ship captains and devising effective cures; both of which placed bondpeople's lives in jeopardy.

Continuing with the ship experience, Chapter 4 analyzes the various attempts bondmen and bondwomen waged for freedom through instances of self-sabotage. Many interpretations of the Middle Passage do not always give significant attention to these practices. This chapter complicates the traditional view of 'suicide' by providing not only a gendered view of different resistive tactics but also exploring bondpeople's mental health. Likewise, it introduces an alternate view of these practices by introducing the concept of 'transmigratory rebellion' in order to show how intentionality often guided many bondmen and bondwomen's actions within the trade. This view builds upon belief of the dual existence of spiritual and material worlds many captives carried from their former communities.

Chapter 5 recognizes the history of violence ingrained within the procurement, transport, and sale of bondpeople. Oftentimes these aggressive measures are merely understood through the outbreak of insurrections and the implementation of disciplinary measures, which this chapter addresses. Taking a broader approach, however, it probes

the 'culture of violence' contained between sailors and enslaved Africans by highlighting the rape of female captives and murder of enslaved infants. The discussion also goes further to interrogate several other mechanisms bondpeople instigated through poisoning and abortion.

The 'importation' of Africans held significant importance within New World communities. Chapter 6 highlights the complexities common to domestic slave markets. It analyzes the economic history beyond offered prices and uses slaves' bodies as text to explicate how factors such as ethnicity, gender, and age influenced sale preferences and in some cases the devaluing of newly arrived Africans. This chapter argues that despite articulated desires for 'prime slaves', the range of bondpeople brought ashore were often contrary to slave owner's preferences. Hence, significant proportions of young children, 'older' slaves, as well as those attended by physical disabilities appeared in New World markets much to the dismay of potential buyers.

The Atlantic Slave Trade served as a crucial component to the evolving institution of slavery taking shape across the Caribbean and much of the Americas. Portuguese traders sparked the initial lure to 'export' Africans for exploitative means during the latter part of the 15th century. The foundational taste of wealth generated from the labor of enslaved people became the motivating factor for many other nations including the Dutch, French, and British to participate. Amidst the growth in slaving interests, the exchange of control between the Portuguese and Dutch foreshadowed the increased complications forthcoming with other trader's arrivals. Although the 17th century witnessed a gradual increase of involvement, particularly for the British, it still represented a testing ground for slave sales. During this process, merchants pooled

resources to create joint stock companies – including the Royal African Company, Dutch West Indies Company, and the French Guinea Company – which received government sanctioned monopolies granting them sole rights over their African commercial interests. On the eve of the 18th century, an estimated 1.65 million Africans found themselves shipped into different parts of the Atlantic world.[5]

The 18th century, which represents the temporal boundaries of this project, saw a dramatic transformation in slavery commerce. As charter companies became ill-equipped to fulfill the vast demand for slaves that they helped to foster, they lost control of the trade to a growing base of private traders. Their downfall paralleled the subsequent growth in free trade. Various types of goods circulated across the Atlantic, however the trade of African descended people represented the least regulated branch of commercial interests during this period.[6] The shipment of men, women, and children underwent a quantum leap in the numbers with over 6 million being deposited into slave societies.[7] The eradication of slaving companies and growth of free trade altered the method of obtaining slaves, reducing the strains of regulated control that prescribed the contours of seamen's involvement. As such, uniform structures governing their slaving endeavors in many sense disappeared.

Most would agree that the slave trade represented the largest forced migration of a group of people in recorded history. However we have not fully grappled with their encounters of captivity or the different bondpeople represented aboard slave ships. One aim of this dissertation is to illuminate the diverse experiences of people treated and sold

---

[5] James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery*, (London: Fontana Press), 26.

[6] Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (New York: Verso, 1997) 383.

[7] *Ibid*, 377.

as 'slaves' during the legal era of slave trading in the 18th century. Exploring the intricacies of slavery contained within the journey towards the New World permits us the opportunity to speculate on varying patterns of social control, violence, and resistance. Uncovering the gendered nature of enslavement represents another critical objective to this project. We already know that adult black men commanded the highest interest across the many centuries of trade. Yet, while traders transported lower numbers of bondwomen into the Americas, we know far less about how they fared within captivity.

Historiographical Trends

This dissertation utillizes an interdisciplinary view of the Middle Passage by drawing together several historiographies to uncover the slave ship experience. In fact, it contributes to several working bodies of historical literatures: studies of the slave trade and colonial slavery, labor, migration, maritime history, resistance, comparative studies, gender, violence, medical history, as well as Diaspora and Atlantic World studies. However, there are five primary categories of historical analysis that this study directly contributes to; the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Middle Passage studies, maritime history, resistance studies, and medical history.

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade –

Scholarship on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade emerged at the dawn of the 20th century with W. E. B. Du Bois' 1896 publication of his doctoral dissertation entitled, *Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638 -1870.*[8] Although pulling from his master's thesis, Du Bois' training at the University of Berlin in Germany prompted further study of the impact of economics, history, and sociology

[8] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638 -1870.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1896).

within world history. In effort to understand the linkages of the abolition of the American slave trade to U.S slavery and colonial policy, Du Bois drew upon traveler's accounts, colonial statutes, Congressional documents, and reports of anti-slavery societies. The goal of his work was to focus on the contours of the American Slave Trade highlighting the massive anti-slavery movement waged for its eventual demise. Yet, consumed by the dynamics of racial inequality prevalent among black and white populations following the emancipation of slavery, he articulated the importance of economic factors which he argued were intricately connected to the realms of slavery and slave trade. He concluded that the demise of slavery within the northern, middle, and southern colonies took place not because of issues of morality, but instead as a result of widespread financial constraints.

Du Bois' work emphatically constructed the beginning parameters for historical discussions of the African slave trade through an economic lens. Writing in the Cold War, nearly fifty years after Du Bois' study, Eric Williams published, *Capitalism and Slavery*.[9] Within this seminal study, he expanded Du Bois economic analysis of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade. Ushering in a new perspective on the economic history under-girding the operation and ultimate destruction of the slave trade, Williams contended that the wealth amassed through the slave trade sparked an Industrial Revolution within England. Using his work to overturn the traditional imperial centered analysis of global history, he drew upon colonial office papers, abolitionist papers, correspondence records, and parliamentary papers to highlight the relationship of slavery to the growth and expansion of British capitalism.

---

[9] Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*. (New York: Perigee, 1944).

As North America became widely confronted with the outpour of massive demonstrations through the Civil Rights Movement, historical scholarship on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade began to take on new dimensions. The study offered by Daniel Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, emerged close to two decades following Williams' earlier work. [10] However, they used their work to closely examine the contribution of slavery, particularly the slave trade, to the ensuing dynamics of race and racism prevalent within American history. Exhausting captain's accounts, government testimony, traveler's accounts, and slave narratives, Mannix and Cowley forged the first social history of the slave trade, diverting attention from the emphasis of economics to analyze the process of enslavement beginning with West African coastal holdings, through the Middle Passage, New World arrivals, and finally into the realm of growing abolitionist sentiments prevailing in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Despite these innovative efforts to call attention to the social history imbedded within the process of Atlantic trading, Philip Curtin, followed closely on the heels of Mannix and Cowley with publication his study, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census.*[11] Curtin began an almost three decade long historiographical debate on the numerical studies of populations of enslaved Africans captured and transported throughout the Americas through the slave trade. Heavily influenced by the French Annales school with the study of history primarily through the lens of statistical models – cliometrics, - Curtin's classic study facilitated the beginning of the "numbers game". He drew upon

---

[10] Daniel Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865.* (New York: Viking Press, 1962).

[11] Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

traveler's accounts, ship manifests, and ship logs, devising an estimated 9.5 million Africans forcibly removed as part of the Trans-Atlantic Trade as laborers for colonists of New World societies. Soon after Curtin's publication, writers of the 1970s included Roger Anstey who used his work, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810,* to offer an interpretation of Curtin's calculations. Employing data on ships and lave prices, he increased Curtin's conclusions upward by 10.3 percent.[12] Following Anstey, Joseph Inikori offered a counter to both Curtin and Anstey in his article, "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment of Curtin and Anstey."[13] Increasing the estimate to include the losses of Africans within the Atlantic transport, he proposed an estimate of 11 million Africans arriving within New World destinations.

As the debate stretched into the next decade, James Rawley in his book length study, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A History,* argued for an increase of Curtin's earlier conclusions by estimating total slave importations into the Americas. He concluded that close to 11,345,000 Africans was a more accurate number.[14] Further extending this discussion, Paul Lovejoy in "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis" sought to give closure to the lengthy debate.[15] Criticizing the pendulum of estimates put forth by scholars in response to Curtin's earlier work, he argued that 9,566,100 Africans were imported to Atlantic plantation communities.

In the 1990s the discussion shifted from the numerical lens to cultural investigations of the trade. Michael Gomez's astute study, *Exchanging our Country*

---

[12] Roger Antsey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810.* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1975).

[13] Joseph Inikori, "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: A "Rejoinder." *Journal of African History* 17 (1976): 607-627;

[14] James Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (New York: Norton, 1981.

[15] Paul Lovejoy. "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis." *Journal of African History* 23 (1982): 473-501

Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South, is part of the generation of cultural historians offering a revisionist approach to the study of not only slavery, but equally studies of identity among enslaved populations within New World slave societies.[16] While his work is largely centered on the creation of African American identity among those transported Africans, he turns much needed attention back to the slave trade by highlighting the conditions of the Middle passage as well as methods of African resistance. Drawing upon surgeon's accounts, colonial newspapers, and secondary literature on the slave trade, Igbo history and culture, and African cosmology, Gomez concludes that the West African coastal enslavement and the Middle Passage experience solidified this transformative process into an African American identity.

This dissertation has historiographical resonance in studies of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, yet it contributes to a burgeoning subfield of Middle Passage Studies. Viewing middle passage studies as an important sub-field within slave trade studies that can stand on its own, *Make Haste* departs in that it will add to our understanding of the fundamental social experiences contained in the process which landed many people across much of the Atlantic. The study navigates some of the same sources of earlier scholars to better examine the complex array of human merchandise offered to interested planters.

Many scholars look at the slave trade as a whole; whereas the cadre of works exploring the journey *to* slave societies represented through the trans-oceanic process of enslavement is now becoming its own historiography. This small body of scholarship fits

---

[16] Michael Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

within the larger umbrella of slave trade studies, taking a separate approach to specifically explore varied groups and their experiences respective to the slave ship experience. Eric Taylor in his 2006 work *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* produced the first book- length study highlighting the wide range of slave ship revolts waged by bondpeople from the 17th through the 19th century. Taylor argues that these instances of physical combat created a foundation of resistance upon which those landed in the Americas acted upon within plantation societies.[17] Stephanie Smallwood echoes the same call for studies of the various intricacies inherent to the slave trade through *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora.* Drawing upon records of the Royal Company of Adventurers to Africa of the 17th century British system of slavery, she shows British traders procured and transformed African people into viable Atlantic commodities.[18] Likewise, Emma Christopher's 2007 path-breaking study *Slave Ship Sailors and their African Cargo* presents yet another fresh approach to studies of the Middle Passage. She takes a much needed approach by exploring the often understudied lives of countless sailors employed aboard slavers. Highlighting their background involvement, the varied complexities of their seafaring world and employment, she argues that their lower class status as white sailors shielded them from any inclusion in the institution of slavery in contrast to their African counterparts.[19] Building upon the view of violent environments commonly perpetuated by sailors, Marcus Rediker in his most recent monograph *The*

---

[17] Eric Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

[18] Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[19] Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their African Cargoes* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Slave Ship: A Human History delves into the personal experiences of bondage endured by captive Africans. Specifically outlining the violent realities common at sea, he argues that slave ship operated as instruments of terror that affected bondpeople prior to their sale within parts of the New World.[20]

Maritime History -

Similar to the scholarship covering the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, studies of maritime history have continued to undergo interesting changes. This project recognizes that the strengthening of sea power within the slave trade helped to further facilitate the rapid growth of maritime industries and the employment of sailors across the Atlantic. To be sure, although studies of the slave trade and maritime history have traditionally been separate, *Make Haste* centrally locates the lives of African captives within this history, emphasizing that even as bonded people they contributed to the evolution of Atlantic maritime culture.

Writing in the heart of the Reagan era, Julius Scott produced his dissertation entitled, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-America Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution."[21] He calls attention to the international framework of maritime culture during the revolutionary war periods, highlighting the role of sailors, including black sailors, throughout the Atlantic. Examining ship logs, travel literature, and seamen's diaries, he argues the fundamental role of sailors in spreading the rumor of revolts. In fact, he goes further to contend many times sailors contributed to the rise of abolitionist discourse throughout the revolutionary era of the late eighteenth century.

---

[20] Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Vintage Press, 2007).

[21] Julius Scott, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1986).

Following on the heels of Scott's work, Marcus Rediker's seminal work, *Devil in the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*, emerged also on the tail end of the numerical debates on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.[22] Joining a growing body of literature covering Atlantic maritime history and culture throughout the Atlantic World, Rediker employs a Marxist approach to his analysis. He draws upon seamen's diaries, merchant records, travel literature, ship logs, ship manifests, and seamen's wage records highlighting the lives of sailors which he contends made up working class history. Although his work is centered primarily on the experiences of Anglo-American sailors and their relationship to maritime culture, his study effectively highlights the growth of the maritime industry, expansion of capitalism, and sailor's unending negotiation for wages, identity, and their subsequent influence on Atlantic World societies.

Quite similar to Rediker, Martha Putney used her scholarship to situate sailors, this time African American sailors, within this evolving age of eighteenth century sail. Influenced by the protests of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, she was interested in centering people of African descent within maritime historiography. Therefore she published her 1972 work, "Black Seamen of Newport 1803-1865: A Case Study on Foreign Commerce". Drawing extensively upon new sources such as Bureau Custom Records and crew lists of Newport shipping records, she uncovered the conciliatory role of black men on vessels engaged in foreign commerce and whaling throughout the northern port of Newport. Her next study, published in the Reagan years, built upon Rediker's work. In *Black Sailors: Afro-American Merchant Seamen and*

---

[22] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Whalemen Prior to the Civil War, she responds to the continual exclusion of African American men, women, children, and elders from discussions of American maritime history.[23] Some of the specific sources she utilized were port records, newspapers, letters by black sailors, ship registers, antislavery papers, and ship manifests. Another contribution of Putney's work is her integration of a gendered analysis. Within her study she concludes that the inclusion of black sailors on merchant ships and whaling vessels of New England were largely multi-ethnic, multi-national, and interracial in composition.

Similarly, Gaddis Smith sought to situate the dynamic lives of African American seamen with maritime discussions within his study, "Black Seamen and the Federal Courts, 1789-1860."[24] Calling significant attention to the circumstances shaping the lives of black seamen, both slave and free, within the maritime industry, Smith astutely employed federal admiralty court cases to highlight the prevalence of slave owner's leasing of enslaved black men within maritime employment. He went further than his predecessors, revealing not only the mechanism of liberation some enslaved black men enjoyed as sailors, but more importantly the construction and implementation of laws, especially within southern ports, used to curtail the threat of influence free black sailors allegedly posed to southern slave societies.

James Farr in his manuscript, *Black Odyssey: The Seafaring Traditions of Afro-Americans,* sought to further expand the earlier work of maritime scholars.[25] Influenced by the growing trend of social and cultural histories, Farr illuminated the centrality of

---

[23] Martha Putney, *Black Sailors : Afro-American Merchant Seamen and Whalemen Prior to the Civil War* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

[24] Gaddis Smith, "Black Seamen and the Federal Courts, 1789-1860" in Timothy J. Runyan, ed., *Ships, Seafaring and Society: Essays in Maritime History.* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987).

[25] James Farr, *Black Odyssey: The Seafaring Traditions of Afro-Americans.* (New York: P. Lang, 1989).

black sailors within American maritime history in effort to construct a social history of Black seafaring from slavery to the early twentieth century. . Extensively incorporating sea journals, naval documents, travel accounts, census records, and annual reports of colored sailors, Farr traced the legacy of Black seafarers, contending that following the demise of the Civil War seafaring culture underwent significant transformation resulting in the virtual exclusion of Black sailors within the industry.

Although studies of the maritime history, including those covering black sailors, underwent a decade long paucity of scholarship, Jeffrey Bolster's seminal study, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail,* effectively redirected attention back to the lives of Black seamen within the Atlantic maritime industry. Building upon the work of earlier scholars, his study emerged amidst a period characterized by a plethora of studies covering African American history, slavery, and a resurgence of studies of Atlantic World studies. Within this, Bolster poignantly situated the work and lives of black seamen within the Atlantic shipping industry. Yet most salient Bolster's examination of the dynamism of Black sailors is not only the meticulous attention he diverts to their maritime life in contrast to their white counterparts, but equally his efforts to position Black sailors as a vital force contributive to expansion of the Atlantic maritime culture and identity formation among northern free black communities. Soon after *Black Jacks,* Bolster offered another maritime piece entitled, "'To Feel Like a Man: Black Seamen in Northern States, 1800-1860", which offered a deeper examination of the labor practices of Black seamen within the northern maritime industry.[26] Utilizing similar source of his earlier manuscript, he went further to offer a gendered perspective

[26] Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.); 'To Feel Like a Man:' Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800- 1860," *Journal of American History* 76 (March 1999): 1173-1199.

on the lives of black seamen, which he contends varied significantly from the experiences of other northern black workers due to the psychological and sociological implications maritime labor had in Black seamen's overall lives.

Following closely on the heels of Bolster's work, David Cecelski's study, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina,* expanded discussion of the vital role of Black sailors, offering a regional discussion of maritime culture within North Carolina from slavery to emancipation.[27] Providing a lens into coastal urban slavery, Cecelski mined plantation ledgers, ship logs, slave narratives, court documents, and contemporary newspapers to conclude the innumerable influences black sailors extended within southern maritime culture.

Resistance Studies-

Resistive studies have remained central to slavery scholarship. Yet another area *Make Haste* builds upon is the growing body of scholarship concerning gender and slavery.[28] Within the broader discussion it sets out to provide a gendered view of captivity showing both bondmen and bondwomen experienced the Middle Passage.

---

[27] David Cecelski, *Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).*

[28] See Angela Davis. "Reflections on Black Women's Role in the Community of Slaves," *Black Scholar,* Vol. 3, (Dec. 1971); Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South,* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985); Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Betty Wood, "Some Aspects of Female Resistance to Chattel Slavery in Low Country Georgia, 1763-1815," *Historical Journal* 30, no. 3 (1987); Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, (New York: International Publishers, 1943); and Alice and Raymond Bauer, "Day to Day Resistance to Slavery," *The Journal of Negro History*, 27, no. 4 (Oct., 1942): 388-419; Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America.* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981); and Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Vincent Brown *The Grim Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2008); Daina Ramey Berry, *Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe: Gender and Slavery in Antebellum Georgia*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

Violence formulated the operative basis of the slave trade, to which this study addresses.[29] Scholars continue to produce studies of the trade however few have addressed the role of women within slave ship revolts. Likewise, the violence children were often exposed to along with the various acts of self-sabotage both groups acted out within their captivity all remain important facets still overlooked within our understanding of the Middle Passage.

Early works covering the resistance waged by enslaved people arose in response to the conclusions U.B Phillips proclaimed in his monumental text, *American Negro Slavery.*[30] Writing in the early years of twentieth century, in fact one year before the outbreak of racial riots that spanned much of the United States in 1919, Phillips' work was influenced by prevailing racist notions concerning people of African descent. Although the primary goal of his study was to examine the function, viability, and profitability of plantation slavery in the southern region, Phillips emphasized docility as a common feature of behavior among enslaved populations. Drawing upon innumerable plantation and colonial records, as well as traveler's accounts, he concluded that not only was the system ineffective as an economic institution for planters, but further that enslaved Africans were both victims and benefactors of a system hinged on southern paternalism.

---

[29] Recognition that this project fits within the growing field of violence studies arises from the work of: Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Within this particular field Nudelman posits, "...scholars have begun to identify, however tentatively, a vocabulary of violent practices, and the concepts that govern them. This makes it possible to interrelate different kinds of violence – slavery, murder, war, genocide – and begin to comprehend the ways that particular acts of destruction reverberate across time and space."(2) Understanding that slavery and the resulting acts of resistance many times included acts of violence, the author contends this study fits within this growing trend of scholarship.

[30] Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime*, (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1918).

Phillips' work endured longevity for close to two decades until the work of Harvey Wish in 1937. Despite the onslaught of the Great Depression, Wish through, "American Slave Insurrections Before 1861" sought to counter the narrative of docility previously asserted by Phillips.[31] Tracing resistance from the Middle Passage into the southern plantation system, he maintained that resistance was a common feature of enslavement, impacting the lives of both planters and enslaved populations. Utilizing anti-slavery records, government testimony, ship captain's accounts, correspondence letters, and colonial newspapers, Wish highlighted themes including ship revolts, gender, suicide, and widespread regional variation of enslaved resistance. Yet, far from sporadic, Wish contended among enslaved Africans there persisted "an ever-recurrent battle" expressed against their enslavers.

Writing within the growing era of Cold War politics, Alice and Raymond Bauer used their study, "Day to Day Resistance to Slavery" to extend the same conclusions Wish articulated five years earlier.[32] Unlike Wish, the Bauers turned sole attention toward plantation slavery, teasing out the utility of day to day resistance they found consistently used to undermine the institution of slavery. Employing travel accounts, plantation journals, biographies and autobiographies of planters the authors maintained there were five main characters of resistance continuously employed by enslaved Africans that led not only to their freedom, but also hindrance of the system of enslavement. These five categories included: the deliberate slowing of work, feigning illness/pregnancy, suicide, destruction of property, and infanticide.

---

[31] Harvey Wish, "American Slave Insurrections Before 1861" (*The Journal of Negro History*, July 1937, Vol. 22, No. 3): 299-320.

[32] Alice and Raymond Bauer, "Day to Day Resistance to Slavery," (*The Journal of Negro History*, July 1942, Vol. 27, No. 4): 388-419.

Merely one year later Herbert Aptheker built upon the work of the Bauers, producing the first book length examination of slave resistance in his seminal study, *American Negro Slave Revolts.*[33] Exploring the realm of enslavement, Aptheker sought to highlight the incalculable methods utilized to maintain the obedience of enslaved populations. Integrating correspondence letters, travel accounts, newspapers, plantation journals, slave narratives, legislative journals, and county records within his analysis, he illuminated the widespread influence of revolutionary ideology. Through this he maintained instead of passivity, rebelliousness was a central feature continuously shaping the lives of the enslaved.

Extending the growing scholarship covering slave resistance, Lorenzo Greene published his article, "Mutiny on the Slave Ships."[34] Turning attention back towards the slave trade, Greene emphasized the pattern of resistance he argues emerged within the sales of African descended people. In fact, critiquing Aptheker for excluding ship revolts from his analysis of slave revolts, he examined battles on board New England slave vessels, characterizing these acts of liberation as first acts in the drama carried out in the struggle for freedom. Although much of his analysis was based on secondary sources covering the slave trade, Greene effectively called attention not only to the multiple measures used to thwart African liberation, but he also insisted on the persistence of slave mutinies. Interestingly, Greene deviated from his predecessors within this analysis, maintaining that African captives were unified only in the desire for liberty, where their efforts for freedom, as he contends, were both unorganized and undisciplined in contrast to their captors.

---

[33] Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*. (New York: International Publishers, 1943).
[34] Lorenzo Greene, "Mutiny on the Slave Ships," *Phylon (*1944): Vol 5, No. 4; 346-354.

Despite the effort sought by earlier scholars to infuse resistance as a central factor of analysis within slavery studies, Darold Wax's work, "Negro Resistance to the Early American Slave Trade" emerged two decades following Greene.[35] Writing as North Americans were forced to face the realities of unending racial inequalities with protests of the Civil Rights Movement, the primary objective of Wax's work was to highlight the evolving pattern of black rebellion by diverting attention historically back towards the slave trade. In order to further emphasis African captive's unwillingness to cooperate with expectations of passivity by their captors, Wax employed travel accounts, abolitionist records, slave trader's journals, letters, ship captain's accounts, and newspapers. Going beyond his predecessors, Wax highlighted the experience of slavery and resistance beginning with the West African coastal experience moving through the Middle Passage and into the slave auctions of the American domestic slave trades. Contrary to Greene, another contribution of Wax's work is his exploration of African resistance through not only ship revolts, but also methods of self-destruction.

The 1970s witnessed an explosion of scholarly works uncovering the intricacies of American slavery. Within many of these discussions, resistance was given even if partial exploration by several historians. John Blassingame in his groundbreaking study, *The Slave Community,* was the first scholar to devote considerable attention to the communities maintained by enslaved populations.[36] Although he integrated traditional sources used by earlier scholars, he was first to utilize new sources including slave narratives, slave songs, and slave folklore. Yet, the primary intention of his work was to

---

[35] Darold Wax, "Negro Resistance to the Early American Slave Trade," *Journal of Negro History*, 51 No. 1 (Jan. 1966): 1-15.

[36] John Blassingame, *Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

highlight that slave communities were salient to the experience of slavery, oftentimes cushioning the blows of degradation and continued exploitation, which he astutely teased out by exploring slave music, dance, religion, family, and resistance. Blassingame's discussion of resistance further confirmed earlier conclusions offered by scholars as he examined the prevalence of runaways, maroon communities, and enslaved revolts. Despite the fact that his exploration of resistance centered primarily on the lives of enslaved black men, his work remains significant for the attention he provided to slave agency.

Following Blassingame, Eugene D. Genovese published his study, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World The Slaves Made*.[37] Heavily influenced by the nationwide stage of Black activism waged for civil rights during much of the 1960s, Genovese sought to disentangle the history of master-slave relationships widespread during slavery. The focal point of his study was the centrality of paternalism which he argues was contributive to the lives of both the enslaved and slaveholders. Yet, his discussion of resistance remains pertinent where he contends that resistance came at the expense of white paternalism. Employing a Marxist interpretation of resistance, Genovese drew upon planter's diaries, personal letters, family and personal papers, and agricultural records to conclude that American enslaved populations were virtually devoid of hope, being unable to effectively overthrow the system. In fact, he countered Aptheker's earlier conclusions of the existence of a revolutionary tradition of resistance, maintaining instead that the employment of day to day resistance by American enslaved populations operated more as

[37] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).

"prepolitical" and even "apolitical" acts that implied more accommodation rather than insurrection.

Writing in the same year as both Blassingame and Genovese, Gerald Mullin put forth his manuscript, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia.*[38] Similarly impacted by the growing demands for civil rights, Mullin's work was also shaped by the growing trend of studies employing a bottom up analysis to explore the intricate lives of oppressed peoples. Due to this influence, Mullin called attention to his predecessor's employment of not only "narrative sources" but more importantly scholar's unending gaze upon antebellum slavery, which he contended prevented comprehension of the evolution and transformation of slave societies. Offering a corrective, Mullin utilized census record, personal letters, travel accounts, slave runaway advertisements, and planter account and letter books to highlight the centrality of slave resistance throughout the southern region during the colonial period. Although much of his analysis was centered on Virginia, he aptly described the widespread influence of disobedience upheld by enslaved populations across the southern states.

Extending scholarly discussion of the colonial period, Peter Wood offered an interesting analysis within his landmark study, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion.*[39] Writing amidst the waning years of the Black Power Movement, Wood sought to illuminate the dynamic lives of enslaved Africans within South Carolina in effort to show their significance upon evolution of the southern colony. Employing planter's diaries, travel accounts, census

---

[38] Gerald Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[39] Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974).*

records, runaway slave advertisements, and planter account books, Wood effectively teased out the black labor, rice cultivation, social control, and enslaved resistance within colonial South Carolina. Devoting an entire chapter within his study to runaways, Wood meticulously disclosed the life of runaways and their subsequent impact on the institution of enslavement. Revealing the risk involved with such liberating efforts, he examined the varying reasons motivating such overt acts of black oppression, while also highlighting the variety of methods used by enslaved populations to gain their freedom.

During the latter part of the 1970s, William D. Piersen used his study "White Cannibals, Black Martyrs: Fear Depression, and Religious Faith as Causes of Suicide Among New Slaves," to broaden the discussion of colonial slave resistance, this time turning attention back to slave vessels of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.[40] His work turned an interesting lens towards explanation of African suicide, where he argued that the belief of white cannibalism contributed greatly to the deaths of African captives. He also explored the various ethnicities enslaved within the trade and the resistive behaviors oftentimes understood by slave traders. Integrating slave narratives, abolitionist testimony, travel accounts, ship captain's accounts, and slave trader's journals, Piersen traced the link of enslaved resistance from the Middle Passage through their arrival in New World societies. Unlike earlier scholars, Piersen's major contribution was his close examination of suicide through the eyes of the enslaved, where he highlighted the different types of suicide carried out while also situating these acts within a religious framework, specifically within Christian theology.

---

[40] William D. Piersen "White Cannibals, Black Martyrs: Fear Depression, and Religious Faith as Causes of Suicide Among New Slaves," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 62, No.2 (Apr. 1977), 147-159.

The 1980s and 1990s ushered in a resurgence of studies specifically analyzing the centrality of resistance within slavery. Vincent Harding's eloquent work, *There is A River: The Black Struggle For Freedom in America,* falls within this category.[41] Writing in the beginning era of Reagan politics, Harding sought to trace the "river of struggle" he found prevalent in the history of black enslavement. He employed slave narratives, poetry, convention records, and newspapers as well as an array of secondary sources on the slave trade to highlight the unending battle enslaved populations waged for their freedom, evident with acts of suicide, revolts, runaways, and employment of day to day resistance within the work space. The most enduring contribution of Harding's volume is the chapter he devotes to the Middle Passage where he explores the conditions of the voyage, highlighting resistance through ship revolts and suicide. Building upon Piersen's work, Harding contends suicide was not only a method of resistance consistently utilized, but more importantly as a form of heroism.

Writing in 1994 amidst growing studies of the Atlantic World, Michael Mullin offers a broader perspective on slave resistance in his book, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831.*[42] The primary objective of Mullin's work is to explore the relationship of slave acculturation and enslaved resistance. Employing a comparative methodology, he drew upon colonial newspapers, wills, personal letters, plantation journals, diaries, and planter letter books, diaries to uncover the dynamism of slavery within the US South and the British Caribbean. In order to understand the evolution of slave societies, Mullin's

---

[41] Vincent Harding. *There is a River: The Black Struggle For Freedom in America.* (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1981).

[42] Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831.* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

analysis moves from the early part of the eighteenth century through to the demise of enslavement in the British Caribbean in 1831. Teasing out themes of naming patterns, rituals, religion, and resistance, he concludes that newly arrived Africans were more likely to resist slavery than their Creole counterparts who he contends expressed greater patterns of acculturation.

Turning attention back to the confine of the plantation south, John H. Franklin and Loren Schweninger put forth their study, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation.*[43] Writing on the brink of the twenty-first century amidst a downpour of studies covering African American history and slavery, Franklin and Schweninger produced the first volume to focus solely on absconding within the plantation system. Drawing extensively upon planter's records, newspapers, state legislatures, slave narratives, and petitions to county courts, the authors offer discussions of gender, family, violence, and even collective resistance as it operated within the lives of runaway slaves. While exploring the relationship of absconding to the lives of the enslaved, attention is also given to the subsequent impact it had on both the system of enslavement and the lives of slave owners.

Continuing the trend of resistance studies within the twenty first century, Stephanie Camp provides an interesting perspective on resistance within her text, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South.*[44] She devotes sole attention to the centrality of resistance within the lives of black women concluding existence of the dualism operating within the lives of black women resulting

---

[43] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation.*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[44] Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South.* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

in the continued violation of their homes and their bodies by planters. Although her work is focused on the lives of black women, she incorporates slave narratives, plantation records, travel accounts and planter's diaries to further situate black women's experiences of slavery within the lives of black men, showing a gendered perspective of enslavement and resistance. Quite interestingly, Camp demonstrates the centrality of space operating in the lives of enslaved groups where she maintains they were consistently forced to maneuver for their ultimate survival. In fact, she employs the concept of 'rival geography', where she contends black women and men drew as an alternative space defiance against the values and demands imposed upon them by their owners.

Medical History

This dissertation also aligns closely with broad literature on health. It fits into conversation with the growing of field disability studies showing how the sale and arrival of disabled captives lays the groundwork to speculate on the plantation experiences that likely unfolded thereafter.[45] However, it uses instances of sickness and death among enslaved Africans to demonstrate the complicated histories of medicine that began much earlier than occurrences contained within plantation communities. Not only does it explore the social dynamics of disease and mortality, but it also reaches further to

---

[45] See, Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York : Columbia University,1997); Paul K. Longmire and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History : American Perspectives* (New York : New York University Press, 2001). Douglas Baynton, "Disability in History" *Perspectives* 44, No. 8 (November 2006); Brenda Jo Brueggemann, Sharon Snyder, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, eds. *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2002); Susan Burch, *Signs of Resistance: American Deaf Cultural History, 1900-1942* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002); Paul K. Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003); Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (New York: Random House, 1984; Lennard Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London and New York: Verso, 1995); Hannah Joyner, *From Pity to Pride: Growing Up Deaf in the Old South* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University, 2004); Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998); Richard Sandell, *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Joseph Shapiro, *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Times Books, 1993).

speculate on the importance of mental health in our view of the psychological traumas common to the slave ship experience.

The history of American medicine in relationship to enslaved populations has undergone significant transformations within historical scholarship. Todd Savitt's monumental piece, *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia,* represents one of the earliest works to uncover the entrenched history of health care and disease among enslaved populations in Virginia.[46] Using medicine as a lens to explicate the experience of enslavement for black populations, Savitt also astutely weaves white health care within his analysis to highlight the varying differences of access and medical treatment available between to the populations. Exhausting plantation records, medical journals, correspondence letters, family papers, and planter's diaries, Savitt concludes that within their enslaved status, black populations operated similar to wards of their masters because they were unable to dictate the treatment and subsequent exploitation they endured within their enslavement. While exploring the various epidemics common throughout various southern plantations, Savitt also integrates discussion of the continued exploitation enslaved blacks suffered at the hands of medical colleges, medical students, and practicing physicians.

Writing in the same year, Kenneth Kiple published his book, *Another Dimension of the Black Diaspora: Diet, Racism and Disease.*[47] Providing examination of the centrality of health and disease from the western part of Africa during the Trans-Atlantic

---

[46] Todd Savitt, *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia.* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981); This study laid the foundation for Savitt's article that emerged one year later, "The Use of Blacks for Medical Experimentation and Demonstration in the Old South" *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 48., No. 3 (Aug. 1982): 331-348.

[47] Kenneth Kipple, *Another Dimension of the Black Diaspora: Diet, Racism and Disease.* (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

Slave Trade through to nineteenth plantation slavery, Kiple's work set out to highlight the varying dimensions of disease in the lives of people of African descent in contrast to their white counterparts. To further understand the implications of these differences of health, both genetically and culturally, his work alls attention to the climate of North America in effort to illuminate the impact it had on black immunities. Drawing upon medical journals and records, slave narratives, plantations records, physician's papers, and secondary sources shedding light on pathologies, epidemics, and slavery, pertinent to Kipple's account is not only his discussion of medicine and slavery but equally his attempt to situate it within a broader Atlantic framework.

Soon after Kiple's work, several scholars engaged in a debate concerning the relationship of medicine and the slave trade. Joseph Miller's article, "Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Statistical Evidence on Causality," is credited as the originator for this particular debate as he sought to investigate the primary reasons for the increase of mortality of enslaved Africans within the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.[48] Calling attention to the health conditions common within the interior of African during much of the 18th and 19th centuries, he concludes that instead of the passage itself, Africans had higher rates of mortality prior to their departure from the ports of Western Africa, which he attributes to prevailing ill-conditions widespread during the pre-embarkation phase of the slave trade. As a result of the conditions prior to Africans transport across the Atlantic, he maintains the rates of African mortality decreased the longer they were at sea.

[48] Joseph Miller, "Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Statistical Evidence on Causality," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11, No. 3 (Winter, 1981), pp. 385-423.

David Eltis responded to Miller's conclusion in his study, "Mortality and Voyage Length in the Middle Passage: New Evidence From the Nineteenth Century."[49] Disagreeing with Miller's assertions, he maintains following the standardization of voyages in the closing decades of the slave trade, mortality among African captives on board slavers traveling the Atlantic increased significantly. Richard Steckel and Richard Jensen in their study, "New Evidence on Causes of Slave and Crew Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade," also sought to offer a fresh perspective on the mortality debate.[50] Analyzing 92 British surgeon's logs t, the authors illuminated health and mortality of both enslaved Africans along with white seamen. Integrating information on dates and causes of deaths for both slaves and sailors, their findings concluded that instead of the belief of widespread smallpox and measles, fevers, gastrointestinal diseases, and malaria were the primary catalysts causing death among both groups. Philip Curtin in his article, "Epidemiology and the Slave Trade" explores yet another aspect of the experience of disease and the slave trade this time focusing solely on the centrality of genetic diseases and race. Far from any discussion of the Middle Passage, much of his analysis is centered primarily on epidemiology and diseases common among British troops employed on the Western coast of Africa during suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade in the early 19th century.

Richard Sheridan's seminal study, *Doctors and Slaves,* sought to return attention to the realm of plantation slavery.[51] Joining the growing body of historical literature

---

[49] David Eltis, Mortality and Voyage Length in the Middle Passage: New Evidence From the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Economic History* 44, No. 2, (Jun., 1984): 301-308.

[50] Richard Steckel and Richard Jensen, ""New Evidence on the Causes of Slave and Crew Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade." *Journal of Economic History* 46 (1986): 57-77.

[51] Richard Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves: Demography and Medicine in the British West Indies, 1680-1860.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

exploring Caribbean slavery during the 1980s, Sheridan utilizes medicine as a window to interrogate the system of slavery and practice of health care in the British West Indies. His meticulous study astutely employs parliamentary papers, planter's diaries, plantation records, physician's records, travel accounts, medical journals, and family papers to illuminate themes of surgeons within the slave trade, plantation labor, diet, enslaved hospitals, epidemics, reproduction, and the rise of the medical profession throughout the Caribbean.

In the 1990s and early twenty first century, historical works covering the African influence of medicine within antebellum slavery began to enjoy considerable scholarly attention. William D. Piersen's study, *Black Legacy: America's Hidden Heritage,* calls attention to this phenomenon of African medicine. Although the basis of his entire book is to interject African culture within the development and transformation of American social and cultural practices, he devoted an entire chapter to the African American healers and their contribution to the growing medical field. He incorporates slave narratives, ship captain's accounts, planter's journals, travel accounts, colonial statues, and an array of secondary sources concerning African cosmology, Latin American and Caribbean and slavery to illuminate black doctors and their utilization of what he deems to encompass African medical knowledge. Situating many of these healing and medicinal practices within a Diasporic framework, critical to Piersen's work is his analysis of the transformation of black health where he maintains with the increase of Creole populations came the omission of various rituals and divinations previously central to the healing practices of African populations.

Similarly, Sharla Fett in, *Working Cures: Health, Healing, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* also highlights the centrality of African American healing practitioners throughout southern plantations.[52] She surpasses Piersen's earlier work producing not only a book length study on black healers, but she also offers gendered perspective of black medical practice. Effectively providing a regional analysis of black medicine, Fett concludes beyond the communal role of black healers, their work became a political space of contestation between the enslaved and white male physicians. Within her work she astutely weaves folklore, medical and surgical journals, insurance records, planter's medical daybooks, correspondence letters, slave narratives, and planter's diaries to show the unending role of black medicine within the southern plantation regime. Fett contends that by incorporating ritual within their medical practices, for many black practitioners their work operated as a healing art for the surrounding community.

Methodology and Sources

Imbedded throughout this project is a comparative link transcending cultural lines, while also intersecting discussions of gender, medicine, and national boundaries. The primary geographical locations of this study specifically include London, England, Liverpool, England, and Rhode Island, United States. Although the study draws heavily upon slaving voyages undertaken within the British and American slave trades, it does not set out to compare the dynamics of these important systems. Nor does it attempt to fully interrogate the assorted lives of sailors, sea captains, and surgeons employed within the trade. These various groups are critical actors to this history, but they are not my primary concern of inquiry.

---

[52] Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Health, Healing, and Power on the Southern Slave Plantations.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Sources often pose a significant problem for scholars interested in analyzing human strains of the slave trade. Instead of confronting a paucity of materials, however the primary challenges lies imbedded within perspective. Confined largely to the fragmentary records left behind by primary perpetrators of the trade – merchants, ship captains, surgeons – it is often difficult to find the African voice. Although recognizing these constant challenges, this study takes the position that if we learn to read behavior as language, then we are often granted access to the diverse ways bondpeople dealt with the shock of captivity and enslavement; oftentimes through public means still open for historical interpretation. Therefore, to effectively highlight the diverse nature of the trade, *Make Haste* draws upon a variety of sources for understanding this dynamic history; some of which include: travel accounts, merchant's papers, ship logs, colonial newspapers, medical logs, cargo receipts, correspondences between merchants, account sales, surgeon's letters, seamen's diaries, government testimony, and ship manifests. The project creatively places many of these varied sources into conversation to better speculate upon the varied experiences that took shape within the Middle Passage. Instead of new source material however I pose different questions to broadly consider the range of different people procured as well as giving attention to their endured treatment and sales as captives.

The following study is structured to provide a panoramic view of the Middle Passage. For quite some time we have understood this process to merely take place once at sea. However, I argue that this middle leg of the journey captives endured began not once they were forced aboard ship, but instead at the point of initial capture in the interior hinterlands of West Africa. As such the Middle Passage is traced from the point of

procurement, onward aboard slave ships, and it ends at the point of arrival and sale into Atlantic slave markets. The primary intention being that when we take a broader view of the Middle Passage beyond the ship experience, this forces us to consider that the 'importation' of people also created the influx of trauma, disease, disability, and types of captive agency initially tested on the Atlantic waters.

One of the central questions guiding this study is who made up these broad categories of "slaves" commonly used in reference to the trade? Adequately pinpointing the ethnicity of different captives continues to create significant challenges to contemporary scholars. Broader narratives focused on the trade are often hinged upon generic ideas of the slave ship experience based in large part on the experiences of adult black men. This study breaks apart the singular view of captives to show the captive diversity aboard slavers along with bondmen. It considers that every bondperson did not experience the trade in the same way. Additionally, This study works with the understanding that not only is culture is a dual product brought on board slave ships, contributed from both Africans and Europeans, but even more, that this process of the Middle Passage served as a "*cultural womb*" giving birth to interactions, stereotypes, and beliefs that were transferred to New World slave societies.[53]

Another equally important aim of this study is to reveal the patterns of bondage that took place on ship. Much like life on plantations, crewmen sought to control the

[53] I coin this term to represent the culmination of both European and African cultures in the slave trade that gave birth to reconfigured cultures that incorporated both Africans and Europeans. This concept parallels understanding of the physical birth of a child into the physical world. Thus much like the creation of a child through the union of two parents, the Middle Passage became similar to the same symbolically enlarged belly encasing African captives and their European captors. Although the argument can be made this idea that these Atlantic exchanges on board slavers made up a "collision of cultures," this project further extends this phenomena arguing that the Middle Passage experience gave rise to the birth of not only new African cultures within a New World context, but equally an altered European culture that arose from New World experiences.

lives of bondpeople confined within the holds of slavers. The undergirding intention of placing these two systems in conversation is not to compare plantation slavery with the slave ship experience. Instead, it sets out to demonstrate the overlapping patterns of captive agency, sexual exploitation, poor health, nutritional deficiencies, familial separations, and physical violence at sea which all magnified in New World slave societies. Although a wealth of plantation studies continue to flourish in exposing the intricacies of domestic slavery, in a broad sense we are not as well versed in the obscure nature of captivity at sea. As such, we have virtually bypassed the very process that landed Africans into slave societies.

The overarching thrust of my project was constructed to consider and broadly chart how this journey may have taken shape for bondpeople. By calling attention to the centrality of poor health, issues of gender, age, motherhood, and physical disability, *Make Haste* poses new questions by suggesting that we can no longer look at the Middle Passage within a static view of its human victims. Instead we must give consideration to the experiences of people just like Cugoano including bondwomen, boys, girls, nursing mothers, children, elderly men/women and those deemed disabled by their captors all forced aboard ships and dispersed across various corners of the Atlantic. Therefore, let us steer our sails in turning backwards towards the coastal shores of Africa.

CHAPTER ONE

'We Took Man, Woman, and Child, As We Could Catch Them': Procurement and the Forcible Entrance of Bondpeople into the Coastal Slave Trade[1]

Where do we go, what do we say, what do we do
No where to turn, no where to run, and it's nothing new
Where do we go for inspiration, it's like pain is our own inspiration.[2]

Introduction

In 1734 British seaman William Snelgrave recounted his experiences while employed in the African slave trade. He unexpectedly gained an additional African woman among the 'cargo'. During his stay at Jaqueen, a local African linguist brought him two black females for purchase.[3] Along with showcasing the women, he recounted the details of the proposed offer. Snelgrave learned from the interpreter "[t]he King desired, [that] I would buy them," and that "I would not let them be redeemed by any one that should offer to do it." To oblige the king's offer he inspected the bondwomen and estimated that the older female was "fifty, and the other about twenty Years old." The physical features and variables he used to calculate the bondwomen's ages remain a mystery. Following the examination he communicated to the native "The first was past her Labour," and in his view "not for my purpose." As for the younger female, he offered to buy her.

Snelgrave's refusal of the older captive prompted an immediate reaction by the linguist. "He could not part them" the coastal man declared, adding "It would highly

---

[1] Testimony of Isaac Parker, *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 73, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 125. (hereafter cited as HCSP).

[2] Talib Kweli, *Quality*, CD, 2002.

[3] Eighteenth century maps refer to a place called Jaqueen Road, which is located west of Benin in the Gold Coast region. See William Snelgrave "A New Map of that Part of Africa Called the Coast of Guinea" in *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade* (London Frank Cass & Company, 1734).

oblige the King" if Snelgrave agreed to purchase both females. Judging by the native's response, he probably faced difficulties trying to sell both women, particularly the "older" captive.[4] His insistence on their sales increased Snelgrave's apprehension and he suspected that the linguist "made use of the Kings Name, to get rid of an old Woman" which resulted in his refusal and both women were carried away.

The next day Snelgrave gained greater detail concerning the fate of the refused older woman. Once in seclusion the linguist confided with him that the offered female "had that day been sacrificed to the Sea, by order of the great Captain."[5] In the interpreter's view, her imposed sentence was because she "had highly offended the King" and coupled with the fact Snelgrave "would not take her" the local ruler's aide "ordered her to be destroyed" through death. Discovery of the woman's fate seemed to alter Snelgrave's approach. He admitted, "I then wish'd in my mind I had bought her." With her life determined, the coastal man described, "[t]he Woman's Hands being tied behind her, and her Feet across," afterwards several men put her "into the *Cannoe*, and carried [her] off about half a Mile from the Shore." While at sea an indeterminable number of rowers aboard the dinghy carried out the order to throw her body overboard. According to the native "they had no sooner done [it]" when they witnessed some sharks described

---

[4] In this chapter I use several terms to describe an "aged" captive. I use "older", "elderly", and "old" interchangeably. These terms come from primary source materials. The author recognizes the difficulty in ascertaining the actual ages of bondpeople, therefore, these terms are used to mean a person *perceived* as "older" in age according to their bodily structure – hair, face, body parts, and skin. It is probable that stress, especially given the circumstances of captivity, could have increased the "aged" look of a person. At the same time, those enslaved probably did not see themselves as older. Whereas in the interests of sales traders used this physical characteristic to refuse a bonded person, or in some cases gain a lowered price for their purchase.

[5] Earlier within this narrative Snelgrave gives the context of "the great captain." He explains that in hoping to honor he and his companions during their regional travels, a local king "sent the principal person of his Court (whom the *Negroes* distinguish'd to us by the Title of the *Great Captain*) to receive us." Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade*, 27.

as "voracious Fishes very common in those Seas" commence to "tear her to pieces in an instant."

The woman's death affected Snelgrave in an interesting way. Initially he remarked that he "pitied the Fate of this poor Creature" because of her gruesome death. Although he appeared disturbed, her disastrous fate seemed to further bolster his belief on what he characterized as "the Barbarity of those [African] people." Receipt of further details further intensified the preconceived racial and cultural biases he already held. The next day he received a letter from the chief mate on his ship that altered his understanding of the bonded female's situation. Instead of falling victim to the jaws of traveling sharks, according to the sailor's correspondence, "the Woman was on board our Ship."

In an unexpected fashion the woman escaped her predetermined death. While traveling back from the shoreline in a small boat, one of Snelgrave's vessel officers "spied something floating on the Sea" catching his attention. "At his coming nearer, he perceived [it] to be a human Body lying on its back," and his suspicions were confirmed when he saw the mysterious object "now and then spurting Water out at the Mouth." Realizing that the person "was still living, he ordered it [sic] to be taken into the Boat," in order to examine their current state of health. An undisclosed number of seamen moved the body into the dinghy and "untied this poor Woman, chafed her Limbs, and rolled her Body about," until she successfully "discharged a good quantity of salt Water out of her Mouth." Afterwards they transported her aboard Snelgrave's vessel. It was the same woman that earlier witnesses alleged was 'torn to pieces in an instant.' The sailors were considerably perplexed on how "she had escaped the Sharks" especially in knowing these creatures posed an impending danger to any person at sea.

Snelgrave gave thought to the circumstances following discovery that the woman evaded death. His uncertainty persisted, however he speculated that "knowledge of the greediness of these Sharks" prompted the native man to conclude "that he actually saw her torn to pieces." Snelgrave reasoned further that the man's "Fears would not let him stay to see" the fate that befell the deserted bondwoman's body. It is probable that the female's escape and placement aboard his ship appeased Snelgrave's earlier feelings of bias. Yet, he grew extremely apprehensive for the reason "if the King of Dahome' should come to know it." His concerns led him to compose a letter to his chief mate in order "to charge our People to keep the thing secret."

It is unclear how much time passed following the woman's relocation, however once Snelgrave re-boarded he sought immediate clarification on how she became enslaved. While conducting another bodily examination, he used an interpreter to ascertain any attending ailments. During the inspection he queried the relationship the woman shared with the local ruler. He soon found "she would never confess the reason of the King's displeasure against her." Although tight lipped, the female attested, "she knew not that she had in any respect offended him." There is no direct evidence determining the accuracy of her statement or if it was a devised measure used to protect her self. The linguist later shared with Snelgrave his suspicion that the woman's removal "was on account of her assisting some of the King's Women in their Amours."[6]

Following the ship's passage the female captive was sold to Snelgrave's acquaintance in Antigua. We are deprived of further details illuminating the type of life she endured within the Caribbean plantation environment. Likewise, the fate of the

---

[6] This story arises from Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade*, 97-106.

younger captive originally offered with the older female also remains untold. The paucity of additional source material on this rare case raises several questions. How long were these females available for sale and were there other traders with whom the linguist used to try and rid the two off his hands? Did the king's aide actually impose the death sentence on the bondwoman? Or was the operation perhaps a sole endeavor instigated by the linguist? Lastly, why was the woman's death left to the sea as opposed to using coastal resources on shore?

Although many queries go unanswered, this narrative provides a rare glimpse into the varied tactics used to place people within the system of slaving. The above case leaves room to conclude that the slave trade created an unstable period of vulnerability for every person in African society, despite age, class or status. Black bodies were collectively viewed as potential sources of profit, creating a platform for communities and most especially local leaders to remove individuals deemed deviants or social outcasts. This emerged with the growing presence of foreign traders willing to barter and sell their lives at the expense of financial growth. As a result, ever shifting positions of power and influence came to determine bondpeople's fate.

The growing demand for African people set into motion diverse and rather creative strategies used to procure available captives. This chapter builds upon this reality showing the process that transformed human beings into chattel property on the African side of the Atlantic. Merchants scattered across Europe and different parts of the New World orchestrated economic pursuits that shaped the fate of seamen, surgeons, and most important Africans.[7] The discussion hereafter demonstrates that these preferences

[7] This chapter calls attention to two groups of people active within the coastal slave trade in Africa. The first group represents those originating across the Atlantic that financed voyages ship captains

functioned within a complicated system of cooperation and trickery without any regard to human suffering.

This chapter analyzes the measures used to gain a range of 'human merchandise.' It outlines the business of slave trading from outfitting a ship to the final sale of slaves. Foremost, it explores the orders merchants allocated to employed seamen, and juxtaposes these instructions with the typical slave sales conducted with local natives. Likewise, it analyzes the violent entrance of bondpeople into the trade as well as breaking down the categories of people offered for sale. It ends by calling attention to the assessments used to determine slave health as well as forcing consideration of the captives refused by traders.

Rules of Engagement

Merchants operated as the primary instigators of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Many of these men held certain expectations concerning their involvement within the risky business of slave trading. English participants typically pooled their resources "taking shares in a venture, buying or leasing a ship, and loading it with their own goods" in order to fully maximize potential opportunities for wealth.[8] Their financial ties to the trade depended upon sailing vessels to West Africa. Recognizing the uncertainty of profits and losses, some investors took shares in different slaving voyages to prevent massive deficits from emerging with one single investment.[9] Although they sought

---

led to Africa and onward into the Caribbean and the Americas. The terms used to describe these men range from "merchants," "entrepreneurs," "financers," and "investors." The other group primarily involved in slave sales includes Africans with different positions, including local leaders, brokers, and inland traders. For those working in shoreline capacities I refer to them as "African brokers" "coastal brokers" "brokers" and "African suppliers.

[8]R. Paul Thomas and R. Nelson Bean, "The Fishers of Men: The Profits of the Slave Trade," *Journal of Economic History* 34, 4 (Dec., 1974), 894.

[9] *Ibid*, 897.

economic security, the sale of black bodies became a substantial gamble for profit acquisition.

Merchants' interests in gaining wealth forced reliance on the labor and seafaring expertise seamen held within the industries of trade and shipping.[10] After securing investments and insurance from local businessmen, merchants often employed captains to lead different voyages to Africa. As a result seamen often found a constant supply of employment opportunities. Once employed, sailors served as the human conduits active in the process of sales and transporting bondpeople. One scholar characterizes them as "well travelled and worldly wise" to which as such their oceanic ventures placed them in the hazardous environments of slave ships.[11] Work aboard slave vessels represented the least desired form of employment. Along with lower wages, innumerable dangers placed their lives at risk; some of which arose aboard ship.

Working relationships distant financers cultivated with seafaring men hinged not only on matters of trust, but also familiarity. For example, owners of the vessel *Corsican Hero* expressed to one of their hired captains, "you have been so often at Affrica its needless to Recommend particular care in the treatment & usage of your Slaves as its as much your Interest as Ours to bring a good & healthy Cargo – to Markett. . . ."[12] In a similar fashion, the merchants connected with the 1759 voyage of the brig *Marigold* conveyed their African interests with ship captain Tho'd Taylor. Their letter explained, "In regard to your proceeds upon the Coast – must leave it intirely with you," as they

---

[10] Marcus Rediker in his seminal study is credited for offering a detailed discussion of lower class workers - seamen and ship captains - that operated as merchants' employees. See, *Between the Devil and Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750.* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[11] Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes*, 1730-1807, (England: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 49. She offers the first book-length study interrogating the lives of sailors employed aboard slave ships, giving treatment to their introduction to this often dreaded profession.

[12] David Tuohy Papers, Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool, England. (hereafter cited as LRO)

worked with the understanding "you will do every thing in your Power for the general Benefit of the concerned."[13] The orders given to both commanders seem to convey free reign over their coastal ventures. For these merchants and plausibly many others, the primary motive was accumulation of wealth through bartering goods for slaves.

Other investors articulated the same desires of profit to ship captains. The Vernon brothers, two Rhode Island merchants, authored instructions to Thomas Rogers of sloop *Wydaw*. They told Rogers to dispose of goods brought from their home port "to the best advantage" once docked on the African coast. "[Y]ou have a general knowlidge of the Affrican Trade" they conveyed, and this created confidence in offering him autonomy. Upon ending they declared their intentions "not [to] attempt to give you any particular directions nor confine you" within any particular "strict order in that respect" of slave trading practices. This is demonstrated through their approval that Rogers "may Trade up & down y'e Coast" which they reminded, "as long as you find profit." Ship captains, much like other employed crewmen, served a critical role operating as middlemen within the vast trade network. They performed various assigned tasks and procured slaves as well as manning the very structures used to transport purchased 'human goods.'

A primary concern for many financers concerned the unity among ship crew. To effectively outline the orders of conduct governing seamen some merchants' penned letters specifying expected behavior within the trade. Ship captain John Duncan received instructions from the vessel's merchants declaring, "be carefull to keep up good harmony & agreement amongst your officers & crew" during business endeavors[14] Amidst elongated voyages, crewmen solidarity was fundamental to the successful operation of

---

[13] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, New York Historical Society, New York. (hereafter cited as NYHS)

[14] Ibid.

any slaving endeavor. Their sustained cohesion proved necessary for a range of factors: life aboard ship, carrying out shared duties along with representing themselves in a solidified fashion in front of bondpeople.

Some sailors also received orders addressing matters of alcohol abuse. Spirited drinks were common staples consumed at sea. Perhaps because of regular use, the owners of the vessel *Ranger* gave Captain Spoors instructions encouraging that "a little Brandy now and then may be very proper for the Seamen" during the ships passage. They emphasized to Spoors, "tis not our meaning to encourage Drunkenness or inattention to the Duty of the Ship."[15] Overindulgence often proved consequential to daily services required of seamen, therefore merchants sought commanders' assistance in maintaining order. During January of 1783 Charles Wilson master of the brig *Madampookata* prepared to depart for the coast of Angola. Prior to his travels, the Liverpool financers, Leyland & Penny & Co offered him advice. They underscored the expectation of restraint from inebriation, pointing out, "You cannot too forcible impress on the minds of your officers (who are unacquainted with the African Trade) how necessary it is to establish among the Crew, a steady uniform discipline" with each other. In their view, it was imperative that Wilson "above all guard against Drunkenness" which their understanding revealed "is the source of every tumult disorders" aboard different ships. To guard against such outbreaks they cautioned, "when you dispose of Liquor to the Sailors, let it be only in small quantities at a time."[16]

Recognizing that alcoholism increased physical outbreaks among crewmen, some merchants spoke out against practices of inhumane treatment. On 2 July 1787 Robert

---

[15] David Tuohy Papers, LRO.

[16] James Dumball Papers, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, England. (hereafter cited as SJL)

Bostock addressed ship orders to Captain Peter Reme. After outlining specifics of trade operation he ended insisting on the necessity of collegiality among the vessel's seamen. Bostock instructed, "take Care to use your people with great Humanity" by making sure "not to beat nor Abuse them as you see many Voyages over set by ill treatment and causes them to run away" from their employed vessel. Strained relationships made up a customary facet of sea life. These contentious encounters occurred not only on the passage from Africa but also during other legs of the infamous 'triangular route.'

Perhaps distressed by continual patterns involving sailors' lack of civility, a year later Bostock became even more explicit in his orders regarding their behavior. Once in command of the sloop *Kite*, Stephen Bowers received several terms concerning his voyage to Africa. "[I]t is my particular Request and desire" Bostock explained, "that you treat your People with Great Humanity" while at sea. To achieve this he commanded Bowes to "not beat nor abuse them" or as he added, "Suffer your Mate or Mates to do it but that you keep a proper order and Command" over the vessel's crew.[17] Seamen served a critical role in helping to satisfy merchants' overseas ventures. Any episodes of internal conflicts proved damaging to these desires. Therefore, as evidenced, explicit demands circulated to counter such occurrences.

Cohesiveness among sailors helped to service necessary ship repairs and expedite coastal sales, but impeding fractures often became detrimental to slaving business. On 14 June 1708, British trader Ditto Snow reported that while docked in West Africa "his Garrison Mutinyed ag't him" which comprised of four sailors traveling on his vessel. Two of the seamen were off boat and according to Snow's correspondence, "y'e Negroes

[17] Letter Book of Robert Bostock (1779-1790), LRO, Liverpool, England.

Seeing this disturbance Took advantage of it."[18] The record does not reflect if these captives tried to escape to the nearby shore line, or if they engaged in open rebellion. This instance demonstrates that ruptures among slave trading seamen became the opportunity some bondpeople used to obtain freedom.

Solidifying Slaving Endeavors

Despite the prevailing expectations merchants held for sailors, the realities emerged in a much different fashion once embarked in West Africa. Oftentimes a delicate and specialized system of slave dealing operated within coastal West Africa. Although far from homogeneous, regardless of the geographical location that ships docked slave sales depended upon the cooperation sailors forged with local natives. One of the most important tactics helping to further cement relations and help to establish a continual coastal presence arose with the construction of trading posts such as castles, forts, and factories.[19] These physical sites, representative of the 'built environment,' varied in design but the resulting creations transformed the face of coastal West Africa. The term built environment is used here to represent individual sites and congregations of material remains, in building form, architecturally designed by humans that altered their natural and communal surroundings through social, physical, and cultural means. Looked at the from the perspective of foreign traders, although bound by their own constructed walls, the primary intention of these locales were to *defend* against outside

---

[18]T 70/2, Abstracts of Letters From Sep. 30, 1707 To July 22, 1713, Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, England. (hereafter cited as PRO)

[19] Albert van Dantzig is perhaps one of the few scholars to offer distinction between the various trading posts that emphatically left a legacy of slave trading operations within Africa. He explains that *castles* represented the biggest of the historical sites of slavery, often located in gun range of each other, which includes present sites: Elmina, Cape Coast, and Goree Island. *Forts* however were the smaller versions of fortified buildings that many traders utilized. The small trade factories, which he refers to as "lodges", were smaller trading venues that were not fortified. Instead of hardened cement, they were typically mud huts that individuals protected. See, *Forts and Castles of Ghana,* (Ghana: Sedco Publishing Limited, 1980), i-ii.

enemies and natural elements; *serve* the needs of their inhabitants; and lastly *protect* their material and financial interests.[20]

Unlike other parts of the world, central sites manufactured for trade and slaving have a long and rather complicated history within western Africa. The Portuguese influenced their initial emergence in 1482 when they erected Sao George D'Elmina. This historical structure granted the Portuguese dominance over the trade along with a permanent coastal presence until 1637, when the Dutch seized control and made it their headquarters until 1872. During the early part of the 17th century, one castle, two forts and one factory were reportedly built in western Africa as slaving interests continued to take shape. The middle part of this period from 1646-1710 experienced perhaps the most significant increase in coastal alterations through assembly of many of these historical spaces. By the dawning of the 18th century, it is estimated two castles, 22 forts, and an innumerable amount of factories were established.[21] Therefore, by the peak of the trade several trading posts had already been created and exchanged hands several times.

Following the waning success of the Royal African Company in the early decades of the eighteenth century, private slave dealers created much more personalized transactions outside of company imposed restrictions. The primary motive attending Europeans' arrival to Africa was the procurement of slaves however their engagement

---

[20] This definition builds upon discussions of 'built environment' offered in: Richard McKinley Mizelle, Jr, "Backwater Blues: The 1927 Flood Disaster, Race, and the Remaking of Regional Identity, 190-1930" (PhD dissertation, Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, 2006), 15; and Denise L. Lawrence and Setha M. Low, "The Built Environment and Spatial Form," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19, (1990): 453-505.

[21] See, Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana,* ix; For further discussion of the integral history of coastal occupation by Europeans during the slave trade, see Magbaily Fyle, *Introduction to the History of African Civilization, Vol. I: Pre-Colonial Africa* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1999), 114-115; Darold J. Wax, "A People of Beastly Living": Europe, Africa, and the Atlantic Slave Trade Vol 41, No. 1 (1st Quarter 1980), 18; and Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Towards the Negro, 1550-1812*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 4; Walvin, *Black Ivory,* 34; and Catherine Coquer-Vidrovitch, *The History of African Cities South of the Sahara: From the Origins to Colonization*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 137-145.

depended upon observing necessary preliminary customs. Forging relations with coastal Africans was one of the most fundamental aspects of the trade. Captains typically waded in designated locales, following their arrival, casting their anchors close to a mile off shore due to the difficulties with docking larger vessels directly on land.[22] Once lodged, as one trader shared, "As soon as the Natives perceive a ship on their Coast, they make a smoke on the Sea-shore, as a Signal for the ship to come to and anchor."[23] As the trade intensified, typically after anchoring, on many occasions the presiding commander accompanied by one of his officers, traveled to the coast by a small boat to inform locals of their arrival.[24] After landing, they located the local king or principal men associated with slaving affairs to discuss their trade intentions and inquire into the current state of slave markets.

Paramount to gaining entrance into slave sales involved establishing relations among local leaders as well as allocating gifts. Upon docking, the presence of white traders typically spread throughout shoreline communities. In order to create more engaged encounters some captains invited kings aboard their vessels to better facilitate the process of gaining trade approval. According to one surgeon's observations, it was not uncommon that "a day or two after [their arrival] the king comes on board in his

---

[22] For a discussion of the utility of coastal lagoons, rivers, and internal waterways in coastal West Africa, see David Eltis "The Volume and Structure of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment" *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, No. 1 (January 2001): 32; There were also health dangers believed to arise once docked in Africa. According one reference, "On the coast of Guinea and on all unhealthy costs" efforts should made to keep a considerable distance in order to "have the benefit of the seabreezes" which in many cases permitted "perfect health." Anonymous (A Surgeon of the Royal Navy), *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant, or Physical Advice To All Masters of Ships who carry no Surgeons; Particularly Useful to those Who trade abroad in Hot or Cold Climates Containing A brief Description of Diseases, Especially those peculiar to Seamen in long Voyages with A concise Method of Cure, The result of many years, practice and experience in all climates,* (London: J Wilkie, 1777), ix. (hereafter cited as *The Ship-Masters Medical Assistant*).

[23] Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade,* introduction.

[24] The term used for this item ranged from a "yawl" and at other times "cannoes." The latter was described as being made "of a single Tree" if carried and used by natives. The former were small dinghies attached to larger vessels that traveled from Europe.

canoe, with a band of music, to break trade, as it is called." Practices varied considerably across the coast, but the tradition involved distributing gifts, also known as *dashes*, to African rulers. After agreeing on final terms in many cases captains received permission to partake of slave negotiations.[25] "When the king breaks trade with the ship," as one trader expounded, "the assortment and quality of his cargo are sufficiently well known to all the [African] traders."[26] Knowledge of the goods held aboard foreign vessels proved useful in generating coastal interest to help expedite slave sales. It also sparked greater desires for the different types of material goods certain vessels carried into Africa.[27]

The offering of vendible items was indigenous to African cultural practices, yet it evolved into a different function within the slave trade. For some sailors it operated as a form of bribery to local chieftains; however the primary accomplishment of these gestures served as formal bids used to enter coastal sales.[28] Amidst the process, "[g]ifts were offered and accepted, drinks and smokes exchanged, food cooked, and consumed together."[29] Although elongating their coastal stays, these initial encounters exposed

---

[25] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, HCSP, 72: 299; In addition to rulers, he also mentioned the expectation of giving gifts to those within a king's entourage. According to him, "after the king has been entertained on board, his parliament gentlemen expect to be treated with a small quantity of bread and salt beef."

[26] Testimony of James Frasers, HCSP, 71:20 – 21; The phrase "breaking of trade" implied opening up the trade for active participation.

[27] David Eltis writes that merchants commonly sent cargoes to preselected markets which owed to the fact, "Africans had regionally distinct preferences for merchandise." See "The Volume and Structure of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment," 31; On the cooperative venture maintained between Africans and Europeans, see Robin Law and Kristin Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast" *William and Mary Quarterly* 56, No. 2 (1999), 313.

[28] See, James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 31; Christopher Fyfe, "West African Trade A.D. 1000-1800," in *A Thousand Years of West Africa History*, ed. J.F. Ade. Ajayi and Ian Espie. (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1965): 237-252; and Joseph Harris, *Africans and Their History* (New York: Meridian Books, 1998), 83-85.

[29] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 35; Christopher Fyfe offers an interesting response to these cultural interactions that took place between Europeans and coastal Africans. He argues that during the exchange of goods Africans received luxuries, necessities and mostly consumer goods. Therein, "[o]nce they had been worn out, smoked, drunk, etc. they were gone for ever." Whereas, on the European end they "were given slaves who were employed to create wealth cross the Atlantic" forcing him to conclude that these barters were unequal. See Fyfe, "West African Trade, A.D. 1000-1800," 249.

crewmen to various aspects of African culture.[30] As evidenced, utilization of local resources and entrance into the complicated system of African trade required several important costs; to which all seamen were expected to oblige. Any disregard of these practices could result in the inability of trade as well as hindering the establishment of ties fertile to supplying desired slaves.

Having been intimately connected to the trade based upon previous investments, many distant entrepreneurs were well informed of the dynamics of the coastal African trade. The various goods they ordered sailors to include prior to a vessel's England departure attested to this prevailing recognition. Often gathered from overseas travels and distant trading posts, wares such as "[i]ron, cooper and brass bars were used as currency, silks from India, refined metalware and textiles from England, [in addition to] the best of European drinks" carried into Africa and perpetuated the sale of humans.[31] Along with cementing relations and assisting seamen in obliging customary trade policies, these material items served a multitude of purposes.

The practices sailors engaged with Africans demonstrated their entrepreneurial intentions however they were also emblematic of a range of other factors. They attested to the budding growth of slave demands taking place across the waterways. For Africans, the presence of foreign traders and their willingness to offer various tokens formally

---

[30] Some could argue that this exposure revealed certain tendencies and behaviors that were recognized as weaknesses upon which traders exploited upon their return trips. For instance, William Smith in his travel narrative makes the observed that "[t]he Women also are addicted to Drinking." Of course this belief could have provided the catalysts for offering excess amounts of alcohol when deemed necessary. Smith also declared that Africans "cannot read or write, by which Means as to the Knowledge of their Antiquity, History, &c little is to be learnt, every Thing here being uncertain and traditional." This declaration perpetuates the idea that Africans lacked any fundamental basis of history. Filtration of these ideas likely had influence the intentional miscalculation of monies some traders used, working with the idea of Africans illiteracy. William Smith, *New Voyage to Guinea: Describing the Customs, Manners, Soil, Climate, Habits, Buildings, Education, Manual Arts, Agriculture, Trade, Employment, Language Ranks of Distinction, Habitations, Diversions, Marriages, and Whatever Else is Memorable Among the Inhabitants* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1744), 212.

[31] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 30.

acknowledged their arrival in coastal communities. Likewise, on a certain level, the central role local leaders held in facilitating contours of the slaving machine seemed to give them prestigious positions by serving the role of "protector or landlords" to arriving Europeans.[32] Relative to seamen, offering monies and goods demonstrated the posture of humility Europeans required of them in order to merely gain entrance into conversations with local slave brokers. At the same time, these mannerisms also exposed the dependence confining traders for the acquisition of human cargoes.

