

## Abolition and Identity in the very Long Run

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A global shift in attitudes toward coerced labor has occurred in the last three centuries. Whereas all societies once accepted slavery and the slave trade as useful, but unremarkable institutions present in most societies, now it is inconceivable that chattel slavery and the slave trade could exist ever again. Such a shift has happened in one country after another so that today no state anywhere sanctions slavery or slave trading. In some countries the change has manifested itself as a popular campaign against abuse, while in others, such as the Netherlands, it happened with little pressure from below. But in all instances the end result has been the same. The fact that in our own day the terms “modern slavery” and “modern slave trades” can increasingly be used to describe activities that no captive emerging from the hold of a transatlantic slave vessel would recognize as slavery is, in a sense, testament to how far and how fast values have altered. It is possible that modern sex slaves and child laborers around the globe might outnumber chattel slaves in the Americas just prior to the formal abolition of slavery, and some law-enforcement authorities certainly tolerate the conditions under which such individuals are forced to labor. But such conditions are not enshrined and protected by law, and the share of the modern labor force that comprise “slaves,” or, more broadly, dependents of their employers is a tiny fraction of what it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

How did the world - and there is no doubt that the shift *was* global in scope - move from unquestioning acceptance of coercion to current attitudes that see slavery as

the apotheosis of evil?<sup>1</sup> Historians have hardly ignored this question. Indeed, the shifts in the historiography of abolition have been as dramatic as the disappearance of the phenomenon itself. We need not review the debates in detail, but a salient feature or two should be noted. Most early abolitionists felt there was no tension between humanitarianism and economic interest - Africa would take its place in global commerce once the ravages of the slave trade were ended, and in the Americas and elsewhere, slave owners would find free laborers to be more productive than slaves. In the aftermath of abolition, when Africa's share of world trade began to decline and the former slave plantations of the Americas did not do well, "the triumphant achievements of British abolitionists were interpreted ...to support the view, as phrased by philosopher, John Stuart Mill, that 'the spread of moral convictions could sometimes take precedence over material interests.'"<sup>2</sup> But for several decades after the 1964 re-publication of Eric Williams' Capitalism and Slavery, it was the economic interest strand of the original abolitionist position that became the mainstream explanation for the ending of the slave trade and slavery, though with the Industrial Revolution (and the new entrepreneurs it spawned) at center stage, rather than the economic interests of the planters themselves.<sup>3</sup> The idea that the ending of the slave trade and slavery served the economic interests of industrializing nations still predominates in the Caribbean and in many histories written for a mass audience. In the last two decades, however, the ties between industrialization and abolition have received less attention. In part this is because of greater interest in the participation of peoples of African descent in abolition (both slave and free) and also in the difficulty of tracking down a credible role for industrialization - either in terms of

identifying the direct economic beneficiaries of abolition or in making ideological links between the two phenomena.

Societies had accepted slavery as a central social institution for centuries prior to 1780, and the campaign to rid at least the western world of the slave trade and slavery was thus both sudden and swiftly successful. Within a century, the transatlantic slave trade and slavery in the Americas had gone. Orlando Patterson and David Brion Davis have explored the genesis of the idea of abolition as well as conceptions of slavery over the very long run, yet their superb analyses of intellectual trends and state policies tends only to underline the sharp discontinuity between the pre- and post-1780s. Christopher Brown has tracked the failure of early anti-slavery initiatives, but sees attempts to abolish slavery as a product of the American, rather than the Industrial Revolution <sup>4</sup> The long run perspective of these scholars is essential. Yet if we shift the emphasis of inquiry away from the history of ideas, state policy, or British angst triggered by defeat in America, and toward an examination of changing perceptions of cruelty, and how people of different cultures interacted with each other - both within their own societies and between cultures - we can at once reduce the discontinuity and make the disappearance of chattel slavery easier to understand. Slavery was just one extreme form of social and personal relations and it is unlikely that changes in the way it was perceived occurred in isolation from other central social relations, or was even the most significant of such changes.

I have argued elsewhere that abolition is best viewed as a phase in a titanic clash of identity. In the Atlantic after 1492 oceans that had hermetically sealed peoples and cultures from each other sprouted sea-lanes almost overnight. Cultural accommodation between peoples, in this case between Africans and Europeans, always took time. The big

difference was that before Columbus, migrations had been gradual and tended to move outwards from the more to the less densely populated parts of the globe. But Columbian contact was sudden, and inhibited any gradual adjustment, in terms of values just as much as it did so in epidemiological terms. A merging of perceptions of right and wrong, the erosion and redrawing of group identities, and relations between the sexes, to look only at the top of a very long list of social values that came into conflict, could not be expected to occur quickly in a post-Columbian world. In short, cultural accommodation could not keep pace with transportation technology. The result was first the rise, and then, as perceptions of the insider-outsider divide slowly changed, the fall, of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans. During the long coercive interlude of forced transatlantic migration, European and African conceptions of self and community (and eligibility for enslavement) did not remain static. On the African side, the initial and unintentional impact of European sea-borne contact was to force non-elite Africans to think of themselves as part of a wider African group. Initially, this group might be Igbo, or Yoruba, but also blacks as opposed to whites. And on board a slave ship with all the slaves always black and the crew largely white, skin colour quickly came to define ethnicity.<sup>5</sup>

In this essay I would like to provide new evidence in support of this interpretation and link it with other latent elements of anti-slavery (if not abolition) that have a history as long and as complicated as slavery itself. The identity element is rooted in the fact that every group of enslavers has had a set of criteria that have separated out those eligible for enslavement from those that are not. Abolition of slavery is in a sense no more than making these criteria all-inclusive. A second element stems from the fact that most slaves

by definition have wanted to escape from slavery, and thus resistance to the institution is as old as the institution itself. Some slaves had always managed to permanently abscond, commit suicide or join in rebellions that might last years, but resistance to slavery never threatened the existence of slavery itself prior to the late eighteenth century and “never challenged the justice of slavery as an institution.”<sup>6</sup> Rarely had the resistance of slaves or even direct and personal experience of enslavement persuaded slaveholders or slaveholding societies to contemplate abolition. The Earl of Inchquin, enslaved by the Barbary pirates while sailing to Jamaica to become governor of a slave colony, James Irving, who had a similar experience when the slave ship he commanded was wrecked on its way to Africa, and the liberated Africans who returned to Yorubaland from Sierra Leone in the 1830s provide clear enough evidence of this last point. The first eventually took up his post anyway, the second took command of yet another slave voyage when he was ransomed and several Yoruba became slave traders when they reached their homelands.<sup>7</sup> Yet it is nevertheless probable that without the resistance of slaves, abolition would not have happened, or at least would not have happened when it did.

The third antislavery element derives from the rules of conflict – and the attendant attitudes to violence - that evolved in the centuries prior to abolition. In the eleventh century it was still possible on the fringes of Europe for prisoners of war to be enslaved and for several centuries thereafter no quarter was given in civil wars and military conflicts with Celts, Croats, and Turkic peoples. Yet rules of war did develop between states in Western Europe – in the English case after the Norman Conquest - that removed the possibility of enslavement or made death for prisoners, and certainly civilians, less likely.<sup>8</sup> I have argued elsewhere that this constituted a major step toward making

Europeans off-limits for enslavement by other Europeans, but here my interest is more in drawing attention to the fact that the acceptance of rules indicates shifts in what communities considered to be appropriate violence and indeed, a narrowing of limits on violence. The corollary was an increasing concern with cruelty and brutality that became more marked during the late medieval period and renaissance.<sup>9</sup> Intensive debates developed in Europe on what these limits should be by the time of the Thirty Years War and the British variants of these, fuelled by a burgeoning print culture and tracked by analysis of the content of titles of published works, has been interpreted as an increasing sensitization toward violence. Three topics in particular dominated the pamphlet literature between 1640 and 1700, the Civil War, rebellion in Ireland, and sectarian conflict between Protestants and Catholics.<sup>10</sup> Phillippe Rosenberg has argued that these issues provided “models for complaints” against other forms of violence, particularly in the domestic sphere, the jailing of debtors, and captivity abroad including slavery, all of which were clearly of lesser concern..

