The Ocean in the Atlantic: British Experience and Imagination in an Imperial Sea,
ca. 1600-1800

Heather Rose Weidner
Chino Hills, California

BA, Swarthmore College, 2000
MA, University of Virginia, 2002

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Department of History

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Abstract

For Britons in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "the Atlantic" was not a field of study -- it was an ocean. In this dissertation I argue for an environmentally minded Atlantic history, one that is conscious of the ocean as both a cultural and a physical presence. The ocean shaped an early modern Atlantic vernacular that was at its essence maritime, godly, anxious and sociable. The ocean was a conduit to empire, so anything Britons imagined about the oceans, they imagined about their empire as well. Britons could never fully master their empire because they could never master the ocean; it was source of anxiety for even the wealthiest merchants. The fear of extremity – of wreck and ruin – kept those who crossed the ocean focused on the three most valuable Atlantic commodities: a sound reputation, accurate information, and the mercy of God.

To explore this four-fold Atlantic culture I examine a variety of sources, from popular songs and sermons to merchants' letters. These sources expose the connection between the physical experiences that shaped British bodies and the fears and images that shaped British minds. Songs told people that the life of a sailor was one of danger, scripture told them the seas were the mouthpiece for an often angry God, and those who ventured out onto the waters came home to tell stories of overwhelming hardships. By restoring the place of the ocean in the empire, I argue for an eighteenth century that was communal rather than individualistic, religious rather than secular, shipwrecked and nerve-wracked rather than proudly imperial.

<u>Acknowledgments</u>

At this rate, I shall not pity the writers of history any longer. If people like to read their books, it is all very well, but to be at so much trouble in filling great volumes, which, as I used to think, nobody would willingly ever look into… always struck me as a hard fate; and though I know it is all very right and necessary, I have often wondered at the person's courage that could sit down on purpose to do it.

Jane Austen
Northanger Abbey

I owe a considerable to debt to many people who provided the support, encouragement, understanding, and resources so that I could "sit down on purpose to do it." I hope they know how truly grateful I am.

Thank you to Swarthmore College for the excellence of the education it provides. Anything I did not learn was my fault. Particular thanks to Bob Duplessis who interested me in the early modern Atlantic and to the history department, as well as to Nora Johnson and Betsy Bolton in the English department who told me to go study history. I also thank Nat Anderson and Michael Cothren as mentors and teaching role models.

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Lucille Wright, and Carolyn Clark. There has been much that required managing. Because they managed for me and tended to needs I could not meet, I thank Dr. Paulino Yanez, Sharon Green, Darcy Wenz, and Gaye Gibbs. All the appreciation in the world to Steve and Janet Headley for being my family, Barbara Smith for being my teacher, Caroline Wilkinson because she is not vegetarian, James Wilkinson for the music, Desi and Frank Allevato because they were there too, Mark Reis for technical support, Anna Hess for forgetting I was not already done, Heather Baldwin for the laptop at the eleventh hour, Brad Zuchero because he gets it, Gail and Gary Goetschius because they drive, Kira Goetschius for coming to pack boxes 15 years ago and never leaving, and Catherine Osborne for being my art historian, actor, writer, literary critic, theologian, and friend on-call.

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This dissertation is for my mother who read to me. Nancy R. Weidner, 1950 - 2007

Abbreviations

HL   Huntington Library

MJB   Memoirs of Joseph Banfield, not before 1796

NYPL   New York Public Library

OED   Oxford English Dictionary

SRO   Somerset Record Office

TMC   Thomas Moffatt Correspondence, 1717-1716

Images

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Introduction – Maritime, Anxious, Godly, and Sociable

Lord, lord! Methought what pain it was to drown;
What dreadful noise of water in mine ears!
What sights of ugly death within mine eyes!
Methought I saw a thousand fearful wracks;
A thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalu'd jewels,
All scattered in the bottom of the sea….[1]

When early modern Britons thought about their empire, they had to think about

the ocean. There was no empire without it. The Atlantic Ocean was the Atlantic world's

common ground, metaphorically, spiritually, environmentally, and experientially. It

created a context from which ideologies of empire grew. The ocean functioned like the

empire's emotional baggage. It was fraught with physical dangers and religious

significance and it colored the empire with those qualities as well. To think about empire

was, therefore, to think about the risks that had to be faced because of the ocean. To

think about empire was to think about God who made himself known through the ocean.

The Atlantic created a common culture for itself by virtue of being an ocean. It created a

popular ideology of the British empire: maritime, anxious, godly, and sociable. These

were the ideas that the Atlantic's participants expressed and that printed texts repeated

and made available to Britons whether or not they ever went to sea. This dissertation will

explore that popular ideology, an Atlantic vernacular, through the songs, prayers, and

stories that engaged British minds, through the practical business of ocean crossing and

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, I.iv.21-28.

trade, and through the charitable Christian obligations that connected Britons at home to those in the empire.

In 1765, David Harrison set sail from Faial Island in the Azores. He was bound for his home in New York with a cargo of wine and brandy and hoped for a speedy voyage that would bring him into port before the beginning of winter. Instead, Harrison encountered a series of storms that crippled his ship and left his crew starving and murderous while his own mental and physical health deteriorated. When the desperate passengers of the sloop *Peggy* were found, their horrified rescuers demanded to know *what* they were. Harrison wrote of the voyage:

> When the reader comes to consider our total want of necessaries, that my vessel had been for some time leaky, that I myself was emaciated with sickness, and had but one sail in the world to direct her…. when he likewise considers the severity of the season… he will scarcely suppose that I could sustain any new misfortune; yet… I was overtaken by a most dreadful storm… so that I was now become a wreck in the fullest sense of the expression, -- and death became so seemingly unavoidable, that I even gave up hope… and prepared for an immediate launch into the dreadful gulph of eternity.[2]

By the time he was safely home again, Harrison had participated in the full spectrum of the British Atlantic experience. He had been a successful ship captain, a leader of other men, and involved in profitable trades in lumber, fish, and wine. He had business associates in multiple colonies and in England, in addition to the English and Spanish with whom he dealt in the Azores. He had seen his ship pounded into kindling and members of his crew murdered and eaten. His body had been so abused that his stomach could not hold more than a few bites of food. And then he had been nursed back to health by a fellow ship captain who rescued him from the deep, fed him from a

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[2] David Harrison, *The melancholy narrative of the distressful voyage and miraculous deliverance of Captain David Harrison, of the sloop, Peggy, of New York* (London, 1766) 18-20.

dwindling supply of provisions, and bore him safely to England – a ship captain who had also suffered and prospered on the waves.

As David Harrison's terrible adventure illustrates, the prosperous, bustling British Atlantic empire was unavoidably bound up with the ungovernable, unpredictable ocean. The ocean made the empire accessible. It contained the valuable fisheries of the North Atlantic. It allowed for the movement of goods and people on a global scale. It held open the possibility of what seemed like limitless expansion: more land to explore, more seas to chart, a larger empire to gain, greater profits to acquire. The Atlantic was the means to an end, a conduit to empire and wealth; but it had to be grappled with first.

To master an empire it was necessary to master an ocean. It was in this spirit that Britons poured money and energy into larger, faster ships; that the seafaring profession expanded; that experts in the field published helpful textbooks on the mathematics of navigation and chart-making. It was in this spirit that prayer books were printed with petitions to God to have mercy on sailors, that collections were taken up for those damaged at sea, that merchants funded schools to better educate prospective mariners.

The Atlantic experience did change. New technology made navigation more of a science and less of an art. Insurance petitions competed with prayers. Merchants formed pools of investors to mitigate risk. Yet these changes reaffirmed the essential problem: the ocean retained its capriciousness. The ocean created the need for insurance; it created the need to mitigate risk. By the last third of the eighteenth century, Atlantic trade had been routinized to the point that agreements between merchants and captains required only a boilerplate, preprinted contract. Yet printed onto the form after the terms of the

agreement were the words "the Danger of the Seas only excepted."[3] In this case,

familiarity did not breed contempt. The Atlantic did not lose its menace, its capacity to

do physical harm, or its spiritual significance even while Britons crossed it in increasing

numbers. The promise of the Atlantic and the threat of the Atlantic existed

simultaneously in Britons' minds and in their lived experiences.

The many faces of the early modern Atlantic, however, are obscured by the size,

duration, and wealth of the British empire. Britons learned to thrive in the Atlantic

world, just as they had in the Mediterranean world and just as they would in the Pacific

and the Indian worlds. They established trading posts, formed mercantile networks,

lobbied for laws favorable to expansion and trade, pursued profits and ultimately made

them. The manner in which the successful Briton achieved his success remains a matter

for debate. But no matter how the imperial, mercantile, maritime Briton went about it, he

is generally represented as being part of a winning proposition.[4] The wealth of the West

Indies, Africa, and the East Indies were ample compensation for whatever was lost in

territory, wealth, and prestige in 1776. Britons left a lasting cultural legacy in their

fractious, former colonies and went on to expand their already existing interests in the

Pacific into the empire of the nineteenth century.

So how did this prosperous empire co-exist with the restless Atlantic? And did

the perpetual tribulations of individuals undermine the ultimate success of a people? To

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[3] Virginia Historical Society, Mercer Family Papers, Mss 1 M5345a 145-147, Section 27, item 146.

[4] Linda Colley addresses this perception in *Captives* when she describes the pink parts of the map – the vast swaths of the world colored to match Britain in nineteenth and twentieth century maps of the empire. Colley asserts that the British government compensated for its relatively small size by expressing an ideology that was aggressive and confident to the point of arrogance. Britain pronounced itself successful and historians, while criticizing the environmental and cultural damage that went along with those successes, have largely agreed. Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (New York, 2002), 1-12.

Britons, the ocean served as a humbling reminder that their fates and fortunes remained in the hands of God and that their ambitions were circumscribed by his will. It was a technological challenge to overcome, and, simultaneously, one which scripture demonstrated could be overcome only by God. The ocean loomed large in the imagination as a road to glory and riches, and as a trial to be endured on par with the dangers presented by pirates and pagans. Together, these anxieties undercut the transformative power of the empire. When it was successful, the empire was a catalyst for change. British identity, nationhood, and class formation have all been connected to the vitality of the empire. But the Atlantic also had the capacity to reinforce tradition. Watery failures like Harrison's tied people more firmly to their roots: their communities, their families, their churches, their God.

Before the Atlantic was an empire or a history, it was an ocean. It was an ocean with which Britons had to contend – in thought or in practice – before they could immigrate, plant, explore, or turn a profit. It was an ocean that is underrepresented in the history that bears its name. While historians have been able to conceive of an Atlantic world that is essentially dry, early modern Britons could not. It is their Atlantic this dissertation seeks to explore.[5]

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[5] Christine Daniels and Michael Kennedy, eds., *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (New York, 2002); David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800,* (New York, 2002); David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2002); Kathleen Wilson ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire* (Cambridge, 2004); Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford, 2009); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (2008). Some exceptions include Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: a Woman in World History* (New York, 2007); Stephen D. Behrendt, "Ecology, Seasonality, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade" in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830*, Bernard Bailyn and Patricia Denault eds., (Cambridge, 2009) 44-85; Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York, 1986). Alison Games calls for more "oceanic histories of the Atlantic," but focuses most on the land around the ocean and the movement of people and goods across it. Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 3 (June 2006), 741-757. W. Jeffrey

Just as I argue for the centrality of a vital and often terrifying sea, I also assert the existence of an equally vital faith. While few historians would characterize the eighteenth century as secular in so many words, they often give the impression that English religion was tepid at best. The eighteenth century was the beginning of a long, slow slide towards secularism. During the Reformation and the fractious, fracturing Civil War, religion moved people to action. During the eighteenth century, it influenced "identity," a category that is often vague and may, ultimately, say little about behavior. Tired of persecution, even the Quakers moderated their conduct and turned their considerable energies to charitable works and modest living. Radicalism was left only to the Methodists.[6]

I argue instead that the ocean and godliness were mutually reinforcing. Britons took their faith onto the seas and their physical experiences there confirmed the potency, the necessity, of belief. For David Harrison, faith was clearly more than "identity." It did more than define how he thought about himself or his community or his country. All that stood between Harrison and death was his ship and his God, and his ship was sinking. All that stood between his soul and hell was his salvation. The ocean was killing him and, at that moment, his eighteenth-century faith was as fervent as any expressed by an early Protestant reformer. To understand, then, the way Britons thought about the Atlantic world, we must recognize both the dread the ocean evoked and continuing power

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Bolster also calls for "putting the ocean in Atlantic history," although he meant in an environmental and technical sense. W. Jeffrey Bolster, "Putting the Ocean in Atlantic History: Maritime Communities and Marine Ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500-1800" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (Feb., 2008), 19-47.

[6] C. John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: from Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford, 1992); B.W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998); Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 2004); Robert Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2007).

of faith. Faith spurred action, it influenced thought, it was the greatest comfort and last recourse.

Britons' thoughts about the oceans, enhanced by the lived experiences of seafarers, comprised a popular ideology of the British Atlantic. These ideas and impressions underlay and ultimately undercut triumphant visions of empire. These were the things everyone thought regardless of their proximity to the seas: the stereotypes, fantasies, and fears that emerge from the texts that Britons shared. This dissertation exposes the ocean's meaning for Britons from those texts and experiences. It was first and foremost a maritime space; it was a source of profound anxiety; it expressed the will of God and served to test the faith of the godly. It was not the proving ground for aspiring rugged individualists; instead, the Atlantic was braved by communities, fostered sociability, and left many people dependent on family and friends. In all of its aspects, the historical Atlantic could never be separated from the ocean.

The Historians' Atlantic

The historians' Atlantic and the historical Atlantic bear little resemblance to each other. The first is a category for analysis. It is possible to write Atlantic history without ever using the word "water." The second covers 20% of the earth's surface. At its narrowest, it is 1500 miles across and over 3000 miles across at its widest. At its deepest, it goes down 27,500 feet. The trade winds cross it; the Gulf Stream warms it; hurricanes and icebergs trouble those who sail it. Its liquidity and its nature are ineluctable, so much so that early modern Britons rarely wrote about the "Atlantic" specifically. They wrote about the sea and the seas, bodies of water that flowed endlessly into each other. To

write about the historical Atlantic as anything other than water is to write about something that did not exist.

The historians' Atlantic complements another field of scholarship: imperial history. For many years, the history of the British empire developed alongside the empire itself. It was written by the subjects of an imperial Britain and, consequently, reflected those writers' concerns with the empire of their experience: its condition, direction, and ultimate state.[7] These historians' interest in direction – rise versus decline – was quickly followed by a concern with the fruits of empire. What blessings would the empire bestow on the people it touched? What changes would those people make after experiencing the example of British law, politics, education, and culture?[8] Years of imperial maintenance and reform contributed to interest in histories of policy. For every country that had a British presence, there was a history to write describing and analyzing that presence and predicting what the future might hold.[9] Concurrent to exploring the

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[7] See for examples: Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788). (Although Gibbon was obviously writing about ancient Rome, his work influenced theories of British imperialism and prompted concerns that the empire was destined to crumble.) Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England, from the accession of James II* (1849-1865); J.R. Seely, *Expansion of England* (1883); John Seargeant Cyprian Bridge, *From Island to Empire: a short history of the expansion of England by force of arms* (1908); Albert Frederick Pollard, *The British Empire: its past, its present, and its future* (1909); C.W. Smith, *Primal Root-Causes of the Decline of the British Empire, 1876-1911* (1911); Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, *The Growth of Empire* (1922); Cumberland Clark, *Britain Overseas: the story of the foundation and development of the British Empire from 1497 to 1921* (1924); etc.

[8] These questions were particularly of interest to Thomas Macaulay, whose work has become synonymous with the Whig school of history. They were re-explored in the *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, published in 1929, which primarily represented the empire as benevolent and progressive. Macaulay, *The History of England*; W.M. Roger Louis "Introduction" in Robin Winks, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5 (Oxford, 1999) 5-7, 11. See also Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Wealth, Power, and Resources of the British Empire, In Every Quarter of the World* (1815); Henry Hamilton Johnston, *Britain Across the Seas: Africa, A History and Description of the British Empire in Africa* (1910); N.W. Rowell, *The British Empire and World Peace* (1922).

[9] See for example: George Robert Gleig, *The History of the British Empire in India* (1830); Sydney Smith Bell, *Colonial Administration of Great Britain* (1859); Francis Peter Labillière *Early History of the Colony of Victoria, from its discovery to its establishment as a self-governing province of the British Empire* (1878); Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire* (1893); Johnston, *Britain Across the Seas*; Edward Jenks, *The Government of the British Empire* (1918); Percy Ellwood Corbett and

nature and benefits of empire, historians also investigated the lives of the people who had

built the empire. These mostly laudatory biographies examined the impact of individuals

on policy, military success, and the spread of Christianity.[10]

To this generation of historians, the seventeenth- and eighteenth- century empire

presented an enlightening counterpart to the empire of the present day. The "old" or

"first" or "commercial" empire was characterized by its Atlantic setting and its emphasis

on regulated commerce and settlement.[11] Whether or not these early British acquisitions

constituted conscious empire-building remains a matter of debate. While some historians

attribute a spirit of deliberate empire-building to the earliest Tudor mariners and

explorers, others do not see the shift to conscious imperial policy until the patriotic

enthusiasm and martial aggression of the Seven Years War.[12] The shift from the first

empire to the second is usually connected to the loss of the American colonies; although

the spreading of Britain's interests beyond the Atlantic during the eighteenth century is

also characterized as part of that shift as well.

Arthur Herbert Smith, *Canada and World Politics: a Study of the Constitutional and International Relations of the British Empire* (1928).

[10] See for example: George Bruce Malleson, *The Founders of the Indian Empire: Clive, Warren Hastings and Wellesley* (1882); W.K. Strike, *Empire-Builders* (1906); George Cockburn Henderson, *Sir George Grey: pioneer of empire in southern lands* (1907); Arthur Hugh Urquhart Colquhoun, *Pitt, the Empire Builder* (1908); S.C. Bayley, *Lord Clive and his Part in the Foundation of the Indian Empire* (1908); Edward Fraser, *Champions of the Fleet: Captains and Men-of-War and Days that Helped to Make the Empire* (1908); Herbert Fuller Bright Compston, *Thomas Coram, Churchman, Empire Builder and Philanthropist* (1918); Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Policy* (1927).

[11] J.R. Seeley is one of the most prominent early historians to assume a distinction between the first and second empires. Seeley *The Expansion of England* . See also George Louis Beer, *The Origins of the British Colonial System, 1578-1660* (1908); George Louis Beer, *The Old Colonial System, 1660-1754* (1912); Arthur Percival Newton, *The Old Empire and the New* (1917).

[12] P.J. Marshall "The First British Empire" in Robin Winks ed. *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Historiography* (Oxford, 1999) 43-45. See also: Albert Frederick Pollard "The Elizabethans and the Empire" in *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 10 (1921-3) 139-156; Gerald Berkeley Hurtz, *The Old Colonial System* (1905).

Unlike the history of empire, the field of Atlantic history developed first along technological lines. Early histories focused on the navy, the construction of ships, feats of navigation, and the management of fisheries.[13] By 1930, however, the "Atlantic" had become a geographic category of analysis in works that primarily dealt with the development of the empire through the acquisition of the North American colonies and migration, and with the exploits of explorers and pirates.[14] After 1930, the number of works that used "the Atlantic" to define the boundaries of their subject grew steadily, inspired particularly by Fernand Braudel's imagining of the Mediterranean world and by the Annales school of history. Historians continued to focus on topics like fishing, migration, and colonial growth, with the notable addition of slavery, trade, and the histories of specific religious groups in an Atlantic context.[15]

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[13] See for example: Charles Deane, "Remarks on the Small Size of Ships Used in Crossing the Atlantic, 1492-1626" in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 8 (1865) 464-466; Henry Fry, *The History of North Atlantic Steam Navigation* (1896); T.W. Balch, "The American-British Atlantic Fisheries Question" in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* vol. 48 (1909), 319-353; Charles William Palmer, "St. Helena and the Route to the Indies, 1659-1702" in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 4 (1926), 183-185.

[14] See for example: Howard Millar Chapin, *Bermuda Privateers, 1739-1748* (1923); John Clarence Webster, *Some Episodes in the Relation Between the Maritime Provinces and the American Atlantic States* (1927); James Alexander Williamson, "England and the Opening of the Atlantic" in John Holland Rose, Arthur Percival Newtown, et al., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. 1, (1929) 22-54; James Alexander Williamson, *The Voyages of John and Sebastian Cabot* (1937); Ernest Albert Crossley Belcher, *Migration Within the Empire* (1924).

[15] In particular see: Jacques Godechot, *Histoire de l'Atlantique* (1947); Michael Kraus, *The Atlantic Civilization: Eighteenth-century Origins* (1949); Charles Malcolm MacInnes, *England and Slavery* (1934); H.A. Wyndham, *The Atlantic and Slavery* (1935); M.L. Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860* (1940); Louis Booker Wright, *The Atlantic Frontier: Colonial American Civilization, 1607-1763* (1947); Gerald Sandford Graham, *Empire of the North Atlantic: the Maritime Struggle for North America* (1950); F.B. Tolles, *The Atlantic Community of the Early Friends* (1952); Bernard Bailyn, "Communications and Trade: the Atlantic in the Seventeenth Century" in *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 13:4, (1953) 378-387; Bryan Desmond Greenway Little, *The City and County of Bristol: a study in Atlantic Civilization* (1954); F.B. Tolles, *Quakers and Atlantic Culture* (1960); Douglas Farnie, "The Commercial Empire of the Atlantic, 1607-1783" in *Economic History Review*, 15:2 (1962-1963) 205-218; Daniel Pratt Mannix, *Black Cargoes: a History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865* (1962).