The localized reigns of control natives held in some cases created frustration among traveling seamen. Stereotypes of cultural inferiority circulated about West Africans, particularly within travel literature. Alongside this the waterways of the Atlantic Ocean encompassed a similar and rather unique highway of information contained among crewmen that shaped the prejudices they carried into their interactions with Africans.[33] Of course the token action sailors engaged with coastal men overtly professed their "respect" for the customs required to gain access to their most valued commodities – slaves. Yet, according to one scholar, "whites were irritated at the universal demand for dashes, or bribes, as a preliminary to the trade and the need to indulge other native customs."[34] Traveling with a degraded view of shoreline cultures, it would not seem extraordinary that seamen held feelings of resentment. Perhaps the most

---

[32] Christopher Fyfe further expands on this idea talking about that within this role kings and other chiefs may have seen themselves as such by demanding customary due: commissions on each slave sold as well as customary gifts. In exchange many of these rulers willingly looked to offering physical protection along with "supplying their everyday wants (housing, food, and wives), "West African Trade A.D. 1000-1800," 250

[33] For an engaged discussion of this phenomenon especially in regards to travel literature, see Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Gender and Reproduction in the New World*, 2004.; Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes Towards the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1978); and Darold J. Wax, "A People of Beastly Living". Travel literature circulated among literate populations across England and the colonial societies of the New World, which helped to create widespread influences. However, critical to these discourses are the personal observations and conclusions that sailors created and filtered that operated outside of mainstream understanding.

[34] Barker, *The African Link*, 107.

deep seated hostility driving Europeans' frustration was their inability to control natives' negotiation practices with traders from other competing nations. Despite any ill-views they may have harbored, however it proved far more practical to oblige customary practices; even if disapproval persisted.

After gaining approval from African elite to proceed with trade, sailors moved onward within another set of negotiations. This took place with "people on the Sea Coast [who] act commonly as brokers" within coastal operations.[35] Serving as middle men, these locals were generally responsible for supplying local demands for slaves, particularly that of white sea-captains. Some of these dealers were appointed by local rulers; while on the other hand, the increase of relationships between sailors and African women throughout the eighteenth century produced mixed-race children who often served in these shoreline capacities.[36] Regardless of their racial background, in many cases they were most "trusted" by traveling seamen. One captain explained his inability to gain satisfactory business with "Natives of the Inland parts." Despite his frustrations, he relayed, "the Natives here on the Sea side are much civilized" because of their regularly "conversing with the Europeans" by going aboard trade ships. In his estimation, "Here we can venture on Shore amongst the Natives, without any hazard."[37] One could argue that interactions among racially mixed coastal dwellers reduced degraded views some Europeans held about Africans. Yet, on much broader terms, for

---

[35] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71: 9.

[36] See, Walter Rodney, "Upper Guinea Coast and the Significance of the Origins of Africans Enslaved in the New World," *The Journal of Negro History* 54, no. 4 (Oct., 1969), pp. 327-345; Walter Rodney, African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 3 (1966), pp. 431-443; Robin Law and Kristin Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community," 316-317; George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa : Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth century* (Athens: Ohio University, 2003);

[37] Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade*, intro.

some seamen observation of native adaptions to European customs facilitated greater ease in the interactions shared thereafter.

Although serving as intermediary between traders and arriving seamen, coastal retailers benefited considerably. They operated similar to whole-sale dealers working with nearby commercial networks to gather desired captives. On occasion some traveled inland "where they know there are Slaves ready for sale," having been captured and brought by traders from the hinterland.[38] Once in the hands of these coastal men, they assessed the viability of certain slaves to determine their possibilities of commercial sale. The history of these men is rather sketchy, yet they served a critical link in controlling the inventory of captives carried from the interior; making sure they were funneled onward to awaiting sea captains. One trader explained that during exchanges a coastal man typically "takes what commodities he pleases for his Negro which he has to sell" in exchange for having "the choice of his goods" offered by ship commanders. In the central position these men held, they determined the fate of not only available captives, but also the likelihood that interested captains gained access to these valuable commodities.[39] Recognizing the power at their disposal, some Africans used the heightened desires articulated for slaves to their advantage by keeping captives on hand and increasing prices. During holding, "they are not only at the expence of feeding them, but there is also the risk of mortality." Therefore, it was most advantageous that they rid themselves of captives to reduce accruing any further expenses.

Both coastal natives and seamen likely felt they had the upper hand within conducted sales. It is not possible to fully comprehend the view some Africans held of

---

[38] Testimony of Jerome Barnard Weuves, HCSP, 68:208.
[39] *Ibid.*

competing European nations. However belief of cultural inferiority and financial mismanagement shaped sailors' approach to their dealings within West Africa.[40] One sailor attested "The black are very cunning, and commit various frauds in their trade with the Europeans."[41] His point is revealing of the stereotypes that shaped seamen as well as those who took coastal residence. In November of 1763, surgeon and slave trader Archibald Dalzel wrote from Annamaboe discussing the practices of his "black neighbours" relative to the Fantee people he observed during his stay on the Gold Coast. Most telling was his point, "What is likewise a bad Circumstance for us, [is that] they think it meritorious to Cheat a White Man that lives in their power," within the surrounding coastal community. Going further, he disclosed "if we catch them Stealing anything, we can exercise their own laws against them" which in all probability was worse if it had to do with matters of human property.[42] Dalzel's personal correspondence probably never reached British officials or even slave trading seamen. However, this same basis of judgment prevailed among different Europeans that interacted with Africans on a regular basis. The manipulative illustration Dalzel portrays of local natives

---

[40] Trying to understand the African role in the trade is a rather difficult task. For further discussion offered by scholars grappling with this important aspect to the story, see, George Metcalf, "A Microcosm of Why Africans Sold Slaves: Akan Consumption Patters in the 1770s," *The Journal of African History* 28, No. 3 (1987): 377-394; and Herbert J. Foster, "Partners or Captives in Commerce?: The Role of Africans in the Slave Trade," *Journal of Black Studies* 6, No. 4 (Jun., 1976): 421-434.; Sylviane A. Diouf,ed., *Fighting the Slave Trade : West African Strategies* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003); Anne C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade : Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); J.D. Fage, "Slavery and Slave Trade in the Context of West African History, *Journal of African Hisory* 10, No. 3 (1969): 393-404; Lansine' Kaba, "The Atlantic Slave Trade was Not a Black-on-Black Holocaust," *African Studies Review* 44, No. 1 (Apr., 2001): 1-20; Charles Piot, "Of Slaves and the Gift: Kabre Sale of Kin During the Era of the Slave Trade," *Journal of African History* 37, No.1 (1996): 31-49; George Metcalf, "A Microcosm of Why Africans Sold Africans: Akan Consumption Patterns in the 1770s," *The Journal of African History* 28, No. 3 (1987): 377-394; J.D. Fage, "African Societies and the African Slave Trade," *Past and Present*, No. 125 (Nov., 1989):97-115

[41] Testimony of John Fountain, HCSP, 68: 274.

[42] Archibald Dalzel Papers, SJL, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, England.

seems to further fuel the necessity of judicial powers as well as perhaps the use of violence during episodes of thievery.

Unfavorable views held regarding African financial responsibility were far from uncommon. While preparing to travel to West Africa, ship captain Stephen Bowers received instructions concerning the typical mode of operation with local natives. The owners connected with his voyage forewarned on 19 June 1788, "you are not to trust any Goods to the Natives on any Account whatsoever on forfeiture of your commissions & privilleges." Part of their concern rested with the fear "trusting of Goods to them has been the totall defeat of many a Voyage on Account of there Defaults of payments."[43] This letter sheds useful light on the prevailing biases some merchants sought to warn sailors of in their shared business ventures with Africans. We already know that distribution of dashes proved critical to purchasing desired slaves, which seamen were unable to alter. Yet, the "trusting" of goods likely dealt with giving natives required commodities without receiving the exchange of available captives.

Due to the skewed views commonly held, many Europeans often employed different tactics to guard against being swindled. According to one trade participant, with virtually "everything the Europeans deal[t] in" they employed fraudulent tactics against local natives. Ship commanders were unable to alter that delicate process being greatly dependent upon local residents to gain access to desired slaves. Yet, they understood that different goods they carried overseas would conceivably peak the interest of natives; helping to create easier coastal transactions. Therefore, on many occasions they attempted to assert control through the quality of various material items given to purchase slaves.

[43] Letter Book of Robert Bostock (1779-1790), LRO, Liverpool, England.

It is quite possible that contrary perspectives held about Africans influenced the physical mistreatment used against some coastal brokers. On 9 April 1710 British officials received a letter from Cape Coast reporting on the current status of slaving transactions. A stationed agent, Sir Dalby Thomas, reported on the coastal affairs of a trader referred to as Mr. Phipps. According to Thomas "M'r Phipp was more ashoar than aboard" thus neglecting various duties needed on ship. Viewed another way, it is possible that he used the time to secure slave sales. However, Thomas professed that "when aboard if the Blacks Will not take what he bid them for y'e Slaves" it was not uncommon that Phipps "would beat them over Board." Likewise, in creating further tensions, he "would not Rise tho in the Day time to look upon the Slaves when they have been brought on board."[44] This trader was quite inattentive to the duties required to purchase slaves. His behaviors could be considered offensive to his fellow crewmen and employers; yet perhaps even more alarming was the crude and violent means within which he dealt with local natives. From the perspective of company officials, continuation of these practices could only fray the very fabric of cooperation many traders sought to create and maintain for the good of their financial endeavors.

Along with battery, on many occasions sea captains distributed tainted commodities in exchange for slaves. Charles Berns Wadstrom explained "there are so many methods in almost every article, by which they [Europeans] can deceive the Negroes without their deceiving it," that in his view "it would be tedious to enumerate them."[45] Such evidence validates the innumerable tactics of deceit employed against Africans. There is no direct evidence explaining when these practices began to emerge,

---

[44] T 70/2 Abstracts of Letters From Sep. 30, 1707 To July 22, 1713, PRO.
[45] Testimony of Charles Berns Wadstrom, HCSP, 73:134.

however, considering the feelings of African inferiority regularly harbored by sailors, it does not seem extraordinary. The strategies waged against natives ranged from adulterating spirits with water, "making three cases out of two, and putting in Cayenne pepper into the mouth of the bottle to make it take strong."[46] We see through this account the extent that some foreigners went in their dealings with natives. Africans probably shared the same mistrust however it is difficult to determine how regular they accused Europeans of fraudulent practices against them.

Some traders attempted to use Africans' kindness against them. It was not uncommon to find that seamen held beliefs of "the ignorance of the Negros in calculation." Recognizing this, they took full advantage by offering "bottles that contain but half of the contents of the samples" or at other times "mixing water with their brandy after the bargain has been made."[47] These incidents probably fostered a negative view of traveling Europeans. Yet, if we look more closely, following the conclusion of sales and once these items were taken back ashore, it was too late to make any concession against any perceived deceptive operations. At the same time, if any coastal men endeavored to accuse seamen of treachery, it could prove damaging against future business; which they were not only dependent, but significantly lured by the prospect of continued engagements.

In addition to liquors Europeans deceived Africans with guns. The 17th century established the early desire for these metal pieces, particularly among the ruling elite; yet

---

[46] Testimony of James Towne, HCSP, 82:18; Richard Story makes the same assertion, see, Testimony of Richard Story, HCSP, 82:10

[47] Testimony of Charles Berns Wadstrom, HCSP, 73:134.

these desires peaked in the next century.[48] Europe reportedly imported between 283,000 and 394,000 guns into Africa per year.[49] In supplying demand the intention was not to empower Africans. These practices permitted them to rid themselves of ill-equipped metal pieces. However, by far the most important aspect to these distributions revolved around the creation of dependence it instituted that prompted requests for more. Europeans were well aware of the embroiling situation, evidenced through the fact they often exchanged slaves for guns with "their barrels burst, and thrown away." Due to the growing desire still unfurling, one trader confessed witnessing "many of the Natives with their thumbs and fingers off," which upon querying he uncovered, "they have said were blown off by the bursting of their guns."[50] There is no direct evidence estimating the numbers of natives that suffered physical damages from these metal pieces. Even though we know very little about their demands for guns and their impending dangers, these narratives help to provide a glimpse into the bodily costs that Africans confronted through coastal ventures maintained with Europeans.

Guns were one of the most highly prized goods carried to Africa. Part of the desire stemmed from gaining access to technological advancements, but also because of the strength and power these items embodied which granted the ability to assert control and terror against any perceived enemies. Many sailors built upon these understandings, funneling scores of guns into Africa. Richard Daniel of the brig *Daniel* observed the

---

[48] See Fyfe, "West African Trade A.D. 1000-1800", 248. He points out that special types of arms were created especially for the trade, particularly long barreled guns which were perceived dangerous to users and heir victims; also Gavin White, "Firearms in Africa: An Introduction," *Journal of African History* XVII, 2 (1971): 173-184;J.E. Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa 1750-1807: A Quantitative Analysis," *Journal of African History* XVIII, 3 (1977): 339-368; W. A. Richards, "The Import of Fire Arms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, 21 (1980):43-59;

[49] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 30; See also Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 385-386.

[50] Testimony of Richard Story, HCSP, 82:10. For further discussion of poor quality of guns, see, Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 31; J. D. Fage "Africans Societies and the African Slave Trade," 103.

material goods French ships used to barter for slaves. In September of 1790 they bartered cloth, metal cookware and "a Chest of Tobacco" in order to satisfy African's consumptive requests. Daniel seemed astonished by their "paying such Extravagent prices" that in his view "it was impossible to stand it." Along with these various goods he also maintained "they were paying 22 Guns" which we can presume hindered future intentions of trade.[51]

Engineering Human Laborers

To better understand the complicated system of coastal slave sales it is useful to turn to the process of how some bondpeople came to represent 'human goods'. As planter demands continued to increase, it facilitated the need to supply potentially valuable slaves from coastal West Africa.[52] The growing appeals expressed by slaving nations determined the expeditious manner upon which interior traders sought to usher slaves towards the coast for sale. It also dually affected the amount of slaves and the type of people made available. African men understood by some as "people that live in the Up Country" were the primary catalysts responsible for transporting slaves towards the sea line.[53] Located in a central position and presumably familiar with the areas between the interior hinterlands and the coastal shore this made capture much more feasible. As the trade gained further momentum it created an environment of fear among African residents due to the possibility that at any given moment they could become enslaved.

Procurement of bondpeople did not occur in a peaceful manner; instead it operated in a haphazard and unexpected fashion, while people were engaged in a variety

---

[51] "Ship Daniel," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

[52] Joseph Harris builds upon this same point explaining that "when Europeans demanded laborers or slaves, the African merchant had to comply or lose his business. Harris, *Africans and Their History*, (New York: Penguin Press, 1998), 83.

[53] Testimony of James Fraser, HCSP, 71:19.

of activities.[54] By the 18th century 70% of purchased slaves were kidnapped.[55] One surgeon shared the story concerning a female he observed in Bonny. Several captives were transferred from the coast on the vessel *Alexander*, one of which included "a woman [that] was brought on board very big with child." Taking notice of her endowed body, this prompted the attending physician to query how she came to be sold as a slave. She probably spoke in a native tongue unfamiliar to him forcing his reliance on an interpreter to understand her testimony. He learned that while "returning home from a visit she was seized" in a rather abrupt manner. According to the physician, "after passing through several hands of different traders" she was later "brought down to the waterside and sold to a voyage" who then bartered her aboard the present vessel.[56] In another instance, a man described as "advanced in years" was also forced within the trade. The attending ship surgeon described his capture based on the bondman's story. When they were abducted, "he and his son were planting yams in their field" within their community. Intensely engaged in their agricultural endeavors however they were unaware of events brewing within their proximity. As a result, "they were seized by professed kidnappers, and [then] sold." [57] Through all of these captives we see the vulnerability traders preyed upon while they engaged in a variety of daily activities. As the slave demands grew in strength interior communities of Africa developed into a

---

[54] See, Testimony of Capt. John Ashley Hall, *House of Commons Sessional Paper of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 72, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 226; Winston McGowan posits that kidnapping and raiding persisted as long as the slave trade. See McGowan, "African Resistance to the Atlantic Slave Trade in West Africa," 10; The author recognizes some people were often sold and born into slavery and in some cases exchanged by seamen without the threat of violence, yet this beyond the scope of this project. For an expanded discussion of the background of enslavement among West Africans see Richard Sheridan, "Resistance and rebellion of African captives in the transatlantic slave trade before becoming seasoned labourers in the British Caribbean, 1690-1807," in Verene A. Shepherd, ed., *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa, and the African Diaspora* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2002), 183.

[55] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 26.

[56] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, HCSP, 72: 294-5.

[57] *Ibid.*

predatory atmosphere. Far from a precisely organized process, traders used different people as bargaining tools to maintain a viable position in the trade.

Incidents of kidnapping were considerably widespread. For instance, two black women were taken by surprise one evening while asleep in their beds. Suddenly dragged out of their houses, they were confronted by several 'war-men' who then tied them up and transported them in a coffle bound for the coast.[58] A similar example of extreme violence took place on the coast of Bonny Point where a young woman came out of the woods to bathe one morning. Yet much to her dismay two men grabbed her, "secured her hands behind her back, beat her, and ill-used her, on account of the resistance she made."[59] The methods of capture differed for these and other bondpeople, yet their stories – largely invisible within the written record – collectively expose the often wanton brutality used to force African people into the system of Atlantic slavery. They also confirm that the initial capture of both women and men created fertile ground for the perpetuation of continued violence.

Trickery served as another method used to obtain desired slaves. When a ship arrived on the African coast, it was a regular practice that some seamen offered natives unsolicited gifts to encourage them to bring slaves. As foreign traders, many seamen were likely unmoved by the circumstance that landed different captives in bondage. The escalated value for black bodies created an environment in which every person within African society became a potential target. James Towne a slave trader recollected the case of bondmen forced into slavery who formerly engaged as a coastal trader. During his ship confinement the captured man described how he became a slave while on the

---

[58] Testimony of John Bowman, *HCSP*, 82:114.
[59] Testimony of John Douglas, *HCSP*, 82:122.

Galenas River. He shared that a group of four black men "took and plundered him of what he had, stripped him naked, brought him on board. . .and sold him."[60] The lack of further details on the bondman's case raises several questions. Were the men that took him from the same area as he? If so, one wonders how he was unrecognized by the local traders and ultimately sold. Did the bondman carry any slaves that were taken and sold? Many of these queries go unanswered, yet conclusions from his experience suggest that much like competing European nations, African local traders also worked in rivalry of supplying slaves.

In a relatively similar fashion, several bondmen were also deluded into bondage. A surgeon witnessed a male seized by Bonny locals and thereafter sell him to an interested captain. Once sold the captive shared that "he was invited to come and look at a ship" perhaps working with the understanding of his "never having seen one." Taking advantage of the opportunity, he prepared to satisfy his curiosity. In doing so he was seized and immediately sold. In another case a bondman referred to as Cape Mount Jack was boarded onto a slaver off the Windward Coast. As the ship remained docked, the male captive's understanding of English began to gradually improve. He later used his linguistic ability to explain how he became apart of the vessel's cargo. One evening he was "invited to drink with some of his neighbours." After partaking of the festivities he prepared to leave however amidst his efforts "two of the people" he dined with, they "got up to seize him" in an attempt to prevent his departure. In the bondman's view "he would have made his escape" but his attempts were quickly suppressed when he was "stopped by a large dog." Both of these men's lives provide a valuable opportunity for questioning the ways that Africans entered captivity. We will never understand the

[60] Testimony of James Towne, *HCSP*, 82:16.

circumstantial motives leading to their capture and sale. Yet, one thing clear from these narratives is the susceptibility of bondpeople to diverse manipulative tactics used to place them in bondage.

Much like their African counterparts, foreign ship captains also employed dishonest strategies to acquire black bodies. These practices established a platform helping to increase the level of violence that played out between various regions. Because of an already functioning form of slavery, many white traders saw themselves as "participants in a legitimate commerce, rather than receivers of stolen human property."[61] Trade participant John Bowman conveyed how he was used to acquire more slaves aboard the vessel he manned. The captain he worked under gave directions for his involvement on the coast, directing him "To proceed up to the factory" in order to "settle myself as a trader amongst the inhabitants." Once acclimated within the local community his primary orders were to spark discord among the locals. To achieve this, the presiding captain gave him the task of "encourage[ing] the town's people by supplying them with powder, ball, and ammunition, to go to war," along with making sure "to give them all the encouragement that laid in my power to get Slaves."[62] It was not uncommon for seamen to reside within coastal African communities. However, it is difficult to comprehend the full extent that some Europeans instigated wars among neighboring coastal regions.

---

[61] Barker, *The African Link,* 189; An endless debate persists on African "slavery" relative to the coming of Europeans during the era of the slave trade. For this, Darold Wax points out that regarding the African side it had grown out of local circumstances which allowed it to adapt to local condition. However in his view it "bore no more than a superficial resemblance to the institution that developed in the Americas." See, Wax "A People of Beastly Living," 23; Fyle, *Introduction to the History of African Civilization*, 121.

[62] Testimony of John Bowman, HCSP, 82:113.

Along with firearms, alcohol was also an extremely useful tactic used to gain bondpeople. One ship captain ordered a crewman to go ashore and invite "two [African] gentlemen traders" back aboard the vessel. Once there, as James Towne recalled, "The Captain took them down into the cabin, and made them drink to such an excess," that in his view "they were unable to stand." During the commander's endeavors the vessel's sailors were "employed in getting sail upon the vessel, and making all ready" for the ship's departure across the sea. Later within the passage Towne indicated "the captain called me down into the cabin and pointed to the sail case," telling him to look in and "see what a fine prize he had got." Obliging the captain's orders, he explained, "I was much surprized to find there the two men I had brought on board, whom he had made drunk, and concealed therein." Both men "were still laying fast asleep" for close to three hours upon which after waking they found they were trapped aboard a slave ship. Afterwards they were "ordered upon deck, put in irons, and sent forward amongst the men Slaves" presumably already confined. Upon full recognition of the attending situation, according to Towne, "They made lamentations, and were sorry that white men should be such great rogues to take them from their own country" because in their view "they were free men."[63]

The Range of Available Human Merchandise

Building upon the initial experiences of procurement within Africa, it is also necessary to explore the diversity of bondpeople represented in the Atlantic trade. Although preferences changed within different periods, black males dominated as primary categories of captives bought and actively sought within distant slave markets.

---

[63] Testimony of James Towne, HCSP, 82:20; For another instance of the use of alcohol to procure slaves reference, Testimony of Captain James Morley, HCSP, 73:155.

One scholar contends that the considerable inclusion of men owed more to matters of supply rather than demand because African suppliers tended to funnel more males into overseas exports in contrast to women and children.[64] As such, concentrations were given to those believed young and healthy. Ship captain Charles Knealy received instructions for his purchase of bondpeople. His orders encouraged that close to half should "consist of Prime Men Negroes from 15 to 25 yrs old." The other captives valued in these merchants' eyes were "Boys" that ranged from "10 to 15" years old and "Women" approximately "10 to 18" years old.[65] As these preferences reveal, along with bondmen countless other bondpeople were included in this vast trade network. Most interesting is the attention given to their ages. For the female captives, it demonstrates the assessments employed in reference to their reproductive capacities. Numerical estimations help to remind us of the diversity of slaves traded. Outside of culling statistical information however we must take a broader view of bondpeople's experiences within captivity that is often much more difficult to quantify.

Physical attraction often guided the decision of sale for bondwomen. In a 1722 letter, British merchant Humphrey Morice gave specific orders for the purchase of two males to every one female. As his request articulated, if women were procured, "see they are good & Beautifull, never y'e worse."[66] These instructions reveal the significance of

---

[64] See, G. Ugo Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender and Slave Traffic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, No. 1 (January 2001) 3. David Eltis and Stanley Engerman, "Was the Slave Trade Dominated By Men? *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Autumn, 1992): 237-257; " The Volume, Age/Sex Ratios, and the African Impact of the Slave Trade: Some Refinements of Paul Lovejoy's Review of the Literature," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1990), 485-492; David Eltis and Stanley Engerman, "Fluctuation in Sex and Age Ratios in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864," *The Economic History Review* 46, No. 2 (May, 1993): 308-323

[65] Account Books of Ships of Thomas Leyland & Co, LRO, Liverpool, England.

[66] Add. 48590, British Library, London, England. (hereafter cited as BL); One might wonder if such practices were used in the purchase of black men. We do not know at this juncture according to

attractiveness some merchants expected slave traders to use in judging the worth of enslaved females. During negotiations traders were expected to give "a certain quantity of goods for slaves" which in some cases final sales went "according to their appearance" as perceived by interested buyers.[67] These same preferences might have become even more pronounced within the Atlantic auction block system – represented through inland fairs and markets - prior to their coastal sale. Once available for sale, black females' lives were quantified, their bodies objectified, and their fate finalized by traders and potential buyers.

For many of these bondwomen, their physical body parts and in many instances their breasts, became the primary features slave traders drew upon to base their final decisions of purchase. Although slave trader John Newton sought to procure more females, he declined an African woman offered to him for sale. He explained, "Yellow Will brought me a woman slave, but being long breasted and ill made, refused her, and made him take her on shoar again. . . ."[68] A similar reference of valuing black females according to their anatomy took place in 1787 aboard the slaver, *Ville d'Honfleux*. Twenty-one female captives from Bassa encompassed part of the ship's human 'cargo' that received description, "the Women in general having good Breasts were strong and well."[69] One could offer the point that those who underwent lactation often became physically visible in women who nursed. In going further, it is quite conceivable some

---

available sources. Additionally, there is no way to determine how often other merchants instructed these same practices to ship captains.

[67] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71: 23.

[68] John Newton, *Journal of a Slave Trader*, 32

[69] Certificate of Slaves Taken on Board Ships, Parliamentary Archives, House of Lords Records Office, London England. (hereafter cited HLRO)

traders used these physical references to decide the reproductive value some bondwomen could offer in the New World.

Building upon the same physical features, Morice provided several characteristics to employed seamen. He declared their avoidance of Africans with "Long, Tripeish Breasts" and most especially those with "Navells sticking out."[70] The former description provides insight into the continual use of breasts as an indicator of value; whereas the latter is perhaps applicable to those with a hernia or even pregnant women. Using the shape, size, and perceived firmness of women's breasts, this further broadens the view of body examinations that surgeons and seamen used to assess the value of female captives. Black women's bodies represented "the utility to produce both crops and other laborers."[71] Therefore, we can conclude that with some buyers there operated a female specific dual determinant used in sales; relative to productive and reproductive capacities. Jennifer Morgan in *Laboring Women* makes reference to the widespread observation of black women with children suckling at the breast within coastal Africa. She uses her discussion to contend European literary criticisms helped to perpetuate evidence of barbarism among African peoples, while also suggesting black women's immunity to the pains of the childbirth in contrast to European women. If we look more closely, we find that these physical references were not always used by ship captains and prospective buyers to suggest always barbarism. Instead they became mechanisms used to assess the value of black women's bodies for the trade and labor within Atlantic plantation systems.

---

[70] Add. 48590, BL.
[71] Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 14.

Along with single women females and their progeny also held a place within coastal sales.[72] In a letter to his financers, ship captain John Duncan declared, "[i]t's true I had nine but two of them were children and the mother of them died before the briggs departure."[73] While substantiating the place of children in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, this letter offers a glimpse into the inclusion of black mothers who in some cases were enslaved alongside their offspring. Ordinarily traders' sought to capture women within the interior regions of West Africa without their offspring because of the burden of care required in addition to the fact children brought a lower value.[74] Despite the underlying intent, this did not exclude women with suckling infants from consideration. According to one ship captain, in many cases, younger captives "always came without any relations," whenever sold on the coast.[75] This of course differed by circumstances and decisions made by interior African capturers.

Difficulties often persisted in procuring and transporting nursing women and their infants however some ship captains elected to purchase them. In November of 1788 eight women "with Children at Breast" were hurdled together and forced to cross the Atlantic waters aboard the ship *Madampookata*. As evidenced, the widespread devaluing of new mothers did not grant them immunity from enslavement.[76] The presence of bondwomen, both young and old, debunks previously held ideas that females aboard slave ships were comprised primarily of adult women. These considerations suggest a

---

[72] This idea is used to mean women without children. It is not used in reference to their marital status.

[73] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

[74] See King, "'Mad' Enough to Kill: Enslaved Women, Murder, and the Southern Courts, *The Journal of African American History*, 92, no. 1 (Winter 2007), 47

[75] Testimony of Capt. John Ashley Hall, *HCSP*, 72:227; within in his testimony he did later mention witnessing the coastal sale of an enslaved woman with a six week old child suckling at her breast. For an additional discussion of familial relations see Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP*, 72:299.

[76] Extracts of Such Journals of the Surgeons Employed in Ship Trading to the Coast of Africa, HLRO.

necessary expansion of the term "women" in the context of the international slave trade. It not only prevents general categorization of the different females forcibly placed in the slave trade, but it also prohibits further exclusion of young and teenage girls, nursing mothers, elderly women, and females without children present whose lives were also offered for sale.

Prepubescent captives, both boys and girls, represent another group of Africans' enslaved. The categorical labeling often varied with different terms: "boys", "girls", "men-boys", and "women-girls." The latter were likely more applicable to pre-teens and teenage slaves, whereas the former could apply to younger children. Interestingly, one scholar posits, "Children were easier to capture and confine than adults."[77] Because of the common dichotomies of adults and children used in reference to the trade, the type of captives that made up these distinct categories are perhaps deserving of more discussion. In all probability younger slaves were likely easier to kidnap because of their smaller size. Excluded from this analysis are the difficulties attended with keeping children quiet. Additionally traders plausibly faced challenges in also managing them within coast bound coffles due to the additional responsibilities required.

Even though younger aged captives were not always preferred, they appeared aboard several slave ships. One merchant gave instructions regarding the purchase of children. He requested "none under 14 if Possible, such being unfit to Travell y'e long journey."[78] Even though his orders suggested crewmen's avoidance of young children, they were not excluded from the specter of sale. Ecroyde Claxton recounted the story

---

[77] Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender and Slave Traffic," 11; Robin Blackburn points out that children were carried less than men during the 18th century which included those under 15 with far fewer being transported younger than 10 years old. See, Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 384.

[78] Add. 48590, BL.

surrounding the purchase of nine enslaved Africans. According to him they appeared "dejected" once brought aboard ship from the Island of Bimbe. Among those sold, a young girl, "a child of about ten or twelve years of age" learned she had been sold to an awaiting ship captain. It is unclear how she was able to decipher details of the events. Yet, she "clung fast about the neck of her disposer, and eagerly embraced him" perhaps hopeful of reversing her ill-fated enslavement.[79] This narrative demonstrates the awareness bondpeople had regarding their bondage, including children. One can only imagine the deep rooted pain this young girl felt after being stripped from her community and immediate family and especially upon recognition her future lied in the hands of a strange foreigner.

In addition to children, Africans believed beyond their prime years were also included within the Middle Passage. Serving as central conduits of wisdom bridging the past with future generations, elderly men and women held critical roles within African communities. Although emerging from varied ethnicities and societies, many bondpeople carried common ideals of reverence for those aged. However, the mistreatment that "old" slaves endured within the trade altered the respect that they formerly enjoyed within African communities.

Elderly slaves were often deemed lower in value by different traders. Orders were regularly given for their exclusion in order to prevent their appearance within ship manifests. Captain Smyth of the *Corsican Hero* received directions from his financers regarding the specific attention he needed to allocate with purchasing potentially valuable slaves. They warned Smyth "be Carefull in your Choise as old ones sell for little and

[79] Testimony of Ecroyde Claxton, *HCSP*, 82:34-5.

often die" once in a trader's possession.[80] These instructions confirm that older Africans were sometimes found aboard slavers. At the same time, they also seem to give the illusion of perceived weakness believed pervasive among aged captives.

Merchants' instructions commanding the decline of certain captives were a common feature within the trade. Caleb Godfrey captain of the sloop *Hare* received guidance concerning his procedure of sales expected on the African coast. On 8 November 1755 the financers for his overseas travels explained that once embarked, "you are at Liberty to trade at Such Places as you think most for our Interest" on shore. However, they also gave him details specifying their investment interests. In so doing, they warned Godfrey, "Don't purchase any small or old Slaves or as few as possible." To encourage the procurement of other slaves, they added "Young Men Slaves [also] answer better than Women" within current slave markets.[81] These instructions identify the preferences merchants articulated according to gender, size, and age.

Older captives were regularly overlooked within coastal slave sales. On 7 April 1751 John Newton detailed that a man referred to as Mr. Cumberpatch came aboard his vessel *African* in effort to pay an overdue debt. He resolved the outstanding payment by giving Newton "a woman and a boy (4 foot 1 inch)" along with selling him two other boys. Likely looking to rid other slaves, Newton claimed that "[h]e [also] had an old man" for sale though "I would not buy him" he added.[82] The refusal of the elderly man reveals that regardless of the desire to conclude sales for an immediate departure, traders devalued them against their younger counterparts.

---

[80] David Tuohy Papers, LRO.
[81] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.
[82] Newton, *The Journal of a Slave Trader*, 45.

Despite widespread disapproval, this did not prevent traders from purchasing older slaves. Records available on the vessel *Ville d'Honfleux* further demonstrate these realities. "Number of Men 50" were listed and described as "old maimed and sick [with] 20 thin," to which an additional note relayed "whose Youth gave great room to hope for their Reestablishment." Along with these bondmen, ten female captives described as "old and sick, [and] decidedly bad" were also included in the vessel's cargo.[83] The decision made to board a significantly high number of aged captives reveals that traders did not always oblige expectations for their refusal. Their inclusion also raises several questions. How were these captives procured? Were they offered with a price reduction perhaps to rid the area of unwanted slaves? Did their weakening state jeopardize their ability to withstand the later passage? This account suggests that on some occasions age did always operate as the determining factor of coastal sales. Equally exposed is the broader spectrum of captives offered as future laborers. It would be useful to better understand how these older slaves came into captivity. Despite the depravity of details, however it is plausible to conclude then that, regardless of age, some coastal brokers considered that the exchange of goods and monies for bondpeople solidified they became the sole property of their purchasers; thus freeing them of further responsibilities required for their care.

In some cases matters of age affected slave sales. On 13 November 1750 John Newton logged that while at the Bonanoes he "[w]ent on shoar directly to look at 4 slaves" available for sale. Despite his lingering interest, once in view of the captives he declined their offer because as he indicated "they were all old." Several months later despite his previous apathy, he called attention to the fact that on the morning of 23

[83] Certificate of Slaves Taken on Board Ships, HLRO.

February 1751, four slaves were brought aboard ranging from "1 girl, 2 boys and an old woman."[84] The written record does not indicate if Newton kept the older female slave or perhaps bartered her for additional goods needed on his ship. Judging from his previous reaction, we can assume that he gave consideration to the younger slaves while refusing the offer to buy the older woman.

Assessment of Slave Health

For many merchants the most primary request concerned the procurement of health cargoes. Recognizing the risk of violence and unhealthy conditions pervasive throughout much of the trade, sailors were encouraged to exert sufficient care in selecting offered slaves. Liverpool merchant Robert Bostock penned a letter outlining these expectations to an employed captain Edward Williams. On 4 May 1789 Bostock specified, "I hope you will be very carefull about your Slaves" of which he directed "take none on Board but what is Healthy & Young" to of course further their shared slaving interests.[85] Captain Charles Wilson received similar instructions prior to his departure warning, "You will be remarkably choice in the Quality of your Negroes," selected on the African coast. His orders contained a reminder to "buy none but those that are in the full Bloom of Youth, & health full chested, well Limbed, [and] without defect."[86] As evidenced through both correspondences, there were a range of preferences that merchants shared with traveling seamen in order to obtain desirable captives. Some of these orders proved useful in assisting the selection of desired captives. Yet, the regularity within which these specifics were obliged is still unknown to contemporary scholars.

---

[84] Newton, *The Journal of a Slave Trader*, 17; 37.
[85] Letter Book of Robert Bostock 1779-1790, LRO.
[86] James Dumball Papers, SJL.

Operating as the primary human link closely engaged in African sales, slave ship sailors endured significant pressure. The captain of the vessel *Earl of Liverpool* received similar instructions on 31 May 1799. His orders outlined: "You will be attentive in the choice of your Negroes, and do not receive any with bodily imperfections," upon their bodies. Likewise, he was to avoid those "exceeding twenty years of Age," and "if Females are scarce you may buy Boys in the Place of them."[87] Financers of slaving voyages held certain preferences for selected slaves, however these orders reflect more of the possibilities of sale within Atlantic slave markets. Therefore, while gender and age were factors with plantation owner's decisions, many merchants were well aware that slaves whose bodies professed abnormalities created significant obstacles to sell.

Some merchants preferred certain slaves, yet the bondpeople that African brokers made available on the coast greatly determined the range available for sale. John Newton illuminated these slaving realities while docked at Rio Junque aboard the *Duke of Argyle.* On 7 January 1750 he noted that he sent a steward ashore to purchase a female captive, referred to as No. 46. He explained, "she cost 63 bars" despite that "she had a very bad mouth." His description implies that the bondwoman suffered from some type of facial contortion. It remains a mystery if the woman's present state emerged from a previous health concern or if it was perhaps a bruise or physical wound she incurred during her coastal holding. Although agreeing to the negotiated sale, Newton recognized that he "[c]ould have bought her cheaper" than the asking price. This was because in his estimation, "the trade is in such a pass that they [natives] will very seldom bring a slave to a ship to sell" to any interested sailors.[88] Prevailing events often influenced the

---

[87] *Ibid.*
[88] Newton, *The Journal of a Slave Trader*, 28-29.

feasibility of procuring "prime" slaves. As such, circumstances including war and famine caused a decrease in supplying slaves as well as forcing higher prices. Imbedded within the above narrative are the challenges some sea captains confronted oftentimes being forced to board slaves they may have ordinarily declined.

Surgeons conducted medical examinations prior to coastal purchases to ensure the procurement of healthy captives. Once docked on the coast of Africa, physicians' duties began with helping captains select potential captives in order to discover any attending health conditions.[89] Eighteenth century medical practitioner, T. Aubrey admonished to physicians traveling to West Africa, "I hold it absolutely necessary that you visit All the Slaves, before you suffer them to be bought, because in this Affair your own Reputation as well as the Owner's Interest lies at Stake."[90] Assisting ship captains, practitioners were responsible for helping to designate captives worthy of future purchase. To secure the most ideal and sound bodies able to withstand sea voyages and arduous plantation labor they typically made queries regarding height, weight, and age.[91] In doing so, practitioners set out "to see that they were sound in wind and limb, making them jump, stretch out their arms swiftly, [and by] looking in their mouths to judge of their age. . . ." Along with testing bondpeople's physical strength, it was also a regular practice that they

---

[89] For further discussion of surgeons' coastal work of inspecting of potential Africans, see Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870*," (London: Picador, 1997) 393; Richard B. Sheridan, "The Guinea Surgeons on the Middle Passage," 615; Richard H. Steckel and Richard A. Jensen, "New Evidence on the Causes of Slave and Crew Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The Journal of Economic History* 46, 1 (March 1986), 73-74; and Testimony of James Morley, *HCSP,* 73:168.

[90] T. Aubrey, M.D., *The Sea Surgeon, Or the Guinea Mean's Vade Mecum In which is laid down, The method of curing such Diseases as usually happen Abroad, especially on the Coast of Guinea; with the best way of treating Negroes, both in Health and in Sickness,* (London: John Clark, 1729) , 118.

[91] Regarding slave trader's primary interests with bondpeople, Stephanie Smallwood offers the point, "[t]he business of the Atlantic market in Africa ... was production not of bonded laborers but of human commodities," where she argues ship captain's primary concern, albeit different from Atlantic slave owners, focused not upon future plantation labor, but solely on captives' ability to endure travels aboard a slave ship. See: *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Harvard University Press, 2007), 81-82.

"minutely inspect their persons" relative to slaves' genitalia, to assess if any reproductive concerns plausibly lied dormant within their bodies.[92] According to Aubrey, it proved pertinent to ensure "they have no Mark in the Groins, or Ficus's about the *Anus,* or Marks of Scabs having been about the *Scrotum,*" or within any other hidden parts of their bodies.[93] This process subjected bondwomen and bondmen to degrading bodily scrutiny in which they were handled in a cattle-like fashion.[94] Confirming this method of treatment, one trader confessed, "I certainly look to a Negro's eyes, to see whether he was blind" of which he characterized that he did it "as I should to a horse in this country, if I was about to purchase him" for later use.[95] These coastal medical examinations therefore constituted the first dimension of the auction block system captives often underwent.[96]

The Fate of Refuse Slaves

Slave's physical fitness greatly affected final sales. Considering the extensive process used to ascertain their state of health prior to purchase, one wonders the fate of those unsold. Significant attention is given to scores of bondpeople bartered to sea captains traveling across different parts of the Atlantic World. As such, the numbers of those landed and filtered into plantation communities create the numerical framework for understanding the wholesale enterprise of human sales through the slave trade. Another

---

[92] Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, (London: printed and sold by James Phillips, 1788), 17; For further discussion see, Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870*, (New York : Simon & Schuster, 1997), 393-4.

[93] T. Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum,* 119

[94] With regards to the use of black bodies similar to cattle, Winthrop Jordan posits, "[s]lave traders in Africa handled Negroes the same way men in England handled beasts, herding and examining and buying." See Jordan, *White Over Black*, 29.

[95] Testimony of John Fountain, Vol. 68, 274

[96] Considerable attention is given to Caribbean and southern domestic slave markets where following the arrival of ships, black bodies were poked, prodded, and scrutinized by potential slave owners. Yet, this same system of preparatory assessment operated much earlier on the West African coast as captives passed through diverse hands of coastal traders, surgeons, and ship captains in effort to determine their worthiness and ability to survive elongated Atlantic crossings.

aspect to the story often left out is the multitude of captives disregarded and ultimately omitted from coastal negotiations. The greater damage inflicted upon many of these people was not only enforcement within bondage but also their fate beyond exclusion.

Those rejected within coastal sales made up a complicated category of slaves. The treatment of this specialized group of bondpeople differed within African versus Caribbean and British mainland slave markets. One wonders, who made up this broad category of slaves. A clearly defined rubric utilized by different natives and seamen in coastal negotiations was likely non-existent. Not only did those refuse have their own category known as "refuse slaves".[97] Even more, virtually every offered slave was susceptible to inclusion within this particular group.

Different types of people encompassed the category of refuse slaves. One trader offered a perspective on this term commenting, "Refuse Slaves are such as [those who] are sickly" perhaps from a range of physical and emotional catalysts.[98] The primary contributors traders used to avoid certain slaves involved their unhealthy disposition. Those excluded typically related to factors of disease, body structure, and age which all had the greatest influence on traders' final decision of negotiations. However, refusal did not always pertain to matters of physical health. On rare occasions surgeons and captains queried the mental capacities of offered slaves.

There were a range of factors that prompted the rejection of different bondpeople. One surgeon was very forthright in his discussion of such exclusions. According to him "if they are afflicted with any infirmity, or are deformed, or have bad eyes or teeth" they

---

[97] See, *Saltwater Slavery*, 176-178; Wilma King; *Stolen Childhood : Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989);

[98] Testimony of James Towne, *HCSP*, 82:24.

are disregarded. Additionally, "if they are lame, or weak in the joints, or distorted in the back, or of a slender make, or are narrow in the chest" this would prompt seamen to withdraw any further interest in their sale. If any captive's body appeared incapable of surviving such conditions, they were passed over. Another trader explained the different factors that "would make a Slave objectionable, as a prime Slave" in the view of interested buyers. According to his experience these irregularities ranged from "The loss of a tooth" to having "a blemish in his eye, tho' he might not be blind."[99] "When there is an appearance of moths, flies, dust" according to one 18th century medical reference, other elements "floating in the air" often affected the inner part of a person's eye.[100] Within this particular case we see that the smallest perceived "defect" often hindered further negotiations. Coastal sales often took place in an open air fashion which could have caused further damage to different captives. However, some seamen were less concerned with the origination of certain "defects" that caused changes in captives' bodies. John Fountain offered a critical point that "one disorder, which renders them unsaleable," was in his estimation "because it is incurable." This concerned "loss of an hand . . . the total loss of an eye" and as he added "old age" which he indicated "might make them objectionable."[101] We can only imagine the considerable scrutiny subjected against old and disabled slaves during coastal sales and perhaps even on ship. Of course for many captives these physical characteristics were virtually unavoidable. However, one when considers the physical constraints used on slaves we can speculate the difference of treatment they required if missing a hand; due to the fear that they could somehow escape. With respective to any aged captive or someone missing an eye it is

[99]Testimony of John Fountain, *HCSP,* 68: 272.
[100] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 72
[101] Testimony of John Fountain, *HCSP*, 68:276-7.

also probable that additional treatment also proved necessary especially in maneuvering aboard the ship.

In some cases African merchants attempted to shield discovery of alterations and diseases among slaves. One trader shared the story of a bondman "brought in for sale, on a very wet day" from the interior hinterlands. Outsiders unaware of his circumstances might have presumed he traveled a considerable distance owing to the fact "part of his legs and feet [were] covered with mud." In the trader's view some unknown and subversive tactic "was done to hide the leprosy, which had made the bottoms of his legs and feet perfectly white." As a result of the creative strategies employed "the Slave was accordingly purchased." His defect however became obvious shortly thereafter. During the following morning "when he came to wash himself" in preparation to "appear before the Chief," the trader explained that "this great defect which rendered him unsaleable" made its appearance. Discovery of the man's condition would have proven too late to request any sort of compensation. The bondman's purchasers likely felt cheated by the preceding sale. In view of the diseased male, mistreatment by inland traders probably caused him to assist in hiding his condition. We do not know if his purchasers kept him on hand or attempted to exchange him for another slave or overseas goods following this medical detection.

For the sake of reputation and profit surgeons could not afford to neglect matters of health, therefore traders received warnings to guard against matters of ill-business. T. Aubrey urged physicians "you must not be contented that they [bondpeople] seem to be in Health," leading thereafter to an immediate purchase.[102] Poor health proliferated within slaving stations across coastal West Africa. There were certain symptoms and

[102] Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum*, 118.

diseases medical practitioners were encouraged to guard against. Aubrey pointed out "Sometimes the Men have *Gonorrhoeas,* or *Ulcers* in the *Rectum,* or *Fistulas,* and the Women *Ulcers* in the Neck of the *Matrix*," of their bodies." In many cases slaves expressed awareness of their attending ailments. Aubrey admonished, "they will hide [them] from you, (if you be not very careful)" during the performance of examinations. In his estimation their tactics owed to "fear of those who bring them on Board, because if they don't sell them, they will surely starve them to Death," once taken back ashore.[103]

The disapproval of slaves placed their lives in an even greater fate of uncertainty. On several occasions protests launched against bondpeople lowered their purchasing value. Coastal men were "not ignorant of these Marks," that sometimes filtered across slaves bodies. Therefore, Aubrey indicated "when they find you know them as well as they, you will have them at half the Price," which his experiences demonstrated, "they will rather sell them at any Price, than keep them" on their hands.[104] The propensity of African merchants to offer captives at a reduced rate freed them of any other financial and physical responsibilities necessary for their upkeep. Familiar with business exchanges, many sea captains traveled informed of the available possibilities for reduced sales. Some sailors probably waited for the arrival of bondpeople they deemed worthy of purchase. Whereas others withheld the exchange of goods, particularly in the event of a slave attended with a disease or physical abnormality "unless something is taken off from their prices, so as not to make them as high in price as prime Slaves."[105] Although initially declined, price played a primary factor in the final decision of some slave sales.

---

[103] *Ibid.*
[104] *Ibid,* 120.
[105] Testimony of John Fountain, HCSP, 68:276-7.

Further confirming that many times there was a market available for every offered bonded person.[106]

Financial reductions did not always guarantee a slave's sale. "When the Owners of slaves from the country are satisfied that the Europeans will not buy them," according to one trader it was not uncommon that coastal brokers "sometimes sell a few of them to the people on the sea coast, for very low prices, and [even] carry the rest back."[107] Considering the remarkable distance inland traders carried bondpeople it is doubtful they were regularly returned, if at all. Instead, the nature of the trade gives room to speculate they were bartered into local coastal communities or carried to fairs within other regions where they might find a better chance for purchase. Perhaps even more interesting is the factor of age that determined their future lives. The same trader added that unsold young slaves "are kept by the Bonny people in their houses." On the other hand, "the old or unsaleable" as he characterized them, they went back by canoe along with "the goods that have been paid for the slave that have been sent in the same canoes."[108] These matters of treatment were not always common practice. Perhaps another untold story concerns the absorption of Africans carried from the inland regions into local coastal communities as a result of the trade. The evidence offered here helps to make sense of the fact that age played a critical factor not only in the process of sale but also in the willingness of care. As for healthy younger captives, it was more of a tactical advantage to take them in and improve their condition for further transactions. Whereas, with adult captives, if elderly or diseased slaves, their presence probably led to instances of mistreatment or mere refusal.

---

[106] For further discussion of this ease of marketability see Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*.
[107] Testimony of James Fraser, HCSP, 71:13-14.
[108] *Ibid*, 19.

The devaluing of bondpeople seemed to further permit the use of physical abuse. One eyewitness to the trade explained, "The traders frequently beat those negroes which are objected to by captains, and use them with great severity." In his view, "it matter[ed] not whether they were refused on account of age, illness, deformity, or for any other reason."[109] Disapproval of slaves by white traders of course placed coastal men within a precarious position not only against their reputation in supplying demands, but also due to the difficulty in reducing the number of slaves on hand. The logical outgrowth, in the African merchant's perspective, was to direct any extreme emotions against the primary catalyst for their lack of success – slaves. One trader attested to the use of personal injury against unsold slaves. He disclosed "I have seen them sometimes beat [and] heard them threatened" which in some cases caused them to be "generally anxious to be sold with the rest of the Slaves" presumably already bought.[110] It would be useful to know the number of traders that coastal brokers would go through to sell a slave. Here we see therein the number of hands within which bondpeople were exchanged prior to New World arrival if only for mere assessment to determine their value.

Other captives were mistreated through more violent means. Elongated stays within shoreline holdings permitted those enslaved the ability to recognize the commonality of mistreatment instigated by coastal men. For instance, in New Calabar following a slave's refusal "the traders have been frequently known to put them to death." According to one surgeon natives "have dropped their canoes under the stern of the vessel, and instantly beheaded them, in sight of the captain."[111] Considerable thought has to be given to the transmitters of these violent observations, which may have created

---

[109] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 18.
[110] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:13-14.
[111] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 18.

exaggerations of certain hostile occasions. Even though we know very little on the accuracy of cruelty against bondpeople that emerged within the trade, these public displays of aggression permanently solidified their devaluing by taking their lives in a very brutal manner. They also reveal the sense of self-worth some Africans seemed to place upon white traders' acceptance of offered slaves. Any behaviors contrary to these expectations, virtually sheer rejection, came at a detriment to bondpeople.

Some natives used graphic displays of prowess against bondpeople. Ship captain James Fraser further attested to these violent realities, intimating that in his experiences refused slaves were commonly "put to death" if they were not sold. While docked at River Ambris north of Angola he learned the deadly fate of "a Slave, who I would not purchase" during conducted sales. As a result of his decline, the owner of the slave called a meeting of local "traders and fishermen together under a tree." Once gathered, he explained to the men that the bondman caused him considerable grief because he represented "the Slave, whom the white man would not buy" in addition to the fact he previously absconded three different times. Therefore, because "he derived no benefit from his labour" the native man felt obligated "to put him to death. . . ." He reasoned that this decision could appease expenses already incurred while also serve "as an example to the rest of his Slaves."

The native's decision caused the bondman to endure seemingly unbearable pain on his body. According to Fraser's interpretation, while under the tree the owner began by "cutting off his wrists, then at the elbows, and then stumps from his shoulders." He followed by lacerating the man's "ankles, the rest of his joints, and finished with cutting his head off" in view of the gathered crowd. Recollecting upon the man's death Fraser

intimated "I did not suppose [him] to be very criminal" in nature. However, forced to cooperate with local practices, he acknowledged "they have a right to put their own Slaves to death" which he understood to include, "any useless criminal or old Slave" deemed useless for future means.[112]

As evidenced, the seamen's refusal became the motivating force some used to impose violence upon bondpeople. There are several important factors imbedded within Fraser's narrative. To begin, one wonders the accessibility he successfully gained to witness the bondman's death is rather curious. We do not know whether he physically witnessed the sequence of events or if he overheard it from nearby locals. One thing clear from this story is the testimony of torture, pain, and anger inflicted upon the male slave. One scholar writes, "a damaged head, a torn off arm, [and] an open belly will stare out at the observer . . . and flood him with nausea of awe and terror" upon further observation.[113] As temporary visitors, sea captains were unable to alter local laws common within coastal communities. At the same time we do not know if any sort of assistance would have been offered - by nearby sailors or observing natives – to save the bondman.

Within the broad category of "refuse" slaves' age often became an important catalyst. "When the negroes, whom the black traders have to dispose of, are shewn to the European purchasers," one physician explained that "they first examine them relative to their age."[114] These queries were conducted to determine a captive's feasibility of surviving the hardships of bondage. Adult slaves endured physical scrutiny while

---

[112] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:52-53.

[113] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and the Unmaking of the World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 77.

[114] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 17.

children were also devalued according to their difficulty of sales. George Baille described the story concerning "a beautiful infant boy" showcased for purchased. It is difficult to be sure how many trading ships received an offer to buy the child. However the presiding native responsible for the enslaved child's life failed to gain interest in his exchange.

In their last attempt they brought the child to the *Phoenix*, the same ship that Baille belonged. After climbing aboard ship they "threatened to toss it [sic] overboard if no one purchased it." Amidst their conclusion of sales, several crewmen learned how the child became enslaved. An undisclosed number of inland traders kidnapped him "with many other people the night before," thereafter transporting them to the coast. Once placed for sale, the baby's capturers soon found "they could not sell him, though they had [successfully] sold the others." Perhaps softened by the child's uncertain fate Baille "purchased the infant for a quarter cask of Vidonia wine."[115]

The procurement of the infant exposes the reality of slave dealing. There is no evidence explaining if he was captured with either of his parents or perhaps even with a sibling. Considering his age, one can only imagine the difficulty of care placed upon a parent, extended family member, or another captive unrelated to the child in order to sustain his young life. Beyond the responsibilities attended with kidnapping young children, as evidenced they were not always preferred by traders. We already know that seamen bartered various goods in exchange for bondpeople; such patterns indicate that the view of human life was held in mere cash terms. Even more reflective of the constant depreciation of the child's life was the threat articulated for his overthrow. Because adult slaves held some range of potential laboring capacities, we would never see them thrown

[115] Testimony of George Baille, *HCSP*, 73:208.

overboard. Traders were aware of the difficulties children faced in swimming to free themselves, which speaks further to their view of them as expendable property.

Another child was also subjected to the possibility of death. James Fraser accompanied captain Lawson of Liverpool at the River Ambris. Once ashore Lawson purchased a young bondwoman during the evening hours. Amidst the transaction Fraser "was on shore for the benefit of the air" off ship. He used the available time to tour the local coastal community. In so doing he came upon a linguist that felt obliged to show him "where some countrywomen were going to put a suckling child to death."

On going events prompted Fraser to query the reasoning of the women's actions with the baby. They responded, "it [sic] was of no value." Unwilling to see the valuable child's life wasted, he determined "in that case I should be obliged to them to make it a present to me." He presented his negotiation yet the women opted for monetary compensation. They responded to him declaring that "if I had any use for the child it was worth money." According to Fraser, "I first offered them some knives." In all probability they refused these items because they sold him the child "for a jug of brandy." After climbing aboard his ship with the infant boy, he discovered "it [sic] proved to be the child of a woman purchased by captain Lawson" earlier that day. Excited by the prospect of reuniting with her child, according to Fraser, "the woman went upon her knees and kissed my feet."[116]

This bizarre case is revealing of several factors. Foremost, there are no additional details to indicate if any exaggerations supplemented Fraser's story. At the same time, provided evidence gives room to speculate that some enslaved mothers and their young offspring were captured together. In this particular circumstance the bondwoman's care

[116] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:52-53.

of her child was probably used by her capturers to free their selves of additional responsibilities during the coastal bound trek. Upon their arrival on the shoreline somehow she endured a separation from her suckling child. It would be useful to understand if the broker in her charge elected to separate her from her son, foreseeing a difficulty of sale. Yet, the question still lingers on how the coastal women gained access to the child and if they were given full responsibility for his care? The mere threat imposed on his life once again demonstrates the widespread undervaluing of their lives during much of the trade.

Along with children, elderly slaves were another group of people viewed as undesirable. On 15 January 1707 Sir Dalby Thomas provided an update of slaving affairs he observed on going in coastal Africa. Within his correspondence he referred to a man known as Captain Owen explaining that they were able to persuade him to purchase, "Fourteen Women & Some Men" all available at Annamabo. Prior to Owen's agreement in taking the captives, they were "refused by Cap't Bound" who deemed them "much too Old."[117] Like many other unsold slaves, it is sometimes difficult to be sure how their lives were affected following their subsequent rejection. Not every bonded person's life was spared, conceivably like these captives. One wonders if everyone of the offered captives' bodies actually professed advanced years or if upon gazing at a few the sailor perceived that those remaining on hand were similarly beyond their prime. Those searching for durability would have paid attention to different parts of a slave's body; especially in assessing their age. One slave trader provided a context for the inclusion of elder captives explaining, "if any aged captives were not sold to European traders, they were seldom put to death because" as he understood, "they held no further value to

[117] T 70/2 Abstracts of Letters From Sep. 30, 1707 To July 22, 1713 PRO.

potential buyers."[118] As slave traders looked over available slaves, many times unbeknownst to them, their decisions greatly determined the treatment bondpeople underwent thereafter.

Black bodies deemed useless oftentimes ushered in immediate extermination. During his stay at Cape Coast Castle, John Fountain learned the local custom regarding those captured. Prevailing practices indicated "that if they are not saleable they are put to death." His understanding hastened through one African female's case. A bondwoman described as "being very old and very infirm," was brought to the castle for sale after being rejected by several captives and local residents. Fountain later discovered that "because the Black trader would not be at the expence of her maintenance, he carried her into the Bush." There is no evidence to determine how long he tried to sell the woman or if he carried her during the day or evening hours. After making the decision to relocate the woman, he transported her to an area characterized as "a field or kind of meadow which is overrun with weeds and bushes," presumably nearby. This grassland probably was the last place the bondwoman saw since she "was murthered, and afterwards found."[119]

This female captive's death can be interpreted in a number of ways. We are devoid of the duration of the time her corpse laid within the open field. Nor do we know the means that the broker used to snatch her life or if he used any tools. It would further supplement the story to discover not only who found her lifeless body but even more what was done with her corpse thereafter. There is no way of discerning if orders were given to the trader in carrying out the woman's murder. Yet, her death provides a

---

[118] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 18.
[119] Testimony of John Fountain, *HCSP*, 68:246.

beginning opportunity to speculate on the common ritual of violence imposed upon bondpeople, especially those perceived as aged.

Disapproval often welcomed a deadly fate for some bondpeople. Seaman Henry Ellison explained that one afternoon "a native black called Captain Lemma Lemma" climbed on ship to receive customs for the slaves bought during the ship's stay. While awaiting payment he observed "a canoe paddling in shore with three people in (an old man, a young man, and a woman)" which he ordered to sail over to Ellison's ship. Obliging his request, several men presumably aboard led the small boat across the shoreline waves. Once in close proximity for a closer viewing the African merchant probably offered the three captives for sale in order to further his own opportunity for increased compensation. The chief mate aboard the ship Mr. Wilson indicated his desire to buy the young male and female aboard. However, according to Ellison, "the other was too old," and the ship officer "refused to buy him." Following this exclusion, Lemma forced the older bondman immediately back into the canoe. Thereafter, "his head was laid upon one of the thwarts of the boat, and chopped off, and immediately thrown overboard."[120]

The violence that accompanied this man's death demonstrates several aspects of coastal trade. To begin, considering the menial view within which white traders already held African culture; these practices likely gave them further ammunition to characterize coastal men as unjust and immoral. Looked at from the side of supply, coastal brokers sought to expedite a rapid process of exchange in order to fulfill overseas demand as well as garner compensation for their own services. Any hindrances to this complicated cycle proved consequential not only a short term basis but there were also further reaching

[120] Testimony of Henry Ellison, *HCSP*, 73:367-8.

implications; manifested in the future of different slave sales. Without any regard for pain inflicted, both parties – foreign traders and native men – assessed bondpeople's lives relative to the attainability of profits. For the native man, the only cost-effective solution he may have reasoned for his economic woes involved the forced death of the older captive. The bondman's death further reveals the extent of power some Africans willingly exerted over those unsold; perhaps in hopes of appropriating a person's essence of power, manifested in their head. It is also likely that the man's age provoked fear in the trader's mind that retaliation could ensue with continued battery. Relying upon decapitation, his actions demonstrate the deep seated rage he sought to inflict upon the bondman that extended beyond the physical and onward into the spiritual world.

Gender did not prevent the misuse of other offered slaves. During command at the fort of Anamaboe, trade participant Jerome Barnard Weuves related a tragic case involving a female captive. "A woman who was accused of witchcraft, or the wife of a man accused of witchcraft" who Weuves described as "very old" was brought to the fort for purchase. He refused the given offer, perhaps observing the professed age of her body. Somehow he learned "if I refused to purchase her that she would be put to death" yet this did not prevent his decline for her sale. As a result, the local traders responsible for her sale took her away. During the time of her transport a servant working with Weuves informed him "that it was the intent of the people in town to cut her head off" as a result of her refused sale. Upon learning the news, he sent a messenger to express that he "would take the woman, and give something for her," as he recalled "rather than she

should lose her life." His effort however went to no avail because the messenger arrived "five minutes too late" to which he found "her head was off her shoulders."[121]

This woman's death and perhaps the decline of many other captives is indicative of several societal changes. This woman's circumstances probably did not play out in such simple terms as Weuves explicated. One could easily surmise that his efforts to hinder the woman's fate served as a humanitarian act. However, taking a broader perspective, his intentions were fueled by the possibility of gaining a bonded person at a reduced price. At the same time, the coastal residence he enjoyed likely further enforced his belief of prevailing cultural stereotypes on sacrifice or cannibalism, which he sought to shield with the bondwoman against. Yet, Weuves' active trade participation and even the immediate response of death imposed on the female further attest to the evolving disruption of societal mores and human laws the slave trade created. The arrival of overseas traders came at a cost to African societies that altered cultural practices as well as fracturing their respect for human life. In result, a culture of warfare became intricately woven into the fabric of society, evident in the woman's death. Due in large part to the reduced view of human life, it would not seem out of the ordinary to subvert traditional practices of human relations and inflict an immediate death upon any refused captive; regardless of gender, age, class, or status in society.

Conclusion

During the eighteenth century an unprecedented number of European traders poured into Africa drawn by the pursuit of profit. These ventures, although risky – both financially and physically – represented a critical aspect of European overseas expansion. One scholar contends that by the peak of the trade, "Europeans did not come as

[121] Testimony of Jerome Bernard Weuves, *HCSP*, 68:224.

conquerors, but as customers."[122] The influx of traders and the subsequent redevelopment that took place through the construction of permanent trading posts, this created a transformation of African societies. Through the process assertions of power and influence manifested on ideas related to the trade of people *as* goods.

This chapter demonstrated the evolving financial ideas of advancement that brought Africans and Europeans together through business ventures. As evidenced these financial collaborations became the ideological catalyst propelling women, men, and children within captivity. Paramount to these conversations is the significant losses of life incurred on the African side of the Atlantic. To counter procurement of those viewed as inferior captives' bodies often endured demeaning assessments. As we turn attention to the range of slaves boarded on ships and landed within slave societies, we must broaden our view to recognize the cadre of enslaved people often devalued within this vast commercial market of human beings. Slave markets operative within coastal West Africa represented the first phase of a host of transactions within which bondpeople held a central place.[123] As the next chapter reveals, once ushered aboard ships following sale, ship captains confronted factors of malnourishment, cleanliness, disease and death that foreshadowed the experiences they later faced once transplanted within New World plantation communities.

---

[122] Fyfe, West African Trade A.D. 1000-1800, 247.

[123] See, Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*; Greg O'Malley, "Final Passages: The British Inter-colonial Slave Trade, 1619-1807," (Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 2007.)

CHAPTER TWO

'What My Slaves Will Turn out I Cant Tell': Environmental Factors Affecting Slave Captive Health[1]

When the tears start to fall and you can't see your way,
Justice will carry on, c'mon judgment day
You don't have to mourn, help is on the way,
Cause ain't no body worryin, no more no more
These are our precious times, diseases thick and live,. . .
Show me a weapon lies. . .Tell me when will this end?
All the suffering, my faith is running low.[2]

Introduction

On 11 August 1750, ship captain John Newton departed Liverpool aboard his snow *Duke of Argyle* setting sail for the Windward Coast of Africa. After docking close to a month later, he entered into business negotiations with local slave merchants. Although the numbers of captives boarded on his vessel increased, he confronted several instances of declining health among them. The increasingly unhealthy condition of the ship's sailors and purchased slaves compounded Newton's intention of future trade following his arrival at Rio Junque. Forcing him to declare, "having so many sick, am afraid [we] shall not be able to keep our boats going. . . ."

As sickness attacked the ship's human 'cargo', Newton drew upon available coastal resources in hopes of saving his slaves' lives. Several months later while trading at Grand Basse, he discharged a number of seamen to "put a boy on shoar, No. 27, being very bad with a flux." Three weeks after the young male's removal, his designated care-taker, Andrew Ross, shared with Newton that treatment notwithstanding, the bonded

---

[1] Samuel King Papers, Newport Historical Society, Newport, Rhode Island.
[2] Anthony Hamilton , "Ain't Nobody Worryin," *Ain't Nobody Worryin*, CD. 2005.

child's health deteriorated and he died. Despite the financial loss incurred by the boy's death, Newton declared that it was "indeed what I expected."[3]

Three months later, while attempting to finalize slave sales in preparation for his departure, Newton faced yet another medical episode. This concerned an enslaved girl referred to as "No. 92," who also became enfeebled by the flux.[4] Newton sent the young female captive on shore to Peter Freeman, presumably another trader. In recollecting upon her transfer, Newton reasoned it was "not so much in hopes of recovery (for I fear she is past it)," but instead as he professed, "to free the ship of a nuisance."[5] While his actions can perhaps be perceived as cold and indifferent to the girl's condition, ship captains were mainly concerned with maximizing their profits. His financial intentions aside, on Wednesday morning, the next day following her relocation, "No. 92" died.

Poor health was a common facet of the Atlantic Slave Trade. This chapter interrogates the unhealthy environment of captivity bondpeople faced following the conclusion of sales on the West African coast. Ship captains carefully sought healthy Africans, yet the proliferation of sickness often reduced captives' health. To sustain slaves' health prior to and during their Atlantic passages, sailors and physicians employed preventative measures to hinder the transmission of diseases. As this chapter

---

[3] Bernard Martin and Mark Spurrell, eds., *The Journal of a Slave trader (John Newton) 1750-1754, with Newton's Thoughts Upon The African slave trade*, (London: Epworth Press, 1962), 30.

[4] Ship captains often referred to purchased slaves numerically within their ship logs which corresponded with their subsequent placement aboard vessels. It is difficult to recognize when this process first emerged. However, from the perspective of merchant and vessel commanders it was important that documentation take place on the accumulation of various goods – both human and material – in effort to account for any losses and any other damages that may occur. Language barriers may have proven difficult to query a bondperson's name. Yet, in viewing them as captives and virtual units for sale, slave traders were less concerned with nomenclature and references of humanity.

[5] Martin and Spurrell, *The Journal of a Slave Trader*, 48. On the day "No. 92" died Newton reported, "I have had 5 slaves taken with the same disorder [the flux] within these 2 days, but am unable either to account for it or to remedy it." Whether this young captive became the catalyst for contagion aboard his vessel or not, these testimonies demonstrate that flux was a common a source of sickness and death among bondpeople.

emphasizes, a variety of environmental factors placed their lives in jeopardy, including ship cleanliness, exercise, food, and weather.

Coastal Sales of Captive Africans

African merchants preferred to sell "prime slaves", but this did not always translate to ideal conditions for prospective captives.[6] One slave trader explained that during ship boarding he observed, "some of them [bondpeople] were very meager when I received them on board, owing to the great scarcity of provisions in the country from which they came."[7] Attempting to supply the growing demand for black laborers, it is likely that coastal rations ran low. Despite the potential value bondmen and bondwomen held, the poor treatment they experienced in West Africa often jeopardized their health. For this reason, Joseph Fayrer of the ship *Harlequin* received directions to "be very cautious of the Slaves you buy to Windward" because "they are often sickly."[8]

Sailors received advice on protective measures, yet following the conclusion of sales some captains discovered that local natives did not always exert careful handling of purchased slaves to prevent exterior damages. Surgeon Alexander Falconbridge observed that "the skin of the wrist and arms [among transferred slaves] excoriated from the friction of the country ropes with which they were tied."[9] Another vessel maser added that slaves often came aboard "with their arms pinioned behind them" and at other times he witnessed "four or five with collars about their neck, and chained together."

---

[6] Merchants, seamen, and planters commonly referred to prime slaves whether through the Atlantic or domestic slave trade systems. Used here, this concept of "prime" is defined by gender and age. Within the context of this study however it is viewed to mean captives in superior quality of health and who profess considerable laboring potential. Preferences for different types of captives differed across locales, within different periods of history and of course owing to planting needs. In many instances males ranging between the ages of 15-25 commanded the highest prices and desires within the business of slave dealing.

[7] Testimony of William Littleton, *House of Commons Sessional Paper of the Eighteenth Century,* Vol. 68, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 292.

[8] James Dumball Papers, SJL

[9] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP,* 72: 298.

Both narratives reveal the use of diverse restraints which proved necessary to prevent bondpeople from fleeing. According to the type of device or material used, in some cases body blemishes ensued. From the perspective of coastal men, once Europeans bartered for slaves, any bodily damages that surfaced during their ship transfer became their primary responsibility. The above observations give the idea that traders were sensitive to the physical abuse some bondpeople endured. Yet, the primary concern for many of them involved slaves' laboring potential and their ability to withstand an oceanic passage.