Yet when we consider that in the second half of the seventeenth century, pamphleteers wishing to draw attention to abuses in England would often use the term “slavery” rhetorically, it is startling to see how few references there were to the full chattel slavery that was growing rapidly in the plantation Atlantic at the same time. Rosenberg’s analysis of keywords such as “bloody,” “cruel,” “barbarous,” and “inhumane,” appearing in the English Short Title Catalogue shows dramatic peaks in usage between the 1640s and 1680s, but almost always in relation to the three domestic issues above. Yet these were the very years that English slave merchants were ensuring that England would become the leading slave trading power in the Atlantic, and, for a

while, the leading slave power in the Americas. The quite sudden revival of full chattel slavery under English jurisdiction, enforced with an everyday brutality that would have triggered outrage if instituted in England, was carried out without public discussion.<sup>11</sup> Some questioning of slavery has existed in most societies though - as in the long debates among Islamic scholars on who could be enslaved - it has often been subsumed in discussions of eligibility. Even as the early modern European slave empires of the Americas emerged, critics of slavery from Jean Bodin through the early Quakers to Thomas Tryon developed arguments that were little different from those employed by their more successful nineteenth century successors. How could seventeenth century debates on violence make little reference to the slave colonies or how they were sustained? How could eighteenth century newspapers still run advertisements for runaway slaves when, for at least two centuries, it had been thought that no one entering England, the Netherlands, and France could remain a slave?<sup>12</sup> The failure of anti-slavery arguments to resonate in the seventeenth century is striking, as indeed is the failure of attempts to establish alternatives to slavery in the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps time that scholars interested in the origins of the abolitionist impulse tap into the new literature on the history of sensibilities and a changing awareness of others in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

New evidence on the first of the three precursors of abolition to be examined here - the identity element - is provided by the naming pattern of slave ships, study of which is facilitated by the new transatlantic slave trade database. These may be used as an indicator of the increasing engagement between African and European peoples, albeit at an elite level. One obvious preliminary point is the fact that the great majority of slave

ships were named no differently from other ocean going vessels. Until the illegal period of slave trading this suggests that the slave trade was seen as having no stigma. Vessels were named after the owners or the owners' family members or their collective aspirations. "Hope," "Good Hope," or more pointedly, "Espera Dinheiro" (hope for money) can be seen frequently.<sup>15</sup> Others took the names of royalty or prominent members of the aristocracy, though admittedly in the last years of the slave trade these were more likely to be peers who opposed abolition like the Duke of Clarence. Occasionally a poetic name leaps out to contrast with the on-board filth and hopelessness – the Dutch "Watergeus," the Portuguese "Flor do Mar" or its English counterpart, "Seaflower."

Such contrasts are not just incongruous to modern eyes. They point to an obliviousness to the horrific that can only come from assigning a people to the category of "other," and go to the root of what made slavery and the slave trade possible. The filth and hopelessness on say the "Watergeus" was not experienced by Europeans and in a sense did not therefore exist. That African peoples were outsiders, eligible for enslavement and Europeans were not, made it possible for French slave ships that went to get slaves after the outbreak of the Revolution – to be named the "Citoyen," and the "Fraternité." Then there were the many US and British slavers after 1755 named "Liberty," and the celebration of freedom and independence encapsulated in the registration of the US slave vessel the "Fourth of July." There is no hint of ironic overtones in any of these cases. Of course not all of these vessels would have been named specifically for a slave trade voyage – most vessels sailed in more than one type of trade over the course of their lifetime. But to the modern observer the basic lack of eighteenth



century awareness of the tensions between the name on the one hand, and the function of the named vessel on the other, is no less striking.

Arguably, such tensions testify to the still yawning gap in cultural accommodation and identity between Europeans and Africans. Yet less than a century later in the last years of the slave trade (1850-1867), names that appear incongruous to the modern observer had disappeared completely. Racism existed and of course still exists. Colonial partition of the sub-continent and the murderous twentieth century still lay ahead. But a massive shift in awareness occurred in the course of the eighteenth century. In 1700 one prominent figure in colonial New England society, Samuel Sewall, launched an attack on slavery based in part on the golden rule. He drew attention to the enslavement of New Englanders in North Africa and argued that “we are...culpable in forcing Africans to become Slaves amongst ourselves.” A high profile published exchange ended with Sewall’s position rejected, and in New England, as everywhere else in the Atlantic world, “[s]lavery...experienced little opposition until the decades of the Revolution.”<sup>16</sup> Charles James Fox repeated the argument in 1792 when he asked how Members of Parliament would react if "a Bristol ship were to go to any part of France...and the democrats (there) were to sell the aristocrats, or vice-versa, to be carried off to Jamaica...to be sold for slaves."<sup>17</sup> This time defenders of the slave trade responded only with economic reasons for its retention and the supposed benefits to Africans of being removed from Africa, and the latter argument may in fact be seen as an acceptance of the golden rule. By the mid-1860s almost everyone around the Atlantic recognized the force of Fox’s argument, first made seventy years earlier by Sewall, that violation of the golden rule was the “foundation of the whole business (of the slave trade)," No society thereafter formally

sanctioned a slave trade. Guards and inmates alike knew the awful irony of slogans such as “arbeit macht frei” in the Nazi concentration camps. By contrast, the captains and crew of the numerous vessels named the “Liberty” in the eighteenth century had no such awareness. That is the measure of the shift that made abolition possible. Acceptance of the golden rule on this issue was effectively extending the limits of insidership, or ineligibility for transportation in a slave ship.

The role of religion in the patterns of naming reinforces the dichotomy between the slave trade and modern era. Down to the beginning of the nineteenth century the Portuguese and Spanish invariably named their vessels after saints, the holy family, or other subjects of religious veneration. It is noteworthy that the naming process was often designed to invoke divine intervention to secure the success of the voyage. By contrast the few names of religious figures that appear on the registry of English, Dutch and French vessels were either of national significance – “St. George,” for the English, “Saint Louis,” for the French for example – or major figures in the Old and New Testament – “King David,” for example, and in the seventeenth century Dutch slave trade, “S Jan,” “S Jan Baptist,” “S Pieter,” “S. Michiel,” “Profeet Daniel,” and “Engel Gabriel.”<sup>18</sup> Names could also be just religiously generic like the “Don de Dieu.” Its American counterpart, “Gift of God,” was sent out, interestingly from Massachusetts in 1650, when Puritan influence and godliness there were close to peaking. English, French and Dutch owners of such vessels probably saw no special protective significance in such names.

Portuguese vessels by contrast were named after figures who were thought able to control the success of the voyage. In 1743, Captain Dionísio da Silva, part owner of the “Nossa Senhora de Nazaré e São Antônio” was drifting helplessly toward rocks on the

Brazilian coast with a full cargo of slaves when he prayed to São Antônio for a favorable wind, promising in return to build a church if one was forthcoming. One was indeed forthcoming and the vessel delivered its slaves in Rio de Janeiro. Inside the resulting church there hung until recently a painting of the vessel complete with the captain praying on the deck of the drifting vessel.<sup>19</sup> In a further example a few years after this incident, a slave ship owner, Teodózio Rodrigues de Faria, erected what is still one of the most popular churches in modern Bahia, Nosso Senhor do Bonfim, after surviving a shipwreck through what he saw as the intervention of his patron.<sup>20</sup> For almost eighteen centuries Christian slave holders had accommodated slavery to their religion; why should slave traders have been any different? Yet the misery and mortality of a slave ship was somehow of a different magnitude to what most slave holders ever observed. Not only was no tension perceived between the Christian message and forcing hundreds of unwilling people on to a tiny ship for a transoceanic voyage, but a Christian god and his minions were expected to go out of their way to ensure the success of such a venture.