The idea of the Atlantic as a cultural region gained momentum from the pre-World War I idea that there was an Atlantic community the United States should fight to protect.[16] In 1941, journalists invoked this notion of an "Atlantic" world again when weighing in on the relationship between the United States and the west; on whether there was an Atlantic community, how it should function, and what ideals it should support.[17] As demonstrated above, historians had long been using the "Atlantic" label to situate projects on exploration and technology. But the introduction of the idea of community – of cultural, political, and economic ties and responsibilities between the nations that bordered the Atlantic – was transformative. The political issues that surrounded World War II and the early Cold War influenced the development of the concept of "the Atlantic" into a political and cultural community with a network of shared ideas. Unlike earlier scholars who, with their emphasis on technology, navigation, and sailing, had to acknowledge the maritime nature of the Atlantic, historians of the mid-twentieth century moved Atlantic history away from its watery origins by defining the Atlantic world politically.[18]

Meanwhile, the historiography of the empire was undergoing changes as well. After 1960, imperial histories – particularly in the official form of the exhaustive *Cambridge History of the British Empire* – began to be sharply criticized as parochial. As A.G. Hopkins wrote of this period in scholarship, "The shift of emphasis was marked and rapid: authors of doctoral dissertations with titles beginning 'British Policy

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[16] Walter Lippmann, "The Defense of the Atlantic World" in *The New Republic*, vol. 10:120, (Feb. 17, 1917) 59-61.

[17] Forrest Davis, *The Atlantic System: the story of Anglo-American control of the seas* (1941).

[18] For an overview of the development of the idea of the Atlantic in the early twentieth century, see Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (2005) 4-30.

Towards…' were left high and dry…"[19] The periphery became more interesting than the

metropole, the colonized more interesting than the colonizers, and imperialism more to be

denounced than praised.[20] Imperial history was particularly influenced by the shift

toward area studies, offering, as it did, so many historically marginalized countries and

people to recover and such a strong teleology to deconstruct.[21]

By 1980, historians had started voicing concerns that the emphasis on history

from below was leaving the field artificially compartmentalized. Lawrence Stone

proposed the need for a revival of narrative, suggesting that "The triumph of any one

genre or school eventually always leads to narrow sectarianism, narcissism and self-

adulation…" Although, he hastened to add, "no one is being urged to throw away his

calculator and tell a story."[22] The solution to the problem Stone raised seemed to be to

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[19] A.G. Hopkins, "Development of the Utopian Ideal" in Robin Winks, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford, 1999) 637. Hopkins suggests that Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher's *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism* (1961) is particularly illustrative example of the shift in the field of history, incorporating both the views of Europeans and Africans, both the "official" perspective and that of the people out in the field.

[20] This change can be seen particularly in the field of African history. Not only were more books being written on Africa and from the perspective of Africans, they also reflected the shift toward archival research. Noteworthy contributions to the field during this period include: James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (1958); Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (1964); T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97: A Study in African Resistance* (1967); Robert G. Gregory, *India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations Within the British Empire, 1890-1939* (1971); Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (1969).

[21] For an overview of "history from below" see Jim Sharpe "History from Below" in Peter Burke ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (University Park, 1992) 24-41. "Area studies," or "subaltern studies," or "history from below," as this new scholarly emphasis was variously called, did not just affect imperial history. We can see its influence, for example, in the flourishing genre of the microhistory, the investigation of previously unexplored archival source material, and the scholarly emphasis on the perspectives of non-elites.

[22] Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History" in *Past and Present*, 85, (Nov., 1979), 85.

keep both calculator and story-telling, to combine detailed investigations of migration or culture or identity with the Braudelian scope of the Atlantic in the form of a narrative.[23]

Now Atlantic history and imperial history have blurred together. Atlantic history as a field of study offers a corrective to the narrowness of some imperial histories. It is appealingly organic, rooted in the undeniable fact that the Atlantic Ocean exists rather than in constructed definitions of empire. It provides a way to acknowledge the interconnectedness of four continents and multiple bodies of water swarming with British, Dutch, French, Spanish, Africans and Portuguese. Atlantic history connects the early modern British empire to its historical context.

But those historians willing to follow their subjects around the Atlantic – not just back and forth between England and North America – soon must question whether the "Atlantic world" is a geographic category large enough to contain the energy and ambition of British travelers.[24] Ships, goods, and people moved around the Mediterranean just as often as they did around the Atlantic. Long before there was any significant British empire in the east, Britons were making their way into the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In light of all this movement beyond the Atlantic, "Atlantic world" seems like the wrong label. Perhaps an ocean is too porous to define a community.

In response to this problem some historians have developed metaphors to describe a sprawling world of changing patterns. "Networks" and "webs" imply systems with the capacity to evolve, either in the way or place that they function, allowing people, goods

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[23] See for example: Ian Kenneth Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740: an Exploration of Communication and Community* (1986); David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (1987); Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (1993).

[24] Michael Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Williamsburg, 2010); Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh;* Caroline Williams, *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World: People, Products, and Practice on the Move* (Farnham, 2009).

and ideas to spill beyond the Atlantic.[25] These structures allow for the existence of

uniting experiences more potent than nationality or geography. They also expose

loyalties toward co-religionists, kin, and members of the same profession that may have

been just as potent as loyalties to country and countrymen. Similarly, they highlight the

power of ideas to define communities and to shape the ways Britons thought of

themselves.

The goals of Atlantic history remain compelling: to avoid creating artificial

boundaries that obscure the relationships between people and ideas that were not

circumscribed by country or nation, to follow the movement of people, goods, and ideas

beyond Britain or the colonies, to place the British empire in its historical context

alongside other empires. These objectives seem to indicate that "Atlantic" has become

synonymous with the desire to avoid parochialism – to embrace a sense of an

interconnected, cosmopolitan world. In pursuit of these goals, however, Atlantic

historians have moved away from the field's most fundamental context: the ocean that

gave Atlantic history its name. They write as if Atlantic history is, at heart, a theoretical

conversation among historians dissatisfied with existing terms and categories and in

search of better analytical models.

In contrast, the goals of maritime historians can be so parochial one suspects them

of taking a kind of perverse pleasure in pursuing them. For them, the Atlantic is a kind of

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[25] See for example: Peggy Liss, *Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713-1826*
(Baltimore,1983); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the
British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995); Alan Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks:
Geographies of the British Empire" in *History Compass*, 4:1 (2005); David Dickson, Jan Parmentier, and
Jane Ohlmeyer eds. *Irish and Scottish Mercantile Networks in Europe and Overseas in the Seventeenth and
Eighteen Centuries* (2007); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of
Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford, 2008). Ironically, one of the first works of history to use the idea of the
"web" was the 1902 account of an imperial tour by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall titled *The Web of
Empire*.

technical proving ground of yardarms and stunsails that separates the men from the boys.
While never losing sight of the ocean, maritime historians have given us little reason to
think it is important. Consequently, we lack an Atlantic history that is both ocean-aware
and analytically creative.

Perhaps the answer is to engage more consciously with the historical Atlantic.
The Atlantic Ocean was more than a useful shorthand for comparative or integrative
history and more than the staging ground for naval technology. It was the space on
which people met. It was the experience migrants shared. It was the threat over which
merchants worried. It was a fear and a hope over which people prayed. The Atlantic did
more than connect the countries it touched; it was a space to be reckoned with in its own
right. For early-modernists, "Atlantic" should be more than an analytical construct. By
acknowledging the role of the maritime in the Atlantic world, we simultaneously render
that world in greater clarity and undermine its coherence. To be "maritime" is to be fluid
and permeable. A maritime space cannot be circumscribed. Thus, if the Atlantic world
was maritime in character, then it also was necessarily connected to a larger world
through the seas and the people who used them.

Atlantic history has also been criticized as just another label for Anglo-American
history. The ships and sailors from many other countries crossed the Atlantic; English
was only one of many languages being spoken; England and the American colonies were
only a small portion of the land bordered by the Atlantic. The cultural elements that
bound that world together – language, law, printed texts, Protestantism, politics – did not
have a unilateral effect on all the people who moved through the Atlantic. Yet most
studies of Atlantic history look exclusively at English-language sources and focus mainly

on Britons and British colonies. In its focus, this dissertation is no exception. I suggest, however, that if one were to write a true Atlantic history, the common cultural element that could define that multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, religiously diverse community would be the experience of the Atlantic itself. Establishing the prominence of the ocean in Atlantic history gives us not only a more nuanced sense of the British mind and the British empire, but makes possible a truly inclusive Atlantic world.

Early-modern Britons had their own specific idea about the Atlantic of which we must be aware: they thought it was an ocean. Nor were they ever able to forget this fact because the ocean-ness of the Atlantic continually reasserted itself. As island dwellers, empire builders, and providentially minded Christians they were saturated in the images and language of the sea. This consciousness of the ocean defined and shaped the Atlantic world; it must be equally a part of Atlantic history.

Methods

I choose to write about a "British mindset" – that general consciousness of the ocean – despite the implausible level of consensus that phrase implies, because of the nature of my sources. Impressions of the sea were not like theories of, for example, empire-building, formulated by those with political ambition, knowledge of international affairs, and a high degree of literacy. They originated from lived experience, observation, and texts that served as a kind of cultural lowest common denominator. Nor was ocean consciousness particularly complex. The British mindset regarding the Atlantic was a blend of hope and dread, articulated most basically in scripture, reinforced by popular songs and stories, and confirmed physically through suffering bodies.

That it is possible and even necessary to explore the mindsets -- mentalités, attitudes, popular cultures, collective representations, modes of thought, belief systems, communities of belief, popular imaginings, or the commonsensical common ground – of a people is a proposition that several generations of historians have now accepted.[26] Yet because mindsets do not always correspond with written orthodoxies, they may be hard to uncover. How does one get at "unspoken assumptions rather than explicit theories" when the minds and mouths in question are no longer available for comment?[27] In the case of the Atlantic, how does one get at those assumptions for a space not defined by national or ethnic boundaries and habitable only temporarily, a zone of perpetual transience?

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[26] For a historiographical overview of the study of mentalities, see Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca, 2005), 95-101.

[27] Historians have gone about answering this question in a variety of ways. To explore the popular culture of early modern Europe, Peter Burke decided to cast his lot with the techniques and source materials of the folklorists and literary critics since their expertise lies, in the case of the former, with the unwritten and, in the case of the latter, in an appreciation for the nuances of language. Edward Muir framed his investigation of anger and vengeance in Italy as a microhistory and juxtaposed the language of the vendetta with descriptions of the rituals that accompanied blood feuds, specifically those that involved death. Lynn Hunt chose the world of print as her way into the minds of the revolutionary French. In contrast, Robert Darnton described his methodological approach to the same period in these terms: "There is no better way, I believe, than to wander through the archives." Rather than focus on the common, he chose the unusual with the goal of revealing how different revolutionary mentalités were from those of the present day. For historians of the colonies, their methodologies seem to have been shaped by the way they define their subjects. For Perry Miller, for example, there was a single, Puritan, New England mindset and, thus, the way into that mindset was through an exhaustive exploration of Puritan theology. For David Hackett Fischer, the new world was populated by transplants who brought their regional distinctions with them from Britain intact. Consequently, Fischer examined "folkways" – over a dozen practices like cooking or house-building -- as a way of exposing different, regional American mindsets. Jack Greene wanted to reassert the importance of the Chesapeake region in the making of a distinct American mindset and he saw slavery as an essential component of that mindset. With that in mind, he worked with economic and political sources that reveal minds focused on legal rights, financial growth, and profitable labor systems. Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 95; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 1999), xi-xxiv; Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore, 1998), xxiv-xxviii; Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1992); Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and other episodes in French cultural history* (New York, 1999) 3-7; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1982) vii-viii ("My project is made more practicable by the fact that the first three generations in New England paid almost unbroken allegiance to a unified body of thought, and that individual differences among particular writers or theorists were merely minor variations within a general frame. I have taken the liberty of treating the whole literature as though it were the product of a single intelligence… Puritanism… was the most coherent and most powerful single factor in the early history of America…"); David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York, 1989); Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: the social development and early modern British colonies and the formation of American culture* (Chapel Hill, 1988) xi-xiv, 1-5, 207-209.

In the case of Atlantic and imperial history, more historians have been interested in writing about the spoken than the unspoken. Perhaps because Atlantic history is still a new field, efforts have focused on establishing formal ideologies, patterns of migration, the value of trade, and the movement of goods. Histories of underlying assumptions and common culture are less common.[28]

David Armitage and Kathleen Wilson have both suggested models for ideologies of empire – in Armitage's case, Protestant, maritime, commercial, and free, and in Wilson's case, modern and British.[29] Armitage deals with formal policy and naval prowess, how the myth of British exceptionalism at sea eventually became reality. His "maritime" exists without reference to water or sailors, his "Protestantism" with little reference to God. Protestantism seems akin to the management of the herring-fisheries, a matter of state and a diplomatic talking point. God figures only as a national mascot. Wilson is both apologetic and teleological. She is deeply conscious of the legacy of colonialism and consequently perceives a powerful British state that acquired an empire, which in turn propelled Britons into modernity. Many historians have tackled less formal expressions of British imperial culture by examining the Atlantic slave trade, and British attitudes toward slavery, race and the trade itself.[30] Others have focused on Atlantic culture in the most literal sense by studying the ordinary sailor.[31]

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[28] The relationship between culture and the British empire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seems to have been explored more extensively. Historians have examined British reactions towards the diminished empire, nostalgia for the empire, and the ways the empire encroached or was written onto domestic culture.

[29] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000) 1-8, 61-99, 100-124; Kathleen Wilson ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire* (Cambridge, 2004) 2-8.

[30] James Walvin, *Slaves and Slavery: the British Colonial Experience* (Manchester, 1992); Seymour Drescher, *From Slavery to Freedom: comparative studies in the rise and fall of Atlantic slavery* (New York, 1999); James Walvin, *Britain's Slave Empire* (Stroud, 2000); S.I. Martin, *Britain's Slave Trade*

In terms of trying to grapple with shared ideas and experiences more broadly, perhaps Linda Colley has been both the most sweeping and the most ocean aware. Although she focuses only on the experience of captivity, Colley's work is geographically broad. She explores a wide cross section of the British population by looking at everyone who was touched by captivity and not just those who were captive. She wrote of her method that "stories matter" and that she read over a hundred captivity narratives. Despite this expressed interest in genre and language, Colley's actual interest seems to be political history. She is interested in what captive Britons thought and what free Britons thought about captivity, but she seems equally if not more interested in contextualizing those thoughts by writing a new narrative history of the real British empire – one shot through with uncertainty. The nervous fears of imperial Britons are Colley's springboard into a different project. Ultimately, the subject of *Captives* is less the British mind and more the British state.[32]

I want to return to the British mind. My approach to getting at early modern British thoughts about seafaring was inspired by Keith Thomas' description of his own approach to uncovering and illuminating a mindset: "I try to read everything."[33] As a

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(London, 2000); Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge, 2000); Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-headed Hydra: sailors, slaves, commoners, and the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000).

[31] John Laffin, *Jack Tar: the story of the British Sailor* (London, 1969); Peter Kemp, *The British Sailor: a social history of the lower deck* (London, 1970); N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: an anatomy of the Georgian navy* (London, 1986); Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: a merchant seamen, pirates, and the Anglo-American maritime world, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, 1993);

[32] Colley, *Captives,* 12-17.

[33] The inspiration for this project is due, in many respects, to Keith Thomas. Despite his comprehensive approach to his subjects, his *Man and the Natural World* does not address the seas. Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (New York, 1983).

method, it seemed both ideal and impossible.[34] When outlining his ideas regarding the

correct approach to dealing with cultural history, Roger Chartier suggested that cultural

historians must first recognize that there were not elite objects and popular objects, but

objects appropriated by different social groups for different purposes at different times.

The early modern individual pieced together his mindset from the available material,

taking what he found useful regardless of where he found it.[35] Taken together, Thomas'

and Chartier's models seemed to suggest an approach to this project. It was necessary to

read – if not quite everything – at least some of everything, with the understanding that

my subjects had been doing the same. Moreover, a single body of sources (merchants'

letters for example, or manuals for sailors) would give me a way into the thoughts of

some seafaring communities or professions, but would not give me the shared,

foundational ideas and imaginings I hoped to capture.

With that in mind, I chose sources written for a variety of different audiences:

record books that had no audience beyond the merchant who kept the records,

churchwardens' accounts which made up the official record of parish finance, letters

between business colleagues that shared gossip about mutual acquaintances but that never

circulated generally, sailor memoirs popular enough for one or two publications, blood-

curdling shipwreck narratives that gained notoriety enough for a dozen or more editions,

New England sermons full of reappropriated sea-miracle-stories, woodcut images

recycled again and again at the top of broadsides; and then, some of the most common,

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[34] David Wootten, "Desire without End" in *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 25, 2009. Wootten describes Thomas' next step after reading everything. "… the resulting pages of notes are then cut up and put in envelopes with labels such as 'Clothes' or 'Dirt.' When he wants to write, he empties out an envelope and begins to arrange the quotations, clipping them into place on sheets of paper."

[35] Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, xx-xxii.

accessible texts in Britain, ballads and hymns. This is not everything. But it is my

attempt to locate common ground. It is my attempt to account for the myriad of ways

Britons might have encountered the seas. In their minds, an ocean could be comprised

equally of Macbeth's ship-wrecking witches, the leviathan of scripture, and of the

maimed sailor to whom their parish gave three pennies.

Ultimately, however, it is to Marcus Rediker that this dissertation owes one of its

greatest conceptual debts. In *The Slave Ship: a Human History*, Rediker combines the

sources and perspectives of maritime, cultural, economic, and environmental historians to

explore the slave ship as a place and as an idea.[36] This dissertation does not share

Rediker's focus or his analytical lens, but it was shaped by a similar blend of historical

subfields. Rediker's decision to frame the slave trade as an environmental experience as

much as an economic one suggested to me a legitimate historical role for the ocean. His

focus on the physical experience of slave trading suggested an important link between

mind, body, and nature. Rediker argues that the dangers presented in large part by the

size of the Atlantic and the length of the voyage led traders to inventive cruelty and

systematic terrorism to control their human cargo. In this dissertation, I also explore the

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[36] I chose to teach *The Slave Ship* to a class of undergraduates because I thought its readability would engage them while they learned about the slave trade and were introduced to the concept of Marxist history. Of all the information that Rediker includes to recreate the horror of a slave voyage, the detail that attracted the most student attention was his description of the sharks that followed the ships, unwitting but willing participants in slave captains' campaigns to terrorize their cargo. Initially, I thought that my students had been prepared by television and film to be interested in sharks. But I later concluded that the sharks interested them more because they were the one part of the book that seemed real or recognizable. To many students, the slave trade was impossibly remote, part of a past sometimes quaint and sometimes gothic, but always so far gone that it is accessible only to their professors. The Atlantic of the slave trade seemed equally distant, nothing like the ocean of beach vacations and spring break. At best it was a nonentity and at worst, a kind of manmade pond where slave ships ran on tracks like demented theme park rides. But the sharks were a jolt of reality – something that existed to them and to enslaved Africans -- and they lent their reality to the rest of the book. That experience convinced me of the pedagogical necessity of bringing ocean-mindedness into Atlantic history.

power of the environment to shape thought. The ocean posed a threat to British bodies;

that potential for physical harm, in turn, shaped the way even non-seagoing Britons

thought about the ocean.[37]

Structure

The challenge both of sailing the Atlantic and writing the Atlantic is that it was

never a single experience or thought. It was an ever-shifting place – sometimes conduit,

sometimes impediment. It was an ever-shifting experience – sometimes a goldmine and

sometimes a short, sharp shock. It was an ever-shifting idea – sometimes the cleansing

flood and sometimes the river Styx. Fears and anxieties permeated British thoughts about

the Atlantic. When Britons expressed hopefulness, they were still, in essence, expressing

uncertainty; they *hoped* things would turn out for the best, but they did not know. Hope,

in an Atlantic context, was anxiety seen through rose-colored glasses. I find this bleak

and anxious optimism more common than jingoistic confidence: the savvy merchants

who were supposed to be assuring Britain's prosperity wrote like jittery nurses of a

chronic invalid, nervously monitoring the patient's pulse. The oak-hearted sailors filled

their memoirs with premonitions of death and with predictions that they would never

meet loved ones again in this world. No one can deny Britain's imperial successes, but to

explore the role of the ocean in the British imagination, this dissertation puts both empire

and success to the side. The Atlantic was not a confident place. It was a fearful one, a

hopeful one and it is on these ideas that this dissertation will focus.

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[37] Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: a Human History* (London, 2007).

To explore the role of the ocean in the British mind, this dissertation follows the course of a voyage and focuses on both the mental world of sea-conscious Britons and on their physical world. It first describes the broad, cultural context of the ocean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What images of the ocean did Britons have in their minds regardless of whether or not they ever set sail? It then examines the experience of the voyage and the aftermath of voyages gone wrong. Finally, it shows how traditional communities responded to the plight of survivors and victims by reestablishing their businesses and reputations.