Despite the efforts to procure healthy bondpeople, the reality was that no captain or seamen could anticipate the medical horrors capable of affecting newly acquired slaves. To counter any possibility of infectious transmissions, during captives' ship transfer "the cloth that they had round their middle was thrown overboard."[10] These preventative measures likely appeased ship captains' fears; yet, the intermingling of bondpeople in close confinement within the bottom holdings of ships fostered the exchange of contagious diseases. James Penny, captain of the vessel *Oisean* encountered a high rate of African mortality. After disembarking from the West African coast, an epidemic of measles surfaced among approximately 300 stowed slaves. Prior to his England departure Penny placed, "every Thing necessary for the Restoration of their Health" on his ship along with a variety of food provisions and medicines necessary for travel. Likewise, the ship crew included "an experienced Surgeon, with Three other Assistant Surgeons."[11] Despite such precautions, measles claimed the lives of many of the vessel's captives.

---

[10] Testimony of George Millar, *HCSP,* 73: 394.
[11] Testimony of James Penny, *HCSP,* 68: 37.

The unexpected filtration of disease among bondpeople also occurred through traders' use of 'pawns.' Serving as temporary slaves on loan during coastal sales, "the owner or friend of such pawns commonly borrow Slaves from a ship which is not so forward in completing her cargo, and takes the pawn of the ship that is ready to depart, and puts it on board the other. . ." The momentary relocation of these Africans ensured awaiting traders that their desired human 'cargoes' were en route. At the same time, "epidemical disorders conveyed from one ship to another by this practice," which over time "destroyed a great number of Slaves."[12] As evidenced, some bondpeople operated as bargaining chips in effort to finalize negotiations between coastal traders and white seamen. Their movement from vessel to vessel exposed them to unhealthy environments that created detrimental conditions for people with whom they came into close contact. This included sailors along with any slaves forced to lie in close proximity with these potentially ailing captives.

Although shipmasters preferred bondpeople whose bodies displayed good health, the transmission of virtually undetectable ailments often affected their intentions of future sales. A male captive purchased to relieve a pawn aboard the vessel *Briton* demonstrates this dangerous reality.[13] Henry Ellison, the ship's surgeon, warned that he discovered the beginnings of smallpox during his examination of the purchased bondman. His observations were disregarded and the captain responded by saying that "he did not believe it, and if it was, he would keep him as he was a fine man." Much to his dismay,

---

[12] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP,* 71:14-15.

[13] Richard Steckel and Richard Jensen define of *pawns* as, "captives held as security before transactions were complete." See "New Evidence On the Slave and Crew Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade," T*he Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Mar., 1986), 58. One could easily argue that these captives operated akin to a "down-payment" or a "loaner" until acquiring the originally designated bondperson.

after the bondman boarded, smallpox broke out amongst "almost all the Slaves on the ship" resulting in the death of ten captives discovered the next morning. Upon bringing their diseased bodies on the top deck, Ellison observed, "the flesh and skin ha[d] peeled off their wrists when we ha[d] taken hold of them," which in his medical view represented one devastation of the medical disorder.[14] The outcome of this case reveals the critical threat that contagious diseases posed throughout the entire hold of ships. The heightened filtration of sickness engendered slaves' vulnerability. It also left both ship captains and surgeons powerless in combating these physical diseases.

The end of negotiations for slave sales marked the beginning period for the movement of diseases among captives. Captain John Goodrich encountered a significant health crisis after boarding slaves at the Camaroon River in 1790. Although Goodrich endured the loss of only one bondman during his coastal stay, he remained fearful of a growing local medical calamity. "Mortality is Raging and has been more In the River than Ever was known here As the Viper has buried upwards of 100 Slaves" he described.[15] Sales of bondpeople remained the primary focus for traders. However, the unexpected proliferation of diseases forced their attendance to implications capable of erupting not only among those personally affected but also healthy slaves.

The appearance of life threatening ailments prompted some traders' removal of bondpeople to shore for further treatment. Docked on the Coast of Bance Island, ship captain M. Woodville, Jr. sent a weakened female captive to "trusty persons with whom we can lodge a sick slave." We do not know what caused the bondwoman's decline. However, Woodville explained that they "sent [her] on shore to try if that would help her

---

[14] Testimony of Henry Ellison, *HCSP,* 73: 373.

[15] "Ship *Sarah*," James Rogers Papers, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library; hereafter referred to as DUSC.

recovery," which he found to be successful. Pleased with the outcome, he noted "it has had the desiring effect [and] she is now mending fast."[16] It is unclear whether the female's health improved due to the medical attendance she received or because of her relocation back ashore. Woodville's case affirms that in addition to their trade duties, seamen also had the task of managing infected captives.

Other captains were not so fortunate with gaining local assistance for ailing slaves. On 14 February 1769 John Duncan explained, "we have the misfortune of having a woman slave brock out w't the small pox" with whom he purchased and previously boarded. Despite her condition, he lamented that they "cannot put her on shore [because] the laws of the country are strict against" such practices. His fears intensified and he grew concerned that other slaves on his vessel could become ill. Therefore, he removed her off ship and into a small yawl carried with the larger ship.

Once relocated, Duncan felt a sense of relief with the woman off ship. "Where there is no manner of Danger" as he declared, with her confined in the dinghy, he expected that his crewman "shall take perticular care that she is well clensed before she comes on B'd again."[17] The written record does not indicate how long the bondwoman was removed, how many sailors attended to her, the methods used for her treatment, or even if she survived. In speculating further there are several important observations that surface through her case. For one, the smaller boat exposed this female captive to outside elements – air, wind, saltwater and flying vermin – that could have worsened her condition even more than on ship. Of course with Duncan's vessel she was likely placed in a small and darkened room attended with intense heat. Although we do not know how

[16] "Ship *Rodney*" James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[17] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

many sailors waded in the yawl with her, one wonders the type of treatment, if any, these men could give to her. This is relative not only to the smallness of the dinghy, but also limitation of medical knowledge among those attending the female. Her case offers a useful glimpse into the alternative methods some commanders used to combat slaves' sickness when local African resources were not available.

Matters of Cleanliness

Once sold aboard slave vessels, the unhealthy conditions of ships added to the vulnerability captives experienced. But from the captains' perspective, taking measures to maintain a clean ship was one way to prevent the onset of disease. One ship captain indicated that, "the practice of cleaning the ship is prejudicial to the health of the Slaves."[18] Any neglect of sanitary measures created fertile ground for the transmission of bacteria. Captive health depended on crewmen's diligence to provide a sterile environment. Relative to the decks in particular, to sanitize these wooden planks, seamen were often ordered to scrub them down with bricks and sand followed by a full wash and rinse. For an effective rinsing, canvases were used to filter water from the head pumps down in between the various decks. Alongside removing any undetectable bacteria, it was also necessary that the decks were sufficiently dried. This precaution provided bondpeople some measure of preventing colds and flues capable of emerging in these dampened spaces. In addition, some captains ordered fire pans placed in Africans' rooms where fires were lit and burned for close to two hours to ensure proper drying.[19]

---

[18] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP,* 71:30-31.
[19] See Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP,* 73:30-31

Physician James Lind indicated that "Fires made of dried Wood sprinkled with any refinous Substance, such as Pitch, boiled Turpentine," proved useful for purifying ships.[20]

The bottom holdings of ships represented perhaps the most important area essential to slaves' health. Because captives were forced to lie within these hollow spaces for much of the vessel's passage, this increased the exposure to accumulated mixtures of bacteria, blood, vomit, fecal matter, and mucus to shed from one captives' body to another. Yet, these darkened spaces were not cleaned daily. Instead, sanitation often took place two to three times a week, depending on weather conditions and captains' orders. During the process, captives were relocated to the top deck during daily feeding and exercise periods while "the seamen belonging to the ship, and generally some of the boys, [we]re sent down below to scrape and swab the [captives'] room. . ."[21] These holding areas were cleaned with "the Fumes of Tar or frankincense, and sprinkle[d] with Vinegar" to quell the stench of encasing captives' bodies for long periods of time. Some seamen also steeped "a red hot loggerhead" in vinegar for a deeper cleaning.[22] To freshen slaves' holding areas, both tobacco and brimstone were also burned to allow the smoke to filter throughout the rooms. The multiplicity of cleaning procedures varied across different ships, yet they were used to sterilize hazardous environments that posed a serious threat to captive's health.[23]

---

[20] James Lind, An essay on the most effectual means of preserving the *health* of seamen, in the Royal Navy. Containing directions proper for all those who undertake long *voyages* at ***sea***, or reside in unhealthy situations. With cautions necessary for the preservation of such persons as attend the sick in fevers, 105. (Need full here)

[21] Testimony of William Littleton, *HCSP,* 68:294.

[22] Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP,* 68:5; Testimony of William Littleton, *HCSP,* 68:294; Physician James Lind offers discussion of ship cleanliness with vinegar. See, *An essay on the most effectual means of preserving the health of seamen, in the Royal Navy,* 115.

[23] John Newton mentions the use of tobacco, brimstone to cleanse his vessel. See, *The Journal of a Slave Trader,* 28-29.

Despite the measures of cleanliness employed, slave ships were well known for the smells they omitted. Thomas Wilson shared that his officers and crew "complained of the noxious smell continually on a [slave] ship, insomuch that they dreaded some infection." [24] Seamen sought to combat the unsanitary conditions common on vessels. Platforms, decks, and defecation tubs that contained menses, defecation, and vomit of people aboard were the catalysts of the offensive stench. One slave trader justified the reoccurring odor noting, "[a]s far as the Smell, that must depend on every Person's own Feelings."[25] Working and traveling aboard vessels, often for weeks and months at a time, it is plausible that seamen grew accustomed to the odor. However, one eyewitness contrasted this, declaring, "The stench to me, and I believe to every European unaccustomed to them, is intolerably offensive."[26] A stigma of filth often attended ships' arrival into different Atlantic ports. The smells notwithstanding, slavers represented potential wealth through the bodies of 'imported' slaves. Therefore, it is probable that profiting desires overrode fear for the sake of profit.

Along with sterilizing vessels, slave cleanliness remained equally important. Distant merchants recognized the reality of disease transmission aboard slavers. Due to this Captain Spoors of the ship *Ranger* received orders outlining: "you are to examine that your Cargoe not be Wet or Eat with Vermin as often as you can on the Outward Passage," from western Africa.[27] This was likely written with regards to food provisions however dampened decks contributed to growth in various types of bacteria leading further to the origination of species in the bodies of stowed captives. To prevent these

---

[24] Testimony of Captain Thomas Wilson, *HCSP,* 73:11.
[25] Testimony of Richard Norris, *HCSP,* 68:18.
[26] Testimony of Captain Thomas Wilson, *HCSP,* 73:11.
[27] David Tuohy Papers, LRO.

occurrences Surgeon Robert Norris explained that slaves "they are kept clean shaved" which was presumably used on a regular basis with bondmen.[28] Likewise, for all captives, "every Attention [was] paid to their Heads, that there be no Vermin lodged there."[29] Considering the intense heat aboard ship we can only imagine that these conditions as well as the tight packing of ship helped to increase these dangerous occurrences. The heightened apprehension of disease further motivated many seamen to ensure Africans' bodies were sufficiently cleansed. While aboard the *Duke of Argyle,* John Newton reported, "In the fore noon, being pretty warm, got up the men and washed all the slaves with fresh water." Continuing, he explained, "I am much afraid of another ravage from the flux, for we have had 8 taken within these few days."[30] Protection of their human property being the primary interest of many ship captains, cleanliness of Africans may not have always been top priority.

Several methods were used to keep Africans' bodies clean. On some ships, the morning ritual included using "Tubs of Water to wash their Hands and Face," followed by a surgeon's examination to ascertain sores or complaints that arose during the evening hours.[31] In addition to this, during "the Middle of the Day, if the Weather is fine, they are bathed all over."[32] The frequency of captive cleanliness greatly depended on weather conditions. On 23 May 1753, the captain of the *African* logged that his seamen "washed the slaves which the weather has not allowed us to do this fortnight nearly."[33] Unable to

---

[28] My emphasis on bondmen is based on the idea that males typically trim and shave excess hair, particularly within their face and head. Of course this is not to suggest some women may not have excess hair that also required shaving. However, within the context of the trade these measures were utilized as a matter of cleanliness and more importantly to make a captive appear younger to potential buyers.

[29] Testimony of Robert Norris, HCSP, *68: 4-5.*

[30] Newton, *The Journal of a Slave Trader,* 56-7.

[31] Testimony of John Matthews, *HCSP,* 71:134.

[32] Testimony of Robert Norris, HCSP, *68:* 4-5.

[33] Newton, *The Journal of a Slave Trader,* 80.

clean the ship's human "cargo" any periods of inclement weather presumably fostered an increase of diseases. To prevent slaves from catching colds "when the Decks are Wet," one shipmaster received instructions to "let them be wash'd allways in the Evenings but Never in the Mornings," while at sea.[34] Periods of day deemed most desirable to clean captives depended greatly upon ship commander preference as well as their expertise within the trade. From these narratives however we learn of the diversity of cleaning tactics utilized aboard some vessels.

To counter the transmission of micro-organisms, often damaging to a person's health, there were different strategies of cleaning employed. During periods of more favorable circumstances, on some vessels bondpeople were granted the chance "to wash themselves under the head pump." According to one ship captain, this opportunity represented "a practice which they are fond of themselves, and which we encourage. . . ." Following a brief rinse, captives received palm oil to rub on their bodies to prevent the growth of skin conditions caused by various weather changes.[35] Eighteenth century physician T. Aubrey warned those working aboard slave ships about the dangers of slave cleaning procedures. Characterizing them as "Another principal cause of their Destruction," he found a detrimental practice widespread within the trade was "forcing them into a Tub of cold Water every Day, and pouring the Water on their Heads by Bucketsfull." These measures were used to prevent contamination while also to quell the stench bondpeople's bodies. Interestingly Aubrey included that "they are accustomed to

---

[34] David Tuohy Papers, LRO.

[35] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP,* Vol. 71:26-27. Eighteenth century Physician T. Aubrey discussed Africans use of palm oil as a healing property. He described that if affected with any sort of ailment "they bathe three or four times, and stand in the Sun, and rub themselves all over with the Palm-oil, and so they sweat prodigiously, insomuch that the Venom is partly carried off by Sweat...." See, *The Sea Surgeon,* page 113.

bathe themselves at Home," however in his view "sometimes they may be little indisposed, and then they fear the Bath," expected of them while at sea. To which he encouraged, "when some refuse the Bath, Blows, and Kicks, and Cats" would sufficiently suffice.[36] Although captives were not permitted the chance to regularly cleanse themselves, they had some semblance of dignity when they were allowed to bathe.

Communal cleansing increased opportunities of contamination among bondpeople. As a precautionary measure of cleanliness owners of the *Ranger* wrote that crewmen on the ship, "make the Slave[s] rub each other with a piece of Cloth every Morning" which in their view could "promote Circulation & prevent Swellings" from arising within their body.[37] We do not know if the vessels sailors used these suggestions or if they were implemented after a cleansing process. However, if we look more closely one wonders the cleaning methods used for these cloths as well as how many people a ship commander or surgeon permitted slaves to use them before any disposal. The incorporation of such tactics encouraged poor hygienic practices. Additionally, as evidenced through the above testimonies, on some slavers captives were forced to utilize the same tubs of still water to clean their bodies, which permitted the direct and rather dangerous exchange of bodily fluids during the process. In many cases stagnant water attracts flying vermin, which could have led to slaves' bacterial ingestion. Recognizing the sporadic process of offering slaves the opportunity to clean themselves, it is also probable that water basins were not often drained. As a result, an offensive smell would ensue. To further extend the use of recycled ship water, a British Royal Navy surgeon

[36] T. Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum*, 131
[37] David Tuohy Papers, LRO.

offered the following solution, "when your water is stinking, mix lemon juice or vinegar with it, and it will render it much less unwholesome."[38]

Space and Heat Aboard Slave Vessels

The process of stowing captives also posed a significant challenge to slave traders. Merchants, abolitionists, British government officials, and ship captains often contemplated the utility of loose versus tight packing in the confinement of Africans aboard slave ships. Despite these dilemmas, sailors often placed large numbers of Africans within tight spaces to increase their potential profit. One trader explained the various areas contained on some ships including "The Men's Room, The Boys Room, The Women's Room, The Gun Room, The Cabin, [and] The Half Deck."[39] Within their respective holding quarters, captives were typically "locked spoonways," forcing them to lie in close proximity of their fellow shipmates.[40] Although these measures did not permit sufficient room for those captured, it proved useful to ship captains because they procured larger numbers of captives.

---

[38] Anonymous (A Surgeon of the Royal Navy), *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant, or Physical Advice To All Masters of Ships who carry no Surgeons; Particularly Useful to those Who trade abroad in Hot or Cold Climates Containing A brief Description of Diseases, Especially those peculiar to Seamen in long Voyages with A concise Method of Cure, The result of many years, practice and experience in all climates,* (London: J. Wilkie, 1777), vii.

[39] Testimony of Mr. Matthews, *HCSP*, 68:43; Use of the word "room" was a common feature of the trade. It is typically used in reference to captives' holding/stowage areas on ship. Therefore, it does not imply that an enslaved person had their own personal room akin to a bedroom as in a house; It is also critical to mention that descriptions of the placement of captives in their bottom holdings typically referred to bondmen. Whereas, the written record typically does not provide further clues explaining how female captives were held within their rooms.

[40] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:85. James Fraser justified close confinement;"[i]t is a custom with the Africans to lay close together, in such a manner that one does not breath into the other's face—this is also a very common custom amongst the Slaves on board the ships." See Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71: 85;

Slaves' holdings were typically separated by gender and age, but this did not guarantee ample space for each individual.[41] Surgeon Robert Norris explained "The Whole of that Deck under the Gangway is covered with Negroes."[42] Of course the method of placing bondpeople within their respective holds differed according to captains' preferences and more importantly the size of the vessel. Stowage areas were separated by a partition, commonly two inches thick. Adult males were kept in the lowest placed from the deck because of their perceived threat. However, adult females and girls remained in the same section and were in close proximity to the upper deck. The male and female holds were separated by the boy's room, which sat between the two.[43] Males were divided by age, in that traders and captains separated the "men" from the "boys." The primary purpose of this method was not only to disperse captives throughout the ship but more importantly to keep bondmen and bondwomen away from one another. Owing to the fact many traders viewed black males as threatening to female captives held on ship.

There were certain patterns of slave arrangements on ship. The bottom holdings of ships designated for slave lodging represented the spatial location that captives spent majority of their time. The usual measurements of these rooms were reportedly constructed "the usual Length of the Negro" commonly believed "about Five Feet Ten." On many ships "[t]he Head of the Negro is always to Windward." According to one surgeon, it was common practice that "the Negro was laid on his Back" so that upon

---

[41] This study attempts to replace "slave' with terms that can better highlight those enslaved *as* people. I view them bound within a state of bondage rather than as slaves, especially when one recognizes that not every person entered the trade already enslaved. In most case, I use terms: "bondmen," "bondwomen," "bonded people," "captives," "captive Africans," "enslaved," and "enslaved Africans."; these are used interchangeably throughout the study.

[42] Testimony of Robert Norris, HCSP, 68:7.

[43] Testimony of Robert Norris, HCSP, 68:9.

"lying on their Backs, they were supposed to have sufficient Room for their Accommodation if they chose to turn on their Side."[44] Clement Noble echoed these same sentiments. Captives "had always plenty of room to lay down in," which in his view "had they had three times as much room they would lay all jammed close up together." This being as he asserted, something "they always do. . . before the room is half full."[45] Medical physician Alexander Falconbridge had a difference of opinion with both trade participants. He determined that instead of receiving sufficient space, Africans "had not so much room as a man in his coffin, neither in length or breadth, and it was impossible for them to turn or shift with any degree or ease."[46]

Discussion of slave stowage raises several interesting points. First, is recognition of the diversity of height and weight represented. In trying to maneuver their selves, it is probable that captives of different sizes endured greater bodily damage within their cramped confinements. The testimonies offered in extant records detail slave holdings related to bondmen. Therefore, we know little about the overcrowding women and children experienced. Clearly, there were disparaging beliefs among slave traders regarding matters of perceived comfort and mistreatment that bondpeople endured. Although most perspectives come from the perpetrators and participants of the trade, in many cases their views confirm the realties of racial and cultural inferiority.

Along with tightened spaces, the physical construction of ships prevented the proper circulation of air. Ship captain James Fraser explained that "[e]very ship has gratings, and most have air ports, but there are some ships, whose constructions do not admit of air ports in the usual manner." Regulations specifying the construction of slave

---

[44] *Ibid*, 6-7.
[45] Testimony of Clement Noble, HCSP, 73:119.
[46] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP*, 72:301.

vessels did not exist. Therefore upon sailing, the trade became a risk not only for merchants and crewmen but even more upon Africans' lives.[47] Recognizing the danger looming against prospective cargoes ship commander Spoor of the *Ranger* recovered warning "you must allways be mindfull to give them as much fresh Air as you possibly can," while at sea.[48] These practices varied across different voyages depending on ship commander's preferences. Interestingly, in justifying slaves' cramped stowage, Fraser contended, "[t] hey seldom complain of heat while the air is sweet" because "they are accustomed to heat, and find very few inconveniences from it." In his mind, their tropical environments of origin assured their "comfort." According to him, "they can bear heat better than White People...."[49]

Despite prevailing stereotypical beliefs, many Africans suffered under poor-conditions aboard slavers. Once sold and relocated, bondpeople were shuttled into various designated rooms. Although spread across different locations, slaves' dispersal did not lower concerns of overcrowding which were critically damaging to their health. According to one practitioner, "Too close Confinement in the damp and foul Air of large Ships," in many cases "also create[d] Disease."[50] Some vessels were constructed with ventilators. Yet, these devices were incapable of filtering necessary fresh air among bondpeople often tightly stowed for significant hours and sometimes, consecutive days. Captain John Ashley Hall pointed out, "I have frequently heard them crying out when below for the want of air." Improper air circulation caused stagnation and a heavy

---

[47] The author fully understands there were distinct differences relative to risks between the three groups. For merchants there were major financial risks whereas for crewmen, particularly ship captains and surgeons, their risks were entrepreneurial and physical. As "human cargo," Africans were subjected to even greater physical, psychological, and spatial risks.

[48] David Tuohy Papers, LRO.

[49] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP,* 71:32.

[50] Lind, *An essay on the most effectual means of preserving the health of seamen*, ix.

dampness to filter making it difficult for captives to breathe. As a result, Africans were "frequently brought upon deck, some fainting," while others "die[d] within a few minutes after they have been brought upon deck, which proceeded from the corrupted state of the air and heat jointly."[51] This observation dispels the earlier point that captives were somehow able to withstand the extreme heat.

The lack of fresh air further intensified the unhealthy conditions bondpeople confronted. One surgeon detailed, "I have seen their breasts heaving, and observed them draw their breath with all those laborious and anxious efforts for life" which he attributed to their being "subjected by experiment to foul air of different kinds." Africans' stowage in the bottom holding exacerbated the mistreatment they endured as slaves. "[W]hen the tarpaulins were, through ignorance or inadvertently thrown over the [air] gratings," that covered the port holes for them to breathe from the lower holds, surgeon Thomas Trotter recounted, some captives engaged in "attempting to heave them up, and crying out 'Kickeraboo, Kickeraboo,' which signifies, we are dying...." He added, "on removing the tarpaulins and gratings, I have seen them fly to the hatchway with all the signs of terror and dread of suffocation."[52] This case highlights the sentiment of alarm some captives experienced at sea. It also provides a rare glimpse into the verbal responses they articulated in their native tongue. Language barriers persisted, yet it is likely this did not prevent other bondpeople and seamen from understanding their fears. Nonetheless,

---

[51] Testimony of Captain John Ashley Hall, *HCSP*, 72: 231, 275-276.

[52] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:85. Concerning the word "Kickeraboo," Ian Hancock provides a brief explanation of the etymology and employment of the different variations of this term[phrase or expression?]. This word has different spellings including: "kekrebu," "kickzeboo," "kecrebu," and "kickaraboo." The original word appears to have West African origins stemming from the Ga language spoken in Sierra Leone. For further reference see Hancock, "On the Anglophone Creole Item Kekrebu," *American Speech* 60, 3, (Autumn 1985): 281-283.

hindered from breathing freely, one can only imagine what many slaves endured, particularly feelings of fear, displacement, and psychological torment.

Enforcement of Deck Time and Exercise

Perhaps due to the inability of ships to offer fresh air, many sailors implemented deck time. One trader described that during favorable weather it was not uncommon "to bring them up of a morning between eight and nine o'clock," and move them back to their holdings "about four in the evening" for the remainder of the day.[53] In many senses bondpeople were kept on deck for a significant amount of time. James Fraser explained "it is our wish to keep them all day upon deck, and give them what exercise they can use, with a view to preserve their health." He added that these measures were also incorporated "to prevent them from sleeping in the day-time on deck" because he understood that "those who sleep on deck. . . generally disturb the rest at night."[54]

Forced exercise served as another measure used to preserve bondpeople's health. In preventing sickness, sea-travelers were encouraged to "use exercise every morning and evening" to maintain a healthy disposition.[55] Often confined for long periods of time, slaves' exercise came primarily during feeding times. James Towne explained that "in the afternoon after being fed" sailors would spread across the deck "to make them dance."[56] When they were moved from the bottom holding, "the men, who were confined in irons, were ordered to stand up, and make what motion they could." Likewise, all the slaves were instructed, as one surgeon described, to "dance round the

---

[53] Testimony of James Towne, HCSP, 82:20.
[54] Testimony of James Fraser, HCSP, 71:26-27.
[55] *Ibid*, viii.
[56] Testimony of James Towne, *HCSP*, 82:20.

deck, with all those awkward gestures and motions which they call dancing."[57] Exercise permitted bondmen and bondwomen the opportunity to move and stretch their confined limbs. In 'dancing' slaves, these behaviors often took on the tone of forced entertainment for sailors. Captain John Ashley Hall detailed that captives were "made after each meal to jump up and down upon to the beating of a drum" often to music unfamiliar to their own.[58] Various musical selections were likely chosen by crewmen. Therefore, in addition to providing entertainment, this period of publicly enforced motion also created an exposure of music between slave traders and bondpeople.

If slaves refused to exercise crewmen punished them. Seamen functioned similar to plantation overseers; they flogged unruly captives with an instrument referred to as a cat o' nine tails. In some cases bondpeople "received a few strokes when they refused to perform. . . exercise, or to eat their victuals."[59] These instances of expected compliance were enforced to preserve slaves' health. Yet, disobedience in any capacity welcomed sailor's use of aggressive tactics. According to Alexander Falconbridge, when captives went about their exercise "reluctantly, or do not move with agility," on many occasions "they are flogged."[60] The tenuous dynamics between Africans and their captors created a social order, of which seamen demand bondpeople to oblige. Although implemented to promote optimal health, exercise in some cases came at a violent cost to captives' bodies.

Allocation of Food

Similar to exercise, food also remained critical to maintain the health of captured slaves. Captain Caleb Godfrey of the sloop *Hare* received instructions on 8 November

---

[57] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:87.
[58] Testimony of Captain John Ashley Hall, *HCSP*, Vol. 72:231.
[59] *Ibid*, 271.
[60] Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, (London: J. Phillips, 1788), 23.

1755 regarding food distribution among purchased bondpeople. The ship's owners ordered that he "let them have a Sufficiency of good Diet," to which they reminded, "as you are sensible in your Voyage depends upon their Health."[61] Many of the edible items offered to bondpeople came from England and parts of western Africa. In preparing for their overseas ventures, seamen often loaded various foodstuffs with the intent of covering the entire voyage to and from Africa they carried beans and in some cases "stockfish, flour, bread, and beef" along with various liquors. To accommodate the decrease in food supplies, once docked in West Africa captains ordered goods used to feed captives ranging from fish, corn, plantains and cassada.[62] While docked in Old Calabar in 1788, the captain of the slaver *Juba* negotiated the purchase of several items including, "1 Gang Cask Brandy, Palm Oil, Pepper, Lime Juice, Goat, Dryed Fish, &c for his slaves."[63] The traders' purchase confirms that in addition to available African bodies, seamen also bartered for a diversity of foods that represented items bondpeople later consumed.

The dispersal of food took on different forms aboard slave vessels. Under the orders of some ships, captives received breakfast in the morning "soon after day-light" while their evening meals were given during the four or five o'clock hour.[64] Size of vessels also determined how slaves received their food. On smaller ships seamen brought bondpeople from the bottom holding to serve their food. Aboard larger vessels captives were spread throughout the ship. Some were fed on the main deck, where the chief mate,

---

[61] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

[62] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP,* 71: 26.; With regard to the latter item, a Gentleman's Magazine article in October 1764 alluded to the difference of spelling for this item within the 18th century. It indicated, "The Cassada, or Cassava, yields a poisonous juice, yet its meal, after that juice is expressed, makes a wholesome well-tasted bread." See, *Gentlemen's Magazine,* (October 1764), 487- 488.

[63] "Ship Pearl," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

[64] Testimony of William Littleton, *HCSP,* 68: 294.

surgeon, and boatswain oversaw their congregation. Whereas other slaves were confined to the quarter deck, the location where the ship captain, the second mate and surgeon's mate were stationed to watch over them.[65] During feeding times they were often organized into groups of 10 and segregated by gender to, "mess by themselves, by which means no one can be overlooked, as they fit in a circle."[66] Gendered separation of bondpeople enforced division among men and women. Yet, smaller groups granted seamen the ability to keep close watch on any collaborative acts of insurgency.

Preservation, however, largely shaped the range of provisions included in captives' meals. The challenge of adequate storage enforced dependencies, imposing strict standards for food distribution.[67] In many cases edible items consisted "mostly of Beef, Pork, Biscuit, Flour, Oatmeal, Pease, Butter, [and] Cheese."[68] Captains also often transported salted meats, uncooked beans, rice, and yams due to their longevity against spoilage during lengthy voyages.[69] High temperatures and constantly changing weather patterns prohibited the allocation of perishable items at sea, including fresh fruits and vegetables. James Fraser explained that "while on [the African] coast" they typically "got several articles, such as plantains, bananas, and several other refreshments," despite recognition that these items "are not fit to keep at sea."[70] If consumed during the vessels'

---

[65] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:29-30.

[66] Testimony of John Knox, *HCSP*, 68:78.

[67] For discussion of food preservation as a historical problem, see Anne C. Wilson, ed., *Waste Not, Want Not: Food Preservation in Britain From Early Times to the Present Day.* (Edinburgh University Press, 1991).

[68] Anthony Addington, *An Essay on Sea-Scurvy Wherein is Proposed An Easy Method of Curing that Distemper at Sea; And of Preserving Water Sweet for any Cruize or Voyage.* (London: Printed by C. Mickleright,1753), 8.

[69] Richard Sheridan contends that some slavers grew largely dependent on salted meats because of the ability for easier preservation. See, "The Guinea Surgeons on the Middle Passage," 601-602. For further discussion see also Kenneth and Virginia Kipple, "Nutritional Link with Slave Infant and Child Mortality in Brazil," 681;

[70] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:27-28.

passage, the intensified heat common aboard ships could have deteriorated these foods and caused food borne illnesses.

The food provisions given to enslaved Africans fell into three categories: starches, carbohydrates, and proteins. Beyond sustenance, these foodstuffs provided the necessary nourishment needed to increase immunity among captives. Interestingly, in one surgeon's view bondpeople "are fed with Two Meals of comfortable wholesome Victuals."[71] As 'human property' ship captains viewed their subsistence in a more critical fashion in contrast to seamen. Nonetheless starchy provisions were a common part of bondpeople's meals. Oftentimes this included cassada, grains, Indian corn, barley, and shelled peas, which were boiled and incorporated into different meals.[72] Likewise, carbohydrates were another staple on vessels. Bread, rice and yams also held a regular place within captive's diets. One captain attested that in his experiences slaves "have commonly one meal or more of yams a day given them on the coast and on the Middle Passage."[73] Over-reliance upon certain items was due in many cases to the availability of certain provisions within various seaports.

Africans also received a diversity of proteins. These nutritional supplements were typically procured on the African coast and at other times following a ships' port arrival. On many occasions they included beef, pork, chicken, and salt-fish. In the absence of

---

[71] Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP, 68: 4-5.*

[72] Kenneth Kipple posits that those individuals whose diets were primarily made up of rice over time became thiamine deficient. See "Nutritional Link with Slave Infant and Child Mortality in Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, 4 (Nov. 1989), 677.

[73] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP,* Vol. 71: 34. It is questionable if over dependence of bread could provide the necessary fiber for enslaved people to digest the nutrients in their meager ship diets. D. A. T. Southgate offers a useful discussion of digestibility and absorption of nutrients. See George V. Vahouny and David Kritchevsky, eds., *Dietary Fiber in Health and Disease*, (New York: Plenum Press, 1982), 46. Countering the idea of fecal stoppage due to carbohydrate consumption, I. MacDonald and C. A. Williams point out that "if the concentration of the carbohydrate is high, this can lead to osmatic diarrhoea." This gives possible explanation for the presence of diarrhea aboard ships. See "Dietary Carbs, Health, and Disease" in Michael Turner, ed., *Nutrition of Health A Perspective: The Current Status of Research on Diet-Related Diseases,* (New York: Alan R. Liss, 1982), 152.

preferred meats, sailors accommodated with the range of local foods readily available. While docked in West Africa in 1790, the captain of the *Ranger* logged that he "served the People with fresh Fish in lieu of Pork and Pease."[74] The latter provisions were likely carried from England, however to diversify the meal's contents in all probability the attending shipmaster bartered for the fish within a shoreline community. It was also common that meals at sea were caught at sea. For instance, on 2 November 1783 the commander of the vessel *Count du Nord* logged, "this morning i hook'd a Shark but the line being too small he broke it and made his escape" into the waters. Although successful, several weeks later their persistence proved fruitful in supplying ship meals. "[A]t 10 a poor unfortunate Dolphin took the hook, Was Discover'd and Immediately hall'd In" the ship. In fact, the next day several crewmen "hook'd a Shark of a 11 feet long [and] hall'd it" to which the shipmaster added "he was Immediately Cut up & Devour'd."[75] Although port communities supplied various rations that seamen carried, the sea granted considerable access to an array of dietary items difficult to procure on land.

Different techniques assisted in matters of preservation and distributing animal protein at sea. To counter the intensity of heat common aboard ships and provide proper preservation, many meats served on vessels were often cured by adding salt.[76] This increased captives' salt intake within their meals, which became fertile ground for

---

[74] Log of the Slave Brig Ranger (LRO)

[75] Ship Log Entries for Ships: Count du Nord & Madampookata (1782-1790), LRO; Jeffrey Bolster discusses the ensuing relationship of people and the sea. He posits that during the Age of the Ocean different individuals "relied on ocean products and services as never before." See, Bolster, "Putting the Ocean in Atlantic History: Maritime Communities and Marine Ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500-1800," *American Historical Review* 113, No. 1 (February 2008), 23.

[76] Leslie Owens describes that preservation of food was a perpetual challenge to the ingenuity of men. As a result of this, as he discloses, meat was typically cured by adding salt and letting it sit out in the air. See, *This Species of Property,* 51.

instances of severe dehydration.[77] With regards to this particular inclusion, medical practitioner T. Aubrey explained that slaves were "forced to eat too much Salt," which he declared, "it is a thing they little care for, unless it be in a very small Quantity."[78] The preservation methods implemented ensured that a sufficient amount of provisions were made available within voyages. Yet, it is presumable that over-consumption of salted foods also aggravated various health complications bondpeople later confronted.[79]

In addition to meats, beans made up another source of protein captives consumed on a regular basis. Due to the common usage of dry goods within ship meals one merchant gave explicit directions regarding the allocation of food among bondpeople. "On their first coming on board feed them sparingly," he found "the sudden change from green Vegetable diet to dry food is apt to make them Costive, which the surgeon must guard against."[80] Historical records of the trade do not indicate if sailors actually gave much attention to these concerns. On many occasions however they mixed these hardened items into various sauces they created in an effort to diversify meals. A dish commonly served referred to as 'slauber-sauce' included the combination of rice and

---

[77] See, Kipple and Higgins, "Mortality Caused by Dehydration During the Middle Passage," 421-437.

[78] T. Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum In which is laid down, The method of curing such Diseases as Usually happen Abroad, especially On the Coast of Guinea; with the best way Of treating Negroes, both in Health and in Sickness,* (1729), 127.

[79] There is an existing body of literature concerning the relationship of ineffective and unbalanced diets as the catalyst for disease. For further reference see, Charles H. Halsted, Robert B. Rucker, eds., *Nutrition and the Origins of Disease*, (San Diego: Academic Press, 1989); Turner, *Nutrition of Health a Perspective;* Myron Winick, ed., *Nutrition and the Killer Diseases,* (New York: Wiley, 1981); and Kenneth Kipple and Virginia King., *Another Dimension to the Black Diaspora: Diet, Racism, and Disease,* (Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press, 1981). Additionally one book specifically addresses nutrition at sea. See J. Watt, E. J. Freeman, and W. F. Bynum, eds., *Starving Sailors: The Influence of Nutrition Upon Naval and Maritime History*, (Bristol, [Eng.] : John Wright & Sons (Printing) Ltd., Bristol on behalf of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum, 1981.)

[80] James Dumball Papers, SJL

beans along with, "palm oil, mixed with flour, water, and pepper."[81] Some bondpeople preferred this concoction, forcing one ship captain to suggest that future English vessels traveling to Africa place, "Dryed Flour on board for her slaves" in order to permit, "the Capt to have doe Boy's made & well Boiled with the Slauber Sauce as is Customary."[82] Aubrey made a similar reference to the widespread practice of blending food items within ship meals. He described that in some cases, "Horse-beans [were] boiled all to a Paste, and then stuff[ed] with rotten Herrings" which were served "with Palm Oil enough, a small Matter of Salt, and good Quantity of Pepper. . . ."[83] The foods available on ships were far from extensive. Although meager in many instances, these discussions call attention to Africans' preferences of meals along with offering close insight into the diets allocated.

There were also several beverages bondpeople received during their passages. Water was the most critical requirement for captives. These barreled supplies were typically carried from England. Set at sea for extended time periods, water restrictions were necessarily imposed. Surgeon Robert Norris pointed out the "[l]ength of Voyage may run them short, but Ships in general have the Precaution to lay in Three Months of Water, or thereabouts, for a Passage of Six, Seven, or Eight Weeks."[84] A vessel's size, the number of bondpeople stowed, and the duration of time spent in West Africa procuring slaves determined the regularity and the amount of water distributed.

---

[81] Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, (London: printed and sold by James Phillips, 1788), 21; Sheridan makes reference to 'slauber-sauce' which he points out included the use of scuttlefish over rice and beef bones in water. See "The Guinea Surgeons on the Middle Passage," 617.

[82] "Ship Pearl," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

[83] T. Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum,* 128. Robert Norris also offers discussion concerning the "dabadab," which he pointed out was the mixture of Indian corn "boiled to a thick Consistence, known by the Name of a Dabadab, to which they have Sauce composed of Fish and Meat, seasoned also with Palm Oil, Pepper, and Salt." See, Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP,* 68: 8.

[84] Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP,* 68:10.

Elongated stays typically required seamen to gather additional water once docked in Africa. One captain confirmed, "[t]here is an abundance of excellent water to be found on every part of the Coast of Angola." Likewise, "it is very difficult to get the water on board from some places, on account of the difficulty of landing, where the water was to be procured."[85] Replenishing the water supply available aboard vessels required considerable labor, yet these were necessary precautions for the preservation of both captives and sailors.

Water restrictions depended on the number of people aboard and the periods of intense heat. Some slave traders believed that, "[w]hen the weather is uncommonly warm," it was best for seamen to "serve them [captives] the same quantity of water in the middle of the day."[86] Ship captain John Knox shared that he gave tin cups containing half of a pint water allowance to captives on his vessel during their morning rise and once again in the afternoon.[87] Considering the variety of body sizes represented according to gender and age, equal distribution would have been insufficient for supplying necessary fluids according to bodily needs. In fact, one vessel master explained, "I usually laid in from 60 to 80 gallons [of water] a man; but I generally had a quarter of my stock left, when I arrived in the West Indies or America."[88] Voyage length played a critical role in the availability of water for dispersal purposes. It would have been useful to gain insight into the captain's daily practice of distributing water to slaves that permitted him to land with a considerable amount of unused water. The enforcement of water restrictions

---

[85] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:28-29.
[86] *Ibid*, 178.
[87] Testimony of John Knox, *HCSP*, 68:178.
[88] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:50.

implemented during dangerous periods of low supply also remains a mystery, which conceivably caused captives to confront instances of dehydration.

Along with water, bondpeople received other liquids during mealtimes. American and English sailors carried various liquors in exchange for the coastal sale of valuable slaves in West Africa. These items were also consumed within a ship's passage. Following departure, supplies unsold in many cases were reserved for use during the voyage. According to one captain, "I always had sufficient quantity of wine and spirituous liquors for the use of the negroes and the ship's company."[89] Often utilizing a system of gradual management, captives received diluted "inferior brandy and rum." The ingestion of these drinks in conjunction with hot temperatures probably increased intoxication. Likewise, once the temperature of the captives' body rose, these liquors exacerbated their vulnerability to exhaustion.

Despite the intent to provide meal diversity, bad provisions also often surfaced within ship meals, placing captives' health under life threatening circumstances.[90] This reality prompted one medical practitioner to warn, "one of the great Causes of losing the Slaves, comes from very bad Food" dispersed at sea.[91] Surgeon O.P. Degraves offered a glimpse into the dietary implications of tainted items attesting that the loss of Africans he experienced in Old Calabar was, "owing to a purchase of bad Yams." Fearful of other medical injuries likely to surface and hinder the successful transport and sale of purchased slaves, he added, "Our bread is all mouldy, and I am much afraid of the

---

[89] Ibid, 26 – 27.

[90] Raymond Cohn makes the case that attempts were made to carry only non-contaminated foods and water. See Cohn, "Death of Slaves in the Middle Passage," 692. It is certainly plausible that edible foods were sought, yet these intentions may have been largely difficult to carry out because seamen were forced to rely on other people to procure foods. As such, coastal traders and merchants may not have given adequate attention to climatic affect or the filtration of germs and bacteria that cause provisions to rotten.

[91] T. Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum,* 126.

consequences."[92] It is unclear how long these spoiled items were distributed until discovery of their inferior quality. This case highlights the bodily harm these contaminated foods wrecked on Africans' lives. Perhaps because of these common sea realities one shipmaster was encouraged to remove "your provisions out of the Rooms frequently" in order to permit them "to be Air'd" which could facilitate longer use aboard ship as well as prevent incidents of spoilage.[93] Beyond the mere purchase of putrefied items, however, physician James Lind called attention to the various 'destructive vermine' that often bred themselves within ship provisions. He explained: "The dry provisions, oat-meal, peas, and flour, are apt to be corrupted and spoiled by weevils, maggots, and by growing damp and mouldy."[94] Adapting to their host environment, many of these parasites could lie plausibly undetectable.[95] One can infer then, that dependence upon foods devoid of necessary vitamins and nutrients coupled with bad provisions weakened captives, making them further susceptible to various illnesses.

Oftentimes cost factors and the unavailability of certain provisions influenced the meager range of meals bondpeople received. Upon his departure from Shebar, the captain of the *African* reported constraints he faced in providing sustenance to several boarded slaves. On 21 March 1753 he logged that due to attending circumstances, they were forced to "Give the slaves bread. . .for their breakfast" which he confessed they

---

[92] "Ship Pearl," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

[93] David Tuohy Papers, LRO

[94] James Lind, *A Treatise Of the Scurvy In Three Parts Containing an Inquiry into the Nature, Causes, and Cure, of that Disease Together with A Critical and Chronological View of what has been published on the Subject*, (1753), 238. Physician Anthony Addington similarly disclosed that a 'putrid diet' common aboard ships. As such, it was not uncommon for sea-travelers to receive foods "mouldy or eaten by worms and weevils." See, *An Essay on Sea-Scurvy*, 6.

[95] William McNeil in his classic study mentions the relationship of food, parasites, and bacteria, which he argues under-girded civilized history. See, *Plagues and People*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1976).

"cannot afford them 2 hot meals per day."[96] Even though funds were allocated to cover various expenses for a ship's voyage, in some cases bartering of goods became the typical method of acquiring different items including ship provisions. The scarcity of coastal foods affected sea diets. John Duncan wrote from Annamaboe in 1769 that with dull times widespread on the African coast, "it will take us some time to get corn and yams" for his vessel because "they are very scarse and not to be purchased without gould."[97] In a similar situation, a ship captain lodged at the Mouth of Lawse River also experienced food concerns to which he explained, "the boat is this day a Going to Serelion" for business purposes. "She is going in order to purchase Rice on the Bullarm Shoar" due to the fact as he declared, "for I have bin forst to feed my slaves with flower and. . . [r]ice is very scarce" within the local coastal community.[98]

Interestingly, slaves often demonstrated food preferences within the Middle Passage. Captain John Ashley Hall explained that in stowing provisions and water for his passages, he found it was, "not always the sort of provisions they [slaves] liked best."[99] Language barriers hindered sailors from fully understanding the types of food some Africans preferred. Regularly traveling in close proximity with captives, this would have enforced greater understanding of captives' food preferences. Seaman William Littleton alluded to this declaring, "we usually put a few pieces of ships beef, or salt fish amongst them — [where] after eating them once or twice, they [captives] have become fond of them."[100] W. Woodville attested to this same discovery. He shared, "we can scarcely make them eat European provisions & much less when they begin to complain & their

---

[96] Martin and Spurrell, *Journal of a Slave Trader,* 78.
[97] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP* 71: 38-39.
[100] Testimony of William Littleton, *HCSP,* 68: 292.

appetite becomes weak."[101] Unfamiliarity and the lack of acquired taste of certain provisions further prompted slaves' rejection. For instance, horse-beans were a main-staple of the trade however bondpeople did not like them. Surgeon Alexander Falconbridge explained that some slaves "have such an aversion to the horse-beans, that unless they are narrowly watched, when fed upon deck, they will throw them overboard, or in each others faces when they quarrel."[102] Although limited in their food choices and fully aware that their defiant responses could warrant punishment, this did not prevent captives from resisting.

Bondpeople also sought to determine the amount of food they received. The provisions Africans received were often minimal proportions that made survival challenging. Recognizing this depravity, some slaves took matters into their own hands through resistive means. Surgeon Thomas Trotter recollected that several male captives "between decks had drawn the staple of the fore lazaretto, where the horse beans were kept" and in so doing they secretly "had taken some, about two or three gallons, and hid them away in some of the cases that were between decks." Discovery of their efforts arose when several seamen "had heard them eating them in the night."[103] Realizing the situation embroiling, "the second mate went down, and examined into it, and found they had been down and got them up in order to eat," which Trotter surmised, "from hunger I fancy." News of the bondmen's actions filtered to the captain and he "ordered four or five of the people that had done it upon deck, [and] gave them a severe horsewhipping

---

[101] "Ship Rodney," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

[102] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 22.

[103] The author recognizes captives' dislike of beans – typically horse beans – as previously described. However, considering the depravity of food and limited variations allocated to many captives one can only imagine this would induce altered patterns of behavior. Meaning it would not seem extraordinary for a bonded person to partake of certain provisions, despite the preference, as a matter of survival once a chance was granted.

first." Following this he separated the "two of them that were supposed to be ringleaders" and forced "a thumbscrew on each [slave's] thumb..." According to Trotter, these measures "tortured them very much," as evidenced by "their groans and cries, the sweat running down their faces, and trembling as under a violent fit of the ague."[104] Although rare within evidence of the Middle Passage, this case validates the agency some slaves exerted for their personal welfare, despite the possibility of punishment.

The allocation of foods also further instigated the perpetuation of stereotypes concerning certain African groups. Seamen were often privy to the various dietary preferences Africans expressed, which led to general assumptions. For instance, captives from Angola were described as "eat[ing] whatever provisions were given them with cheerfulness."[105] Similarly, those from the Gold Coast were characterized as "scarcely refus[ing] any food that is offered to them" where it was believed they "generally eat larger quantities of whatever is placed before them, than any other species of negroes."[106] Another assumption prevailed according to matters of food. As one surgeon recounted, "Yams are a favourite food of the Eboe, or Bight negroes, and rice or corn, of those from the Gold and Windward Coasts; each preferring the produce of their own native soil."[107] While these comments fueled exaggerated depictions of Africans' eating habits, their circulation likely had further reaching implications regarding their sale and treatment in New World communities. Such generalizations could lower interest among planters. It is also conceivable that these stereotypes influenced the mistreatment or even withholding of food that some Africans confronted during their Atlantic crossing.

---

[104] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:103-4.
[105] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:28-29.
[106] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 22.
[107] Ibid, 21. Discussion of the food preferences of people from Cabenda and Melimba is disclosed. For further reference see Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:44.

Influence of Inclement Weather

Although there were a range of preventative measures employed to protect Africans aboard ship, weather conditions posed the greatest environmental obstacle to bondpeople's health. The rainy seasons in West Africa began in late May/early June and ended in October. Some believed that the coming of rain often depended upon "the change of the Moon in the latter part of May."[108] To circumvent bad weather, many vessels sailed at night to ride with the land wind.[109]

Despite these precautionary measures, the unpredictability of the weather contributed to a host of issues slave traders faced. Ship captain Edward Taylor confronted the devastation of weather concerns once docked at the River Gambia. He declared, "the prescant Season of the Year, the Rains Coming on is Very unhealthy."[110] Crewmen avoided sailing during unfavorable months but the growing demand for black laborers forced them to risk travel at unseasonable times. As such, these particular periods forced captains to confront unhealthy implications capable of affecting slave sales. While traveling on the African coast aboard the *Jupiter*, John Smith remarked "Rainey season have been & still is Varey severe here." In addition to difficulties of sailing, it is probable his fears concerned the acquisition of several Africans owed to him, still in holding on the coast.[111] Recognizing the widespread mistreatment of captives within coastal holdings, periods of inclement weather could force seamen's attendance to any enfeebled conditions that surfaced on ship.

---

[108] Testimony of William Littleton, *HCSP,* 68:296-7.

[109] Testimony of John Fountain, *HCSP,* 68:248.

[110] "Ship Mermaid," James Rogers Papers, DUSC; For further reference regarding discussion of mortality following rainy seasons on the coast of Africa, See, Testimony of John Barnes, *HCSP,* 68:86.

[111] "Ship Jupiter," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

Bad weather hampered slave dealings and the ability to ensure speedy departures. John Corran of the vessel *Ranger* indicated that on 7 March 1790 weather took a toll on his day while docked at Annamaboe Road on the coast of Africa. He logged that the day "Begins with strong Breezes" culminating from the southwestern direction producing what he described as "dark cloudy Weather." He did not disclose if any damages emerged as a result of these weather conditions. One can infer however, that he employed protective measures for his ship and especially the captives on board. Unexpectedly these patterns changed and later that evening a northeastern came upon them "attended with heavy claps of Thunder, dismal Flashes of Lightening and great rain till 10 PM."[112] Because they were in the hold, bondpeople were likely shielded from the dangerous outside conditions. However, their "residence" in dark and damp spaces probably heightened their fear of the loud weather patterns. Seamen, on the other hand, were accustomed to manning vessels during periods of inclement weather.

Hurricane season, July through September, also impacted voyages. Ship captain James Fraser spoke at length on the devastation of a hurricane following his Caribbean arrival: "I lost my foremast and bowsprit." Likewise, as he recollected "the Negroes were very much distressed during the bad weather—[and] there was a scarcity of water, and a total want of country provisions."[113] Whether on the African coast or following their port arrival within the New World, ship captains were never free from the threat of dangerous weather conditions. Even worse, unfavorable weather affected Africans' source of food and water and added to their adverse medical conditions.

---

[112] Log of the Slave Brig *Ranger* (LRO)
[113] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP,* 71:38.

Poor weather conditions were directly related to ill-health among captives. One ship captain faced the loss of 60 captives, which he attributed to the fact that "weather was very bad comeing down here & the slaves were unwell fitted." This experience forced him to conclude, "the season is entirely against this voyage."[114] Although most captains avoided transporting captives during unfavorable seasons, such endeavors were not always possible. Trader John Hark commented on this dilemma. He remarked that the debilitating conditions of the slaves resulted from "being under water the whole way from the Coast."[115] Leaky voyages often occurred as a result of a downpour of rain. However, chained and confined in the bottom hold of ships, bondpeople were unable to escape or protect against the influx of water. Consequently, these dangerous conditions caused the exacerbation of physical ailments and led to their eventual decline. After leaving the coast fully slaved, Capt. W. Woodville Jr's slaves' health suffered from inclement weather. As he detailed, "the incessant rains on the Coast & the cold weather afterwards brought on the flux," weakening several of his captives.[116] Environmental factors such as weather held a significant bearing on slave trading practices. They affected ship departures, reduced slaves' health, and ultimately limited the number of 'human cargo' captains transported across the Atlantic.

The impossibility of predicting natural disasters affected not only ship's passages but also experiences some bondpeople endured at sea. On 12 August 1773 John Duncan, commander of the brigantine *Othello* and Edward Fare, a mate aboard the vessel, submitted a public act in Middlesex, Virginia detailing circumstances that resulted in the

---

[114] Ibid; Surgeon and notorious slave trader, Archibald Dalzel offered additional discussion of mortality relating to inclement weather. See Testimony of Archibald Dalzel, *HCSP,* 68:34-35.

[115] "Ship Dragon," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

[116] "Ship Rodney," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

loss of several slaves. Bound for Charlestown, they reported that on 24 May they sailed from "Annamaboe on the coast of africa with Eight three slaves." In the early part of August, "there came on a violent gale of wind from the south west" which they declared "occasioned the ship to labour much," out at sea. After a second force of strong winds blew through the next day, "they sprung their foretopmast, split the mainsail and maintopsail" on the top part of the vessel. Much to their already growing alarm, another gale arose causing them "to spring a leak" and dock the ship in Virginia.

Although the dangerous weather patterns caused significant damage to the ship, several boarded slaves were also affected. According to their testimonies, during the passage they "lost by sickness six slaves" previously stowed on the ship. It is unclear if any of these captives endured medical conditions prior to the calamitous event or if winds and incessant rains created their deadly condition. Therefore, to shield themselves from legal ramifications, after landing the vessel Duncan and Fare elected to make an oath that the damage incurred upon the ship and the bondpeople's deaths resulted from "the said hard gales of wind and bad weather" that caused the subsequent leakage. Their intentions were to declare that the damaging results were "not by or through any negligence or want of seamanship in the said appearers or any or either of them" making the incident known. Therefore, as the act demonstrated, "they have protested and by there presents do protest against the sea and the said hard gales of wind & bad weather for all losses damages costs & charges and expenses already happened suffered and sustained or which may happened be suffered sustained or occasioned" resulting from the particular calamity.[117] This episode clearly attests to the inherent dangers of nature. One can only reason that the slaves' deaths imparted particular frustration among the ship's crewman regarding the

[117] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

finance losses that resulted. On the other hand, for the captives, trapped aboard ship and within their holdings, these experiences likely ushered in a range of emotions due to their inability to protect themselves and their fellow shipmates.

Inclement weather also shaped the treatment of captives aboard ship. Some seamen believed Africans' exposure to the climatic changes moving "from wet to dry, or from dry to wet," gave rise to their sicknesses. In the event of storms, rain, or fog, captives were forced to remain below deck, which created later health concerns. Interestingly, one ship captain intimated that Africans "are commonly so sensible of the cold, that restraint is not necessary to keep them below."[118] Emerging from tropical environments, many enslaved Africans probably preferred moderate to warm temperatures. On some vessels, during bad weather, "Water is carried down to them, and in that rough Weather Two or Three Chaffing Dishes, with Coals, are sent down into each Room, which corrects the Air."[119] These practices, along with burning fires and distributing flannel shirts to maintain heat in ailing captives' bodies, suggest the prevalence of humane treatment.[120] Yet, the fundamental nature of slave trading did not set out to provide comfort for its captives.

Conclusion

The unhealthy conditions bondpeople experienced significantly influenced trade operations. This chapter suggests that a variety of factors contributed to captives' sickness, including: exercise, diet, ship cleanliness, and weather. Although disparaging diseases emerged within the Middle Passage, it is clear that coastal factors played a large role in the instances of ill-health among Africans. The circumstances of slaving also

---

[118] *Ibid*, 31-32.
[119] Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP*, 68:7.
[120] "Ship Rodney," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

enforced meager dietary introductions that in some cases contributed to slaves' decline. Many of the meals captives received foreshadowed the nutrient-deprived diet distributed across Atlantic slave societies. Over time an integral relationship of diet, slavery, and disease emerged, which the next chapter explores. Owing in large part to these circumstances, consequences of health emerged among bondpeople – regardless of gender or age – within their oceanic crossing.

CHAPTER THREE

'I never have such a Sickly Ship before': Gender, Disease, and the Specter of Mortality

Diseases, the viruses spreading in all directions
No safe zone, no cure, and no protection
No symptoms to find or signs of an infection
No vaccines, remedies and no corrections
Quarantine your dreams and sell off all connections
Don't let him in, not a friend, and not a reflection.[1]

Introduction

On 21 July 1792, surgeon Christopher Bowes of the slave ship, *Lord Stanley*, recorded the medical complaint of an enslaved male. The bondman, referred to as "No. 24," complained of "pains in the bowels with diarrhea." Over the next three days, Bowes observed the gradual stabilization of the man's condition, documenting that he was, "rather easier," "the same," and "pretty easy." However, on the morning of the 25th, his health took a sharp turn for the worse: he became sleepy and his pulse quickened. Bowes indicated that the ailing man exhibited continual symptoms of delirium. As his health deteriorated, he was unable to stand because of "continual tremors particularly about his heart, [and] his skin [was] extremely hot." Despite the efforts exerted to improve the bondman's condition, five days later at approximately one o'clock he died.[2]

Poor health was common among bondpeople in the slave trade. Traders were particularly concerned because sick captives meant decreased value, and in some cases, death. The widespread proliferation of dangerous maladies placed slaves in a critical state of health. Drawing upon their physical sickness during the Middle Passage, this chapter examines 'ship health' by interrogating the social history of disease and

---

[1] Lupe Fiasco, "Streets on Fire," *The Cool*, 2007.

[2] "Medical Log of the Slaver the *Sir Lord Stanley*," Medical Log kept by Christopher Bowes (1792) Royal College of Surgeons, London, England. Along with the bondman discussed in the above story, 386 of his fellow shipmates also perished from medical illnesses, allegedly believed to be dysentery.

mortality.[3] Regardless of race or gender, individuals traveling across the Atlantic were not granted immunity from the inundation of medical ailments or subsequent death. Although white seamen were often subjected to unfavorable health conditions, the intention here is to examine how life threatening disorders specifically shaped captives' experiences during slaving voyages.[4]

In closely analyzing ship health within the Middle Passage, there are two primary points of discussion: epidemiology and the responses surgeons and captains exerted to combat slaves' ill-health. The first examines epidemiological aspects of the slave trade by analyzing instances of failing health among bondmen and bondwomen. Medical calamities that commonly surfaced aboard slave ships are placed in four primary categories: the most common ailments, respiratory illnesses, fevers, and reproductive disorders. The second intention of this chapter is to trace surgeons' place within the trade. Discussion of their active participation reveals that employment aboard ships offered financial and practical benefit often unavailable within their homelands. By highlighting their efforts to combat episodes of African illness, this discussion also reveals the often hostile relationship between surgeons and ship captains.

---

[3] For the purpose of this discussion, the term "ship health" is defined as the physical condition of– captains, seamen, surgeons, and enslaved Africans – plagued by viruses, diseases, epidemics, and disorders while at sea.

[4] Emma Christopher provides the first book-length study of seamen's experiences aboard British slavers in the eighteenth century slave trade. She offers readers a brief view of medical dilemmas sailors confronted at sea. See, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes*, 1730-1807, (Cambridge University Press, 2006). Leslie Owens discusses the inherent difficulty of trying to answer the question of what it felt like to be a slave. He posits, "In truth we can never know this even when we try to see bondage from the slave's viewpoint." See, *This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South,* (New York :Oxford University Press, 1976), preface. The author of this dissertation readily understands the challenges inherent in ascertaining what slaves may have endured physically, socially, or psychologically amidst their captivity. Thus the intention here is not to compare or contrast the experiences of captive Africans with seamen. Instead, these medical perspectives are addressed to call attention to the various ways ill-health manifested across scores of Africans bodies, placing their lives in jeopardy.

Speculating on the range of symptoms and curative methods offered for those ailing at sea, this chapter draws heavily upon eighteenth century medical literature.[5] It moves beyond quantifying diseases, voyage lengths, or furthering debates regarding African stowage.[6] Instead, it closely examines the social relations of health to query how the varied experiences of ill-health affected enslaved Africans forcibly set at sea. Employing a social lens, surgeons' diversified roles and the efforts they extended to treat captives' medical conditions will undergo a closer inquiry to better understand their place aboard slavers. Designated as slaves' caregivers, the presence of slave ship surgeons was not based upon acts of humanitarianism. On the contrary, it served as a catalyst for increased wealth and advancement of their furthered understandings of medical treatment.[7]

---

[5] This perspective departs from the work of noted scholar Kenneth Kiple. In his article, "Nutritional Link with Slave Infant and Child Mortality in Brazil" Kiple posits that he relied on "present day medical knowledge on the past" to analyze disease among bondpeople, however, he recognized that "presentism of this sort is sometimes frowned upon by medical historians." The author in this dissertation takes a different approach. Because contemporary medical knowledge of the 20th and 21st centuries does not employ the same language as 18th century sickness and disease, I chose to rely on medical journals and descriptions of illness from the period of this study. This was a deliberate decision, which I believe enabled me to effectively translate and understand the symptoms and restorative methods used to treat African captives. This methodology allows a historical contextualization of ailments that surfaced on slave ships and how they were understood by medical practitioners during the time of their outbreak..

[6] There have been a range of historiographical debates concerning the slave trade and statistical queries, causes of mortality, length of vessels at sea, and stowage of slaves on ships. For further reference see: Philip D. Curtin "Epidemiology and the Slave Trade," *Political Science Quarterly*, 83, 2 (June, 1968): 190-216; Charles Garland and Herbert Klein, "The Allotment of Space for Slaves Aboard Eighteenth British Slave Ships," *William and Mary Quarterly* 42, 2(April, 1985): 238-248. Herbert S. Klein and Stanley Engerman, "Slave Mortality on British Ships, 1791-1797," in Roger T. Anstey and P.E. Hair, eds. *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition: Essays to Illustrate Current Knowledge and Research* (Liverpool: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1976. 1986), 113-125; William Darity, Jr., "The Numbers Game and the Profitability of the British Trade in Slaves," *Journal of Economic History* 45, 3 (September, 1985): 693-703; Paul Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," *The Journal of African History* 23, 4 (1982): 473-501; Kenneth F. Kiple and Brian T. Higgins, "Mortality Caused by Dehydration During the Middle Passage," *Social Science History* 13, 4 (Winter 1989): 421-437; Joseph E. Inikori, "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment of Curtin and Anstey," *The Journal of African History* 17, 2 (1976): 197-223; and Philip D. Curtin, "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade Once Again: A Comment," *The Journal of African History* 17, 4 (1976): 595-605.

[7] An ongoing debate emerged in the 18th century which prompted some merchants to employ surgeons aboard the slave vessels they financed. Likewise, the surgeons themselves had to decide if they wanted to work on slave ships. See Chamberlain "The Influence of the Slave Trade on Liverpool

Unhealthy conditions widespread on slave vessels fostered the incubation of contagious and often deadly ailments. As a result of these conditions slave ships crossed the Atlantic as 'floating hospitals.' Critical to this understanding is the idea that hospitals typically function as dual spaces of patient recovery and/or death. An untold number of men, women, and children died from diseases within the Middle Passage. As the doctor-patient relationship ensued , the allocation of medical treatment for bondpeople ushered in a range of difficulties concerning their healthcare. Surgeons' effort to preserve sickly captives often failed as some Africans fell prey to their respective afflictions. Likewise, the challenges some physicians confronted from ship captains also created disparities that jeopardized captives' restoration. Along with posing questions of epidemiology, this chapter problematizes notions of power and treatment that shaped the curative efforts extended to bondpeople.

Captive Disease & Mortality

As eighteenth century medicine developed, physicians sought to classify the range of diseases common in the western world.[8] Characterized as an age of rationalism and experimentation, this historical period saw several shifts take place. Medical knowledge moved from concentration on theories about body structure towards the use of empirical data to comprehend the proliferation of diseases within the human body.[9] As a result, autopsies and the use of human cadavers became pertinent to practitioners' training.[10] The medical profession, particularly throughout England, depended on bodies of the

---

Medicine," 3-4; Richard B. Sheridan, "The Guinea Surgeons on the Middle Passage: The Provision of Medical Services in the British Slave Trade," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 14, 4 (1981), 610.

[8] Kenneth Kipple, ed. *The Cambridge World History of Human Diseases*, (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 16.

[9] John Duffy, *Epidemics in Colonial America,* (Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 23.

[10] See Franny Nudelman, *John Browns Body: Slavery, Violence and the Culture of War*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 46.

general public to develop a better understanding of recovery. The same method of bodily inquiry also emerged within the slave trade in effort to prevent future medical outbreaks.

Many medical calamities common on land also appeared on ships. However, the treatment and prescribed remedies differed at sea. Amidst their voyages, surgeons sought to understand how medical disorders claimed the lives of countless captive Africans. Sustained contact between blacks and whites through the slave trade permitted a 'geographical movement of diseases.'[11] The story of medical illnesses within the Middle Passage is much about the various diseases transmitted and brought to Atlantic World slave communities. Despite the diversity of measures employed to counter sickness, there were a range of diseases present on these floating hospitals.[12]

Common Ailments

The first category of afflictions that affected traders were diseases that often led to death among bondpeople.[13] Scurvy was one of the most recognized conditions, which resulted from the continual digestion of foods deficient of water-soluble vitamins B and C.[14] According to one physician, this disease owed to "frequent voyages [taken] to the most distant parts of the world." Scurvy symptoms represented a "regular and constant"

---

[11] For further discussion of this concept see Debbie Lee, "Yellow Fever and the Slave Trade: Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*," *English Literary History* 65.3, (1998), 676.

[12] James Jones provides a brief discussion of the range of diseases he found among bondpeople that often led to death. See, Testimony of James Jones, *House of Commons Sessional Paper of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 68, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 44.

[13] The author considers the various ailments "most known" did not always translate into high rates of captive mortality. The attempt is made to call attention to as many disorders noted to have affected the lives of enslaved Africans within the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

[14] Kenneth Kipple, ed., "Scurvy." *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1000-1001; R. S. Allison, *Sea Diseases: The Story of a Great Natural Experiment in Preventative Medicine in the Royal Navy*, (London: John Bale Medical Publications Limited, 1943), xix. Scurvy continues to garner its own body of literature. See, Stephen Bown *Scurvy: How a Surgeon, A Mariner, and A Gentleman Solved the Greatest Medical Mystery of the Age of Sail*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2004); Alfred Hess, *Scurvy, Past and Present*, (London : J. P. Lippincott company, 1920); Kenneth J. Carpenter, *The History of Scurvy and Vitamin C*, (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1986.)

feature of ship life, as, "the most ignorant sailor, in the first long voyage, becomes well acquainted with it." [15] The heightened growth of overseas trade during the 18th century created an increase in the amount of medical information offered to seamen for prevention and treatment of various ship illnesses, including scurvy. Recognizing that scores of sea travelers' lives were devastated by this ailment, practitioners suggested a variety of causes for this disease. Many believed the unhealthy environment aboard ships played a major role. Yet, diet typically served as the common factor physicians attributed to scurvy attacks.

Food was considered the primary catalyst involved with scurvy. Often consisting of "hard dry food," one writer declared that "the sea-diet is extremely wholesome." Upon further scrutiny, however, he concluded that many of these provisions were "extremely gross, viscid, and hard of digestion."[16] Conscious of the regular inclusion of salty foods, medical practitioners warned sailors to, "eat very little flesh, particularly salt meat," which coupled with heat, worsened ship ailments.[17] Considering the severe limitation of different types of foods at sea, this suggestion would have proved a difficult feat. Yet, it was strongly advised that "Eating much of salt beef or pork in hot climates brings on the scurvy." If consumed however, "neither should be eat[en] above once a week each, and even then with plenty of vinegar, onions, and mustard."[18] The allocation of food varied on different voyages, as already discussed. Clearly, the descriptions

---

[15] Lind, *A Treatise Of the Scurvy*, 61.

[16] *Ibid*, 117, 119.

[17] Anonymous, *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant, or Physical Advice to All Masters of Ships who carry no Surgeons, Particularly Useful to those Who trade abroad in Hot or Cold Climates, Containing A brief Description of Diseases, Especially Those peculiar to Seamen in long Voyages with A Concise Method of Cure, The result of many years, practice and experience In all climates*, (1727), 6.

[18] *Ibid*, 7.

offered here indicate an awareness of the contribution of sea diets to the severity of this disease.

To counter the possibility of scurvy, the most common meal suggestion included those "of light and easy digestion," that were composed of "more greens and vegetables of all kinds" to sustain the health of sea travelers.[19] Along with green leafy vegetables, Lind added that "ripe fruits, are the best remedies" in protecting against scurvy attacks.[20] During the latter part of the 18th century physicians encouraged seamen to carry and consume citrus fruits for the vitamins and ascorbic acid they provided scurvy patients.[21] Perhaps aware of the dietary suggestion, surgeon Robert Norris often served "a Mixture of Lime Juice, Melasses, and Water [that] was formed into a Beverage" to prevent captives' outbreak of this particular disease.[22]

Despite the range of preventative measures suggested, scurvy continued to afflict bondpeople. In 1796 John Spencer, commander of the vessel, *Thomas*, purchased and boarded slaves to transport across the Atlantic. Amidst the passage, the ship's surgeon William Francis discovered scurvy developing on the bodies of a bondman and bondwoman. At the onset of this medical condition "the person eats and drinks heartily and seem in a perfect health."[23] These particular observations may have gone unnoticed. However, understanding that "rottenness of the gums is always a sign of this disease," it

---

[19] *Ibid*; Addington added that, "The most proper Diet for Seamen, much afflicted with the Scurvy, is the vegetable Part of their Provisions." See, *An Essay on Scurvy* 31.

[20] Lind, *A Treatise Of the Scurvy*, 115.