Our main interest here, however, is in the ship names that refer to Africans. For this category, the ships' names show a clear progression over two centuries from the general to the particular. We focus here on the names of northern European and US vessels. The first recorded English voyage was by a ship called the "Negro" (1556) and "Negro" and "Negro Merchant" appear as the English trade expanded in the 1650s. In the following decade "Black Boy," "Blackamoor" (plus variants) and "Ethiopia" or "Ethiopian" were used, and in 1720s the sickeningly named "Negro's Nest" made three voyages. Variants on "Africa" remained in use by all national participants throughout the slave trade, but apart from this, general references to the people of Africa disappear from

the English traffic by 1730, though they continued to be used in the French. References to specific African peoples, by contrast, first appear in the early eighteenth century with fifteen vessels named after the Fanteen (or Fanti) on the western Gold Coast by 1760 – the African group with whom the English had the earliest and most enduring trading contact (initially in gold). Place names on the African coast become increasingly common from the late seventeenth century, as do titles of African rulers. From the “Roy Damel,” Damel being the title of the ruler (or king) of the Wolof kingdom of Cayor in what is now northwest Senegal, in the north to the rather vague “Roy d’Angole” in the south, dozens of English and French slave vessels assumed such titles.<sup>21</sup> This may track no more than a growing familiarity with the trading environment, but it also reflects a formal recognition of some Africans as equal trading partners. Almost as many vessels were named after the titles (as opposed to the actual individual names) of African rulers as their European counterparts. In 1755 the name “Othello” appears for the first time and is the name of the vessel in twenty-four British and US slave voyages through to 1795. In European eyes, Africans continued to be the only candidates for transportation in a slave vessel, but just as clearly a small, but growing number of Africans had come to hold a different status for Europeans.

But the progression to the specific in naming practices was not limited to geography or to titles. For English and French ships at least it eventually encumbered individuals known to have lived at the time from sources both oral and written.<sup>22</sup> The first slave ship name to be named after a clearly identifiable African individual was the “King Amboe,” a vessel that sailed out of Bristol in 1724. King Ambo was then an eighty year old Obong or “mayor” of Old Calabar. He was the head of the most powerful ward

in the community prior to the evolution of the Ekpe society that was later an umbrella organization for slave trading in which English slave captains as well as Africans were members.<sup>23</sup> After 1750 the practice proliferated. First, the generic “King of Bonny” (five voyages, 1758-66) was replaced by the “King Pepple” (ten voyages, 1786-99) – King Pepple being the head of the Anna Pepple house in Bonny. The first French vessel named after an African appears to have been “Le Roi Guinguin,” in 1764 - Guinguin being a ruler of Badagry which became a major source of captives for French slavers down to 1793. In Upper Guinea, there was a similar progression from the general to the specific in the second half of the eighteenth century. Instead of the “King of Sherbro” in the 1760s, we have several voyages of the “King Grey” and its French counterpart “Roy Grey” in the 1780s and 1790s. The king in question was a southern Vai ruler from whom both French and English obtained slaves.<sup>24</sup> Further north, the “Roy Kanta,” a Honfleur slaver in 1790, was probably named after a Temne king. Vessels named the “King Willy” and the “Willy Tom Robin,” the latter an Old Calabar slave trader who died in 1820, also traded for slaves later in the eighteenth century, as did “King Bell” the major slave trader in the Cameroons. King Bell’s son signed one of the first anti-slave trade treaties in the 1840s.<sup>25</sup>

The invocation of individual African names, even for vessels carrying off Africans to chattel slavery in the New World, implies a much greater degree of interaction between African and European than do generic references to African peoples embodied in the ship names of an earlier era. A similar pattern is apparent in European recognition of the names of individual Africans. For three centuries after ocean-born contact with sub-Saharan Africa, Africans in the European Atlantic world, whether

enslaved or free, were either anonymous or known by Europeanized names.<sup>26</sup> In the English slave Americas African names survived to a limited extent in Europeanized form to a much greater degree than has been appreciated<sup>27</sup> - but renaming, or in the Iberian worlds, formal christening was certainly the norm. Africans who received recognition or acceptance in European society did so under European names. African names emerge only in the 1780s when Ottobah Cugoano (baptized John Steuart in 1772) and Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vasa) reverted to their former (or what they claimed were former) names.<sup>28</sup> In those parts of the Atlantic World affected by abolitionism, even before orthographies of African languages emerged, Europeans increasingly accepted the African birth-name. African names begin to appear in the recruitment records of slaves purchased in Africa at the end of the eighteenth century put into the British army.<sup>29</sup> Beginning in 1819, international courts established in several locations around the Atlantic as part of attempts to suppress the slave trade, recorded the personal details of over 70,000 captive Africans found on board slave vessels.<sup>30</sup> The records of such liberation that were created in Havana and kept in Spanish listed an assigned Spanish name as well as the original African name – the first time to my knowledge that any Iberian authority systematically took note of the birth names of Africans. The equivalent records kept in Sierra Leone dispensed altogether with a European name and attempted what must have been a phonetic rendition of the African name alone.<sup>31</sup> Such practices would have been inconceivable prior to 1780 and constitute, however limited, some indication of cultural respect.

The trend in naming patterns indicates some erosion of skin color or sub-continental origin (Europe v sub-Saharan Africa) as the central separators of insider from

outsider. In the case of slave ship names it also underscores acceptance of one group of slave traders (Europeans) of the definitions of eligibility of enslavement of another (Africans),<sup>32</sup> which in the end constituted, from the European perspective, a shrinking of the pool of potential slaves. Patterns in the evolution of the naming practices comprise, by themselves, a limited indication of trends that could have significance for the onset of abolition. They have to be seen in conjunction with shifts in the behavior of non-elites – African and European alike. If we focus attention away from those who traded slaves, to the Africans who found themselves below decks on a slave vessel, it is possible to discern a quite different element of the recasting of identity that forms the core of this attempt to reassess the emergence of abolitionism. As mentioned earlier, and argued at length elsewhere, on-board slave resistance patterns indicate that barriers of languages and culture between captives on board the same slave vessel lessened over the course of the slave trade.<sup>33</sup> Slave rebellions were both more frequent and more likely to be successful in the second half of the eighteenth century than earlier, as Africans integrated both skin color and “African” as elements of self-perception and joined forces against the crew. African resistance reduced the numbers of captives carried across the Atlantic and in addition shaped the direction of the traffic, but it was never by itself sufficient to bring the slave trade to an end.<sup>34</sup>

Slave resistance made a critical contribution to abolition for quite a different reason. It appears to have played a central role in the emergence of antipathy toward the slave trade in the English-speaking Atlantic given that the increased incidence of revolts coincided with the rapid growth of an extraordinarily rich newspaper culture in Britain and what became the US. Revolts comprised the rawest possible edge of interaction

between cultures with the thinnest possible zone of intermingling of peoples separating them. Given the large size of the populations of Northern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, the extent of intermixing on the African coast was miniscule. “Atlantic creoles” have received huge attention recently, but from a broad Atlantic perspective they were numerically trivial and the role assigned to them has verged on hyperbole. European experience of Africans was mainly as slaves in the Americas; African experience of Europeans was largely as slave owners and buyers. The largest part of that interaction was not war, conquest, a gradual infiltration of one by the other - much less the cooption of a tiny group of peoples of mixed European and African descent - but rather a system embodying the most extreme form of labor exploitation possible.

For three centuries after ocean going contact was established Africa and Europe remained insulated from each other and their chief point of contact - the slave trade – was a specialized business that received about as much public attention as the whale fisheries or the fur trade.<sup>35</sup> The great broadsheet, pamphlet, and eventually newspaper culture that exploded in England during the seventeenth century took almost no notice of either the establishment of the slave colonies or the trade in people that sustained them. In the eighteenth century the number of newspapers increased - by 1750 there were 40 daily or weekly news sheets circulating in London alone – and stories from the slave colonies and from slave voyages began to form the subject matter of their columns in a way that commerce in long-distance non-human commodities never did. Like the advent of television in the mid-twentieth century there was now suddenly a medium for the dissemination of information about the interaction of Africans and Europeans that had never existed before. Far more people read newspapers than read the private reports and



travel books on which scholars have traditionally relied in their explorations of cultural differences in the Atlantic, or than talked to sailors and Africans on the wharves of European ports.<sup>36</sup>

As noted below, the origin of newspaper interest in such matters appears to have begun in the 1720s. It predates but was certainly reinforced by a striking increase in the incidence of slave rebellions. Some record of 579 rebellions or attacks on the slave ship and its auxiliary boats are now available.<sup>37</sup> Almost four out of five of these are recorded as occurring in the period 1726 to 1800. A comparison with the profile of the volume of the slave trade itself reveals that just under one in two of all slaves were carried off from Africa in this period. Is it possible that a greater proportion of slaves was really likely to rise up in this period – most of which falls into the era that precedes the slave trade reaching its peak? The answer is in part, yes. In the very early era of the slave trade – before 1630 – vessels in the large segment of the traffic supplying the Spanish Americas were restricted by law to carrying one slave per ton.<sup>38</sup> The mean number of slaves per ship carried off from Africa was under 200, and on average there was one crew member for every nine slaves.<sup>39</sup> Crew size changed little thereafter, but the average number of slaves per vessel increased by almost 50 percent. At the other end of the traffic - after 1800 - the share of children carried doubled from about one in five to two in five, for reasons that are still poorly understood. Both these factors must have reduced the incidence of slave revolts in the early and the late eras of the slave trade.