The most widely circulated, widely consumed forms of print communicated to British readers that the oceans were dangerous places where only God was master. In the first chapter I use popular print to argue for the existence of a common Atlantic ideology. My main sources were performative. Hymns and broadside ballads brought singers together in a communal act that expressed their confidence in their faith and their anxiety about the seas. These sources present the many aspects of the waters: fresh and beneficial, salt and destructive, metaphorical and redemptive. In histories and in colloquial speech, the Atlantic features as a lake or pond. Early modern Britons knew better. They could never confuse the ocean with a lake.[38]

These sources demonstrate that the maritime was more than just a matter of political policy or technology, and God more than a national symbol.[39] Legal control of the seas mattered little to most Britons. Scripture told them God controlled the seas.

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[38] For example, J.H. Elliott points out that because there were no transatlantic trading systems already in place when Europeans began traveling the Atlantic, the "Atlantic began its historical existence as a European lake." I take his point, and have even been known to use the phrase "across the pond," but neither metaphor represents an early modern attitude toward sea travel or the Atlantic Ocean. J.H. Elliott, "Atlantic History: A Circumnavigation" in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800,* (New York, 2002) 234.

[39] Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, ch. 4.

Only God's arm extended that far. The seas were sites of providential wonders and of personal tragedies. They had meaning as a symbol and a space completely apart from anything the British state might do or the navy might achieve. This chapter argues that maritime meant sensationalism and mutability. Britons expected that, for good or ill, the seas would deal with them in extreme and transformative ways. As manifestations of God's will, the seas spoke for him and were complicit in his plan for human salvation.

Chapter two moves from the imagined empire to the experienced empire: the Atlantic of sailors, merchants, and clerks. I first discuss the field of maritime history and its potential for analytical relevance. I argue that if "maritime" is understood as a mindset rather than a profession, maritime communities cease to appear exclusive and impenetrable. Although sailors withdrew from communities on land temporarily, they returned and reintegrated. Maritime communities cannot be detached from land any more than oceans can.

I demonstrate that this community was bound together by its passion for information. Accurate information was the most valuable commodity in the Atlantic world. It made the difference between success and failure. Anything might be useful, from the going price for fish in Boston to an update on a merchant's most recent financial troubles to gossip about a captain's reputation for shorting his crew water and food.

To expose the movement and value of information, I focus on the business letters of factor Thomas Moffatt. To do his job well as the Boston representative for several overseas merchants, Moffatt had to follow prices, the movement of ships, colonial politics, and local gossip. He had to be intimately acquainted with sailors, captains, other clerks like himself, and merchants around the Atlantic. Moffatt was a person of no

particular historical significance; his correspondence could be the correspondence of any clerk. But it demonstrates how the juggernaut of Atlantic trade depended on the efforts of many equally unimportant people managing a random assortment of goods through their ability to collect information and keep track of news. Moffatt's most valuable business asset was his relationships with other people. His employers' fortunes depended on the quality of his personal connections.

Chapter three turns back to accounts of the Atlantic that appeared in print and focuses on the narratives of shipwreck survivors. These stories emphasize the physicality of Atlantic experiences; they focus on the harm a wreck could do to a human body. Britons learned what to think about the seas from scripture and song, but they had their thoughts confirmed by the sight of flesh and bone reshaped by suffering.

I use four accounts of three shipwrecks, each one telling its story through a different lens. Anthony Thacher described his family's wreck off the coast of New England from the perspective of someone struggling to discern a providential message. He cast his children in the role of New World saints and martyrs who had been thrown – not to the lions – but to the waves.

John Deane and Christopher Langman wrote accounts of the wreck of the *Nottingham* that show their awareness of the financial stakes involved in a wreck, the intimacy of the Atlantic, and the way reputation and business went hand in hand. As the captain who hoped to collect insurance money, Deane explained how the wreck and its savage aftermath could not be blamed on him. Langman, the vindictive mate, wrote a rebuttal to Deane's account which exposed the captain's cruelty and accused him of dishonesty. Langman probably hoped to sabotage Deane's insurance claim.

David Harrison's is the last narrative. The captain of the *Peggy*, Harrison was nearly murdered and eaten by his mutinous crew. After his rescue, Harrison's attention turned toward regaining his physical health; he was conscious of the effects of starvation on his body and grateful to a fellow captain who nursed and bankrolled him until he was well. The rest of his energy he turned toward rebuking the captains who had failed to save the *Peggy* and its crew. Harrison's narrative demonstrates that he was part of a sociable Atlantic maritime community with a moral code that allowed him to expect aid from others.

Finally, I examine the forms of support that relieved suffering Britons. Chapter four looks at charity and Britons' response to imperial maritime victims. Unlike most of England's poor, those damaged at sea were not necessarily marginal. Sailors were treated with all the suspicion usually directed at itinerant, landless young men, but were also national heroes. Coastal communities had to be flexible enough in their approach to charity to deal with a steady stream of poor mariners, to say nothing of wreck victims, returning captives, and bankrupt merchants.

Britons generally conceived of charity broadly. Besides money, they offered credit, forgave debts, gave shelter, provided nursing, and paid the passage so stranded victims could return home. Most importantly and most universally, they prayed. Bringing a sufferer to God's attention was the most valuable form of charity a godly Briton felt he could offer.

I conclude by examining the role of marine insurance. Insurance seems like a sign of coming modernity, a move away from the uncharted seas and the hand of God. Instead, I suggest that insurance had roots in communal Christian charity. As it was

conceived, insurance allowed a community of investors and underwriters to share risk so no one would be undone by a loss. In practice, it provided an opportunity for fraud . Rather than hailing it as an essential innovation that rendered the seas safe, sailors looked on insurance with skepticism. They preferred the compassion and sociability of their communities to an insurance policy.

This dissertation restores the ocean to its central role in the British empire and by so doing recreates the popular thought behind the imperial experience. It captures the spirit of the empire which led Britons to raise their voices to a God who could "protect them from the stormy blast," to scribble fretfully to associates that business was "bad as usual," to write to the wealthy men of their home parish complaining of an "exulcerated wound" received at sea and begging for support. It exposes the ideas and language through which the empire was explained and understood, the language that expressed the terrible tension between Britons' hopes that the ocean would lead them to success and their fears that it would prove their undoing.

<u>Chapter 1 -- Sing aSong of Shipwrecks</u>

My thoughts did rage, my Soul was tost
'Twas like a troubled Sea;
But what a mighty voice is this,
Which winds and waves obey?

God Speaks the word, peace and be still,
My sins, those Mutineers,
With speed went off and took their flight,
Where now are all my fears?[1]

<u>The Ideal Imperial Briton</u>

In September, 1651, a typical Briton set sail from a colonial outpost to return to

England. His experiences had been like those of most of his countrymen an ocean away

from home in the early days of the empire. He had been down, but not out, had backed

some losing prospects and some winners, had done business with the unscrupulous and

the trustworthy alike. He worked hard, but found the unfamiliar landscape and climate to

be challenges almost beyond enduring. Once he mastered them, however, he soon

developed a lifestyle that suited him and made him comfortable. He left considerably

richer than he arrived, in possession of land, two homes, a farm, and servants, and had a

position of authority that gave him a say in the governance of the colony. His attitude

toward the colony's indigenous inhabitants ranged from benevolent condescension to

disgust. He was proud of his own accomplishments and innovations to the point of

boasting. His prayers and his work ethic defined him as solidly but not fanatically

Protestant. He was mostly too busy for religion. He had no time for female

companionship, not that there was much to be had, but took a wife once he returned to

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[1] Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns, Upon Several Occasions; suited to our common tunes, for the use of devout Christians, in singing forth the praises of God* (London, 1694) 80.

England where he settled down, now a prosperous gentleman, to enjoy the fruits of his labor. He was also entirely fictional.

I begin with this man -- with Robinson Crusoe -- because the novel, the character, and the scholarship about the novel represent both where our understanding of empire has been and where this project hopes to take it next. The character of Crusoe is the archetype of the imperial Briton and serves as a literary exemplar for all of the notions about empire – both good and bad – that many scholars have come to accept.[2] Crusoe's relationship with Friday, for example, represented the benevolent, civilizing mission of the British empire, until such an argument fell out of favor.[3] After reanalysis, their

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[2] The number of ways in which *Robinson Crusoe* has been interpreted is legendary. From 1762, when Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that it was "the happiest treatise on natural education…," until the present, there has been no significant break in the flow of Crusoe-scholarship. (Although Rousseau only valued certain portions of the novel. "This romance, divested of all its rubbish, beginning with the shipwreck of Robinson near his island, and ending with the arrival of the vessel which comes to take him away from it…" would serve to educate Emile about self-sufficiency.) Some people attribute this to Defoe's multifaceted career and ever-shifting opinions which were reflected in his writing; much is seen in *Robinson Crusoe,* they argue, because there is much to see. Rousseau's opinions proved mostly to be outliers since the bulk of *Crusoe* scholarship involves Britain's empire in some way -- although certainly not all of it. Daniel Defoe, himself, presciently described his work as "being all things to all men." Rousseau, *Emile*, (New York, 1909) 163-164; Louis James "Unwrapping Crusoe: Retrospective and Prospective View" in *Robinson Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphoses*, Lieve Spass and Brian Stimpson eds. (New York, 1996) 1-9. Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: His Life* (Baltimore, 1989) xi; Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York, 2002) 1-3.

[3] "Robinson Crusoe is De Foe, and more than De Foe, for he is the typical Englishman of his time. He is the broad-shouldered, beef eating John Bull, who has been shouldering his way through the world ever since. Drop him in a desert island, and he is just as sturdy and self-composed as if he were in Cheapside. Instead of shrieking or writing poetry, becoming a wild hunter or a religious hermit, he calmly sets out building a house and making pottery and laying out a farm. He does not accommodate himself to his surroundings; they have got to accommodate themselves to him. He meets a savage and at once annexes him, and preaches him such a sermon as he had heard from the exemplary Dr. Doddridge. Cannibals come to make a meal of him, and he calmly stamps them out with the means provided by civilization… The portrait [of the Englishman in *Robinson Crusoe*] is not the less effective because the artist was so far from intending it that he could not even conceive of anybody being differently constituted from himself. It shows us all the more vividly what was the manner of man represented by the stalwart Englishman of the day; what were the men who were building up vast systems of commerce and manufacture; shoving their intrusive persons into every quarter of the globe… stamping firmly and decisively on all toes that got in their way; blundering enormously and preposterously, and yet always coming out steadily planted on their feet; eating roast beef and plum pudding; drinking rum in the tropics; singing 'God Save the King' and intoning Watt's hymns under the nose of ancient dynasties and prehistoric priesthoods; managing always to get their own way, to force a reluctant world to take note of them as a great if rather disagreeable fact, and making it probable that, in long ages to come, the English of 'Robinson Crusoe' will be the native language of inhabitants of every region under the sun." Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library* (London, 1892) vol. 1

relationship came to denote the patronizing, paternal, racist attitude of Britons toward

people of color, and the ways the British exploited indigenous populations in pursuit of

wealth, land, and free labor.[4] Most recently, their relationship has been rehabilitated until

it is a friendship again, albeit one complicated by the dynamics of race and undercut by

the pressures of civilization.[5] While the befriending and / or enslaving of Friday has

taken front and center in much of the scholarship that deals with Crusoe, Crusoe has also

had the lead in works on masculinity, religion, capitalism, cannibalism, myth-making,

and the attitudes of Europeans toward the natural world, to say nothing of early novel

writing, all of which have then been made to reflect on the state of Britain's role in the

empire it was creating.[6]

Even as the substance of Crusoe has changed – from bold to timid, masculine to

effeminate, savior to oppressor -- the argument that he represents a typical imperial

Briton has remained the same. That Daniel Defoe dedicated his career to furthering the

interests of British merchants and to arguing for the profitable development of Britain's

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44-46. See also Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest* (Minneapolis, 2007) 98-101.

[4] One of the first to make a version of this argument was Karl Marx who objected to *Crusoe* because it celebrated the individual rather than the community, acquisitiveness and exploitation rather than natural harmony. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York, 1973) 83-84. This argument became especially prominent because of several works of fiction that told the *Crusoe* story from Friday's point of view. These include Adrian Mitchell's play *Man Friday* (London, 1974) and Derek Walcott's play *Pantomime* (New York, 1980).

[5] Philip Holden and Richard J. Ruppel, *Imperial Desire: Dissident Sexualities and Colonial Literature* (Minneapolis, 2003) 8-13.

[6] Paula R. Backsheider, "Thank God it's Friday," in *Approaches to teaching Defoe's Robinson Crusoe*, Maximillian E. Novak and Carl Fisher eds. (2005); J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim* (1966). Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), particularly chapter 3 "'Robinson Crusoe,' Individualism and the Novel;" Robert O'Brien, "Robinson Crusoe Inc(orporates): Domestic Economy, Incest, and the Trope of Cannibalism" in *Eating their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity*, Kristen Guest ed. (2001); Leopold Damrosch Jr., "Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*" in *Modern Critical Interpretations of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe*, Harold Bloom ed. (1988); Katherine Clark, *Daniel Defoe: the whole frame of nature, time and providence* (2007); Laura Doyle, *Freedom's Empire: race and the rise of the novel in Atlantic modernity, 1640-1940* (2008).

colonies gives weight to this assessment of the character.[7] To the extent, then, that Crusoe scholarship and scholarship of the British empire have been mutually informing, a new look at one requires a reassessment of the other. In this case, my new look at *Robinson Crusoe* suggests that we have been overlooking in Daniel Defoe's novel many of the same things we have been overlooking about the empire. Crusoe is, indeed, the perfect example of the typical Briton; but his story tells us that the typical British experience is not what we thought it was.

If Robinson Crusoe was a typical imperial Briton, then a typical imperial Briton was a prisoner, a slave, and a shipwreck victim. He worked with and for people who were not his countrymen. He made money, only to lose it. He was a rebellious son who ran away to sea, only to suffer there. He was a poor husband whose desire to return to sea was providentially facilitated by his wife's death. Having escaped his island prison, he longed to go back. Having either acquired a loyal friend (or enslaved another human), he then had to watch his companion (or property) killed by cannibals. He was an indifferent Catholic who made up a kind of Protestantism for himself while shipwrecked, only to contemplate becoming Catholic again for business reasons. While the adventures he is best known for took place in the Atlantic, he was marooned in Madagascar, spent years near the Bay of Bengal, and adventured in Siberia. He ended his life, not in any of the parts of the world he explored, but back in England, moralizing about his adventures and imparting a serious message to readers about his "vision of the angelick world." If we accept Crusoe as typical, we are accepting these experiences as well.[8]

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[7] Katherine A. Armstrong, *Defoe: Writer as Agent* (1996) 9-28.

[8] Daniel Defore, *The life and strange surprizing adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, mariner: who lived eight and twenty years, all alone in an uninhabited island on the coast of America, near the mouth of the great river of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished buy*

The portion of Crusoe's story that has the most cultural resonance is also the most teleological. He was wrecked, learned to survive on the island, met Friday, and escaped a better and richer man. Histories of the British empire can be equally teleological. After a painful beginning, Britain's ambitious vision of geographic and commercial expansion was realized, so enriching and empowering its citizens that they could enslave and exploit. Britain's success was problematic, but it *was* a success. The British empire and Robinson Crusoe have much in common then. They are both stories that are best known in part and as triumphs.

In this chapter, I reintegrate the shipwrecks, cannibals, and captivities. I argue that dangers and failures were always a fundamental part of imperial experiences in large part because the dangerous ocean was equally fundamental. The empire contained literal shipwrecks and literary ones. Together, they made an Atlantic culture.

This dissertation aims to represent not a political ideology of empire or the ideas of a professional maritime or mercantile community, but an Atlantic vernacular. The language and ideas everyone shared were grounded in the experience everyone had: namely, contending with the Atlantic Ocean. To get at that common language and shared experience, it seemed necessary to consult the material that was the most widely available and the most generally perused. With that in mind, I focused primarily on two forms of print.[9] First, I examined broadside ballads, accessible through their low price, eye-

himself. With an Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates (London, 1719); Defoe, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, being the second and last part of his life, and strange surprizing accounts of his travels round three parts of the globe. Written by himself. To which is added a map of the World, in which is Delineated the Voyages of Robinson Crusoe* (London, 1719); Defoe, *Serious reflections during the life and surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe with his Vision of the angelick world* (London, 1720).

[9] The success of the serialized *Robinson Crusoe* and, later, the novel, reminds us that the British empire has always had roots in print culture. Even though the imperial slant was a new one, many of the trials and tribulations suffered by Crusoe had already been suffered by English travelers for centuries: first in the

catching woodcuts, and memorable tunes. Second, I considered religious hymns. While

churches often disagreed on the proper source for hymn lyrics and the value of

congregational singing, virtually all confessions including singing of some kind.[10]

Additionally, I considered other common printed texts: novels, plays, sermons, and

prayer books.

Using these sources, this chapter examines the themes that dominated Atlantic

culture as they were expressed in print. As I discuss earlier, I suggest there were four

primary aspects of Atlantic culture. It was sociable, maritime, anxious, and godly. These

characteristics were reflected in print sources, making up a shared language for talking

and writing about empire and seafaring. I address sociability first by examining the

context for my sources, specifically the function of singing. Next, I expand on the idea of

the maritime. Printed texts, specifically scripture, explained to readers the nature of the

waters. Readers applied these images of metaphorical waters – cleansing fountains,

rivers of blessings, waves of despair – to the physical waters they knew and traversed.

Middle East and Europe, then in Asia and Africa, and eventually in North America. Among adventure stories, the family resemblance is strong. While the content of *Robinson Crusoe* was not new, it had shifted onto a new landscape and into the format of the novel. Defoe was neither the first nor the last to use adventure themes like shipwrecks and cannibals when he wrote about the travails of Englishmen abroad. The relationship between travel, exploration, and print was long-standing and it is for this reason that this chapter takes its evidence exclusively from printed sources. Historian Kathleen Wilson argues even that the popularity of travel narratives even contributed to the spread of print culture. "The dramatic expansion of print culture itself over the century was owed in no small measure to the public's appetite for travel and colonization accounts, which rivaled sermons in their popularity in circulating libraries and were cannibalized and excerpted in periodicals and newspapers." Kathleen Wilson, "Introduction" histories, empires, modernities," in *A New Imperial History*, Kathleen Wilson ed. (2004) 8. For examples of pre-*Crusoe* travel adventures, see: John Mandeville, *The Voyage and Tavayle of syr John Maundeville knight which treateth of the way toward Hierusalem* (1568); Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America* (1582); Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigation, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589); Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (1590); Job Hortop, *The rare travailes of Job Hortop* (1591); Richard Hasleton, *Strange and Wonderfull things.*(1595); Edward Webbe, *The rare and wonderful thinges which Edward Webbe and Englishman borne, hath seen and passed in his troublesome travailes* (1600); Richard Hakluyt, *Virginia Richly Valued* (1609); William Davies, *A true relation of the travailes and most miserable captivitie of William Davies* (1614); Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his pilgimes* (1625); etc.

[10] Until the nineteenth century, the Society of Friends was a notable exception.

Besides considering the waters generally, I also discuss the nature of the ocean. In print, the ocean had two dominate characteristics: it was sensational and it was changeable. It was these qualities that contribute to the third aspect of Atlantic culture, anxiety. Because the Atlantic world contained an ocean, it was inevitable that there would be anxious moments. I examine specific sources of anxiety as they were reflected in print. What did Britons fear would go wrong at sea? Finally, I address the godliness of the Atlantic. Print gives us a providential God who made his will known through storms and wrecks and who was also the best protection a seafarer had against all the calamities he feared might come to pass.

Singing and Sociability

Crusoe's adventures remind us that seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britons imagined their empire as a place where shipwrecks, uncharted islands, enslavement, and cannibals all seemed plausible and possible. (Defoe even claimed at first that Crusoe's adventures were true and probably based the narrative on castaway Alexander Selkirk who was marooned in the South Pacific.) With no definitive knowledge of what the Atlantic held, Britons initially might have approached any story with credulity. The fictions and sensationalisms of many printed sources, and particularly of ballads, reflected the uncertainty of the Atlantic experience. The Atlantic was a sea of misinformation. As the next chapter will show, errors were so common that merchants and sailors had a passion for accuracy. Moreover, travelers' tales had always dealt heavily in fantasies, misunderstandings, and exotic hyperboles. Thus, writers and

printers were not just misrepresenting foreign lands and exotic locales to make a profit. They were reflecting a legitimate aspect of the maritime imperial experience.

Print brought the Atlantic experience onto dry land. There were many different ways a British man or woman might come into contact with some aspect of the empire. He or she might personally experience it as one of 350,000 people who left Britain in the seventeenth century or the 270,000 that left in the eighteenth.[11] In port cities, Britons would be certain to know a returned sailor or a merchant who had made the journey across the Atlantic. Rural parish records made note of departing and returning mariners and religious societies took up collections for the families of those lost at sea.[12] London exhibitions displayed, to large audiences, captives redeemed from Barbary who brought home, literally, the dangers of the maritime life.[13] But all of these forms of exposure were isolated in certain communities or single events. Nothing can have reached as many people as perpetually and as comprehensively as printed accounts.

Singing, however, took the ubiquity of print one step farther. Not only were ballads and hymns texts that everyone had, they were texts in which everyone participated in the most visceral of ways. Britons gave tongue and breath to the ideas that songs expressed. In the case of ballads, they had a place in the heart of secular sociability. Hymns required an even greater communal commitment. First, a religious community had to agree about what a hymn was, what it should say, and who should sing it. The mingling of voices confirmed the singers agreed about the nature of a hymn and its message.

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[11] Alison Games, "Migration," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael Braddick (New York, 2002), 36-43.

[12] For example see Richard Gough, *The History of Myddle*, ed. David Hey (Madison, 1981) 115.