[21] In 1795, due to the persistent efforts of Sir Gilbert Blane, the British Admiralty passed a ruling concerning the use of citrus juices, particular lemon juice, as a daily ration requirement for sailors while at sea. See McNeil, *Plagues and People*, 268; Bown, *Scurvy*, 74-76, 197; Kenneth J. Carpenter, *The History of Scurvy and Vitamin C*, 95 and his chapter interrogating scurvy within the British Royal Navy. As a result of this regulation, by the early 19th century it was estimated that those in the Royal Navy consumed close to 50,000 gallons of lemon juice annually. See Bown, *Scurvy*, 198-212; To understand the evolution of the term limeys as it was applied to 19th century sailors see, David I. Harvie, *Limeys: The True Story of One Man's War Against Ignorance, the Establishment, and the Deadly Scurvy* (2002).

[22] Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP*, 71:10.

[23] Lind, *A Treatise Of the Scurvy*, 147.

is probable that this served as the initial indicator for Francis' awareness of their growing ailment.[24]

Victims of scurvy were also known to exhibit "a great weariness and heaviness of the limbs, not caring to move or stir" within any capacity. Being bonded, these lethargic behaviors likely warranted sailors' use of physical violence. Respiratory concerns also posed a problem due to the "difficulty of breathing on the least motion," particularly while at sea.[25] Likewise, bodily scars often surfaced in "different colour'd spots [that] dispersed over the whole Body, especially the Legs and Arms."[26] These blemishes typically proliferated "on the skin of various colors" ranging from "yellow, red, purple, dark-coloured, blue or black; at first small, but when the disease is advanced, more large."[27] It is imaginable that these physical demarcations inflicted shame. Perhaps even more psychologically scarring were the customary hemorrhages that emerged "without the least Appearance of any Wound on it," forcing patients of this disease to emit blood from their "Lips, Gums, Throat, Nose, Lungs, Stomach, Intestines, Liver, Pancreas, Kidneys, and Bladder."[28]

Equally revealing are the symptoms of scurvy that may have shaped slaves' gendered experiences within the Middle Passage. A common feature for all patients was "swelled legs."[29] One physician described that at the onset of symptoms are "first observed on their ancles" which over time it "gradually advances up the leg" of its victims.[30] Slave trade records confirm that male captives typically traveled the Atlantic

---

[24] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 180.
[25] *Ibid*, 180-181.
[26] Addington, *An Essay on the Sea-Scurvy*, 1.
[27] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 181.
[28] Addington, *An Essay on the Sea-Scurvy*, 40-41.
[29] Lind, *A Treatise Of the Scurvy*, 63.
[30] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 181.

bound in irons due to heightened security concerns. We know the bondman endured bodily trauma from this condition however the process that filtered within his body remains a mystery. Understanding the typical concerns of swelling, it is possible to infer that the chains secured on the man's body worsened the pain he endured amidst his cramped confinement. Even more, one can only imagine that any swaying of the ship during the ship's passage created additional pain he confronted from his stowage in the bottom holding.

Although unchained, the bondwoman's experience may have been different for her ailing shipmate. Physician Anthony Addington explained that those affected by scurvy endured "violent Effusions of Blood" that often flowed "from every internal and External Part of the Body."[31] Once affected, William Francis could have viewed the female's ailment through a gendered lens, misdiagnosing her condition as a reproductive concern. If so, it is probable that he took liberty to perform a vaginal examination to ascertain the source of her bodily distress. It is quite conceivable the confusion scurvy symptoms created, particularly in view of female menstruation.

There is no direct evidence shedding light on the extent of how scurvy affected bondwomen and bondmen. However, it is clear that the trauma associated with this disease caused both men and women agonizing pain. Perhaps most conclusive is that the physical experiences of sickness and treatment varied for both sexes. Their fates, however, became further entwined through their scurvy confrontation, evident in the fact that on 13 May 1796 both slaves died.[32]

---

[31] Addington, *An Essay on the Sea-Scurvy*, 2.

[32] Certificates of Slaves Taken on Board Ships, House of Lords Record Office, London, England. (hereafter cited HLRO).

Scurvy caused significant concern, yet the flux was perhaps the leading cause of death among bondpeople traveling the Atlantic. Descriptive terms for this ailment included the 'Bloody flux,' 'Obstinate flux," and the 'Violent flux.' The diversity of labeling aside, it held a central place in the lives of African captives. Due to its common appearance, seamen as well as enslaved Africans were often aware of the dangerous implications. Offering close inspection, T. Aubrey warned, "You must observe, that when this Flux comes upon them [bondpeople], they know they shall surely dye, and that is the Reason they will neither eat or drink. . . ."[33] These psychological understandings presumably extended towards many diseases that Africans confronted within the Middle Passage. Through further speculation we can assume that witnessing the destructive nature of the flux among their shipmates, caused anxiety and fear for others.

The deadly consequences of the flux were widely recognized, even traders and merchants feared captive mortality. William Roper departed Africa 28 September 1791 with "177 Slaves of My own Purchase" aboard the *Crescent*. During the ship's passage eight bondpeople died from the flux. The medical threat loomed following Roper's arrival in Barbados, which he declared that because of it, "I have 3 more Slaves I expect to Die."[34] Slave trader John Newton also encountered the death of valuable slaves afflicted with this same medical concern. On 23 February 1751, he logged that a "man slave" died while aboard the *Duke of Argyle*. He described the bondman as "having been a fortnight ill of a flux." Perhaps most compelling within the male's death beyond the pain that he underwent for close to two weeks was Newton's comment that his debilitated

---

[33] Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum*, 116.
[34] "Ship Crescent," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

state had "baffled all our medicines."[35] The flux posed a significant threat to many ship captains not only because of the difficulty of tracing its symptoms, but also because it was impossible to effectively control its outbreak.

Indiscriminant in its victims, the flux materialized through the deaths of many African captives. In 1792 the ship, *Shelbourne Castle,* set sail across the Atlantic. Aboard were two boys commander John Fouks purchased during coastal sales. The ship's surgeon William Dickinson observed that both young men were afflicted by the flux. Viewed as "an incurable *Diarrhoea*" by some practitioners, this condition typically developed "moderately for twenty-four Hours and then augment[ed]...."[36] Many patients underwent "frequent discharge of blood from the bowels," which reinforced the bloody connotation often associated with this condition. Equally devastating, the fecal matter of flux victims was in some cases "mixed with flimsy sharp matter" that inflicted "severe griping pains, and a perpetual desire of going to stool."[37] T. Aubrey explained that the duration of a patient's condition extended "perhaps fifteen or sixteen Days till the *humor radicalis* be totally desiccated, and the Spirits dissipated, and the sanguinary Mass converted into a venomous virulent Matter" inside the victim. During later stages of this disease, the symptoms took full control of a person's body and ultimately "stagnates and deprives them of Life."[38] This illness filtered in different ways however several curative methods appeared to restore a person's health.

---

[35] Martin and Spurrell, *Journal of a Slave Trader,* 38; John Newton endured the losses of 24 captives (12 Men; 5 Women; 2 "Men-Boys"; 1 "Woman-Girl"; 6 Boys; and 5 Girls) to the flux aboard the *Duke of Argyle.*

[36] Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum*, 116, 118.

[37] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 36.

[38] Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum*, 117.

Treatment recommendations for the flux varied considerably. Foremost, caretakers were encouraged that "the patient must be extremely cautious to guard against cold" as well to be kept "comfortably warm and dry."[39] Held as captives, it is likely the two young boys found themselves confined instead in an often dark, hot, and dampened stowage room for weeks at a time. The flux also caused incessant vomiting among many patients. Therefore, offered advice warned that "the patient should never ease himself in the head or over the side of the ship, but always use a bucket." These assistive items were encouraged to "be kept constantly clean and empty," and also to contain "warm water in it (if possible) for the patient to sit over." Practitioners additionally emphasized the role of diet. Permitted foods included "sago, rice, weak broth, very slight portable soup or gruel" to use as restoratives. Likewise, suggested drinks ranged from "barely or rice water" to "rum or brandy and water," in which it was advised that those ailing receive "(a spoonful or two to a point) but not malt liquor."[40]

Various medicinal remedies were also suggested to cope with the flux. Forced bleeding served as a widespread practice in the 18th century that surgeons employed to cure a diversity of ailments. With treatment for the flux in particular, some medical practitioners bled a patient "to six or eight ounces" in effort of dispelling toxins from a patient's body.[41] To detoxify captives affected by the flux, surgeon Isaac Wilson often relied on "clearing the stomach or bowels from any putrid matter that might be lodged therein" through the use of mild astringents or a purging.[42] In some cases herbal remedies included "a half a dram of rhubarb and 5 grams of calomel, mixed up thick with

---

[39] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 38.
[40] Ibid.
[41] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 36.
[42] Testimony of Issac Wilson, *HCSP*, 72: 291-2.

a little Syrup" that proved useful. Some physicians also recommended "two grains of ipecacoanha, and half a dram of diascordium" served to flux victims "every third day till the disorder is better."[43] On the other hand, T. Aubrey explained that "The Surgeon commonly take this Flux for a simple *Diarrhoea,* and so vomit them with *Ipecacoanha,*" relying heavily upon administering various astringents. In his view, this "is only throwing away their Medicines and torturing the poor Slave."[44] The medical advice sea travelers received varied, and on some occasions, contradicted one another. However, it remains a mystery if the ship's surgeon William Dickinson employed **any** of the recommended methods to cure the ailing boys. Despite the techniques he used to restore their health, we know that their conditions took a turn for the worse. As a result, one young boy died on July 27. Likewise, several days before the *Shelbourne Castle's* arrival into the Port of Kingston, on 3 August 1792, the other young captive also perished.[45]

Smallpox was another major disorder that affected Africans traveling the Atlantic. In the early part of the eighteenth century physicians considered this disease as "an *Inflammatory Fever.* . . with a peculiar Malignancy or Poison."[46] This medical condition was widely perceived to have two variations: Distinct and Confluent, which both produced four unique phases of the infection. The stages of this dangerous disease were detailed for those traveling at sea, explaining: 1) Feverish State – when the patient is

---

[43] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 36-37. Add a note explaining these two medicines

[44] Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum*, 118.

[45] Certificates of Slaves Taken on Board Ships, HLRO.

[46] William Douglass, *A Practical Essay Concerning the SmallPox* (Boston: D. Henchman, 1730), 3. Beyond the slave trade, small pox has been considered a historically devastating disease. Several scholars write about the history of this particular ailment. See, *The Smallpox Story: in Words and Pictures*, (Kansas City: University of Kansas Medical Center, 1988); Ian and Jenifer Glynn, *The Life and Death of Smallpox*, (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2004); Peter Razzell, *The Conquest of Smallpox: The Impact of Inoculation On Smallpox Mortality in Eighteenth Century Britain,* (Firle, Sussex, [Eng.] : Caliban Books, 1977); Donald R. Hopkins, *Princes and Peasants: Smallpox in History,* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1983); Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana : the Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*, (New York : Hill and Wang, 2001); and Jennifer Lee Carrell, *The Speckled Monster: A Historical Tale of Battling Smallpox,* (New York : Penguin Group, 2004).

seized until Smallpox appears; 2) Eruptive State - the period that smallpox formulates and pustules are dispersed across the entire body; 3) The State of Maturation or Ripening – the point that spots of the smallpox are all out until they turn or begin to scab; and 4) The State of Declination or Scabbing – the stage when the pimple like wounds begin to turn until they are scaled off.[47]

Symptomatic processes of the smallpox took on different varieties among those affected. Some physicians believed that at the onset, patients underwent feelings of "drowsiness . . . sleepiness, [and] sometimes delirium and fits" that were accompanied by "a great propensity to sweat." T. Aubrey explained that patients were "commonly seized with a great Heaviness and Pain in the Head and Back, a gentle Fever, and Vomiting or Nauseas."[48] Likewise, some sufferers "eyelids are puffed up" and their hands often swelled. It was also not unknown for "violent Symptoms, such as Bleeding at the Nose or Mouth" to occur, attended with "excruciating Pains" that further weakened victims.[49]

The proliferation of "spots or pimples" on a patient's body were the most characteristic features of the smallpox. Practitioner Thomas Dimsdale added that as the ailment took control of a person's body "the whole surface of the skin is covered with a rash."[50] Described as "the bigness of little pinheads," these body blemishes appeared "first in the head and face; then in the neck and breast, hands and arms, and then

---

[47] *The Ship Master Medical Assistant*, 192.

[48] Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum*, 107.

[49] Francis Bellinger, *A Treatise Concerning the Small-Pox In which a Plain and Easy Method of Curing that Disease under its most direful Symptoms, is discovered and the Case of a Women with Child at Time particularly consider'd; and so stated, as to be render'd even safer than that of other Women*, (London, 1721), 18.

[50] Thomas Dimsdale, *The Present Method of Inoculating for the Small Pox to which are Added Some Experiments, instituted with a View to discover the Effects of a similar Treatment in the Natural Small-Pox, (1771)*, 24.

afterwards all over the body." The pustules often began "rough and whitish," and were in some cases described as appearing "not unlike a white skin glued to the face." The more severe a person's condition, "the more black the pustules [would] turn." Over time however, these scabs began to "throw out a yellowish matter, in colour like a honey-comb."[51] We know very little about how bondpeople responded to the circumstances of shared bondage at sea. Descriptors common with this condition gives room however to speculate on feelings of shame and embarrassment some diseased captives may have felt amidst their fellow shipmates; due in large to part to the public fashion that their conditions spread which they could not prohibit.

Different treatment offered for this disease targeted physical conditions and dietary alterations. Once affected, it was recommended that "Great care must be taken to supply. . . [patients] with pure cool air." Many believed that "hot air in this disease is of the most fatal consequence."[52] "It was impossible to avoid heat on a slave ship and an even grimmer possibility below deck. Thus, captives suffering from small pox did not have such luxuries to enjoy cool climate. One physician offered the point to "Let the Patient be cover'd with as many Cloaths as may reasonably be suppos'd" in order to provide needed warmth.[53] Although intended to protect victims during changing seasons, another practitioner countered this suggestion indicating that "the patient ought not to be stifled by heat and cloaths."[54] These conflicting suggestions attest to the difference of public opinion on sea travel and the difficulties in offering the most effective remedies to maintain health. Of course many of the strategies commonly used to counter diseases on

---

[51] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 194, 199.
[52] Ibid, 196-7.
[53] Bellinger, *A Treatise Concerning the Small-Pox, 18.*
[54] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 196

slave ships are still unknown to contemporary scholars. However, because many traders held prevailing fears on the transmission of disease through clothing, bondpeople probably suffered from this condition deprived of any attention to their comfort.

Dietary suggestions were also included to counter the effects of the smallpox. Both oatmeal and barley gruel were highly recommended foods. Relative to liquids, patients were encouraged to "drink plentifully of diluting Liquors" because beliefs circulated that "there is something Caustick and acrimonious in the [smallpox] Infection." Some of the favorable drinks included "Herb Teas, Barley Water, Water Gruel or Sack Whey."[55] In addition, "good small beer, sharpened with orange or lemon juice" was also believed to promote patient relief.[56] Historical records do not always provide an entry to understand the regular use of these recommended treatments aboard slave ships. Yet, considering the difficulties attending with treating various conditions at sea, it is probable that seamen and surgeons drew upon available provisions and medicines in order to restore a person's health.

In 1742 ship captain Joseph Drape confronted the devastation of this ailment. He traveled to Guinea and purchased 216 Africans. Prior to his coastal departure, smallpox broke out amongst several captives where, "[i]n a very Short time there were no less than 170 ill of that Distemper all at once." As the symptoms persisted, Drape feared losing slaves afflicted by the outbreak. His concerns escalated prompting one ship officer to suggest that he, "infuse a Quantity of Tar in Water, and give it [to] the Slaves to drink, saying it was practised in the Same Case with good Success."[57] Adhering to the advice,

---

[55] Douglass, *A Practical Essay Concerning the SmallPox* 14.

[56] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 197

[57] During the same year of this case, noted scientist Stephen Hales published his findings with respect to an experiment he conducted with the use of tar water. See, Hales, *An Account of Some*

Drape then ordered the treatment prepared and offered to a male captive who "obstinately refused it, and so did many more." Within three days the bondman died. Those bondpeople who witnessed the man's death "were more easily brought to compliance; so that partly by persuasion, partly by force, the rest were all brought to drink [the water mixture]."

Interestingly, the success of the cure enforced a curious response among the vessel's slaves. Drape described that they "came upon Deck, and crowding about a Tub of Tar Water, that was Set therefore for them, drank plentifully of it, from Time to Time, of their own accord." Aside from the bondman's death, no other captive perished among the remaining 169 captives listed as "grown persons." Perhaps holding to the believed healing capabilities of the offered treatment, Drape shared that, "the Negroes continued drinking Tar-Water after their Recovery, which they found so much Relief from, that they could hardly be brought to drink any other."[58] This case attests to the use of trial and error methods implemented to quell lingering ailments. It also offers a rare glimpse into the collective response some bondpeople waged for improvement of their personal health within the Middle Passage.

Much like smallpox, apoplexy also caused a significant decline of bondpeople. The descriptive diagnosis offered for this malaise, according to slaves' deaths at sea, varied from "Apoplexy," "Fits," and "Appolitick Fit." This condition often receives less attention as a source of mortality however it played a critical role during the eighteenth century. Ship captain Robert Elliot confronted this illness while sailing from Fort James

---

Experiment and Other Observations on Tar-Water: Wherein is Shown the Quantity of Tar That is Therein. And Also A Method Proposed, Both to Abate That Quantity Considerably, and to Ascertain the Strength of Tar-water, (London : printed for R. Manby and H. S. Cox, 1745.)

[58] Certificate of Tar Water Concerning A Guinea Slaver (1745), Wellcome Medical Library, London, England. (hereafter cited WML).

in Africa with "24 Prime Slaves on Board" bound for the Island Des Loss. Four days into Elliot's passage he reported, "had the Misfortune to lose a fine Man slave, was taken in a fit and before we could get his Irons off he died."[59] The record does not offer further details explaining the man's symptoms. Yet, it is probable the bondman went into shock that ultimately led to his death.

This condition also affected sea-travelers, prompting the transmission of warnings detailing the symptomatic process. Medical practitioners surmised that apoplexy was either "sanguineous or pituitous." The former was believed to afflict those "young, or middle aged people of a hot constitution, who are full of blood" while the latter specifically targeted patients of a "cold phlegmatic constitution."[60] However, according to one medical reference, "If the fit is very severe, it carries off the patient in a few days, and sometimes much sooner." For Elliot, the deadly implication of this ailment became a reality. Although believed rare, a common symptom of this illness included "foaming or froth about the mouth." Likewise, it "deprives the whole body of sense and motion" resulting in heavy breathing, snoring, and a patient sleeping deeply.[61]

Treatment recommendations varied to restore patient's health. Because apoplexy was considered sanguineous, physicians emphasized that it "requires plentiful and frequent bleeding" of a patient. Caretakers were additionally suggested to create a mixture composed of a purging pill and a half a dram to "dissolve it in an ounce of water" along with adding an ounce of tincture of fenna, and three drams of syrup of buckthorn."[62] At the onset of a fit however, recommendations suggested that those

---

[59] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.
[60] *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant*, 3.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid, 4.

offering treatment "hold strong volatiles to the nose" of a victim. Physicians were also reminded, "you must not bleed so freely," but instead rely upon forced vomiting followed with "a strong glyster or purge" administering them as needed. Blisters were also used, applying them to a patient's "back, thighs, legs, or feet, and last of all to the head."[63] Despite the difference of suggested treatment, we do not know the type of apoplexy the affected bondman experienced.

Dropsy represented yet another medical condition traders confronted in the transport of enslaved Africans. Capable of manifesting in a patient's head, breast, scrotum, or abdomen, many practitioners believed this condition resulted from "a super-abundant collection of watery fluid in some cavity of the body."[64] According to one physician, dropsy became "induced either by excessive hemorrhages and losses of blood, or by acute diseases of great length."[65] Although a wide range of victims perished, women were considered the primary group of people likely to catch dropsy during the eighteenth century. Physician Richard Wilkes described that female patients "after the time of their menses, are much more frequent sufferers" in contrast to their male counterparts, which he found caused barrenness as a result of the disorder's symptoms.[66] Details indicating how women were able to attract this disease remain murky. Despite

---

[63] Ibid.

[64] Sir Francis Millman, *Animadversions on the nature and on the cure of the dropsy*(London : J. Dodsley, 1786).; Two scholars in their study of the health of bondmen and bondwomen contend that dropsy evolved to become a virtual "forgotten disease" within the historical record. See, Anne S. Lee and Everett S. Lee, "The Health of Slaves and the Health of Freedmen: A Savannah Study, *Phylon* 38, 2(2nd Quarter, 1977):170-180.

[65] Millman, *Animadversions on the nature and on the cure of the dropsy.*

[66] Richard Wilkes, *An Historical Essay on Dropsy.* Sir Francis Millman, echoed Wilkes' medical sentiments in 1786 writing that "the female sex is more liable to this disease than the male: hence too it happens that young women labouring under the Chlorosis, or obstructions, are extremely prone to the Dropsy." Millman, *Animadversions on the nature and on the cure of the dropsy,* (London : J. Dodsley, 1786).

this omission, however, bondwomen and bondmen both declined under the filtration of the dropsy.

This illness became a medical reality for those traveling on the *Iris* in 1792. Following the conclusion of negotiations several bondpeople were purchased and transferred aboard ship. Amidst the oceanic journey, two females and one male captive fell victim to this condition.[67] Women were believed most prone to this affliction but it is difficult to ascertain if either of the bondwomen were confronted with their menses, perhaps making them more susceptible. There is no evidence explaining if any examinations were performed on the ailing slaves' bodies. Nonetheless, for some patients "their veins on the backs of their hands, and upon their bellies, are swelled, and of a blackish colour," which a physical would reveal.[68] Other symptoms for this disorder included "great heat, thirst, pain in the legs, feet," often attended with "a swelling, difficulty of motion, breathing, and sleeping." Even more critical while at sea, in addition to fevers, were "dry coughs, shortness of breath," that arose "especially upon motion." As slaves, it is presumable that lethargic behaviors were met with violent punishment from attending seamen. In many cases, thirst was considered "one of the most constant and troublesome complaints that attend."[69] Speculating further, the circulation of intense heat coupled with severe dehydration made it difficult for captives to expel water from their bodies. The inability to expel toxins forced patients to suffer from "hard stools, with a mucose matter, and bad urine."[70]

---

[67] Series of Mortality Lists, Parliamentary Archives (HLRO)
[68] Wilkes, *An historical essay on the dropsy* , 131.
[69] *Ibid*, 133.
[70] *Ibid.*

This medical ailment posed a challenge to restorative efforts. For this, Wilkes warned that "The Dropsy is a sore disease, of which few recover." In fact, afflicted women were more difficult to cure than men.[71] Relative to necessary treatment, however, another physician pointed out two critical necessities: "the first is to expel the redundant water; [and] the second to prevent a new accumulation of it."[72] Sea travelers were also encouraged that "vomits are often of great service," which vomiting powders were suggested to be used on patients.[73] A patient's inability to produce water, some physicians believe that sweating proved useful. Therefore to promote circulation, caretakers were urged that "rubbing the skin with a fresh brush or coarse woolen cloth, and exercise."[74] It is unclear if the ship's surgeon administered any of the previous suggestions. Yet, the death of the three captives proved that dropsy was "not only unpleasant to behold, but very difficult to cure."[75]

Similar to dropsy, vermin and parasites proliferated in proximity with captives. While traveling at Shebar aboard *Duke of Argyle*, John Newton ordered several seamen to begin mending the ship's sails. Despite numerous attempts to conclude repair, several rats hindered their work forcing Newton to report, "[w]e have so many on board that they are ready to devour every thing." Continuing, he noted that they "actually bite the people when they catch asleep, and have even begun to nibble at the cables."[76] Unsanitary conditions customary aboard slave ships created fertile ground for various vermin to inundate the hold. This forces one to consider the regularity of cleaning measures

---

[71] *Ibid*, 134.
[72] Animadversions on the nature and on the cure of the *dropsy*, 30.
[73] Ship Master's Medical Assistant, 66.
[74] *Ibid*, 67.
[75] Wilkes, [Partial title] 36.
[76] Newton, *Journal of a Slave Trader*, 52.

employed on ship. Along with rodents, specimens of larvae also developed and matured aboard slavers. An instance on the *African* further illustrates these realities. The ship commander logged that officers were forced to, "shift every foot of plank in her bottom, being quite destroyed by the worms." Both structural as well as health concern conceivably emerged from this for sailors and slaves.[77] Dampness common within vessel holds created suitable environments worms. Considering the additional services required, one can only imagine the difficulty captains faced in keeping ships free of disease.

The presence of vermin permitted the transferal of pathogens among humans. Ship captain, M. Dineley encountered parasites through a case involving a young male he purchased. The tiny specimen grew in strength within the bondman's body during his Atlantic transport. His sickness lingered following Dineley's port arrival forcing him to draw upon local resources. Although we do not know the medicines the physician administered to remove toxins out of the boy's body, Dineley reported that the young bondman successfully "quiled a tape Worm 18 feet in length." 18th century physicians presumably understood the variations between different worms. The tape worm was commonly known as "the *Solitary Worm,*" due to its solitary nature. According to one medical reference, "No species of intestinal worms is more destructive to human nature, or more difficult to be totally destroyed." Part of this was because once in a host's body "It sometimes equals in length the whole intestinal canal."[78] Despite the worm's microbial invasion of the boy's body, he did not die. Instead, the restoration of his health created an immediate increase in the value offered for his sale. Following arrival he was

---

[77] *Ibid*, 73.

[78] Henry Van Soligen, *An Inaugural Dissertation On Worms of the Human Intestines*, (New York: T & J. Swords, 1792).

priced at £5. Upon discovery and treatment of his sickness, his market price increased to £40.[79]

For others not so "fortunate," worms claimed the lives of bondpeople within the Middle Passage. A young male slave confined on the ship *George* suffered from worms. It is unclear the type of worm affecting the bonded boy's health. Along with tape worms, medical practitioners believed there were two other types: The ascradies often characterized as "being small worms," and the "lumbrici teres," described as round and long in length.[80] We are devoid of medical evidence explaining how the ship's surgeon David Stephen sought to dispel the worm that proliferated within the boy's body. However, his condition worsened and on 12 May he died.

This medical ailment created an even larger problem. Victims ailing from symptoms of other disease became susceptible to further weakening by worms.[81] One week following the boy's death in much of the same fashion a bondwoman fell prey to deadly microbial parasites that took hold of her body. It is probable that she endured exposure to other potentially harmful diseases, yet David Stephan recorded that worms caused her death. Although we are left to speculate on the type of worm that grew in strength, physicians understood that worms "draw nourishment from the substance of the stomach and bowels" of patients. Therefore one can infer that diet played a major role in the attack of these specimens on bondpeople. In characterizing this medical phenomena one practitioner commented that "children of the poor, far more often than others, labour under this complaint [of worms], on account of the want of proper food." With regular deprivation of proper nutrition at sea, one can speculate that slaves underwent similar

---

[79] "Ship *James*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC
[80] Solingen, *An Inaugural Dissertation On Worms of the Human Intestines*.
[81] *Ibid*, 14.

symptoms. However, it was believed that "[m]any crude indigestible vegetables, immature fruits, legumina, sweets, cheese and fresh fish, tend exceedingly to produce the pituitous matter" that favored worm production.[82] The range of food discussed here mirrors the ship diet many bondpeople received within the Middle Passage. It is probable therein that the relationship of diet and disease emerged through the allocation of types of provisions, which only helped to create the basis for later health consequences.

Several other slaves also perished from the attending condition. Over a two week period, prior to their Jamaica arrival, three bondmen and another bondwoman died in a consecutive pattern from worms. For many people suffering from this illness, "the abdomen becomes hard and distended with air" on some occasions "rumbling noise takes place frequently in it, [coupled with] fetid breath, nausea and vomiting." Worms commonly fed on the food made available in a host's body. However a patient's appetite often fluctuated being "at times impaired," and at other times "ravenous and insatiable." Likewise, their pupils dilate and they commonly experience "involuntary discharge of saliva" in addition to suffering "pain in the head, and sometimes delirium." It was also not uncommon for a patient's urine to appear "frothy and of a whitish appearance." Relative to toxin disposal, one physician described the "vehement itching of the anus. . . and frequent inclination to stool" that some patients undergo.

Further details explaining how the vessel's surgeon discovered worms within the slaves' health remain murky. In some cases, "symptoms may occur, yet no worms may be present." However, abounding within the cavity of many of its victims, worms caused internal discomfort. The intestinal irritation they created often caused "nausea, vomiting . . . itching of the nose, and various convulsive affections, [such] as epilepsy

[82] Solingen, *An Inaugural Dissertation On Worms of the Human Intestines.*

convulsions." It is probable Stephen observed any of these symptoms among the ship's ailing slaves. However, autopsies provided the evidenced needed to determine worms' presence. There is no indication that the surgeon performed this examination following the bondpeople's deaths. One physician explained that upon exhuming a person's body affected with worms, "we very frequently discover them in the cavity of the abdomen, and a perforation made into the intestines." Enduring similar deaths of slaves from worms, it does not seem farfetched to conceive that Stephen conducted experimentations to further his epidemiological knowledge.

Respiratory Conditions

Respiratory illnesses served as another category of diseases that affected bondpeople. Some physicians believed that the lungs were "apt to be corrupted, because their structure is so delicate and tender," helping to create fertile ground for medical adversities. Traveling aboard ships, sea travelers were often exposed to hazardous environments placing their lives in a vulnerable position. Peripneumony is a common affliction in this category of sickness. It commonly arose "from a violent Inflammation of the Lungs," in which trapped blood began "obstructing very many of the pulmonic and bronchial Arteries." Dissections revealed that patient's "Lungs have been found quite stuffed up with concreted Blood, red, hard, and as it were fleshy," and darkened in color. Physician John Huxam explained the illness as "a Disease so common, either as an original Malady, or consequent to some other," that in his view, "its Nature should be diligently studied by every Physician."[83] Although widely prevalent on land, this condition also commonly affected slaves set at sea.

---

[83] John Huxham, *An Essay on Fevers, and Their Various Kinds, as Depending on Different Constitutions of the Blood.* (London: S. Austen, 1750),

Sailing from Angola in 1792, captain George Maxwell confronted the crippling effect of this medical complaint aboard the ship *Torn*. Two bondmen exhibited symptoms related to peripneumony and died shortly afterwards. A purchased bondwoman similarly became enfeebled from this same condition. Her sickness affected the responsibility of care she could extend to her infant son. We are devoid of details specifying when the vessel's surgeon Richard Kirkum discovered the ailment weakening the female's health. Yet, it was not uncommon for those affected to endure "a Load at the Breast, a short difficulty Breathing, a Cough, and more or less . . . a Fever." Along with fevers and a dry cough, those affected would "begin to spit a *thin, gleety, bloody, or very dark-coloured Matter,* frequently of a very *offensive Smell.*" Likewise, according to Huxham, their urine "is commonly of a blackish dull Hue, . . .*as if a small Portion of Blood was dissolved in it.*"

The debilitating symptoms of peripneumony bore greatly upon the bondwoman's health. Direct evidence documenting the various stages of her decline remain absent from the historical record. However, on 18 October we learn that she perished.[84] Four days after his mother's death, the bondwoman's infant son also died.[85] As this case elucidates, black females with nursing children were also susceptible to disease transmission within the Middle Passage. The inability to gain nutritional foods likely created challenges for the bondwoman to nurse, thereby ending her lactation.[86] Even more, the deadly symptoms of this condition could have reduced her ability to provide for her son. Therefore, unlike their fellow shipmates, many of these new mothers bore an even greater responsibility; survival for themselves and their offspring.

---

[84] Ibid.
[85] Certificates of Slaves Taken on Board Ships, HLRO.
[86] See, Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class,* 9.

Quite similar to peripneumony, consumption also created respiratory concerns for the health of bondpeople. Some physicians believed two versions emerged with this condition "acute Consumption, or a chronical one." Despite the variations, there were four primary stages. The first involved the lodging of matter within the lungs internally within the body. "Stuffing of the Lungs, when Matter is actually deposited and lodg'd upon the Lungs, so as to cause a Shortness of Breath, and a Pursiness" represented the second stage. The third involved swelling of the glands in the lungs. Lastly, the fourth phase involved, "an Inflammation, and at last an Ulcer, of the Lungs." As indicated several stages typically ensued with patients of this condition. Oftentimes the environment as well as diet further worsened a person's sickness.

In 1793 the *Brothers of Liverpool* docked on the Windward Coast of Africa. The ship's captain Thomas Payne purchased several bondpeople and transported them aboard his ship. At the closure of sales the vessel sailed to the Island Des Loss. During the port stay, a bondman held aboard underwent severe complications arising from consumption. In some cases "Spitting of Blood, or internal Ulcers corroding the Lungs" ensued among afflicted victims. Likewise, "the Stomach is often loaden with Phlegm of a saltish Nature, which gives Pain where it is, and Swellings," further weakening consumption victims. The duration and actual symptoms that persisted within the male captive's body is indeterminable. It is possible that to restore the bondman's health the ship's surgeon John Thirtle employed a common remedy of forced bleeding.[87] Despite the measures he used, on 4 April, prior to the ship's departure to Jamaica, the enslaved male died.

[87] For a discussion of forced bleeding as a curative for consumption, see Huxham, *An Essay on Fevers, and Their Various Kinds*, 45.

Reproductive Concerns

A wide range of gender specific illnesses also proliferated among captives. Many of these diseases related to reproductive issues that both affected female and male captives. The physical make up of bondmen's bodies made them privy to certain conditions unknown to female captives. For instance, several males traveling aboard the slaver *Venus* suffered and died from "Part of the Scrotum [being] torn off w'th their Irons."[88] The agony these black males endured offers a brief glimpse into the gendered circumstance of mortality some bondmen confronted within the slave trade. It is likely that tears in their genitalia caused them to bleed to death. However, we do not know how long these men suffered. The lack of proper medicines, tools, and even delayed discovery of their wounds would have caused them to weaken in a rapid fashion. As a result, undetectable bacteria arising from the irregularity of ship cleaning could have entered into the bondmen's injuries, causing further infection and leading to their deaths.

Another disease contributed to some bondmen's death. While traveling aboard the vessel *Mary* in 1788, one male captive was diagnosed with Anasarca which results from an accumulation of swelling throughout different parts of the body . Although this condition inflicted pain within the bondman's body, he also suffered "Hydrocale of the Scrotum" also characterized by swelling, however this time specifically within the genitalia. Both ailments are rare within records on the Middle Passage which forces one to consider the expertise of the attending physician. Speculating on the bondman's experience, he probably endured incredible pain from the continued swaying of the ship as it traveled further. Likewise, considering the close spoon-fashioned stowage of male captives, these practices give room to conclude that any accidental hitting of his genital

[88] "Miscellaneous Documents," James Rogers, DUSC.

area may have also enforced greater swelling. The symptoms of both ailments persisted and took a toll on this man's life causing him to die on 13 March.

Female captives also faced reproductive complications that jeopardized their survival. From the moment of capture they were assessed according to their reproductive value.[89] On several occasions the unhealthy environment of slave ships affected their ability to bear children. Venereal complaints were a rather common source of mortality for females during the eighteenth century.[90] Medical practitioner, F. Swediaur, described that patients "poxed, injured, or affected with the venereal disease, pox, or bad distemper" because of circumstances "when the venereal poison has been received into the system" of an ailing person.[91] Widespread among white women, this condition also emerged within the bodies of black females transplanted aboard slave ships. A 1792 bill receipt for "Medicines &c, &a for venereal complaint" showed that physician Thomas Price received £1 and 10 shillings for the medical attention he provided several women traveling aboard the schooner, *James*.[92] Although confirming the presence of venereal related medical issues within the trade, this exchange of monies demonstrates that in some cases external assistance was sought for the treatment of sickly bondwomen.

Venereal disorders also arose at other points during the Middle Passage experience. For example, in 1793 a black woman was offered for sale on the coast of Gaboon. Captain Daniel Collins arranged for the female's purchase and ordered her transported aboard the ship, *Apollo* bound for the Port of Speights in Barbados. The

---

[89] See Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*, 6-7; Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 114; Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, 23.

[90] This phrase emanates from primary source materials of the 18th century. It is not used here to suggest that bondwomen complained, although it is conceivable that they articulated these feelings of medical pain if affected within the trade.

[91] F. Swediaur, MD., *Practical Observations on Venereal Complaints*, (1788), 5.

[92] "Ship *James*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

vessel departed the African coast on 7 March carrying 287 captives. Three weeks into the passage surgeon Robert Scow recorded that the bondwoman died of a disease listed as "venereal."[93] In the same year, traders placed another female into bondage and sold her aboard the vessel *Sane*. She survived close to four months at sea, but began to weaken toward the end of the passage. It appears that Joseph Cankore conducted an examination of her body where he discovered the presence of a venereal virus. We do not know the techniques and herbal elixirs he used for her treatment. Unable to restore the woman's health, Cankore recorded on 23 April she died of a "venerial" related issue.[94]

The historical records prevent us from a full understanding of the pain and trauma these two women experienced. Those affected by venereal complications typically endured "swellings in the groin" that in some cases "form matter and admit a discharge." "[W]arts or excrescences" were also common and according to physician Thomas Gataker, these acne like eruptions were, "sometimes unnecessarily made the objects of terror to the patient."[95] Although viewed as a concern within reproductive organs, one medical reference explained that for both women and men, "it is possible for many other parts beside the genitals to receive this disease." Therefore it was not uncommon for these toxic viruses to emerge "in the anus, mouth, nose, eyes, ears" and even "in the nipples of women. . . ."[96] Although both groups were susceptible to this condition, the female body typically a unique set of symptoms in contrast to their male counterparts.

For the female body in particular, venereal disorders surfaced in rather diverse and interesting ways. Some physicians believed that "a woman may have this species of

---

[93] Certificates of Slaves Taken on Board Ships, HLRO.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Thomas Gataker, *Observations on Venereal Complaints, and On the Methods Recommended For their Cure,* (1755), 10 - 11.

[96] John Hunter, *A Treatise on the Venereal Disease* (Philadelphia, 1791), 22, 30.

the venereal disease without knowing it herself" and that attending surgeons were in some cases also unable to discover its presence, "even on inspection."[97] If affected in their genitalia, many practitioners reasoned that this condition's virus potentially caused damage within "the vagina, uretha, labia, clitoris, or nymphae."[98] Physician John Hunter gave further descriptions of women's initial symptoms which began with "an itching of the orifice of the uretha." Over time, he explained, "the itching changes into pain, more particularly at the time of voiding the urine."[99] As the disease spread, "The natural flimsy discharges from the glands of the uretha is first changed" evolving on occasion from a "fine transparent ropy secretion to a watery, whitish fluid." Considering that venereal complaints often resulted from sexual encounters, this gives room to speculate on the incidence of rape occurring in both women's lives.[100] Although departing the coast of Africa bound for different ports, as evidenced, both women suffered similar deadly symptoms that caused them to share the same fate -- death.

Pregnant bondwomen also faced debilitating medical conditions within the Middle Passage. After the stowage of captives was secured, the captain of the vessel *Eliza* set sail for the Caribbean in January of 1792. One month following the ship's departure, an enslaved mother aboard had a miscarriage that led to her death.[101] Several scholars have argued that African women possessed knowledge of terminating unwanted pregnancies. We do not know whether this woman lost her child or forcibly took its life; these particular details are left out of the historical record. However, it is feasible that she

---

[97] Ibid, 44, 59.
[98] Ibid, 38.
[99] Ibid, 41.
[100] Physician Francis Sweidaur offers considerable discussion on the origin of these complaints. See *Practical Observations on Venereal Complaints*, (1788), 6.
[101] Ibid.

experienced aggravation in her uterus as she became increasingly sore. According to physician F. Swediaur, "The pains of the uterus are situated low in the pelvis, between the bladder and rectum." Creating labor-like pains throughout a patient's body, they sometimes "extend their influence to the stomach, occasioning nausea, vomiting."[102] Recognizing that slaves at sea were in many cases malnourished and often underfed, a healthy pregnancy was unlikely.[103]

The woman's bonded condition calls attention to several important factors. Any nutrient deprived provisions given to her could have caused obstacles with the successful development of her unborn child. It is also feasible that these nutritional deficiencies contributed to the woman's miscarriage, depleting her already weakening body and causing her to die.[104] Equally critical to this discussion are the psychological and emotional traumas that bore upon the bondwoman during her oceanic voyage. She probably witnessed public whippings, rape, or even the death of her fellow captives on a daily basis. Therefore, one can speculate that diet and stress coupled with being confined in an unhealthy and violent environment served as catalysts for the loss of her child.

Surgeons' Place Aboard Slavers

All matters of health concerning bondmen and bondwomen rested in the hands of surgeons. Following the conclusion of sales, surgeon's duties shifted towards preserving the health of purchased slaves. Although medical practitioners, they took on a multiplicity of roles aboard ships, they often served as birth attendants, morticians,

---

[102] *Female Disorders* (1788)

[103] For discussion of healthy pregnancy and its implication for black women during slavery see Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty*, (Vintage Printing, 1998), 47.

[104] See Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 114; Kipple, "Mortality and Dehydration in the Middle Passage," 677, 686.

nurses, and physicians. Thomas King declared, "it is the duty of the surgeon to examine through the whole of the slaves on board."[105] Their work began in the morning and continued throughout much of the day as they were expected to visit captives attending to any medical concerns.[106] Conducting examinations akin to body physicals, these investigations took place in the bottom holding and at other times during feeding periods. Surgeons confronted language barriers as they sought to understand captives' source of suffering. "[W]hen any complaining Slaves declare their complaints to the Surgeon, he generally gives them what medicine his judgment and practice declare him" for the restoration of their health.[107] As such, ship physicians were forced to rely on their own medical expertise to ascertain the source of slaves' ailment.

Surgeons' ship medicines varied according to the resources ship captains acquired prior to their European departure. In many cases merchants provided money for the purchase of "necessary" remedies and preventative medicines. According to one ship captain, "[t]he surgeon, if a man of experience in the trade, [he] takes the assortment which he judges best." On the other hand, "if he never was on the [African] coast before, he commonly takes such an assortment as he has been advised to do by a man of experience, or such, as he finds" or he ascertains the various medicines "the apothecary or druggist has sent in other vessels in the same trade."[108] A diversity of familiarity and lack of experience persisted among surgeons employed within the eighteenth century slave trade. Some physicians carried expertise aboard ships while newcomers were forced to rely on others' knowledge. Their medical chests commonly contained gum

---

[105] Testimony of Thomas King *HCSP*, 68:322.

[106] For discussion of these morning attendances see, Testimony of William Littleton, *HCSP*, 68:295.

[107] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71: 28.

[108] *Ibid*, 29-30.

camphor, pulverized rhubarb, cinnamon water, or mustard.[109] A variety of medicines were available for use, however, their interaction with African populations determined how useful these aids assisted in preserving slaves' ill-health.

Once in close proximity and in full responsible for captives' health, some surgeons were challenged with the medical services they could offer. Critical to the inclusion of ships' medicines is that they were not reserved only for the passage from Africa. Instead, these medical aids were used to restore the health of those stowed while the ship lay on the African coast. As a result, some surgeons faced the depletion of medical resources once the ship set sail. Also connected with this issue of medicine was "knowing the Africans to be naturally averse to taking medicines," surgeons were often forced to provide "every thing in his power to recover them without disgusting them with any thing that is disagreeable to them."[110] It is probable surgeons never anticipated rejection of their medicines from patients. Yet, they were forced to reckon with the difficulties of their employment and the care they were expected to extend. This is evident in the confession, "[a]n exertion of the greatest skill and attention could afford the diseased negroes little relief, so long as the causes of their diseases, namely, the breathing of a putrid atmosphere, and wallowing in their own excrements, remain."[111] Considering the disease-infested environment on slave ships, surgeons' efforts to allocate treatment became difficult feats, which threatened the potential for some bondpeople's improvement.

---

[109] Thomas, *The Slave Trade,* 307-8; For further discussion of surgeon's medicine chests see, Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71: 40.

[110] *Ibid*, 58.

[111] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 28-29.

Language barriers between surgeons and enslaved Africans represented another challenge. One scholar posits that despite the ethnic and linguistic diversity among "cargoes" of bondpeople, bilingualism existed permitting some to converse with seamen.[112] Yet, how were surgeons able to transcend these linguistic barriers and attend to Africans' complaints? According to one observer, bondpeople "will endeavour to make the Commander and his Crew sensible of their Illness by pointing to their Stomach, or Belly, and saying *Yarry, Yarry*."[113] Here we find that some captives used body language to convey the source of their pain. John Knox explained that some seamen heard "the complaints of the Negroes, through the mouths of three, four, or five interpreters."[114] We do not know how these interpreters were chosen or if force proved necessary to provoke their collaboration. Africans located in close proximity to the coastal shore line came in contact with European populations from time to time, permitting an understanding of traders' language in contrast to those from the interior. The success of linguistic mediators in easing the medical complaints of captives remains a mystery. It is plausible however that any inabilities to understand the language as well as lack of familiarity with Africans' customs posed a threat to surgeons' treatment strategies.

Once sickness took hold of Africans' bodies, captors had to provide accommodations for those with failing health. The first solution was to isolate the sick and move them to another place in the hold. In some cases, they were relocated under the half deck in part of the boy's room so that "they would be most out of the way of the

---

[112] For further discussion of African bilingualism see: Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 118.

[113] T. Aubrey *The Sea Surgeon*, 131; The words "Yarry Yarry" according to Aubrey meant sickness.

[114] Testimony of John Knox, *HCSP*, 68:178.

other Slaves" to not only prevent the transmission of any germs, but also to give surgeons space for private observation.[115] Aboard other vessels, some bondpeople were transferred to a reserved location known as "apartments." These semi-quarantined rooms functioned much like infirmaries. In these spaces, captives received 'hands-on' medical attention and were "less likely to be molested or disturbed."[116]

Disease and mortality filtered within ships' passages, forcing the entire vessel to serve as a 'floating hospital.' The massive outbreak of contagious diseases among captives was too difficult to institute any form of quarantine. Although in some cases sections of the ship were designated for ailing captives, surgeons typically attended to the health of slave patients wherever their wasting bodies lied. In many cases larger slave vessels had surgeons along with several accompanying mates used to assist in distributing medical treatment. However, not every ship was legally obligated to carry a physician aboard. Therefore, the responsibility on many occasions fell on the shoulders of surgeons, if available, or seamen designated to provide medical services to bondpeople.[117]

Every person traveling the Atlantic aboard slave ships – enslaved or seamen –put their health at risk due to contagious disease and the presence of decomposing bodies. One surgeon shared, "among the men, sometimes a dead and living negroe [are] fastened by their irons together. When this is the case, they are brought upon the deck, and being laid on the grating, the living negroe is disengaged; and the dead one thrown

---

[115] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP,* 71:47.

[116] *Ibid,* 28.

[117] Hugh Thomas shared "[i]t was not legally necessary to carry a surgeon, and many slave ships economized by neglecting to have one, including most of the ships flying the flags of the United States." *The Slave Trade,* 307-8.

overboard."[118] Seamen jeopardized their health when they removed dead bondpeople. The handling of these corroding bodies placed them in harm's way of many diseases because of the physical contact involved. Furthermore, it is probable that they never washed their hands prior to distribution or consumption of collective sources of water or food. Africans were at an even greater risk by lying next to, and being chained to ailing shipmates, which made them vulnerable to the transmission of bacteria.

Offering care to different captives, this engendered the doctor-patient relationship. These medical interactions coalesced further as surgeons engaged with ailing Africans. While greater understanding of African customs and the most effective methods of curing various complaints occurred, these daily exchanges also fostered bacterial transfers. In moving from body to body, often without the opportunity to wash and sterilize their hands or medical instruments, surgeons and seamen compromised Africans' chances of improvement. The constant interaction of surgeons with diseased patients placed their own health at risk. Therefore, the ill-health of captives rested not only with the transmission of disease through contaminated environments, but also through the human transferal of germs, to which Africans were unable to protect themselves.

As medical practitioners, surgeons were granted unabated access to Africans' ailing bodies. These entries to understand the function of the black body began once ships docked within Africa. The use of surgeons during slave sales helped to counter the purchase of any diseased captives. Yet, on the coast and aboard slave vessels, surgeons' open accessibility to captives permitted additional opportunities to interrogate the various techniques and medicines necessary for treatment. Once transplanted within the slave

---

[118] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 28.

trade, surgeons became apart of and operated within a cycle of "migratory medical apprenticeships."[119] Prior to their arrival in Africa, most of their experience came from the bodies of European patients. However, in moving across various geographical boundaries of the Atlantic slave system, it is plausible these interactions sparked curiosity to enhance their knowledge through the study of Africans' bodies. One scholar contends that with the human terrain of bondpeople always available for medical scrutiny, they evolved to function as 'repositories of mystery.'[120] In attempt to bolster their expertise, many slave trade surgeons strove to discover how disease and death evolved in black bodies.

Surgeons studied African cadavers on a regular basis to establish the cause of their deaths. One physian described the situation of a "stout man." His examination of the bondman determined that he was healthy. However, after the male captive was transferred to the bottom hold that evening, the next morning he was found dead. Baffled by the bondman's death, the attending surgeon confessed, "I had the curiosity to open him," which was approved by the ship captain "providing it was done with decency." After the ship's crewmen secured the remaining captives, he "opened the thorax and abdomen, and found the respective contents in a healthy state," forcing him to conclude

---

[119] The concept of 'migratory medical apprenticeships' is employed to represent the many opportunities medical practitioners had to enhance their medical training and knowledge beyond local arenas. Never being stationary in moving from space to space across the Atlantic, these men received greater understanding of the utility and difficulties associated with medicines, surgical techniques, diseases, and mortality. Although apprentices, instead of confinement under the tutelage of a working physician or surgeon, these men became students of the world through subsequent interactions with locales, tropics, and people helped to further sharpen the medical understandings they ultimately carried back to their homelands.

[120] For a discussion of this idea of dead bodies as a "repository of mystery," see Franny Nudelman and her discussion of this exploitation at the hands or racial scientists. In particular see *John Brown's Body*, page 52.

that the bondman had died from suffocation while stowed in the bottom holding.[121] During the questioning period before the British House of Commons n 1790, Falconbridge received a question if the male captive's affliction lied plausibly in his brain. He responded, "[e]very man that knows any thing of anatomy, likewise knows that opening the head in a dextrous manner, so as to expose the brain, is often no easy thing, and I had neither time nor conveniences in that instance to do it," which he pointed out that he was "forced to do it at candlelight, upon the deck, after all the Slaves were below."[122] It is probable that in serving as the ship's surgeon he was also forced to manage the health of other captives throughout much of the day. Yet, there is no indication regarding the duration of time, the location, or even how the bondman's body was preserved for the surgeon's later use. The availability of this captive's body for a postmortem examination demonstrates that as professionals, surgeons held a pertinent place within the trade. In successfully negotiating for the use of the male's body for his own medical benefit, this suggests that surgeons were equipped with tools of both power and influence, which granted them authorized medical control over the lives of enslaved *and* deceased Africans.[123]

---

[121] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP,* 72:301.

[122] *Ibid*, 338.

[123] The availability of black bodies and their subsequent use by medical practitioners to better understand the implications of disease is based on the work of Todd Savitt in his article, "The Use of Blacks for Medical Experimentation and Demonstration in the Old South," *The Journal of Southern History*, 48 (August, 1982): 331-348. Drawing largely on the southern system of medical practice, Savitt posits that enslaved populations held a salient place as 'clinical material' for the growing study of ailments and death conducted by those of the medical profession and most especially that of medical students who relied on empirical data through the use human cadavers. Within his discussion Savitt reminds readers that bodies used as specimens of education filtered across history, but they become tools of both power and exploitation to which people of African descent became their primary prey. As it stands, the meager evidence offered does not suggest that the dissection of captive Africans was done for experimental purposes for the advancement of medicinal or malignant intent. It can be inferred that while various remedies were used on captives in a seemingly experimental – trial and error method – the death of bondpeople permitted greater understanding of the cause of death more than recreational opportunities to distinguish and purport racial ethnic theories of superiority. However, it is also plausible that these

The conditions for medical inspection at sea were different and in many cases much more difficult than those performed on land. Often devoid of sophisticated medical instruments and a wider profession to draw upon for medical advice, slave ship surgeons relied on their medical training and 'trial and error' to restore captives' health. As the previous case highlights, to enhance their knowledge in protection against future outbreaks of disorders, some surgeons were forced to rely upon the bodies of Africans who perished from various medical episodes to their practical advantage. As such, dissections created a cadre of exploitable bodies that became public spectacles, even if for personal observation. This suggests that within their postmortem state, once under the surgeon's knife, captives' stiffened bodies endured medical violence. As enslaved people, whether dead or alive, captives served as voiceless 'specimens' utilized for medical advancement. Although dismembered, the collection of black bodies that died became the vehicles upon which surgeons gained further knowledge.[124]

Despite the efforts sought to understand Africans' ailments, surgeons' lack of familiarity with black populations often hindered captives' possibility for improvement. While making preparations for his England departure, ship captain Thomas Addison, described that he met a surgeon who "has never been in Africa." Determining him to be, "a clever active young man," Addison elected to offer him a job, and offered him twelve guineas in agreement to serve as the ship's surgeon.[125] While it is unclear why this young man was perceived as 'clever,' it is presumable Addison's final decision for his

---

advancements on board ships bolstered medicine among physicians following the demise of surgeons' involvement within the trade. For further discussion of the impact of the slave trade on the practice of English medicine see Dott E. Noble Chamberlain, "The Influence of the Slave Trade on Liverpool Medicine." *Fourteenth International Conference of the History of Medicine* (Rome and Salemo, 1954).

[124] For further discussion regarding the quest to understand the proliferation of disease alongside theories of medical knowledge, see Julyan Peard, "Tropical Disorders & Forging Brazilian Medical Identity, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, 1(Feb. 1997): 1-44.

[125] "Ship *Swift*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

inclusion was not only based on the necessity of a surgeon, but also on the man's youthful appearance. This may have translated into a possibility for longevity as an employee within the trade. These superficial conclusions created dangerous situations for captives because medical practitioners had little experience with administering medical treatment across racial boundaries. While trading on the coast of West Africa, William Blake pointed out, "the Doctor is not fit for this trade," which he contended was, "owing to burying so many [captives] in the River."[126]

The limitations some surgeons faced in treating captives caused an increase of African mortality. Ship captains' regular observation of surgeons' work often permitted them to gain an understanding of their ineffectiveness within the trade. Vessel commander M. Woodville, Jr. declared, "surgeons are so little acquainted" with West Africans' customs that in his view "are so extremely different from ours."[127] Familiarity with the human body and methods of treatment were critical in assessing a potential captive. Woodville's accusation suggests that along with medical knowledge, surgeons were required to also have cultural understandings of their patients. It is difficult to determine how many physicians within the trade gained familiarity with their enslaved patients. Yet it is more than probable that these deficiencies caused alarm for many sea captains concerning the welfare of boarded slaves. Many surgeons professed their capability of managing the ill-health of bondpeople. However, once placed within the trade the inferior services they offered further demonstrated their medical incompetence. Captain Blake was forced to shorten his coastal stay on the Old Calabar coast. His reasoning for the early departure was because, as he determined, "The Doctor is not

---

[126] "Ship *Pearl*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[127] "Ship *Rodney*" James Rogers Papers, DUSC..

cliver." He shared, "we have been very Sickly for Six weeks past [and] have Buried 13 Woman & Girls & 56 Men & boys," presumably while boarding captives. The deaths of a significant amount of slaves forced Blake to conclude "our Doctor is not Acquainted with this Country's Disorders. . . ." His depressing circumstances forced him to warn his financers, "Hope you will never be Deceived by another."[128] For many surgeons the slave trade represented opportunities for an increase of both social and economic status. Yet, one can only imagine that these dreams disappeared upon receipt of criticism from ship captains, and especially with regard to treating bondpeople.

Once placed within the trade, some surgeons confronted tension from their fellow ship officers. One surgeon stated that the captain aboard a vessel he serviced, "very frequently accused me of ignorance of my profession." Much of this mistreatment he pointed out came through "abusive language that he [the ship master] very frequently bestowed upon me as the Slaves were dying, which he was pleased to call 'the machinations of the doctor and devil.'"[129] These tenuous interactions reveal the tense relationship between captains and surgeons. Yet, the primary criticism hurled against medical practitioners was the continued lack of attendance they gave to ailing captives. Ship captain Samuel Stribling experienced a gradual increase of mortality and believed this situation was not a result of a leak or the quality of the ship, but instead to captives dying of "No Other Complaint than A Surgeon." In sum, "the Doctor has Not Made a Care of Any One of them." They were, "[i]n A Dangerous State But I hope I Shall Not Burry but a few More without Some Great Alteration In thirre Health."[130] This complaint

[128] "Ship James," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[129] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73: 95-96.
[130] "Ship Pearl" James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

of attendance could have owed to the surgeon's experience or even his inability to employ sufficient medicines useful in quelling the medical outbreaks.

Some surgeons' mistreatment stemmed from the falsification of their medical abilities. One surgeon "Advertised In all the News Pappers to Care the Deaf & blind." However, once hired, he was deemed negligent, which the ship captain professed, "I can Venture to Say he has Not made a Cure of 20 Slaves Sence the first of the Passage."[131] This surgeon's inabilities may have stemmed from his ability to understand the source of captives' complaints. The methods he used to gain employment further reveals the wealthy promises the slave trade conveyed to some surgeons. For bondpeople, this came at a life threatening cost to their lives.

The ship captains criticisms of surgeons' medical competence prompted them to disregard their offered advice. One scholar explained that surgeons played a major role concerning the decisions to buy captives or not, confirming the respect they often received within the trade. By contrast, Thomas Trotter shared "I was often thwarted by him [the ship captain] in the exercise of my profession, particularly in the medicines I prescribed for those who had the flux, and in violent bursts of anger he swore they [captives] fell victims to my medicines." Additionally, the ship captain ignored him when he "urged him to carry out a great quantity of fresh fruits, such as limes and oranges," to which as he declared, "my opinion was treated with contempt." Trotter did not disclose whether he was disregarded because of his ship role or his unsuccessful reputation forced the vessel commander to view his medical advice as unworthy.

---

[131] "Ship *Pearl*" James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

The relationship between surgeons and ship captains remained tense. While still lying on the coast of Old Calabar, surgeon O.P. Degraves shared several captives were "perishing for want of knowing what to do" concerning the restoration of their health. Close to 113 captives died, to which he blamed their deaths on the fact "many were bought against my opinion & others without my advice." Understanding the situation at hand, he declared, "I do not wonder at Such a loss."[132] Degraves' suggests that surgeons' advice was not always utilized. Thomas Loma experienced similar disrespect as a ship surgeon. He commented that the attending captain "would not let me continue y'e same medicines for one day" nor did he allow the administering of astringents, which he argued the captain was focused more on "filling them [bondpeople] with raw plantains which every man in his sences will contradict."[133] He also discussed the duties aboard: "my Situation is most deplorable; at 5 o'clock I rise & go to bed at 8 at night" and as he explained, "[I] am on my leggs, and my greatest employment is worse than that of a waiter at the Bush inn." As he later detailed: "I am only a mere Surgeon and am never consulted in one thing conserning this trade" on the coast of Africa. Tension continued as he noted, "that fresh meats is not good for sick people." After suggesting that the captain "purchase a goat for the sick Slaves & white people," he indicated that the captain responded in saying "that he knows what was good for them better than I did, and that I was continually talking nonsense."[134] As evidenced, African captives' bodies often became the arenas for the struggles of power between captains and surgeons. In many cases these power dynamics played out in different ways, which did not always result in preserving their lives.

---

[132] "Ship *Pearl*" James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[133] "Ship *Swift*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[134] "Ship Pearl," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

Conclusion

Writing in 1968, scholars Daniel Mannix and Malcolm Cowley asserted that, "the Middle Passage was a crossroads and marketplace of diseases."[135] As slave traders negotiated the purchase of potentially valuable bondwomen and bondmen, their sales fostered the transfer of bacteria, disease, and contamination across geographical boundaries.[136] Seaborne illnesses extended far beyond racial lines claiming the lives of scores of black and white populations. Medical complaints and necessary treatment however operated much different at sea than on land. Confined aboard ships for weeks and months at a time, seamen and surgeons who were often limited in the restorative care they extended to bondpeople. This occurred because of limited resources, and the unfamiliarity with treating African bodies. As a result, the wooden decks of slave ships became floating morgues representing the only coffins deceased slaves were laid to rest until their decaying bodies were thrown overboard and devoured by sharks.

The core operation of the slave trade was hinged upon the use of unbridled violence. Yet, these dramatic interactions were not always the sole cause of death for bondpeople. As this chapter revealed, sickness prevailed within the bellows of slavers taking countless captives' lives. The history of ailments common within the Middle Passage yield important stories of struggle that shaped the final moments of many

---

[135] Daniel Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, *Black Cargoes: A History of The Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865,* (New York, Viking Press, 1962), 122.

[136] Interestingly, John Duffy posits that slaves "frequently brought with them smallpox, yaws, yellow fever, and other diseases." He goes further to make the case that "one of the major medical problems connected with Negroes was their role in the importation of smallpox." See "Slavery and Slave Health in Louisiana 1746-1825" in *Medicine, Nutrition, Demography, and Slavery*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 29, 32. His assertion omits the role of interaction shared between slave traders and enslaved people, which also helped to further fuel the importation of certain diseases. Useful to this discussion is John Aberth's recent work where he argues that domestication and the resulting close contact with animals, accumulation of refuse and human waste further facilitated the introduction and subsequent spread of disease organisms. See, Aberth, *The First Horseman: Disease in Human History,* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007). His analysis is applicable to the unhealthy environments common aboard slave ships.

bondpeople's lives. Sharing varied testimonies of failing health provides a beginning opportunity to address the personal and painful experiences many slaves experienced during the Atlantic crossing. Discussion of the interrelationship of diet, disease, and mortality, also enables us to reconstruct the social context of ailments as they affected enslaved Africans.

'MAKE HASTE & LET ME SEE YOU WITH A GOOD CARGO OF NEGROES': GENDER, HEALTH, AND VIOLENCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY MIDDLE PASSAGE

VOLUME II

By

Sowande' Mustakeem

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

2008

CHAPTER FOUR

'Presently We Shall Be No More': Interrogating the Psychological Responses of Enslavement Among Bondpeople [1]

I was thinking of starting a new life, but I got hungry mouths to feed.
Don't feel good to me, Oh no.
Now I'm tired, debating and it don't feel good to me, Oh no.
War famine, diseases
I'm glad that you called when you called me, cause you stopped from doing something awful
Cause I've been sitting contemplating on taking this life away from me.
I'm glad that you called when you call me, cause you stopped me from doing something awful
Cause I've been so sick, sick and tired of all that this world is offering.[2]

Introduction

Towards the latter part of the eighteenth century, surgeon Alexander Falconbridge detailed his involvement within the business of slave trading. Within his account he described that while docked on the Bonny coast he observed "a fine young woman brought on board, who was continually crying, and was emaciated very much in the course of three or four days." The despondency the bondwoman displayed forced her immediate transfer back on shore "to the hut of one of the black traders" in order to restore her health. James Fraser, the ship's captain, reasoned that seasickness played a role in the woman's reclusive behavior. In "seeming to pine and waste," as he described, they removed the enfeebled slave to the town of Bonny where she was "left in [the] charge of one of her own countrywomen." It is unclear whether this "countrywoman" was regularly utilized as a coastal healer for sick captives, if she was the wife of a local coastal trader, or perhaps an entrepreneur within the oceanic trade. Nonetheless, once left under the direction of this woman, the bonded female's disposition improved. She

[1] Testimony of Isaac Wilson, *House of Commons Sessional Papers* Vol 72 (Wilmington, 1975): 282-3. (hereafter cited HCSP)
[2] Anthony Hamilton, "Glad U Called," *Southern Comfort* CD, 2007.

reportedly "[e]levated with the prospect of regaining her liberty by this unexpected step, [and] she soon recovered [to] her usual chearfulness. . . ." During her relocation she somehow overheard that following recovery she would be placed back aboard Fraser's vessel. We do not know how the woman learned of her fate or who participated in this conversation, but we do know that she chose to hang herself rather than return to the ship. Fraser explained that if a bonded person died while in holding on the West African coast, typically "they were brought alongside [the ship] to satisfy. . .that they were not stolen." As a result of her deadly actions, the woman, described as "an Ebo Slave, from the interior country," her stiffened body was transported by canoe for a final viewing. Upon observation Falconbridge noted that she appeared "dead, but looked quite jolly."[3] The description of her facial expression gives room to speculate that she understood her behavior would guarantee liberation. Still uncertain on the cause of her death, Falconbridge queried, "she did not die of disease." To which a nearby seaman responded, "no she hung herself."

Bondwomen and bondmen creatively resisted captivity on their own terms within the slave trade. There is no direct evidence explaining how the enslaved woman found means to successfully take her life. Likewise, the rope's access that she gained or the amount of time that passed until discovery of her body is also challenging to determine. Despite such omissions, the resistance she carried out and more importantly her death, illustrates the extent some Africans chose to pursue freedom. Recognizing bondpeople's

[3] The above mentioned case is spread across different testimonies offered by Alexander Falconbridge and James Fraser. See, Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP*, 72:304-05; Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:46; and Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, (London: AMS, 1788) 31; Alexander Falconbridge the only surgeon from the period of the 18th century slave trade that reportedly left a record of his previous engagement with the procurement and sale of bond people. The publication was intended to generate support for the then growing anti-slave trade movement.

use of suicide aboard slavers as a common behavioral phenomenon, this chapter explores the psychological trauma captives experienced.[4]

The present chapter has several objectives. It begins by exploring the tactics used to hinder the purchase of mentally unstable captives. It also addresses the precautionary measures employed to prevent suicidal behavior. Next, the chapter examines the psychological state following their sales, the cultural modes of expression they exerted, and the familial separation some endured. However, the varied acts of self-destruction slaves carried out formulate the crux of this chapter. Finally, this chapter provides a useful discussion of how these ungovernable acts were perceived and managed, including an analysis of the violent responses seamen inflicted, as well as the diagnosis of psychological instability.

The view of suicide offered here counters the traditional slave ship narrative. Foremost, it departs from using the word "suicide." This term is often understood through Christian principles, promoting the view of human life as having a beginning and a finite end. However, belief of the supernatural and the cyclical continuation of life through the transmigration of one's soul into a spiritual plane permeated many captives' philosophical perspective. Taking Africans' cosmological orientation into consideration, the following analysis argues that intentionality filtered slaves' exhibition of "suicidal" tendencies. It is not enough to argue that bondpeople merely took their lives without any regard to the broader implications. The primary purpose is to highlight the diverse assertions of power and reclamation bondpeople actively sought over their bodies and their lives. Therefore, this chapter introduces the concept of "*transmigratory rebellion*,"

[4] David Northup provides a provocative discussion of the importance of interrogating the mental and emotional states of bondpeople. See, Northup, *Africans Discovery of Europe*, 1450-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially 109-122.

a term more appropriate than "suicide." This term is defined here to mean: the purposeful act of engaging insubordinate behaviors – physical and/or mental – that cause the "death" of a person's spirit/soul within the physical realm and transitioning into the spiritual world in order to free them selves of further oppression. Therefore, this study sheds light upon the complexity of "suicide," arguing that these acts operated as a form of resistance that African captives consciously exemplified to gain freedom from slavery.[5]

Self-sabotaging practices did not extend to one particular ethnicity or gender of slaves. Igbos, women, and newly arrived Africans are regularly 'credited' as the primary groups most probable to engage in self-destructive behavior during bondage.[6] However, a diversity of bondpeople represented aboard slave ships utilized these dangerous methods of resistance. Beyond an exhibition of haphazard and rather unconscious attempts waged for escape, "suicide" meant much more to bondpeople. It comprised a highly personalized decision manifested through physical expression. Perhaps even more significant, transmigatory rebellion served as the theatrical outlet through which slaves

---

[5] See, Sowande' M. Mustakeem, "Ripples of Infinity: A Social History of the Middle Passage Experience" Ohio State University, unpublished M.A thesis, 2002. This concept builds upon the work offered by Daniel Walker, "Suicidal Tendencies: African Transmigration and the History and Folklore of the Americas," *The Griot* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 10-18. It was developed to further connect these resistive acts within the basis of an African cosmology/worldview. Merriam's Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed defines the term "suicide" as, "The act or an instance of intentionally killing oneself;" s.v. "suicide." While this definition highlights the point of intent, it promotes the idea that these acts operated as the finality of life. Enslaved Africans had an alternate view. They utilized transmigratory rebellion. The term "transmigratory" is a derivative of the word "transmigration" which the Merriam's Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th defines as the "Passing of the soul at death into a new body or new form of being," s.v. "transmigratory."

[6] On Igbo and their perceived suicidal tendencies, see Walker, "Suicidal Tendencies, 12; Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and British Caribbean, 1736-1831* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 24; Kenneth E. Marshall, "Powerful and Righteous: The Transatlantic Survival and Cultural Resistance of an Enslaved African Family in 18th century New Jersey," *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Winter 2004), 40; Leslie Owens, *This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 94

engaged in psychological battles with their captors in pursuit of permanent escape from captivity.[7]

One of the most important features of maritime history is the vast waterway that different ships traveled. Jeffrey Bolster offers a poignant reminder that in producing histories of the Atlantic, one area of inquiry "largely absent . . . is the ocean itself" which he characterizes as "the living sea." The Atlantic Ocean spans over 30,000,000 miles, averaging close to 13,000 feet in depth. This massive body of salt water served as the tumultuous pathway to slavery for many bondpeople. The connections forged at sea however "were not only across oceans, but [also] between people and the sea." Other populations of people similarly charted these watery roads; although never in the same manner as bondpeople. The geographical terrain to which the Middle Passage was greatly depended helped to provide an important arena for the struggles that different captives sought to activate against their captors.

Once transplanted within slavery and particularly aboard slave ships, bondpeople underwent tremendous sorrow. The varied testimonies already discussed demonstrate the different ways that slaves responded to their imposed captivity; whether through public or covert means. Focusing on the narratives of pain, struggle, and survival imbedded within the Middle Passage encourages us to fully consider the treatment of people *as* material goods traded, bought, and sold within the broader slave economy. Likewise and perhaps even more, the topic of self-sabotage raises difficulty questions on how we give adequate treatment to the range of human emotions exemplified within the trade.

---

[7] Scholar Gordon Lewis writes that matters of adjustment for bondpeople "short of poisoning, suicide, permanent escape, and rebellion" represent the various factors "that the social historians of slavery must look for the more characteristic and common exemplifications of slave protest." See, *Main Currents in Caribbean History: The Historical Evolution of the Caribbean,* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987) 178.