One further factor reinforces the argument for a disproportionate share of slave-ship rebellions occurring in the eighteenth century. It is now clear that the coastal provenance of the slaves shifted markedly between 1751 and 1775, and that this shift

increased the incidence of revolts. It was in these years that slave vessels began to trade in Upper Guinea to a greater extent than ever before (and, indeed, after). As voyages leaving this region – comprising Senegambia, Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast – always experienced significantly higher violent incidents than those leaving Africa south and east of the Windward Coast, the impact was to push up the total number of rebellions.<sup>40</sup> Yet crew per slave ratios, the demographic composition of captives, and geographic origins of those captives cannot by themselves explain the striking time-profile of ship-board resistance that emerges from surviving documents. An important part of the explanation stems from changing patterns in the reporting of revolts during the eighteenth century which made it more probable that a record of such events would survive. In short, there may have been more slave ship revolts in this period, but those incidents were also more likely to have been reported – particularly in the published record. If this was the case, then we should be able to say something about the changing preoccupation of the literate public.

To understand this last point it is necessary to recognize that for much of the history of the slave trade, as also for slavery itself, the resistance of slaves, while feared, was not unexpected, or regarded by the larger society as exceptional and even worthy of report, unless on a large enough scale. A preliminary tracking of newspaper coverage of violent incidents over the last two centuries of the transatlantic traffic shows that initially such incidents were rarely the subject of press or pamphlet coverage. Violent crime and military violence was much more likely to be reported – the former in the form of street crime, public punishments and shaming. In the English and North American press, relative indifference to slave ship and plantation violence lasted into the 1720s, when a

second phase of coverage may be discerned marked by a new willingness to report resistance in the colonies, conflicts on the African coast, and violence at sea, including piracy – the latter no doubt triggered by the upswing in piracy in the aftermath of the Treaty of Utrecht. There follows eighty years when violence in the Atlantic slave system was regularly before the reading public, culminating of course in the St. Domingue revolution and intense public discussion of the abolition of the slave trade. After 1807, a third phase of coverage of the slave trade in British and American newspapers is apparent. Attention shifted sharply away from revolts and toward the detention of foreign slave vessels. In the American case, the internal slave trade from the Old to the New South became a major pre-occupation. More central to the present argument is the second of these three phases, but the very long-run pattern is also of interest.

The entry of slave revolts into the public record can be shown with some precision. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, violent incidents on slave vessels whether within the crew, among slaves, or between crew and slaves, appear in private correspondence, logbooks, and occasionally in court records, but not generally in the nascent newspapers of the period. A slave rebellion was a misfortune of business, but not a matter of public interest. In fact newspapers did not exist in Brazil (where over forty percent of slaves arrived) until the nineteenth century, or in most ports around the Atlantic from which vessels cleared for slaving expeditions. A complete run of the Lloyd's List shipping newspaper exists for 1702-1704, a period for which other sources tell us that five instances of slave revolts on English vessels occurred. Not one of these was reported in Lloyd's List. By 1742, when continuous runs of the publication once more become available, reports are frequent. In other newspapers the first references to

violent resistance by slaves is in 1726 and are extremely cryptic – phrases such as “cut-off” or “slaves rose,” and little else.<sup>41</sup> In the first quarter of the eighteenth century there was far more interest in the attacks of Barbary corsairs, the resulting enslavement of English sailors, and, of course at this time, violence involving pirates – including that against slaves.<sup>42</sup> Sources other than the newspapers make it clear that the resistance of captives was taking its toll of slaving ventures in these years, yet the incidents are not seen as worthy of publication.

Beginning in the late 1720s, public interest apparently increased and more detail is provided on the incidents themselves. A typical report reads:

“The Hester and Jane, Captain Bond from London, having taken on a considerable number of Slaves on the Coast of Africa, for the Leeward Islands, the Negroes rose and murdered all her crew, Except the Master and 4 Men, who by good Fortune made their Escape, and got on Shore in their Boat, leaving the Ship in the Possession of the Negroes.”<sup>43</sup>

In 1731, the dramatic story of the Rhode Island sloop, the “Little George,” attracted wide attention on both sides of the Atlantic and has frequently been reported by several historians from different sources. The ninety-six captives gained control of the small vessel six days after leaving the Banana Islands south of Sierra Leone. The captain, three crew, and a boy were trapped in the cabin under the quarter deck in a stand-off while the captives managed to sail the sloop back to the coast, run the vessel ashore and make their escape. The account was dramatic, filled with incident and, as with many of these early reports, written by a survivor or someone who was there. The Daily Post Boy published it in full, giving over more than a column of its four pages to the story. The depth of coverage here and in other newspapers constitutes a watershed.<sup>44</sup> For land-based incidents the rebellion on St John in the Danish West Indies in 1733 where slaves took

control of the whole island was given similar coverage in the London press. Thereafter, slave revolts, but particularly those on slave ships, where of course they were most common, are reported systematically in the English language press on both sides of the Atlantic. The vessels concerned were mainly English, but, what we know of rebellions on French, Dutch and Danish vessels also often comes from such newspapers.<sup>45</sup>

The tone of the reports was matter of fact, though the rebels were occasionally termed “barbarous.” The reports bring to mind public executions or disasters or street crimes. There is a strong sense of placing the reader at the scene and being involved in the horrors of the events. A sense of sharing is the same as making the reader feel what those present must have felt, and while the captives are sometimes cast as the villains, this is not always the case. Later in the eighteenth century newspapers reported these events to a greater extent and in more detail. Cataclysmic events such as the 1773 explosion of the “New Britannia” during a slave revolt, from which only Captain Stephen Deane and a single slave, out of 236 captives and 53 crew, survived, had no parallels in the non-human commodity trade of the Atlantic by this time - natural disasters and war apart.<sup>46</sup> The “Scipio” suffered a similar fate in 1749, but had no survivors.<sup>47</sup> Slave vessels found floating in the Atlantic with only a few captives on board and no crew, in the aftermath of a successful rebellion fascinated the reading public. In one instance the facts became known because one of the crew had survived long enough to maintain a logbook during and after the slave uprising, but when the vessel was recaptured all the crew were dead. The fifty-four recaptured slaves were taken into Charleston where they were sold.<sup>48</sup>

For decades there is no hint of anti-slave trade sentiment, or links to issues of rights. Eric Slauter has tracked mentions of “natural rights,” “rights of man,” “human rights,” and the “slave trade” in three major electronic collections of eighteenth century publications – the Goldsmith-Kress Library of Economic Literature (for 1750-1849), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, and American Imprints, 1700-1819. “Human Rights” comes into use slowly only in the nineteenth century, and prior to the late 1780s, as we might expect, usage of “Rights of Man” is fairly rare. An upward trend in mentions of “Natural Rights,” however, is apparent from the 1720s, well before a modest increase in the trend line for the slave trade begins in the 1760s. Unfortunately, the collections he consults do not include any newspapers. While the latter never link the topics of natural rights and the slave trade before the second half of the eighteenth century – although I have made no effort to log references to natural rights in early newspapers - it is suggestive that awareness of both topics apparently increases at about the same time, albeit in different branches of the print media.<sup>49</sup> By the 1760s and 1770s, when reports of slave revolts in newspapers are at their most frequent (and the incidence of revolts in the slave colonies is relatively low), references to natural rights are already half or more of the level of usage attained during the 1780s, 1790s and early 1800s.