[13] Colley, *Captives,* 99-102.

Sea ballads seem to have universal appeal. They were popular in the early modern period and antiquarians, folklorists, and folk singers continue to collect, write about, and sing them. But what precisely is a sea ballad? Nineteenth and early twentieth century compilers collected sailor songs, some focusing on particular regions or types of sailors, but rarely giving much attention to provenance.[14] Like most cultural artifacts that fall under the category "folk," sea songs have been altered by generations of singers and by interest in a romanticized English peasant past. Moreover, compilers often did not or could not determine origins and audience. Was a sea song written by sailor or for sailors and did any sailors ever sing it? Collections might include the music hall hit *Heart of Oak* that later became the official march of the British navy, John Donne's poem *The Storm*, and "the favorite top-sail halyard chant."[15]

With no accepted formal definition, I define a "sea ballad" in this project as lyrics written to be sung with a tune and printed in the broadside format, regardless of whether or not they were ever explicitly performed by seafarers.[16] Broadsides were cheap and attractively decorated with sensational woodcuts. Words and images could be easily altered to reflect current events. In accounts of sea battles, for example, the words "French" and "Dutch" often replaced each other depending on which country England

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[14] John Aston, *Real Sailor Songs* (New York, 1972); Charles J. Finger, *Sailor Chanties and Cowboy Songs* (Norwood, 1923); Christopher Stone ed., *Sea songs and ballads* (Oxford, 1906); Roy Mackenzie, *Ballads and Sea Songs from Nova Scotia* (Cambridge, 1928); Laura Alexandrine Smith, *The Music of the Waters: A collection of the sailor's chanties or working songs of the sea, of all maritime nations* (London, 1888); Joanna Colcord, *Songs of American sailormen* (New York, 1938).

[15] Finger, *Sailor Chanties and Cowboy Songs*, 14.

[16] I manually reviewed those entries catalogued as "ballads" in the databases Early English Books Online and Eighteenth Century Collections Online. These databases cover printed texts included in the Short Title Catalogue, The Thompson Tracts, and the Tract Supplement Collection. I also consulted the English Broadside Ballad Archive which includes nearly 6000 ballads. The list of titles available cannot be viewed in its entirety and I depended on the database's search engine. Searches for "sea," "sailor," "seaman," and "ocean" resulted in around 2000 entries. The English Broadside Archive presently includes material from the Pepys Collection, the Roxburghe Collection, and the Euing Collection.

was currently fighting. Between their price and their role as the purveyor of news,

ballads circulated more broadly than perhaps anything else.[17]

English hymn-singing as a cultural pastime and as a religious debate has been

insufficiently studied. Music scholars have examined the development of English

hymnody, but the contentious role of hymns in the evolution of English Protestantism is

largely unexamined.[18] The form of the hymns themselves varied. Until the second half

of the seventeenth century, hymns were almost exclusively Psalms set to a tune.

Eventually, however, more and more original lyrics began to appear in hymn collections,

particularly influenced by nonconformist movements like Methodism. In either form

however, hymns bridged the gap between the literate and the non-literate and carried with

them the air of sanctity. Even when they only repeated scripture, hymns still created a

group of images and phrases held in common among all Christian Britons.[19]

To sing was to affirm. And to sing hymns was to affirm before God and one's

community of faith in the space set aside for worship and the symbols of that faith. It

was an act as corporate as the taking of communion. Hymn lyrics were statements of

belief into which the community poured, if not exactly their blood, then at least their

breath. The seafarer in distress was separate from the sociability represented by

congregational hymn singing. Hymn singers had breath to spend and he did not. But if

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[17] Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991) esp. chs. 1 and 3.

[18] See Appendix 1

[19] Because hymn collections ranged from a few pages to several hundred, I never tried to approach the genre comprehensively. Instead, I read one collection for each decade between 1580 and 1760. I compensated for some decades, like the 1640s, which offered nothing newly published, by reading two collections for the proceeding decade. When both were available, I chose original collections over rhyming Psalms. Because of their length, hymn collections would have cost significantly more than ballads. Not only were there fewer of them, but they were reprinted regularly. Consequently, the relatively small number of collections I examined still represented a significant proportion of the number of collections available. My choices leave Puritan perspective slightly underrepresented since Puritans, especially those in New England, tended to favor collections of psalms to the exclusion of original composition.

he survived, he would depend on sociability, neighborliness, on communities of the godly for support. He would need them to breathe life back into him by welcoming him, healing his body, and filling his pockets.

A Maritime Atlantic

To leave England one must sail. There was no going out into the empire – to reshape the landscape, to exoticize the Other, to become individuals or capitalists or modern or British – without encountering the sea first. It was impossible in real life. It was equally impossible in fiction. So how did popular literature define the maritime quality of the empire, the ocean in the Atlantic?

In some of the best known examples of early modern English literature, the sea and wrecks at sea make improbable events possible. They alter the setting and change the tone. They introduce the possibility of redemption, forgiveness, enlightenment. A wreck -- and a bear -- usher in the comic second half of *A Winter's Tale*. A wreck allows for the possibility of a monster and a magic worker in *The Tempest*. The cannibals of *Robinson Crusoe* announce their presence by leaving footprints in the sand, but it is a wreck that brings the hero into their reach. Crusoe spends the rest of the novel repenting of his decision to go to sea until a sea voyage restores him to England. In 1726, Jonathan Swift used shipwrecks to propel Lemuel Gulliver, a failed businessman turned sailor, into a series of misadventures. Shipwrecks, mutinies, and pirate attacks both got Gulliver to new lands quickly and were a plausible way to find Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians, Yahoos, Houyhnhnms, the land of Laputa, of Balnibarbi, and Glubbdubdrib.

In these texts and others, the ocean had two defining characteristics: it was sensational and it was changeable. The ocean was sensational in that it was full of strange things that could not happen elsewhere. There were signs, wonders, marvels like monsters, great fish, mermaids, storms stronger than had ever been seen before. The ocean was changeable in that it was sometimes kind and sometimes cruel. In this respect, the nature of the ocean mirrors that of water in general, particularly water as it was described in scripture. Sometimes water was a shower of blessings, a heavenly fountain, the holy drops of baptism; and sometimes it was the crushing Red Sea on the heads of the Egyptians. Moreover, the changeability of the ocean effected those who went out on it. The seas altered the people and things they touched.

The Sensational Ocean

At its most sensational, the ocean was "the deep" and a place nearly synonymous with hell. English Christians were familiar with the sensational ocean because they knew the tale of Jonah and the great fish. Jonah's adventure brought together a wicked storm, a frightened crew, a strange sea monster, and a godly deliverance, some of the most common elements in accounts of marvels and wonders. Jonah also set a precedent for thinking of the seas as hellish, something song writers echoed.

> I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the flood compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me… The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about… I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me forever…"[20]

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[20] Jonah 2:2-6

Just like Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish, a hymn might invoke several images simultaneously through the word "deep." It could mean the sea itself, or a void or abyss. It could also refer to an insurmountable distance, like the distance between heaven and earth, or the separation between God and humanity because of sin. When Jonah was cast "into the deep," he was, at the same time in the sea, in a chaotic, hellish space, and also suffering God's displeasure because of his sinfulness.

When we think of an imperial adventurer contemplating the ocean he had just crossed, we can imagine him seeing it at once in these three separate ways: as the navigable, potentially bountiful sea, as a turbulent void between lands, and as an endless gulf separating him from civility and offering trials and temptations. Even landsmen singing about the deep in church would understand the concepts of trouble and separation. And because those concepts were the familiar stuff of Christian life, they could, in turn, understand the sea since it was also a place of suffering and distance, sensational marvels and signs. In the 1610 hymn, *The Song of Jonah in the Whales bellie*, singers described the sea as "the infernall lake."[21] Another hymn inverted the imagery and described hell as a place in which pleasure-loving, worldly people were drowned.[22]

Hymns made the oceans' capacity for containing and hiding seem limitless, reinforcing both the ideas of bounty and of unknown dangers. There were more marvels in the sea than just Jonah's great fish. The seas were both exotic and abundant. Combined with wonder at strange beasts was the singers' amazement at God's effortless

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[21] Michael Drayton, *A heavenly harmonie of spirituall songes, and holy himnes, of godly men, patriarkes, and prophets* (London, 1610) C4.

[22] Anon. *The second part of the weeks preparation for the sacrament* (1684) 18.

mastery over them. In a hymn version of the 74th Psalm, God dispatched whale as food.

"Yea, thou didst breake the heads so great, / of Whales that are so fell: / And gavest them

to the folke to eate, / that in the desart dwell."[23] A Thomas Ravenscroft hymn described

the "great Sea, which large is and broad / Where things that creep swarme / and beasts of

each sort. There both mighty ship saile, / and some lie at road: / The Whales huge and

monstrous / there also doe sport."[24] A later collection populated the seas with "Vast

Troops well arm'd with Silver Scales," "Giant Whales," and frolicking "Pigmy fishes."[25]

     Whales were a popular subject of cheap print, usually after they swam upriver or

beached themselves. Tract authors described them in sensational terms, detailing the

location of the whale, the conditions of its death, its size, and often how the carcass was

disposed of or displayed. The authors of whale accounts usually took a stance on

whether the arrival of the whale meant anything significant. The anonymous author of

Strange news from the deep" sneered at people "superstitious" enough to think that the

coming of a whale foreshadowed some terrible event. Nevertheless, the whale itself was

a marvel, strange and fantastic in its own right, even if it heralded nothing.[26]

     The appearance of one sea marvel begged the question: what else and how many

more were out there? Broadsides provided an array of sea monsters that made the oceans

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[23] Thomas Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes* (London, 1633) 136.

[24] Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes* 181.

[25] Anon, *A Collection of Divine Hymns*, 9.

[26] Some whales were not just prodigies, but political commentaries. The whale in *A Briefe Relation* was both marvel and Protestant metaphor. The whale in *Strange and wonderful news from Ireland* served as opportunity to mock the Irish for being gullible, superstitious Catholics. In all instances, however, the writers were impressed with the whales even if underwhelmed by the crowds who viewed them. HRE Rudolf II, *A briefe relation, of what is hapned since the last of August 1598…. Together with a description of the vvhale of Berckhey, or the great fish which stranded or came on shoare at Berckhey in Holland, the third of February 1598. ... Faithfully translated out of the Dutch* (London, 1599); Patrick Simmons, *Strange and wonderful news from Ireland of a whale of a prodigious size, being eighty two foot long, cast ashore on the third of this instant February, near Dublin, and there exposed to publick view in a letter to a person of quality* (London, 1683).

seem particularly alien.[27] In *A description of a strange (and miraculous) fish*, the ballad

described a creature that had washed ashore in Chester: "It is a fish, a monstrous fish, / a

fish that many dreads…" But, the ballad explained, since the fish was dead, Englishmen

had the opportunity to view it without fear. The fish was twenty-one yards long, five

yards high, and had thirty-four teeth, some which weighed as much as two pounds. To

these alarming statistics, the ballad added the thought that fish like these were the

"secrets *Neptune* closely keeps / Within the bosome of the deeps." The Mariners of

Chester claimed that the dead fish was a called a "Herring-hag" and that the female fish

still lurked offshore terrifying everyone with her mournful cries.[28]

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[27] Timothy Granger, *A Moste true and marveilous straunge wonder, the lyke hath seldom ben seene, of XVII Monstrous fisshes, taken in Suffolke, at Downam bridge, within a myle of Ipswiche* (London, 1568); P.G. *A most strange and true report of a monsterous fish who appeared in the forme of a woman, from her waste upwards* (London, 1604); Anon., *A true report and exact description of a might sea-monster or whale* (London, 1617); Anon., *A Great miracle at sea, or a perfect relation of a mighty whale which… was found dead upon the shore… where the countrey people having opened its belly, found a Romish priest…* (London, 1645); Anon., *A true and wonderful relation of a whale, pursued in the sea, and incounterd by multitudes of other fishes…* (London, 1645); Anon., *Londons wonder being a most true and positive relation of the taking and kill of a great whale* (London, 1658); Eye witness, *A true and perfect account of the miraculous sea-monster… lately taken in Ireland…* (London, 1674); Anon., *Wonders from the deep, or a true and exact account and description of the monstrous whale lately taken near Colchester* (London, 1677); Anon., *Strange news from the deep being a full account of a large prodigious whale, lately taken in the river Wivner* (1677); Anon., *A true and perfect relation of a monstrous and prodigous whale* (London, 1679); Anon., *Strange news from Gravesend and Greenwich being an exact and more full relation of two miraculous and monstrous fishes* (London, 1680); F.H. *Great news from the West-Indies sent in a letter to a merchant of London* (London, 1687); Anon., *5 wonders in the month of July… of A whale, or sea monster, or prodigious size… of a terrible tempest…, of a most strange and wonderful apparition of armies in the air* (London, 1691); John Houghton, *An account of a whale seventy four foot long* (London, 1693); Anon., *Strange and wonderful news.. being the true relation of two monstrous fishes, a sea-horse and a sea-mare…* (London, 1693); Anon., *God's marvelous wonders in England… an account of a mighty monstrous whale…* (London, 1694); Francis Searson, *A true and perfect relation of the taking and destroying of a sea-monster…* (London, 1699); Anon., *A most strange but true account of a very large sea monster…* (London, 1704); Peter Browne, *A letter from a clergy-man in Ireland; Giving an account of the taking of great numbers of fish, and of many sea-monsters, in the county of Clare…* (London, 1721); Anon., *A Sea monster was taken on Sunday last, by some fishermen, and brought to London. It is of the fish kind in substance, with a mouth of a most enormous size, capable of holding the largest man in England* (1789); Anon., *The wonder of wonders; being a strange and wonderful relation of a mermaid that was seen and spoke with* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1795); Anon., *A wonderful prophecy by a mermaid* (Liverpool, 1800).

[28] M.P. *A description of a strange (and miraculous) fish cast upon the sands in the meads, in the hundred of Worwell, in the county Palatine of Chester, (or Chesshiere). The certainty whereof is here related concerning the said most monstrous fish. To the tune of Bragandary.*(London, 1635); Anon., *A Description of a strange (and miraculous) fish* (London, 1690).

The woodcuts that topped *A description of a strange (and miraculous) fish* had little to do with the text, but made the fish seem very frightening. Three images topped the ballad. In the first, an enormous fish with long pointed teeth loomed over a man on horseback, while a second fish (presumably the herring hag), also with long teeth, waited in the water. While the horse was probably added to the image to provide a sense of scale, its position also suggests the fish would be able to swallow the horse and its rider whole. Juxtaposed with this image was a sailing ship fighting its way through a stormy sea. The final image showed men hard at work at a press, most likely printing the ballads that told of these marvels. The first two images together implied, at the very least, that giant fish were like storms. They were both dangers that might be encountered at sea. At the most, the images implied that a sea-monster was actually able to cause a ship distress.

1. The strange and miraculous fish

While death rendered the giant fish harmless, their presence raised the unsettling possibility that ocean held more living monsters. Woodcuts emphasized frightening

characteristics like pointed teeth and dog- or lion-like faces. (The whales were also usually well-endowed.) The broadsides seemed to take it as given that, if presented with the opportunity, whales would swallow people. In this way, the whale could act as both a sensational monster and as a mouth of and for God by making an end to some evildoer. Probably playing off general knowledge of the story of Jonah, one popular image showed a giant fish with a man emerging from its mouth. The accompanying text explained that the man was a priest carrying pardons from Rome for English and Irish Catholics engaged in nefarious plots against Protestant England whose body was removed from the inside of a dead whale by some fishermen. Like Jonah, the priest was punished by God with a shipwreck after which he was "received into the belly of Whale" where he "had remained some while alive in those Chambers of death… a watery Purgatory." Unlike Jonah, the priest did not survive, despite the implications of the image. The whale was then punished for tainting the ocean with a priest. "…the fishes would not endure their owne Element until they had expiated the Waves by the destruction of the Whale… [they] would punish with death amongst the greatest of their owne inhabitants… to dissuade [others] from Popery."[29] The whale from the broadside *Strange and wonderful news from Ireland* swallowed both people ("Three men and a Boy") and their boat as well.[30]

Like ocean adventures, accounts of sea creatures seemed both contemporary and ancient. Readers interested in science and the natural world had their curiosity satisfied by descriptions and dimensions of whale anatomy. New levels of engagement with the oceans through travel and trade gave readers a stake in learning about the dangers that

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[29] Anon.,*A true and wonderful relation*, 7-8.

[30] Simmons, *Strange and wonderful news from Ireland*.

might be encountered on the seas. At the same time, stories about giant fish carried with

them the weight of the ages. Men had been hearing stories about leviathan since Job.

These were God's monsters, created by him at the dawn of time, and, like the waves,

instruments of his will. They appeared, swallowed, and wrecked as part of a divine plan.
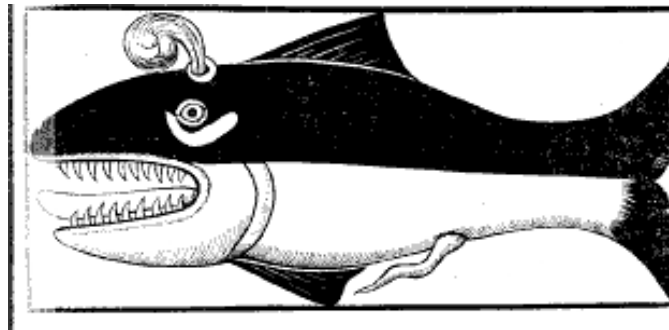
2. According to the text, these monstrous fish (probably orcas) were as big around as three "Buttes of malmsie." "… they were white beneath the eyes a hand broad… theyr backes as blacke as ynke, so smoth & bright yt one might have seene his face on it, as in a dim Glasse. Theyr bellies as whyte as mylke…"
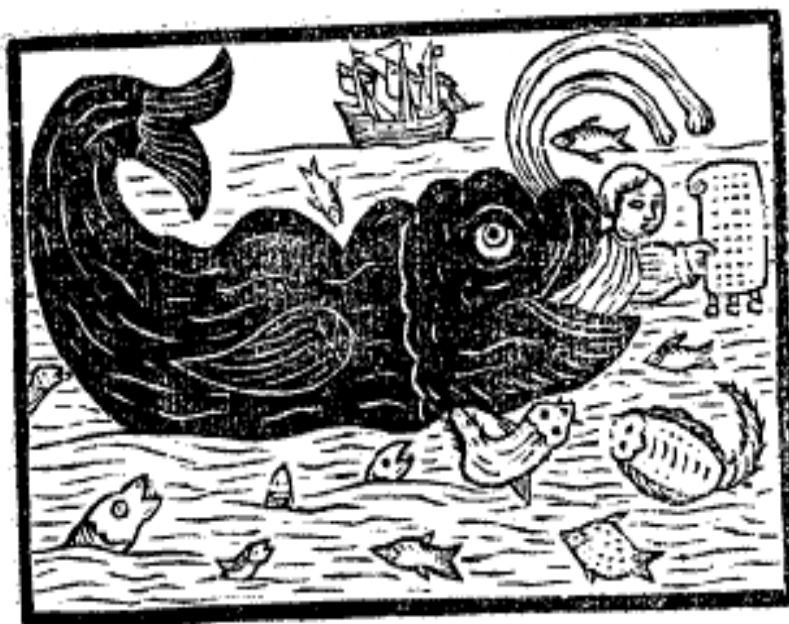
3. The fish of the sea band together. In order to rid themselves of the priest, they will drive out the whale that swallowed him.

47

STRANGE NEWS
FROM THE
DEEP:

Being
A FULL ACCOUNT
Of a Large Prodigious

WHALE,
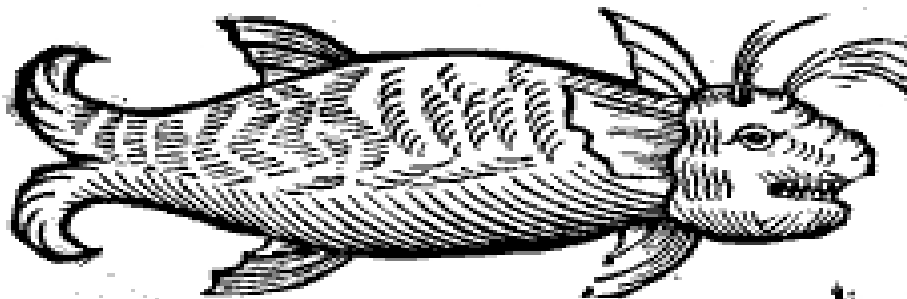
Lately taken in the River *Wyner*, within
fix miles of *Colchefter*.

*Declaring the ftrange manner of its Coming up, and
by what unufuall means it was feized upon by the
Neighbouring Inhabitants. Alfo an Account of the
like prodigious Accidents in general.*

Printed for W. H. in the Year 1677.

4. The whale was seen to "flownce" "with a ponderous squelsh." While some people think that whales came up rivers and beached themselves because of "sickness or indisposition" that "makes them restless and discontented… and run like mad Dogs at Adventures," the author believed that most people thought that whales were a sign of "insuing Judgment… a warning given to us by the Almighty to turn from some notorious sins…" The author disagreed, arguing that, while the king was shepherding the country, God could have no reason to issue warnings.

WONDERS
From the Deep
OR A
True and Exact Account and Description
OF THE
Monſtrous Whale,
Lately taken near
COLECHESTER,
Being two and forty Foot in Length, and
of Bigneſs Proportionable.