A critical aspect to these discussions is an exploration into the cultural meanings of these varied behaviors. The fundamental core of the trade brought together different populations of people. For captives, they carried a host of diversity relative to occupations, spiritual systems, languages, ethnicities, customs, and rituals emanating from different West African societies. Their forcible inclusion within the trade tragically altered their orientation to the world around them. As such, many people sought to make meaning of their reoriented lives.[8]

Implementation of Precautionary Measures

During coastal negotiations traders placed considerable emphasis on a slave's present state of health. The motivating force for many slaving captains was obtaining bondpeople capable of enduring back-breaking plantation labor. In many instances a captive's physical condition served as the primary focus of buyers. Contrary to many of his peers, British merchant Humphrey Morice requested that seamen give attention to captives' *mental* stability during the selection process. Within his 1722 orders, he directed the refusal of Africans considered "Lunaticks," "Idiots," or "Lithargicks."[9] In speculating, these exclusions likely reduced any additional services required of sailors for the preservation of any psychologically enfeebled captives. Another shipmaster received similar orders. On 6 March 1754 financers for Captain Watts' voyage wrote, "Let me beg of you to take none but what is Likely & young" and most especially slaves "free from any Disorders in mind body or any Defects whatsoever" that could be easily

[8] For a discussion of intentions with self-destruction, see *Going Mad to Stay Insane: The Psychology of Self-Destructive Behaviors* (London, England: Gerald Duckworth & Company Ltd, 1996), 120-122.

[9] Add. 48590 ff. 29-31, British Library, London, England. (hereafter cited BL)

discerned.[10] For both merchants inclusion of these different types of slaves could potentially lower the value for the remaining cargo.

One of the most critical aspects of slave sales was the assessment of bondpeople's bodies. As surgeons and captains fondled the contours of a person's anatomy, different marks, blemishes, bodily alterations, or perceived sickness provided the tangible evidence needed for final sale decisions. It is difficult to understand how many of these men were able to distinguish captives' mental capacities; particularly given the subdued state many captives exuded. Even though we know very little of the presumably complicated tasks used, the inclusion of these specific orders confirm merchant's awareness of the obstacles sailors faced in selecting captives.

In order to guarantee sufficient preparation, allocated instructions helped to assist the selection of healthy slaves. Both surgeons as well as ship commanders familiarized themselves with similar traits associated with different captives. Medical practitioner T. Aubrey warned those traveling to Africa that along with assessing captive's bodies, "It is [also] highly necessary for you to endeavour to be acquainted with the Nature and Constitution" of African People. In his estimation, such expertise could "better qualify you for preserving their Health, and also restoring them when afflicted." To accommodate these necessities he outlined characteristics of certain West Africans that he felt physicians needed to be most mindful. For one group, he described them as "naturally sad, sluggish, sullen, peevish. . . . self-conceited, proper at nothing," and as

[10] John Guerard Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina. (hereafter cited SCHS)

he surmised, "naturally Coward[s]."[11] These details were useful for crewmen selecting the most 'desirable' Africans. However, given the depressing circumstances of captivity, these descriptors could apply to virtually any available African.

Moving across different regions of West Africa many seamen grew accustomed to the cultural differences common among Africans. The diversity of "human cargoes" they traveled with aboard ships permitted opportunities to observe prevailing customs. They likely adapted to traditional responses slaves acted out - violent or self-destructive - against their forced captivity. As such, human expressions including anger, sadness, and pain, would not have seemed extraordinary. We are not always privy to the day-to-day behaviors bondpeople exhibited however it is quite conceivable that several displayed a solemn disposition.

Many captives traveled the passage disheartened by their forced migration. The morose behaviors of slaves did not go unnoticed at sea. Of course one wonders the physical indicators needed to attract the attention of sailors to a psychologically weakened captive. Yet, because of the regular depressed condition Africans exhibited during bondage the term 'fixed melancholy" became a common descriptor used to characterize their behaviors.[12] In many cases traders viewed this condition as an irreversible emotional state characterized by "lowness of spirits and despondency."[13] These depressive moods often came at a cost to ship captains. "[I]f they are not kept in heart and good spirits" as John Fountain observed, "it is odd but they sicken and die."

---

[11] T. Aubrey, M.D., *The Sea Surgeon, Or the Guinea Mean's Vade Mecum In which is laid down, The method of curing such Diseases as usually happen Abroad, especially on the Coast of Guinea; with the best way of treating Negroes, both in Health and in Sickness,* (London: John Clark, 1729), 104.

[12] For a discussion of fixed melancholy, see John Blassingame, *Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 7.

[13] Testimony of Isaac Wilson, *HCSP*, 72:287.

Considering the severity of captivity, one can only imagine the difficulties sailors confronted in an attempt to maintain a sense of 'cheerfulness' among boarded slaves. To assist with keeping them upbeat, Aubrey ordered "you must observe to order them now and then a Glass of Brandy," to which he added "especially when you see them a little dull and melancholy."[14] There is no way to be sure that this or many other remedies were effective.

Sailors tried different tactics to reduce instances of self-destruction among captives. Three techniques commonly used to hinder slaves' disobedience included ship alterations, sailing at night, and using violence. One of the most striking features used to counter rebellious attempts involved making vessel modifications. On several occasions rails were constructed on the top deck. Thickened ropes were similarly draped "by nettings [that went] round the quarter deck, main deck, and poop, to a considerable height."[15] Primary intent imbedded within these measures was "to prevent the Slaves, from any accident, [or] falling overboard" off ship.[16] Another strategy involved sailing ships "[i]n the night, after dark, and when all the slaves were secured below" as one trader declared "to prevent them from murmuring, and shewing any signs of discontent at leaving the coast."[17] The evening hours may have proved useful in preventing physical visibility of their forced departure. We should bear in mind however that the peril of captivity did not destroy the collective memories of their families and homeland that they carried with them; which likely kept them in a grim state of mind.[18]

---

[14] T. Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum,* 132.
[15] Testimony of Isaac Wilson, *HCSP*, 72:281.
[16] Testimony of John Fountain, *HCSP,* 68:270.
[17] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:86.
[18] For a discussion of African ties to land, see John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (Heinemann, 1992) 35.

The last and perhaps most predictable strategy were the violent methods used against any bondperson caught attempting to evade captivity. Physical abuse characterized the environment typical aboard many ships. It proved regular to the trade that a sailor was "apt to give them a blow with his hand" in effort to maintain some sense of ship order. One trader found "the more you beat them, the more sulky they are."[19] Although we cannot probe the minds of captives, it is probable that some may have welcomed their own decline. However, not all captains shared this perspective on punitive measures, particularly if one considers that their objective was to transport of 'live, sellable' cargo. A range of precautionary methods filtered to reduce any instances of insubordinate behaviors. It is quite conceivable that in many cases they were useless in dispelling the deep seated pain of grief, separation, and loss many slaves underwent; which would have only furthered their desires to escape bondage.

Captives' Mental Condition Once Traded

The adaption of warnings and safety measures operated in different ways however Africans boarded slave ships in a poor mental and physical state. On occasion, "Most of them, at coming on board, shew signs of extreme distress, and some of them even looks of despair." This evidence of trauma showed on their faces and in their body language. Robert Norris, a former Carolina merchant, added that they "frequently come on Board the Ships in a diseased state," due to insufficient lodging, starvation, and instances of dehydration undergone during their coastal imprisonments.[20] Physical weakness

---

[19] Testimony of Isaac Parker, *HCSP,* 73:138-9.

[20] Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP*, 68:9; For an interesting discussion of the role of trauma and behavior, see L. Stephen O'Brien, *Traumatic Event s and Mental Health* (Liverpool, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 2.

prevailed, yet this "diseased" state extended further, manifested in the damaged psyches that bondpeople displayed on board.

Their sadness became intensified once secured within their ship holding rooms. During the evening hours they "were often heard making a howling melancholy kind of noise, something expressive of extreme anguish." Confinement in tight and cramped spaces likely further added to their oppression. One slave trader reasoned that the emotional outbursts of grief were "occasioned by finding themselves in a slave room, after dreaming that they had been in their own country amongst their friends and relations."[21] One can only imagine the sentiments of powerlessness and anger that took hold of bondpeople's minds upon comprehension of their circumstances. Surgeon Thomas Trotter surmised that their despair arose from "a feeling for their situation, and regret at being torn from their friends and connections." In his view "many of them, . . . are capable of retaining those [depressed] impressions for a very long time."[22] Elongated coastal stays solidified slaves' awareness of their inability to return home. Their enforcement within bondage and the powerlessness they faced probably made it even more difficult to overcome these weighted circumstances.

Many captives' exhibited grief following their vessel relocation. These realities are illustrated through an African man sold once taken near the Galenas River. Within his stowage crewmen noticed that he "seemed so cast down." Recognizing the regular sadness many captives professed, it would be useful to ascertain what drew the crewmen's attention to this man. His melancholic disposition did not seem extraordinary because of seamen's belief that "they all generally are when brought on board ship."

---

[21] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP* 73:85.
[22] Ibid, 86.

During the continuation of business proceedings, a native ruler referred to as King Battou came aboard. Once there he recognized the bondman described as "sitting in a very melancholy manner on deck." Following this observation Battou queried how his fellow native became bonded, to which the male slave shared his plight. He offered details on his unexpected fate, yet this did not liven up his spirits or create the guarantee freedom. There is no way of discerning if the local king tried to negotiate with the shipmaster for the man's liberation or not. The attending situation of bondage seemed to further exacerbate the male captive's already saddened state. As a result, the vessel's sailors "could not make the man eat by any means" despite administering a "flogging, and then put[ting him] in irons." They aggressively sought to restore the bondman, however "In a very little time he died."[23]

Most bondpeople displayed a saddened disposition, regardless of the circumstances that landed them enslaved. We can assume the bondman emerged from the surrounding community in observing the local rulers familiarity of him. His inclusion as a captive further confirms the predatory environment we already examined filtering across African societies as the slave trade emerged to become a respectable basis of wealth. It is not difficult to imagine the sense of anger, frustration, and sheer powerlessness the bondman felt because of his enslaved state. As evidenced, it was common for sailors to liven up the spirits of boarded captives. Yet, once mentally confirmed that they did not belong in the system of captivity, many of these efforts were futile.

Female captives also exhibited similar sentiments of despair. John Newton confronted depression through a bondwoman held aboard the *Duke of Argyle*. On 9

[23] Testimony of James Towne, *HCSP*, 82:16.

January 1750 he recorded, "This day buried a fine woman slave No. 11, having been ailing some time" during her ship confinement. He "never thought her in danger till within these 2 days." The female's daily behaviors may not have signaled distress to her captors and therefore gone unnoticed. Yet, in all probability her disappointment likely intensified the longer she remained on board creating public means of understanding her grief. Amidst her continued decline, Newton noted, "she was taken with a lethargick disorder" which he added, "they seldom recover from." Bondage altered the minds of many captives, which further intensified once transplanted at sea. Of course we will never be able to fully comprehend the final moments of this woman's life or the thoughts that she had prior to her death. Her life provides an invaluable means of seeing how intense sadness set the stage for many slaves' deaths; despite sailors' difficulties in predicting such behaviors.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, lethargy was considered one of several dangerous diseases that stemmed from melancholic circumstances. Once afflicted, patients became "continually sluggish, and sleepy, scarcely answering if often spoke to" and on occasion "only opening their Eyes and shutting them again" in a rapid like fashion. The most characteristic feature of this condition involved the unending "desire to sleep," which those suffering "are never satisfy'd without it, or indeed with it." Likewise "a gentle Fever, a high Pulse, and Breath [that was] weak" also took hold of many victims. Some 18th century physicians believed that these symptoms arose from excessive "Flegm, cooling the Brain in its Windings and hindmost Cells."[24] Newton did not offer indication if the bondwoman endured bodily changes amidst her growing weakness. Any of these medical symptoms could have emerged and caused her continual

[24] Anonymous, *A Treatise of Diseases of the Head, Brain, and Nerves*, 1727.

decline. However, coupled with the emotional despair of bondage one can only conclude that these changes caused her spirits to decimate.

Ship captains also faced overt demonstrations of psychological shock among boarded slaves. In 1755 Caleb Godfrey mastered the vessel *Hare*. Traveling from Africa to Barbados, on 15 February following port arrival, he wrote to his financers describing the behaviors of two young girls he transported to his ship. He shared, "theirs Two Girls that are so low that I had as Good knock them in y'e head as Protend to carry them away," to which he added, "they are some thing recruited. . . "[25] After ensuring sales of the remaining cargo, Godfrey set sail for his next destination. During this time the vessel's owners took financial responsibility and offered monies for the girls' medical care. According to account sales, a physician named Ebenezer Gray received £37.18 "for Medicines & Attendance of two Girls."[26] Data that delves deeper into the bonded girls' medical condition or their fate beyond the treatment they received remain elusive. It is likely that the stress of the Middle Passage overtook both females, rendering them virtually numb to their external surroundings. Once sold to their new owners it is also probable that they carried these deep emotional scars into the plantation environment.

After leaving Barbados, Godfrey sailed to Charlestown. Once there, he faced yet another episode of mental trauma that arose in a captive's health. This instance pertained to "a Negro girl" purchased by a man named Benjamin Yarnold. The young female sold for £180, of which £30 was used "to cure her of a shocking disorder." The South Carolina slaving firm, Austin and Laurens, handled the details of her sale. They offered a perspective on her medical episode disclosing that she "was so manag'd that the Girl had

[25] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.
[26] *Ibid.*

not the least appearance of any disorder in the Yard." However, "the very next day" as they relayed, the young female "was unable to stir with the foul disease" once again taking hold. Yarnold likely felt cheated by the unexpected psychological ailment that arose within the girl's health. This is illustrated through the South Carolina merchants' point "the purchaser sends her back to us" of which they adamantly refused. Fearful of the financial jeopardy this decision could inflict upon future business, they "obliged to consent to refer the matter to two or three impartial judges" in order to gain legal advice on whether "she should be cured at the Expence & Risque of the Owners."

The embroiling financial matters did not aid in the girl's improvement. On 24 July 1756, Austin and Laurens wrote, "The Negro Girl we mentioned to you in our last continues greatly out of order," as a result of the lingering affliction. Hopeful of her recovery, they explained "she is in the hands of one of our best Doc'rs" upon whom they relied "he will see her to rights by & by." An unnamed medical practitioner received £192 "To Board, Nursing &c 1 Negro Girl that Dyed" rated at £16 per month for offering medical treatment. Although under a physician's close care, the young girl referred to as "that slave sold Benj'm Yarnold" continued to weaken further. There are no medical records explicating her symptoms or the remedies offered for her restoration. According to her temporary owners, she reportedly, "lingered under the Doc'rs hands for two or three months and then dyed." Following her death, £8 was allocated "To Coffin &c y'e Girl that Dy'd."[27] Because of her loss, legal ramifications emerged between Yarnold and Austin & Laurens concerning compensation as a result of her death.

[27] *Ibid*; There is a discrepancy in the historical records of this girl's case. According to account sales, she received medical treatment for a year extending from May of 1755 to May of 1756. As indicated in the above text, the financers noted that she remained under a physicians' care for two to three months.

The female's case is extremely rare in exposing the psychological tolls the trade forced bondpeople to confront. Suffering for several months outside of her oceanic passage, the girl's experience sheds considerable light on of the emotional trauma that both traders and interested purchasers confronted in the active pursuit of human laborers. Whether the young girl lived or died, as evidenced it made a critical difference in the financial and laboring welfare of Yarnold, Austin & Laurens. Details illuminating the circumstances that caused her mental condition as well as her fellow shipmates, to formally occur and gain the attention of their captors remain considerably murky. The two young girls left in Barbados for treatment were perhaps more fortunate than their shipmate carried onward. Yet, the consecutive manner of their episodic outbreak forces one to question if something occurred during the ship's passage that contributed to their emotional decline. Although devoid of any further details, we can speculate upon several contributing factors: having to overcome familial separations, an unhealthy oceanic passage, and arriving in a foreign land. These factors probably exacerbated their decline and for the one girl, led to her death.

Expressions of Sorrow

Their ship environments often increased captive's depressed states. One captain asserted that slaves were "generally of a cheerful disposition" while set at sea. He added, "they had frequent amusements peculiar to their own country" including "some little games with stones or shells, dancing, and jumping and wrestling."[28] These activities were likely encouraged to distract Africans in hopes of quelling any resistive attempts. However, imbedded within his observation is the idea that bondpeople were properly treated by their captors. Available evidence suggests the contrary: that instead captives

[28] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71: 28.

experienced significant anxiety emanating from ship confinement and mistreatment. To reduce captive discouragement, T. Aubrey suggested that sailors frequently "divert them often with Drum, [and] Dancing" in effort to "dissipate the sorrowful Thoughts of quitting their own native Country, Friends, and Relations."[29] Sailors probably drew upon a range of schemes to keep bondpeople in lively spirits. Whether useful or not, it is probable some captives engaged the various aspects of amusement offered to them; if only to keep them selves free of physical abuse for their disobedience.

Physical movement was typically incorporated to counter any psychological weaknesses capable of threatening bondpeople's lives. Although widely pervasive on many slavers, according to one surgeon, "it was not practised till their health made it absolute necessary that they should be allowed some exercise."[30] This necessity likely emerged when captives appeared dispirited without any obvious signs of improvement. Yet, the physician's comment permits us to speculate on the enforcement of regulated exercise among boarded slaves. "Exercise being deemed necessary for preservation of their [captives'] health" in some cases sea captains "obliged [them] to dance, when the weather will permit their coming on deck."[31] This description suggests that inclement weather hindered the enforcement of exercise periods. However, one wonders if some seamen viewed the practice of 'dancing' slaves cumbersome amidst other required ship duties.[32]

---

[29] T. Aubrey, *The Sea Surgeon Or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum,* 132.

[30] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:87.

[31] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 23.

[32] The practice of 'dancing slaves' is a term commonly used in reference to the slave trade that involves the tactic of forcing bondpeople to dance within the Middle Passage; For another discussion of purpose of requiring dance within bondage, see, Lynne Fauley Emery, *Black Dance from 1619 to Today* (New Jersey: Princeton Book Company Publishers, 1972), 12.

Traders viewed bondpeople's movement through dance in a variety of ways. Delving into their previous cultural practices, T. Aubrey explained that Africans were "accustomed to divert themselves at Home with Dancing, and Singing, and Drinking" of which he strongly advocated. Any person that took residence within a coastal community probably gained a sense of the central role musical expressions served in different African societies. Perhaps mindful of Aubrey's suggestions and other captain's experiences with confined slaves, some sailors enforced these same practices; although primarily through violent means. One ship captain intimated that, "They are always very ready" relative to dancing aboard ships. The only exceptions were as he determined, "a few sulky ones."[33] If we look more closely his statement portrays Africans as constant entertainers where perhaps without the use of abuse they willingly engaged opportunities for physical motion. There was, however, still the basic problem concerning the turbulent climate slaves were forced to survive, which his statement does not address. Given the circumstances propelling slaves' bodily movements, one can only imagine the sadness coupled with eager emotion they displayed due in large part to the constant threat of a lashing.

Amidst the process of exercise, bondpeople found ways to express their dissatisfaction of captivity. These varied modes of cultural expression predominated through dancing, drumming, and singing. Relative to dance, Captain John Ashley Hall explained that in his experiences "They are made after each meal to jump and down upon the beating of a drum." This was likely used to aid in proper blood circulation and matters of digestion. However, as he relayed, "this is what I have heard called dancing, but not what I consider as dancing" because according to him, "it is not to music of their

[33] Testimony of Clement Noble, *HCSP*, 73:120.

own."[34] Music used to enforce dancing among slaves varied across voyages. Africans may have had some influence however it is more probable that sailors dictated these preferences.

There are several angles which Hall's observation can be viewed. Foremost, it is not surprising that he contrasted African dances with European modes of style due to the difference in cultural orientation. In so doing, his own biases prevented him from viewing native moves as culturally acceptable. Being forced to dance with musical sounds unfamiliar at least within West Africa, it does not seem extraordinary that a sense of awkwardness emerged within bondpeople's movements. Yet, Hall was not alone in misconstruing their movements. Surgeon Thomas Trotter described that slaves "dance[d] round the deck, with all those awkward gestures and motions which they call dancing."[35] Belief of African inferiority already colored traders view while in close contact and it exacerbated once at sea. These observations also suggest that any dances they enforced slaves to act out took on a tone of forced entertainment for vessel sailors.

Music held a significantly central function within African culture. This operated with various rituals, celebrations, and processes of mourning.[36] Drums represented critical component necessary to these occasions. Within the context of bondage, drumming served as a collective art form upon which slaves engaged with their fellow

---

[34] Testimony of Captain John Ashley Hall, *HCSP*, Vol. 72:231.

[35] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:87.

[36] On the role of dance as a communicative art form within various aspects of African culture, see Omofolabo S. Ajayi *Yoruba Dance: The Semiotics of Movement and Body Attitude in a Nigerian Culture* (Chicago, Illinois: African World Press, 1998), 1; Jacqui Malone, *Steppin on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1996); and John Chasteen and Lyman L. Johnson, *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance*,(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

shipmates.[37] Once played, this hollowed instrument provided the polyrhythmic foundation encouraging participants to dance. Drums typically call forth spirits through the creation of syncopated rhythms that drummers must be well versed in producing.[38] These musical tools also helped to momentarily bridge the material and spiritual world for its observers, providing a portal of entry for pervading spirits. We can easily deduce that sailors were unaware of these spiritual inclusions. For Africans however, when we look specifically at the makeup of different ships and the diversity of occupations, skill sets, and expertise that captives carried into bondage, it does not seem far-fetched that some may have been ingrained with knowledge of divination, ritual, and other spiritual practices.

The availability of instruments differed according to resources accessible on ship. On many occasions slaves were given "a drum which they beat, and others dance" to formulate a variety of rhythmic beats.[39] Here we see the participatory nature of these activities, even amidst bondage. Alexander Falconbridge offered further discussion on the inclusion of drums for Africans at sea. He explained "Their musick...consist[ed] of a drum, sometimes within only one head" and on occasion "when that is worn out, they do

---

[37] Monica Schuler offers a provocative discussion of music and religion among Central Africans within in St. Thomas. See, Schuler, *Alas, Alas Kongo: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 72-83; For a discussion of call and response practices, see, Frances Aparicio and Candida Jacquez, eds., *Musical Migrations: Transnationalism and Culture Hybridity in Latin/o America*, (Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2002), 102. The collaborative opportunities these cultural practices created among different groups of slaves prompted their refusal within many mainland American colonies; Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 176;

[38] For discussion of the role of drummers and drumming, see Schuler, *Alas, Alas Kongo*, 77; John Generrai, *Blowing Hot & Cool: Jazz and its Critics* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 139-140; Winnie Tomm, *Bodied Mindfulness: Women's Spirits, Bodies, and Places* (England, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995), 105; Steven Friedson, *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 131; Tracy D. Snipe, "African Dance: Bridges to Humanity," in *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical and Philosophical Inquiry*, ed. Kariamu Welsh-Asante (Chicago, Illinois: Africa World Press, 1997), 63; Dena Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*: Black Folk Music to the Present (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

[39] Testimony of Capt John Ashley Hall, *HCSP*, 72:231.

not scruple to make use of the bottom of one of the tubs" stowed aboard.[40] Evidence describing how sailors designated drummers or distributed different tools used to produce music is rather sketchy. However, these narratives attest to the freedoms some captives received in musical production. As already mentioned, crewmen influenced these sounds, but it seems likely that some bondpeople could also inflict their own preferences upon different patterns of sounds formulated. We see therein that slaves adapted cultural practices within their forced environment.

Along with the drum, songs also served as a vehicle of expression for bondpeople. One trade participant explained that amidst their confinement, "The poor wretches are frequently compelled to sing." It would be rather useful to understand the methods crewmen used to enforce these behaviors, outside of aggressive means. Despite the attending circumstances, many captives utilized the power of collective composition.[41] This is demonstrated through the observation "At the time of their dancing, they always sing to some tune or other in their own way."[42] The varying ethnicities represented aboard ship probably created song variations and means of interpretation.[43] Through the process song and dance became the collaborative mode of communication slaves drew upon. One could argue that the diversity of captives created lingering cultural barriers. Yet, it is probable close confinement also permitted a sensitivity and gradual understanding of different languages and dialects spoken. Therefore, once sung, songs

---

[40] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 23.

[41] *Ibid*, 23.

[42] Testimony of Henry Ellison, *HCSP*, 73:376.

[43] Monica Schuler offers a counter point to this idea calling attention that many slave ships carried Africans of "a single large culture-complex" that helped to produce pan-ethnic bonds. See, Schuler, *Alas, Alas Kongo*, 66. ; For a discussion of the importance of song and the role of bonding, see James Wilson, Jr, "Political Songs, Collective Memories, and Kikuyu Indi Schools," *History in Africa* 33.1 (2006), 370; On the role of song as a part of collective mourning, see Eliyana R. Adler, "No Raisins, No Almonds: Singing as Spiritual Resistance to the Holocaust," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24.4 (2006), 50.

translated into a collective language of pain and sorrow that took on their own altered version of the present enslaved situation. This cultural exchange between groups helped to formulate beginning versions of creolized languages that adapted to the bonded circumstances captives found themselves at sea. At the same time they could have also articulated testimonies of pain and struggle towards the spiritual realm.[44] Women were known for engaging in song, but one witness noted also that "the Men sing their Country Songs, and the Boys dance" during their Atlantic crossings.[45] In essence, these cultural modes were not age or gender specific, but instead collectively shared.

The musical forms that converged on ship often took on a sorrowful tone. In observation of slave songs, James Towne indicated that he "never found it anything joyous, but [instead] lamentations."[46] Given that they were forcibly placed into bondage, melancholic creations do not seem extraordinary. If looked at from the side of traders', one could argue that they expected much more upbeat songs since they implemented exercise to reduce feelings of dejection. However, in many cases these expectations were far from common practices. Henry Ellison confessed, "I have very often heard them sing mournful tunes when in their rooms in the night time."[47] We already know they used significant efforts to keep captives segregated according to gender and in some cases age. It is difficult to determine how slaves heard one another in different rooms, especially

---

[44] Frances Henry discusses that musical practices, particularly singing helps to carry words sung forward to a mystical world that extends an abode where spiritual forces dwell. See, *Reclaiming African Traditions in Trinidad: The Socio-Political Legitimation of the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist Faiths* (University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 144.

[45] Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP*, 68:7.

[46] Testimony of James Towne, *HCSP*, 82:22; William D. Piersen characterizes slaves songs in the Middle Passage as "blues like songs of sorrow." See, "White Cannibals, Black Martyrs: Fear, Depression, and Religious Faith as Causes of Suicide Among Slaves," *Journal of Negro History* 62, 2 (Apr. 1977): 150.

[47] Testimony of Henry Ellison, *HCSP*, 73:276.

given the noisy environment on ship and at sea. As evidenced, bondpeople expressed feelings of sorrow despite efforts to hinder such emotion.

Many captives exuded depressive sounds however there was diversity to their lyrical content. The separations many captives endured from their families, friends often comprised the primary composition of many ship songs. Seaman Clement Noble observed that some captives regularly expressed "fears of being beat, [and] of their want of victuals" particularly from their homelands. This detail confirms the regularity of violence and depravity of foods; even if the provisions slaves desired were those most familiar. On other occasions they demonstrated an awareness "of their never returning to their own country." Although stripped of everything and many times sold against their will, bondpeople were not oblivious to their present circumstances. Considerably rare in slave trade records are native words that Africans chanted in musical form. Surgeon Ecroyde Claxton recollected hearing words some captives sang on a ship he serviced. He intimated that they sang out: "Madda! Madda! Yeira! Bemini! Madda! Aufera!" which according to his understanding meant "they were all sick, and by and by they should be no more."

This remarkable account can be interpreted on several levels. For one, it would be useful to understand how he remembered these words and also if he used an interpreter to translate their original intent. The etymology is difficult to discern. Yet, Claxton's observations confirm that language barriers did not hinder captives from collectively creating music. As the lyrics convey, regardless of their enfeebled state, these captives understood that they would soon be freed from their oppressive condition. This probably reflected their understanding that freedom existed beyond the material

plane. One wonders however if this such recognitions manifested in a threat of self-sabotage or awareness that continued mistreatment endured would lead to their deaths.

Integrally connected, drumming, song, and dance became varied methods of communication actively shared between slaves. These practices were indigenous to many African societies. Therefore, they held intrinsic meaning for African people due to the binding factor for its practitioners as well as pervading spiritual forces. Bondage facilitated a shared language of sorrow. They articulated the range of human emotions, serving as the oral text transmitting folkloric and often grim details of their ship captivity. Many of these lyrical formulations served as canonical stories that likely filtered across generations at sea and onward within plantation communities.

Family Separations

Forced separation from loved ones created one of the most emotionally devastating aspects of enslavement. Interior capturers were driven by the possibility of wealth therefore they rarely gave much regard to family separation. As such, the nature of slavery permanently inflicted division among married couples, parents and their children, as well as among siblings.

Severance of African ties further intensified during coastal sales. Alexander Falconbridge offered testimony on this prevalent practice. While embarked at Cape Coast Castle, the captain he worked with ordered him "to choose eighteen Slaves out of the yard." Available evidence does not explain how many bondpeople were congregated and chosen for purchase. However, during selections Falconbridge "objected to one that was meager, and put him aside" and endeavored to select other potentially valuable slaves. Although separated from the group, Falconbridge took note of the young male's

gloomy disposition that he originally declined. He "observed a tear to steal down his cheek," which he reasoned the boy "endeavoured to conceal."

Following the conclusion of sales, Falconbridge's curiosity of the young child persisted. He queried the underlying cause of the boy's grief by relying on an interpreter on shore. In so doing, he learned that his somber feelings were because "he was going to be parted from his brother" presumably already selected for transport. Perhaps softened by the pain he exhibited, Falconbridge reversed his decision and purchased the boy to join his brother on ship. Beyond their coastal sales, the fate of these siblings faded within the backdrop of the trade's history. Yet, their case reveals the familial connections many slaves sought to maintain whenever possible. Although enslaved, such evidence provides clues that having the opportunity to bear it with their kin seemingly helped to lessen the blow for some captives.[48] We also see these patterns emerging prior to plantation slavery, which builds upon the work of scholars revealing how the family served as the most critical survival mechanism for enslaved people.

The inclusion of families within the Middle Passage is an understudied factor of the trade. Slave trader John Douglas explained the story of a bondman abruptly taken and sold "together with his father, mother, and three sisters."[49] The few details left in the written record limits prevent further interrogation into the male slave's case. It was common practice that criminal charges helped to usher people into slavery. Of course we do not know if he faced these particular circumstances, yet other families became victim to these manipulative tactics. Many inland capturers sought to gather larger groups of slaves. Therefore, any raids instigated against a village or community could provide the

[48] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP*, 72:315.
[49] Testimony of John Douglas, *HCSP*, 82:122.

needed range of captives. Another trade participant acknowledged that efforts were not made to keep families in tact. Instead, as he recollected, "they were divided, some in one ship, and some in another" perhaps to create diversity and also reduce the instances of revolts instigated by captives from the same community. Interestingly, the only captives excluded from these practices were "sucking children," who he explained "went with their mothers."[50] Perhaps most telling within both narratives is the value some traders held in procuring and selling families rather than splitting them through pre-selected preferences. With regard to enslaved infants, it makes sense that the responsibility of their care would be placed on bondwomen, whether related or fictive kin, in order to reduce the burden of care imposed coastal traders.

The trauma of familial separations emerged initially on the coast of West Africa, however it operated differently once aboard ship. In some cases married slaves made up familial units captured and sold together as human "cargo." Surgeon Thomas Trotter confirmed this reality after witnessing "two or three husbands and wives, and many other relations of different degrees of kindred" enslaved together on the same vessel.[51] For the sake of a quick procurement, it was probably far more advantageous to capture adults and leave their offspring. "[W]hen a Man and Wife are on Board they are permitted to speak to each other" however only with the help of interpreters and fellow shipmates.[52] Gendered separations were a primary facet of ship life, yet it is possible that the fear of uprising enforced these practices. One surgeon explained, "Any intercourse betwixt the husbands and wives was carried betwixt them by the boys which ran about the decks."[53]

---

[50] Testimony of Isaac Parker, *HCSP*, 73:125.
[51] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73: 98-99.
[52] Testimony of Robert Norris, *HCSP*, 68:12.
[53] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:98-99.

This description suggests that traders sought to accommodate their boarded slaves. These meager opportunities for communication were likely done to counter any thoughts of self-sabotage that might emerge among different slaves; especially those aware of family members enslaved on the same vessel with them.

Much like enslaved couples, siblings also endued limits to their shared interactions. Many of these disconnections meant a great deal to enslaved people. On occasion some captives expressed the desire that they "commonly wished to mess with one another." Any moments offered to share with a family probably helped to cope with the shock of enslavement. Despite lingering pleas, crewmen typically sought to keep "those men that were brothers with brothers, and those women that were sisters with sisters."[54] We see here that cross-gendered exchanges were not permitted, regardless of age. These testimonies provide a much needed glimpse into the place of bonded families and the minimal interactions they tried to maintain amidst their captivity.

Although the fundamental core of slavery disjoined African families, on rare occasions some kin were fortunate to board the same vessel. In one case a bondman understood to originate among the "Breeches, who" according to one seaman "are styled of the higher class," he was offered and sold to a European slave trader. After boarding the male slave "seemed to take his situation a great deal to heart, and go ill." It is likely he weakened after recognizing that his relocation off land symbolically severed the physical ties he held with his African homeland. Observing his saddened disposition, several "indulgences [were] granted to him," by crewmen and this appeared to aid in his improvement. We are not privy to the tactics or tokens used to improve his spirits.

---

[54] Ibid.

During restoration of the bondman's health, the vessel commander continued slave negotiations to prepare for the ship's disembarkation. One of the purchased captives brought aboard included a young woman. In closely observing the bonded girl several sailors discovered similarities of "countenance and colour" that gave indication she and the ailing boy were related. They later learned their speculations were true since the female "proved to be his sister." Upon discovery of their familial connection, the two captives "stood with silence and amazement, and looked at each other apparently with the greatest affection." Thereafter, "[t]hey rushed into each others arms—embraced—separated themselves again—and again embraced." Taking note of the pair's interaction, the ship's surgeon he observed "tears run down the female's cheek." Based upon the response they expressed upon their initial discovery of one another, we can presume that they were separated for a considerable amount of time. The moving description of their reunion confirms the heartfelt connections shared between captives.

The siblings' interaction was however short-lived. This was because the bondman "had a return of his former complaint," that once again weakened his body. We do not know the condition that he suffered from. According to Trotter, the male's sister offered assistance where at different points throughout the passage she "attended him with the greatest care imaginable." Details describing the length of time the bondman declined or the type of support the young girl gave him is not reflected in the historical record. We also are unable to determine the oldest among the two captives. One morning after helping her enfeebled brother, the girl beckoned the ship surgeon in order to "enquire how her brother did." Although hopeful of his improvement, she soon learned that "[h]e at length died." There is no evidence available to determine if the

bondman further weakened and died from the attending sickness he endured or if he gave up on the idea of living life in captivity; although comforted for a short period of time by his sister's presence. Receipt of the news affected the young girl in a drastic manner. She reportedly exhibited significant despair where according to Trotter she "wept bitterly, tore her hair," and allegedly "shewed other signs of distraction."[55] Her behaviors likely prompted her captors to reason that she underwent a period of mental instability. One can only imagine she not only internalized the loss of her brother but perhaps even blamed his death on herself because of her inability to aid in his full recovery.

Traveling with her weakened brother likely permitted the girl to better manage the stress of enslavement. However, once deprived of the only familial connection available, as evidenced emotional turmoil emerged. Judging by the description of the response to her brother's death, she probably traveled the remaining part of the voyage depressed and in mourning. Her grief did not prevent her from being sold in South America. In all likelihood she carried this loss into her plantation experiences. Speculating further, undergoing tremendous pain after suffering separation from her homeland, this wide range of experiences could have made her fearful of establishing ties with any other slaves in order to protect against enduring a similar episode of physical, emotional, and familial severance.

Traders separated enslaved families during African sales, however rare ties of kinship occurred following a ship's arrival. The 1774 Rhode Island vessel *Othello* provides a rare opportunity to analyze the 'importation' of two African families. Sales for the ship's captives began during the fall of 1773 however we do not see the first family bought until months later. On 2 April 1774 a buyer listed as "David Baird"

[55] Testimony of Wilson, *HCSP*, 72:282.

purchased four captives which one 'Elderly' woman along with one girl listed as 'her Daugh'r" and two boys. The lives of the captives amounted to £125, which we can speculate was considerably cheaper than the average captive sold. The terms used to describe the two of them raises several critical question: What standard did the traders use to conclude the sold woman was 'older'? Did her body profess increased age beyond other female captives? Was the listed girl perhaps a younger woman? As for the two young boys it is difficult to determine if they were related to the female captives or merely bought as a four person unit. On the same vessel another buyer permitted a family to remain together. In so doing, on 21 April 1774 during the operation of 'vendue sales' a man referred to as "William Dangerfield" bought two captives described as one woman 'very old' and bondman which the record references as 'her son." Both captives here sold for an estimated £81.[56] For both families it would be useful to understand how traders or local merchants recognized their familial connections. One wonders if their understanding arose during sales if any of bondperson exhibited emotional trauma at he possibility of losing connection with their family members. Nonetheless, their Atlantic arrival demonstrates that some families remained in tact even through initial market sales.

Diagnoses of Psychological Instability

Most compelling to the traders responses to slaves' behaviors are the conclusions they drew with regard to their mental capacities. They sought to understand the source of captives' rebellious behaviors.[57] Serving in the role of captors, this rendered them

---

[56] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

[57] To date, Wilma King is one of the few scholars that offers a close view of the fluid use of 'madness' as it was applied to bondwomen's resistive behaviors during plantation slavery. "'Mad' Enough to Kill: Enslaved Women, Murder, and the Southern Courts," *Journal of African American History* 92 (Winter 2007), 37-56.; Leslie Owens makes a important point that among the range of disease that affected bondpeople "scholars have been adamant in the near exclusion of one – mental illness." See, Owens, *This Species of Property*, 44.

incapable and unwilling to understand bondage from the perspective of bondpeople. We already know that sailors traveled well informed of the frequent violent attempts captives asserted for their freedom. Yet, in many instances they were less prepared to manage slaves affected by psychological conditions. Regardless of gender, there were no standard treatments used against mentally disturbed slaves. Therefore, crewmen responded by protecting themselves as well as preventing similar behaviors among other slaves.

Displays of mental instability were difficult to predict. Surgeon Clement Noble described a case involving an enslaved black man. During coastal sales Noble likely conducted a physical examination to determine the bondman's health. If not, as Noble disclosed, "I should not have bought him." Shortly following the man's boarding, several symptoms alerted Noble to his imbalance. He described that the male slave "stormed and made a great noise" and at other times he "threw himself about in an extraordinary manner and shewed every sign of being mad."[58] One can only deduce the anger the bondman exhibited was due in large to his forced captivity. According to available evidence his behavior did not result in any self-injury. However, ingrained within this narrative is that slave traders seemed to expect certain patterns of obedience and emotional numbing among boarded slaves. Therefore, anything contrary would invite opportunities to interrogate and manage captives' psychological state. We could further to also speculate that some captives even feigned madness.

Another male slave also seemed to display abnormal behaviors. Medical practitioner Isaac Wilson recounted that the bondman "came on board [ship] apparently well," in his overall health. He determined that "shortly after" the man boarded, he

[58] Testimony of Clement Noble, *HCSP,* 73:114.

"became to look pensive and melancholy." The sadness he displayed probably was because he realized his permanent separation at stake. The attending physician reasoned that his grievous state stemmed from "a certain degree of wildness" which he determined "appeared in his countenance." The evidence he used to determine this diagnosis was that the male captive "began to eat his food voraciously" while at other times "he refused it entirely." In addition, "on several occasions he used the expression 'Armourer'" which was used in reference to "that person being in general called upon to take the Slaves out of irons when necessary." We can surmise that the bondman's requests were disregarded by the vessel's sailors. Throughout the remainder of his passage he reportedly continued to "disturb the ship's company" and prior to the vessel's port arrival, the surgeon determined that he "died insane."[59]

The circumstances of bondage created an altered version of many captives' behaviors. In maintaining some semblance of order among boarded slaves, there was a code of conduct sailors expected and sought to enforce. Yet, as this case reveals, any behavior contrary to these ship regulations they proved consequential to the security of the ship and those aboard. From the bondman's perspective, he probably struggled to perceive his attending condition, particularly out at sea. One can only imagine the terror and sense of defenselessness, which manifested in the manifestation of his seemingly erratic behaviors. Though we cannot probe the minds of different captives, few scholars would disagree that virtually every captive underwent some aspect of mental alteration because of their forced removal.

Much like male slaves, traders also drew bizarre conclusions about bondwomen's behaviors. Surgeon Alexander Falconbridge explained that a young girl procured in the

[59] Testimony of Isaac Wilson, *HCSP*, 72:281.

Bonny River, "had lost her senses, soon after she was purchased and taken on board."[60] It is difficult to determine how this girl behaved that forced Falconbridge's diagnosis of her insensibilities. Was it the strange sounds she emitted? Anger she expressed in her native tongue? Or perhaps a melancholic and detached manner she exhibited? These observations are not reported, however the debilitating circumstances of bondage permit us to conclude that the institution of slavery caused emotional distress among bondpeople.

On many occasions bondwomen, in contrast to their male counterparts, were diagnosed as mentally ill. One former participant of the trade noted "[i]t frequently happens that the negroes, on being purchased by the Europeans, become raving mad." Although pointing out that "many of them die in that state" he concluded this was the case "particularly [among] the women."[61] Numerical estimations speculating on the regularity of self-sabotage within the Middle Passage have not been compiled. Although scholars would readily agree on its occurrence, claims of female slave insanity have not been analyzed in the historiography.

Surgeon Thomas Trotter conveyed the story of a female captive who became unmanageable after recognizing she would never return to her former homeland. He did not offer further details explaining how she created difficulty for the vessel's crewmen or even how and if she died. However, he included an important observation relaying that, "This exquisite degree of insensibility was particularly pervasive among the women" in ships he serviced. During these times, he found them "in violent hysteric fits."[62]

---

[60] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa,* 32

[61] *Ibid*, 32.

[62] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:86; For a discussion of hysteria, see, Elizabeth Waites, *Trauma and Survival: Post-Traumatic and Dissociative Disorders in Women* (New York: W. W Norton &

Trotter's observation raises several questions. Did these females cry out, pull at their hair, or perhaps become unresponsive within their confinement? Even more, were the overt expressions of grief used to determine a women's psychological fitness in contrast to their male counterparts? Gendered displays of emotion erupted in diverse fashions among boarded captives however these illustrations are often omitted from the written record. Regardless of the means by which they demonstrated their unhappiness, both females and males dealt with sorrow in ways specific to their own reality and perception of bondage.

Echoing these same ideas, another slave trader recounted the circumstances concerning a bondwoman he observed at sea. He described this female as "insane," while adding that she "was very troublesome" throughout her ship confinement. There may have been various behaviors she acted out aboard ship, yet we are unable to decipher these eruptions from the written record. He pointed out that "she did jump overboard once or oftener" amidst the passage. Her inability to gain freedom at sea gave her captors ample room to speculate upon perceived mental incapacities. Therein the ship captain "ordered her to be confined, to prevent her from jumping overboard again." According to the written record they "punished her no other ways."[63] Of course we will never know what other methods they utilized or even their effectiveness with this female.

Another surgeon observed similar tendencies through a bondwoman he traveled in close proximity with on a slaver. He explained that she was regularly reprimanded for "refusing to take food." In attempt to quell her defiant behavior several crewmen aboard "repeatedly flogged" her body which she suffered, along with having "victuals forced

---

Company, 1993), 5; Joan Acocella, *Creating Hysteria: Women and Multiple Personality Disorders* (Jossey-Bass,1999), 29-30.

[63] Testimony of Clement Nobles, *HCSP*, 73:112.

into her mouth" to make her eat. The vessel's ship crew quickly discovered that these techniques seemed useless since "no force could make her swallow" any of the offered food. Interestingly, the surgeon concluded that "she lived for the four last days in a state of torpid insensibility."[64]

Sailors often faced with disobedient captives who welcomed their own decline. Yet, this bondwoman remained convicted in her determination to stand firm against her own bondage. The written record does not outline the "insensibility" she reportedly acted out prior to her death. In looking more closely it is probable she mentally transcended beyond her enslaved status, perhaps acting upon recognition of the opportunities for a free existence obtainable only in a realm of existence outside of her current place on a slave ship. Much like other bondpeople she probably struggled to comprehend the enforcement of bondage placed upon here. As we see through her physical behaviors, however, she ultimately permitted her physical death through a means of transmigratory rebellion; which in essence allowed her spirit to transition to different abode and thereby escape her forced condition.

Traders commonly associated madness with female captives' ship behaviors. Falconbridge offered additional discussion of bondwomen's behaviors. He explained that upon visiting the vessel *Emilia* he witnessed "a woman chained on deck" to which he queried the matter of her circumstances. A sailor responded declaring that, "she was mad." We are unsure if her relocation resulted from anger because of her ill-treatment or that her behaviors became unmanageable for the attending crewmen. How a captive exhibited 'madness' and how these psychological conclusions were determined remain unknown. Interestingly, it is through psychotic episodes of irrational behavior that

[64] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:88.

females were deemed as threats to security, otherwise their docility went widely assumed by many seamen. In taking a broad view of perceived mental disturbances, this young woman's story calls into question notions of value given for those reportedly affected by psychological disorders. The price tag offered by an interested buyer as well as the treatment she endured once sold could offer useful insight into how slave traders and slave-owners grappled with alleged mental disabilities in attempt to gain profit from captives' 'laboring bodies.'[65]

Gendered Dimensions of Self-Sabotage

The entrenched sorrow many bondpeople faced further encouraged the manifestation of physical responses they waged against their enslavement. As previously recounted, cultural outlets of drum, song, and dance permitted the space to publicly express their discontent. However they also relied on more inner-directed extremes through transmigratory rebellion. Through these motives captives sought not only to reshape their current condition but also to protest through their self-imposed death. There were three primary strategies bondpeople commonly employed: hangings, giving up the will to live, and jumping overboard.[66]

---

[65] The higher incidence of 'madness' illustrated through the previously mentioned cases of bondwomen seems to disprove Piersen's theory that women withstood the Atlantic crossing slightly better than their male counterparts. See, "White Cannibals, Black Marytrs," 151.

[66] Darlene Clark Hine and Kate Wittenstein. "Female Slave Resistance: The Economics of Sex," in Filomina Chioma Steady, ed., *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally* (Cambridge MA: Schenkman, 1981), 289-300; For further discussion of suicidal behaviors among enslaved Africans see Leslie Owens, *This Species of Property*, 93-96; and also Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, 7-10.

Hangings represented the rarest form of self-destruction that slaves carried out.[67] Although irregular, it became troublesome to traders, posing considerable challenges to predict and counter Africans' intentions of freedom. One surgeon shared the case of a bondwoman who elected to utilize this particular method. While on ship, she "found means to convey below, the night proceeding, rope yarn," in order to end her physical life. Upon gaining access to the chosen instrument, she tied it "to the head of the armourer's vice" which had been "placed in the women's room." Thereafter, "[s]he fastened it round her neck," and choked life out of her body. The attending physician described that "on the morning she was found dead" after entering the stowage quarters they found "her head laying on her shoulder." Observing her contorted and lifeless body, they reasoned, "she must have made use of very great exertions to have accomplished her design" of forced death.[68]

Despite the extended effort required to hang herself, the bondwoman's actions are perhaps more demonstrative of her liberation through physical death. The personal experiences she endured or bore witness to leading up to her last days aboard ship remain unknown.[69] Yet, her final fate provides a valuable opportunity to explore physical death as a strategy slaves used to obtain freedom. Many Africans understood that self-sabotage

---

[67] 'Hangings are understood within this discussion to represent the voluntary process of using an available tool and tying it around one's neck to the point of inflicting physical death of a person's body. Given the circumstances of captivity, for enslaved people it is likely they drew upon these means to escape bondage. Likewise, the fragmentary nature of source material does not always permit us to determine if they used these extremes to provoke further punishment by traders. In all likelihood these behaviors assisted in vocalizing their resentment of bondage through their bodies. This statement is based on rare accounts mentioned in historical records of the Middle Passage; William D. Piersen makes the case that hangings were the most common methods of 'suicide.' See, "White Cannibals, Black Martyrs," 153. Conversely, Louis Perez, Jr posits that this method of self –sabotage was a common practice acted out by bondpeople particularly within Cuba. See, Perez, *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

[68] Testimony of Isaac Wilson, *HCSP*, 72:279-80.

[69] Nell Irvin Painter posits that many slaves bore witness to a wide range of "psychological hurt" that ranged from anger, depression, and self-esteem problems. See, *Soul Murder and Slavery,* Charles Edmondson Historical Lecture Series, 15, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press), 20.

countered the natural cyclical order of human life. However, as Michael Gomez astutely contends, the hardships converging within the Middle Passage forced reconsideration of their priorities and matters of survival.[70] In view of the bondwoman's behaviors, it is probable she mentally reflected on her present condition and thereafter imposed a premeditated sentence upon her self. This is evident in the energy she expended to locate, place in her possession, and ultimately use the available rope to permanently sever the hold of bondage over her physical life.

Another female captive utilized the same route to liberation. To achieve her efforts, she secretively secured "rope yarn" within her bottom holding. With the device at her disposal, she tied the thickened thread "to that part of the platform where she usually lay." After securing its grip, she "made a noose, and put her neck in" the self made contraption. From the scant evidence available, it is unclear how long she devised the proposed plan; or if an event occurred aboard ship that further determined her motives. It seems probable however that she reasoned her life did not belong in captivity. Therefore, she "slipt off the platform" and according to a crewmen's estimation, "put a period to her existence."[71]

Slaves regularly drew upon calculated measures to carry out their liberating strategies. Yet, in many cases seamen sometimes saw their resistive actions as unintentional. Isaac Wilson explained that "It is customary, when any accident of that kind [suicide] happens," a surgeon is normally summoned to examine the deceased

---

[70] See Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 120. He posits that along with suicide, absconding was another method of resistance Africans employed. The author of this dissertation contends that if we broaden our understanding of self-destruction particularly aboard slave ships, we find that absconding fits within this category as bondpeople sought to evade bondage.

[71] Testimony of Isaac Wilson, *HCSP*, 72: 279 -80.

captive's body. This would have served to determine the cause of death or if the bonded person had actually perished. In the above bondwoman's case, during the morning following her actions, "she was found warm" which gave indication that she took her life shortly prior to the daily examinations conducted on bondpeople. Discovery of her recent attempt may have signaled to her captors that an opportunity existed for her restoration. Upon close scrutiny of her body however, the physician determined that "every symptom of life was gone."[72]

The death of these two female captives conveyed considerable meaning to their captors. Motives they utilized help to further confirm the use of self sabotage carried out by enslaved people. However, as Walter Johnson reminds us, losses incurred through slaves disobedient behaviors often served as explicit threats to slavery.[73] Although their deadly intentions were largely unpredictable, the disdain of bondage which they harbored through their deaths became publicly enshrined within the symbolic representation of their corpses. Therein the lifeless bodies of these women became expressive mediums.[74] As such, it not only signaled incurred losses and the differences between the living and the dead, but perhaps even more, they reinforced the limitations of control seamen were able to exert over bondpeople; particularly insubordinate women.

Instead of hangings, other captives welcomed escape by virtually permitting their own physical death. Although difficult to recognize, this process took on different

---

[72] *Ibid.*

[73] Walter Johnson, "On Agency" *Journal of Social History* 37.1 (2003), 116; Elizabeth Fox Genovese makes an important point regarding women and resistance. "The extreme forms of resistance – murder, self-mutilation, infanticide, and suicide - were rare." Yet, in going further she posits, "if they were abnormal in their occurrence, they nonetheless embodied the core psychological dynamics of all resistance." See, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 329.

[74] Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 44-45.

varieties for each bonded person. Captives exhibited their disdain of bondage by causing death of their enslaved bodies. However others resisted by refusing offered food and medicines. Regardless of the tactic, they collectively demonstrated that slaves psychologically permitted the possibility of their own physical death. Some captives vocalized their freedom beyond the material world. Captain John Ashley Hall explained it was not uncommon that he "heard them say in their language, that they wished to die."[75] Unfamiliarity with native Africans' language would have conceivably prevented him from understanding their articulations; therefore, interpreters proved useful to any sailor's curiosity. Critically important to Hall's observation is the bold affirmation of spiritual ascendance slaves sought even amidst their captivity. Much of this resonated with Africans' belief in the continuation of life beyond the physical death of their bodies.[76] It is probable that recognition of this spiritual existence operated amidst their ship responses. Amidst receiving "the act of chastisement or flagellation," as one surgeon intimated, "I have seen the Slaves look up at me with a smile on their countenance, and in their own language say, 'Presently we shall be no more.'"[77] Bondpeople fully understood the present conditions damaging to their everyday lives. As this recollection demonstrates violence did not deter them from their fateful pursuits. Instead, deeply ingrained in their cosmological understandings, they recognized the operation of two worlds: the material and the spiritual. Equipped with this knowledge, they understood that physical death through transmigratory rebellion permitted their spirits to transcend into another cosmic space; thus freeing them from captivity.

---

[75] Testimony of John Ashley Hall, *HCSP*, 72:275.
[76] Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 6.
[77] Testimony of Isaac Wilson, *HCSP*, 72:282-3.

Other captives drew upon hunger strikes to reject their captivity. James Fraser relayed the story of an insubordinate bondman transported from Africa to Grenada. During the ship's passage, Fraser suffered from an undisclosed ailment. However, amidst his continued weakening, "the chief mate and surgeon" under his command informed him "that there was a man upon the main deck that would neither eat, drink, or speak." Upon discovery of the embroiling circumstances, Fraser "desired them to use every means in their power to persuade him to speak" in order to break the male of his rebellious intent.

Although they employed varied aggressive methods, the bondman "still remained obstinate" in his refusal to oblige the crewmen's expectations. "[N]ot knowing whether it was sulkiness or insanity," Fraser gave the sailors instructions to effectively manage the resistive captive. He ordered them "to present him with a piece of fire in one hand and a piece of yam in the other" and thereafter to instruct Fraser "what effect that had upon him." Presumably obliging his directions, he learned afterwards "that he [the bondman] took the yam and eat it, and threw the fire overboard." The success of the aggressive gesture prompted several seamen to give the male slave "a frock and pair of trousers" due to the work he performed by "washing and mending their cloaths." By the ship's arrival, Fraser reasoned the restored bondman turned out to be considerably valuable since he "was sold afterwards for upwards of 40£ at Grenada."[78]

This bondman's experiences reveal several important facets. First, his behavior after the violent threat confirms that not all aspects of resistance contained the intention of death.[79] He could have been fatigued during feeding times or he may have not liked

[78] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:45.
[79] See Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (Viking Press, 2007), 288.

the foods offered to him. Likewise, the distribution of different duties to Africans was common within the Middle Passage. However, one wonders if the bondman appeared obedient in taking on his given role in effort to counter any other threats of abuse. Of course his actions demonstrate that with obedience some slaves received fair treatment. At the same time, despite any if the crewmen "appreciated" his tailoring abilities, these feelings were further exploited once they sold him.

Traders implemented forceful methods to preserve slave's health. Clement Noble confirmed this explaining, "We now and then met with sulky ones that would not eat without force, and we then endeavoured to persuade them."[80] One can only imagine feeling trapped within bondage some captives welcomed their own death to free them selves of further oppression. In many cases to repress these insubordinate tendencies violent methods were incorporated. "The general method" of punishment given to slaves, as one trader intimated, "was flogging, or taking them out of [shared] irons, and putting them into irons by themselves" presumably to worsen their enslavement. During the process, "both hands [were] handcuffed, and both legs shackled, with a collar about their neck with a chain" in order to inflict greater bodily pain upon any insubordinate slaves. Because of the constant fear of security concerns, we can presume that these tactics were used with bondmen. This is not to suggest that rebellious female captives did not endure the same mistreatment. Along with physical constraints, in other instances thumbscrews were incorporated "to take the stubbornness out of them." These varied measures inflicted pain and torture, but they also probably reinforced resentment and vengeful thoughts. Further confirming this idea, one trader shared that because of the violence

[80] Testimony of Clement Noble, *HCSP*, 73:117.

leveled against bondpeople some "attempted to jump overboard, and at other times have gone mad, and died in that situation."[81]

Threats of aggression often proved insufficient in quelling slaves' intentions of death. Slave trader George Millar shared the case of "a woman Slave being brought on board" where once set at sea, she "refused any sustenance, [and] neither would she speak." In response to her diligence, "she was at last ordered to have thumb-screws put upon her" in hopes of inflicting torture to counter her rebellious desires. Along with suspending her body "in the mizzen rigging," the ship's crew used a range of other tools to hinder her efforts, including a cat-o-nine tails. In Millar's view these strategies operated "all to no purpose." Although the bondwoman suffered bodily pain from the brute force imposed upon her flesh, she "died three or four days" after the designated sentence. Following the female's death, Millar shared, "I was told by some of the women Slaves that she spoke to some of them the night before she died," which within her confinement she declared, "'She was going to her friends.'"[82]

The bondwoman's case calls attention to several critical factors. First and foremost, captives remained committed to the quest of physical death. Paramount to the female's story however is operation of the 'female network' that she and her fellow captives participated.[83] It would be useful to know if any violent persuasion proved necessary to prompt the females' discussion of the bondwoman's final hours. Although they confessed the women's declared intentions with their captors, the code of secrecy shared between them essentially permitted the insurgent female to attain her desired

---

[81] Testimony of James Towne, *HCSP,* 82:21.

[82] Testimony of George Millar, *HCSP,* 73:393-4.

[83] For further discussion of the female slave networks see *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South,,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 119-141.

liberation. Despite the offered declaration we are still unsure of the methods used to end her life or the duration of time that passed until discovery of her body.

Persistence drove many slaves' resistive behaviors. Alexander Falconbridge shared, "I once knew a negro woman," whom he characterized as "too sensible of her woes, who pined for a considerable time, and was taken ill of a fever and dysentery." It remains unclear how she behaved forcing the conclusion of her insensibility. Yet, Falconbridge reasoned that in "declaring it to be her determination to die, she refused all food and medical aid, and, in about a fortnight after, expired." Following her death several crewmen threw her body overboard which engendered perhaps another and more damaging punishment because "her body was instantly torn to pieces by the sharks."[84] Once they committed their selves to the idea of death, captives fully recognized the bodily consequences of their defiant decisions. This is evident through the woman's determination and perhaps her prophetic awareness that her physical existence would soon end. Beyond the constraint of chains, bondpeople understood the attainability of freedom; even if it superseded the material world.

Similar to their female counterparts, male captives also displayed acts of insubordinancy that resulted in their physical death. Thomas Trotter recounted a case involving a bondman who "had been a trader, and spoke a little English." His fate soon changed and he found himself along with his family comprising "his mother, wife, and two daughters" all sold into slavery and landed them upon a foreign slave vessel. During boarding his female relatives reportedly "exhibited every sign of affliction" while the bondman displayed "every symptom of sullen melancholy." These observations provide

[84] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade off the Coast of Africa*, 31.

a gendered speculation of trauma showing that some women overtly expressed their torment while in some instances men became more reclusive.

Despite the bondman's growing sadness, he offered his captors an explanation of the circumstances that forced him into captivity. He recollected that "he had quarreled with the chief," who he described as "Cabbosheer of Saltpan" presumably located within his former community. Following the verbal altercation, the local administrator "revenged upon him, [and] accused him of witchcraft" thus propelling the male captive and his family into bondage. Perhaps in reflecting more upon his fate, the forced status as a slave he endured seemed to further weaken his spirits and "he refused all sustenance" offered to him. The next morning he continued to disregard offered provisions and several crewmen beckoned the ship's physician to attend to his declining health. Upon observation, discovery revealed that the male captive "had made an attempt to cut his throat" which caused the loss of "little more than a pint of blood." Despite the incurred injury the attending practitioner saw an opportunity for his improvement and made sure "the [damaged] parts were immediately secured by sutures." During the following evening, however, the bondman "not only tore out the sutures" but he also attempted to cut the other side of his neck. Caught in the act and perhaps cognizant that his efforts may be quelled, according to the surgeon, the male captive allegedly declared "he would never go with white men" and thereafter "looked wistfully at the skies, and uttered incoherent sentences" which in all probability were uttered in his native tongue.

The wounds the bondman inflicted upon his body prompted an investigation into the tools used to assist in his desire for liberation. To be sure, a "diligent search was made throughout all the rooms," yet much to the sailors' dismay, "no instrument could be

found" to confirm their speculation. Because of "the ragged edges of the wound, and blood upon his finger ends" the presiding physician reasoned soon after that the male captive "had torn the part [of his neck] with his nails" during the exerted attempt. After they discovered the man's techniques, his hands were "secured to prevent any further attempt." These restrictive constraints seemingly went to no avail because he "adhered to his resolution" by refusing to eat. According to the available record, the bondman "died in about a week or ten days afterwards," which the surgeon conclusively diagnosed was "for mere want of food."[85] Although the physician determined he died of starvation, as illustrated through the various testimonies of defiance above, the bondman remained fixated on escaping bondage. Of course the final moments of life are absent from the written record, but it is quite conceivable that he engaged in some form of transmigratory rebellion to obtain his desired liberation.

The male slave's story reveals several important patterns. We are deprived of understanding how his female relatives dealt with their captivity. The bondman's actions provide ample evidence that, contrary to trader's violent fears of rebellion, black males were sometimes willing to use their bodies as testaments of defiance; which proved far more difficult to predict. There are no direct statements from the bondman explaining the reasons he chose to end his life in the physical world. Knowing that he traveled with his family likely in another part of the ship, he probably dwelled on his own circumstances along with his inability to protect his loved ones from their bondage. The bondman's psychological persistence to escape captivity posed a difficult feat for his captors to alter.

The injury slaves inflicted upon their own bodies proved unpredictable in many cases. The brig *Ranger* set sail from Annamaboe bound for Jamaica in 1790. Less than

[85] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:82-3.

two weeks following the ship's departure, the presiding commander John Corran faced an unforeseeable event of resistance waged by a purchased slave. He logged on 7 July that during the passage, at approximately five in the morning, "a Man slave that slept in the Boys room endeavoured to cut his Throat" presumably to end his life. We already know that weakened captives were sometimes placed in boy's rooms to serve as a temporary hospital. However, it would be useful to learn how the vessel's seamen discovered the man's resistive attempt. During the passage the male captive sought to lacerate parts of his body "with a Knife or some other Instrument," which he located and secretly held in his possession. Unsuccessful in his motives, according to Corran "at day light when the Hatch was taken off to get y'e Tubs" the bondman then "came upon Deck and jumped overboard." His second attempt was similarly defeated as he "was picked up with the Boat" probably by several seamen that went after him. As such, their efforts quelled any opportunities of the man drowning or being killed by traveling sharks. All of the bondman's escape attempts occurred on the same day which probably further enraged the ship's crewmen. One wonders what prompted his innumerable attempts for freedom, yet we cannot draw any firm conclusions. Following his last failed endeavor, the only mention Corran made of the bondman after his return to the ship was his log that the man operated "in a fair way of recovery."[86]

The male's case reveals the obstinate stance bondpeople maintained within captivity. Viewed from another angle some could argue that his actions were haphazard and rather desperate attempts used to eschew bondage. In one scholar's estimation, a significant portion of those enslaved "surely did fall into states of depression and shock" which in his view "disabled them from mounting any significant defense to their

[86] Log of Slave Brig Ranger, Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Record Office

enslavement."[87] The hardships of bondage ushered in considerable pain and sorrow for many bondpeople. It is difficult to be sure how deeply scarred that captives were by their oppression, but their psychological condition did not always hinder them from devising and treading upon a myriad of routes to freedom. When we look more specifically, to locate and turn a knife upon one's self or even jump overboard knowing the danger that lurked beneath, these attempted motives required some sort of mental capacity. Both anger and frustration probably further drove the bondman's actions. Yet the responses the sailors exerted to quell his attempts reveal not only the extent some captives went to liberate themselves. This example also makes clear the stakes crewmen faced in not only managing captives but ultimately keeping them alive.

Jumping overboard operated as one of the most public methods bondpeople used to secure freedom and participate in transmigratory rebellion. As will be seen, this practice had different meanings if nearby the coastal shoreline versus once set at sea. For the former, we can deduce that many captives sought to escape back to familiar surrounding or even to get on land in hopes of finding freedom. On the other hand, once at sea many captives probably underwent traumatic episodes of terror as they sought to make sense not only of their bonded status but especially in being separated from any form of land. Slave traders incorporated considerable measures to protect against episodes of slaves' losses, however as already disclosed, this did not always prove effective. The Rhode Island vessel *Othello* boarded slaves in preparation to depart for the West Indies. In early January after purchasing a male slave the shipmaster John Duncan

[87] Eric Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 39.

recorded that "A Man Jumpt Over Board Out the Long Boat and Was Drowned."[88] The bondman may have tried to escape back to shore. There is no evidence to determine if he could swim, the boat crossed into deeper waters too difficult for him to manage, or if desperation caused him to ingest too much water once off boat.[89]

There are several more important details to the story. Once docked in Barbados Duncan along with two others seamen, they launched an "Instrument of Protest" against the negligent sailors. Within the public notary they described that "as the Long Boat belonging to the said Vessell was Trading to Leeward a Man Slave was lost out of the said Boat" which they alleged "was through the Carelessness of Nathaniel Shearman and Ezekiel Mitchell" employees of Duncan's ship. In their estimation the accused two "were the only two men that were on board the said Boat at that time" of transporting the bondman to the larger vessel. Sailor's inattention to purchased slaves proved consequential to a ship's voyage. As for the bondman, we can presume he exerted a haphazard attempt to escape bondage. Yet, his actions demonstrate that although unanticipated by seamen, slaves were always attuned to their environment in hopes of acting upon opportunities to obtain their freedom.[90]

Interestingly, Duncan confronted another loss of ship captives. This time on 16 March "Two Women [were] Lost Over Board Out the Vesel in the Ni't By Neglect Of S'd Mate" which it was believed stemmed from his "Not Locking them up and [he] kept bad Wa'ch." Within the same protest Duncan lodged for his own protection, he offered several clues into the bondwomen's outbreak. From his perspective "two Women Slaves

---

[88] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

[89] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP*, 72:304.

[90] Gordon Lewis writes that "the first appearance of suicide" occurred through bondpeople "jumping overboard from slavers." See *Main Currents in Caribbean History*, 178.

were lost over Board the said Vessel" which the record reflects "[was] through the Neglect of John Bent," a second mate aboard the *Othello*. The crewmen's negligence was attributed to "not Locking the Hatchways as he was Ordered to do that on the twenty sixth day of the said month of March" amidst the vessel's journey. As evidenced, proper security proved essential to confining purchased slaves.[91]

There are several complexities imbedded within this case. We are not able to discern the locale of the ship's proximity to coastal Africa. Even more we do not know if the two females tried to escape on shore or if they collaboratively chose to sever the enforcement of bondage upon their lives. Because of the personal decision common with acts of transmigratory rebellion, it is probable that they tried to evade captivity and head back to the coastal line. Beyond their escape, there are no details explaining the fate of these two bondwomen.

Instead of seeking death, some captives escaped off ship with the intention of escaping back to the nearby African shoreline. Ship captain James Fraser recounted an occurrence of escape he confronted. During the conclusion of negotiations for slave sales he explained that he remained "sick in my cabin" from an unknown ailment. His enfeebled condition permitted the sailors to disregard their typical duties with the vessel's slaves. Due to "the neglect of not locking the gunport gratings," several women jumped overboard "and attempted to swim on shore." With the ship being a mile from shore, Fraser recollected "there were three women" stowed aboard his ship who he remembered were "from the King's Town at Ambris." Once out of reach from the vessel, the females presumably regained freedom unscathed.

---

[91]Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

The outbreak of escape warranted further investigation. Enraged by the incident, Fraser went ashore to query local natives about the missing women and the local man. He soon learned that "one of the Black Traders in that country was suspected of having induced these women" to jump off the vessel. Fraser was able to come to this conclusion after dwelling upon occurrences that emerged before the women's escape. He remembered that during the previous evening a nameless native man came aboard his ship although "contrary to the customs of the country" at the time. Reasoning further, he contended that the man's visit was "on some pretended business." Who this native man was, and the intentions of his boarding Fraser's vessel remain a mystery. There are a variety of speculations one could conclude regarding his purpose with the women. Yet, it is clear some natives were presumably fearless in altering slave sales, whether for means of personal compensation or to free friends and loved ones.

Medical pain and the relentless desire for freedom drove some captives' insubordinate acts. John Newton experienced an episode of self inflicted death imposed by one of his captives. During his coastal stay at Mana in West Africa, on 9 February 1753 he logged that several crewmen on his ship engaged in putting slaves in the bottom hold during the evening hours. Amidst their efforts "one that was sick jumped overboard." Once off ship, the bondman probably assumed he had gained his freedom, yet they were able to pull him back aboard. The vessel's sailors likely experienced feelings of relief after re-boarding the man. Despite any renewed feelings they may have harbored, Newton explained that once secured again, the male slave "dyed immediately between his weakness and the salt water he had swallowed" while out at sea.[92]

---

[92] John Newton, *Journal of a Slave Trader*, 1750-1754 (England: Epworth Press, 1962), 75.

Debilitating conditions often further prompted captives' rebellious behaviors. One evening a bondman received medical attendance for a disease he declined from on ship. The record does not indicate the illness he suffered or any signals of distress he may have displayed that alerted the ship's sailors. During the next morning he was unaccounted for among the vessels' other slaves. As a result, the ship's surgeon reasoned, "he must therefore have found means to get overboard," because as he determined, "I never saw him afterwards."[93] The bondman's escape likely caused an immediate alarm considering the close management expected of both seamen and physicians. However, it remains a mystery on how he evaded his captors as well as the duration of time that passed until his absence was discovered.