After 1807, while mentions of the slave trade in print continue to increase, paradoxically, there is much less information on shipboard resistance. Rather than violence within the hold, it is violence between vessels that captures attention: captures of slave ships by British and American naval vessels pick up and ship revolts become less frequent. The reasons for this dearth are pertinent to the themes of this paper. As already noted, there was very likely a decline in ship-board violence because in contrast to earlier

periods, well over half of those carried off from Africa in the nineteenth century were women and children. In addition the volume of the transatlantic slave trade was generally substantially lower than in 1727-1807. Yet many more revolts must have occurred than are reported. Two quite different reasons for the sparse information on nineteenth century revolts must be considered. First, there were far fewer English and US vessels on the coast after formal abolition, and thus a major source of information for the newspapers had disappeared. And, of course, from 1802 (Danish abolition) to 1830 (Brazilian abolition), the slave trade became illegal around the Atlantic and was carried on less openly. But why were reports of revolts not appearing in the non-English language press? The transatlantic slave trade was dominated by the Spanish and Portuguese after 1807. Cuba, one major destination, had no free press. In Brazil, now, the most important remaining market for African captives, a press evolved with the move of the Portuguese court to Rio de Janeiro after 1808, but while they reported shipping movements – as did the London press a century earlier, they were no more likely to record and describe slave revolts prior to 1830 as were their earlier London counterparts. And then from 1830, the traffic slipped partly under cover because of its illegal status. On the other side of the Atlantic, ports in Spain and Portugal were not centrally engaged in the slave traffic – only the small Amazonia traffic was under the partial control of Lisbon merchants by the late 1820s and there were few voyages from the Iberian peninsular thereafter.

The lower incidence of revolts after 1807 and less readily accessible information on those that did happen meant that published reports on the slave trade began to focus on captures. The tone shifted from a matter-of-fact statement of outcome of a voyage to outrage, to melancholy, to horror, to indignation that slave traders could do such a thing.

The Illustrated London News first began to present pictures and slave ship captures.

Pictures of captives after recapture became a staple item, those after 1860 likely to have been drawn by artists from a photograph.<sup>50</sup>

Overall, incidents of violence on the African coast and on board slave vessels were reported in print more frequently than similar news from the plantation Americas prior to the outbreak of the St. Domingue revolution. Such reports served to keep the slave system before the public eye and for the English newspaper reader comprised the main form of information to come out of that system. In terms of the broader argument presented here, awareness of the struggles of slaves was at once likely to accelerate abolition, and, given the split in the ruling class that abolition constituted, make land-based revolts, at least, more likely to occur as well as to improve their chances of success.

While reports of violence from the Atlantic appeared in the English press continued to build, attitudes to violence within in England did not stay the same. The limits of what was considered acceptable violence continued to shift. The easiest way to follow such patterns is through the evolution of penalties and public reaction in the criminal justice arena. The master-servant act remained part of the penal code until 1875, and servants continued to be incarcerated and fined, but the penalty of physical chastisement diminished in the course of the eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> In 1351 the English Treason Act defined the murder of a husband by a wife as petty treason for which the penalty was burning at the stake. This clause was not repealed until 1790. From 1675 to 1773, six women were condemned for the offence. The fire was set as close as possible to the site of the offence – usually in the street - and while the executioner had the option of dispatching the condemned women before lighting the fire, this did not always happen.



The last time the sentence was carried out was probably in 1737.<sup>52</sup> Witchcraft was also defined as petty treason, but had its own act. It was repealed in both England and Scotland in 1736. In England the penalty was hanging with the last execution occurring in 1684, and the last conviction in 1712. In Scotland, where cases were much more common (as in France and Germany), there were at least 3,837 prosecutions between 1563 and 1736. The penalty was burning at the stake with the last cases prosecuted in the 1720s.<sup>53</sup>

As for High Treason, there are twenty-seven cases in the Old Bailey Proceedings, but twenty-three of them occurred before 1717. When Colonel Edward Marcus Despard and his co-conspirators in a plot to kill George III were sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered in 1803, public concern led to the sentence being commuted to hanging and beheading.<sup>54</sup> The “quarters” of the ten regicides, “mangled and cut and reeking as they were brought from the gallows in baskets,” that diarist John Evelyn noted in 1660 as he arrived late for the execution, is indeed of an earlier age.<sup>55</sup> The mass execution of 52 pirates, all British, over a two week period in April, 1722 on the Gold Coast falls into the same category.<sup>56</sup> The introduction of the drop at the gallows in 1783, and thus the elimination of slow strangulation (paralleled in France by the guillotine a few years later), meant that the means of death itself was becoming somewhat more humane.

The English domestic relationship that was closest to that of slave owner and slave in the plantation system was that of the master-servant. The murder of a master by the servant – a subversion of normal hierarchies to match that of a woman killing her husband – was also defined as petty treason, with the penalty for men being hanging, drawing, and quartering. While the draconian terms of the master-servant act remained in

place until 1875, by the mid-eighteenth century the penalty was hanging, followed by dissection. To be “dissected and anatomized” by surgeons was an extra penalty reserved for aggravated murder. But as protests and riots at the practice increased during the eighteenth century it was clear that this form of judicial violence, too, was moving into the unacceptable category.<sup>57</sup> The master who had the greatest powers over servants, indeed, close to absolute, was the sea captain, but here too some de facto limits developed over time. Records of the mid-seventeenth century Admiralty courts contain instances of piracy, mutiny, disputes over wages and property, but no cases that I have seen of captains prosecuted for excessive use of force. Such prosecutions first appear well into the eighteenth century, many resulting in acquittal.<sup>58</sup> But John Jane, a Bristol captain, was condemned for “barbarously” killing a cabin boy and jeered by a large crowd on his way through London to execution at Wapping Dock.<sup>59</sup> The chief mate of another Bristol ship, the “Mary,” threw a yam at a seaman on a slave ship in the Bight of Biafra, killed him, and then immediately absconded (not a tempting option in the Bight of Biafra) rather than face trial.<sup>60</sup> Mate Thomas Sanderson beat a sailor with a 2” rope in 1739 and was prosecuted,<sup>61</sup> and many similar cases appear thereafter. Tensions between master and servant, street crime, domestic violence, the retribution exacted for such acts, and of course, warfare made late eighteenth century Europe, and especially London, a dangerous environment. But the limits of what was tolerable and appropriate had nevertheless narrowed relative to the previous century.

There was no such change in the Atlantic slave system, by contrast. As early as 1788 the Times reprinted runaway slave advertisements from West Indian newspapers that used scars and deformities from punishments to identify the slaves. This, the paper

argued, was evidence of the “usage received by Negroes in captivity.”<sup>62</sup> In the aftermath of acts of slave resistance, large-scale painful death remained the norm. Concern at loss of property that retribution inevitably incurred might impose restrictions on the numbers killed. Thus, while executions on slave ships were invariably horrific, they were usually limited in number given the strong effect of mortality on the profitability of the voyage.<sup>63</sup> But in plantation society the owners of slaves executed after rebellions were often compensated by the state, and with the costs spread to the community as a whole, such limits were less likely to be observed. Historians have noted the huge contrast between the number of whites killed by slaves in the series of rebellions toward the end of slavery in the British Caribbean, and the number of slaves killed by whites after the rebellion was suppressed.<sup>64</sup> But the key impact for campaigns against the slave trade of such events came in the late eighteenth century with the publication of accounts of wars against maroons, violent reactions to slave conspiracies, real or imagined, and, of course, the violence unleashed in St Domingue in 1791. Awareness of overseas violence and the different role it played in relations between master and slave on the one hand, and master and servant on the other had never been greater.<sup>65</sup>

The transatlantic slave trade formed a bridge, literal and figurative, between these two diverging conceptions of appropriate violence. Because, for the most part, the slave trade was organized in Europe, it was bound to reflect the tensions between the standards that held in Europe on the one hand and Atlantic slave societies on the other. While ship’s officers might be prosecuted for cruelty practiced on ordinary seamen in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, there were certainly no cases involving cruelty to slaves on board slave vessels then, or earlier. A half century later, however, captains

could become infamous for their involvement in the death of slaves as well. The Zong trial of 1781, arising from the fact that slaves were thrown to their deaths by Captain Luke Collingwood, and the Captain John Kimber case involving the torture of a slave girl,<sup>66</sup> were unusual only in the sense that they became well-known, not because it was the first time that such things had happened. Captain John Brelsford, the second mate, surgeon and a crew member of the Sarah were acquitted of murdering two slaves in 1802, but the charges were prosecuted by the Advocate-General, and the judge commented that “it was necessary that the affair should have been sifted to the bottom. When the Admiralty heard a charge made..., they were bound to institute an enquiry.”<sup>67</sup> Such a comment could not have been made by a seventeenth century judge, nor could the attention all of these cases attracted have occurred in the 1680s or the 1730s.