With the manner of its coming, and being
Kill'd on *Thurſday* the 9*th*. of *April.*

Being ſo rare and ſtrange a ſight that mul-
titudes of People from all parts dayly go
to ſee it as thick as to a Market or Fair.
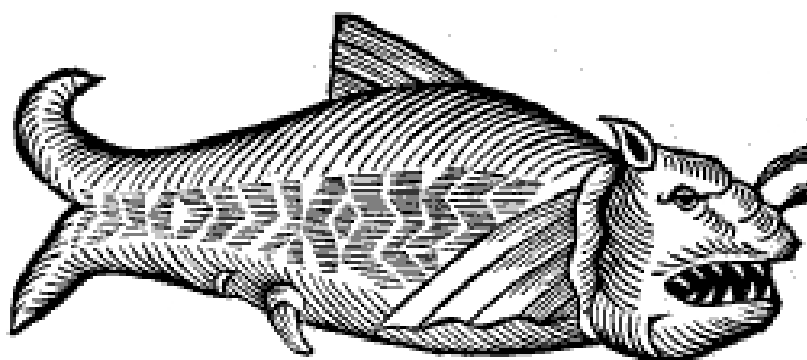
London Printed for *E. W.* in the Year 1677.

5. "But amongst all the wonders of the Deep, that which most Summons our Admiration, is the Whale…"
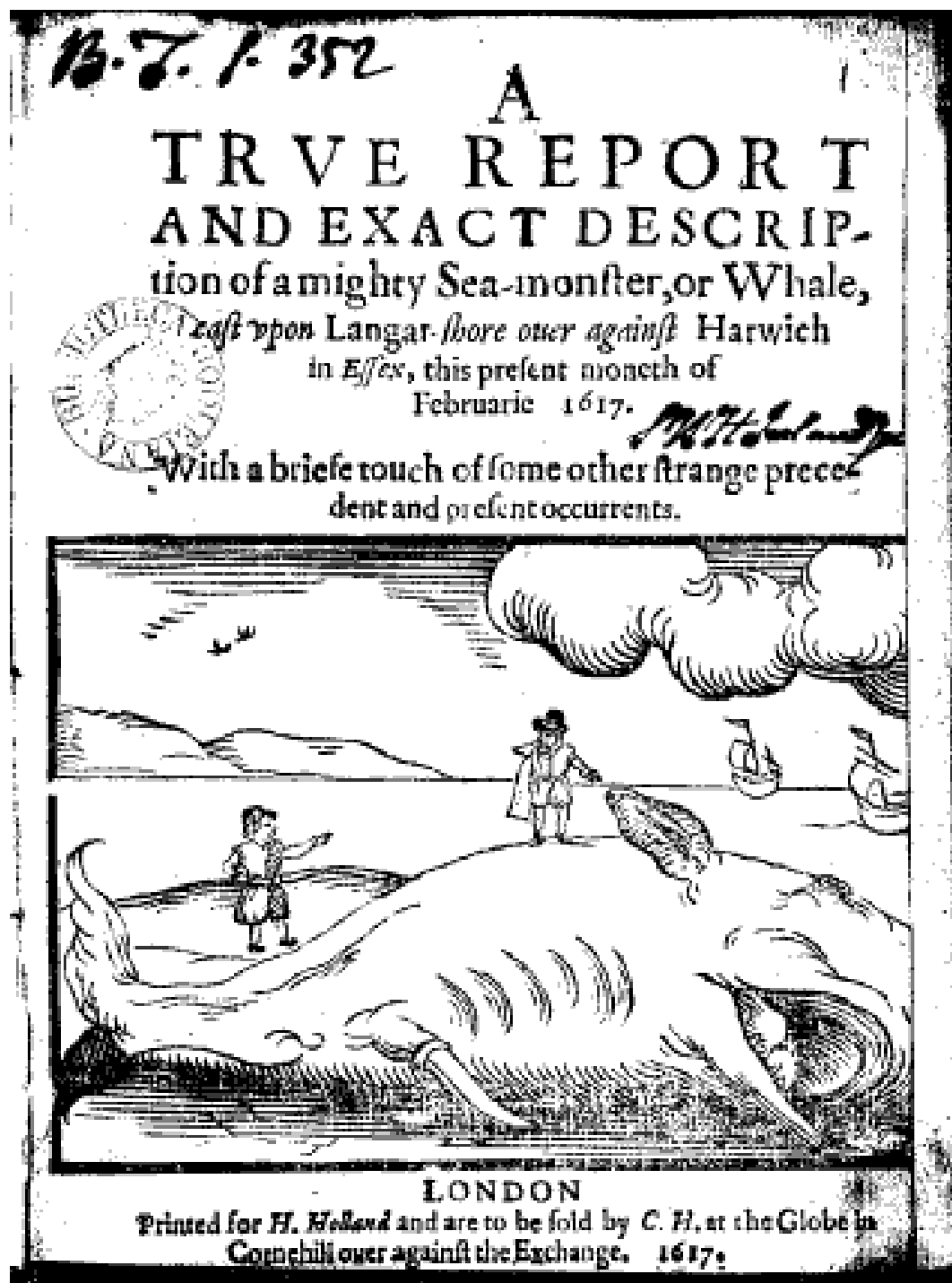
6. A more realistic rendering of a whale. It was thought to be a sign of the world's end.

7. One of the few images of a sea monster that does not resemble a whale or fish. A "miraculous sea-monster" without "legs, bones, fins, or scales, with two heads, and ten horns…"

The ocean could be sensational because of the things in it, or in its own right. In some hymns, the waters were like monsters straining to escape. God controlled the waters, rendered them quiescent, but hymns explained that was not their natural state. This hymn warned about the inclinations of the waters, should God ever lose control of them.

> But lest the Waters should at length
> Cast off their captive Chain,
> And growing bold, should by their strength
> Their Empire lost regain.
>
> For ever thou to check their Pride
> Hast by thy mighty hand
> Fixt them a bound, forc't to abide
> Within a wall of Sand.[31]

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[31] Anon., *A Collection of Divine Hymns,* 3.

Unruliness, rather than placidity, was the inherent nature of the seas. Thus, the waters'

sensational power was not diminished, just temporarily checked by a god even more

powerful.[32]

Even more alarming than the idea of monster oceans was the idea of Jonah's

deep, an ocean that was like hell. A hymn version of Psalm 69 conflated the sea and hell

in a verse that asked God to save singers from both places. "Pluck thou my feet out of

the mire… Lest with the waves I should be drownd, / and depth my soule devoure / And

that the pit should be confound, / and shut me in her power."[33] This verse suggested that

being saved from the waves and from the pit -- a synonym for hell -- were related. On

the one hand, a sinner might be consigned to infernal regions after dying a premature

death in the waves without a chance to repent, thus explaining the conflation of the sea

with hell. But the song implied a more nefarious role for the waves than impartial

executioner. The depths consumed not just the body, but the soul. Nor were these

isolated examples of a hellish sea. A rendering of the 74th Psalm into song described

"The seas that are so deepe and dead," a line of author Thomas Ravenscroft's own

devising since it has no corresponding verse in the Psalm.[34]

Regardless of the ocean's behavior, it served as a mouthpiece for God. Thus, its

every utterance was sensational and potentially significant of something greater. A hymn

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[32] Another hymn includes wind and waves in a list of things God check'st and chains along with "The Devils which like Lions Roar." This is not illustrious company. Not only, the hymn implies, were the wind and waves fierce like lions, they are as malicious as devils. In a different hymn, "raging tumults" are considered roughly comparable to tainted air, deadly arrows, pestilence, earthquakes and massacres, all listed together in the same petition to God for protection. Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns,* 77; Anon. *Select hymns and anthems* (1696) 53.

[33] Sternhold, *The whole book of Psalmes,* 126.

[34] Sternhold, *The whole book of Psalmes,* 137.

taken from Revelation explained "Great and marvelous are thy Works / Jehovah, working Wonders; / It lighteth when our Lord appears, / And when he speaks, it thunders."[35] More specifically, Ravenscroft's 29th Psalm asserted, "His voice doth rule the waters all / even as himselfe doth please: / He doth prepare the thunderclaps, / and governs all the Seas."[36] Is it any wonder that people who experienced an ocean full of monsters and demons and divine messages came away from it feeling transformed?

The Changeable Ocean

When Britons thought about water, they thought about a substance imbued with many meanings. Because water had so many characteristics, the ocean, by extension, could as well. In this section I will consider some of the roles that water played and some of its meanings. I will then turn to the ocean specifically. I address first spiritual transformation (from sin to repentance), then transformations of condition (reversals of fortune and marriages), and finally physical transformations (disfigurements, anonymity, and death).

Printed sources that described water in negative terms usually referred to water in large quantities. The waters present at creation were contained by God, their violent nature checked. Water acting at God's will, in the form of seas or waves or terrible storms, punished the sinful and redirected them to righteousness. Perhaps the ultimate indictment of bodies of water comes in Revelation when John described his vision of

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[35] Anon, *A letter from a gentleman…, with the hymns they usually sing* (London, 1694) 12.

[36] Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes*, 62.

Other examples include: the 107th Psalm (also by Ravenscroft), "…at his word the stormy winde / ariseth in a rage…" and "with his wrath the Lord doth make / the sturdie stormes to cease…"; and in the *Collection of Divine Hymns,* "All things in Heaven above, / Are Subject to his Will; / The Earth and Seas below / His pleasure do fulfil. / At his Command / From the Worlds end, / Thick Vapours come, / The Clouds ascend. / Lightnings from thence burst out, / And Rains are fast pour'd down; / He brings his boyst'rous winds / From Treasuries unknown." Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes,*190. Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns,*50.

heaven. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."[37] While theologians argue over what the "sea" in this passage represents, to a less scholarly reader of the Bible, the passage is plain.[38] In heaven, there is no ocean. All of the things the sea might represent – distance, turmoil, warfare, despair – are gone too. But dry landscapes are not especially idyllic, and so heaven is, instead, decorated with an endless variety of streams, pools, and fountains.

In contrast, small quantities of fresh water were usually beneficial. Gentle rain made the earth bountiful, streams provided drinking water, and fountains poured out the waters of baptism. These sources of water were physical necessities. They were also metaphorically meaningful. God's merciful intervention in the lives of the faithful was analogous to calm water and God might intervene in the lives of faithful by actually providing calm water. One rendering of the 23rd Psalm delicately balanced the actual and the metaphorical by describing the stream necessary for the keeping of sheep as a stream of "grace and peace."[39]

If a singer was not encountering benevolent streams as part of a well-tended flock, then he was encountering them as part of God's plan to make the earth fruitful and beneficial for humanity. "The floud of God doth overflow, / and so doth cause to spring:

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[37] Revelation 21:1

[38] Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: a Theology of Becoming* (London, 2003).

[39] The 23rd Psalm was a perennial favorite, appearing multiple times in some hymn collections. All addressed the idea of quiet water as part of what God provided to care for the faithful on earth. "Heaven's King my careful Shepherd is, / I am his Pasture Sheep. / 'Twere strange if I should come to want / For he doth never sleep. / His Word and Orindances are / Fat Pastures unto me, / In them he leads me where the streams / Of Grace and Peace run free." Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns,* 22.

/ The seed and corne which men do sow, / for he doth guide the thing."[40] Too little water was just as disastrous as too much water. Hymns like this one made it clear that the ideal answer to angry storms and waves was not drought. A fruitful earth required water of the right temperament delivered in the right quantity.

To Christians, water was most important in its capacity as a source of cleansing and healing. Metaphorically, the saving knowledge of the gospel was like a refreshing stream. Physically, water had been part of some of Christ's miracles. Several hymns echo this when the singers took on the voice of parched sinners being revived by water or thanking God for rain that cooled their cracking skin. This hymn specifically reminded singers that water could be part of divine healing. "We wait here at Bethesda's Pool, / Those Waters which refreshed and cool, / We wait whose Souls are scorcht with sin / O come, dear Savior, help us in."[41] Bethesda's pool is a marked contrast to the waters that must be chained so they will not rage out of control and cause harm.

Healing, saving waters prefigured the waters of heaven. Ultimately, heavenly waters were most meaningful in contrast. One could appreciate quiet streams and crystal fountains best after exposure to the storms of life. Consequently, songs about heaven often tried to draw together the many characteristics of the waters: their capacity to harm and their capacity to bless, their literal existence and their spiritual significance, their presence on earth and their presence in heaven. This particular hymn repeated many of

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[40] This version of the 65th Psalm is different because of the hymn writer's use of the word "flood." Usually, "flood" means a destructive flow of water. Sometimes it was used to describe Jesus' blood, but the redeeming qualities of that type of flood were still tied to destruction, specifically its ability to destroy sin. In this hymn, however, the flood is entirely positive. Sternhold, *The whole book of* Psalmes, 120.

[41] Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns,* 28.

the ideas of Revelation, integrating the images of the faith testing, violent ocean and the

image of the city of God where those who have remained faithful will be at peace.

> Our Faith may there remain unmov'd,
> Tho' th' Earth should be displac'd;
> Or tho' into the Sea's vast gulph,
> The Mountains should be cast.
>
> Altho' the Oceans troubled waves,
> A frightful noise should make;
> Should rise and swell above the Cloud,
> And cause the hills to shake.
>
> There is a quiet stream makes glad,
> The City of Lord;
> His preference will secure her peace,
> And timely help afford.[42]

For British singers, this hymn could have expressed perfectly their spiritual expectations

and their earthly hopes. As believers, they expected to suffer in life and then be at peace

in heaven. As citizens of an island country with imperial possessions, they hoped that

enduring the "troubled waves" would be made worthwhile by secure, peaceful, profitable

colonies.

Baptism, however, represented water at its most powerful and necessary. In this

dissertation, I argue for the ubiquity of the seas to an island people and for images and

ideas about seafaring held in common. But *this* was the water that *everyone* experienced.

Baptism showed believers that water killed sin, initiated new life, and that its absence

consigned the soul to hell. The seas were essentially redundant.[43] In the hymn "Against

Unbelief," the singers knew that they deserved a physical flood, but were fortunate

enough to encounter the waters in their redemptive capacity instead. "My sins are grown

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[42] Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns,* 70-71.

[43] David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1999) 106-108.

so high, that they / Deserve a second Flood; / Behold the Deluge, Christ is come / To drown them in his Blood."[44] This song connected the waters used by God to punish and purge with their counterpart, the water of baptism that could also purify and destroy. To think of one was to think of the other. Those experiencing the waters as oceans were already familiar with water at its most potent. They had been baptized and already believed what they were about to experience: that water was the destructive, redemptive instrument of God.

The seas had few benevolent aspects. At best, they provided an uncomfortable opportunity for reclamation. In this hymn version of the 83rd Psalm, the singer asked God specifically to use the natural world to change the minds of the wicked.

> Turne them O God with stormes as fast
> as wheels that have no stay:
> Or like as chaffe which men doe cast
> with windes to flye away…
>
> So let the tempest of thy wrath
> upon their necks be laid:
> And of the stormie wind and showre,
> Lord make them all afraid.[45]

The seas were frightening and so they were effective. Moreover, storms at sea were unforgiving. A person who survived could rightly feel he had been granted a second chance and needed to mend his ways. A gentler medium would have done less to guide sinners back to their faith.

At a distant second place, the seas could offer earthly wealth and adventure. There is no counterpart in balladry for the still waters. The only waters exciting enough for cheap print were storm tossed and troubled by battle. But in the context of romantic,

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[44] Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns,* 32.

[45] Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes,* 152.

adventure-filled ballads, storms and battles could still lead to riches and glory. *The Boatswains call* entreated brave young men to come fight against "the Mighty force of France," which they would "subdue" "through blest permission." The song opens with a bold verse appealing to sailors' (and would-be sailors') patriotism, but also reminding them that there were personal advantages to be gained by defeating the French. The "promotion" of England's interest would lead to their promotions in rank and fortune.[46] A very popular two-part ballad, the *Marchants daughter Bristow* showed how sea adventures transformed unmarried Maudlin into a happy bride.[47] If time, as the cliché goes, heals all wounds, time at sea is doubly efficient. In the length of a sea voyage, all the impediments to the heroine's marriage were eliminated, including her recalcitrant father. The wedding was quickly planned and the heroic English captain who kept Maudlin from harm on the sea and in Italy stepped in to replace her conveniently dead parent.[48]

For those who found patriotism and romance insufficient inducements, glory, sex, and treasure were also on offer for the sea traveler. A song called *A Sayler new come over* described the unusual people who had washed up in the port city of Dover and the adventures of which they had been part. It encouraged listeners to go to Dover to gawk. Sea-curiosities included "A Saylor" who "strange countries doth discover," and a

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[46] Anon. *The Boatswains call; or the courageous marriners invitation to all his brother sailers to forsake friends and relations for to fight in defence of their King and country. To the tune of Ring of gold* (London, 1688-1692).

[47] Other ballads make the same point. In *The Sea-mans Compass*, a lady praises sailors and concludes each verse with the observation that "There's none but a Sea-man / shall marry with me." L.P. *The sea-mans compass or A dainty new ditty composed and pend the deeds of brave sea-men to praise and commend* (London, 1650).

[48] "Her father he was dead God wot, / And eke her mother was joyful of her sight / their wishes she denied not, / But wedded them with hearts delight." Anon., *The first – second part of the Marchants daughter of Bristow to the tune of The maidens joy* (London, 1600); Anon., *The first part of the Marchants daughter of Bristow to the tune of The maydens joy* (London, 1610).

Captaine who "hath in the warres commanded, / with vallour great hath thousans slain, / yet nere received hurt or maine, / at flouting gainst the power of Spaine." The woodcuts at the top of the broadside also highlighted the idea that seafaring made a person unusual by showing four figures in exotic clothes. There were no women at all mentioned in the text of the ballad, but one of the images was of a woman in an opulent dress with a slit skirt and exposed breasts. The printer was probably trying to suggest that the waters could lead to earthly pleasures besides military prowess.[49]

8. Some of the strange people one can see in Dover.

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[49] Anon., *A Sayler new come over And in this ship with him those of such fame The like of them, never unto England came, Men of such qualitie and parts most rare, reading this Ditty, will shew you what they are; to the tune of A sayler new come over* (London, 1631). The woodcut of the bare-breasted woman may be a reproduction of a more complicated engraving critiquing vanity at court. It also showed a woman with exposed breasts. In contrast to her beautiful face, her lower half (revealed by her split skirt) was represented by scenes of sin and death. Lacey Baldwin Smith, *This Realm of England, 1399-1688* (Boston, 2001).

9. None of these figures can be found in the ballad. Perhaps these were the strangest images the printer had available and he used them to represent the exotic in general.

Ballads sometimes boasted that the seas brought transformative wealth. In *The sea-mans leave taken*, a sailor reassured "sweet Margery" that he would remain faithful to her while at sea. The seas had rendered him rich -- "I have seaven ships upon the Sea, / and are all laden to the brim" – but he was "so inflam'd with love to thee, / I care not whether they sinke or swim."[50] The sailor newly returned in another ballad also bragged of having ships of his own on which he would carry off his sweetheart. "I have seven ships upon the Sea, / when they are come to Land / Both Mariners and Merchandize / Shall be at thy command. The Ship where in my love shall sail, / is glorious to behold, / The sails shall be of… silk, / And the masts of shining gold."[51] This motif was most common in broadside ballads, not particularly known for their realism. Although these

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[50] Anon., *The sea-mans leave taken of his sweetest Margery. And Margery her singing loath to depart, being very unwilling to leave her sweet-heart. To the tune of I'le goe through the world with thee* (London, 1626-1681).

[51] Anon., *A Warning for married women,* (1650).

ballads were about love, their most romantic element was the idea that this change for the better would occur to an ordinary sailor. Outside of ballads, merchants and ship captains might reasonably hope to make their fortunes. Sailors' financial prospects were more modest.

Physical transformation ranged from a new outward appearance to the loss of limbs or life. Crusoe fashioned a new wardrobe for himself from goat skins. The odd cast of characters who washed up in Dover had unusual appearances and abilities, acquired from their time at sea. One, for example, was an exotic "pirate lately taken, / that bravely can Duch spreaken…"[52] Along with the other exotic figures at the top of the broadside was a man with a peg leg, someone who has had his appearance permanently altered by sea travel.[53] The most permanent alternation, however, was death. Just as the story of Jonah illustrated the sensational quality of the waters, the story of the Exodus reminded Christians of the destructive potential in bodies of water. In "A Song of Moses and the Israelites" from the 1610 collection *A Heavenly Harmonie*, author Michael Drayton described the salvation of the Israelites and the destruction of the pursuing Egyptians. "Thou sentst the wind which overwhelm'd them all, / The surging seas came sousing in againe, / As in the water, so with might and maine, / Like lead, unto the bottome downe they fall."[54]

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[52] Anon., *A Sayler new come over*. Other ballads described Dutch as a language impossible to learn. That the pirate could speak Dutch was a sign of how unusual he was and how varied his experiences had been.

[53] See image 9. Women were often transformed by a sea voyage as well. In the case of faithful Betty, her protestations of love for John did not survive his absence. "Before they came to the Marriage Bed, / (so wofull is this Ditty) / E're she had lost her Maiden-head, / Alack, the more's the pitty." And the woman in *Joy after sorrow* finds that "My belly is up and my heart is down, / and my Love is gone to Jamaica." Anon. *The faithful lovers last farwell* (London, 1664); L.P. *Joy after sorrow, being the sea-mans return from Jamaica* (1648).