Once overboard bondpeople often exhibited sentiments of joy for their successful escape. A slave ship surgeon explained an instance when "the captain and officers were at dinner in the cabin" aboard a vessel he serviced. During their evening meal, they "heard the alarm of a Slave being overboard" who had secretly gotten off ship. They probably learned of the captive's escape through a sailor stationed as a watch guard to prevent such occurrences. The news prompted the seamen run to the top deck and once there they "perceived him making every exertion he could to drown himself" in his escape. According to the practitioner's view, he did this by "putting his head under water, and lifting his hands up," and as he intimated, the male slave "went down as if exulting that he got away."[94]

Another case attesting to feelings of exhilaration involved a bondwoman. Slave trader George Millar recounted that "[a] sickly Slave got through the necessary[nets], and

---

[93] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP*, 72:304.
[94] Testimony of Isaac Wilson, *HCSP*, 72:281.

in swimming bore herself higher upon the water than ever I saw any person." The instance caused significant alarm among the ship's sailors and they shared news of the escape with the vessel's commander. In contrast to his slaving peers, after learning of the bondwoman's escape, the ship's commander declared, "'Damn her, let her go, she is not worth picking up. . . . [95] There are no records explaining the woman's physical state or if any preceding interaction ensued between she and the captain that might have further encouraged her rebellious intent. Despite this exclusion, her actions testify to the relentless determination she allocated in the pursuit of freedom.

The possibility of captives' escape by death directed some ship masters to rely upon violent responses. Surgeon Ecroyde Claxton explained that a captain he served under had recently learned of an effective preventative measures useful against "suicidal" slaves. This method involved, "cutting off the first and all succeeding Slaves heads who died" who attempted to use these insubordinate motives. Likewise, the punisher should throw the "[slave's] body overboard," with the purpose of intimating "if they were determined to go back to their own country, they should go back without their heads."

The captain incorporated his recently acquired tactics once confronted with the unexpected self-inflicted death of a purchased slave. He proceeded with the imposing sentence where he "ordered all the Slaves . . . to be brought upon deck to be witness to this operation." All the vessel's captives were relocated from their holdings "excepting one man [slave]" and as a result the captain directed an immediate search to find him. According to Claxton several crewmen found the male slave. However, once located he "was very unwilling to come up" to which aggressive means were used to move him on the top deck. During his transfer from the bottom holding the bondman observed "the

[95] Testimony of George Millar, *HCSP*, 73:393.

carpenter was standing with his hatchet up, waiting for the command to cut off the dead Slave's head." On seeing the embroiling event, he "immediately perceived the situation of affairs," and in an instant "made a violent exertion to disentangle himself from the sailors" being perhaps fearful of his own fate. Terrified by the attending circumstances, the bondman clamored for his own escape. Claxton reasoned the captive somehow gained knowledge that the nettings had been previous loosened "for the purpose of emptying the tubs" and he ran in that direction. Once there, he "darted himself through the hole overboard." The ship crew sought to recapture the frenzied man, however upon "perceiving that he was going to be caught" he immediately dove underwater. He swam "some few yards from the vessel" and according to Claxton's testimony, he "made signs which it is impossible for me to describe" to those who did witness the man's escape. In his view the man's motions were "expressive of the happiness he had in escaping from us." In the end, the bondman "again went down" and as Claxton indicated, "we saw him no more." Interestingly, the man's success in escaping seemed to spare his fellow shipmates from the premeditated death originally planned by the captain. Perhaps fearful of another outbreak, the shipmaster altered their tactics. As such, according to Claxton, they were forced to "desist from our intended scheme" with any other rebellious slaves and instead "resolved to keep a strict watch over them."[96]

Bondpeople's attempt to flee ships was often by chance however some instances involved planned designs. Sailors employed precautionary measures to prevent slaves from escaping by death, however, one surgeon found such tactics were ineffective against a small band of boarded slaves. He described that they "were so artful as to elude all our

[96] Testimony of Ecryode Claxton, *HCSP*, 82:35-36.; For an important discussion of the terror inflicted upon bondpeople see, Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008).

precautions" through the resistive behaviors they devised. The top deck of the ship had been previously netted and one of the defecation tubs sat "in the corner next to where the netting was lashed" presumably to throw over any bodily waste. Creatively mindful of the crewmen's neglect in retying the rope like material, "some of the Slaves had premeditated their escape" presumably while in their respective holdings. In doing so, a number of captives found means to communicate and devise a plan of escape. It is difficult to understand their original scheme however they agreed that several of them would relieve themselves or make motions to do so while attending sailors watched. During this time "the others which were in the plot were to stand by to effect their escape" off ship. There is no evidence determining the gender of the captives involved or how long the plan had been conceived. Nonetheless, several slaves followed through with the intended design which began with those already preselected making motions of relieving themselves at the corner tub. While hunched in a stooped position, "they were secretly unloosing the lashings" of the ship netting. According to the ship's physician the slaves engaged in their motives "unperceived by us." As a result of their collective efforts, "two [slaves] actually did throw themselves overboard" however the third captive, a bondman, "was caught when he was three parts overboard." Although the male's intentions were thwarted, "the [other] two were lost."

This case demonstrates the astute means which bondpeople sought to participate in transmigratory rebellion. Quite uncommon in slave trade records, the offered narrative provides details confirming the diligence captives exerted within their ship captivity. The prevalence of gender segregation forces us to conclude that the escapees were comprised of men. Given the meticulous nature of their devised plan we cannot firmly make this

gendered conclusion. It is remarkable how these captives were able to construct a rebellious plan that facilitated the escape of at least two slaves. The schematic design attests to their awareness of the ship layout as well as the crewmen's weakness – negligence of ship duties – that all aided in their successful attempt.

Self-sabotage was often carried out on an individual basis however some bondpeople jumped overboard in a collective fashion. Another collaborative plan occurred following arrival into a Caribbean port community. In September of 1737 readers of the *Boston Weekly* Newsletter learned the fate that ensued aboard the Bristol vessel *Prince of Orange* mastered by Captain Japhet Bird. Following his March arrival at the island of St. Christopher's Bird shared, "I thought all our Trouble of this Voyage was over." Despite his hopefulness, a considerable obstacle forced him to face "Danger [that] rest'd on the Borders of Security." He explained that on 14 March "we found a great deal of Discontent among the Slaves particularly the Men," that extended for a two day period. At approximately "Five o'clock in the Evening" the bondmen's disappointment intensified "when to our great Amazement" as Bird described, "above an hundred Men slaves jump'd over board" off the vessel.

Following their outbreak, several crewmen sought to pull the bondmen back aboard. As Bird determined, "it was [with] great Difficulty we sav'd so many as we did." Although they procured more than half of the males, in his estimation they "lost 33 of as good Men slaves as we had on board" who decided their fate would not include living as slaves. Stemming from this psychological determination, Bird reasoned the vessel's escapees "would not endeavour to save themselves, but [instead] resolved to die, and sunk directly down" into the water. Out of those "taken up [that] almost drown'd some

of them died" soon after the jettison episode. Their deaths were "not to the Owners loss" because the captives were "sold before any Discovery was made of the Injury the sale water had done to them." Shortly following the calamitous event Bird learned greater details that prompted the captives to jump to their deaths. As he stated, "[it] was owing to one of their Countrymen who came on board" following the ship's arrival. Once in close proximity with the ship's slaves, "in a joking manner" this unnamed man "told the slave[s] that they were first to have their Eyes put out, and then be eaten" following sale to any interested planters.[97]

This case further reveals the dangers of slave rebellion captains confronted at every moment within the passage. Many sailors likely anticipated resistive moments to ensue near the shoreline at times and once set at sea. As this case evidences however it was critical that ship captains exert the same defensive mechanisms once docked within New World communities. Beyond the means that these bondmen learned of their probable fate, there was a much broader significance that emerged. Many Africans harbored fears of white crewmen upon initial entrance into the trade. We can presume that traveling with different captors for any extended period of time at sea these concerns would have abated. As the above narrative clearly demonstrates, these fears resurfaced upon receipt of information that may pose a danger to their lives; which they sought to prevent through their imposed death.

Conclusion

There were a variety of ways that bondpeople responded to their captivity however there are several important factors that underscore the life-altering motives some

[97] *Boston Weekly Newsletter*, September 8-September 15, 1737; For an important discussion of African fears of white cannibalism within the Middle Passage, see Piersen, "White Cannibals, Black Martyrs," 147-159.

slaves acted out. We have already outlined the three primary types of transmigratory rebellion common aboard slavers. Within each strategy individuals envisioned freedom for themselves beyond the constraint of whips and chains as well as the mistreatment extended by their captors. Terror was regularly used to quell slaves' desires for death as sailors sought to maintain control of their captive cargo.

Among the different routes that bondpeople used to gain their freedom, the act of jumping overboard embodied a multitude of realities. As previously evidenced, these behaviors were the most predictable and public testaments of liberation.[98] Beyond the method itself, the Atlantic Ocean came to represent several realities for Africans and slave ship sailors. We can easily infer that seafarers were always aware of the alternative to bondage that lied just below ship. At the onset of a slave's escape alarm inevitably ensued not because of the loss of human life but instead the forced reduction in their "human property." Although temporary owners, they understood the economic responsibilities at hand for themselves and distant investors; to which they were intricately tied.

On the other hand, the ocean constituted a different meaning for bondpeople. Diversity persisted within the spiritual practices and epistemology of different Africans. Yet, the underlying basis for many cosmologies was a shared understanding of a Supreme power, hierarchy of spiritual forces and more importantly the integral relationship of the material and spiritual worlds. There also existed a common belief that inanimate entities inhabited different aspects of nature including earth, wind, sky, trees, and different types of water.[99] Within that framework many Africans upheld the belief that a person's soul

---

[98] See, Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 288.
[99] See, Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 71; Marshall, "Powerful and Righteous," 39.

endured a rebirth into the spiritual realm following the physical death of their body. As such, an idea of heaven and hell did not filter into their worldview.[100] Perhaps even more critical here is the symbol of water believed by some Africans as it encompassed the pathway of reincarnation.[101]

The spiritual perspective many Africans held greatly influenced their approach to the trade.[102] We already know the awareness displayed aboard ships as they defied their forced condition of enslavement. This same comprehension manifested as slaves leaped off ship and into the Atlantic waters beneath, obstructing the parameters of social order regimented by crewmen. Taking a closer view of the geographical terrain of the Atlantic permits us to analyze that the landscape captives used to obtain freedom were at sea as opposed to on land. Asserting control of their own lives by fleeing in essence they became 'aquatic absconders.'[103] Their actions show therein the beginning patterns of resistance through 'running away' that characterized many New World communities. Even more, for many of these people the ocean became akin to an 'underwater railroad' guiding them to "death" through the ending of their physical bodies. We cannot speculate much further into the place they entered as their spirits transitioned into the spiritual world. However, we can contend that the abode they sought to escape into represented a maroon community inhabited by spiritual forces.

---

[100] See Walker, "Suicidal Tendencies," 12.

[101] For a discussion of the symbol of water by bondpeople, see Mullin *Africa in America*, 204.

[102] John Mbiti makes the point, "To ignore these traditional beliefs, attitudes, and practices [of spirituality] can only lead to a lack of understanding African behaviors and problems." See, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1.

[103] This term of 'aquatic absconders' is used here to mean any enslaved person, regardless of gender, ethnic, or age that escaped slavery by and through the sea. Not every individual endured physical death through such means therefore the concept is incorporated to broadly symbolize the many individuals who attempted to flee bondage by jumping overboard into the Atlantic Ocean; Michael Gomez makes the point that suicide was only one form of rebellion and that another involved absconding. See, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 120; The author of this study considers that within the plantation community these differences persisted. Yet, at sea it was often different where running away typically resulted in the voluntary death of a bondperson.

CHAPTER FIVE

'We Took Spell and Spell at Flogging of Them': Gendered Violence and the Quest for Control of the Black Body [1]

Climb the mountain, though your hands maybe weary
Swim the ocean, though your legs maybe tired
Run the extra mile, though your stride maybe worn-down
Fight, Fight, Fight
Never surrender.[2]

Introduction

On 23 December 1773, the *Virginia Gazette* contained a letter extract from West Africa indicating the state of slave trading affairs at Fort James. Readers learned the fate of Captain Deane, engaged in procuring bondpeople from the River Gambia aboard the snow *Britannia*. After finalizing sales and stowing 230 captives, the ship's crewmen made preparations for the vessel's departure. Their efforts were hindered as several slaves "got Possession of the Guns, &c, rose up and fought the white People for upwards of one Hour. . . ." As a result of the rebellion, "many were killed on both Sides." According to the newspaper, "finding they were likely to be overpowered, the Blacks set Fire to the Magazine and blew up the Ship, whereby 300 Souls perished." The historical record does not give further insight towards the primary insurgents involved or how they successfully sprang free from their confinement. Despite these omissions, the revolt affected both the vessel's slaves and sailors. One crewman escaped the deadly revolt "by being on Shore," yet casualties claimed the lives of several others since "[m]ost of the

[1] Testimony of Henry Ellison, *House of Commons Sessional Paper of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 73, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 374-375.
[2] Jill Scott, "Sweet Justice", *Experience: Jill Scott 826+*, Hidden Beach Recordings CD, 2001.

Officers were killed, among which were the two Doctors." Interestingly, "the Captain was wounded," but he "soon recovered" from his injuries.[3]

The slave trade relied upon the unmitigated use of violence. Although aggressive behaviors encompassed the fundamental nature of obtaining enslaved people, these tenuous human interactions took on a different tone once aboard slave ships. This chapter interrogates the *culture of violence* shaping the forcible movement of bondpeople out of West Africa. 'Violence' is broadly defined here to include the behaviors and acts carried out by enslaved Africans and white seamen that resulted in psychological torment, the spillage of blood and/or death. Despite the racial background of the perpetrator, the primary intention exerted was to control the black body. While seamen drew upon aggressive means to impose social order, domination, and in some cases revenge, bondpeople demonstrated their dissatisfaction with enslavement by reclaiming ownership of their bodies.

Considering these circumstances, the following chapter analyzes power and violence through three primary sections. The first examines violent influences sailors encountered traveling into Africa. The second explores the rape of black females and murder of enslaved infants. The final part addresses poison, abortion, and revolt that slaves employed to obtain their freedom. Central to these discussions are the punitive measures – physical and psychological – that crewmen used to manage disobedient slaves.

From the point of boarding Africans, violence became a permanent reality in which slave ships served as "mobile battlefields." As such, the constant threat of warfare

---

[3] *Virginia Gazette*, December 23, 1773

and bloodshed made the Middle Passage akin to a war zone. With riotous threats always looming, both captives and captors crossed the ocean vulnerable to the possibility of an outbreak. However, the battle lines upon which these bloody confrontations occurred, operated within the physical structure of ships, and upon the human terrain of slaves.

Whispers of Danger

Editorials chronicling the state of overseas trade were a common feature of 18th century newspapers. As competing slave trading nations became better familiarized with African entrepreneurial pursuits, these journalistic updates became one of the most valued aspects of oceanic endeavors. Stories highlighting unprecedented clashes of racial violence filled the pages of periodicals in places like: London, Liverpool, Bristol, Jamaica, Barbados, New England, and the southern colonies. Many of these editorials shaped literate populations across much of the Atlantic. However, these same narratives also held a critical function among other populations of people.

A diversity of readers scoured headlines covering recent slave trading affairs. Separated from husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons for months and years at a time, families of traveling crewmen anxiously read these reports with great interest. Letters penned at sea typically provided some comfort to those awaiting sailors' safe return. Weekly papers that reported ships' departure and port arrival proved useful. Much like seamen's families, merchants were also vested in receiving communication about their overseas investments. There is not an abundance of evidence; however during periodic lapses in communication, entrepreneurs were often forced to rely on correspondences from fellow investors and newspapers to gain information regarding their financed vessels, employees, and more important the status of their human 'cargo."

The British news source *Country Journal* regularly provided its readership an update of sailing vessels. On 2 November 1754 they reported "The Admiral Blake, Talbot, from the Bite with 225 slaves, the Alice and Robert, Jackson from the windward coast, with 225; the Spencer, Roberts, from ditto, with 209, and the Bridget, Hastings, from ditto, with 180 are arrived at Barbados."[4] Entries similar to this helped recount ship news and served the needs of many entrepreneurs – merchants and planters.[5] Readers also learned the deadly fate that befell employed sailors.

On the American side of the Atlantic, *The Boston Weekly Newsletter* gave startling news to its audience in April of 1731. They shared, "We hear from Rhode Island, that Capt. *George Scot* of that Place, who some time since went from thence to Guinea, and was returning with a Cargo of Negros," carried from Africa. During the crossing, an undisclosed number of captives "rose upon the said Commander & Company, and barbarously murder'd three of his Men," working on the ship. According to the account, "the said Captain and the rest of his company made their escape, tho' tis said they are all since dead," perhaps because of wounds incurred during the uprising. The article ended indicating "the Negro's we are inform'd were afterwards taken and made Slaves of by those of another Nation."[6] Narrations similar to the one offered here further impressed ideals of violent African societies. It also perpetuated the willingness of Africans to sell their own people into bondage; which probably further fueled justification for the slave trade.

---

[4] *The Country Journal or the Craftsman*, Saturday 2 November 1754.

[5] This news proved useful to investors, colonial factors, and planters looking to purchase viable slaves.

[6] *The Boston Weekly Newsletter*, 22 April to 29 April1731.

Reports of slave revolts frequently dominated trade news. Sailors were responsible for transporting a variety of goods ranging from different household items, foods, clothes, and other luxuries desired by merchants and colonists. However unlike inanimate material items, Africans posed the greatest obstacle to the successful sailing of different vessels because they were living and breathing 'merchandise.' The *British Gazetteer* briefly reported on 18 September 1756, "The Fortune and two other vessels are cut off by the negroes in the Gambia river."[7] Close to a decade later the *Boston Evening Post* received news from Newport identifying that "Capt. Hopkins in a Brig belonging to Providence arrived at Antigua from the Coast of Africa." The article outlined that "Soon after he left the coast, the Slaves rose upon the people." As a result, "80 of them [captives] were kill'd wounded and forced overboard by the captain and crew before the rest could be bro't to submit."[8] Captive insurgency underscored the often-dangerous sphere of violence many seamen confronted in the pursuit of profit.[9] The scholar Winston McGowan reminds us that perhaps "the act of resistance most feared by white slave traders" were the forceful means that bondpeople willingly exerted towards their liberation.[10]

Many stories of African filtered among sea-borne populations. Although illiterate in many regards, this did not prevent them from obtaining vital information concerning worldly events. Docked in similar ports for extended periods, these loading stations permitted the exchange of stories emanating from different societies. Once indoctrinated

---

[7] *Read's Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, 18 September 1756.

[8] *Boston Evening Post*, November 25, 1765.

[9] See Harvey Wish, "American Slave Insurrections Before 1861," *Journal of Negro History* 22 (July 1937), 300.

[10] Winston McGowan, "African Resistance to the Atlantic Slave Trade in West Africa," *Slavery and Abolition* 11 (May 1990), 19.

within the world of travel and trade, seamen formulated their own basis of obtaining news information particularly in the port communities where they interacted. Continued employment often created a sense of familiarity among various crewmen. In many cases seamen were well aware of the dangerous environment common to those whose livelihood was based upon the sea life. At the same time, they understood the duties and subsequent risks attached to their line of work; no matter if it was desired or not. With violence characterizing the nature of slave vessels, those employed aboard slave ships carried and transmitted their own version of different events that took place. [11]

These stories likely bore influence on the views seamen carried of Africa and local natives, only further shaping their approach to the trade. Disasters, both physical and environmental, attended seafaring life. Yet, slave ships held specialized dangers indigenous to the procurement, treatment, and transport of Africans.[12] For instance, in 1708 an agent of the Royal African Company relayed that the brigantine *Mary* endured "a Riseing on Board" the ship while docked in West Africa. As a consequence of the revolt, there were "Drowned 30 Men & 3 Women Slaves & 3 Dead of their wounds." The significant aspect to the story concerned the fact these motives were "occasioned by the Carlessness of y'e Men And the Brigantine not being provided for Defence ag't Such a Cargoe of Negros."[13] Although local authorities in Britain received word of this

---

[11] For further discussion of the unique maritime culture cultivated among seafarers, see Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World,* 1700-1750 (Cambridge University Press, 1987); David Cecleski, *Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina,* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail,* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007).

[12] Eric Taylor makes this same assertion with respect to African insurgency. See, Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 5.

[13] T 70/2 - Abstracts of Letters, From Sep. 30, 1707 To July 22, 1713 (PRO).

upheaval, it is likely the news filtered among those preparing for similar travels to Africa. Stories such as these offered interested sailors insight into the dangerous threats contained within the trade. They also probably fostered apprehension, further enforcing the necessary use of an aggressive posture with Africans – both natives and boarded slaves.

To provide some measure of protection, sailors typically carried weapons aboard ship. On many occasions captains stowed a range of guns to counter piracy and other unanticipated danger. For instance, during 1785-1790, a generated list based out of Newport reported the departure of several vessels out of the Rhode Island port designated for overseas trade. Of the ships listed, 11 traveled to Africa to participate in the coastal slave trade. Pertinent to this register is the glimpse offered into metal pieces held on several vessels. Among those that migrated out, only three reported sailing with guns.[14] In total three ships left manned with 45 sailors and 8 guns. The numbers appear meager in the broader enterprise of human sales. They also help to further confirm several other important details: the smaller operation of the American participation along with the violent preparations seamen implement throughout their oceanic travels.

It is probable to conclude that guns held a permanent place in the lives of enslaved people. They were repeatedly used as a means of procuring slaves, yet on other occasions firearms were also used to exert terror. Although holding a position of power as captain of the *Duke of Argyle*, John Newton still remained fearful of the threat several boarded slaves may wage. To counter any opportunities, on 7 December 1750 he explained "This day fixed 4 swivel blunderbusses in the barricado, which with the 2

[14] Newport Intendant of Trade, 1785-1790, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island.

carriage guns" they intended to "make a formidable appearance upon the main deck," with the various items. Newton was hopeful that this measure would "be sufficient to intimidate the slaves from any thoughts of insurrection" that might erupt.[15] Posting artillery helped to reinforce the symbolism of power and control that they sought over bondpeople. It is plausible other captains employed similar tactics. Yet there is no way of understanding if these tools were effective in deterring against any looming threats. Judging by the various deadly plots Newton faced, one can conclude that the risk of death among African captives did not always prove useful in countering their intention of obtaining freedom. Instead, it may have served as a catalyst for the creative and rather unpredictable methods captives used later within the passage.

Along with the use of weaponry, once slaves boarded ships, sailors typically enforced gendered separation to reduce any prospects for future rebellion. Some vessels had a high barricade constructed "as strongly put together as wood and iron can make it," so that, "the women cannot see the men, nor the men the women."[16] Carpenters were typically responsible for creating these structures. Following the arrival of the *Ranger* near Annamaboe Road, the captain logged on 25 January 1790 that the "Carpenter [began] building the Barricado."[17] These separations proved necessary to prohibit formulation of small bands of captives that crossed gendered lines. According to one captain, females were "carefully kept from the men" which he added, "I mean from the black men." Black males were the primary captives most feared by sailors.[18] Security

---

[15] Newton, *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade,* 22.

[16] Testimony of James Towne, *HCSP,* 82:22; See, Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 76.

[17] Log of the Slave Brig *Ranger* (LRO).

[18] John Newton articulated this fear while aboard the *African.* Although continuing to board slaves, he logged, "Having now 12 men slaves on board began this day with chains and sentrys." Newton, *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade,* 25.

concerns enforced the regular use of restraints during the passage. On the other hand, "the women, girls, and children are all at liberty" during a vessel's crossing "except when [crewmen] put them below at night, and lock[ed] them down."[19] Despite the illusion of 'freedom' this explanation supports the notion that, women and children could move freely unchained about the ship, most likely because of sailor perceptions of docility; particularly that of female captives.[20]

Cyclical Nature of Sexual Violence

Myths of black women's promiscuous nature often shaped the sexual mistreatment they confronted. Ideas that circulated concerning their hyper-sexuality likely helped to lure some sailors into the trade. On the other hand, elongated coastal stays in Africa created opportunities for sexual exploitation. For instance, while stationed at Annamaboe Fort in 1764, slave trader and former surgeon Archibald Dalzel wrote to a friend regarding his shore line observations. Although accustomed to the trade profits, he expressed "still there is something a wanting to compleat my wishes which is not to be had here." In going further he confessed, "I have been able as yet . . . to abstain from Amours with the black fair sex," to which he added, "tho' most of the Gentlemen here, have got wives."[21] One can rightfully infer that these extramarital affairs were with African women.

Sexual relations and "marital" arrangements often emerged from the influx of seamen, traders, and agents into West Africa. In fact, one scholar offers a grim

---

[19] Testimony of William Littleton, *HCSP,* 68: 292-293.

[20] Wilma King discusses the consistence of sexual exploitation bondwomen faced due to their enslaved status. See "'Mad' Enough to Kill: Enslaved Women, Murder, and the Southern Courts," *Journal of African American History* 92 (Winter 2007), 39.

[21] Letters of Archibald Dalzel, 1762-1807, (SJL); Marcus Rediker also found that seamen took an African "wife" during the passage. See Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, (New York: Viking Press, 2007), 161.

perspective of these interactions. He explains, "the usual custom was to discard such women at the end of a period of [African] coastal residence, and indeed to change them quite frequently at other times."[22] For Dalzel, it is impossible to draw a sense of how long his restraint lasted. Yet, the picture he provides concerning other Europeans' dealings with black women creates a viable opportunity to explore these coastal practices. Although the paucity of sources make it difficult to determine the frequency of these "relationships," historian Jennifer L. Morgan poignantly characterizes the hypocrisy Europeans faced in their interactions with black women. According to Morgan, the African female was a "body both desirable and repulsive, available and untouchable, productive and reproductive, and beautiful and black," which further drove not only the sexual lust, but also exploitation.[23] One can only speculate that these sexual encounters permitted traders' in some cases to cultivate closer ties with local African leaders.

Engagement in the seafaring world, particularly in West Africa, offered close contact with black females, helping to heighten sexual exploitation. In 1772, a Liverpool ship captain "had obtained a girl as a mistress for the time being from king Tom of Sierra Leone." According to a nearby witness, "instead of returning her on shore when he went away, as is usually done," going against customary practices "he took her away with him."[24] Further details of the woman's fate are unknown. However, the negotiated offering of this female provides a glimpse into the common use of African women as

---

[22] Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550-1807*, (London: Frank Cass & Company, 1978), 126.

[23] Jennifer L. Morgan, "Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder": Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1700," *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 54, 1(Jan., 1997), 170.

[24] Testimony of George Baillie, *HCSP*, 73: 208.

sexual objects during sailors' coastal stay. It also indicates that some sailors chose not to part with their African concubines.

This case can be analyzed in a variety of ways. It is probable that a relationship ensued between the ship captain and bondwoman. Yet, the female's removal may have stemmed from a range of reasons; she may have desired to leave her king, or the captain may have requested her companionship during the vessel's voyage.[25] Imbedded within the heart of this story is the phenomenon of loaning black women to white sailors. Even more telling is the operation of openly sexual relationships that would have only further justified assumptions of promiscuity about African females. According to one belief, "those of Africa," particularly the women "have the superiority over those of Europe, in the real passions they have for the men who purchase them."[26] This remark seems to suggest that black women somehow held inherent powers over their captors. The most damaging implications of these circulated ideologies were that they helped to provide rationalization for sexual aggression against African women. For this, historian Nell Irvin Painter reminds us that "submission and obedience [operated as] the core values of slavery," upon which all bondpeople, especially bondwomen were held in accordance.[27] As a result, female captives had few if any methods to escape sexual exploitation at coastal ports or on slaving vessels.

The additional oppression black women faced during slavery occurred because of objective accusations regarding their sexuality. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham contends

---

[25] See Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 241-243.

[26] Abbe Raynal, *Slave trade: A Full Account of This Species of Commerce; With Arguments Against it, Spirited and Philosophical.* (Southwark: T. Cox, 1792),35.

[27] Nell Irvin Painter, *Soul Murder and Slavery,* Charles Edmondson Historical Lecture Series, 15, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press), 9.; **See,** Edward E. Baptist, "Cuffy," "Fancy Maids," "One Eyed Men,": Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States, *The American Historical Review* 106, No. 5 (Dec., 2001): 1619-1650

that, "the social constructions and representation of black sexuality reinforced violence," and condoned the rape of black women.[28] Although stereotypical ideas concerning the sexual prowess of black men abounded; for black females, their existence, culture, and ultimately their bodies became viewed through a dual prism of both promiscuity and savagery. This is evidenced through the declaration, "African women are Negroes, savages, who have no idea of the nicer sensations which obtain among civilized people."[29] Creating a general yet debased understanding of African-descended women, these racialized and gendered stereotypes encouraged the use of rape as a mechanism of 'civilizing' female captives. It also further confirms the argument that "the most challenging task confronting black women under slavery was how to maintain a healthy opinion of themselves as sexual beings."[30]

Once taken aboard ship, the limited space of slave vessels exacerbated the double oppression many female captives confronted. Deborah Gray White argues that being both black and female, enslaved women were the most vulnerable group within antebellum slave communities.[31] This same analysis can be extended to their Atlantic experiences, considering that aboard one Dutch ship the female quarters were commonly referred to by the ship crew as, "the whore hole."[32] Although respective to the Dutch slave trade, this labeling – both literally and figuratively - provides a context for

---

[28] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," in Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reeds, eds., *'We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible': A Reader in Black Women's History,* (New York: Carlson Publication, Inc., 1995), 11.

[29] John Newton, *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade*, (London: J. Buckland, and J. Johnson, 1788), 105.

[30] Darlene Clark Hine, "Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silences: Black Women's History in Slavery and Freedom," in Darlene Clarke Hine, ed., *The State of the Afro-American Past, Present, and Future,* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 224.

[31] See White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985).

[32] Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 243.

comprehending the function bondwomen served within the minds of some seamen. As such, black women's bodies became largely sexualized. This recognition offers greater insight into the ill-treatment they faced at sea. Historian Jay Coughtry helped to further illuminate these slaving realities. A ship log he uncovered stated, "[t]his morning found our women Slave apartments had been opened before by some of the ship's crew, the locks being spoiled and sundered."[33] Bondwomen were liberated from the weighted hold of irons, yet this evidence reinforces the constant threat of sexual exploitation they confronted daily. Recognizing these dangerous environmental conditions, it is plausible many females conceivably traveled fearful of seamen's invasion of their quarters and their bodies, without prior warning or the possibility of protection.

In effort to obtain victims for their sexual desires, seamen often used violence to control sexual relationships with black women. These forceful measures typically occurred through rape, but it is difficult to recount the widespread dimensions of sexual exploitation within the trade.[34] Fortunately there remain a few viable sources permitting scholars the ability to begin this conversation. For instance, a 1753 ship log detailed that while employed aboard the vessel *African* sailor William Cooney felt liberated to seduce a bondwoman referred to as "number 83" who was described as "big with child."

---

[33] Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1800.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 11.

[34] The difficulties of ascertaining the full dimension of rape in the Middle Passage is because of two primary reasons. First, while some sailors committed sexual aggression in a public fashion, others did so in private. Secondly, ship captains were expected to maintain order over employed crewmen. Instances that resulted in the damage of captives due to sexual violence reported back to merchants would promote the idea of a commander's inability to maintain order. Therefore, to protect their reputation it is likely that slaving captains withheld such accounts, regardless of the perpetrator. Additionally, reports of dominance through sexual means exerted with black men remain a continued historical puzzle. James Sweet in his work however problematizes our understanding of the use of rape, forced breeding, and sadomasochism relative to bondwomen and bondmen within Brazilian slave communities. See, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770.* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Considering that these practices took place within the landscape of plantations, it is presumable that they also emerged aboard slave vessels.

Cooney became sexually aggressive with the female, forcing her "into the room and lay with her brute like in view of the whole quarter deck."[35] Beyond the fact the ship captain "put him [Cooney] in irons," we do not know if he faced additional punishment. Unashamed in his exploitation and rape of the female's body, his behaviors reveal that even pregnant females were not free from the sexual aggression of sailors.[36] Additionally, the public means Cooney expressed his misconduct further confirms the open nature of these practices within the slave trade.[37]

Regardless of age, sailors used unmitigated aggression to hold dominion over captive females. In one report, a ship captain, "mistreated a very pretty Negress, broke two of her teeth, and put her in such a state of languish that she could only be sold for a very low price at Saint Domingue, where she died two weeks later." Still unsatisfied, he "pushed his brutality to the point of violating a little girl of eight to ten years, whose mouth he closed to prevent her from screaming. This he did on three nights and put her in a deathly state."[38] These graphic accounts reveal the conquest some crew sought through the rape of black females, both young and old, pregnant or not.[39] Cramped amidst overcrowded ships, the crew had unabated access to female captives. Aggressive behaviors committed against female slaves remained a staple feature of the Middle Passage. The long reaching affects of these physical and psychologically violent acts

---

[35] John Newton Manuscript Journal 1750-1754, Log/M/46, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.

[36] Wendy Anne Warren in her recent article offers the point that pregnancy could somehow keep enslaved black women free from repeated attacks of rape. See Warren, "Rape of a Slave in Early New England Slavery," *Journal of American History*, 93 (March 2007), 1047. The present study departs from this particular view arguing that as human chattel, bondpeople were never free from the lash of violence – sexual or otherwise – regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, or even if they were carrying unborn children.

[37] Painter, *Soul Murder and Slavery,* 10.

[38] Robert Stein, *The French Slave Trade In the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 101.

[39] Wilma King makes the assertion that regardless of race or age, women were often subjected to sexual abuses mitigated by both black and white men. See "'Mad' Enough to Kill," 158.

were the influence they had on future sexual relationships black women engaged in on land. No matter if their partners were white or black, one can speculate that their shipboard experiences inflicted permanent scars of fear and anger, and we know from plantation histories that these behaviors continued in New World societies.[40]

For many ship crew, raping black women provided temporary ownership over their bodies. Surgeon Alexander Falconbridge explained that on slave vessels he formerly serviced, "the common sailors are allowed to have intercourse with such of the black women whose consent they can procure." This observation push several thorny questions to the forefront: Were African women asked for their consent? Did they have the opportunity to say "no?" And if they did, were their wishes honored? If not, did their punishment result in rape? One can only conclude that black women were never given the opportunity to voice their preferences on these practices. Instead, throughout much of the passage crewmen were "permitted to indulge their passions among them at pleasure. . . ."[41] Although serving as middle men in the supplying of human bodies, slave ship sailors were able to assert varying means of power through their interactions with enslaved people. These positions of domination operated differently with bondwomen in which

[40] This point builds upon the assertion Wendy Anne Warren poses in relation to the rape of enslaved women. She suggests that, "maybe rape meant little to a woman fully immersed in one of the most violent enterprises the world has ever known" and that as "a proven survivor" these varied victims perhaps "took the rape in stride..." See "Rape of a Slave in Early New England," 1047. Although the argument could be made that repeated sexual attacks may have induced feelings of numbness, the author of this study argues it is difficult to presume these women became accustomed to these violent attacks. For discussion of the long term affects regarding sexual exploitation, see Nell Painter, *Soul Murder and Slavery*; Darlene Clark Hine offers details concerning gender relations based on sex common between black women and men during bondage. See, "Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silences," 226.

[41] Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, (London: AMS, 1788) 23-24.

they often became 'sexual hostages,' to more than one seaman prior to their Atlantic arrival.[42]

The realties of inter-racial sexual encounters illuminate the power dynamics in place between seamen and female captives. As 'slaves,' bondwomen were deemed voiceless, and as such their protest and resistance were futile. Moving across the Atlantic traveling from port to port, in many cases sailors were not held accountable for the resulting implications – pregnancy or venereal diseases - capable of erupting from the violence imposed upon black females.[43] These realities underscore the dual 'rite' in place for bondwomen and their captors. For white seamen, the bonded status of black women gave them an opportunity which gave them their perceived 'right' to violate captives. Quobna Ottobah Cugoano attested to these perceived freedoms seamen held, recollecting "it was common for the dirty filthy sailors to take the African women and lie upon their bodies."[44] While it can be argued that damaged psyches emanating from the circumstances of slavery caused some women to use sexual relationships with their captors for personal gain; rape for female captives became akin to a violent 'rite of passage.' These introductions foreshadowed the cycle of sexual aggression many of these women endured or bore witness to upon their arrival on New World plantations.[45]

---

[42]Darlene Clark Hine employs the concept of 'sexual hostage.' See "Rape and The Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West," *Signs*, 14, (Summer 1989): 915.

[43] Hazel Carby analyzes this phenomenon through the context of master-slave relationship within the American plantation system. See, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, (Oxford University Press, 1987), 27. The author of this study takes a much broader view to understand this dynamic suggesting that with possible different sexual partners some black women may have endured within the slave trade, seamen were at liberty to flee or even return to Africa to embark upon new forced relationships without the threat of political, economic, or social liability. This process was permitted largely due to the differing status of seamen and female captives within slave societies.

[44] Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts And Sentiments On The Evil of Slavery*. (Penguin Books, 1999; originally published 1787), 15.

[45] King originates this concept of "rite" and its relation to the sexual exploitation of black females within plantation slavery. For further discussion, see "'Mad' Enough to Kill," 40.

During times of warfare, sexually aggressive motives are often seen as *by-products* of war. Elaine Scarry offers a salient point that, "[t]he language of 'by-product' denotes 'accidental,' 'unwanted,' 'unsought,' 'unanticipated,' and 'useless.'"[46] Considering that rape and the threat of sexual violence served as the tools of terror and power commonly used against black women, these measures were far from undesired or devoid of intent. Slave trader John Newton underscored this, indicating that "when the women and girls are taken on board a ship, naked, trembling, terrified. . .they are often exposed to the wanton rudeness of white savages." He concluded, "[t]he poor creatures cannot understand the language they hear, but the looks and manner of the speakers are sufficiently intelligible." For any female captive, language barriers and more importantly the circumstances of captivity likely made them fearful of any interactions with their sea-borne transporters. Newton also went on to share that once boarded, "the prey [of black women] is divided upon the spot, and only reserved till opportunity offers."[47] These *opportunities* stemmed from the frequent accessibility crewmen had to bondwomen's bodies without the threat of interference, due to regular practices of gendered separation. The wooden decks of slave ships often became the spatial battlefield upon which captives and sailors positioned themselves in defense or offense of their respective interests; for seamen in particular, these battle lines extended even further onto the bodies of enslaved women.

Along with rape, in some cases, specialized roles were used to maintain black women's allegiance to seamen. Ties of loyalty were presumed much easier to forge among bondwomen. This is demonstrated through the assertion that, "[t]he happy

---

[46] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World,* (New York: Oxford University, 1985), 73.

[47] Newton, *Thoughts Upon the Slave Trade*, 105.

discovery and prevention of conspiracies that would have destroyed all their oppressors by the hands of their slaves, hath been owing to the faithful attachment of these negro women."[48] The offered presumption advocates belief of a contradictory and rather vindictive role some African women willingly held. At this same time, it is also enforces belief of black women as the 'weaker sex.'[49] In exchange for their presumed loyalty, on several occasions different roles were distributed to female captives once at sea. Thomas Trotter recounted the role of interpreter one black woman held on a vessel he serviced. Dealing with seamen on a regular basis, her primary duty involved providing ship officers with information concerning the melancholic disposition of captives.[50]

Another case involving the shipboard use of a bondwoman occurred on the vessel *Nightingale*. Henry Ellison offered descriptions of this female. She was, as he relayed, one "whom we called the boatswain of the rest" of the slaves aboard. Although similarly bonded, she "used to keep them quiet when in the rooms, and when they were on deck likewise." Her duties however were short lived when "one day [she] disobliged the second mate," and as a result of blatant disobedience "he gave her a cut or two with a cat he had in his hand." Perhaps perceiving this as mistreatment "[s]he flew at him with great rage, but he pushed her away from him," and as Ellison declared, the crewman "struck her three or four times with the cat very smartly." Yet, recognizing that, "she could not have her revenge of him, she sprung two or three feet on deck, and dropped

---

[48] Raynal, *Slave Trade: A Full Account of This Species of Commerce; With Arguments Against it, Spirited and Philosophical,* 35.

[49] Ken Marshall discusses the presumption of women as the weaker sex, which he argues is predicated on "the chauvinistic belief that the physically weaker females represented little if any real threat to the armed crew's safety." See, "Powerful, Righteous: The Transatlantic Survival and Cultural Resistance of an Enslaved African Family in Eighteenth-Century New Jersey," *Journal of American Ethnic History,* 23 (Winter 2004), 32.

[50] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP,* 73:86.

down dead. She was thrown overboard in about half an hour after, and tore to pieces by the sharks."[51]

One can presume these offered duties shielded this and other bondwomen from any threats of danger. However, considering the constant threats of danger common in the lives of bondpeople, this does not seem probable. As clearly evidenced, if these 'trusted' female captives displayed any behaviors counter to the sailor's expectations, they endured immediate punishment for their actions, despite the risk of death. The punishments used against unyielding females reinforce the dynamics in place between captive and captor. Likewise, it is important to highlight that seamen's allocation of these 'special' roles set into motion prescribed boundaries encased bondwomen.

Sailors' distribution of material items also sought to enforce bondwomen's obedience. In one example several seamen held a purchased female captive "prey of the ship's officers," explaining to her she would be "in danger of being flogged to death if she resisted." Upon acquiescing to the men's demands, this entitled her to "a handful of beads or a sailor's kerchief to tie around her waist."[52] These practices were not uncommon within the Middle Passage. Merchants during the latter part of the eighteenth century affirmed this commonality. In their description they shared, "The women & girls divert themselves. . .and amuse themselves with arranging fanciful ornaments for their persons with beads" which as they determined "they are plentifully supplied with."[53] A surgeon of the trade echoed these sentiments commenting that some females were "furnished with beads for the purpose of affording them some diversion," therefore once

---

[51] Testimony of Henry Ellison, *HCSP,* 73: 375.

[52] Daniel Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865*. (New York: Viking Press, 1962), 113.

[53] Add. 18272, Collections Relating to the Slave Trade , 1775-1788 (BL)

given, it seemed to reduce any further internal squabbles.[54] Both observations promote the idea that regardless of age, bondwomen were easily manipulated by materialism. These perspectives would have further solidified the belief of female docility and cooperation. Yet, the distribution of various trinkets across different voyages seems to also suggest the operation of psychological abuse.

Inherent dangers lurked beneath the distribution of material objects. In some instances they fostered an environment of division among boarded captives, due in large part to the debased status that the institution of slavery forced bondpeople. However, stripped of virtually everything following their initial capture, it is probable that receipt of such tokens instilled a desire to hold dear to certain items; especially those believed to originate in their former homelands. These gifts also created silent dangers in the lives of females, helping to declare symbolic ownership. As such, the mere display of material items across any woman's bodies could at any given point within their passage give the impression of total possession by seamen; with the intention of deterring any other interested parties. In taking a broad view on the centrality of sexual violence within the Middle Passage, these tactics probably proved useless in shielding black women from other sailors.

Violence and the Limits of Black Motherhood

In addition to shielding themselves against violence, some female captives also faced the responsibility of protecting their offspring. Pregnancy among many West African women traditionally served as a rite of passage.[55] Taking great pride in the

---

[54] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 23.

[55] John Mbiti offers a useful analysis of the interplay of communalism and the spiritual linkages connected with pregnancy and motherhood within traditional West African societies. See Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (New York, NY: Anchor, 1970).

opportunities for motherhood, sentiments of joy and accomplishment often permeated the birth of their newborns. As the maternal link strengthened, "the African mother became the watchdog for her children."[56] Yet, the slave trade and slavery created an environment that jeopardized slaves' familial ties.

Children were also included as ship "cargo," although many times numerically lower in contrast to adult slaves. Infants in the arms of bondwomen were the most critical. One slave trader explained that he witnessed close to 40 children included as purchased slaves. Out of that number, he estimated "between thirty and forty, both boys and girls, some sucking at their mother's breast."[57] Another slave ship surgeon added that he witnessed, "four or five born on board" during a ship's voyage. Separations of Africans families persisted within the trade. However, exceptions were typically made for "sucking children, who went with their mothers."[58] Despite the circumstances of bondage, some enslaved women were granted the opportunity to attend to the duties of parenting. One could presume that traders were somehow sensitive to these familial connections; however this was far from the truth.

Biased ideals condemning black women and mothering often abounded. Slave trader John Fountain believed that African females did not have feelings for their children. He contended, "I do not apprehend they have any such fine feelings" which he added, "if they had, they would not treat them [children] in the manner they do." Further bolstering the idea of their innate lack of nurturing, Fountain relayed, "a Black woman would think very little of pouring a spoonful of brandy into a child's mouth of two or three months old, at the breast." He did not detail how he came to these particular

---

[56] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 107.
[57] Testimony of William Dove, *HCSP*, 73: 82-83.
[58] Testimony of Isaac Parker, *HCSP*, 73:125.

conclusions. Yet, one can speculate that he may have observed an enslaved mother attempt to give the only drink available for her child during bondage. Whether depravity ensued or not, Fountain reasoned that these maternal deficiencies originated from common practices of polygamy.[59] As evidenced, the circumstances of slavery perpetuated ideals of African inferiority. This case seems to further the notion regarding maternal ignorance bondwomen exhibited with their children.

Exaggerated conclusions concerning black females and their parental abilities were common. During his stay in the Gold Coast region of West Africa, Archibald Dalzel observed indigenous culture. In 1763 he sent a letter to a friend confessing, "I made a kind of promise, to give you an account of the manners &c of my black neighbours." He spoke at length on the agricultural and religious practices among the Fantee people. According to him, "The Blacks are great likers of European Liquors and Tobacco." Building upon this belief, he asserted that because of these preferences, it did not seem abnormal to observe "a Boy of 5 years of age, smoke a pipe" who in his view did so "as greatly, as a London Alderman. . . ." Along with the young child he also witnessed, "a Child in its mothers arms, drink a Dram."[60] From the outset, Dalzel's observations call attention to prevailing consumptive patterns among African children. His judgment spoke volumes to black women and the lack of innate nurturing they seemed to profess. Therefore, according to his understanding, they would have been virtually indifferent to any life threatening behaviors their children seemed to engage.

Once displaced within the Middle Passage, the emotional behaviors female captives regarding their offspring countered these stereotypes. According to one scholar,

---

[59] Testimony of John Fountain, *HCSP*, 68: 278-279.
[60] Letters of Archibald Dalzel, 1762-1807, (SJL).

slavery did not permit bondwomen much room to express compassion regarding their children for the fear of perceptions of weakness.[61] However, the maternal ties black females overtly expressed for their children during slavery counters this idea. For instance, slave trader James Towne pointed out, "it is a very rare matter for any captains of Guineaman that they ever buy women with children" because of instances when "their infants died, they grieved after them, and died themselves."[62] Death severed the physical connections they shared with their children; yet slaving did not disrupt the unbreakable bond females forged with their offspring. In fact, in some cases, the death of their children inflicted mental imbalances among bondwomen similar to symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and postpartum depression. In attempting to provide care for their children, this made them even more vulnerable to the brutalities of slavery.

Under the violent tutelage of enslavement, female captives faced significant challenges while shielding their young offspring. In 1789, abolitionists Moses Brown and William Rotch, Jr. exchanged correspondence regarding the state of international slave trading affairs.[63] Rotch explained to Brown his interest in "endeavouring to find what instances of barbarity could be substantiated" that occurred aboard New England slave vessels. He highlighted a case involving a seaman who had "thrown a child overboard" a slave ship. According to his understanding, this man "succeeded to the Command . . . by the death of the Cap'n & Mate." During the ship's passage the sailor

---

[61] Paula Giddings pushes this particular argument concerning bondwomen and the emotional ties to their children. For further discussion see, *When and Where I Enter*, 45; The author of this study does not agree with that position because despite bondage many women sought to shield their child from the brutalities of enslavement. In so doing, many women willingly risked their lives for their children, which was due in large part to the maternal connection they sought to continue to foster. See also, King, *Stolen Childhood.*

[62] Testimony of James Towne, *HCSP*, 82:22.

[63] For further discussion of the abolitionist activities of Moses Brown (Rhode Island) and William Rotch (Newbedford, MA), see Mary Ricketsen Bullard, *Robert Stafford of Cumberland Island: Growth of a Planter*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 34.

used the new position to his advantage where, according to Rotch, he "was so inhuman as to take a child by the feet whose crying afflicted him & repeatedly whipd it before its mother & once made an attempt to burn it by thrusting it into the Caboose."[64] Black women understood and readily accepted the responsibilities of preserving their children's lives. This case elucidates the trauma some bondwomen faced through sailor's mistreatment of their offspring. Even more, crewmen's use of aggressive tactics exhibited blatant rejection of the natural parental rights females had, forcing them to confront extreme limits of motherhood.

Bondage fostered the practice of devaluing children through physical violence. Captain John Ashley Hall shared a case involving an enslaved child estimated "about six weeks old who was sold during coastal sales with his mother. Surviving evidence does not indicate the amount of time that passed until the bondwoman and her child were transported off shore. However, once aboard, "the child was very cross from indisposition" in which he "made much noise at night." Because of the baby's offensive cries, the ship's boatswain "wished very much to have permission to throw it [sic] overboard" to free himself from any continued disturbance. It would be useful to know how the child's mother sought to quiet her child. She probably recognized the embroiling rage emanating from the child's cries. However the sailor sought approval for his deadly intentions. "[H]e even solicited the captain for that permission," which according to Hall he made a plea contending the infant would not survive the oceanic passage. Furthering his case, he added that "if it [sic] did it [sic] would not fetch nothing in the West Indies." Much to his dismay, the attending captain received the sailor's

[64] Moses Brown Papers, (JCBL).

request "with horror and detestation."[65] The written record does not indicate the grounds upon which the attending commander disagreed. Therefore, we are unsure if it was due to the loss of money anticipated through the child's death or if he somehow reasoned this act could inflict grief upon the enslaved mother. Although details of the case remain murky, the seamen's impulse to rid the ship of the noisome child reveals several important factors. His behaviors clearly demonstrate the low value that traders held infant children. Likewise, it also reveals the liberty some sailors felt in drawing upon murder in effort to restore ship order.

Slavery often facilitated the physical separation of black women from their children through death. A former participant of the trade, Isaac Parker, shared the case involving the purchase of a female captive with her nine month old son by a slave trader known as Captain Marshall. Following the conclusion of business, he transferred the pair aboard his vessel *The Black Joke*. During the ship's passage, Marshall took particular interest in the bondwoman's son. This probably was because, "The child took sulk, and would not eat." As a result of the boy's protest, the captain "took the child up in his hands" and flogged him with a cat'o nine tails. Several bondpeople witnessed the young captive's beating, where "[t]hey saw it through a barricade, looking through the crevices" and as a result, "they made a great murmuring, and did not seem to like it."

The young boy's punishment seemingly altered Marshall's approach thereafter. He discovered "the child had swelled feet" which he directed the ship's cook "to put on some water to heat to see if he could abate the swelling." Once the water boiled, he "ordered the child's feet to be put into the water, and the cook putting his finger in the water, said, 'Sir, it is too hot.'" Marshall responded, "'Damn it, never mind it, put the

[65] Testimony of Captain John Ashley Hall, *HCSP*, 72: 27.

feet in,' and in so doing, the skin and nails came off" of the young boy's feet. Perhaps intending to appease the child's wounds, Marshall "got some sweet oil and cloths and wrapped round the [boy's] feet in order to take the fire out of them." Additionally, on several occasions he laid the boy "on the quarter deck in the afternoon at mess time," and offered him foods including "[r]ice mixed with palm oil," however the child continued to refuse. This enraged Marshall further and he "took the child up again, and flogged it [sic], and said, 'Damn you, I will make you eat'. . . ." The physical mistreatment he used against the boy continued for "four or five days at mess time, when the child would not eat" any offered provisions. Intending to invoke greater discipline, Marshall "tied a log of mango, eighteen or twenty inches long, and about twelve or thirteen pound weight, to the child by a string round its neck." As Parker observed, "The last time he [the captain] took the child up and flogged it [sic], and let it [sic] drop out of his hand, 'Damn you (says he) I will make you eat, or I will be the death of you;' and in three quarters of an hour after that the child died."

Instead of designating a member of the ship crew to dispose of the young boy's body, Marshall "called the mother of the child to heave it [sic] overboard." The bondwoman "was not willing to do so" and as a consequence the captain flogged her until she obeyed his demands. Upon acquiescing "she took it [sic] in her hand, and went to the ship's side, holding her head on one side because she would not see the child go out of her hand, and she dropped the child overboard." Marshall forced this woman to bury her son in a makeshift watery grave. His treatment greatly affected her where shortly afterwards, according to Marshall, she "seemed very sorry, and cried for several

hours."[66] Seamen regularly used physical and psychological violence to solidify the boundaries of control used against bondpeople. For this black mother in particular, however, witnessing the use of aggressive tactics against her child with little or no recourse for prevention only exacerbated the trauma she experienced. Beyond the death of her son, this woman's fate is unknown. One can only imagine how difficult it was to mourn her son on ship in the Middle Passage. It is plausible that the loss of her child kept her in a fragile state, forcing attendance to her depressed condition. We can also presume that she carried this life altering event with her into her future slave community.

Violence committed against children in front of their mothers was a common practice in the trade. John Newton described an account involving a "mate of a ship in a long boat" engaged in slave trading on the West African coast. During negotiations the seaman "purchased a young woman, with a fine child, of about a year old, in her arms." Perhaps due to extended coastal business duties, he elected to stay on the coast and because of this he stowed the bondwoman and her son in close quarters with him on the "long boat." Later that evening, "the child cried much and disturbed his [the mate's] sleep." As a result, the seaman "rose up in great anger, and swore, that if the child did not cease making such a noise, he would presently silence it." The toddler's mother likely extended the meager care bondage permitted in order to quiet the young boy and prohibit any further threats. It is also plausible that she permitted her child's cries to continue, further enforcing her resistance to captivity. Yet, these efforts went to no avail; her son continued to cry and the sailor "rose up a second time, tore the child from the mother, and threw it [sic] into the sea." Having been subjected to the loss of her child in such a traumatic manner, Newton pointed out, "it was not so easy to pacify the woman. . .

[66] Testimony of Isaac Parker, *HCSP,* 73:124-5; 129-130.

." This grief-stricken mother expressed sorrow, which further enraged the attending sailor. Yet, due to the fact, "she was too valuable to be thrown overboard," the seaman was therefore "obliged to bear the sound of her lamentations, till he could put her on board his ship."[67]

Brutalities committed against children during slavery are often attributed to the behaviors of bondwomen. The above testimonies counter this dominant narrative, highlighting the burden of trauma, pain, and loss, which characterized the experiences of some enslaved mothers. Female captives confronted hierarchies of racialized power as they sought to shield their children from seamen's excessive use of violence. Far from accidental, however, these disciplinary measures deliberately sought to foster fear and social order among bondwomen and their fellow shipmates.

In many instances, children represented long-term investments within the system of slavery. To the contrary, ship captains viewed their inclusion as 'cargo' quite differently. The demanding responsibility required of infant care forced seamen to often turn to bondwomen's nurturing abilities. This is confirmed through the coastal activities of British slave trader William Snelgrave. After negotiating to purchase an infant child, he instructed a crewman to "pitch on some motherly Woman, to take care of this poor Child." The accompanying seaman responded "He had already one in his Eye."[68] Much like other traders, Snelgrave sought to reduce the duties expected of him at sea. To be sure, sailors commonly forced females to serve as mothers or care-givers of enslaved children; whether related by blood or not. These same practices foreshadow the idea of fictive kin widespread within plantation communities.

---

[67] Newton, *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade,* 104.

[68] William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1971; originally published 1734), 12-13.

If a child exhibited any sort of disobedience, sailors revoked these motherly duties opting to take matters into their own hands. Some sailors used varied aggressive means to inflict discipline, yet to invoke greater fear others relied on the use of deadly force. Through the process female captives and their children found themselves traumatized by physical violence. Once murdered, enslaved infants became the 'sacrificial tokens' symbolically reminding black women of the limits of their parental control, while also enforcing greater restriction among remaining captives. Bonded children, and newborns in particular, held a lower value than their enslaved mothers. Therefore, Wilma King makes the observation, "enslaved infants were economically worthless to owners at their birth because they were not productive laborers."[69] Perhaps in holding to this understanding, sailors viewed these younger slaves as 'disposable property.' Conceived as virtually expendable, this permitted the use of physical action against them, which bondwomen could not prohibit.

The Art of Subversive Resistance

Considering the violent traumas compounding bondpeople, it forces one to question, how did they respond to their imposed captivity? From the moment of their capture they asserted belief in autonomy through the resistive motives they utilized. Ship revolts are often associated as the primary means slaves used to gain freedom. Although widespread as a tactic used once aboard ship, there were also other insubordinate behaviors carried out. Placing African insurgency within the broad discourse of violence allows us to consider other ulterior modes of resistance including poisoning and abortion.

Poisoning encompassed one of the covert strategies some captives employed although it is difficult to trace. This technique ignited widespread panic across plantation

[69] Wilma King, "'Mad' Enough to Kill,'" 47

communities however these same fears filtered among sailors. For instance, an American seaman traveling in 1796 on the sloop *Dolphin* logged that an enslaved female and male were able to "fetch some poison" in order "to put into some rice that was on the fire. . . ." The ingredients used for the duo's plot remain unclear and we also do know how they circumvented the gender-segregation among purchased slaves. Yet, their collaborative efforts enraged the crew and they "whipt them severely."[70] The couple's attempted plot exposes the premeditated and coercive measures both bondmen and bondwomen engaged for their liberation. Their administered punishment further highlights the terror in place among the ship's sailors, which conceivably caused the inherent challenges of detecting use of these toxins.

John Newton described a similar episode involving the use of poison on his vessel *Duke of Argyle*. On 16 June 1751, he recorded, "we were alarmed with a report that some of the Men Slaves had found means to poison the water in the scuttle casks upon deck." After investigating the plot, Newton surmised, "they had only conveyed some of their Country fetishes, as they call them, or talismans into one of them," which he downplayed as harmless, concluding, "they had the credulity to suppose must inevitably kill all who drank of it."[71] The conspiracy shaping the experiences of Newton and his fellow crewmen illuminates the carryover of Africans' cultural knowledge of herbs – albeit for deadly repercussions. Yet, his dismissal of the used medicinal tactics as mere 'country fetishes' gives further validity to the 'competing cultural meanings of poisoning' John Savage contends filtered between bondpeople and white populations.[72] Therefore,

---

[70] Ship Logs, Sloop *Dolphin* 1795-1797 (RIHS).

[71] John Newton Manuscript Journal, 1750-1754 (NMM).

[72] John Savage, "'Black Magic' and White Terror: Slave Poisoning and Colonial Society in Early 19th Century Martinique" *Journal of Social History* 40, 3 (2007), 646.

while Newton's reflection appears to dispel the importance of these life-threatening episodes; for Africans, the philosophical beliefs they carried concerning the relationship of ritual and the supernatural empowered their use of such methods.

The motivating factors prompting Africans' use of poison and the techniques used are a mystery. Instead of targeting the complete overthrow of slavery, poisoning created an equal if not greater threat to the lives of sailors. Thus, to some, poisoning represents "one of the most logical and lethal methods of resistance."[73] The difficulties attended with tracing the origins of this creative practice gives credence to the possibility that perhaps other occurrences arose that are not recorded. "Slaves struck frequently at the opposing white world," although often in modes challenging to predict.[74] Discovery of these two plots reveal the malicious intentions exerted by some people, yet one can reason that the overarching intent of captives did not involve getting caught. Regardless of the underlying motives, these unpredictable motives created an environment of fear among seamen.[75]

Another method of subversive resistance utilized, particularly among bondwomen, involved gynecological resistance.[76] Commonly recognized as a plantation phenomenon and rare within many ship records, some black women asserted reproductive control over their offspring through abortion. In April of 1793, after finalizing sales, the ship *Sane* set sail. Several weeks into the passage, a pregnant female

---

[73]Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina From 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion,* (New York: Knopf), 289.

[74]Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 392.

[75]Carol E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution From Below,* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press), 66.

[76] Darlene Clark Hine and Kate Wittenstein originated the concept of 'gynecological resistance.' For an expanded discussion, see "Female Slave Resistance: The Economics of Sex," in Filomina Chioma Steady, ed., *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally* (Cambridge MA: Schenkman, 1981), 289-300.

captive elected to abort her unborn child. Complications arose from her dangerous efforts and on 18 April she died.[77] A similar experience took place three years later aboard the ship *Mary*. In this case, another female willingly used her body as a site of resistance by aborting her child. Much like her fellow captive, these drastic measures led to her death two months later.[78]

Inclusion of these pregnant women within the trade and the death they suffered as a result of their resistive actions raises several questions. Did both women enter the trade pregnant? Or were their children perhaps conceived during their coastal holdings? How far along were they in their pregnancy? What methods did the attending surgeon use to determine abortion as the cause of their deaths? Further details illuminating the intricacies of these bondwomen's cases remain untold. Yet, the behavior they displayed demonstrates their unwillingness to permit their unborn children to bear the pain of captivity. Testimony of their defiance also indicates that some female captives boldly engaged in reproductive politics against their enslavers, even at the risk of their *own* mortality. Reclaiming gynecological agency, their acts ensured that their children never bore witness to the traumas of bondage.

African women were often known for possessing herbal knowledge and in many cases serving in various roles of spirituality. These realms of expertise may have granted some bondwomen familiarity with terminating unwanted pregnancies.[79] Yet, it remains

---

[77] Certificate of Slaves Taken on Board Ships., (HLRO)

[78] Series of Mortality Lists, (HLRO)

[79] Several scholars have considered slaveholder's recognition of bondwomen's knowledge on how to terminate unwanted pregnancies. See, White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 84-88; Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 114; and Barbara Bush, "Women, Childbirth, and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies," in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene, eds., *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, (Indiana University Press, 1996), 204-205.

an incredible challenge to uncover how these females succeeded in their resistive efforts. Therefore, it is unknown whether they somehow ingested an herbal remedy, or if they creatively gained access to a piece of wood or rusted tool on board, which they forced into her bodies, taking the life of her children, and likely causing them to expel large amounts of blood. Perhaps most salient to the motives of these enslaved mothers is that the freedom they sought for their unborn children interestingly became the same fate they also shared.

Rebellious Confrontations

In contrast to unpredictable motives, other bondpeople drew upon direct and rather confrontational routes to freedom through ship rebellions. These aggressive assertions illustrated the unending quest sought for control of their lives. John Bell, a physician aboard the slave ship, *Thames,* remarked on the devastation of these particular motives. In 1776 an insurrection broke out prior to the vessel's coastal departure to which he reported, "the Voyage has been attended with nothing but losses & disappointments." In his description he detailed, "on Friday the 8th Inst' we had the misfortune to lose 36 of the best slaves we had by an Insurrection." The rebellion broke out "when there was only the Boatswain, Carpenter, and 3 White People & myself on board" following their passage up the coast from Accra. As Bell indicated, "[w]e had 160 Slaves on board & were that day lett out of the Deck Chains in order to wash, [where] advantaged by this They began by rising" against their captors. There is no direct evidence describing the various tools the captives gained access to helping to assist

---

Ken Marshall also offers further discussion of spiritual mediums some African women played within West African societies. See, "Powerful and Righteous," 34. These knowledge systems could have presumably bestowed some of these women with expertise in various areas that they carried aboard slave ships and into enslaved communities.

in their rebellious efforts. The battle however carried on "for upwards of 40 Minutes," when the captives "f[ound] they could not effect it all the Fantee & Most of the Accra Men Slaves jumped overboard" probably to reach the nearby coastal line. Amidst suppression of the revolt, the ship crew discovered "34 Men & Men boys w't 2 women a rising," to join their shipmates. Thwarting their efforts, several seamen "fired 2 magnets amongst them" to quell any developing possibilities for insubordinate behavior.

Although uncommon for many accounts of ship rebellions, Bell also offered discussion regarding the presence of female captives during the revolt. He wrote:

> ". . .had the woman assisted them in all probability your property here at this time would have been but small, The woman having no hand in it was owing to their having no time to consult about it, as their riseing at that time was entirely owing to there being so many white people out of the vessel, /which they said themselves/ though they had 2 or 3 times before been going to attempt it, The only reason we can give for their attempting any thing of the kind, is, their being wearied at staying so long on board the ship, those left will give no reason for their riseing, but lay the blame entirely on those thats lost...."[80]

Recognizing the rebellious intent among these bondpeople, his report counters prevailing misconceptions of obedience among female captives. The inclusion and subsequent involvement of bondwomen on the vessel verifies that occasionally they, like their male counterparts, contemplated and participated in open engagements of resistance. It would be useful to ascertain the motivating factors along with the schematic plans they devised. However, the inability of Bell and other slave traders to fully consider the implications of enslavement placed upon bondpeople forced them, as indicated above, to characterize these defiant behaviors and rebellious intentions as stemming from fatigue or anxiousness.

Another bold testament of open warfare that crossed gendered lines occurred in 1721 aboard the slaver *Robert*. Departing from Sierra Leone, this ship set sail carrying

---

[80] Peleg Clarke Papers, (NHS)

30 Africans. Five of the captives, including an enslaved woman, planned to overthrow the crew and return to their former homelands. The female, being unbound on the main deck, served as a spy. Much like plantation owners, seamen traveling aboard slave ships "were never. . .in control as fully as they would have liked."[81] Evident in the fact that once she determined the crew were asleep, the insurgent bondwoman successfully brought, "a Hammer at the same time (all the Weapons that she could find) to execute the Treachery."[82] In the end only the female and two other men elected to follow through with the surprise attack. Despite the attempts waged for freedom with the small army, the ship crew quickly suppressed their efforts. The willingness the bondwoman displayed in this case confirms the vital role women played in the implementation of slave ship rebellions. Additionally, her ability to travel unchained in contrast to her male co-conspirators attests to the presumed docility seamen held of certain captives, namely women and children.[83] Housed in quarters often near the storage room, through their premeditative intent, some African women willingly sacrificed their lives for the good of the revolt and the hope of liberating their enslaved cohorts.

Pertinent to our discussion is the 'counter-resistance' the sailor waged against the primary insurgents. The ship captain, listed as Harding, began enforcing his punishment with the two bondmen actively involved. He ordered several seamen to "whip and scarify them only." Interestingly, three other captives accused of serving as "Abettors, but not Actors" were sentenced to death. Before their execution, and likely to further

---

[81] David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993), 171.

[82] John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies*, (London: Ward and Chandler, 1735), 72.

[83] Wish, "American Insurrections Before 1861," 300.

enforce their dehumanization, they were made to "first eat the Heart and Liver of one of them [sailors] killed."

The imposing sentence the bondwoman received was equally as unforgiving as her male counterparts. In fact, the discipline used against her confirms the frequent use of public displays of brutality aboard slave ships. She was, "hoisted up by the Thumbs, whipp'd, [and] slashed...with Knives, before the other Slaves till she died."[84] This operated much like a triple punishment for her role in the attempted revolt. Flogged, cut, and murdered in view of the entire ship, in all probability her punishment served as a mechanism of reform and deterrence for others. The scars and ultimate destruction inflicted upon the female's body reinforces that "torture usually mimes the killing of people by inflicting pain, the sensory equivalent of death, substituting prolonged mock execution for execution."[85]

The bondwoman's conspiring role probably was unanticipated by the ship's sailors. Upon discovery that stepped outside the boundaries of the vessel's prevailing social order by engaging in seditious acts, as evidenced, they subjected her to an even more severe punishment. Historian David Richardson acknowledges that, "the role of women in supporting and encouraging revolts has perhaps not been fully appreciated," and this case confirms his claim.[86] By offering assistance in violent acts aboard slave ships, bondwomen affirmed not only their humanity, but they defied gendered stereotypes and took their fate out of slave traders' hands and moved it into their own.

Another revolt further demonstrating the centrality of violence took place in 1729 aboard the English ship *Industry*. In this account, members of the ship crew discovered

---

[84] Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies*, 72-73.
[85] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 61.
[86] Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," 76.

that an African woman played a role in smuggling gun powder and ammunition through a hole leading down to the bottom male holding. It is unclear if any participating males were later implicated. Yet, following suppression of the captives' revolt, the ship's sailors discovered that the woman had been badly scarred from her involvement. As a consequence, they deemed her unfit for sale. Thereafter they "hoisted her up to the Fore-Yard-Arm in view of the other slaves" brought on the top deck to view the imposing sentence. Once in view of the entire ship, the ordered crewmen "fired half a Dozen Balls tho' her Body," riddling burning holes across her flesh. Her punishment extended even further as the last fired shot "cut the Rope which she was strung by, [and she] tumbled amain into the sea."[87] There is no evidence suggesting that she was alive once she fell into the waters. Yet, one can presume that following the drop her bloodied body became a feast for sharks.

Originally the woman professed economic value to her purchaser. Yet, her engagement in the ensuing conspiracy propelled the crewmen to use her as a sacrificial example for her fellow shipmates. Their use of unrestrained violence operated as a technique to discipline any future insurrectionists. As such, the bloody public exhibitions utilized for this woman and many others, they functioned as both warnings and celebrations.[88] While these ritualized punishments served to dismantle African unity, they also seemingly brought seamen together, creating a sense of strength, communal identity, and ultimately protection, helping to reassure against any other future outbreaks.

Perhaps in a more bizarre chain of violent eruptions we find the collective will exerted by bondmen and bondwomen within a different testimony. The Liverpool ship

---

[87] *The Weekly Journal: or the British Gazetter*, July 5, 1729.

[88] Louis P. Maher, *Rites of Execution: Capital Punishment and the Transformation of American Culture, 1776-1865.* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 26.

Unity set sail in July 1769 bound for West Africa. Several months later, after finalizing sales and boarding 425 bondpeople, the commander Richard Norris ordered that preparations begin in order to expedite sail towards Jamaica. Prior to their departure, Norris logged "the Slaves made an Insurrection" which he assured "[it] was soon quelled with y'e loss of two women." The record does not detail the number of people that rose against their captors or how their efforts were suppressed. Although two bondwomen were lost in the attempted battle, later within the crossing several other captives perished within a period of four consecutive days.[89]

Norris focused thereafter on the remainder of the already troubling passage; yet, much to his dismay another outbreak occurred. On 23 June, virtually within days of the last's slave's death, he wrote that "the Slaves attempted an Insurrection." This time he endured the loss of a bondman referred to as "No. 1." This captive's death did not arise from the violent outbreak, instead he "jumped overboard & was drown'd" out at sea. It remains unclear if he engaged in the attempted plot or if he advantageously used it to gain his own desire of freedom within the ocean. Norris added another detail to the insurrection, explaining that they also "gave y'e women concerned 24 Lashes each" upon their bodies. If would be useful to know if this attempt was orchestrated by the accused women or instead if they were the ones caught while attempting to assist other insurrectionists. Their punishment was likely conducted in a public fashion to quell any other lingering rebellious intent. Norris' imposed punishment however seemed to go to no avail. Two days later he remarked, "The slaves this day proposed making an Insurrection" during the evening hours. On this occasion several slaves "[got] off their

[89] The cause of death for the four captives (1 girl, 2 women, and 1 man) from 13 to 16 June is not known. Norris did not mention connections to any of the attempted plots -- which leave room to conclude that disease claimed their lives.