Four separate acts from 1788 to 1799 governing the space provided by slave vessels and the conditions under which the trade was carried on also had implications for violence. The ultimate purpose of this legislation was to reduce voyage mortality, seen then as directly connected to crowding. Among the longest articles of the original law, usually termed Dolben’s Act, were those requiring surgeons to keep a sworn log of the cause of each slave death. The log was to be handed over to the Collector of the Customs of the first British port entered after departure from Africa.<sup>68</sup> Subsequent legislation, particularly the 1799 Act, increased the level of oversight, and penalties for non-compliance very significantly. Whatever the broader impact on mortality of the 1788-1799 acts regulating the slave trade, they must have inhibited casual violence and can be viewed as an attempt to impose an evolving British sense of what violence was appropriate on to the part of the slave Atlantic directly under metropolitan control. While

the first regulation to impose limits on numbers carried was Spanish, dates from the sixteenth century and was repealed, Dolben and its successors had a measurable impact and were widely publicized. The legislation can be more appropriately grouped with the first British Passenger Act of 1803, though it was clearly the slave trade that seemed most at odds with the sensibilities of the late eighteenth century.

In terms of the larger argument proposed here, the widening difference between conceptions of appropriate violence in Europe on the one hand, and Atlantic slave systems on the other, have an additional implication. On the part of Europeans not directly involved in the slave system, the pattern indicates a massive change in awareness of the black Atlantic since the early eighteenth century. It also points to a developing assumption that the rule of law should apply to slaves just as much as to others, and that in the long run all should be subject to the same law. And one fundamental element of a shared identity, though clearly not sufficient by itself, is being subject to the same law. The laws governing the transport of slaves and those dealing with passenger transportation were of course very different, and conditions on these two branches of transatlantic commerce remained drastically separate. Yet collectively the British acts of the 1788-1799 period regulating the slave trade are sufficiently different from their Spanish and Portuguese predecessors that they constitute some erosion of the “outsider” status of those occupying the holds of slave ships.

Briefly in France in the 1790s, and more gradually and permanently in the British system in the first decades of the nineteenth century, slave resistance together with metropolitan pressure resulted in the establishment of new conceptions of appropriate violence in the slave systems. The abolition of the slave trade beginning with the Danes

in 1803 had the effect of bringing a degree of homogeneity to the long-distance transportation of labor. The differences in regulations and conditions under which convicts traveled to Australia, Asian contract labor went to the Mascarene Islands, South Africa, and the Americas, steerage passengers voyaged across the Atlantic from northern Europe, and African contract labor went to Jamaica in the nineteenth century appear small compared to those that held in the various forms of pre-1800 migration. The abolition of slavery itself in the British system was at root an attempt to eliminate differences between domestic and colonial labor regimes, as opposed to migratory regimes.<sup>69</sup> The society that the British elite tried to create in the former slave colonies was one that they would have liked to have had in Britain. The 1833 Act reflects a Tory view of master-servant relations, the Whig origins of the Act notwithstanding. The new society was certainly based on free labor, but the expectations, if not the provisions, were highly paternalistic. The free laborers would choose jobs that the elite thought appropriate, they would work hard for their pay, they would be deferential and sober, and, of course, they would respect the property of others. In the aftermath of abolition of slavery itself, it should be remembered, a greater share of Barbadians than English had the right to vote for their respective governments.

The former slaves ensured that such a society never evolved, and indeed, in a real sense, it had never existed in England. Nevertheless, in some ways the discussion within the Colonial Office in 1833 of the various plans for emancipation constituted a high-water mark for applying the rule of the same law over regions and peoples that were very different. Given the scientific racism that was shortly to get under way, the several printed plans and position papers, as well as the hand-written annotations are grounded in

a world view remarkable for its lack of racism. The underlying assumption in the exchanges are that English, Irish, indeed laboring peoples around the world as the Colonial Office officials searched widely for guidance, were no different from the soon-to-be former slaves.<sup>70</sup> This is not of course the same as the integration of cultures – a black culture scarcely existed in England - but it is a useful start. If in the 1830s large numbers of people of African descent had been routinely offered for sale within walking distance of the Houses of Parliament, in other words if London had been like Washington, attitudes may well have been quite different. But they were not. For a few years at least, the French in the 1790s and the British in the 1830s and 1840s, in both cases prodded by large scale unrest in their slave colonies, seemed to have attained a cultural accommodation with peoples of sub-Saharan Africa and their descendants so conspicuously absent since 1492.

As many historians have observed, the ex-slaves refused to conform to white paternalistic expectations and exited the sugar plantations in the aftermath of the first abolition of slavery. The impact of this on the remaining stakeholders of the slave systems of the Americas was almost as great as the St. Domingue revolution forty years earlier.<sup>71</sup> The restoration of slavery in the French case, and reemergence of overt racism as a response to the collapse of sugar exports in the British case constituted a major retreat from the attitudes that had fuelled abolition. Thereafter, every post-emancipation society drew on constructions of race that differed little from those prevalent in slave societies.<sup>72</sup> Yet in the long run the integration of cultures and identities that first came into contact in 1492 has arguably continued since the late eighteenth century.

In summary, it is possible to discern three strands of opposition to slavery that interacted and eventually coalesced. – resistance by those that were enslaved, narrowing conceptions of eligibility for enslavement, and a rising sensitivity toward cruelty. Two of the three themes thus stem from changing attitudes rather than military events (the St. Domingue rebellion and the US Civil War notwithstanding), structural changes in the economies of the Atlantic World, or democratization and revolution, however defined. An historiographical shift toward increased focus on the European elements of this coalescence may be traced back to Thomas Haskell, though a recent book on emerging human rights by Lynn Hunt, which makes almost no mention of slavery or the slave trade, deals with same phenomenon from a different perspective.<sup>73</sup> Christopher Brown's prize-winning work may be seen as part of this pattern. It, too, focuses on shifting attitudes within Britain, but privileges the traumatic impact of the loss of the American colonies on those attitudes. Would British abolition of the slave trade have happened - or at least have happened when it did - without the American Revolution? Brown's nuanced and insightful discussion implies not. The argument here, by contrast, views the shift in sensibilities and the impact of slave ship revolts as taking place well before 1776. There is not much role for industrialization in the more recent research on abolition. Neither Christopher Brown nor David Brion Davis' In Human Bondage pay it much attention.<sup>74</sup> But it should not be ignored. The accelerated communication and transportation that it made possible appear of central importance to the process whereby peoples become more aware of other cultures and sensitive to the consequences of their own actions. Haskell set out to link such rising awareness to market activity, but a stronger link might be made with technological innovation which pre-dated, though clearly accelerated through, the



Industrial Revolution. Is it possible that scholars are moving toward a new consensus view of abolition as a shift in attitudes?