[54] Michael Drayton, *A heavenly harmonie of spirituall songes* B2. Another Exodus hymn describes how ""Then from thy breath / a gale of wind was sent: / The billowes of the Sea / quite o're them went: / And

The most common alteration caused by the sea was the profound discomfort of becoming unrecognizable. People returned from the seas, but as who? As what? In *The Marchants daughter of Bristow,* the "gallant Maister" of a ship agreed to help Maudlin run away after her sweetheart.[55] Dressed in a "ship-boyes garments," Maudlin's disguise was impenetrable. "Thus through the Daughters strange disguise / The mother knew not when she spake unto her child…" Instead, she took Maudlin's hand and promised to reward the "faire youth" if he saw her daughter and sent word.[56] The possibility that a parent or lover might not recognize their child or loved one because of a sea-voyage or the strange clothes of a sailor gives a general impression of the sea as a space with the power to confound, especially the issue of identity. Name, age, sex, and fortune became fluid at sea and during the long years away from home: a woman could believably dress as a boy, a poor sailor could come home a handsome, rich gentleman, a strong young man could come home poor, weary, and sick.[57]

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they the mighty waters suncke into, / Ev'n as a weightie peece / of Lead will doe." George Wither, *The hymnes and songes for the church divided into two parts* (London, 1623) A3.

[55] The two parts of *The Marchants daughter of Bristow* were so popular they were printed in 1600, 1610, 1635, 1640, between 1658 – 1664, 1669, and 1730.

[56] Maudlin was not the only heroine to think of putting on boys clothes. Betty, the soon-be-abandoned sweetheart in *The faithful lovers last farwell* offers to "put be on a Masculine Case, / and pass for one of your Men," so that she and John can die together. But John declines saying "Thou rather wilt hurt, and hinder me, / when we begin the Fray, / When Cleopatra put to Sea / Mark Anthony lost the day." Thus Betty remained safely on shore, dressed as a woman. Anon., *The faithful lovers law farwell*; Anon. *The Marchants daughter of Bristow*.

[57] One of the most familiar ballads about a sea transformation is from the nineteenth century. The earliest known version is from 1822. There are dozens of variations on "The Pretty Fair Maid," but the plot is essentially the same. A woman who encounters a man, sometimes identified as a solider, a *sailor*, or a stranger. He proposes marriage, or in some versions a sexual encounter. She turns him down because she is waiting for her sweetheart who has been gone seven years. The stranger suggests her sweetheart may be dead on a battlefield or drowned. The stranger explains that he is also rich as an inducement. The woman still turns him down. Satisfied that she has been faithful, the stranger reveals a token (sometimes a locket or ring) that proves he is the man for whom she has been waiting. Her lack of recognition was not just caused by the years he was away, but also because of his fine clothes and good looks. (Laws N42) "The Pretty Fair Maid (The Maiden in the Garden; The Broken Token)" from The Traditional Ballad Index: An Annotated Bibliography of the Folk Songs of the English-Speaking World, accessed March 11, 2014

Sea anxieties were most unsettling when they were unresolved. By and large, ballads end well. Women pregnant and abandoned in the first stanza were married and content by the last. Sailors came home. Maudlin was ultimately reunited with sweetheart and mother. An eerie ballad called *A warning for married women* told a story that, despite ghosts and visions, was ultimately more realistic. Just as most people got few answers about the fate of loved ones missing at sea, the ballad reader got little satisfaction from the song's end. *A warning for married women* told the story of Jane Reynolds whose sweetheart, a "Seaman brave," was pressed. She faithfully waited for him until "At last news came that he was dead / within a foreign land…" Freed from her engagement, she married a carpenter, had children, and was happy until her husband went away on business. That night a spirit came to her window.

> Which Spirit spake like to a man,
> and unto her did say,
> My dear and onely love (quoth he)
> prepare and come away.
>
> James Harias is my name (quoth he)
> whom thou hast loved so dear,
> And I have travel'd for thy sake
> at least this seven year.
>
> And now I am return'd again,
> to take thee to my wife,
> And thou with me shall go to Sea,
> To end all further strife.

The spirit finally coaxed her to join him. "And so together away they went, / from off the English shore, / and since that time the Woman kind, / was never seen no more." When

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http://www.fresnostate.edu/folklore/ballads/LN42.html; Malcolm G. Laws, *American Balladry from British Broadsides* (Philadelphia, 1957).

the carpenter returned home to find his wife vanished, he hung himself from grief leaving, the ballad explained, God to care for the children.

This ballad drew together many of the anxieties that accompanied seafaring: from separation and violence that left loved ones dead in foreign lands, to confusion and transformation. Here, the sea voyage caused such profound alterations that it left a woman in doubt about everything from identity to the safety of her soul. Did she see her lover or a devil? To join lovers together was the primary goal of ballads, and these two lovers were, indeed, joined. But *where* were they joined? Did they sail blissfully off together? Or did an evil spirit disguise itself as the sailor to lure a good woman into hell? The only answer the ballad provided was the title: this was a warning. If a long lost sweetheart comes back from sea and claims to be rich, it is probably too good to be true.[58]

Now, the expression "sea-change" has no negative connotation; it implies only a transformation. But as *A warning for married women* indicated, an early modern sea change often had a sinister aspect. When William Shakespeare coined the phrase, he brought together the ocean's nature: marvel filled and ever changing. Ariel's song was lovely and horrifying at the same time. The spirit claimed that the man had not faded, only suffered "a sea-change" that had made him into something beautiful. The sea, however, had affected not just one, but two changes: it drowned him and then turned him

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[58] Anon. *A warning to married women. Being an example of Mrs. Jane Reynolds… who having plighted her troth to a seaman, was afterwards married to a carpenter, and at last carried away by a spirit…* (1650). Another lover expresses his intent to return from the sea, even after death. He tells his sweetheart "And as I do glide / To and fro with the Tide, / Thereby is exprest, / That a Lover may die, but never can rest." He had also been changed into some kind of spirit of ghost given a voice by the waters. William Hicks, *Wits Academy: or the Muses Delight* (London, 1701) 170.

into pearl and coral.[59] The sea stripped him of the signs of his humanity – the very bones of his body – and separated him from his family. They could bury him, lay him to rest in the earth. He was five fathoms under the sea. The beauty of the imagery and the lyric can obscure the fact that it is a song about sea nymphs ringing bells for a dead man.

Ultimately, there was nothing Shakespeare could tell early modern Britons about the sea that they did not already know. The Bible told them that leviathan was in the deep and that sometimes he swallowed the wicked.[60] They knew God brought the waters crashing down on the heads of his enemies.[61] The Psalmist had prepared them for a sea voyage. They knew that those who "do business in great waters" would see the "wonders of the deep," that their ships would "mount up to the heaven" and "go down again to the depths…" They knew they would "reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man… at [his] wit's end…"[62] Most importantly, they knew that they were saved through water in its most benevolent aspect. Printed texts confirmed and elaborated on these ideas, but the ideas themselves created the foundation of an Atlantic ideology and taught Britons how to regard the waters that had always been part of their faith.

The Anxious Atlantic

Historiographically, the imperial Briton has suffered a severe reversal in fortune. He has gone from being the bluff and confident conqueror of new worlds, to being riddled with doubt and loathing. He feared his empire even as he conquered it. Imperial

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[59] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* I.ii.368-416.

[60] Job 41, Psalms 74:13-15, Psalms 104:3-27, Isaiah 27:1, Jonah 1-2

[61] Exodus 15:1-10

[62] Psalms 107:23-30

fears were varied: they ranged from threats to masculinity to ecological fears about the detrimental effects of new climates to morals and health. Britons feared race and rape and cannibalism. They feared that savagery was somehow contagious that they would bring it home and infect others.[63] Linda Colley examines imperial fears in her exploration of captive taking, something she argues provoked British anxiety specifically because it happened at sea. Seafaring was a necessary part of Britain's glorious destiny; it symbolized power and liberty and free commerce. If it became fraught with identity shattering experiences like captivity, then what would become of the British empire and those Britons who were out in it?[64]

Captivity was only one aspect of a generalized anxiety directed toward the seas, the distance they represented, all the things that might be in them, and all the things they might do to someone who tried to cross them. Britons were undeniably anxious over the possibility of being taken captive, snatched by pirates or seized by Indians in a raid on a colonial village. But captivity was never in a position to undercut British confidence in their seafaring prowess and in their maritime empire. Their confidence was already undermined by the maritime nature of the empire itself.

The nature of the seas and sea travel included a long list of anxiety producing qualities: long distances, long absences accompanied by infidelity, dangerous foreigners, bad weather, wrecks, the possibility of drowning, the possibility of violence, and the discomforts of the maritime life. While songs often expressed a sailor's point of view,

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[63] Felicity A. Nussbaum, "The theatre of empire: racial counterfeit, racial realism" in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840*, Kathleen Wilson ed. (Cambridge 2004); Colley, *Captives*; Anthony S. Parent, *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Williamsburg, 2003); Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years* (New York, 2012); Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (New York, 2007); Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest* (Minneapolis, 2007).

[64] Colley, *Captives,* 46-48.

disappointed or grieving lovers also provided a different perspective in some songs and poems about maritime anxieties. I focus first on fears provoked by long separations, then move to impressment, and conclude by examining anxieties centered on a sea career, namely shipwrecks, battle, and the rigors of the sailing life. The fear of death was at the heart of all of these anxieties.

Distance, Separation, and Abandonment

Ballads that described partings and separations also touched on the idea that women left behind could be just as much the victims of a seafaring career as sailors. In *Joy after sorrow,* the main character despaired because her sailor-lover impregnated her then sailed away. She explained, as a refrain, that "My belly is up and my heart is down, / and my Love is gone to Jamaica." In a manner characteristic of sailors, her lover spent freely while on shore, bought her lots of expensive presents – a beaver hat, a silken gown, a gold ring, amber bracelets, a "Holand smock," and, finally, a feather bed where he seduced her. With notable pathos, the pregnant woman remarked "If I had Icarus wings to flye, I doe so greatly mind him, / Then I would go beyond the Seas, / and seeke till I could find him…" This, then, was what was required to find a sailor once he had left: the mythical wings of Icarus. Surely that was a daunting prospect, no matter how appealing the gold ring and the featherbed. The woman went on to list all the places she would look: the Indies, the wilderness, and hollow caves. Not only was she abandoned and separated from her lover by vast distances, she had lost him to strange, wild places.[65]

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[65] L.P. *Joy after sorrow*. As the title predicts, the story ended well for the woman because her lover returned with plenty of money just in time to become a father, and then a husband. The woman explained that now "My heart is up and my belly is down, / and my Love is come from Jamaica."

We can see the connection between the sea and anxieties about distance through ballad-printers' choice of woodcuts that top ballads.[66] Many sea-faring ballads were topped with woodcuts of ships, tipping off readers that a sea story would follow.[67] [Image 10] Recruiting ballads or retellings of battles were more likely to be topped with a picture of multiple ships or of ships doing battle. [Image 13] But romantic ballads about a sailor and his sweetheart were topped with the image of a man and woman. [Image 14] If images were clues to readers about content, as historian Tessa Watt argues, then an image of a couple was a clue that the focus of the ballad was on love rather than adventure. Whenever the image of the ship was added to the image of the couple, however, the ballad would probably be about parting or suffering. [Image 15]

10. A typical woodcut topping a seafaring ballad. The male figure may indicate the king based on the ballad's title.

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[66] In general, we can conclude less from woodcuts than we would like because they tend to be more representative of a printer's resources than of the particulars of a ballad. According to Tessa Watt, "figure subjects were just part of [publishers'] stock of ornaments, along with border blocks and initial letters." But the repetition of certain figures or poses (such as a person kneeling in prayer), did alert the reader to the type of story he was buying. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety,* ch. 4, particularly 148-150.

[67] However, the flags flying from the ships may represent countries none which appear in the song, and the ships may be engaged in battle, even if the song has no battle in it. One printing of the ballad, *A True relation*, which describes a battle between an English ship and Scottish pirates, was printed with a woodcut of a ship flying flags marked with crescents. [Image 11] A ballad about a poor maid and a poor sailor could be topped with images of a well-dressed man carrying a sword and a woman who is the stereotypical image of Queen Elizabeth – curling hair, high ruff, richly ornamented skirt. This is most likely a sign that the printer already owned blocks that portrayed a wealthy couple and was not going to pay for more accurate ones. It does not mean that sailors dressed like wealthy gentlemen and courted queen-like ladies. [Image 12]

11. This ship topped a ballad about a Scottish pirate. The ship was flying flags marked with a crescent, even though there are no Muslims in the ballad. This suggests that broadside printers may have made do with the woodblocks they had on hand.

12. The two characters in this ballad were a "sea-man" and "sweet Margery." It is unlikely either of them looked like this.
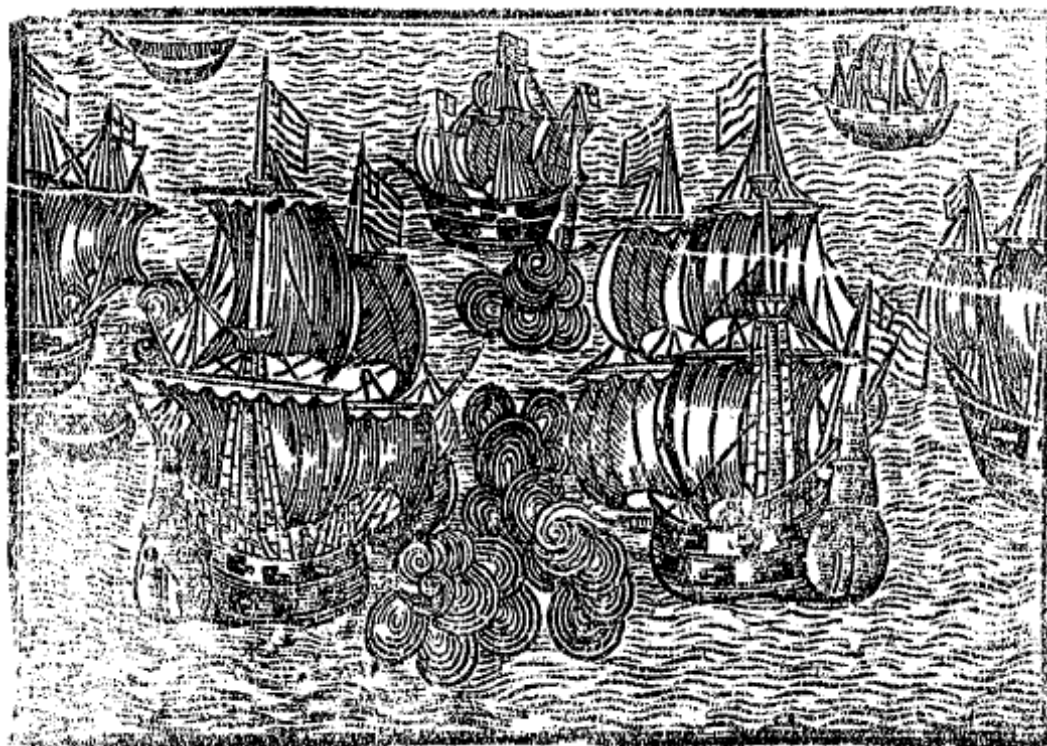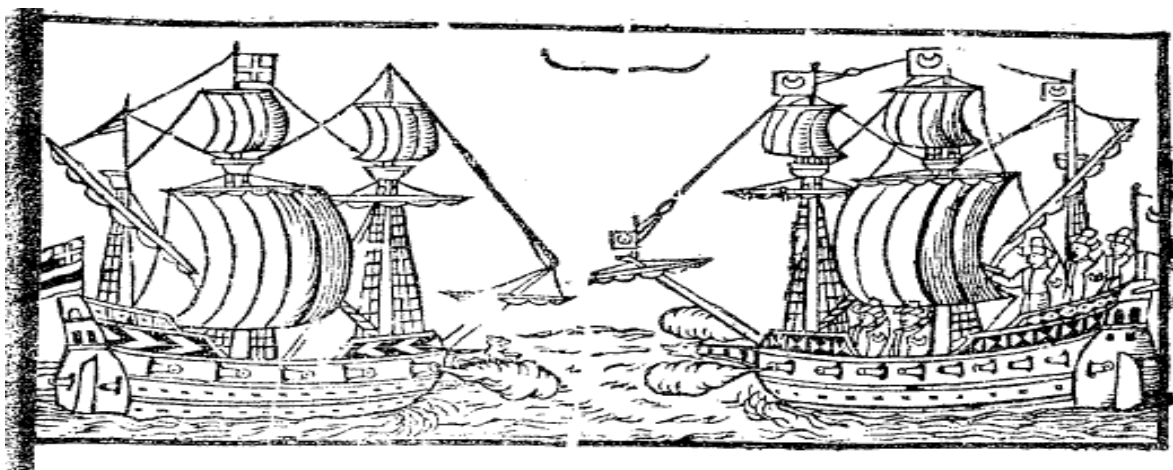
13. Printers often used scenes of ships engaged in battle on top of recruiting ballads.

14. Ballads that focused on sailors and their sweethearts often were topped with woodcuts like these.

15. The implication of these woodcuts is dire. Not only is this a ballad about lovers parted, but they may never be reunited. There is a shipwreck in their future. (The actual text of the ballad, however, does not include a shipwreck.)

While sailors seem to have accepted the possibility of being buried at sea as a fact of the seafaring life, it was particularly unsettling to landsmen. The ocean denied loved ones a body to mourn over and tend. It was restless and cold. How could a body be at peace in the ocean? In an unusual twist on the sorrowful sweetheart song, the lover in "Despair" threatened to kill himself in the sea if "Phillis" continued to rebuff him. His love agitated him and his death would give him no rest either. After drowning, he promised to haunt Phillis by whispering to her on the stormy wind. The lyrics, oddly, echo Revelation, since the lover planned to sleep at the bottom of the ocean until the end of time woke him up again.[68]

> When the Storms do arise,
> And with their proud Surges encounter the Skies,
> My Head finds a Pillow
> On the top of a Billow,
> And I look for a Grave
> Within the cold Womb of a turbulent Wave…
>
> If the Tempest do roar,
> Then Phillis alone is the Saint I implore;
> If she will not appease
> The Rage of the Seas,
> Nor calm the rough Weather,
> I'll breathe out her Name and my Life both together.[69]

Ballads often explored the idea that the drowned would be buried in the sea. That the ocean should take the place of "Tomb and Sepulchre" made death even more terrifying. An ocean burial was a sign that someone had died too far away, that the world was not as it should be.

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[68] Revelation 20: 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it…

[69] Hicks, *Wits Academy: or the Muses Delight* (1701) 170.

Taken together, love-and-parting ballads were more than emotional dialogues between overwrought women and callous men. They depicted seafaring as necessarily dangerous, even for the brave and eager. A man who was willing to go to sea must also be willing to risk his life. And no matter how indifferent to violence the male characters claimed to be, how much they longed to hear cannons and smell gunpowder; the voice of the female characters undercut their bragging. England was not Sparta, populated by women as bloodthirsty as the men. In the case of *A Dainty new ditty*, the female character even won the day. Her man gave up the sea he loved to stay safely at home. In the other ballads, the best the men could achieve after stanzas of persuasion was their sweethearts' promises to remain faithful until they returned and to pray for their safety.[70] There was no speech, no matter how eloquently king, country, honor, and duty were invoked, that could coax the anxious women to look charitably on seafaring.

Impressment

One of the most intense maritime anxieties was connected to impressments; being pressed to sea brought together all the fears that went with seafaring and the discomfort of coming to the profession against one's will. Songs about impressments often took the wife or sweetheart's point of view and were despairing. Besides pointing out potential threats to life and limb, the women also complained about the separation itself: the length of time they would be apart, the enormous distances involved, and the possibility that the sailor would fall in love with someone else.[71] Impressment ballads usually took the form

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[70] Anon., *The seamans adieu to his dear*. "Each hour for thy welfare, to God I will pray, / that he will in safety preserve / My one dearest Lover by night and by day, / whilest he on the Ocean doth serve."

[71] See also, M.P. *Saylors for my money* (London, 1630). "Into our native Country, / With wealth we doe returne: / And cheere our wiues & children, / Who for our absence mourne…" Anon. *The seamans adieu to his dear*. "But chiefly to thee (my own Dearest) I speak, / with patience my absence to bear…" Anon. *The faithful lovers last farwell* (1664) "Twas Betty that first complained, / Oh! why will you use me so, /

of a dialogue and were often very long. In the interminable *The sea-mans leave taken*,

Margery bade farewell to a newly pressed sailor in twenty-six verses.

The word "pressed" is nuanced. It may describe a landsman made to join the

navy; it may indicate generally that a man was forced to go somewhere unwillingly,

although not necessarily for military service. "Pressed" may also mean "hired and

partially paid," but that meaning was not usual for the phrase "pressed to the sea."[72] I

find in ballads, the writers used "prest to the sea" symbolically rather than precisely.

Being "pressed" was what happened when men had to go to sea and their sweethearts did

not want them to go. Being pressed carried with it the implications of danger, and forces

beyond one's control, and sorrow, and distance. It was not necessary for a song to have

twenty-six verses for a singer to learn that a man was reluctant to leave his lover, that a

long time would pass before they were together again, and, most of all, that he could do

nothing to avoid the voyage. All the song needed was the phrase "pressed to sea."

Recruiting ballads tried to convince listeners that they would enjoy being pressed.

In *The seamans adieu to his dear*, a man exhorted others to follow his example and

rejoice in being "prest to serve on the Seas." The ballad was structured as a conversation

between the sailor and a "Maid" who tried to talk him out of going "where Cannons do

roare / in the depths of the Seas to be drownd."[73] Although the sailor was able to counter

all her objections, she still voiced them, leaving listeners with the impression that going

to sea was their patriotic duty *and* incredibly dangerous.