Handcuffs" yet they reportedly "were detected in Time." Details of this case do not shed light on how these captives were successful in getting their restraints off. One can presume that their motives were not only pre-meditated but that because of the fear it instigated among the crewmen they were immediately reprimanded.

Faced with three plotted outbreaks, Norris became even more guarded with the remaining slaves. Sensitive to their every movement, this made him exceptionally attune to any behavior they carried out on ship. His perception may have in fact permitted him with the help of his crewmen to prevent another struggle from occurring. On 27 June he chronicled "the Slaves attempted to force up y'e Gratings in y'e Night" which in his view was "with a design to murder y'e Whites and drown themselves" following the proposed plot. Of course we will never fully know if this was the original plan the captives outlined or what Norris' apprehension forced him to conclude. Nonetheless, he explained that the slave's efforts "were prev'ted by y'e watch" presumably on guard during the later hours.

Charges of conspiracy against the accused captives were not dealt with until the following morning. According to Norris' log, once confronted they "Confessed their Intentions, and that t'e women as well as the men were determn'd" that if they were unsuccessful in "Cutting off y'e whites" they would jump overboard. There are no descriptions explaining how they gained these alleged confessions. Yet, within their interrogation, the bondpeople reportedly declared that they "resolved as their last resource to burn the Ship" to protect themselves against further bondage. Enraged by their committed desires, Norris explained "their obstinacy put me under y'e Necissty of shooting y'e Ringleader." Following this deadly course of action he did not face another

threat or actual outbreak within the passage. Although far from conclusive, we can presume, drastic tools of violence may have been effectual in deterring other potential rebels. Two weeks following the ordered death of the designated rebel leader, Norris wrote that "A Man No 3 [and] Woman N'o 4 . . . Died Mad."

Employed as a sailor and free from the status of "slave" Norris, nor his shipmates, were capable of understanding the freedom slaves strove towards. Because of this, any behaviors that slaves acted out that appeared abnormal they were conceivably characterized as deranged. Therefore it is interesting that the cause of death mentioned within his log relates to their perceived madness. Offering additional details on their final days, Norris explained that the pair "had frequently attempted to drown themselves" presumably off-ship "since their views were disappointed with y'e Insurrection." Beyond this, available evidence does not delve further into the two captives' final days aboard nor does it explain if they were treated poorly. Interestingly, the next day following their deaths and perhaps to Norris' satisfaction, on 12 July *Unity* landed in Antigua and preparations were immediately made to offer the remaining slaves for sale.[90]

Moving beyond lines of both gender and ethnicity, ship revolts encapsulated a collective language of resistance. To quell any potential for overthrow of the ship crew, they sought to prevent "chaining those together who speak the same language."[91] These divisive mechanisms in many cases were futile in thwarting collectivism among captives. It does not seem far fetched that those who elected to resist were "unorganized, undisciplined, and united only in their insatiable desire for liberty."[92] Although often unfamiliar with their current geographical locations at sea, bondmen and women adapted

---

[90] Earle Collection (NMM)
[91] Testimony of Richard Miles, *HCSP*, 68:86.
[92] Greene, "Mutiny on the Slave Ships," 348.

to their forced surrounding and drew upon the terrain of the ship to reclaim their own versions of power and freedom.

The violence carried out aboard ships created an expression understood by many of its temporary inhabitants. One scholar of the slave trade argues, "the voices of those who were its victims are rarely heard when one looks for evidence or explanations of shipboard slave revolts."[93] If resistance includes the non-verbal modes of communication carried out through illicit behavior, then the active voices and conversations of disdain can be interpreted through the incessant rumblings of rebellions widespread throughout the Middle Passage. These behavioral languages often extended beyond racial lines, permitting seamen the ability to interpret the cultural meanings of such insurrectionary motives. While some whites believed that "civilized or not, Negroes... [were] cowards all their life-time and heroes for an instant," slave ship sailors understood Africans' violent motives and responded with a language of counter-resistance.[94]

Torture as a Form of Control

The physical mistreatment of captives often evolved to become tortuous forms of domination and entertainment for some crewmen. Seaman Henry Ellison discussed theses violent realities. He stated that a man referred as Mr. Wilson ordered "eight or ten" bondpeople up from their bottom holdings "for making a little noise in the rooms at night." Once relocated on top deck, he directed several crewmen to "tie them up to the booms, flog them very severely with a wire cat, and afterwards clap the thumb-screws upon them, and leave them in that situation till morning." The calculated violence they used inflicted severe pain upon the bondmen. As a result of their punishment, Ellison

---

[93] Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," 71.
[94] Raynal, *Slave Trade: A Full Account of This Species of Commerce,* 23

recounted "I have seen the ends of their thumbs mortify from having been thumb-screwed so violently," which he observed had "thrown them into fevers, and they have died."[95]

Similar episodes of torment persisted aboard other slave ships. While the vessel, *Nightingale*, laid in New Calabar River, several slaves waged an insurrection against the ship crew. As their motives unfolded "eight or ten" captives were "selected out of the rest, as ring-leaders to be punished." Once designated as the primary perpetrators, "they were tied up to a rough tree (that is, a spare top-mast)." According to the ship's surgeon, "we took spell and spell at flogging of them, both the African's people and our boat's crew, till we were all tired of flogging them." The ship crew likely saw this as a method of inflicting vengeance against the lack of safety these ungovernable captives they initiated into their lives. The circumstance surrounding the involvement of the coastal Africans remains murky. One can infer that these natives viewed the men's resistance as a threat to future sales with other traders. Nonetheless, Ellison reasoned "this flogging had no effect upon them" owing to his observation that "they were so stubborn, they never cried out." As a result of their perceived apathy, this warranted additional punishment. After the captains re-boarded the vessel, he "ordered some cook's tormentors and tongs to be put in the fire, and made red hot" for immediate use. Once ready, "he burnt their bare backsides in a most dreadful manner."[96] The captain presumably went to these violent extremes in reprisal for their insubordinate behaviors and to further sustain control of other purchased slaves. His actions demonstrate the

---

[95] Testimony of Henry Ellison, *HCSP*, 73: 374-5.
[96] *Ibid*, 374-375.

intentions some traders sought to spark fear, powerlessness, and relentless control over these disobedient slaves.

In yet another case, torment became the means of not only power but also personal amusement. Surgeon Thomas Trotter explained that the attending vessel's captain "went on board to pay his respects" to the master of the Liverpool vessel *Myrtle*. Following considerable time, the captain returned "in the evening somewhat intoxicated." After boarding the ship in a drunken state, "he began to find fault with the officers" which prompted him to take "a rope's end and beat several of the white people that were on the quarter deck" presumably in close proximity. Still unsatisfied, he ordered, "the boatswain to knock a stout fellow, a Negro, out of irons." Obliging the captain's directions, they brought a bondman into the fold. Thereafter, the seaman was directed "to stand on one side of the rope whilst he [the captain] stood on the other, and put his foot to the black man's foot." As Trotter detailed, the captain "then squared as if to box the man, saying, 'That he would learn him how to fight.'"

During the standoff, the inebriated captain taunted the relocated bondman. He "signified to the black fellow to make a blow at him" with his hands. Upon hearing the demands, "the black fellow did not know how to do it," and he presumably stood in his place unmoved. In all probability, one can imagine his lack of obedience further enforced the jeers hurled at him in a foreign tongue. Upon recognition however, "he gave the captain a terrible blow" upon his body. In result, "the captain turned about, and went down into the cabin, brought up a horsewhip and beat him" as Trotter described "most unmercifully." Amidst the brutal punishment, the captain commenced "turning it and twisting the lash about his hand, with a full sweep with the butt end." His vicious

punishment continued "till he [the slave] evacuated both urine and excrement," which reduced his strength "insomuch that most of the ship's company thought he could not survive it."[97]

It is obvious that bondpeople suffered the physical and psychological blows of violence instituted by their captors. Both sailors and slaves were subjected to the wrath of different captains. There were however distinct markers between their shared mistreatment. Although the general public viewed slave ship sailors as the virtual drudgery of eighteenth society, as Emma Christopher reminds, their race shielded them from the clutch of bondage. On the other hand, for slaves, their confrontation with aggression came not only for any resistive motives but also due to racial and cultural markers of inferiority cast upon them.

Conclusion

Violence regularly manifested within the social space of slave ships. This occurred across the entire vessel – on the top deck and the within bellows beneath. As the battle lines became further inscribed within the passage, bondpeople formulated even if beginning ideals of a community while seamen also came together to penalize African instigators. Hence, both groups, sailors and bondpeople, respectively boarded vessels as strangers; yet upon instances of aggression they coalesced as temporary units to defend and protect their collective interests – albeit for profit or ultimate liberation.

Building upon the history of violent human interface, this chapter reveals that slave vessels operated as mobile battlefields. Varying chronicles of violence on the coastal African shoreline appeared within different Atlantic communities, which influenced large populations of people. Interrogation of the multi-layered violent action

[97] Testimony of Henry Ellison, *HCSP*, 73:103-104

including sexual and physical violence, plots of rebellion, and the punitive measures employed against insurgents give viable opportunities to illuminate their affect on captive Africans. These discussions position the interrelated themes of gender, sexuality, power, and resistance within studies of the slave trade, helping to demonstrate the diversified efforts seamen used to dehumanize bondpeople.[98] It remains considerably difficult to explained the widespread of violence not only within the trade, but especially aboard ships.[99] Yet, far from fluid, "[e]very stage in the Negro traffic was marked by slave behavior which was uncooperative and belligerent," critically hampering all intentions of trade.[100] The unbridled measures of violence bondpeople and seamen engaged in demonstrate the openly contentious struggle exerted for control of the black body. For slave traders, this physical defense served for their own proprietary measures. Yet, for enslaved Africans, the implementation of subversive and overt strategies asserted the control and subsequent value they saw in their own lives. Therefore, while set adrift at sea, slave ships became the water-logged coffins that seamen and bondpeople fought and in many cases drew their last breath championing their respective causes.

This chapter also sought to situate female captives within discussions of violent instances carried out aboard slave vessels. Bondwomen "did not participate in the trade as fully as men," however, beyond statistical understandings, testimonies of their social

---

[98] Walter Johnson makes perhaps a rather critical point on the issue of dehumanization and slavery. He posits, "terror, torture, rape, and exploitation are activities which are elementally human and which depend upon the sentiment of a suffering human object to produce the effect desired by their (all-too) human perpetrators." See, "On Agency" *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, 1 (2003), 116.

[99] Historian Kali Gross reminds that "[t]he precise effects of violence are difficult to qualify." See *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910*, (Duke University Press, 2006), 8.

[100] Darold D. Wax. "Negro Resistance to the Early American Trade," *Journal of Negro History* 51, (No.1, Jan. 1966), 2.

experiences within the Middle Passage are deserving of further historical inquiry.[101] The vulnerable bodies of black females served as the human landscape upon which some sailors sought to assert control. As such, rape, physical mistreatment, and bearing witness to the death of their infants caused significant trauma. These gendered discussions facilitate a beginning examination into the conditions different bondpeople faced within the slave trade.

[101] Hebert Klein, "African Women in the Atlantic Slave Trade," in Claire Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa,* (Portsmouth, NH:Heinemann, 1997), 29.

CHAPTER SIX

'The Slaves in General Are Y'e Worste I Ever Saw': Arrival and Sale in New World Communities[1]

The fate of the black man, woman, and child...
You get judged
You get laughed at
You get looked at wrong
You get cited for not being strong.[2]

Introduction

On 20 December 1773, ship captain John Thorton remarked on the sale of captives carried into Fredericksburg, Virginia. He excluded further details regarding the makeup of the slave "cargo." However, in effort to appease his financers he noted that thirty-one captives sold for the sum of £1373 and 6 shillings in "Virg'a Curc'y." Despite the lucrative wealth gained through these bondpeople' bodies, twenty-one others were left for purchase. Among those unsold, Thornton declared, "[t]hose left on hand you may believe must be of much less value than the others" already bought by different planters. The range of slaves conceivably deemed less valuable than their shipmates included "9 old women [and] - 4 Men," three of the latter whom he determined were "old & blemished" in nature. There were also "4 very small girls & 4 very small Boys." Aware of the difficulty in securing the slaves' future sales, Thorton warned, "there is little prospect of doing any thing with them till the spring" which probably ensured time to improve their physical appearance to generate renewed interest among other buyers.[3]

The scarcity of details makes it difficult to speculate further on this anticipated transaction. We do not know if the additional time granted Thorton the opportunity to

---

[1] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.
[2] Common, "Black Maybe," *Finding Forever*, CD 2007.
[3] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

successfully secure sales for the remaining slaves or if he was later forced to sail to another port community in hopes of gaining profit.. Nonetheless, the fate of these devalued captives continues to remain a mystery. Reporting the state of account sales remained a staple feature of colonial mercantilism. Particularly pertinent to Thorton's exchange is the glimpse he offered into the varied faces of enslaved Africans transported as living commodities. Not only does it counter the dominant narrative of 'prime slaves' actively sought for recruitment, but it also reinforces the diversity of human "cargo" represented and offered for sale within Atlantic slave markets.

This chapter analyzes the importation of Africans into New World slave societies. Viewing these economic ventures as carryovers of the Middle Passage, it calls attention to the complex array of human merchandise offered to interested buyers. Prior to the trade's demise in the early 19th century, various colonies depended greatly on the slave-based enterprise to gain imported slaves for the replenishment of laborers. As such, negotiations and the conclusions of sales between traders, merchants, and planters marked the initial introduction of bondpeople into plantation communities. Recognizing this unabated reality, the following discussion analyzes the expectations and preferences surrounding the arrival of carried captives. In so doing, it emphasizes the interrelated factors of ethnicity, gender, and complicated misnomers of age. It also calls attention to the different types of sickness, physical disabilities, and psychological traumas that affected imported slaves as well as the prospect of final sales.

The range of captives transported, speculated, and bartered within domestic slave markets formulates this analysis' primary thrust. Economic factors show the price differences for available slaves however the primary objective is to explore the broad

category of "newly arrived Africans." Planters expressed decided preferences on the diversity of imported goods, especially slaves. As such, ship captains helped to satisfy these colonial demands by funneling West Africans into colonial communities. In many instances the human cargoes made available were contrary to previously articulated desires; often forcing planters to forgo sale or in some cases purchase bondpeople deemed less valuable, both on cash terms and physical interest. Many newly arrived Africans came with diverse ethnicities, occupations, skills, and expertise. The physical manifestations of sickness – relative to different diseases - that some slaves carried into port remain equally important. Another category excluded within our understanding of the slave trade are the innumerable bondpeople brought ashore compounded by various physical disabilities. In many instances we are often devoid of details explaining if any of the bodily alterations slaves displayed occurred prior to sale, emerged aboard ship, or as a result of violent interactions waged at sea. Despite these omissions, it remains critically important to include their depreciated lives within the narrative of Middle Passage studies. This chapter's uses "the body" as a textual source to gain a better sense of bondage at sea. Slaves' bodies were the most visible 'object' of slavery, however in gazing upon *how* they arrived, we can better speculate upon prior experiences endured on ship.[4] Outside the fertile possibilities of wealth and labor, the fundamental basis of financial exchanges within slave markets rested firmly upon the terrain of the black human body. They provide the most critically animate testimonies of historical evidence to the period of slaving.

[4] The word 'object' is not used to objectify people in attempt to reduce them as objects rather than human beings. Instead it is applicable to bonded populations confined within the institution of slavery. Especially when we recognize that they were assessed according to their physical fitness and value as laboring bodies.

Further broadening our categorical view of "newly arrived Africans" beyond the general rubric of prime, young, male, and presumably healthy slaves allows us to fully consider the diversity of human representation imbedded within the specter of slave markets. The inclusion of bondpeople helped to fulfill planter demands. However, often lost in slave trade narratives is the integral relationship of captives' arrival within Atlantic slave societies. If we look more broadly their importation can be viewed as an extension of the Middle Passage experience. The various destinations seamen carried slaves is useful to understanding *where* they landed. However, even more critical is the process of *how* they arrived and became exploited laborers. This chapter contends therein that the Middle Passage ended not once taken ashore but instead after being sold to an interested buyer. Considering the scores of Africans brought to port we must ask: Who made up the groups of human chattel 'imported' following port arrival? What were the varied bodily descriptions applied to captives bodies? Once transplanted, how did colonial factors and planters respond to the diversity of slaves offered for market sales? Lastly, what are the broader implications of these diversified sales within plantation communities?

Expectations on the Sales of Imported Slaves

Among the various colonial goods exchanged across the Atlantic, the greatest emphasis lied on African bodies. There were a considerable number of people invested and significantly interested in the importation of human goods along with employed sailors. We already know that distant merchants supplied financial means to facilitate these consumer desires. Along with them, agents of different slave trading firms located across parts of the Caribbean and southern mainland colonies also played a crucial role.

Expressing the initial demand for laborers, slaveholders functioned as the primary catalysts for slaves' incorporation into plantation communities.

Sailors were expected to oblige 'pre-sale' preparations prior to slaves' arrival, which assisted with market selections. We already learned the range of orders merchants allocated to employed commanders within this process. Decisions of sale were based not only on profit potential but also on slaves' perceived endurance within the elongated chain of transactions. Captain David Tuohy received instructions regarding his responsibility in transporting anticipated slaves. His financers expressed on 9 July 1789 "that the Slaves be choice," not only in quality but also relative to durability. In their view, this was due to the fact, "they will be considerably longer on Board," as well as the fact they "are to stand the whole Purchase." If we look more broadly, their instructions are likely applicable to purchases conducted on *both sides* of the Atlantic. To further encourage Tuohy's expeditious sales and departure from West Africa they emphasized that any anticipated wealth "will greatly depend [on] the success of your Voyage," to the New World. Upon ending they added, "we don't mean you, to throw away your Cargo for this desired Dispatch," or as they declared, "have you loose any good Slaves, for advancing a trifle towards procuring them."[5] Instead, operating within a drastically expansive market of demand for African people revenue was the most critical factor for them. For Tuohy, these directions could have forced him to give less attention to the superior quality of slaves in hopes of better satisfying the vessel owners' demands.

Another critical aspect to market sales was the physical appearance and condition of 'newly arrived' slaves. While aboard the *African* the ship commander logged on 24

[5] David Tuohy Papers, Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool, England. (hereafter cited as LRO)

May 1753 that crewmen "Shaved the slaves' fore heads."[6] Earlier discussions revealed that these measures were used to reduce the filtration of bacteria within slaves' bodies aboard ship. However, purchase preferences typically went to younger slaves. Therefore, the above tactics were likely implemented to create a youthful look for different captives in order to increase planter interests.

Slaves' cleanliness was another matter of importance. We know that slave ships represented confined spaces of filth that commonly produced offensive smells. To counter any possibilities of contamination seamen were encouraged to give attention to captives' hygiene. In 1789 following his Caribbean arrival Captain Edward Williams learned of the relationship his financers expected him to establish and maintain with the slave trading firm Lightfoot Hill & Co. His orders outlined, "you are to put the Cargo into there hands and take care to have them well Clean'd" once brought ashore in order to make sure "that there be no Complaints made" by any colonial factors or interested purchasers.[7] For the interest of profit, preparation for slave sales required sufficient grooming of docked slaves. Many commanders probably attended to these duties. However, having to include these details within different orders, it gives room to speculate that every captain did not follow such procedures.

Once carried to port there were different preferences merchants held concerning 'imported' slaves. In the fall of 1792 James D'Wolfe wrote to his brother Levi concerning his role as captain aboard the *Sally*, bound for Africa. After detailing his expectations of Levi's involvement in overseas coastal negotiations, he ended professing, "I know nothing more to say to you only make haste & let me see you with a good cargo

---

[6] John Newton, *Journal of a Slave Trader*, 1750-1754 (England: Epworth Press, 1962), 67.
[7] Letter Book of Robert Bostock (1779-1790), LRO.

of negroes." As evidenced from his declaration the primary focus for many trade merchants was the mere procurement and sale of bondpeople. Amidst evolution of other competing slaving nations, James probably sought to maneuver himself in a successful position through slaving profits. Other entrepreneurs expressed different anticipations. On 4 August 1789 slaving factor Francis Grant conveyed several details to the Bristol company James Rogers & Co intimating, "even if a dozen Ships were to come" his primary concern was that the vessel commander "provided [that] the people are healthy" as well as making considerable efforts "not to have to large a proportion of Old or Young among them."[8] Here were see that beyond the mere arrival of innumerable slaves, some merchants held strict preferences regarding their incorporation within market business. We could presume that each bondperson generated some aspect of value. Yet, as Grant's declaration suggests, the primary concern alongside profits involved the feasibility of ease in selling bondpeople.

Ship commanders played significant roles in market sales. The transport of captives and other 'goods' carried from England and African ports appeased different interests within port communities. However, the largest responsibilities crewmen were entrusted with involved forging relationships with local agents as well as ensuring the sales of slaves. The financers for sea-captain William Doyle encouraged, "take care that you exert yourself in the Sale of the Slaves," because any accrued wealth depended greatly on his involvement.[9] Doyle's involvement in the trade much like other commanders placed them in an advantageous position. By traveling in close proximity to

[8] "Ship Daniel," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[9] Letter Book of Robert Bostock (1779-1790), LRO

captives his owners probably estimated he could do a much better job with advertising the different 'types' of slaves onboard; which aided in generating interest among buyers.

The duties of shipmasters intensified once on land. George McMinn of the *Ingram* received several instructions for his cargo once docked. His orders first reminded, "Your average indeed will greatly depend upon Your own Conduct" following the ship's port arrival. Along with this, he was also given the task of asserting control with local agents by "not allowing them to pick any Slaves before the Day of Sale," or as his investors outlined, "to sell too many in one Lott to close the Sales" in an expedited fashion. Although these practices were frequent, they warned "by no means allow it," but instead focus on "keep[ing] up your Average."[10] The relationship shared with colonial agents was critical to market sales. In many senses shipmasters served as representatives for companies under whom they worked. The above evidence demonstrates the additional work expected of commanders once off ship. At the same they also provide insight into the control that distant merchants sought to instigate over local sales ensure receipt of fair amounts of profit.[11]

Once brought to port there were specific methods used to sell slaves. After docking, captains typically sought agents within the local vicinity. Oftentimes vessel owners established previous contact with fellow merchants to better facilitate smooth collaborations in slave sales. Thereafter, as one trader pointed out, "We usually immediately advertise a day of Sale, to take place four or five days or a week after our arrival," that they believed most convenient for all involved. Part of this accommodation

---

[10] David Tuohy Papers, LRO

[11] For further discussion of the work expected of shipmasters upon arrival in the New World , see Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes*, 1730-1807, (England: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 167-223.

is due to the fact "Some of the purchasers live at a remote distance from the place of Sale."[12] It is difficult to discern how far market attendees traveled we know that sales "generally brought together a considerable number of buyers."[13]

Planters held the most important role within slave sales. South Carolina merchant John Guerard wrote to a fellow investor Mr. William Tolliff regarding affairs for the ship *Molly*. On 21 May 1752 he remarked "that Cargoe coming down directly from the Coast & all fine likely People," aboard the vessel, "the Planters prefer'd them on account of having more Roome to make a better choice," in procuring captives. As a result, those offered, "sold at prodigious Rates" because of the ease in sales.[14] Evidenced through this correspondence diverse ship cargoes permitted planters an ability to make decisions of available slaves.

Purchasers were the largest necessity for sales which some merchants tried to satisfy. In 1775 Henry Laurens wrote to his fellow St. Christopher merchants regarding this issue. He explained, "An entire parcel of fine Negroes must enable us to remit quicker than we can for a Cargo which consists of a mixture of all sorts & sizes," of different captives carried into port. Upon ending he declared, "those which are prime enable us to pick our Customers."[15] Buyers' perceptions of captives had much to do with the successes and failures of conducted sales.

After securing the intended date of public auction there were two primary modes of sale. These included what was formerly known as scramble sales as well as those conducted off ship in an open yard. The scramble method took place on ship in a

---

[12] Testimony of William Littleton, *HCSP*, 68:210.
[13] Testimony of George Baillie, *HCSP*, 73:184.
[14] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS
[15] *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, Vol I (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 254-256.

confined fashion similar to private sales. Hercules Ross, an esquire during the trade, explained "The general mode is, that the factor or agent, who have the sale of the cargo, give notice by public advertisement, fixing upon a day of sale." On the designated day, interested buyers gathered "on board the ship, and at a given hour the sale is declared to be opened." According to Ross "different people intending to be purchasers exert themselves to get as early as possible in among the Slaves, for the purpose of obtaining a good choice," of offered captives.[16] The average number of market attendees is unknown to contemporary scholars. Yet, few scholars are likely to disagree that such sales appealed to scores of slaveholders.

There were various intricacies common to scramble sales. Surgeon Thomas Trotter described the process: "People who wish for Slaves" attend these fairs and once there they "are ready when the signal is given them to open the sale" of available slaves.[17] On many vessels "The men are the main deck, and the women all on the quarter deck." The separations were likely regimented to protect against resistive opportunities and also to permit an easier prospect of examining captives according to gendered preferences. The interested buyers characterized as "gentlemen" they typically "come on board to purchase come in at the gangway, betwixt those places," where the segregated captives are stationed. Purchasers often remained in this part of the ship "until the sale is opened," and following the given signal "they rush in fore and aft, and suit themselves as well as they can, clapping their tallies on whatever they mean to take."[18] One can only imagine

---

[16] Testimony of Hercules Ross, *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 82, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 258 (hereafter cited as HCSP)

[17] Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:88.

[18] Testimony of Clement Noble, *HCSP*, 73:119-120; Trotter offers the same discussion. See, Testimony of Thomas Trotter, *HCSP*, 73:88.

the chaos that erupted amidst this process. At the same time, we see that poor hygiene often associated with slavers did not prevent some buyers from boarding different ships.

The commonality of sales created specialized tactics to emerge. Surgeon Alexander Falconbridge offered an even more graphic description of the scramble process. He gained further insight on the *Emilia* after it docked at Port Maria. Once the designated day of sale was set, he found "the ship was darkened with sails, and covered round." This was probably used to quell any instances of self-sabotage. After the male and female captives were segregated "the purchasers on shore were informed a gun would be fired when they were ready to open the sale." There is no evidence to determine how soon buyers boarded but "a great number of people came on board with tallies or cards in their hands," that they previously procured off ship. According to Falconbridge's understanding some had inscriptions "with their own name upon them," perhaps personalized for extended use. After the gun, many people "rushed through the barricado door" aboard ship in a manner he described as "with the ferocity of brutes." As they ran about the ship "some [also] had three or four handkerchiefs tied together, to encircle as many. . . [slaves] they thought fit for their purpose." Following designation of the slaves "cards or tallies" were then clamped "about the necks of such Slaves as they make choice of."[19]

The scramble method of sale enforces a variety of slaving realities. Foremost, considering the desire for healthy slaves one wonders how buyers were able to determine slaves' fitness in such a short period of time. The above descriptions make it pointedly clear the frenzy of the market sales that slaves were forcibly subjected to both mentally and physically. The number of interested people that poked and prodded at slaves bodies

[19] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP*, 72:307-8.

in order to base their final decision of sale is difficult to prove. However critical pertinent to our understanding is that for many captives this was the second and perhaps even the third market they had already endured. We learned earlier that bondpeople regularly transferred into several hands on the African coast, prior to the Atlantic transport. Yet, this same practice continued in the Americas until an offer for their purchase was given.

The method of sale conducted on land differed in many respects. One trader explained "I have known them sold in both ways" however according to his recollection "it is commonly on shore." We can infer that sales off ship permitted the engagement of even more buyers while also reducing opportunities for slaves to jump overboard. Advertisements typically circulated while bondpeople were prepared for sale. Once taken off ship "the Slaves were then placed in a close yard, [and] ranged in order for sale." Although not in an auction block, sales were conducted in an open space. To protect their property surrounding gates were "shut immediately before the sale commenced," and thereafter "a great gun was fired," to spark beginning selections. According to one ship captain, "the purchasers with their adherents and assistants, rushed into the yard with great violence, and laid hold of the most healthy and good looking Slaves," that they could obtain. Perhaps in hopes of securing their own sales and preventing losses to competing buyers, purchased captives "were immediately purchased and hurried out of the yard." This process typically continued in this fashion at least until all of the 'prime slaves' were sold and those left on hand often entered a different set of sales which we will explore later within this chapter.[20]

[20] Testimony of George Baillie, *HCSP*, 73: 184.

Although often located at a distance, some merchants tried to dictate the operation of land based sales. On 30 April 1783 Leyland Penny & Co. wrote to vessel commander Charles Wilson regarding his participation in market sales. Their instructions urged, "we take leave to recommend to you that you put the Negroes into small Lots" making sure they were comprised of "15 or 20 Negroes in a Lot" during open sales. Smaller groups probably helped to fuel further interest among buyers. Wilson was advised that "mixing the Indifferent Negroes with the best" of available slaves. According to the memo, through such practices "youl then have little or no refuge [that] this will keep up the Average better than any other mode that can be adopt'd" through different measures. Confident in their tactics they declared that he "Urge this measure to the house who sells the Cargo."[21] Slave sales proved difficult with the arrival of different types of human cargo offered sale. Looked at from the side of supply, mixing varied slaves probably increased the value of those deemed inferior during inspections.

Human Representations of Atlantic Slave Markets

During the 18th century scores of bondpeople were poured into port communities scattered across the Atlantic. Their 'importation' as human 'goods' as well as their Middle Passage experience had significant bearing on the evolution of slave communities.[22] Although for some it has been tempting to view the 'importation' of enslaved Africans through a numerical lens, pertinent to understanding their confinement within the institution of slavery is by interrogating the social dimensions of bondage. Critical to these conversations is addressing the treatment they endured within various

---

[21] James Dumball Papers, SJL

[22] See, Sowande' Mustakeem "Far Cry From a Fantasy Voyage: The Impact of the Middle Passage on New World Slave Societies" *ISLAS Official Publication of Afro-Cuban Alliance, Inc.* 2, 8 (September, 2007): 28-34.

Atlantic slave markets. Within the following discussion we will begin to trace some of the preferences – relative to ethnicity, gender, and age – that shaped market transactions.

Varied African Ethnicities

A primary factor connected with slave demands were the overarching stereotypes held about different bondpeople. The waterways of the Atlantic Ocean permitted a critical exchange of information concerning historical events, locales, and people; to which Africans were included within this information network. We already know that sea captains, crewmen, and agents stationed on the coast of Africa carried their own view of bonded people. Distant merchants, colonial factors and slaveholders depended on the observations slave ship sailors gained in helping to formulate their own views of future investments. Of course for planters in particular laboring skills along with behavioral patterns significantly influenced their sale decisions.[23]

The largest preference guiding planter and merchant demands concerned African ethnicities. Many of the ethnic terms applied in reference to various Africans continue to remain problematic in their usage. Part of this is because of the difficulties in ascertaining if Africans saw themselves relative to the terms used or if they were merely groupings imposed by traders and ship captains' influenced by the port in which captives were procured. For this Gwendolyn Midlo Hall reminds, "There is no detailed, existing body of knowledge about historical African ethnicities either in Africa or in the Americas."[24] Hall much like Douglas Chambers discusses the identities that emerged

---

[23] Darold D. Wax makes a useful observation on the circulation of information. He contends, "ideas concerning [slave] preference were sometimes based less on direct evidence than on tradition, notions once accepted which were then passed on from one reporter, writer to another, without, in many cases, any immediate knowledge or information about the peoples of West Africa." See Wax, "Preferences for Slaves in Colonial America," *The Journal of Negro History* 58, 4 (Oct., 1973), 390.

[24] Gwendolyn Mildo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 37.

associated with African nomenclature and changed over time permitting them to be understood as artifacts of the trade's existence.[25] Perhaps even more critical here is the ethnic association attributed to bondpeople not only according to place of origin but also based upon behavioral patterns. Therefore, we must be cautious in our own perception of ethnic stereotypes applied to different captives within the trade.

There were different stereotypes that circulated about West Africans according to their behavior. One ship captain expressed that Bonny slaves were required to be kept "under strict confinement" because in his experiences "they are more vicious than Angola slaves" forcing necessary guarding against any insurrectionary motives. Part of his perspective originated from the idea "[t]hey are often of opinion that White men intend to eat them" once they were placed in their control.[26] This narrative leaves little doubt that sailors formulated ideas about different African groups within the trade. Equally important is the influence it could have laid in affecting planter's future preferences for captives.

These same of general classifications filtered into slave communities. In July of 1786 merchant James Rollan offered greater perspective on preferences of slaves within the island of Antigua. Within his correspondence he conveyed to James Rogers & Co. the success different groups in gaining planter interests. He indicated that arriving ships should "by no means carry Coromantees," because in his estimation "they are generally troublesome & do not like controul."[27] It would prove useful to gain insight into the incidents that forced Rollan to develop these conclusions. Yet, it is probable that captives

---

[25] *Ibid*; See also Douglas Chambers, "Ethnicity in the Diaspora: The Slave Trade and the Creation of African 'Nations' in the Americas," *Slavery and Abolition* 22, 3 (Dec., 2001): 26.

[26] Testimony of James Fraser, *HCSP*, 71:34.

[27] "Ship *Diana*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

believed to arise from this group were open in their disdain of bondage. We do not know if any captives employed violent motives or absconded. However his perspective allows us to see the circulatory nature of perceived biases held about different African groups.

Other assumptions of captive behavior abounded within the 18th century. South Carolina factor John Guerard offered his view on Gambia slaves. In September of 1753 the snow *Elizabeth* docked into port with 145 captives aboard. He credited part of the lack of interest in their arrival to the three other vessels that "were in port at same time" to which, as he added "no body could have made more of them." Delving deeper he reasoned, "in my Opinion the whole purchase was always an Ordinary Gang," because he believed "Such Slaves are most apt to Sicken & become distemper'd" with their bondage. According to Guerard, "they Cannot bear Confinement nor stand fatigue of a Voyage so well as Young Healthy robust ones" who seemed to profess a different response.[28] However, these reactions could have applied to any African captives. Most telling within Guerard's testimony is the common preference exerted according to age. Accustomed to freedom within their former homelands, it is more than probable that adult slaves had a different response in contrast to their younger counterparts.

Captives from the Bight of Biafra were the most highly discussed groups of the slave trade. According to one merchant, at least in 1752 "the Bites [and] Callabars are the most disliked" among different buyers. This aversion persisted because of the held view that "they are too much adicted to Distroy them Selves" due to the fact "there has been Severall instances of it amongst the Late importations" of newly arrived Africans. In the factors' view he found dislikes of this category of slaves "Discourages our Planters

[28] John Guerard Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina. Hereafter cited as SCHS.

more & more from medling w'th them" where as a result, "they buy them when no other is to be had. . . ."[29] This commentary offers considerable insight into the underlying dynamics contained within slave sales and the challenges merchants faced in recruiting interests. Planters were inclined to different captives; therein as demonstrated, bondpeople least desired in certain markets became problematic for those required to sell them.

There were other categories of slaves unfavorable according to planter's tastes. On 21 May 1786 Liverpool merchant Thomas Leyland penned a letter regarding sales aboard the ship *Enterprize*. After traveling to Dominica, the ship docked in Havana, Cuba. Once there, Leyland indicated that the captives held aboard generated "an average of $270 P[er] head" in market sales. Although we are devoid of intricate details regarding the shipment of slaves, he did provide a glimpse into the ship's cargo. He offered that among those stowed aboard "these people were Ibo or Bonny Negroes" of which he added they are "of course very tender" in their overall nature.[30] Considering that the sales took place towards the later part of the 18th century we can infer that stereotypes about this category of captives had already become ingrained in the minds of different traders and merchants. Bonny slaves and especially those considered Igbo were often noted for their proclivity to engage in acts of self-sabotage. It would have been useful to gain a glimpse into slave behaviors Leyland observed to better understand his characterization of these captives.

Stereotypes of different groups significantly shaped expectations regarding slave importations. John Guerard wrote to a fellow merchant Mr. Toliff in June of 1752 on

[29] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.
[30] Account Books of Ships of Thomas Leyland & Co, LRO, Liverpool, England.

current slaving affairs within South Carolina. He professed, "I wo'd chuse all Men of Gambia or Windward Coast, in failure of w'ch Angolas," could suffice within market sales. Offering even more insight into the slave purchases, he added, "no Bite or Callabarrs," despite the fact they "may be cheaper than the last," who were conceivably preferred by different buyers. Several months later Guerard was more forthright on the matter of ethnic preferences he expressed to another merchant. Within his correspondence to Henry Nest Jr he wrote that Capt Marrick of the *Eugene* came into port carrying boarded slaves. Despite the excitement for "a Cargo of Negroes lately imported" he clarified that they came "from the Bite" which reduced planter's interests. Perhaps in effort to discourage the arrival of anymore slaves from this locale, Guerard declared, "they are worst sort that Comes here on acco't of their so frequently destroying themselves" during captivity. Therefore, he warned, "if You sho'd Interest Your Self in any Negroes to Come here I wo'd advise You not to medle w'th any of that sort" but instead go further "to send Gambias preferrable to any others," carried into shore.[31] These comments illustrate the various ways in which the arrival of some captives proved disappointing to some buyers. Merchants maintained their own tightly woven networks of entrepreneurs who relied on each other for advice on future slave investments. In this case we do not know if this particular vessel came unsolicited due to difficulties of sale in another port or if another merchant conveyed details for these Africans.[32]

Despite prevailing biases, some merchants tolerated the arrival of less desired captives. One merchant detailed prevailing slave preferences within a Caribbean island in 1786. He intimated, "Windw'd Coast Negroes has the preference," among different

[31] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.

[32] For further discussion of the arrival of unsolicited ships carrying bondpeople least desired with slave markets, see Wax, "Slave Preferences in Colonial America," 374.

buyers. In going further he advised that slavers coming to port, "should they be Eboes," if feasible it proved useful to "avoid Grown men, as much as possible & let the Majority be young Women, with girls & boys in proportion."[33] We already know that slaves of this particular group did not always receive preference because of their tendency to commit acts of transmigratory rebellion. However some factors and planters accepted importations of Igbo captives because of matters of supply. We can speculate therein that contrary to common markets the lowered interest in black men expressed here likely originated from associated behaviors they may have acted out within plantation communities. Another layer imbedded within this evidence suggests that female captives did not engage in the same type of life-threatening responses to their bondage. Our earlier discussion revealed that much like bondmen, bondwomen willingly drew upon transmigratory rebellion to escape captivity.

Gender

As attempts were made to fulfill planter's demand for black laborers, slave traders transported a range of bondpeople into various Atlantic ports. Amidst the heightened preferences articulated by planters, bondmen often commanded the highest prices on both sides of the Atlantic. The predominance of black males shipped overseas corresponded with the requirements of agricultural needs within various plantation communities. However, biases for the importation of male bodies in some cases proved a difficult feat for traders to supply these growing demands. The correspondence exchanged between Liverpool merchant Thomas Leyland and the trading firm Eustace Barron & Co further confirms this gendered reality. Commenting on the state of slaving affairs, Leyland relayed "It is impossible to buy a Cargo of Negroes in Africa [that are] all Males" to

[33] "Ship Diana," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

make available for later sale.[34] Employed seamen served as the primary middle men active in the daily business of slave negotiations. It is probable that they sought to fulfill the orders specified by their financers. Despite demands extended overseas, there were inherent challenges that shaped the procurement of slaves.

Recognizing these lingering obstacles, it was not uncommon for merchants to outline explicit demands for captive procurement. On 30 July 1780 colonial factor James Rollin called attention to a "long Conversation" he had with a ship captain referred to as Walker regarding expectations he held for slave importations. Much of this was "concerning the size, Age, & Sex" of bondpeople that he "apprehended [and] would meet with the most ready Sale" within the present Antiguan slave market. Among the bondpeople Rollan felt were most favorable to planter demands, this included: "a Cargoe of about 2 to 300 well assorted [slaves], such as young Men & boys, young Women, & Girls from a good Country" within western Africa.[35]

As his conversation clearly highlights, although male captives were highly prized, concessions were also made for the inclusion of other types of bondpeople. The mood of the above narrative illustrates the explicit demands some traders sought to convey. They were well aware of other captives often carried in for sale to which they often had to accommodate and try to recruit planter interest. Beyond gender however, we are also able to better understand the preference placed upon younger captives.

Planters expressed marked concentration on obtaining bondmen. John Guerard wrote to Merchant's Harmington & Stricts on 10 June 1752 regarding the shipment of captives Captain Wells brought to Charleston. He found there "was too many little ones"

---

[34] Account Books of Ships of Thomas Leyland & Co, LRO.
[35] "Ship Diana," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

made available. One can only speculate on the frustration this created. Perhaps because of an embroiling frustrations that emerged he pointed out, "My request to our Friend was to the Contrary for Men chiefly" to be brought into market. His demands went unfilled because as he indicated, "I find it Cou'd not be avoided neither co'd they be Obtain'd cheaper" due to the fact "there was such a Demand for them" by different planters and merchants. We see here the widespread pool of competition merchants were forced into, particularly in attempt to supply adult male slaves.

Anticipated hindrances common in supplying desired slaves prompted some merchants to become bold in their demands. Following the arrival of poor quality Africans, Guerard wrote to Mr. William Tolliff on 29 September 1753 concerning future demands for other captives. He professed, "in your next orders lay the [ship] Master under a Positive Injunction (instead of recommending) to purchase as many Young healthy Likely men as Possible" during initial sales. His instructions authorized that employed seamen procure "as few females as he can," and as he further directed, "what he is Obliged to take of the Last sex Let them be young" slaves placed on ship. Upon ending he expressed his preference for "as many men Boys of 14 to 16 Years of Age as possible" to be transported into South Carolina.[36]

Gendered demands often varied with prices. On 17 July 1755 Henry Laurens wrote of his hopes in obtaining "likely healthy People" for market sales. Among those most favored he requested slaves that were made up of "Two thirds Men from 18 to 25 Years Old," to which he added, "the other young Women from 14 to 18 the cost not to exceed Twenty five Pounds Sterling per head," in their averages. Offering further clarity, he explained, "The difference in price between Men & Women here is never less than £3

[36] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.

Sterling per head, sometimes £6." It is clear here that bondmen garnered significant interest by distant merchants. Another factor imbedded within these age ranges is the attention given to the gendered differences which appears to correspond with perceived years of reproductive capacities. As evidenced, for women the estimated ages were much earlier. Likewise, we also see that adult women did not hold preference in Lauren's mind; probably because any slaves older than 25 years of age were understood as beyond any means of breeding.

Although often undervalued, women held a place aboard slavers. Henry Laurens wrote to merchants Devonsheir, Reeve, & Lloyd on 24 June 1755 regarding the average of several slaves brought aboard the ship *Pearl*. He explained that the cargo's average would be "upwards of Thirty Pounds Sterling" in their respective prices. Perhaps in reasoning on the lowered sales he claimed, "you must allow a most extraordinary affair for Angola Negroes" in addition to the fact "the Women are but ordinary."[37] Three days later he remarked on the same sales through an exchange addressed to Thomas Euston & Co. This time he included that, "The Women are but indifferent."[38]

Details within this case are rather sketchy however they are illustrative of several important factors. Judging by Lauren's description, we can infer that Angolans did not receive high preference among planters. It is also clear that bondwomen held lower values. Of course we do not know the physical condition of these females. Yet, having already considered the difference of assessments given in contrast to male captives, it is probable these women were either diseased, deemed unattractive, and/or determined

[37] *Papers of Henry Laurens*, Vol. I, 267-8
[38] *Ibid*, 276.

beyond their prime years. This assumption is based on the fact these characteristics often worked against the purchase of female captives.

Matters of warfare with local colonies often shaped gendered demands for bondpeople. Writing to merchants Smith & Clifton in August of 1755, Henry Laurens explained, "We in this Quarter are of opinion that a War with France must very speedily take place from the measures pursuing by our Admirals in North America." Recognizing the improvement to their sales, he added, "This we all apprehend would have a very sudden effect upon the prices of Slaves" carried into port. News of warfare proved advantageous which he noted that, "there has been two Sales in one day the number about 250[captives]." In his view "never was [there] such pulling & hawling for Negroes before." The threat of war likely fostered significant fear among local residents. Yet, for Laurens he saw the potential for a growth in slave sales. "Had there been 1000" as he expressed, "they would not have supply'd the demand of the Purchasers which appear'd."

Several months later the prospect of war continued to aid in their slaving business. Laurens corresponded with another merchant, this time stating, "The nearer we Seem to a Warr the more Mad some of our People seem to be after Slaves." In portraying the state of affairs he described that several Gambia captives brought from Barbados sold exceptionally well in which "the 4 best Men sold so high as £330." One can only conclude that he, like other merchants, sought to fulfill the growing demands as long as conditions proved favorable. Despite an entrepreneurial drive, he acknowledged, "this Spirit is not General" for planters to regularly buy slaves at such high prices.[39]

Bondpeople were sought for a variety of reasons within plantation communities. The primary motive driving merchants and planters lure concerned laboring means. Of

[39] *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, Vol 1, 346-347.

course the growth of wealth generated off agricultural based endeavors prompted the largest demand for slaves equipped with varying expertise. As the above exchange highlights within slave holder's minds there were even broader meanings of labor which also included engagements within physical warfare. There were different Africans imported due to circulated understandings of their military knowledge they were believed to possess. For the sake of creating an even larger web of defense, planters probably also used other captives in combat, despite any previous familiarity they held or not.

The Variable of Age

Alongside gender, age played a major role in planter's decision to purchase available slaves. There were two categories of imported Africans who fostered strong dispositions following their port arrival: small children and adult slaves considered beyond their prime years. The typical dislike of these slaves emanated from laboring possibilities which younger captives and elderly captives were not believed capable of fitting into these financial understandings. Black bodies represented considerable wealth within New World communities. Yet, the following discussion highlights that there were limitations to this economic framework.

The devaluing of both groups commonly took place. One slave trader noted that while on the coastal shore of Mana in West Africa a canoe came from ashore with four slaves available for purchase. Although already engaged in loading captives aboard his vessel, he "refused them all, 2 being too old, and 2 too young."[40] Heightened demands for slaves across the New World fueled the growth of ships traveling to Africa. Yet, as evidenced, vessel commanders did not always find value in every slave. To maintain these discriminatory practices explicit details were allocated to trade participants

[40] Newton, ***The Journal of a Slave trader***, 69.

regarding children and aged captives. For instance, in 1789 merchant Francis Grant articulated his hopes that those carried into port were healthy and more importantly not to have "too large a proportion of Old or Young among them."[41] Preferences were specified yet it is important to consider the responses that emerged following their subsequent arrival.

There were considerable complaints expressed against the inclusion of young and aged captives. On 10 September 1753 South Carolina merchant John Guerard reported upon the arrival James Hunt who carried 145 slaves from Gambia aboard the snow *Elizabeth*. Particular to the ship's "cargo" were the inclusion of "24 Boys" and "15 Girls." Presumably unsure of his profits, Guerard added that the sales of the vessel's captives represented as he declared "the Best I cou'd possibly do with Them" because as he indicated "there being too many old & Small ones" among those brought to port.[42] They implemented measures to prevent the inclusion of either group, however once imported, colonial factors fully recognized the challenges surrounding slaves' future sale and placement.

Younger captives were not always preferred within the trade. In effort to hinder the arrival of children and therefore reduce any physical losses, one merchant requested "none under [the age of] 14 if Possible, such being unfit to Travell y'e long journey."[43] Investors held different understandings regarding categories of children. From these instructions however we can speculate that their refusals probably stemmed from the difficulty of care at sea. The Middle Passage unhealthy, violent, and psychologically

---

[41] "Ship Daniels," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[42] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.
[43] Add. 48590, British Library, London, England. (hereafter cited as BL)

traumatic environment proved a significant challenge for children to process and ultimately survive; especially those traveling without parents or other kin.

Although these orders suggest the exclusion of children, it gives further credence to the fact they were included within the trade. In 1792 ship captain of the *Fame* wrote his concerns over an inferior cargo of bondpeople carried to Grenada from old Callabar. He remained hopeful of some prospect of profit able to be generated off the carried slaves. Yet, he admitted, "I am Sorry to Say I Belive there was Never a Worse Cargo of Slave Ships from Africa" further sparking his fear that sales "will be greatly to your Disadvintage." There were several men and women stowed aboard. However, the inclusion of several children reduced the vessel's value. Not only were there "11 Girls under five" but also quite rare within slave trade records was the arrival of "13 Infants at [the] Breast."[44]

Inclusion of these children/infants can be analyzed from a variety of angles. Ship captains saw their placement as 'goods' quite differently from adult slaves. Although children generally represented long-term investments within plantation communities, they were significantly devalued within slave market sales. We cannot probe the minds of any factors associated with the vessel's sales or the response of slave holders that assessed any of the offered slaves. Judging by the shipmaster's initial response however it is probable his sentiments were widely shared.

Speculating further, it still remains a mystery as to how a large number of children entered the trade. We can analyze the young girls' inclusion through several ways. The captain may have endured difficulties in procuring adult captives. It is also probable that he received a price reduction or even gained them through barters that took

[44] "Ship Fame," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

place for offered goods while docked on the coast. On the other hand, the existence of over a dozen infants raises several questions: Where did they come from and how were they captured? Were any of them sold with their mothers? What was the difference in ages? It is quite possible that several women could have entered the trade already pregnant or that they were impregnated after being raped during their coastal holdings. The timing of these pregnancies might explain the birth of children at sea. We know traders did not give attention to the separation of slave families. Whether any of these infants were carried by their mothers or other women designated to provide care remains too difficult to ascertain. Because of unanswered complexities, we cannot fully speculate on how these children's experiences at sea or upon arrival on New World plantations.

Infants often created considerable frustration on part of Caribbean merchants. In many instances we are deprived of primary source material confirming the presence of enslaved babies stowed aboard ship. James Baillie & C'o wrote in 1791 from Grenada reporting on the arrival of several children carried aboard the *Daniel* mastered by Captain Laroche. The local merchants explained, "Capt'n Laroche will without [a] doubt report to you, how very averse he was even at Old Calabar, to take charge" of that they characterized as "Such a miserable Sett of people," carried into the Caribbean port. Recognizing that "they would not Sell, so as to pay the Expence of the Voyage," they concluded "in short it appears to us is that they are the refuge" among other imported cargoes. Seventy-three of the vessel's slaves sold at an average of £32, however several others remained on hand. Among those still unsold they indicated that lack of sales forced them to direct "21 [captives] to Vendue" where they conceived that once there, "they will sell for a Trifle" with the lower prices offered for each of them. Upon ending

they highlighted perhaps the greatest source of anxiety amidst the vessel's sales. This concerned the fact "the rest [on hand] are infants so small, that nobody will look at them."[45] One can only imagine the frustration and sense of distress these slaving agents felt in trying to locate buyers for these young children. Available evidence does not permit us to determine the fate of these children. Therefore we do not know if they remained in Grenada, factors sent them to any other islands, or perhaps they were parceled out during other different sales within the local area. .

It was not uncommon to find women and their progeny aboard different slavers. Merchant William Grumly reported the arrival of the ship *Fly* which docked in Tortola. There were several slaves sold to eager buyers. However, particular to this ship's sale was that a man by the name of William Gregory purchased "1 Woman & Child at the Breast" which totaled £70. Considering that another female sold for £66, we can deduce that the infant was given to Gregory for £4.[46] Primary source materials are often fragmentary within slave trade records regarding the inclusion of infants. Yet, one letter for an unnamed ship indicates that £9 represented the "Sum Rec'd for a negroe Child whose mother Died on the passage."[47] Beyond this listing we are not able to discern where the two were procured, the age of the child, or even how the young child's mother perished. Regardless of the captive's age, we can only imagine the trauma he/she confronted in their early childhood stemming from the loss of a parent, the violent environment of slavers, and sale into a land of foreign strangers.

Other children endured similar circumstances. On 2 February 1791 John Kennedy commander of the schooner *Flora* wrote from "Dominico" reporting on his

---

[45] "Ship *Pearl*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[46] "Ship *Fly*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[47] James Dumball Papers, SJL

current status to the vessel's Bristol owners. He described that the passage carried him into Barbados to which following his current departure he expected to journey forward to Jamaica while awaiting further instructions. Amidst his continued movement however several slaves were sold off his ship. It is difficult to determine where some of the 73 carried captives were sold, yet there are several interesting aspects to his account sales. A purchaser by the name of Joseph Tobling engaged in sales with Kennedy's slaves. In so doing, he bought four slaves including: 1 man, 1 boy, and 2 women. He also purchased "a Child at the Breast" who was sold for £5. The entire total for all the slaves amounted to £277.[48]

All of these cases force reconsideration of the inclusion of children within the slave trade. Historical records do not always refer to the arrival of infants, however their placement aboard ships is worthy of further exploration. Of course in many cases we are unable to establish where these children's births took place. As evidenced from the above narratives, oftentimes the addition of children as offered captives created considerable frustration by different merchants. Despite this, as the sources reveal, some slaveholders were willing to purchase these infants along with their enslaved mothers. The outcome of these children's future as well as the traumas they were forced to witness and survive on a daily basis are lost within primary source material.

Younger captives were often the catalyst that lowered the value of slave cargos. The trading firm Allan White & Co wrote from Kingston Jamaica on 12 January 1793 regarding the state of affairs for the ship *Fanny*. The average sales for 121 bondpeople amassed to £59"6"1 sterling. Reflecting further on the profit potentials, the slaving agents added "but for the number of Children, we might anticipate, that it would not fall

[48] "Ship *Flora*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC

lower than £54." The sale conducted likely composed the slaves they were able to successful sell. Several weeks later they indicated that several slaves "sold at Vendue" to which we can infer that they were unable to find any interested buyers. We are not able to discern how many captives were included, their gender, or physical condition upon their arrival that may have influenced the decision to direct them into this specialized market. The factors did include however that among those sent, "two were infants." In reasoning upon their placement within bondage they determined that these children "must have been given with their Mothers" during coastal African sales.[49]

This case confirms once again that the broad spectrum of procured children also included enslaved babies. We already know from earlier discussions that it was not uncommon to find infants sold into the trade with her mothers. However there is no direct evidence available to help determine if these particular children were actually sold with their mothers, if any of their parents survived the passage, and more important if any buyers opted to purchase them. Much like other bondpeople, details of these children's fate beyond their port arrival is lost within the history of the trade. Yet, their lives provide an invaluable opportunity to reflect on the import of children and their forced placement within slave sales.

In addition to children, elderly enslaved Africans also held a presence within the trade. Despite any increased age the bodies of aged captives may have seemed to profess, this did not prevent their purchase. Many Africans carried ideals related to elders into their New World slave societies.[50] Of course the violent nature of the trade

---

[49] "Ship Fanny," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

[50] Leslie J. Pollard expounds on this idea further. See Pollard, "Aging and Slavery: A Gerontological Perspective," *Journal of Negro History* (Autumn, 1981): 228-234; See also, Stephanie

altered the perspective of respect common to elder Africans; particularly through instances of mistreatment they often endured. We can go further to speculate that because of the difficulties in their sales, seamen and local factors viewed their inclusion within the trade as burdensome. Outside of prevailing attitudes asserted by slave traders, it is difficult to fully determine how 'old' was defined during slavery. The 1756 exchange shared between Henry Laurens and Rhode Island merchants Samuel & William Vernon offers a glimpse into some trader's minds. Delving into current affairs, Laurens remarked, "The young people found purchasers pretty readily" among different buyers. Yet, his experiences revealed that slaves "on the Wrong Side [of] 30 years of Age wont move at all."[51] This declaration provides a much needed window into how age was often understood in the context of slave sales; especially among those considered aged. One scholar makes the point that although age often granted respect, afflictions of infirmities forced an immediate reduction in their value. In so doing, this caused even broader implications that jeopardized their very existence within slavery due to the significance placed on a person's productive capacity.[52] Older Africans were often included within ship manifests and carried into different Atlantic ports. Although rejected in often brutal means on the African coast, this same process of devaluing extended against older slaves within market sales.

Age became a critical factor merchants emphasized that seamen give attention to when purchasing slaves. Captain Peter Reme prepared to lead a voyage to Africa aboard the ship *Tommy*. Amidst his preparations on 2 July 1787 his financer Robert Bostock

---

Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, (Harvard University Press, 2007), 158.

[51] *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, Vol II, 277.

[52] Pollard, "Aging and Slavery," 230.

outlined orders concerning his upcoming engagement in slave sales. "[A]s to the Quality of your Slaves" as he warned, "don't take any old ones as they will fetch little or nothing in the West indies" slave markets.[53] These types of orders were common in the 18th century. Perhaps understanding the difficulty attended with buying elderly captives, the investors for sea-captain Stephen Bowers declared on 19 June 1788 that he was "not to purchase any old Slaves on any account" to which if somehow available, they urged, "take care to examine them well as they are not Idiots nor Ruptur'd" because in their estimation "they will fetch nothing in the West ides."[54]

Orders against buying older captives were commonly distributed, yet their inclusion enforced considerable costs for many ship captains. Surgeon Thomas Lomas of the *Swift* wrote James Rogers regarding slaves previously boarded on ship. He offered, "perhaps you may think it something surprizing that our Mortality was so great" at sea. "It is not surprizing at all" as he professed, due to other outside factors, especially "when he [the ship captain] bought Old Slaves I am certain none of your others Masters would of bought."[55] Recognizing the role of surgeons in slave selections, one wonders how much influence Lomas was able to offer during initial sales. Details of this case remain incredibly murky. Yet the physician's explanation of the different captives bought by the vessel commander provides further evidence that elder bondpeople were not excluded from sales.

Age played a major role in planter's decision to purchase available slaves. Ahxaridne Quidoe a merchant from Kingston Jamaica wrote to James Rogers & Co. concerning the arrival of *Pearl* commanded by Samuel Stribling who carried 356 Slaves

---

[53] Letter Book of Robert Bostock (1779-1790), LRO
[54] Letter Book of Robert Bostock (1779-1790), LRO.
[55] "Ship *Swift*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

into port. As Quidoe indicated, he "applied to me to dispose of his Cargo, and I was enduced to take him up, having had the pleasure of doing some Business for your[s] before," perhaps at another occasion. Much to the merchant's disappointment however, "the Slaves were of a very inferior quality," where he offered the description "many of them [were] aged and infirm," in their health. It is probable that this physical state bore significant bearing on "his having lost near 120 – on the middle passage. . . ."[56] It would be useful to learn if the captives that perished were 'aged'; particularly when one considers the high rate of loss Stribling endured. There are no further details, but his case helps reinforce the disappointment that aged and enfeebled captives often engendered.

Merchants often expressed frustration about aged slaves. In 1790 Captain Martin carried 189 slaves from Old Callabar aboard the brig *Daniel*. James Baillie was designated to recruit their sales and he explained that some arrived "thin" along the fact there were "a number of old people amongst them" which probably fostered considerable resentment. Despite any growing concerns, they "exposed the slaves for sale" and according to Baillie they "run off 120 at an average of £37.7.3 Sterling." Although sales of salves proved favorable probably beyond their surprise, thereafter they continued to face insurmountable obstacles. "The 68 that remain having buried 1 since his arrival" as Baillie indicated, they recognized this would reduce their average. The primary factor of concern that worsened their fears was that "They are so low in flesh" and as they added, "so many old people among them that we cannot with precision ascertain their value. . . ."[57]

---

[56] "Ship Pearl," James Rogers Papers, DUSC
[57] "Ship Daniel," James Rogers, DUSC

Similar references to bondpeople's perceived age were recorded aboard other slavers. A list of sales concerning the importation of several Africans on the 1774 brigg *Othello* makes references to the purchase of nine women and three men described as "Elderly", "Old", or "Very old."[58] In many cases the term "old" implies weakness and fragility, and it is probable that many merchants viewed slaves through this lens. Similar observations were made of several females captives brought in aboard the vessel *Fame* in 1792. A man listed as Mr Jenkins wrote from Grenada remarking that among various others there were "128 Women all [with] fallen Breast & Grayhears."[59]

The offered description offers an incredible insight into how some bondwomen were perceived once carried into a slave society. Poignantly useful is the attention given to their body image. We already know that female captives were judged in a much different category from males by traders that dealt with physical descriptions as well as matters of beauty. Focusing on the bondwomen's breast and hair gives clear indication of the challenges Jenkins anticipated within market sales. There is no evidence pointing to the success or any failures he confronted in attempt to recruit such a significant high number of women. However, judging by his mere mention of these observed details, it is quite conceivable that other buyers shared the same sentiment. We can infer upon this possibility after learning earlier that bondwomen were often judged according to their physical breasts.

High numbers of aged captives landed within New World societies. The 1787 ship *Ville d'Honfleux* confirms the inclusion of several elderly captives. The manifested list stated "Number of Men 50 old maimed and sick 20 thin," which it was added that

[58] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.
[59] "Ship Fame," James Rogers Papers, DUSC

their "Youth gave great room to hope for their Reestablishment." In addition to these bondmen "10 Women" were also, described as "old and sick, [and] decidedly bad."[60] From this particular account, we see that age once again was the determining factor of value placed upon the lives of captive Africans. With the varying descriptions of physical health offered, one wonders the amount of medical care that was required to sustain them. It is also difficult to determine how many captives survived and were later sold. Their perceived age and poor health likely reduced the price merchants were able to ask of different buyers. Although we cannot probe these captives' minds it is unimaginable the terror they carried into their new surroundings. Especially when we analyze the reduced state many of them were described which would have made it even more difficult to resist their imposed bondage.

Disease and Disability

Although age greatly determined slave selections, planters also contended with the poor health exhibited among bondpeople arriving in New World ports. Previous discussions permitted us the opportunity to examine how the mistreatment endured within African coastal holdings along with the unhealthy conditions on slave ships further reduced their health. We already uncovered the varying preferences planters and merchants made according to ethnicity, gender, and age. Yet, different types of sickness and disabilities proved particularly troublesome to many slave trading men. Discussions of diseases and mortality have undergone considerable examination by scholars interested in economics and statistical understandings of this complicated history. Little attention has been given to the social experiences of medical episodes that commonly manifested on the bodies of imported captives.

[60] Certificate of Slaves Taken on Board Ships, HLRO.

Some ship captains initially sought to exclude devalued bondpeople from being transported into slave societies. John Newton logged on 24 September 1752 concerning his refusal of seven slaves. His reasoning against purchasing them because as he determined, they were "either lame, old, or blind."[61] Continual engagement in slaving activities permitted traders the ability to differentiate between healthy and disabled slaves. There is no way to comprehend how traders avoided the inclusion of these types of captives. Yet, in many cases they were unsuccessful in preventing the entrance of disabled black bodies into slave communities.

Merchants often encouraged against buying slaves with bodily alterations. In 1752, South Carolina merchant John Guerard wrote to Captain Watts concerning sales in West Africa. He advised, "what I apprehend of Negroes if you Could get Negroes Suitable for this Place" it should not only include adult male slaves but he encouraged that he "take none with Crooked Limbs or other Blemishes," on their bodies. As evidenced, some investors offered explicit instructions for seamen's role in supplying "healthy" bondpeople. Guerard likely faced the arrival of several captives affected with demarcations and irregular body structures. It is probable however that his orders also stemmed from the story of a young male that Watts previously carried to shore. Guerard explained, "the boy you brought" presumably at any earlier time "with [a] Sore Arm is under the Doc's hands" within the local community. Particularly interesting to his note was his point, "I fear the Arm will be Lost at Last," as a result of the boys injury.[62]

Judging by the fact the young captive came to market sales already affected, we can infer that his reduced condition originated at sea. Of course we do not know the

---

[61] Newton, *The Journal of a Slave Trader*, 67
[62] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.

source of his pain or even how the boy's captors learned of his attending grievance. Yet, we can speculate upon several contributions including that he plausibly fell on ship, was mishandled by a seamen or that he engaged in a revolt. The source of his complaint continues to puzzle contemporary scholars but one can only imagine the pain inflicted upon the boy's body as well as the trouble any future buyer confronted with his purchase; particularly if he lost his arm.

Conditions of ill-health also transplanted into New World port communities. South Carolina merchant John Cross addressed a letter to Paul Cross on 2 March 1776 in Gallinas River within coastal West Africa. He detailed business ventures on going within Charleston concerning another slaving merchant. Within his correspondence he included the mention of three slaves. There is no evidence illuminating where they originally came from, the person who took charge of their sale, or when they were sold. According to the list, along with a boy, a young girl of 4 feet and 6 inches sold with an adult male slave totaling for the combined price of £171"2"6. Most interesting to the female's sale however was the included reference describing "her Nose almost Eataway with the yaws."[63]

There were several symptoms common to victims of yaws. One physician explained, "This is a real Pox, and proceeds from Coition with an unclean Person."[64]

---

[63] Paul Cross Papers, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina; Yaws was one of the most recognized diseases that emanated during the era of the slave trade. There were divergent perspectives offered on the origin of this particular disorder. One medical reference described that "The Yaws is a disease common to the negroes in Guinea and other hot countries." This commentary suggests that those African descended along with other populations of people dwelling in warmer climates were all privy to this condition. Another practitioner countered this idea contending that "The *Yaws* is perhaps one of the most remarkable diseases that prevail among Negroes." These perspectives further attest to the circulation of racialized associations attended with this medical condition. .

[64] T. Aubrey, M.D., *The Sea Surgeon, Or the Guinea Mean's Vade Mecum In which is laid down, The method of curing such Diseases as usually happen Abroad, especially on the Coast of Guinea; with the best way of treating Negroes, both in Health and in Sickness,* (London: John Clark, 1729), 110.

Having already interrogated the violent nature of the trade which commonly extended to sexual violence it is plausible that the passage introduced the young girl to these same slaving realities. However at the onset of this condition, "It makes its first appearance in little spots on the skin not bigger than a pin's point," that in many cases "increase daily, and rise like pimples."[65] By some it was "distinguished by numerous superficial sores of no great size, in each of which are small spherical prominences, in appearance like a raspberry."[66] Critical to our understanding of the girl's case is that "The Yaws appear in all parts of the body," to where it was not uncommon to find "they are most plentiful and of the largest size about the groin, private parts, fundament, arm-pits, and [the] face." We do not know if she suffered from more than one yaw yet "they are largest when fewest in number," and in one physicians estimation, these sores "are not painful unless roughly handled," during the course of the disease.[67] Set at sea amidst unstable waters this likely prevented any sort of comfort during her passage. Additionally, recognizing that sailors gave meager care for the survival of their African cargo, we can easily infer that they did not extend careful attention to her wound. On many occasions this disorder arose "[f]rom want of care and proper management, [causing] the torments of the *yaws* to surpass all description, from the *bone ache*, and [other] dreadful agonizing curvatures. . . ."[68] This latter detail permits us to speculate that deprivation of medical attention likely aided in

---

[65] Anonymous (A Surgeon of the Royal Navy), *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant, or Physical Advice To All Masters of Ships who carry no Surgeons; Particularly Useful to those Who trade abroad in Hot or Cold Climates Containing A brief Description of Diseases, Especially those peculiar to Seamen in long Voyages with A concise Method of Cure, The result of many years, practice and experience in all climates,* (London: J Wilkie, 1777), 255.

[66] R. Shannon, M.D., *Practical Observations on the Operation and Effects of Certain Medicines in the Prevention and Cure of Diseases to which Europeans are Subject in Hot Climate, and in these Kingdoms* (Publisher: London, 1794), 372.

[67] Anonymous, *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant,* 256.

[68] Benjamin Moseley, *Medical tracts. 1. On sugar. 2. On the cow-pox. 3. On the yaws. 4. On obi; or African witchcraft. 5. On the plague and yellow fever of America. 6. On hospitals. 7. On bronchocele. 8. On prison.* (London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1804) 185.

the worsening of the girl's condition and therein gave rise to the prominent facial alteration she endured.

Although considerable details to the young girl's background remain a mystery, the medical condition she arrived with grants room to reflect on several factors affective in her subsequent bondage. It would be useful to understand when her disease advanced causing the modification of her nose. The central location of her wound probably reduced any initial interest among buyers due in part to matters of physical attraction. Adult females were judged according to various parts of their bodies. However, this little girl's face would have conceivably been the primary point of speculation buyers used to assess aspects of her 'beauty.' Even more, the sore's frontal location prevented the use of any deceptive tactics employed by sailors for her sale. One can only imagine the psychological trauma compounding this child from being unable to shield others from observing this sizeable abrasion. We do not know if she received any restorative care that may have aided in her improvement. Therefore, in reflecting further on her age, upon initial entrance into the plantation community, she could have suffered extreme ridicule and isolation that extended onward into her adult years because of the growth a childhood disease.

Several other captives came into port plagued by innumerable disorders. Henry Laurens wrote James Skinner 3 October explaining that a ship captain by the name of Bennet endured "the loss of his Doctor" presumably while at sea. As a result of this episode, thereafter he "had a great mortality," among the vessel's slaves, in which he "lost 34" during the ship's passage. He suffered an incredible blow to the numbers he carried in for sale. As a result, according to Laurens "he deliver'd about 30 [who] were

loaden with infirmitys," of various kinds. We are left to speculate on the specific disorders however an offered description revealed that "10 of them [were] almost blind" forcing their average to come to a low value of "£33.14/Sterling."[69]

The circumstances imbedded within the above narrative reveal several slaving realities. Foremost, there were significant dangers of mortality that virtually every individual confronted at sea. We already know about the central role surgeons served in attempt to manage slaves' health. We do not know however the measures Bennet exerted to protect the health of those who survived. Beyond this, descriptions of the physical disability affecting the above ten captives forces to fully consider the physical state within which some captives entered New World slavery. We do not know the fate of these captives or even how their blindness ensued. Yet we can infer upon the horror they faced once rendered incapable of witnessing their own peril of bondage. Although this condition filtered among different captives, it is critical to contemplate their difference of enslavement within the plantation community once devalued within market sales.