While this essay has been mainly concerned with attitudes rather than state regulation, we might nevertheless note in conclusion that the long perspective suggests the 1807 act not to have been quite the watershed and model for other reforms that some scholars have assumed (including myself).<sup>75</sup> Quite apart from the provisions already mentioned, especially in relation to criminal law, it might be noted that legislation making the binding of Scottish colliers for life illegal passed in 1775, and higher penalties and more restrictive provisions became law in 1799. Thus, formal abolition of serfdom in Scotland came well ahead of attempts to suppress the slave trade. Further, the first British East India Company regulation against the slave trade was in 1774 and prohibitions of the export of slaves from first Bengal and then Madras followed in 1789 and 1790 respectively. All these measures were “apparently part of a more comprehensive attack on the institution of slavery in India.”<sup>76</sup> Although the gap between British metropolitan and Caribbean attitudes to violence and labor had become large indeed by the late eighteenth century, the shift on the British side between the mid seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries was of sufficient magnitude that we would not expect an impact limited to the Caribbean alone.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For this association see David Eltis and Stanley L Engerman, "Slavery and Evil," in Steve Mintz and John Stauffer (eds.), The Problem of Evil: Slavery, Freedom, and the Ambiguities of American Reform (Amherst, 2006), pp. 54-60.

<sup>2</sup> David Brion Davis, Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World (New York, 2006), p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> Originally published in 1944 (Chapel Hill), the book's massive impact on the historiography developed only after its re-issue in 1964. See Howard Temperley, "Eric Williams and the Birth of a New Orthodoxy," in Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman (eds.), British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 229-58. The new transatlantic slave trade database (at [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)) shows that the Portuguese slave trade was almost twice the size of the British and casts further doubt on how such a traffic could have generated both capitalism and abolition in Britain and not in Portugal. But even historians who disagreed with Williams, including myself, still accepted his linking of industrialization and abolition and searched instead for ways of making the connection that did not rest on direct financial rewards for those supporting abolition. See David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution (Ithaca, 1974); Seymour Drescher, Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective (London, 1986); David Eltis, Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (New York, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Davis, Age of Revolution; idem, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture (Ithaca, 1966); Orlando Patterson, Freedom in the Making of Western Culture, 3 vols. (New York, 1991); Christopher Leslie Brown, Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism (Chapel Hill, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> For an early use of "whites" in a racialized context in the English West Indies see George Fox, Gospel, Family-Order, Being a Short Discourse concerning the ordering of Families, Both of Whites, Blacks and Indians (London, 1676) pp. 13-14, cited by Philippe Rosenberg, "Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Anti-Slavery," William and Mary Quarterly (2004): and n. 31.

<sup>6</sup> David Brion Davis, "American Slavery and the American Revolution," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution (Charlottesville, 1983), p. 276

<sup>7</sup> David Eltis, Rise of African Slavery in the Americas (Cambridge, 2000), p. ; Suzanne Schwarz (ed.), Slave Captain: The Career of James Irving in the Liverpool Slave Trade (Liverpool, 1995). The two slave voyages are voyageids 80295, 81242 in the database. Jean Herskovits Kopytoff, A Preface to Modern Nigeria: The "Sierra Leonians" in Yoruba, 1830-1890 (Madison, Wisc., 1965), p. 108

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Strickland, War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217 (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Renato Rosaldo, Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis (Boston, 1989), pp (ch 4)

<sup>10</sup> Phillipe Rosenberg, Negative Enlightenment: The Polemics of Brutality and the Cultivation of Restraint in the British Isles (1640-1700) (forthcoming). I thank Dr

Rosenberg for generously allowing me to read and cite his manuscript in advance of publication.

<sup>11</sup> A search for the words “slave” or “slavery” in the titles included in the Goldsmith-Kress Library of Economic Literature: A Consolidated Guide. 4 vols. (Woodbridge, Conn, 1976-77), and R.L.G. Eureka, English Short Title Catalogue for the years 1600 to 1710 generates 173 hits, but almost all use these terms either in a metaphorical sense, or refer to white slavery in North Africa, or to slavery in some part of the world other than the slave colonies. When the Caribbean is mentioned in connection to slavery the reference is usually to white servants being treated as slaves.

<sup>12</sup> Daily Courant, April 28, April 30, May 2, 1713 (London). Williamson’s Advertizer, May 4, 1780 (Liverpool), cited in Gomer Williams, History of the Liverpool Privateers and Letters of Marque (London, 1897), p. 554; Eltis, Rise of African Slavery, 82.

<sup>13</sup> See Christopher Brown, Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism (Chapel Hill, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> The foundational works on the history of violence and cruelty by Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault appeared somewhat formalistic to many scholars even at the time of publication and were largely ignored by students of slavery and abolition. The more recent focus is on the historical evolution of attitudes to violence as a social construct subject to constant reformulation by communities via a print culture. This offers more promising avenues of investigation for those interested in the rise and fall of the plantation complexes of the Atlantic World.

<sup>15</sup> The voyages (and of course names) of every one of the vessels mentioned in this and the following paragraphs can be easily called up using the “search the Database” function on the voyages database site at [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org).

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Sewall, The Selling of Joseph (Boston, 1700). For a review of the debate see Lawrence W. Turner, “The Sewall-Saffin Dialogue on Slavery,” William and Mary Quarterly (1964): 40-52. For quotes, see pp. 43, 52.

17. Parliamentary Debates, 1792, XXIX, 1122.

<sup>18</sup> The secularization of ship names occurred in the Dutch slave trade about 125 years (late seventeenth century) before the same process in the Portuguese traffic (early nineteenth century). It does not seem likely that disappearance of religious names in the Portuguese traffic was linked in any way with a new sensibility, or a recognition that the slave trade might no longer be respectable.

<sup>19</sup> Para Nuncer Esquecer: Negras Memórias, Memórias de Negros (Rio de Janeiro, 2001), frontispiece. The vessel depicted is in fact voyageid 8148 in the database. For a similar case in 1756, see the painting, “Milagre de Nossa Senhora do Rosário do Castelo a Francisco de Sousa Pereira,” in the Museu dos Biscainhos in Braga, Portugal which shows the story of a captain who survived an on-board slave rebellion by praying to Our Lady of the Rosary of Castelo after whom the slave ship was named, though in this case the vessel was probably involved in the intra-American slave trade. I thank Stuart Schwartz for drawing this to my attention.

<sup>20</sup> See ids 47612, 50730 and 50758 in TSDT2. I thank Alexandre Ribeiro for drawing my attention to this case.

<sup>21</sup> The others include “Queen of Barra;” “King of Dahomey” and its French variants; “Roi d’Akim;” “Roi d’Ardres;” “Roi de Cabinde;” “Roi de Juda;” “Roi de Malimbe;”

1766-91;” “Roy d’Ambris;” “Roy de Gabingue;” “Roy de Louangue.” With some exceptions these vessels traded with or close to the polity after whose head the vessel had been named. The Dutch never seemed to tailor their ship names to African individuals. Perhaps this was a reflection of the high proportion of fort trade on their vessels and the relative lack of direct interaction between ship owner and captain, and African trader.

<sup>22</sup> The absence of this trend for Dutch ships is curious. If it is suggestive of lower degree of engagement with Africans than the French and English had, perhaps one could speculate that such a pattern is consistent with the very divergent route to abolition that the Netherlands took – that is to say the total absence of a Dutch abolition movement.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen D. Behrendt and Eric J. Graham, “African Merchants, Notables and the Slave Trade at Old Calabar, 1720: Evidence from the National Archives of Scotland,” History in Africa, 30 (2003): 48, 50.

<sup>24</sup> I thank Stephen D. Behrendt for this identification.

<sup>25</sup> The “Prince Tom” which made eight voyages between 1756 and 1774 was also likely named after an African, but I have not so far been able to identify this individual.

<sup>26</sup> The best recent review of an African presence and African status in fifteenth and sixteenth century England relative to southern Europe is Gustav Ungerer, “Recovering a Black African’s Voice in an English Lawsuit: Jacques Francis and the Slave Operations of the *Mary Rose* and the *Sancta Maria* and *Sanctus Edwardus*, 1545-ca1550,” Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England, 17 (2005): 255-71.

<sup>27</sup> Kwesi de Graf, unpublished paper, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Even Ayuba Suleiman Diallo was known as Job Ben Solomon during his sojourn in England in 1733-34

<sup>29</sup> Roger Norman Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815 (New Haven, 1979),

<sup>30</sup> David Eltis, “Liberated Africans in Time and Space: An Overview” (Conference on Liberated Africans at University of California, Berkeley, May, 2008).