As soon as affection is gained, / so speedily can you go, / And leave me in pyning sorrow / distressed upon the Shore; / If you do depart to Morrow / I never shall see thee more." Anon., *The true lovers joys* (London, 1694). "I am a Maid undone, / Sighing my heart is almost broke, / for my Love he is from me gone."

[72] OED

[73] Anon. *The seamans adieu to his dear*.

Shipwrecks, Battles, and the Sailing Life

Shipwrecks were another anxiety-producing feature of the maritime life that often showed up in print. Ballad form, however, was not conducive to shipwrecks stories since they often featured dialogue. Nevertheless, ballad printers included images of wrecks on top of ballads. [Image 15] Wrecks looked sensational and tipped off prospective readers that they were buying a sea story.

In romances outside of ballads, shipwrecks were a common and useful form of travel.[74] For Shakespeare, the shipwreck was the all-important plot device that could flap the unflappable, repair the irreparable, and reunite those whom God had put asunder. Shipwrecks caused Antonio's economic crisis and debt to Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. A shipwreck led to a tale of mistaken identities in *Comedy of Errors*. A shipwreck saved the island of Cyprus from the Turks in *Othello*. A shipwreck led the title character of *Pericles* to the woman who would be his wife. A shipwreck started adventures that ended with romance in *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. Shakespeare drew on two early modern anxieties in *Macbeth*, combining wrecks and witchcraft. The witches in *Macbeth* demonstrated their evil nature by sending storms to torment a sailor whose wife had insulted them. "Weary sennights nine times nine / Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine. / Though his barque cannot be lost, / Yet it shall be tempest-tossed." One of the ingredients or charms the witches had with them to carry out the spell was "a pilot's thumb, / Wrecked as homeward he did come." And if this was not unnerving enough, the witch planned to pursue the sailor to Alleppo: "But in a sieve I'll thither sail /

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[74] Robert Sandler, ed., *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare* (New Haven, 1986); Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: the development of Shakespearian comedy and romance* (New York, 1965).

And like a rat without a tail / I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do."[75] To portray just how wicked

his witches were, Shakespeare described them trying to wreck a ship, stirring up storms,

and carrying with them a thumb that ought to be on the ocean floor along with the rest of

the sailor and his ship. The thumb-less pilot died trying to fulfill the natural human

desire to go home; in contrast, the witch showed her inhumanity when she planned to sail

in a ship full of holes.

Real shipwrecks were too serious to be the subject of comedy on stage.

Shakespeare never used shipwrecks for comic effect. Viola's sorrow for her brother

preceded her gender-bending romance.[76] Likewise, *The Comedy of Errors*, one of

Shakespeare's silliest plays, opened with Egeon's painful description of his wife

fastening their infant sons to the mast of a ship while it sank to explain how he came to

be alone in the world.[77] Shipwrecks always add a somber, anxious moment to a play, no

matter how ridiculous the play later becomes.

Unlike plays, wrecks in ballads were not convenient plots devices, but usually

descriptions of English victories in sea battles along with all the defeats and failures that

preceded them. These ballads reminded readers that country and countrymen were

vulnerable even if English might and main did eventually win the day. Despite its happy

ending, *The Royal Victory* was blood-soaked: "The Battel was hot, / And bloudily fought,

/ the fire was like Rain & like Hail was y Shot, / For in this Ingagement ten thousand did

bleed / Of Flemmings, who now are Low-Dutch indeed." [78] Then with black humor, the

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[75] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* I.ii.6-9, 21-24, 26-27.

[76] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* I.ii.3-4.

[77] William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors* I.i.62-90.

[78] This ballad was reprinted several times and the different versions suggest something more about the meaningful use of woodcuts. The woodcuts show a well-dressed man with a sword and a hat with a curling

ballad described how the Dutch were repaid for stealing British fish by becoming food for the fish.[79] When the battle was over, the ballad proudly explained, a "thousand slaine bodies the Ocean ore spread…" And what caused this brutal display? "They Tortur'd our Men" and "with fire & water their Sinews they crackt." The Dutch were not the only ones destined to bleed; in fact, they bled only in retaliation. British blood had flowed just as often. In case any readers missed the threat of imprisonment in the text, a note on the ballad's bottom margin warned of "a thousand Manacles found aboard one of their Ships, which they had provided to Hand-cuff the English." Even this bombastic representation of victory was tainted with anxiety over the possibility of defeat.

plume, a scene of several ships sinking against sharp rocks while other ships look on, two men in a town gazing through a telescope at a ship in the river, and a picture of a single ship with flags marked with crescents. Such a random assortment of images seems to indicate the printer used every block he had with a ship on it regardless of the ballad's contents or the particulars of the image. But I do think we can infer a few things from this selection besides the printer's enthusiasm for woodcuts. Ballads about voyages were usually topped with a picture of a single ship. Therefore, it seems like the images of multiple ships, regardless of their behavior, was meant to indicate a sea battle. It is unclear whether the man was Dutch or English, civilian or sailor, heroic survivor or soon to be one of the fallen. Whoever he was, he was alone and looked dashing. Thus, this was a ballad about a sea battle and a story about heroic men -- no romance here! The same shipwreck woodcut topped *The faithful lovers last farwell*, but was combined with figures of a man and a woman, indicating romance. [Image 15] Even though the ballad specified the enermy was Dutch, the woodcut showed a Turkish ship, suggesting that it stood for any English enemy. [Image 16]

[79] "His fate looked grim / Twas well he could swim, / Else he that caught fishes, y fish had caught him, / they eat up our fish without Reason or Lawes, / But now they are going to pay for the Sauce." Anon., *The royal victory obtained… against the Dutch-fleet* (London, 1665).

16. These woodcuts tell us more about the printer's selection of woodblocks than they do about the ballad. Nevertheless, there was some consistency, collectively, in terms of how woodcuts were selected. Readers probably understood them like a code explaining the ballad's subject.

The Royal Victory was not the only ballad to expose the high cost of the struggle for dominance on the seas.[80] *A Lamentable Relation* described an epic fight between Dutch ship and Spanish ship, including a gory passage about the battle's aftermath: "A multitude the sea cast up, / Which all had tasted of deaths cup, / Some without heads, some wanting armes, / Some legs…"[81] In the ballad *A True relation of the life and death of Sir Andrew Barton,* Lord Howard threatened his sailors with hanging if they failed to shoot twelve score of pirates. He specifically threatened Peter Simon, the gunner, with hanging on the main mast if his shots were not deadly. But Simon had no trouble sending off "a shot / which did Sir Andrew mickle scarre, / In at his Decke it came so hot, / kill'd fifty of his men of war." Andrew Barton was one of the fallen, but ever the good leader,

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[80] See also L.P. *The honour of Bristol* (1646-1680). "Seven hours that fight continued, / and many brave men lay dead, / With purple gore, and Spanish blood, / the Sea was coloured Red: / five hundred of their men, / we there out-right did kill: / And many more were maim'd / by the Angel Gabriel."

[81] M.P. *A lamentable relation of a fearfull fight at sea* (London, 1639).

exhorted "Fight on, fight on my merry men all, / a little I am hurt yet not slaine, / Ile but lie downe and bleed a while, / and come and fight with you againe."[82] Alas, Barton did not live to fight again, and Howard brought his head to the king. According to this ballad, a sea-faring life could involve being taken prisoner, robbed, shot by enemy arrows, blown apart by enemy canon fire, or ignominious death as punishment for failure at the hands of one's own captain.[83]

While male characters in ballads looked forward to battles, the female characters focused on the likelihood of grievous wounds or death. In *The faithful lovers last farwell* Betty and John debated his decision to go fight the Dutch. Betty, not one to pull her punches, told John that if he left to go to sea, "The Battail will be very bloudy, / when all the great Guns do Roare, / Thoul't either be drowning or burning / in Crimson Waves of Gore…"[84] Likewise, in *The seaman and souldiers last farwel to their dearest jewels*, a sailor explained that he was willing to spend his "dearest blood" for his country. Given his description of a battle, he was probably given the opportunity. "In midst of skirmish hot / when blowes are dealing, / Firey balls fly about / and ships are realing: / When Cannons are roaring: / and bullets are flying, / He that will honour win / must not fear dying."[85] Finally, in *A Dainty new ditty of a saylor and his love*, a sailor explained that he wanted to encounter "the proudest Foe" in a "lusty Ship" and hear "the bouncing Cannons bark apace," while his sweetheart tried to keep him home. She seductively

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[82] A version of this line also appears in the ballad *The Famous and renowned history of the memorable but unhappy hunting on Chevy-Chase*. "Fight on, my merry Men all, / For why, my life is at an end…." But it is best known for its appearance in the ballad *Johnny Armstrong's last goodnight*, published around 1670 anonymously and later claimed by John Dryden.

[83] Anon. *A True relation of the life and death of Sir Andrew Barton, a pirate and rover on the seas* (London,1630).

[84] Anon. *The faithful lovers last farwell* (1664).

[85] Anon., *The seaman and souldiers last farwel to their dearest jewels* (London, 1665).

promised that her "bed shall be the ship wherein [he] shall sail" and her "infolded arms, /

Shall be the Port to keep thee from all harms." Once the offer of her charms failed, she

pointed out that if he stayed with her, he "shalt not need to fear th' pagans power, /

Which daily seek good Christians to devour…" She went on to promise sweet music

instead of the sound of guns, rich clothing instead of a sailors rags, and pleasant

conversation. The man perversely insisted that he liked bad food, loud noise, and tar-

stained clothes. Finally, the woman threatened to die for love and the sailor hastily

assured this was all a test of her fidelity and that he would stay on land with her forever.

Without a female perspective, the ballads were cheerfully grim. *The Boatswains

call* ended with a verse explaining that there were only two possible outcomes for a

sailor's life. "If we the Conquest gain / that brings promotion, / If we by chance are slain,

/ then the wide Ocean, / Shall be our watry Tomb / near Neptunes palace / This Boys

shall be our Doom…" Should anyone miss this somber closing note, they would still be

struck by the images that top the ballad. In the background, three ships looked on while a

third ship sank. In the foreground, the head of a drowned sailor bobs on the waves.[86]

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[86] Anon., *The Boatswains call*.

17. The head of a drowned sailor near a wrecked ship.

In *The English seamans resolution,* each verse ended with the chorus "for I came to the

Seas to Dye.' The speaker, a brave sailor, described his affinity for the seafaring life and

concluded "My joyes lies on the Maine Ocean, / and my Hammock supports my head, /

The Bottom shall be my portion / wherein my Grave shall be made …"[87]

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[87] Anon, *The English seamans resolution*.

Ballads also emphasized violence on the seas by comparing the comfortable, timid life of landsmen with that of sailors. In *Saylors for my money*, the ballad began by enjoining "Countrie men of England, / who liue at home wt ease: / And litle thinke what dangers, / Are incident o'th Seas: / Giue eare vnto the Saylor…" The ballad explained that sailors must "with noble courage, / All dangers undergoe." Dangers included enemy ships: "Our enemies approaching, When wee on sea espie, / Wee must resolue incontinent / To fight, although we die…"[88] This formula was used in several ballads, including *Neptunes raging fury or The gallant sea-mens sufferings*. ("You Gentlemen of England / That lives at home at ease, / Full little doe you think upon / The dangers of the Seas; / Give ear unto the Marriners…") This version explained how, when sailors fought England's enemies, they "fear[ed] not wounds and scars…" In *The sea-mans compass*, a lady this time praised sailors, concluding "There's none but a Sea-man / shall marry with me" because landsmen do not measure up. The ballad concluded by asking God to keep all sailors "From loss of their blood / and enemies knocks…" Lest any prospective buyers mistake this ballad for a tale of romance because of its female narrator, it is topped with two woodcuts, the first of ships engaged in a vigorous sea battle and the second of a single ship bristling with cannons.[89]

Print communicated to British readers a consistent message: the seas were full of risks. Even those who did not face the risks themselves were left at home anxiously imagining the fate of people they loved. Perhaps most striking were those ballads that encouraged men to go to sea. Even while boasting of the advantages to be gained from a sea career and promising the gratitude of a nation, they also described the hardships.

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[88] M.P. *Saylors for my money*.

[89] L.P. *The sea-mans compass*.

There were no exclusively positive depictions of seafaring in ballads. Readers could not ignore the dangers in favor of fantasizing about riches or glory. To go to sea was to embrace one's mortality. Away from home and at the mercy of cannibals, Catholics, and brutal captains, sailors' only recourse was to turn to God.

The Godly Atlantic

Fear of failure, hope of success, and dependence on others as a panacea for physical and financial disappointments were universal Atlantic experiences unaffected by theology or confessional differences. Historians of Britain have typically defined the empire as "Protestant" and reasonably so. But the Atlantic experience was not exclusively Protestant. The Atlantic experience was to cry out to God from the depths of extremity. The ocean was equally hard on everyone, Catholic, Protestant, and pagan alike.

Other historians have defined the empire as "Protestant." For David Armitage, for example, the Protestantism that was part of empire ideology was not so much theological as it was political and depended upon "a common anti-Catholicism."[90] Carla Pestana, on the other hand, asserted the existence of a larger and more positively defined Protestant influence. Britons had a world view that was uniquely Protestant and they brought it into the empire with them. It informed their interactions with foreigners; it impelled them to claim new souls for God.[91] When historians place religion in an imperial setting, it often takes on a martial quality. It was a tool of colonizers, an

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[90] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000) 66.

[91] Carla Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2009).

expression of their confidence and power. But religion in an Atlantic (Ocean) setting was neither martial nor confident. It was desperate and essential.

Moreover, Britons were not consistent in their Protestantism. Members of the Church of England, dissenters, Quakers, Catholics, and Methodists all crossed the Atlantic. They sailed at different times for different reasons. They had different financial resources and political goals. They conceived of their faith differently. But in distress they had the same reaction. Consequently, it is godliness and God-mindedness I find defining aspects of the Atlantic experience rather than Protestantism.

One of the strongest inducements against describing the Atlantic world as "Protestant" comes from that stereotype of "Protestant faith and busy ingenuity" which so embodied the British empire.[92] Alone on his island, Robinson Crusoe kept a traditional Puritan-style spiritual record of his struggles and discoveries.[93] Without any of the paraphernalia of worship, Crusoe's practice looked Puritan-like as well. He read the Bible, prayed, occasionally fasted, and catalogued God's providences. He used Friday's innocent questions as an opportunity to instruct readers in matters of faith. Nevertheless, when his adventures began Robinson Crusoe was Catholic, a convert after four years in "the Brazils."[94] Once rescued, he contemplated returning to South America to make more money, but did not want to worship as a Catholic. He was getting old: "I began to regret my having professed myself a Papist, and thought it might not be the best religion

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[92] Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York, 2002) 1.

[93] J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in Robinson Crusoe* (Baltimore, 1966) 1-22.

[94] Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe,* 29-33.

to die with."[95] This was a tepid attack, not the vigorous denouncement we might expect

from a good English Protestant after 28 years of Bible reading.

While Defoe was raised Presbyterian, he never attached Crusoe to any particular

confession. Not only did Crusoe fail to profess the teachings of a specific church, he

expressed himself about the existence of many churches with mildness and humor.

Crusoe said he taught Friday to be a Protestant, joking after the rescue of the cannibals'

prisoners that his island kingdom had three subjects each with a different religion: "My

man Friday was a Protestant, his father was a pagan and a cannibal, and the Spaniard was

a Papist. However, I allowed liberty of conscience throughout my dominions."[96] I too

would like to allow for liberty of conscience in my definition of an Atlantic ideology.

Anyone who engaged in early modern sea travel looked to God as an essential component

in understanding, and surviving the ocean.[97]

While Britons expressed their sense of God's role in the empire in many forms,

they particularly acknowledged it in hymns. While the language of hymns was both

didactic and metaphorical, for a seventeenth-century singer, it was still something more.

The imaginative connection between written word and lived experience was very strong

for many English Christians.[98] Even while some early Enlightenment thinkers and

middle-road Anglicans began to reinterpret Bible miracles as symbols rather than actual

occurrences, or were skeptical that storms and astronomical events were demonstrations

of God's favor or displeasure; there were still plenty of people who believed fervently in

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[95] Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 257-258

[96] Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 217.

[97] Elizabeth Tingle, "The Sea and Souls: Maritime Votive Practices in Counter-Reformation Brittany, 1500-1750" in *God's Bounty? The Churches and the Natural World*, Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon eds., (Woodbridge, 2010) 205-215.

[98] Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven, 2006) 123.

the truth of biblical miracles, that a miracle might even be extended to them, and that God routinely spoke through nature and other signs.[99] For those people, besides describing the Christian experience in a figurative sense, the verses of hymns were also literal and physical. God did not just send emotional storms and windy crises of faith. He troubled the waters. He turned day to night. He tossed ships as often as he tossed souls, and unscrupulous human villains were as powerless before him as human sin. One of the faith-testing storms of life might actually be a storm that tested not only faith, but skill, strength, and nerve. When they rose to sing this hymn in church, Christians asserted that they were like Jonah, not just symbolically, but literally. They were only one storm, and the grace of God, away from the belly of a whale.

When we look at the language and images of hymns, we see that a primary component of belief was a concern with providence. As they sang about the ways God's will might be manifested, singers found themselves confronted by scenes that seemed right out of a travel narrative. The spiritual journey sounded remarkably like a journey across the Atlantic. A tempest in one's soul sounded a lot like a tempest on the sea. And because providence was discerned through nature, it was not even necessary to designate between the two: a spiritual crisis might come as a storm. By examining the language of these hymns, we see how the idea of providence connected the physical to the spiritual. We see how Britons described the ideas of "the voyage" and "the waters" and how they connected these abstractions to the realities of their lives. Finally, we see the possibility of failure confronted. The hymns presented and accepted hardships as assured; and then offered, as a solution: still waters, a heavenly and earthly reward.

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[99] Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*.

Taken together, English hymns made an argument about the power of God, his mastery of the natural world, humanity's interactions with God through the natural world, and the blessings with which the faithful would eventually be rewarded. Their argument was made up of four basic parts. First, God made the waters and they are inherently violent. Second, God alone controls the waters and, thus, can speak through them. Third, people experience the waters in various ways – through fear, wonder, gratitude, and awe. And fourth, the rewards of earth and heaven are blessings produced by the waters, tamed and peaceful.

The image of God making and taming the waters was an old and consistent one. It appeared in some very early hymn collections like Thomas Sternhold's *The whole booke of Psalmes* from 1633 with its version of the 95th Psalm. "The sea and all that is therein / are his, for he them made…"[100] A version of the 29th Psalm in the same collection reiterated these ideas. "His voice doth rule the waters all / even as himselfe doth please: / He doth prepare the thunderclaps, / and governs all the Seas… The Lord was set above the clouds, / ruling the raging seas: / So shall he raigne as Lord and King / for ever and for aye."[101] Like Sternhold, authors who did not confine themselves to the text of the Psalms used these images of creation and confinement too.

Hymn writers of the eighteenth century continued to use images of creation and divine mastery in their verses, even as other aspects of the hymn changed. Isaac Watts, whose hymns were widely accepted in English churches, used them in his *Song of Praise for Creation and Providence*. "I Sing th'Almighty Power of God, / That made the

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[100] Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes*, 6.

[101] Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes*, 62-63.

Mountains rise, / That spread the flowing Seas abroad, / And built the lofty Skies."[102] In

his famous *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, Watts demonstrated some of the ways in which

hymn writing had changed when he cited Isaiah, rather than the Psalms, as the influence

for his hymn on *Strength from Heaven*. Nevertheless, the song still included the question

"Have we forgot th' Almighty Name / that form'd the Earth and Sea?"[103]

John and Charles Wesley, who represented a much more controversial brand of

spirituality than Watts', used the images too. The Wesleys worked with creation images

in a much more limited sense, however, because they focused primarily on Jesus the Son

rather than on God the Creator.[104] In John Wesley's hymn *The Attributes of God*, he

wrote "Thy parent hand, thy forming skill, / Firm fixed this universal chain… Whate'er

in earth, or sea, or sky, / Or shun or meets the wand'ring eye, / By thee was to perfection

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[102] Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs attempted in easy language for the use of children* (London, 1716) 2.

[103] Isaac Watts, *Hymns and spiritual songs. In three books.* (London, 1707) 32.

[104] The Wesleys are often cited for changing the subject matter and sensibility of English hymns in a way that made them unpopular except with fellow Methodists. Louis Benson considered that Charles Wesley's tunes could not be sung by the average singer, having "strange metres" and that his theology was "heated by the controversial spirit. Its spiritual tone was strange and unreal to the man who had not come under Methodist training. Moreover the high spiritual levels on which Charles Wesley moved were immeasurably above the average experience or even ambition." In practical terms, this meant that Wesleyan hymns used the first person, a rarity in seventeenth century hymns. Watts used "I," but in a more rhetorical style; Charles and John, on the other hand, used the first person in almost every hymn and while making intimate statements about a relationship with Jesus. This gestures at another difference in the Wesleyan hymns. Seventeenth-century hymns were based mainly on the Psalms, thus, severely limiting the extent to which they could be about Jesus. While occasionally others writers took up images like that of the slain lamb or the blood of Christ before Charles and John Wesley, they were some of the first to focus primarily on Jesus. In a randomly selected sample of 100 Wesleyan hymns, only fifteen did not mention Jesus, Jesu, Immanuel, the Redeemer, the Lamb, the Shepherd, the Savior, or the Son of God. Each Wesleyan hymn might also refer to dozens of passages of scripture from throughout the entire Bible. Singers were not performing a musical version of a few verses, a Psalm, or a Bible story; these hymns were assembled, quilt-like, from whatever pieces John or Charles thought best explained the condition of the Christian. These significant differences in the style and content made the hymns controversial and kept church-goers from becoming widely familiar with Wesleyan hymns until the end of the eighteenth century. Amidst all the difference, however, we still find some familiar themes. Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: its Development and Use in Worship* (Richmond, 1915) 257.

brought."[105] And in an unusual hymn on the 44th chapter of Isaiah, Charles Wesley allows God to speak for himself. "I am the Lord, who all Things made, / And still stretch out the Heavens alone. / I hung the Earth on empty Space, / And still in equal Poise sustain; / I make, and mar, pull down, and raise, / And lord of my Creation reign." Thus, even the Wesleys who deliberately broke most hymn-writing conventions, dutifully churned out a creation hymn or two, demonstrating that God's authorship of the natural world and the troublesome waters was a universally accepted point among English Christians.