Several other medical episodes compounded imported slaves. John Guerard wrote to William Toliff on 21 May 1752 regarding slaves that Capt Watts brought aboard the *Molly*. He explained that they "disposed of 44 Men, 20 Women, 23 Boys, & 7 Girls of the Negroes" which their total sales "amount[ed] to £19096." Despite the success of many of the vessel's slaves he added "there is 4 Men, 1 Girl and 1 Boy" who remained unsold. Within his exchange he called attention to their present state of health. In his estimation, "two [of] the Men are sick & lame in their thighs, one almost blind" as well as the fact "the other Man & the Girl [are] very bad w'th the Yaws," affecting their

[69] *The Papers of Henry Laurens,* Vol I, 353-4.

condition.[70] One month later Laurens offered an update, disclosing "There is none of the Negroes sold Since my Last, but we have had the ill Luck to loose two Men," still on hand. He added that along with this, "the Two Men & Women remaining are under the Doctors hands," presumably on shore in Charleston.[71]

Other captives brought to shore were similarly devalued according to their weakened bodies. On September 4 1792 the ship captain of the *Fame* reported on the expected affair of several slaves carried into Grenada from Old Callabar. He explained, "I have Bury'd 65" slaves along with enduring the sickly disposition of several other slaves carried to shore. The unanticipated despair forced him to declare, "God Knows I hope I Never Shall Experince the Uneaseness of Mine as I have this Pasedge," from West Africa. Despite the weakened state of arriving slaves, he advertised their sale and engaged "Indivering to get them up," through the use of "as much as Meat & Drink will do," to conceivably improve their enfeebled condition. The declining health of many of the ship's slaves was not only the source of concern. Likewise, the inclusion of one slave who was "Bline, [with] one Eye." In addition, an unreported number of slaves were "Loafing fingers [and] some Toas" forcing him to conclude, "I am afraid it will be a Low Avrige" for slaves purchased by any interested planters.[72]

Details from this case remain scant. Therefore, we do not know the prices these varied captives were able to command once placed for sale. However, brief mention of the physical condition of these varied slaves gives room to speculate on their fate once sold. Although it was not uncommon to find blind slaves within plantation communities, the loss of various digits also reduced the captives' value. Judging from the

---

[70] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.
[71] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.
[72] "Ship *Fame*," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

correspondence, the vessel commander expressed frustration with the captives' sales. Reflecting further on the bodily description one wonders where and how these alterations emerged. From the perspective of slaveholders, we can conclude that there were limitations to the amount of labor many of these slaves could produce. These social experiences of physical disability however remain silent within written records of bondage.

Disability often took on different forms among "imported" slaves. William Grumly wrote in 1788 reporting on the state of slave sales. He remarked upon the arrival of the sloop *Fly*, however within his correspondence he called attention to a bondman's condition of a bondman stowed aboard from another ship's cargo. Within his account he described that the male captive "is picking up his flesh" once he came ashore. Despite his professed improvement, Grumly expressed concern that the man "was loseing one of his eyes" due to a persistent inflammation.[73] We are unsure of any lingering health challenges that gave rise to the man's eye problems. Likewise, beyond mention of his condition following import, available evidence does not delve into his later fate, offered price, or if he received treatment for his failing eyesight. We can suspect therein that his described physical condition limited the interest of any potential buyers who may have viewed him as a potentially valuable worker within the plantation environment.

Sickness also bore within Africans' bodies following their ship arrival. On 28 December 1767 sales began for several imported slaves carried aboard the ship *Royal Charlotte*. The ship contained a diverse cargo which included: 17 boys, 2 girls, 3 men,

[73] "Ship Fly," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.

and 5 women.[74] Particularly interesting to this sale was the condition and fate of two bondwomen. On 18 January account sales lists that "1 Woman w'th Dropsy" was purchased by a man listed as "Doc'r Heren" for £12. Likewise, two days later another female captive, compounded by the same ailment, was sold for the same price as her shipmate, this time to a man referred to as "Doc'r Mears."[75]

There are several angles in which the sale of these women can be analyzed. Firstly, as evidenced through this and many other ship arrivals, traders and planters were forced to contend with the import of various diseases. With respect to the two diseased female captives, we do not know when their sickness arose. Nor can we ascertain the duration of time that symptoms arose in their bodies. We learned previously that in the 18th century many physicians believed women suffered were more susceptible to this condition particularly following their menstruation.[76] Still affected by their condition upon arrival, it is plausible that many of their earlier symptoms persisted.

Equally critical to this case are the men that purchased both females. Among the 17 men that participated in sales from the *Royal Charlotte*, the bondwomen's buyers were the only listed medical practitioners that engaged themselves in the purchase of bondpeople. Available evidence does not permit us to determine if these men were local slaveowners, they worked in collaboration with other physicians, or if they frequented slave markets. Although their backgrounds remain unknown, their inclusion in the conducted sale demonstrates that the slave trade freely permitted the availability of

---

[74] The evidence does not call attention to their gender however one can speculate that they were male slaves. Their total amounted to 18. Additionally, among those reported as boys and girls, on several occasions there was description that they were "small" in nature.

[75] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

[76] See Chapter 3.

medical specimens through the purchase of captive black bodies.[77] We cannot dismiss the possibility that other captives were also affected by different disorders. Yet, the men's purchase of the only two slaves listed with specific sicknesses speaks even further to the calculated intention these medical men had in obtaining slaves affected by debilitating medical conditions. As such, the mysterious background of these men and the women's fate once sold remains difficult to our own present understanding. It is quite conceivable that the bodies of these females served as additional human material used by these and other men to comprehend the nature of diseases; particularly among those enslaved.

Although weakened, some merchants were able to find markets for ailing slaves. Of the 45 slaves brought to port aboard the *Fly,* several generated interest among different buyers. Paramount to their sales included the purchase of 7 slaves who arrived enfeebled in their physical condition. For instance, John Graham bought a slave described as "1 Small Sickly Girl" who sold for £30. Of course one wonders why he elected to buy a captive in poor health. However, looking more closely we find that the average price for "healthy" girls amounted to £54. From this we can speculate that he was able to gain a reduced price in contrast to his fellow purchasers. Another listed buyer referred to as "John Mutaker" expressed similar interest in the offered sales of several sick slaves. He bought "4 Refuse Men" and 2 female captives described in the same manner of which each sold at £40, totaling to £240 for the entire transaction.[78]

---

[77] Alexander Falconbridge further confirms these practices in his 18th century account. According to him, among those in attendance at vendue sales for "the sick, or refuse slaves," he found they were typically "purchased by the Jews and surgeons," that frequented such slave fairs. See, Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, (London: printed and sold by James Phillips, 1788), 33.

[78] "Ship Fly," James Rogers Papers, DUSC

There were other buyers that engaged the sales of unhealthy captives. The 1765 slave ship *Sally* helps to confirm this reality. On 17 October 1765, sales began for 35 slaves brought into port. A man listed as "Mr John Lynsey" opened sales by purchasing "6 Sick Slaves" carried on the brig. Several other slaves were sold from that vessel including 24 all similarly described as "sick" in their disposition. Interestingly, purchases of healthy slaves did not occur until 2 November when "3 Slaves" were sold to "Mr Williams." Likewise, a man referred to as "Capt Scot" bought "2 Prime Slaves." Among those who entered the market enfeebled off the *Sally*, they ranged from men, boys, and "Small Garles" whose sales amounted to £406"49"09 in profit.[79] Available evidence does not permit us to understand the ailments affecting many of these bondpeople. The source of their delicate state of health upon sale is worthy of attention if merely to better speculate upon the social dynamics of the slave market.

Poor health commonly weakened bondpeople, yet there were other contributing factors. A slaving merchant Munro Mcfarlane wrote James Rogers & Co on the matter of the arrival of the *Mermaid* mastered by Captain Taylor. Within his exchange he shared that among the 128 slaves carried into port, they "sold at an Average of £44 Stg for the whole 128." Offering further description on the cargo, he conveyed that the slaves were "originally by no means ill chosen" presumably during African coastal sales. Mcfarlane held the view that the transported slaves could have produced a higher return of profits "but for the disasterous circumstances which attended the Voyage." In effort to provide an understanding of the cargoes value, he disclosed that prior to Taylor's departure from Gambia, "an insurrection happened" between the slaves and crewmen. While the sailors sought to quell the outbreak, "a good many of the Slaves lost their Lives" during the

[79] Brown Family Papers, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island. Add website link.

interaction. After suppressing any further attempts still brewing, we can speculate that the commander continued with the anticipated voyage.

The implications of the rebellion however were much further reaching. "[M]any of those who lived to be brought to Market" as Mcfarlane declared, they "had wounds in their bodies which gave an unfavorable impression" during any pre-sale inspections likely conducted.[80] Direct evidence from this case does not offer descriptions of the people involved, their gender or the types of varied damages that professed among the boarded captives. However, in recognizing the scarcity of adequate medical care available on some ships, it is probable that unattended wounds filtered across the bodies of many bondpeople. Even more, these were probably not only inflicted physically. We can only imagine how psychologically scarred these captives were upon entering the markets sales; which also probably further reduced any buyers' interests.

Once entered into the market, environment also played a role in slave's health. John Guerard wrote from Charleston 10 June 1752 attesting to the slaving affairs of Captain Walls. He described that among the slaves Wells transported, "he bo't them all alive" during coastal sales within Africa. However, "a few Contracted Disorders by Colds" while in Africa and also following their Charleston arrival. As a result, he disclosed, "we Lost two during the Sales and have three now under doctors hands w'ch am in hopes will Recover."[81]

Weather patterns enforced some captives' decline. In the summer of 1740 Robert Pringle offered details on the current state of slaving affairs within Charleston. He explained, "The Season is now become exceeding Hott which makes Business very

---

[80] "Ship Mermaid," James Rogers Papers, DUSC
[81] John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS

fatigueing & prejudicial to health" which likely concerned the different traders, buyers, along with offered bondpeople. He recognized the imposing seriousness manifested from "being obliged to be so much in the Scorching Sun" during different transactions.[82] Several months later he offered a different picture of climate affairs. In December of the same year the *Griffin* docked into port traveling from Angola "with about 250 negros" on board. According to Pringle, "we have been Busie Employ'd about the Sale thereof" which began a week later following the slave's arrival. Much to Pringle's disagreement he found "the Weather has been so extreamly Cold ever since & Continues with hard frosts & Snow" that forced him to determine it "is a great Detriment to the Negroes."[83]

Slaves' enfeebled heath is often attributed to the primary circumstances of bondage. It is important to remember that their inclusion in market sales and exposure to often inclement weather was in large part connected to the enforcement of captivity. As evidenced through both testimonies, unlike mistreatment mitigated at the hands of slave holders, the dangerous climates bondpeople confronted were largely unpredictable. Some could argue for the inclusion of protective measures to preserve slaves health. Yet, for the sake of profit it probably proved far more advantageous to conduct public means of sales to expedite and also recruit other interested local buyers.

Vendue Sales

Considering the range of factors affecting bondpeople viewed less than desirable by merchants, one wonders the fate of those unsold. In some cases females, infant children, and those deemed elderly or "old" fell into category of "refuse slaves." Likewise, we know that diseased and in many cases disabled captives were refused by

---

[82] Robert Pringle Letterbook, 1742-1745 (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 223-224.

[83] *Ibid*, 280 – 283.

many planters. However, it is not always clear how long any "refuse slaves" were kept on hand or where they were taken thereafter. This raises several difficult questions: Were these captives adapted into the local slave communities? Did the presiding ship captain take them to other islands and colonies in order to recruit the interest of other buyers? What happened if they were never sold? These queries continue to pose a challenge for contemporary scholars. Available evidence however permits us to understand the specialized markets known as "vendue" sales which were used to encourage planters to purchase slaves still unsold.[84] In many cases interested buyers were able to participate in auctions for captives devalued by others, often receiving them for significantly lowered prices.

There were specific markets constructed to manage unsold captives. In many cases "Those Slaves that do not average with the cargo are sold by auction" through what was commonly known as "vendue."[85] An esquire employed during the era of the trade, Hercules Ross, offered insight into what can be perceived as second-tier sales. He explained that captives unsold during initial sales typically "remain longer on hand, until purchasers offer" to buy them. In some cases "a number of people, who speculated in the purchase of the Slaves" investigated the condition of those unsold. They did so, "either for the purpose of carrying them to the country, and retailing them," or instead having them "shipped off the island to foreign parts."[86] The groups of people, presumably men, that Ross described would commonly investigated the state of affairs for unsold slaves, in a much broader sense they appear akin to slave dealers that supplied captives within the a broader network of domestic slave sales.

---

[84] For further discussion see Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 177.
[85] Testimony of James Morley, *HCSP*, 73:161.
[86] Testimony of Hercules Ross, *HCSP*, 82:258.

Vendue processes of sale often had its own function within the market of bondpeople. Ross recollected, "I have frequently seen the very refuse (as they are termed) of the Slaves of Guinea ships landed and carried to the vendue masters in a very wretched state" in terms of their overall physical condition. This often included being "sometimes in the agonies of death" as he characterized "and there sold at very small prices, even as low as a dollar." The depreciated bid for their sales many times stemmed from the enfeebled condition upon which they arrived. Surgeon Alexander Falconbridge described "We had sixteen [captives] sold in the Alexander by auction," which he noted "one or two of them so low as five dollars – a piece" for each of them. Although they were able to find buyers for them, he later learned "they all died before we sailed."[87] It was not uncommon that bondpeople perished once relocated into the sale conductor's hands. Ross confirmed the commonality of slaves' deaths relaying, "every person employed about the streets betwixt the wharfs and vendue stores, had almost daily opportunities of observing" these occurrences.[88] When we reflect upon the conditions bondpeople endured at sea (poor nutrition and lack of personal and ship cleanliness, coupled with the daily trauma of bondage that reduced their physical and mental capacities,) it seems more than probable that many captives arrived extremely weakened.

Slaves that came to port with different types of sickness caused mixed reactions among different buyers. In 1793 Allan White & Co. explained the sales of slaves transported aboard the brig *Fanny*. Within their correspondence they outlined that "eight diseased people" were carried into Jamaica. There is no mention of the ailments that permitted the conclusion that they were *diseased*, however these enfeebled captives

---

[87] Testimony of Alexander Falconbridge, *HCSP*, 72:307.
[88] Testimony of Hercules Ross, *HCSP*, 82:258.

caused significant trouble with conducted sales. According to the correspondence, they "could not possibly be brought forward in our Sales," and as a consequence "were therefore sold at Vendue" which we can infer for far lower prices than any other their fellow shipmates.[89]

Other merchants confronted a similar fate with unsold captives. James Baille & Co. wrote from Grenada to James Rogers & Co in 1791 concerning the sales concluded of slaves from Old Callabar aboard the *Daniel*. Offering further description of the captives' circumstances, they explained, "We are reproached every day with some of the different parcels we sold having Died in 24 hours" once removed into the hands of slaveholders. A large part of their growing frustration emanated from the fact "Six of those sold at Vendue died emmediately," after finding interested buyers. We are not able to ascertain the gender, physical condition of those sold, or the duration of time it took to recruit any different planters. Yet, it is clear the captives' deaths created considerable financial constraints on part of both the local merchants and those who engaged in the slave's sales. The unexpected events prompted the factors to declare, "in a Word they were such a parcell, that we never desire, to See their like again," within the island.[90]

The vessel *Hare* commanded by Caleb Godfrey also confronted the difficulty of sales for several boarded captives. We learned earlier of the psychological condition among three young girls he carried during the ship's voyage from Africa to the Caribbean and onward to Charleston. Judging by the final account sales however we can infer that Godfrey endured even more challenges with several other bondpeople. The factors involved in the ship's sales sold 27 men, 12 women, 4 boys, and 1 girl. Yet eight other

---

[89] "Ship Fanny," James Rogers Papers, DUSC.
[90] "Ship Daniels," James Rogers Papers, DUSC

captives - two men, nine women, and one female with her child - did not share the same fate. Instead, they were all "Sold at Vendue" for various prices to different buyers. There is no direct evidence that expounds on the physical condition of any of these different captives, therefore we are not granted an opportunity to speculate on their attending circumstances.[91]

Details explicating the physical condition of transported captivities are rare within slave trade records. The Rhode Island brig *Othello* offers an incredible insight into the range of captives forced into vendue slaves. There is no direct evidence that the vessel commander involved himself in the sales of those sold off his ship. Instead, agents connected with John Thornton & Co. in Virginia are listed to have taken charge of the vessel's docked captives. 30 different slaves were able to command the interest of different buyers beginning in the latter part of August through the end of the year. The sale of "1 Girl" to a man listed as "Fielding Lewis" for £42 took place on 16 December 1774 thereby ending all purchases for the year.

A smaller group of unsold captives endured a different process of sale in contrast to their shipmates. We do not know what the factors associated with the vessel's sale did with captives during the period of time leading to their one day sale. Although these details remain a mystery, on 21 April 1774, the Virginia merchants conducted the sales of 12 different captives. We learned earlier that most of these captives were perceived as aged. Particularly astonishing to this source is the glimpse we are permitted into the importation of various diseases and physical disabilities through these captives..

There were several medical variations affecting imported captives. Among those listed, one man and two "Elderly" slaves, both female and male, were listed as "wanting

[91] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

an Eye" within account sales. Likewise an age bondman "lost the use of his Right Hand" while a bondwoman similarly listed as aged in her years endured deprivation of the same hand, particularly within her "fore fingers." Sickness also surfaced among several captives. The listing indicates that one bondman entered the port with "[an] Inflamation in his Eye" as well as being described as "Sickly." Along with the bondman, an older female similarly confronted sickness during her bondage. The offered description determines that she "has had the Yaws" at some point.[92] Of course there is no way of determining if she endured the symptoms of this condition within Africa or aboard ship. Language barriers as well as any trauma from her new surroundings likely prevented her from articulating her medical history. Testimony of the various diseases and physical handicaps affecting elder captives provides an important glimpse into the varying conditions shaping their Atlantic passages. Yet, even more critical to this discussion is consideration that these debilitative states affected slaves during market sales and even further once sold into the plantation communities.

Conclusion

Clearly, different types of captives – bondmen, females, children, elderly slaves, and those diagnosed as diseased/disabled – were forced within the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The Middle Passage and the slave markets bonded people were immediately funneled into both produced stressful environments for African people. As a result of these uncontrollable conditions, there were a range of emotional and psychological tolls many bondpeople carried into New World societies. The intention of this chapter has not been to contrast the experiences of bondage many captives underwent. Instead, it highlights the diversity of bondpeople's lives in effort to give further speculation into

[92] Slavery Collection 1709-1864, NYHS.

their displacement as potentially valuable workers within slave communities. We can no longer simply say that slaves who were sold out of Africa and transported into Atlantic ports generally fell under the category as young, male, and healthy slaves. Inclusion of these "lesser known" yet divergent human commodities emphatically demands a shift in the focus to engage a more complex web of individuals imported for exploitative labor. These physical conditions not only lowered their values, but also shaped their placement within New World plantation communities.

Seamen, merchants, colonial factors, and slaveholders sought a range of desirable human merchandise. Although ship captains sought to satisfy these colonial consumptive patterns, the choices offered were not always amenable to planter's preferences or needs. For quite some time a seemingly generalized view of bondpeople's introduction into slave societies seems largely predicated upon the idea of healthy and readily viable captives. This chapter sought to reinforce that women, children, and 'older' slaves came ashore. Even more, significant attention has not been granted to the scores of slaves affected with various physical disabilities that hindered purchaser's possibility of purchasing valuable laborers. Market sales and the arrival of slaves, further reveals the harsh realties of the Middle Passage relative to the emotional, physical, and psychological traumas and damages it inflicted. By calling attention to the existence of medical realities attending different bondpeople, this chapter offers as many questions as it does speculations on the varied people, the process of sale, and their fate endured within plantation communities.

CONCLUSION

Writing from Annamaboe Fort in 1764, physician and noted slave trader Archibald Dalzel confessed to an acquaintance, "I have at last, come a little into the spirit of the Slave Trade," as a result of his slaving endeavors. Once fully indoctrinated he found "I can now traffick in that way without remorse." The characterization Dalzel offers provides a mere glimpse into the mind of a trader active in the sale of African descended people. As evidenced he initially underwent apprehension as a result of his involvement. Of course we will never learn how his lasted or even what provoked his ultimate comfort in the commercial market of human beings. In closing his letter however he ended, "I am perhaps as happy, as any European can make himself" which we can assume emanated from accrued profits.[1] Nonetheless, Dalzel's affirmation demonstrates the refashioning of their former lives that some traders were forced to undergo in order to become fully acclimated to the slaving way of life.

Much like Dalzel, vigorous demands articulated across the Atlantic by merchants, planters, and sailors for human laborers became commonplace throughout much the eighteenth century. Once deals became sealed, as we learned, so too did the fate of African men, women, and children. Until recently, the stories imbedded in the personal experiences of those captives placed aboard slavers seemed almost to remain lost in the bellows within which sailors stowed them. Some could argue the paucity of sources prevent us from recounting this important history. Whereas, for others attempts to delve

[1] Letters of Archibald Dalzel, 1762-1807, (SJL)

into the human stories contained in this tumultuous aspect of Atlantic history evoke a range of emotions often bordering on discomfort.[2]

Despite the weighted history of the Middle Passage, *Make Haste* sought to redirect attention toward the social and often gruesome experiences different captives endured within the trade. Critically pertinent to the offered study is that the Middle Passage is more about journey than the actual destination upon which many displaced bondpeople found their selves. The widespread dispersal of African people is often interpreted through their place of arrival and the multitude of experiences endured once landed. However, equally important are the range of experiences confronted in Africa and even more once at sea. By examining these often tumultuous encounters which foreshadowed bondpeople's entrance into domestic slavery it ensures that the varied factors affecting the physical and mental state of different captives is no longer overlooked.

The evolution of slave trade and plantation slavery scholarship has permitted studies of the journeys that scattered African people across the New World to arise and become even more sophisticated in our analysis. As trends within Middle Passage studies continue to proliferate we are beginning to learn of the complexities shaping the various people set at sea aboard slave ships, whether by choice or force. In calling

---

[2] Henry Louis Gates writes that the history of the slave trade has "haunted African American discourse for the past two centuries." According to him, amidst the process, a range of emotions have come to circulate including: "Anxiety, angst, anger, bitterness, remorse, regret, sadness, and if truth be told, embarrassment, complicity, shame, the urge to forget, as well as pride in the urge to remember and glorify" captives centrally placed within the trade. See, Gates, Jr. "Preface," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, No. 1, (Jan., 2001), 3.

Relative to matters of discomfort, scholar Oliver Ransford comments, "To continue writing about the horrors of the Middle Passage is both tedious and gruesome, and it comes as something of a relief to realize that perhaps too much has been made of them." See, Ransford, *The Slave Trade: A Story of Transatlantic Slavery,* (London: J. Murray, 1971), 95; In much the same vein, noted scholar Peter Kolchin writes, "It is almost a relief that one turns from gruesome description [of the Middle Passage] to the cold statistics of the slave trade." See, Kolchin, *American Slavery 1619-1877,* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 23.

attention to the various contours of the trade, this dissertation proposes that the way in which we view the Middle Passage has to be further broadened to fully comprehend the intricacies of bondage that affected different captives. By reexamining the innumerable testimonies of struggle, pain, and survival, we are offered a chance to closely interrogate the varied people used as bargaining chips within the institution of slave trading. More importantly, it offers an invaluable opportunity to explore overlooked issues of rape, motherhood, violence committed across lines of gender and age, ill-health as well as the different resistive mechanisms instigated by countless captives.

By taking a view of the landscape of slavery contained within the Middle Passage several factors come to light. Foremost, men, women, children, and 'older' slaves found themselves held captive and sold to different slave societies. Although for quite some time the trade has been understood through the lives of adult black slaves, every captive did not experience bondage in much the same way. Instead, teenage males and young boys confronted their own set of experiences. Likewise, adult black women endured captivity in often different ways in contrast to their male counterparts. Even more, as *Make Haste* contends, the broad category of "women" does not given attention to the scores of teenage females, young girls, and nursing mothers all placed into this generalized grouping. Age is often difficult to discern among those placed within the trade, however it is imperative that we call attention to the range of experiences of those both young and 'old.' Additionally, we have to remain equally mindful of the diversity of physical and mental conditions among different bondpeople. As evidenced, traders actively sought 'health' captives, however those affected by physical ailments as well as instances of mentally instabilities were sold and placed aboard slavers.

Once we take a view of the diversity of people forced into captivity, it further enhances our understanding of a diversity of themes connected to the Middle Passage. Gendered discussions of the trade allow us to consider the range of experiences common to bondmen and bondwomen. As such it challenges us to consider the centrality of families, motherhood, and even differences in the way in which bondpeople responded to their subsequent enslavement. By broadly re-examining instances of resistance, it permits us to recognize that bondpeople resisted through instances of abortion, poisoning, transmigratory rebellion as well as through ship revolts. At the same time, calling attention to the fabric of violence interwoven throughout the trade we learn that manifested not only through physical combat and imposed disciplinary measures, but also through matters of control sought through sexualized aggression and even the often fatal mistreatment of enslaved children. Poor health affected virtually every individual at sea, however for Africans these factors became exacerbated through matters of unhealthy environments on ship, malnutrition, or inclement to which some ship captains and surgeon sought to protect against. However, along with illnesses and physical disabilities some captives traveled the Atlantic compounded by psychological traumas that further reduced their mental capacities, ultimately affecting their later sale. Despite reassessments of their own lives that slaving voyages enforced among bondpeople, experiences confronted within the passage often shaped buyers approach to the sale of offered captives. As a result some captives found they were moved from port to port often being offered for several different times until being sold.

Bondage across much of the 18th century varied on different voyages as dictated by captains and sailors. Diverse experiences of slavery emerged at sea in contrast to

those endured on land. As such the Middle Passage functioned as a microcosm of innumerable experiences that took shape within the domestic sphere of enslavement. Patterns of physical abuse, poor diets, ill-health, and death magnified and transformed in diverse within the confine of plantation communities, which prompted re-adaptation of various strategies captives formerly employed at sea in accordance for their ultimate freedom.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LISTING OF TRADE PARTICIPANTS, 1701-1800

Carrier				Total
English				2,532,300
Portuguese				1,796,300
French				1,180,300
Dutch				350,900
North America				194,200
Danish				73,900
Other (Swedish, Brandenburger)				5,000
Total				6,132,900

Source: Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis", *Journal of African History 23*, No. 4 (1982): 483.

APPENDIX B

COMPILED LISTING OF CAPTIVE DISEASE AND MORTALITY

Disorder	Male	Female	Boy	Girl	Year	Ship
Inflammation & Sore Throat	1				1796	*Pilgrim*
Inflammation of the Lungs	2				1795	*James*
Putreosore Throat'd	2				1795	*Perserver ance*
Inflammation of the Lungs	1				1792	*Shelbourn Castle*
Inflammation on y'e Lungs	1				1792	*Alice*
Inflammation & Fever	1				1793	*Clemison*
Importume of Lungs	1				1793	*Yasacoyne*
Inflammation of the Lungs	1				1793	*Crescent*
Inflammation of y'e Brain				1	1795	*Gudgeon of Liverpool*
Inflammation of y'e Brain	1	1			1795	*A Spinal of Liverpool*
Inflammation	1				1795	*A Spinal of Liverpool*
Inflammation of the Liver	1				1788-1789	*James*
Inflammatory Fever			1		1788-1789	*Madam*
Violent Inflammation throughout the Whole System	1				1792	*Alice*
Measles	3	3			1796	*Pilgrim*
Dysentery		1			1796	*Pilgrim*
	2				1795	*Nancy of London*
	1				1795	*James*

	5	1			1795	*Hinde*
	1				1794	*Minter*
	3				1795	*Union*
	1				1792	*Eliza*
	1				1793	*Brothers of London*
	2				1793	*Liver*
Dysentery & Peripneumony	1				1792	*Torn*
Dysentery & Fever	1	1			1793	*Jupiter*
Dysentery&Scurvy	3	2			1793	*Jupiter*
Dysentery	12	5			1793	*Jupiter*
	2	1			1793	*Crescent*
	1	1			1794	*Union*
Dysentery & Lethargy		1	1		1794	*Union*
Dysentery	4		4	1	1788-1789	*James*
	4	2	6	2	1727	*Castle Galley*
		1			1791	*Alice*
Fever	1		1	1	1795	*Nancy of London*
			1		1795	*Crescent*
				1	1794-1795	*Barque Aune*
	2	1			1795	*Perserver ance*
	3				1796	*Diana*
Low fever, & much Wasted	1				1793	*Brothers of London*
Fever w'th Delirium		1			1793	*Brothers of London*
Fever	8	2			1793	*Golden Age*
		1			1793	*Apollo*
Fever & Swelling		1			1773-1774	*Othello*
Fever	1				1793	*London*
	1				1792	*Fly*
	3	1			1796	*Crescent*
	1	2			1793	*Backhouse*
	1				1792	*Iris*
	1			1	1750	*Duke of*

						Argyle
Cold		2			1796	*Diana*
Dyarrhea	7	2			1795	*James*
Diarrhoa		1			1793	*Liver*
Diarrhea	3				1792	*Arpinall*
		3			1793	*Sane*
Dury'd Lungs		2			1795	*James*
Enlarg'd Spleen		1			1795	*James*
Dropsical		2			1795	*James*
Dropsy	1				1795-1796	*Pilgrim*
	1				1795	*Persevera nce*
Dropsey	1	2			1792	*Iris*
Consumption	1	5			1795	*James*
	1				1794	*Minter*
	1				1793	*Brothers of London*
		2			1793	*Golden Age*
	1				1795	*A Spinal of Liverpool*
Abortion		1			1796	*Mary*
		1			1793	*Sane*
Flux	3	2			1796	*Mary*
	1				1795-1796	*Pilgrim*
	2				1796	*Thomas*

	1	1			1796	*Bridget*
	2			1	1792	*Hero*
	2	1	2		1792	*Shelbourn Castle*
	9	8	1	3	1793	*Apollo*
Flux & Dropsy		1			1793	*Apollo*
Flux &Fever	1				1793	*Sane*
Flux	10	10			1793	*Sane*
Flux & Relanced	1				1793	*Sane*
Flux & Fever	1	1			1793	*Sane*
Flux	4	1	2	1	1795	*Lion of Bristol*
	3	1	1	1	1773-1774	*Othello*
Flux & Swelling				1	1773-1774	*Othello*
Flux	3			1	1793	*London*
		1		1	1788-1789	*Madam*
	5	5			1793	*Backhouse*
	1	1			1792	*Iris*
Obstinate Flux	1				1750	*Duke of Argyle*
Violent Flux			1		1750	*Duke of Argyle*
Flux	8	3	5	3	1750	*Duke of Argyle*
	2				1792	*Alice*
Remitt Fever	1				1795-1796	*Pilgrim*
Yellow Fever	4				1795-1796	*Pilgrim*
		1			1795	*Persevera nce*
Cholera Morbus		1			1795-1796	*Pilgrim*
	1				1793	*Liver*
Bilious Fever	1				1794	*Brig Betsey*
		1			1796	*Bridget*
		2			1792	*Torn*

		1		1	1788-1789	*Madam*
Apoplexy		1				*Brig Betsey*
Fits		1			1794-1795	*Barque Anne*
Apoplexy		1			1796	*Bridget*
Appolitick fit		1			1792	*Eliza*
Fits	1				1792	*Arpinall*
Apoplexy	2				1793	*Yasacoyne*
	1				1793	*Apollo*
	1				1795	*Lion of Bristol*
Appolectic Fit	1				1788-1789	*Madam*
Convulsions			1		1795	*Crescent*
Spasms & Convulsions	1	2			1796	*Thomas*
Spamatic Complaint		1			1792	*Shelbourn Castle*
Suddenly with Convulsions	1				1793	*Brothers of London*
Convulsed and feverish		1			1793	*Brothers of London*
Typhus		1			1795	*Hinde*
Anasarca	1				1795	*Hinde*
		1			1792	*Eliza*
Anasarcaus, Hydrocale of the Scrotum	1				1788	*Mary*
Nervous Fever	1	1			1794-1795	*Barque Aune*
	1	1			1792	*Eliza*
	4	1			1793	*Sane*

Pleuratic Fever	2				1794-1795	*Barque Aune*
Plurative Fever	2				1796	*Bridget*
Humour falling in throat		1			1794-1795	*Barque Aune*
Scurvy	1				1794-1795	*Barque Aune*
	1	1			1796	*Thomas*
	1				1793	*Clemison*
		1			1793	*Yasacoyne*
	1				1793	*Alice*
	1				1793	*Jupiter*
	1				1792	*Alice*
Scurvey	1				1792	*Iris*
Epilepsy	1	1			1794	*Minter*
			1		1793	*King Grey*
Worms	1				1795	*Persevera nce*
Worm & fever		1			1796	*Thomas*
Died of the Worms	3	2	1		1793	*George*
Worms	1				1793	*Jupiter*
Tape Worm			1		1793	*Crescent*
Worm & fever	3			1	1794	*Union*
Worms	1	1			1795	*Gudgeon of Liverpool*
Timparry			1		1796	*Thomas*
Hectic Fever	1				1792	*Eliza*

Thad Colick		1			1792	*Eliza*
Owing to a Miscarriage		1			1792	*Eliza*
Febris	1				1792	*Arpinall*
Peripneumony	1	1			1792	*Torn*
	1				1795	*Lion of Bristol*
						infant M
Putrid Fever					1792	*Torn*
Put'd Sore Throat		1			1793	*King Grey*
Putrid Fever	1				1794	*Union*
Abscession in the Thigh	1				1793	*Yasacoyne*
Abscession in the Lungs	1				1793	*Crescent*
Ulcers	1				1793	*Apollo*
Ulcerated Intestines	1				1793	*Crescent*
Venereal		1			1793	*Apollo*
Venerial		1			1793	*Sane*
Weakness		1			1793	*Apollo*
Weakness from jumping overboard/salt	1				1752-1753	*The African*
Sulks		2	1		1793	*Apollo*
Sulkiness		1			1788-1789	*James*
Worn Fever				1	1793	*Apollo*

Dry Belly ach	1				1793	*Apollo*
Malignant Fever	4	1			1793	*Sane*
Relanced	3				1793	*Sane*
Intermitting Fever	1				1793	*Sane*
Jaundice	1				1793	*George*
Decline	1				1793	*Alice*
Wound (of insurrection)	1				1793	*Alice*
Lurfict	1				1793	*Alice*
Suffocated	1				1793	*Jupiter*
Suffocated himself	1				1792	*Arpinall*
Sea Sickness	1	1			1793	*Jupiter*
Pluricy	1				1794	*Union*
Pleuracy	3				1795	*A Spinal of Liverpool*
Pleurisy			1		1752-1753	*The African*
Hemoptesnes				1	1795	*A Spinal*

						of Liverpool
Swelling	1				1773-1774	*Othello*
Yaws		1			1792	*Fly*
Rupture	1				1792	*Iris*
Mortification of his leg			1		1788	*Mary*
A swelling in his Knee	1				1788	*Mary*
The Gravel and Stoppage of Urine			1		1750	*Duke of Argyle*
Medical Ailment Unmentioned	2				1792	*Alice*
	12	1	1	1	1792	*Lord Stanley*
TOTALS	**252**	**130**	**36**	**24**		

APPENDIX C

COMPILED LISTING OF CAPTIVE SELF –SABOTAGE

Cause of Death	Male	Female	Boy	Girl	Unknown	Year	Ship
Suicide	1					1793	*Golden Age*
					1		*Pilgrim*
					1		*William*
Suffocated	1					1793	*Jupiter*
Suffocated himself	1					1792	*Arpinall*
Drowned	4	1				1793	*Sane*
		1				1793	*London*
					1		*William*
		1				1793	*London*
	1					1795	*Union*
Flux & Drowned					3		*Little Box*
Sulks		2	1			1793	*Apollo*
Sulkiness		1				1788	*James*
Sulk w'th Suicide					2		*Apollo*
Jump'd Overboard		1				1796	*Mary*
		1				1792	*Eliza*
	1	2				1773-1774	*Othello*
					1		*Mercury*
	1					1792	*Backhouse*
Jump'd Overboard & Drowned					2		*Othello*
					2		*Iris*
	5					1792	*Iris*

	1					1770	*Unity*
Leap'd Over & Drowned					5		*Bolton*
		4					*Mary*
Accident					2		*Toms*
Decline	1					1793	*Alice*
					2		*Pilgrim*
					4		*William*
Manea	1					1794	*Union*
Lunacy					1		*Bolton*
Lethargy		1	1			1788	*James*
					1	1793	*London*
Dysentry & Lethargy		1	1			1792	*Union*
Choaked himself	2					1796	*Diana*
Died Mad	1	1				1770	*Unity*
Phrenzy					1		*Venus*
Hypo & Melancholia					7		*Toms*
Sudden Death					2		*Mentor*
Sudden					2		*Little Box*
					5		*Amacree*
Suddenly					3		*James*
		1				1788	*James*
	1					1795	*Spinal of Liverpool*
	2	1				1795	*James*

	2					1794	*Minter*
	1					1792	*Clemison*
Starved herself		1					*Langrish e*
Shocking Disorder				1		1756	*Hare*
Endeavored to cut his throat	1					1790	*Ranger*
Totals	**28**	**20**	**3**	**1**	**48**		

APPENDIX D

LISTING OF SHIP REBELLION TOOLS

Weaponry	Tools and Utensils	Miscellaneous
Small arms	Axes	Pieces of Wood
Swords/cutlasses/sabers	Hammers	Bars/Pieces of Iron
Knives	Carpenter's Tools	Shackles/Chains
Ship's guns	Cooking utensils	Food Bowls
Lances	Files	Oars
Pikes	Hatches	Boiling Water
Razors	Buckets	
	Cooper's Tools	
	Hand Spikes	
	Scissors	
	Shovels	
	Sledgehammers	
Source: Eric Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections In the Era of the*		
Atlantic Slave Trade,(Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2006), 96.		

APPENDIX E

LISTING OF CAPTIVE ARRIVAL BY REGIONS

Destinations	Estimated No. of Captives	Percent
British Mainland North America	361,100	3.80%
British Leewards	304,900	3.20%
British Windwards and Trinidad	362,000	3.80%
Jamaica	1,077,100	11.20%
Barbados	494,200	5.10%
Guinas	403,700	4.20%
French Windwards	305,200	3.20%
St. Domingue	787,400	8.20%
Spanish American Mainland	430,300	4.50%
Spanish Caribbean	791,900	8.20%
Dutch Caribbean	129,700	1.40%
Northeast Brazil	876,100	9.10%
Bahia	1,008,000	10.50%
Southeast Brazil	2,017,900	21.00%
Other Americas	118,700	1.20%
Africa	130,800	1.40%
All Regions	9,599,000	100%
Source: David Eltis "Volume and Structure of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment,"		
William and Mary Quarterly 58, No. 1 (Jan. 2001) 45, table 3.		

WORKS CITED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Manuscripts

Boston Public Library
Boston Weekly Newsletter
Boston Evening Post
Georgia Gazette
Virginia Gazette

British Library, London, England
Gentlemen's Magazine
The Country Journal or the Craftsman
Read's Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer
Add. 48590 ff. 29-31
Add. 18272, Collections Relating to the Slave Trade, 1775-1788

Duke University Special Collections, Durham, North Carolina
James Rogers Papers

John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island
Moses Brown Papers

House of Lords Record Office, London, England
Certificate of Slaves Taken on Board Ships
Extracts of Such Journals of the Surgeons Employed in Ship Trading to the Coast of Africa
Series of Mortality Lists

Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool, England
Account Books of Ships of Thomas Leyland & Co
James Tuohy Papers
Log of Slave Brig Ranger
Robert Bostock Letterbook
Ship Log Entries for Ships: Count du Nord & Madampookata (1782-1790)

National Library, Kew Gardens, England
T 70/2, Abstracts of Letters From Sep. 30, 1707 To July 22, 1713

National Maritime Museum, Liverpool, England
Earle Collection

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England
John Newton Manuscript Journal, 1750-1754

Newport Historical Society, Newport, Rhode Island
Peleg Clarke Papers
Newport Intendant of Trade, 1785-1790
Samuel King Papers

New York Historical Society, New York City
Slavery Collection 1709-1864

New York Public Library, New York City
Boston Post-Boy
Newport Mercury
New York Gazette
New York Journal

Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island
D'Wolfe Family Papers
Ship Logs, Sloop Dolphin 1795-1797

Royal College of Surgeons, London, England
Medical Log of the Slaver *Sir Lord Stanley*, 1792.

South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina
Robert Pringle Letterbook
John Guerard Letterbook

South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina
Paul Cross Papers

University of Liverpool – Sydney Jones Library, Liverpool, England
James Dumball Papers
Letters of Archibald Dalzel, 1762-1807

Wellcome Medical Library, London, England
Certificate of Tar Water Concerning A Guinea Slaver (1745)

Published Primary

Addington, Anthony. *An Essay on Sea-Scurvy Wherein is Proposed An Easy Method of Curing that Distemper at Sea; And of Preserving Water Sweet for any Cruize or Voyage.* London: Printed by C. Mickleright, 1753.

Anonymous (A Surgeon of the Royal Navy). *The Ship-Master's Medical Assistant, or Physical Advice To All Masters of Ships who carry no Surgeons; Particularly Useful to those Who trade abroad in Hot or Cold Climates Containing A brief Description of Diseases, Especially those peculiar to Seamen in long Voyages with A concise Method of Cure, The result of many years, practice and experience in all climates.* London: J Wilkie, 1777.

Atkins, John. *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies.* London: Ward and Chandler, 1735.

Aubrey, T., M.D. *The Sea Surgeon, Or the Guinea Mean's Vade Mecum In which is laid down, The method of curing such Diseases as usually happen Abroad, especially on the Coast of Guinea; with the best way of treating Negroes, both in Health and in Sickness.* London: John Clark, 1729.

Bellinger, Francis. *A Treatise Concerning the Small-Pox In which a Plain and Easy Method of Curing that Disease under its most direful Symptoms, is discovered and the Case of a Women with Child at Time particularly consider'd; and so stated, as to be render'd even safer than that of other Women.* London, 1721.

Cugoano, Quobna Ottobah and Vincent Carretta. *Thoughts and Sentiments On the Evil of Slavery.* New York: Penguin Books, 1999; formerly published 1787.

Dimsdale, Thomas. *The Present Method of Inoculating for the Small Pox to which are Added Some Experiments, Instituted with a View to Discover the Effects of a Similar Treatment in the Natural Small-Pox.* London: W. Owen, *1771.*

Douglass, William. *A Practical Essay Concerning the SmallPox.* Boston: D. Henchman, 1730.

Falconbridge, Alexander. *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa.* London: printed and sold by James Phillips, 1788.

Gataker, Thomas. *Observations on Venereal Complaints, and On the Methods Recommended For their Cure.* London : Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1755.

Hales, Stephen. *An Account of Some Experiment and Other Observations on Tar-Water: Wherein is Shown the Quantity of Tar That is Therein. And Also A Method Proposed, Both to Abate That Quantity Considerably, and to Ascertain the Strength of Tar-water.* London : Printed for R. Manby and H. S. Cox, 1745.

Hunter, John. *A Treatise on the Venereal Disease.* Philadelphia, 1791.

Huxham, John. *An Essay on Fevers, and Their Various Kinds, as Depending on Different Constitutions of the Blood.* London: S. Austen, 1750.

Lind, James. *An essay on the most effectual means of preserving the health of seamen, in the Royal Navy. Containing directions proper for all those who undertake long voyages at sea, or reside in unhealthy situations. With cautions necessary for the preservation of such persons as attend the sick in fevers.* London : D. Wilson, 1762.

_____. *A Treatise Of the Scurvy In Three Parts Containing an Inquiry into the Nature, Causes, and Cure, of that Disease Together with A Critical and Chronological View of what has been published on the Subject*, 1753.

Martin, Bernard and Mark Spurrell, eds., *The Journal of a Slave trader (John Newton) 1750-1754, with Newton's Thoughts Upon The African Slave Trade.* London: Epworth Press, 1962.

Millman, Sir Francis. *Animadversions on the nature and on the cure of the dropsy.* London : J. Dodsley, 1786.

Moseley, Benjamin. *Medical tracts. 1. On sugar. 2. On the cow-pox. 3. On the yaws. 4. On obi; or African witchcraft. 5. On the plague and yellow fever of America. 6. On hospitals. 7. On bronchocele. 8. On prison.* London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1804.

Raynal, Abbe. *Slave Trade: A Full Account of This Species of Commerce; With Arguments Against it, Spirited and Philosophical.* Southwark: T. Cox, 1792.

Shannon, R., M.D. *Practical Observations on the Operation and Effects of Certain Medicines in the Prevention and Cure of Diseases to which Europeans are Subject in Hot Climate, and in these Kingdoms.* London: Printed for the author; and sold by Vernor and Hood, 1794.

Smith, William. *New Voyage to Guinea: Describing the Customs, Manners, Soil, Climate, Habits, Buildings, Education, Manual Arts, Agriculture, Trade, Employment, Language Ranks of Distinction, Habitations, Diversions, Marriages, and Whatever Else is Memorable Among the Inhabitants.* London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1744.

Snelgrave, William. *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade.* London: Frank Cass & Company, 1734.

Soligen, Henry Van Soligen, *An Inaugural Dissertation On Worms of the Human Intestines.* New York: T & J. Swords, 1792.

Swediaur,,Francis M.D. *Practical Observations on Venereal Complaints,* (1788),

Hamer, Phillip, ed. *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, 1724-1792. 9 vols. Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 1981.

Lambert, Sheila, ed. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century,* 73 vols. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975.

Wilkes, Richard. *An Historical Essay on Dropsy*. London : Printed for B. Law and G. Ray, 1777.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Aberth, John. *The First Horseman: Disease in Human History*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.

Acocella, Joan. *Creating Hysteria: Women and Multiple Personality Disorders*. Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Adler, Eliyana R. "No Raisins, No Almonds: Singing as Spiritual Resistance to the Holocaust," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24.4 (2006), pp. 225-230.

Ajayi, Omofolabo S. *Yoruba Dance: The Semiotics of Movement and Body Attitude in a Nigerian Culture*. Chicago, Illinois: African World Press, 1998.

Allison, R. S. *Sea Diseases: The Story of a Great Natural Experiment in Preventative Medicine in the Royal Navy*. London: John Bale Medical Publications Limited, 1943.

Anstey, Roger. "The Volume and Profitability of the British Slave Trade, 1767-1807," in Stanley Engerman and Eugene Genovese, eds. *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975.

_____. *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810*. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1975.

Andrews, Kenneth. *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Aparicio, Frances and Candida Jacquez, eds., *Musical Migrations: Transnationalism and Culture Hybridity in Latin/o America*. Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2002.

Aptheker, Herbert. *American Negro Slave Revolts*. New York: International Publishers, 1943.

Bailey, Anne C. *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade : Beyond the Silence and the Shame*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005.

Bancroft, Frederic. *Slave Trading in the Old South*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.

Baptist, Edward E. "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States." *American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (2001):1619-50.

Barker, Anthony J. *The African Link: British Attitudes Towards the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. London: Frank Cass & Co, 1978.

Bauer, Raymond and Alice Bauer. "Day to Day Resistance to Slavery.' *Journal of Negro History* 37 (1942): 388-419.

Baynton, Douglas. "Disability in History." *Perspectives* 44, No. 8 (November 2006).

Beckles, Hilary. *Centering Women: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999.

Behbehani, A. M. T*he Smallpox Story: in Words and Pictures*. Kansas City: University of Kansas Medical Center, 1988.

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Berry, Daina Ramey. *Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe: Gender and Slavery in Antebellum Georgia*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

Blackburn, Robin. *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (New York: Verso, 1997.

Blassingame, John W. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. 1972. Reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Bly, Antonio. "Crossing the Lake of Fire: Slave Resistance During the Middle Passage 1720-1842." Journal of Negro History 83 (1998): 178-186.

Bolster, Jeffrey. *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

_____. 'To Feel Like a Man:' Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860." *Journal of American History* 76 (March 1999), pp. 1173-1199.

_____. "Putting the Ocean in Atlantic History: Maritime Communities and Marine Ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500-1800," *American Historical Review* 113, No. 1 (February 2008), pp. 19-47.

Bown, Stephen. *Scurvy: How a Surgeon, A Mariner, and A Gentleman Solved the Greatest Medical Mystery of the Age of Sail.* New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2004.

Brooks, George E. *Eurafricans in Western Africa : Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century.* Athens: Ohio University, 2003.

Brown, Vincent. *The Reapers's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Brueggemann, Brenda Jo, Sharon Snyder, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, eds. *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities.* New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2002.

Bullard, Mary Ricketsen. *Robert Stafford of Cumberland Island: Growth of a Planter*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995.

Burch, Susan. *Signs of Resistance: American Deaf Cultural History, 1900-1942.* New York and London: New York University Press, 2002.

Cable, Mary. *Black Odyssey: The Case of the Slave Ship.* New York: Viking Press, 1971.

Camp, Stephanie M. H. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Every Resistance in the Plantation South.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Carby, Hazel. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist.* Oxford University Press, 1987.

Caretta, Vincent. *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man.* Penguin Books, 2007.

Carney, Judith A. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Carpenter, Kenneth J. *The History of Scurvy and Vitamin C.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Carrell, Jennifer Lee. *The Speckled Monster: A Historical Tale of Battling Smallpox.* New York : Penguin Group, 2004.

Cecelski, David. *Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Chamberlain, Dott E. Noble. "The Influence of the Slave Trade on Liverpool Medicine." *Fourteenth International Conference of the History of Medicine.* Rome and Salemo, 1954.

Chambers, Douglas. "Ethnicity in the Diaspora: The Slave Trade and the Creation of African 'Nations' in the Americas," *Slavery and Abolition* 22, 3 (Dec., 2001), 101-120.

Chasteen, John and Lyman L. Johnson. *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.

Christopher, Emma. *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes*, 1730-1807. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Cohn, Raymond. "Death of Slaves in the Middle Passage." *Journal of Economic History* 45 (1985): 685-692.

Conrad, Robert Edgar. *World of Sorrow: The African Slave Trade to Brazil.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986.

Coquer-Vidrovitch, Catherine. *The History of African Cities South of the Sahara: From the Origins to Colonization.* Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005.

Coughtry, Jay. *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1800.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981.

Craton, Michael. *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Curtin, Philip. *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.

_____. "Epidemiology and the Slave Trade," *Political Science Quarterly* 83, 2 (June, 1968): 190-216.

_____. "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade Once Again: A Comment," *The Journal of African History* 17, 4 (1976), pp. 595-605.

Daniels, Christine, and Michael V. Kennedy, eds. *Over the Threshold: Intimate Violence in Early America, 1640-1865*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Dantzig Albert van *Forts and Castles of Ghana.* Ghana: Sedco Publishing Limited, 1980.

Davies, K. G. *The Royal African Company.* London: Longmans, 1957.

Davis, Angela. "Reflections on the Black Women's Role in the Community of Slaves." *Black Scholar* 3 (1971): 2-15.

_____. *Women, Race, and Class.* New York: Vintage Books, 1983.

Davis, Lennard. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body.* London and New York: Verso, 1995.

Diouf, Sylviane A., ed. *Fighting the Slave Trade : West African Strategies.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003.

Donnan, Elizabeth ed. *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to the America.* 4 vols. Washington, DC: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1930-35.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638 -1870.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1896.

Duffy, John. "Slavery and Slave Health in Louisiana 1746-1825" in Paul Finkelman, ed. *Medicine, Nutrition, Demography, and Slavery.* New York: Garland Publishing, 1989.

_____. *Epidemics in Colonial America.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971.

Elkins, Stanley M. *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976; 1959.

Ellison, Mary. "Resistance to Oppression: Black Women's Response to Slavery in the United States." *Slavery and Abolition* 4 (1983): 56-63.

Eltis, David. *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas.* Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

_____. "The Volume and Structure of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment" *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, No. 1 (January 2001):

_____. "Mortality and Voyage Length in the Middle Passage: New Evidence From the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Economic History* 44, No. 2, (Jun., 1984): 301-308.

_____. "The Volume, Age/Sex Ratios, and the African Impact of the Slave Trade: Some Refinements of Paul Lovejoy's Review of the Literature," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1990), 485-492.

_____and Stanley Engerman, "Was the Slave Trade Dominated By Men? *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 237-257.

_____. "Fluctuation in Sex and Age Ratios in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864," *The Economic History Review* 46, No. 2 (May, 1993), pp. 308-323.

Emery, Lynne Fauley. *Black Dance from 1619 to Today*. New Jersey: Princeton Book Company Publishers, 1972.

Ephirim-Donkor, Anthony. *African Spirituality: On Becoming Ancestors*. Trenton: New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1997.

Darity, William, Jr., "The Numbers Game and the Profitability of the British Trade in Slaves," *Journal of Economic History* 45, 3 (September, 1985), pp. 693-703.

Dena Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Present*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

Fage, J.D. "Slavery and Slave Trade in the Context of West African History, *Journal of African History* 10, No. 3 (1969), pp. 393-404.

_____. "African Societies and the African Slave Trade," *Past and Present*, No. 125 (Nov., 1989), pp. 97-115.

Farr, James. *Black Odyssey: The Seafaring Traditions of Afro-Americans*. New York: P. Lang, 1989.

Fenn, Elizabeth A. *Pox Americana : the Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*. New York : Hill and Wang, 2001.

Fett, Sharla. *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Plantations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Fick, Carol E. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution From Below.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990.

Foster, Herbert J. "Partners or Captives in Commerce?: The Role of Africans in the Slave Trade," *Journal of Black Studies* 6, No. 4 (Jun., 1976): 421-434.

Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

_____ and Loren Schweninger. *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Friedson, Steven. *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing.* Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Fyfe, Christopher. "West African Trade A.D. 1000-1800," in *A Thousand Years of West Africa History*, ed. Ajayi and Espie. Ibadan, London, Ibadan U.P.; Nelson, 1965.

Fyle, Magbaily. *Introduction to the History of African Civilization, Vol. I: Pre-Colonial Africa.* Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1999.

Garland, Charles and Herbert Klein, "The Allotment of Space for Slaves Aboard Eighteenth British Slave Ships," *William and Mary Quarterly* 42, 2(April, 1985): 238-248.

Gaspar, David Barry. *Bondmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua, With Implications for Colonial British America.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

_____ and Hine, Darlene Clark, eds. *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Gates, Henry Louis. "Preface," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, No. 1, (Jan., 2001), 3-6.

Generrai, John. *Blowing Hot & Cool: Jazz and its Critics.* Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made.* New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

Genovese, Elizabeth Fox. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South.* Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Giddings, Paula. *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America.* New York: W. Marrow, 1996.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic.* Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1988.

Glynn, Ian and Jenifer Glynn. *The Life and Death of Smallpox.* New York : Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Gomez, Michael. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Pres, 1998.

Greene, Lorenzo. "Mutiny on the Slave Ships," *Phylon* 5, No. 4; (1944), pp. 346-354.

Gross, Kali. *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910*, (Duke University Press, 2006.

Gutman, Herbert. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925.* New York: Vintage Books, 1976.

Halsted, Charles H. and Robert B. Rucker, eds., *Nutrition and the Origins of Disease*, San Diego: Academic Press, 1989

Hall, Gwendolyn Mildo. *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.

Hancock, David. *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic community, 1725-1785.* Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Hancock, Ian. "On the Anglophone Creole Item Kekrebu," *American Speech* 60, 3, (Autumn 1985): 281-283.

Harding, Vincent. *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981.

Harris, Joseph. *Africans and Their History.* New York: Meridian Books, 1998.

Harvie, David I. *Limeys: The True Story of One Man's War Against Ignorance, the Establishment, and The Deadly Scurvy.* Phoenix Mill, U.K:Stroud Publishers, 2002.

Henry, Frances. *Reclaiming African Traditions in Trinidad: The Socio-Political Legitimation of the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist Faiths.* Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003.

Hess, Alfred. *Scurvy, Past and Present.* London : J. P. Lippincott company, 1920.

Hine, Darlene Clark. "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance." In *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, edited by Ellen DuBois and Vicki Ruiz, 292-97. New York: Routledge, 1990.

_____ and Kate Wittenstein. "Female Slave Resistance: The Economics of Sex" in Filomina Chioma Steady, ed., *The Black Woman Cross Culturally* (1981): 289-300.

_____. "Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silences: Black Women's History in Slavery and Freedom," in Darlene Clarke Hine, ed., *The State of the Afro-American Past, Present, and Future.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986.

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," in Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reeds, eds., *'We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible': A Reader in Black Women's History.* New York: Carlson Publication, Inc., 1995.

Holloway, Joseph. *Africanisms in American Culture.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Hopkins, Donald R. *Princes and Peasants: Smallpox in History.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983

Howard, Thomas, ed. *Black Voyage: Eyewitness Accounts of the Atlantic Slave Trade.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1971.

Hudson, Larry E. Jr. *To Have and to Hold: Slave Work and Family Life in Antebellum South Carolina.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997.

Inikori, Joseph. "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: A "Rejoinder." *Journal of African History* 17 (1976): 607-627

_____ . "The Import of Firearms into West Africa 1750-1807: A Quantitative Analysis," *Journal of African History* XVIII, 3 (1977): 339-368.

_____ and Stanley Engerman. *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.

Inyama, Emma C. "Religious and Political Culture in Igbo Traditional Society," in *Igbo and the Tradition of Politics.* Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Pub. Co, 1993.

Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Johnson, Walter. "On Agency" *Journal of Social History* 37, 1 (2003), pp. 113-124.

Jones, Jacqueline. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, From Slavery to the Present.* New York: Vintage Books, 1985.

Jones, Howard. *Mutiny on the Amistad: The Saga of a Slave Revolt and its Impact on American Abolition, Law, and Diplomacy.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Jordan, Winthrop *White Over Black: American Attitudes Towards the Negro, 1550-1812.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Joyner, Hannah. *From Pity to Pride: Growing Up Deaf in the Old South.* Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University, 2004.

Kaba, Lansine'. "The Atlantic Slave Trade was Not a Black-on-Black Holocaust," *African Studies Review* 44, No. 1 (Apr., 2001), pp. 1-20.

Katz, William. *Breaking the Chains: African-American Slave Resistance.* New York: Maxwell Macmillan International Publishing Group, 1990.

King, Wilma. *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

_____. "'Mad' Enough to Kill: Enslaved Women, Murder, and the Southern Courts, *The Journal of African American History*, 92, no. 1 (Winter 2007), 47.

Kiple, Kenneth. *The Caribbean Slave: A Biological History.* Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

_____. *Another Dimension of the Black Diaspora: Diet, Racism and Disease.* Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

_____. "Nutritional Link with Slave Infant and Child Mortality in Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, 4 (Nov. 1989), pp. 677-690.

_____, ed. *The Cambridge World History of Human Diseases.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

_____ and Brian T. Higgins, "Mortality Caused by Dehydration During the Middle Passage," *Social Science History* 13, 4 (Winter 1989), pp. 421-437

Klein, Herbert. *The Atlantic Slave Trade.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

_____. *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978.

_____. "African Women in the Atlantic Slave Trade," in Claire Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa.* Portsmouth, NH:Heinemann, 1997.

_____ and Stanley Engerman, "Slave Mortality on British Ships, 1791-1797," in Roger T. Anstey and P.E. Hair, eds. *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition: Essays to Illustrate Current Knowledge and Research* Liverpool: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1976.

Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery 1619-1877.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.

Lane, Harlan. *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf.* New York: Random House, 1984.

Law, Robin and Kristin Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast," *William and Mary Quarterly* (1999), 316-317.

Lawrence, Denise L. and Setha M. Low, "The Built Environment and Spatial Form," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19, (1990): 453-505.

Lee, Anne S. and Everett S. Lee, "The Health of Slaves and the Health of Freedmen: A Savannah Study, *Phylon* 38, 2(2nd Quarter, 1977):170-180.

Lee, Debbie. "Yellow Fever and the Slave Trade: Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," *English Literary History* 65.3, (1998), pp. 675-700.

Lerner, Gerda. *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History.* 1972. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Lewis, Gordon. *Main Currents in Caribbean History: The Historical Evolution of the Caribbean.* Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Linton, Simi. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity.* New York and London: New York University Press, 1998.

Littlefield, Daniel C. *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.

Longmore, Paul K. *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003.

_____ and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*. New York : New York University Press, 2001.

Lovejoy, Paul. "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis." *Journal of African History* 23 (1982): 473-501.

_____. *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery*. New York: Continuum, 2000.

_____. *Transformations in Slavery*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

MacDonald, I. and C. A. Williams. "Dietary Carbs, Health, and Disease" in Michael Turner, ed., *Nutrition of Health A Perspective: The Current Status of Research on Diet-Related Diseases*. New York: Alan R. Liss, 1982.

McNeil, William. *Plagues and People*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1976.

McGowan, Winston. "African Resistance to the Atlantic Slave Trade in West Africa," *Slavery and Abolition* 11 (May 1990).

Malone, Jacqui. *Steppin on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Maher, Louis P. *Rites of Execution: Capital Punishment and the Transformation of American Culture, 1776-1865*. Oxford University Press, 1991.

Manning, Patrick. *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Mannix, Daniel and Malcolm Cowley. *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865*. New York: Viking Press, 1968.

Marshall, Kenneth E. "Powerful and Righteous: The Transatlantic Survival and Cultural Resistance of an Enslaved African Family in 18th century New Jersey," *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Winter 2004), pp. 23-49.

Mbefo, Luke Nnamdi. *Theology and Aspects of Igbo Culture*. Nigeria: Spiritan Publications, 1997.

Mbiti, John. *African Religions and Philosophy*. New York: Praeger, 1969.

_____. *Introduction to African Religion*. New York: Praeger, 1975.

Metcalf, George. "A Microcosm of Why Africans Sold Slaves: Akan Consumption Patterns in the 1770s," *The Journal of African History* 28, No. 3 (1987): 377-394.

Miller, Joseph. *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830.* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

_____. "Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Statistical Evidence on Causality," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11, No. 3 (Winter, 1981), pp. 385-423.

Mizelle, Richard McKinley Jr., "Backwater Blues: The 1927 Flood Disaster, Race, and the Remaking of Regional Identity, 190-1930." Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, Unpublished Dissertation, 2006.

Morgan, Jennifer L. *Laboring Women: Gender and Reproduction in the Making of New World Slavery.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Morgan, Phillip D. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

_____. "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans circa 1600-1780," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margin of the First British Empire,* ed. Bernard Bailyn and Phillip D. Morgan. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1991.

Morgan, Jennifer. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

_____. "Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder": Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1700," *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 54, 1(Jan., 1997), pp. 167-192.

Mullin, Gerald W. *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Mullin, Michael. *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

Mustakeem, Sowande'. "Ripples of Infinity: A Social History of the Middle Passage Experience". Ohio State University, unpublished M.A thesis, 2002.

_____. "Far Cry From a Fantasy Voyage: The Impact of the Middle Passage on New World Slave Societies" *ISLAS Official Publication of Afro-Cuban Alliance, Inc.* 2, 8 (September, 2007): 28-34.

Norling, Lisa. *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Northup, David. *The Atlantic Slave Trade.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

_____. *Africans Discovery of Europe*, 1450-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Nudelman, Franny. *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Nwokeji, G. Ugo, "African Conceptions of Gender and Slave Traffic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, No. 1 (Jan.2001), pp. 47-68.

O'Brien, L. Stephen. *Traumatic Event s and Mental Health.* Liverpool, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

O' Malley, Greg. "Final Passages: The British Inter-colonial Slave Trade, 1619-1807," Ph.D. Dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 2007.

Owens, Leslie. *This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South.* New York :Oxford University Press, 1976.

Painter, Nell Irvin. *Soul Murder and Slavery,* Charles Edmondson Historical Lecture Series, 15, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1995.

Parrish, Lydia. *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands.* 1942. Reprint, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Peard, Julyan. "Tropical Disorders & Forging Brazilian Medical Identity, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, 1(Feb. 1997), pp. 1-44.

Perez, Louis, Jr. *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Phillips, Ulrich B. American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and *Control of Negro Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime.* Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1918.

Piersen, William D. "White Cannibals, Black Martyrs, and Religion as Causes of Suicide." *Journal of Negro History* 62 (1977): 147-159.

Piot, Charles. "Of Slaves and the Gift: Kabre Sale of Kin During the Era of the Slave Trade," *Journal of African History* 37, No. 1 (1996), pp. 31-49.

Pollard, Leslie J. "Aging and Slavery: A Gerontological Perspective," *Journal of Negro History* (Autumn, 1981): 228-234.

Pope-Hennessey, James. *Sins of the Fathers: A Study of the Atlantic Slave Traders 1441-1807.* New York: Knopf, 1968.

Postma, Johannes. *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815,* Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Putney, Martha. Black Sailors: Afro-American Merchant Seamen and Whalemen Prior to the Civil War . New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.

Ramey, Daina L. "'A Heap of Us Slaves:' Family and Community Life among Slave Women in Georgia." *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 21-38.

Ransford, Oliver. *The Slave Trade: A Story of Transatlantic Slavery.* London: J. Murray, 1971.

Rath, Richard Cullen. *How Early America Sounded.* New York: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Rawley, James. *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History.* New York: Norton, 1981.

Razzell, Peter. *The Conquest of Smallpox: The Impact of Inoculation On Smallpox Mortality in Eighteenth Century Britain.* Sussex, England: Caliban Books, 1977.

Rediker, Marcus. *Between the Devil and Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

_____. *The Slave Ship: A Human History.* New York: Viking Press, 2007.

Richards, W. A. "The Import of Fire Arms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, 21 (1980):43-59.

Richardson, David. "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade." *The William and Mary Quarterly*58, No. 1, (Jan., 2001), pp. 69-92.

Roberts, Dorothy. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty.* Vintage Printing, 1998.

Rodney, Walter. "Upper Guinea Coast and the Significance of the Origins of Africans Enslaved in the New World," *The Journal of Negro History* 54, no. 4 (Oct., 1969), pp. 327-345.

_____. "African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 3 (1966), pp. 431-443.

Ryder, A. F. C. "Portuguese and Dutch in West Africa before 1800," in *A Thousand Years of West African History.* Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1965.

Sandell, Richard. *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

Savage, John. "'Black Magic' and White Terror: Slave Poisoning and Colonial Society in Early 19th Century Martinique" *Journal of Social History* 40, 3 (2007), pp. 635-662.

Savitt, Todd. *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978.

_____. "The Use of Blacks for Medical Experimentation and Demonstration in the Old South" *The Journal of Southern History* 48, No. 3 (Aug. 1982), pp.331-348.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and the Unmaking of the World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Schuler, Monica. *Alas, Alas Kongo: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865.* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Scott, Julius. "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution." Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1986.

Sheridan, Richard. "Resistance and Rebellion of African Captives in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Before Becoming Seasoned Labourers in the British Caribbean, 1690-1807," in Verene A. Shepherd, ed., *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa, and the African Diaspora.* Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2002.

_____. *Doctors and Slaves: Demography and Medicine in the British West Indies, 1680-1860.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

_____. "The Guinea Surgeons on the Middle Passage: The Provision of Medical Services in the British Slave Trade," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1981), pp. 601-625.

Schwartz, Maria Jenkins. *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Snipe, Tracy D. "African Dance: Bridges to Humanity," in *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical and Philosophical Inquiry*, ed. Kariamu Welsh-Asante. Chicago, Illinois: Africa World Press, 1997.

Smallwood, Stephanie *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*. Harvard University Press, 2007.

Smith, Gaddis. "Black Seamen and the Federal Courts, 1789-1860" in Timothy J. Runyan, ed., *Ships, Seafaring and Society: Essays in Maritime History*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987.

Stampp, Kenneth M. *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South*. 1956, Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Steckel, Richard. H and Richard A. Jensen. "New Evidence on the Causes of Slave and Crew Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade." *Journal of Economic History* 46 (1986): 57-77.

Stein, Robert. *The French Slave Trade In the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979.

Stuckey, Sterling. *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundation of Black America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Sweet, James. *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship & Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Tadman, Michael. *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

Taylor, Eric. *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

Thomas, Hugh. *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870*. New York: Simon and Schuester, 1997.

Thomas, R. Paul, and R. Nelson Bean, "The Fishers of Men: The Profits of the Slave Trade," *Journal of Economic History* 34, 4 (Dec., 1974), pp. 885-914.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York : Columbia University,1997.

Thompson, Vincent Bakpetu. *The Making of the African Diaspora in the Americas 1441-1900*. White Plains, NY: Longman, 1982.

Thornton, John K. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800.* Second Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Thorpe, S.A. *African Traditional Religions: An Introduction.* Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1991.

Tomm, Winnie. *Bodied Mindfulness: Women's Spirits, Bodies, and Places.* England, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995.

Vahouny, George V, and David Kritchevsky, eds., *Dietary Fiber in Health and Disease.* New York: Plenum Press, 1982.

Vickers, Daniel and Vince Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail.* Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007.

Waites, Elizabeth. *Trauma and Survival: Post-Traumatic and Dissociative Disorders in Women.* New York: W. W Norton & Company, 1993.

Walvin, James. *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery.* London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

_____. *Questioning Slavery.* New York: Routledge, 1996.

Walker, Daniel E. "Suicidal Tendencies: African Transmigration in the History and Folklore of the Americas." *The Griot* 18 (1999): 10-18.

Warren, Wendy Anne. "'The Cause of Her Grief': Rape of a Slave in Early New England Slavery," *Journal of American History*, 93 (March 2007), pp. 1031-49.

Watt, J., E. J. Freeman, and W. F. Bynum, eds., *Starving Sailors: The Influence of Nutrition Upon Naval and Maritime History.* Bristol, England: John Wright & Sons (Printing) Ltd., Bristol on behalf of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum, 1981.

Wax, Darold. "Negro Resistance to the Early American Slave Trade." *Journal of Negro History* 51, No. 1 (Jan., 1966): 1-15.

_____. "Preferences for Slaves in Colonial America." *Journal of Negro History.* 58 (1973):371-401.

_____. "A People of Beastly Living": Europe, Africa, and the Atlantic Slave Trade, *Phylon* 41, No. 1 (1st Quarter 1980), 12-24.

White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South.* New York: W. W.Norton, 1999.

White, Gavin. "Firearms in Africa: An Introduction," *Journal of African History* XVII, 2 (1971): 173-184.

White, Andy. *Going Mad to Stay Insane: The Psychology of Self-Destructive Behaviors.* London, England: Gerald Duckworth & Company Ltd, 1996.

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944.

Wilson, Anne C., ed. *Waste Not, Want Not: Food Preservation in Britain From Early Times to the Present Day.* Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.

Wilson, James, Jr. "Political Songs, Collective Memories, and Kikuyu Indi Schools," *History in Africa* 33.1 (2006), pp.363-388.

Winick, Myron, ed., *Nutrition and the Killer Diseases.* New York: Wiley, 1981.

Wish, Harvey. "American Slave Insurrections Before 1861" *The Journal of Negro History* 22, 3 (July 1937): 299-320.

Wood, Betty. "Some Aspects of Female Resistance to Chattel Slavery in Low Country Georgia, 1763-1815," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Sep., 1987), pp. 603-622.

Wood, Peter H. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina From 1670* Through the Stono Rebellion. New York: Knopf, 1974.