<sup>31</sup> See the African names database at [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org).

<sup>32</sup> Robin Law, “African definitions of enslavement

<sup>33</sup> Eltis, Rise of African Slavery

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, ch 7. Stephen D. Behrendt, David Eltis and David Richardson, Economic History Review, (2001):

<sup>35</sup> The Netherlands, for example, sent far more vessels and men to hunt whales than to carry slaves from Africa between 1680 and 1720.

<sup>36</sup> The most convenient way to track the distinctive time profile of reports of slave ship revolts in newspapers is (given the fact that TSDT2 is multi-sourced and does not link specific bits on information in a given voyage record to specific references) is the appendix in Eric Robert Taylor, If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade (Baton Rouge, 2006), pp. 179-213.

<sup>37</sup> These data constitute a revised version of the database used in Behrendt, Eltis, Richardson,

<sup>38</sup> António de Almeida Mendes, “The Foundations of the System: A Reassessment of the Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” Eltis and Richardson, Extending the Frontiers

<sup>39</sup> Crew counted at departure from Africa. All statistics calculated from the revised Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (henceforth TSDT2) available at [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org).

<sup>40</sup> David Eltis and David Richardson, "Productivity in the Slave Trade." Explorations in Economic History, 32 (1995): 465-84.

<sup>41</sup> Lloyd's List, no. 167, 1703. There may well be earlier references, but until the extensive newspaper holdings of the Bodleian and British libraries are digitized and made searchable, it is beyond the means of any individual scholar to extract everything this material has to offer.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, News Letter, Jan 21, 1716; The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post, March 15, 1718. The Weekly Journal of Oct 10, 1719 reported that off Whydah "the Pirates commit unheard of Cruelties; they have hang'd Capt. Abraham Plumb of the Prince's Galley; and just as if they set themselves apart to study Cruelty, have hang'd several of the Negroes by the Legs, and afterwards shot 'em."

<sup>43</sup> Daily Journal, May, 26, 1727, London.

<sup>44</sup> Daily Post Boy, June 25, 1731. See inter alia Kenneth Scott, "George Scott, Slave Trader of Newport," American Neptune, 12 (1952): 222-28.

<sup>45</sup> Specific references may be found in the expanded data base by selecting all those voyages with a positive value in the "African resistance" variable for these years, and then displaying the sources in the "Results listing" panel.

<sup>46</sup> Gentleman's Magazine, October, 1773, p. 523; Lloyd's List, June, 18, 1773; South Carolina Gazette, May 31, 1773.

<sup>47</sup> Lloyd's List, January 5, 1750.

<sup>48</sup> For these three cases see voyageids 25,486 in 1808, 25,045 in 1785, and probably 32,981 in 1770, in [slavevoyages.com](http://slavevoyages.com). Taylor, If We Must Die, 128 mentions these cases.

<sup>49</sup> Eric Slauter, commentary, presented to the "The Bloody Writing is forever Torn," a Conference on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, held at Elmina, Ghana, August, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> For examples see the images on the slave trade page of Handler and Tuite, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities web site at <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/>

<sup>51</sup> Seymour Drescher, The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation (Oxford, 2002), p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Petty treason also included the murder of a master by a servant. These cases are available on the "Proceedings of the Old Bailey, London, 1674 to 1834" web site at <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/oldbailey/search/crime/>. For the botched burning of Katherine Hays in 1726, see the Daily Journal, May 1, 1726. I have not been able to find any record of the sentence of burning at the stake of Elizabeth Herring in 1773 being carried out.

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.shc.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/> and

<http://www.library.usyd.edu.au/libraries/rare/witchcraft/witchcraft.html>

<sup>54</sup> Mike Jay, The Unfortunate Colonel Despard: The Tragic True Story of the Last Man to be Hung, Drawn and Quartered (New York, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> Diary of John Evelyn, diary entry (17 October, 1660).

<sup>56</sup> For the trial and executions see HCA1/99/pt3.

<sup>57</sup> See Peter Linebaugh, London Hanged also see his 1975 essay. Linebaugh does not note a trend, but the evidence he provides is certainly points to increasing protests over time.

<sup>58</sup> Emma Christopher, Slave Ships and Sailors, Edward Little captain of id16710 in 1734 for murder of cabin boy off New Calabar Also captain of Levant (id16800). Docket "South Carolina" is record of trial

<sup>59</sup> Daily Journal, April 26, 1726 and May 3, 1726.

<sup>60</sup> Whitehall Evening Post, Sept., 26-28, 1732.

<sup>61</sup> HCA 24/139 Thomas Powell v Eustace Hardwicke – no outcome to the case survives. (cited in Marcus Rediker, The Slave Ship: A Human History (New York, 2007), p. 247).

<sup>62</sup> Times, April 2, 1788.

<sup>63</sup> A sample of fifteen slave voyages for which a detailed record of retribution has survived includes one savagely spectacular instance from the nineteenth century where 47 slaves were killed after the suppression of an uprising (the "Kentucky," voyageid = 3433), but apart from this, the average was between one and two captives executed.

<sup>64</sup> The argument here for the role of violent resistance of slaves in the emergence of abolition in the second half of the eighteenth century is similar to that put forward for the last years of British slavery by Gelien Matthews [Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement (Baton Rouge, 2006)], in this land-based slave revolts.

<sup>65</sup> The classic graphic account was that of John Gabriel Stedman, Narrative of Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes in Surinam (London, 1796). For St. Domingue, one interesting European reaction that focuses on the violence, not much used by historians, is Henry Brougham's An Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European Powers (London, 1803). While even then an ardent abolitionist, Brougham's view of violence against the planters is in places not much different from that of a grand blanc. By the 1820s, however, when he was the most effective of the abolitionist speakers in Parliament, slaves appear in his speeches as peace-loving peasants subject to unfair restraint. It should be noted that Caribbean attitudes to violence did not remain completely unchanged. In 1811 the trial and execution of the Honorable Arthur William Hodge, a member of the HM Council of the Island of Tortola, for the sadistic murder of a slave, was widely reported in newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic. It is difficult to imagine the trial and execution of a planter for such an offence in any earlier era of Caribbean history.

<sup>66</sup> Christopher, Slave Ships and Sailors, 178-81. The fact that neither of these men was convicted is beside the point.

<sup>67</sup> HCA 1/61, ff.348-57; The Times, November 12, 1802.

<sup>68</sup> Great Britain, Statutes at Large, Geo III, 1788, c 54, clauses 3 and 4. The stated motive in the Brelsford case above was the captain's need to bring the numbers of slaves on board down to the limits allowed by the later 1799 act.

<sup>69</sup> David Eltis, "Abolitionist Perceptions of Society after Slavery," in James Walvin (ed.), Slavery and British Society, 1780-1846 (London, 1982), pp. 195-217.

<sup>70</sup> The printed position papers, mostly anonymous, are collected in a single piece – CO8/320. For a discussion of authors and the context, see W.L. Burn, Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies (London, 1937), pp.

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence C. Jennings, French Reaction to British Slave Emancipation (Baton Rouge, 1988); Davis, Inhuman Bondage,

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<sup>72</sup> Drescher, The Mighty Experiment ; Frederick Cooper, Thomas Holt and Rebecca Scott, Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies (Chapel Hill, 2000)

<sup>73</sup> Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1 and "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2, in Thomas Bender (ed.), The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation (Berkeley, 1992). Lynn Hunt, Inventing Human Rights: A History (New York, 2007).

<sup>74</sup> For a broad review of the shifts in the debate on abolition and a clear distancing from the older economic interpretations, see David Brion Davis, Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of slavery in the New World (New York, 2006), pp. 205-96.

<sup>75</sup> Davis, 1974; Oliver MacDonagh, A Pattern of Government Growth, 1800-60; the Passenger Acts and their Enforcement (London, 1961)

<sup>76</sup> Richard B. Allen, "Suppressing a Nefarious Traffic: Britain and the Abolition of Slave Trading in India and the Western Indian Ocean, 1770-1830" (paper presented to the "The Bloody Writing is forever Torn," a Conference on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, held at Elmina, Ghana, August, 2007).