But it was not enough for hymns to demonstrate that God had, at one time, created the world and everything in it, that he had tamed the fierce waters back in the days of void and chaos. The hymns also explained to English singers that God continued to control the waters, that only God had such a power, and that, consequently, the behavior of the waters was providential, an expression of God's will.

Providence was simultaneously a complicated, controversial aspect of English Protestantism and an accessible and flexible one. In polemical tracts, theologians argued over how God's interventions fit into a predestined world and whether these interventions could be interpreted. Some distinguished between God's secret will and his revealed will. Others wondered why a good god would choose to be author of disorder and catastrophe. Some strenuous Protestants of a Calvinist bent believed that providences were communications from the Lord especially for the elite and that, by examining these signs, the saved could receive reassurance.[106] What some people saw as providence,

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[105] John Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists*, eds. Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver Beckerlegge, vol. 7, *The Works of John Wesley* (Oxford,1983) 371.

[106] Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999) 8-18.

others railed against as belief in luck or fortune. What some saw as the hand of God, others found too insignificant to note.

A version of the 65th Psalm explored the relationship between nature and the expression of God's will: "The swelling seas thou dost asswage, / and make their streames full still: / Thou dost restraine the peoples rage, / and rule them at thy will."[107] Like this verse, many hymns transition very quickly from God's control of the natural world to God's control of people. We see it again, for example, in a hymn from a late seventeenth-century collection. "In vain the World rebellious powers, / In tumults and commotions rise, / Like troubled waters of the Sea, / That bid defiance to the Skies. / Resist not his unequal strength, / That's far above your threatning noise; / For ev'n the Seas unruly Waves, / Do calmly listen to his voice."[108] These verses showed that earthly waters were disobedient, just like earthly people were sinful. Rather than being explicit about the connection between nature and providence, they are suggestive. An observant singer might reflect that, given the commonalities these hymns imply between God's treatment of man and nature, there were lessons to be learned through nature about one's own salvation.

God did not just speak through the oceans, he punished through them as in the case of the Egyptians and the Red Sea. But even ordinary Christians might be chastised by the waters, as this hymn version of the 88th Psalm demonstrated.

> Thine anger and thy wrath likewise
> full sore on me doth lie:
> and all thy stormes against me rise
> my soule to vexe and trie….

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[107] Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes*, 120.

[108] Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns,* 49.

The furies of thy wrathful rage,
full sore upon me fall
Thy terrours eke doe not asswage,
but me oppresse withal.

All day they compasse me about,
as water at the tide:
And all at once with streames full stout
beset me on each side.[109]

The 88th Psalm, like the story of Jonah, conflated the experience of being dead with that of being under the water. The Psalm writer says "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lies hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves."[110] In this hymn, the singer took the Psalm writer's voice and also described God's direction of the waters as an affliction that put his soul to the test.

Ultimately, the emotional theme of most hymns that described a Christian's struggle with the waves was the plea for physical and spiritual deliverance. In a simple verse of a Ravenscroft hymn, the singer asks "Send downe thy hand even from above / O Lord deliver me: / Take me from waters great, from hand / of strangers make me free." The juxtaposition here of the waters with imprisoning strangers might have reminded singers that there were other dangers to be found on the waters besides those posed by the waters themselves. This verse also brought in the idea of providence, the idea that God's direct intervention was possible in a moment of danger to provide safety. A lengthy late seventeenth-century hymn reminded singers that the act of singing itself could be used to ask God for deliverance in times of trouble. "The Deeps upon each other call, / When thy loud Storms descend; / And over me thy Billows fall; / But, Lord, thou Help wilt send. /

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[109] Sternhold, *The whole booke of Psalmes*, 158.

[110] Psalms 88:6-7

For Day and Night I'll sing and pray, O God (my Life) to Thee…"[111] This song added

the extra element of explaining to singers the meaning of the activity in which they were

currently engaged. They were not merely singing, or even praising God. They were

saving their lives and souls.

Water in these hymns washed away both the physical presence of sin of earth, as

in the case of the Red Sea and the Egyptians, and the spiritual taint of sin through

baptism. Once brutal earthly washings were over, God provided water in the form of

blessings. In life, the cleansed Christian received gentle rains for his crops, quiet streams

from which to drink, and a fertile, pastoral landscape on which to live. The deserts would

be watered, the seas pacified. In death, because he had been washed by the trials of life

and the blood of Christ, he lives forever where the only water is quiet.

If the absence of an ocean is a fundamental aspect of the Christian heaven, then its

presence must be an equally necessary part of earthly life. The seas become proving

grounds, places for characters to be molded and impurities cleansed. This was illustrated

by a hymn that used the aftermath of a disaster at sea as a metaphor for earthly life.

"Why do we seek felicity, / Where 'tis not to be found; / And not, dear Lord, look up to

Thee, / Where all delights abound? / Why do we seek for Treasure here, / On this false

barren Sand, / Where nought but empty shells appear / And marks of Shipwrack stand?"

For early modern singers, the shipwreck was probably a sign of human ingenuity and

industry ended in anonymous failure. This seems a cautionary moment, reminding

Britons, in particular, that happiness would not be found in overseas exploration or the

pursuit of wealth through trade. Hymns explained that God's decision to create and

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[111] Anon. *Select hymns and anthems*, 61.

direct the waters was part of a larger plan for human salvation; the waters reminded Christians that true "felicity" was not on earth.[112]

Conclusion

Far more Britons stayed home than ever went to sea, but texts kept them connected to the ocean and by extension to their empire. Daniel Defoe initially presented *Robinson Crusoe* as a true story and readers accepted it as such. He described exciting adventures, but nothing readers could not imagine. The seas were wide and dangerous; of course someone who went out on them might be wrecked, enslaved, castaway, and chased by cannibals. Moreover, the most common forms of print echoed Defoe. The nature of these sources reinforced the sociability of the Atlantic. To think about the ocean was not the prerogative of only a select community of mariners. Ocean-mindedness was inculcated through amusing ballads, songs of praise to God, a new trendy, literary form, the novel, and popular plays. In short, it was everywhere. The sound of mingling voices in places of entertainment and places of worship confirmed the seas were dangerous.

Even without these texts, Britons still had to contend with the waters. They were all around and all through their scriptures. Without water, there was no baptism and no salvation. If God could save through water, it was no harder to believe that he could speak through water. Consequently, scripture told Britons how to look at the seas and what to expect from them: storms and wrecks filled with providential meaning.

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[112] Anon. *The second part of the weeks preparation for the sacrament*, 17.

Scripture created and confirmed Britons' greatest fears about the ocean: it was indeed filled with monsters, it could punish and unmake, the depths of the sea and the depths of hell might be one and the same. And yet there was one more way in which faith interacted with anxieties: it calmed them. Hymn singers could gain a small comfort from the verse "Small Ships there ride on mighty Waves, / And as they rise and fall, / Men sail among high Tombs, deep Graves, / Yet fear no Funeral."[113] Despite transformations, battles, storms, cannibals and an angry God, Britons went to sea. This suggests both the power of the empire's inducements -- wealth, land, opportunity – and the power of early modern faith. In the next chapter, we will examine those Britons who put their faith and their fortunes to the test in the world of Atlantic trade and seafaring.

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[113] Anon, *A Collection of Divine Hymns*, 9.

Chapter 2 – Between Wind and Water: the Atlantic maritime experience and the pursuit of information

The Marchant man doth saile on the seas,
And lye on the ship-board with little ease:
Always in doubt the rocke is neare,
how can he be merry and make good cheare?[1]

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Lloyd's Coffee House was one of the most important centers of the British merchant community.[2] The men of business who set up shop in Lloyd's arranged financing, created partnerships, offered loans and credit, and most famously provided insurance to those who worried that, without protection, trade was too risky. For some historians, the development of the insurance business marked a shift in the Atlantic world: as more captains and merchants insured ships and cargo, sea travel passed out of the hands of God and into the impartial realm of actuary tables.[3]

If, however, we consider marine insurance only in terms of the legal contracts so associated with the famous coffee house, we miss the more creative and informal strategies with which merchants attempted to manage risk. Insurance did not come of

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[1] "Between wind and water" is a nautical expression that can refer generally to the side of a ship, or more specifically to the area of the ship's side and bottom exposed when the ship rolls. During sea battles, a damaging hit was one that struck a ship between wind and water. The expression can also refer to an area of weakness.

Thomas Ravenscroft, *Deuteromelia, or the seconde part of Musicks melodie* (London, 1609) 18.

[2] Robert O. Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward, *London: A Social and Cultural History, 1550-1750,* (Cambridge, 2012) 91-93; Hugh Cockerell, *Lloyd's of London: a Portrait,* (Homewood, 1984) 9-17; Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History,* (London, 2004) ch. 6, 12; Godfrey Hodgson, *Lloyd's of London,* (London, 1984) 45-58. Chapter 4 provides a more extensive discussion of insurance and Lloyd's Coffee House.

[3] Geoffrey Clark ed. *The Appeal of Insurance,* (Toronto, 2010) 3-4, ch. 4; Geoffrey Clark, *Betting on Lives: the Culture of Life Insurance in England, 1695-1775,* (Manchester, 1999); Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution* (New York, 1982) 231-234; Robin Pearson, *Insuring the Industrial Revolution: Fire Insurance in Great Britain, 1700-1850,* (Aldershot, 2004); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Oxford, 1971) 650-654.

age in the eighteenth century. It did not spring fully formed from the profit-seeking brains of the speculators who spent their days at Lloyd's. Those who made their living through the seas had always availed themselves of the best insurance they could provide; they would continue to do so, above and beyond underwriters' policies. They called it information.

For many Atlantic Britons, information was their only insurance. Even after policies became more common, they did not replace the maritime community's insatiable thirst for detail. Any information was potentially relevant, from the location of the shipyard where a ship had been built, to the reputation of a captain, to the going prices in Boston and Charleston on particular commodities. Compared to accurate information, formal insurance was pitifully limited. It promised no safety. It repaired only finances. It helped only those who owned or invested. But accurate information could stand between anyone and potential dangers, regardless of their social position. It addressed the intangible risks that insurance could not: competence, morality, judgment. Only the benevolence of a merciful God had more value than information.

Between its value and the manner in which it spread, information should be considered an Atlantic commodity – perhaps *the* Atlantic commodity, since it made the movement and success of all other commodities possible. Any line on a map representing the movement of goods might just as well be representing the movement of information. In this way, information is connected to the maritime in the most intimate sense. A product of human agency and a response to human desires, it nevertheless moved (or failed to move) with the currents and the winds. Nor were Britons ignorant of its worth. For merchants, their fortunes depended on successful communication and

accurate assessments of the market and of the men they planned to employ.[4] Sailors and

captains were equally dependent on accurate information if they wanted to be paid and,

more importantly, if they wanted to survive. Information about the quality of a ship and

the ability of those who manned it had life-altering, life-ending implications. Britons

were indefatigable when it came to asking questioning their sources, their energy an

indication of how much they valued the information they sought. Good information is

valuable in any context. In a risky environment, it was crucial.

In the same way maps of the world designating the British empire in swaths of

color give the inflated impression of power and ascendancy, graphic representations of

Atlantic trade can give the impression of homogeneity, wealth, and strength.[5] These

images indicate that Europeans in the Atlantic world must have been successful and

dominant because they had mastered a set of routes and practices that resulted in a

profitable trade and were perpetuating the enslavement and captivity of another people.

Away from the context of slavery, the weaknesses in Atlantic travel become more

apparent, as does the diversity of Atlantic trade. This chapter specifically focuses on

Britons with more modest business interests, those not involved with any of the major

Atlantic commodities. When we examine these men and the goods they shipped, we see

cargos pieced together experimentally as merchants and their men of business tried to

figure out what would sell, where, and when.

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[4] David Hancock observes in his study of London merchants that when their "commercial networks failed them, they nearly always regarded the failure as the result of a breakdown of communication and the betrayal of a representative." David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995) 109-110.

[5] Linda Colley, *Captives*, (New York, 2002) 4-8.

I have already demonstrated in the first chapter of this dissertation that Britons shared a common language about the seas, centered to a great extent around their anxieties about the capacity of water to transform and destroy. In this chapter, I will address the physical realities of those anxieties and turn from print to sources directly from the hand of the anxious imperial Briton. Merchants did not correspond out of idle curiosity. They wrote and rewrote to colleagues so they could keep tabs on investments over which they had very little personal control. Consequently, their correspondence stands like a monument to anxiety – full of repetitive questions and multiple copies in case a first letter had been lost at sea. To an extent, historians' ability to write the history of Atlantic trade has been made possible by anxiety. Our sources are a product of their fears.

Merchants' letters and shipboard accounts reflect the same ideas about the ocean that appeared in print, but with a different tone. In ballads, the maritime was synonymous with lost love and broken hearts. In letters, the maritime meant lost ships and broken hogsheads. Business correspondence and logbooks were as prosaic as ballads were sensational. Even anxieties that merchants could present in dramatic terms, they chose not to, writing in the plainest language their fears that a ship had gone down or that a business contact was dead. Sentiment, horror, or curiosity could not be allowed to obscure the all-important transmission of accurate information. Hymn singing represented a profound, sacred sociability, the communal blending of voices before God. Hymns were like the "amen" of a prayer or the cup and the bread, a shared ritual that expressed accord and concurrence. The sociability that merchants' letters reflect was no

less significant, but far less exalted. It was neighborly, generous, inquisitive, and judgmental; it was gifts of fish and gifts of gossip.

This chapter explores Atlantic ideology from within maritime communities of merchants and sailors. What did it mean to actual seafarers to be part of the maritime world? I will examine the maritime experience, first as historians have seen it and then as early modern merchants and sailors described it. I suggest that their concerns, as they expressed them, fall into two main categories: damage and delays. I then turn to the anxiety merchants and their business partners faced over fears both real and anticipated and the ways they used and sought information to allay their fears. Here I draw heavily from the business correspondence of Thomas Moffatt, a factor working in Boston and acting as a go-between for ship captains, and merchants based in Bristol, London, and the Caribbean.

I chose Moffatt, not because he was exceptional, but because he was an ordinary man of business.   His correspondence illuminates his many connections and concerns; he worried about politics, prices, scarcity of goods, Indian uprisings, and personal reputations. He crossed the Atlantic himself and kept tabs on the comings and goings of dozens of ships and their captains. His letters are repetitious, pedantic, full of abbreviations and lists of names and goods with little context.   He did not correspond with any of the great men of the age. He was not given to literary flourishes. He represents the nuts-and-bolts of the Atlantic world. From a profusion of data we get a picture of a complicated environment, bustling with people and their property. A successful person was one who could keep track of it all.

To be sociable was one way of lessening risks inherent to the Atlantic. Men in business like Moffatt used their personal relationships to inform themselves about the honesty and abilities of potential partners. Likewise, sailors depended on the society of other sailors to help them choose able captains and avoid brutal, incompetent shipmates. I suggest this maritime sociability was a key element in the pursuit and movement of information. Finally I turn to godliness in a maritime context, particularly the moral character of merchants and sailors. While both enjoyed reputations for worldliness, they also had opportunities for reclamation. Wealth brought respectability, enabling merchants to become pillars of their communities. Sailors experienced less comfortable transitions toward godliness, usually through shipboard conversions during crises. If they lived long enough, retirement often brought amendment and the inclination to moralize over their careers and point to evidence of God's providence in their lives. In print and in imagination, the Atlantic world was maritime, anxious, sociable, and godly. These themes appear again in practice, as this chapter will demonstrate.

<u>Maritime History</u>

A maritime sensibility was the first component of early modern Atlantic culture, an element that seems self-explanatory. "Maritime" is surely something we recognize, connected as it is to massive bodies of water. And yet it is unclear historically and historiographically to whom "maritime" should apply and how it should be studied. Historically, this confusion arises because the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries represent a period of maritime transition. Sea exploration, the development of the navy, the expansion of Atlantic trade, and the growth of the seafaring profession all contributed

to two centuries of fairly rapid change that complicate the terms of analysis.[6] Was a man who sailed for a decade as much a sailor as a man who sailed for a lifetime? Was a man employed in the coastal coal trade as much a sailor as a man on a ship bound to the East Indies? Did it matter whether a merchant engaged regularly in Atlantic ventures or only on occasion? What was the relationship between sailors in the Royal Navy and other seafarers? These questions trouble contemporary historians and interested maritime Britons at the time. Sailors were proud of their skills, were paid based on their level of experience, and were eager to defend their area of expertise; merchants wanted to know the business history of their fellow merchants. At the same time, they recognized that these were fluid categories. A sailor boasting of his abilities on a large, profitable East Indiaman might find himself relegated to a fishing boat during the off-season. A merchant who only dabbled in Atlantic commodities might still be an expert in the sea trade to other parts of Europe. So who was rightfully part of the maritime community?[7]

I argue for an inclusive definition of "maritime community." Undeniably, there was a world of difference between the skills of a coastal fisherman and a sailor who labored on a vast East Indiaman. Merchants did not work in the same proximity to the seas as the captains and crews they employed and most Britons did not interact directly with the seas at all. But these subsets were constantly in flux: sailors changed ships,

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[6] These changes were more social and professional. Some historians believe that no significant technological changes in ship design and construction occurred until industrialization. While ship building remained constant, new technologies did influence navigation and the design of maps and charts. Frank C. Spooner, *Risks at Sea: Amsterdam Insurance and Maritime Europe, 1766-1780*, (Cambridge, 1983) 8-9, 13. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Admiralty began distinguishing between experienced sailors and landsmen in an attempt to avoid burdening any vessel with too many inexperienced hands and, thus, jeopardizing its safety. This policy developed as the navy became increasingly professional -- complete with bureaucracy -- and was a luxury that would not previously have been enforceable. I am dubious that the policy was enforced, even on navy ships. Stephen F. Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy during the Seven Years' War* (London, 1980) 73.

[7] Jesse Lemisch, *Jack Tar vs. John Bull: the Role of New York's Seamen in Precipitating the Revolution* (New York, 1997); Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy,* 73.

merchants changed specialties, and people moved from landlocked towns to coastal parishes or large cities, many of which were on ports. As the eighteenth century progressed, London's population grew until by 1750, 675,00 people were living in one of the busiest port cities in Europe, dominated by the sight and smell of the Thames.[8] Just to do business in London, one would have had to make one's way to one of the few bridges that crossed the river. Sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century maps of London confirm the centrality of the river port.[9] The Thames, rendered in great detail, takes up a significant portion of most London maps. Mapmakers drew it covered in ships of different sizes, implying that it was always busy as a means of travel within London as well as a place of commerce. Early modern maps give the impression that the entire city of London could function as a maritime community. To define the maritime community as only those in the navy or only those engaged in blue water sailing is to imply a degree of coherence that never existed.

I suggest that using physical experience alone to define a community is limiting and, in this case, ultimately an analytical dead end. I prefer to define this community as one of ideas and images, in addition to experiences. As the first chapter demonstrated, texts in general circulation – popular songs, religious hymns, the Book of Common Prayer – presented depictions of the seas and suggested it was the duty of all patriotic

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[8] Tudor historian John Stow described how, after the Reformation, the presence of the Thames reshaped London. The city's Catholic structures were replaced with monuments to trade: warehouses, the houses of merchants, shops, and, in one cased a Cistercian abbey was replaced with "ovens for making ship's biscuit." William J. Thoms ed.. *A Survey of London Written in the Year 1598 by John Stow*, (London, 1842), 44-45; Peter Ackroyd, *London: the biography* (New York, 2000); Paul Griffiths and Mark Jenner eds., *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2000), 2.

[9] For an overview on the presence of the sea (physically and as metaphor) in London from pre-history to the twentieth century, see Peter Ackroyd, *London*, 6-18. For the shifting patterns of water usage in London and the symbolism of urban water, see Mark S.R. Jenner, "From conduit to community to commercial network? Water in London, 1500-1725" in Paul Griffiths and Mark S.R. Jenner, *Londonopolis* (Manchester, 2000) ch. 12.

Englishmen and good Christians to think about them, either by aiding poor victims, supporting brave sailors, or grappling metaphorically with the storm-like wrath of God and the healing waters of salvation. But if ideas and images were insufficient to create a loosely-knit community of common knowledge and common inclinations, there was also the presence of the sea itself, never that far off. There was a sky full of sea birds, a network of canals carrying goods to the coast, a steady trickle of young men making their way to sea or home again, storms coming in from the North Sea or the English Channel, swelling port cities like London and Liverpool, and all of the foods and goods not produced in England to remind people about the presence of the seas.

18. London, 1657
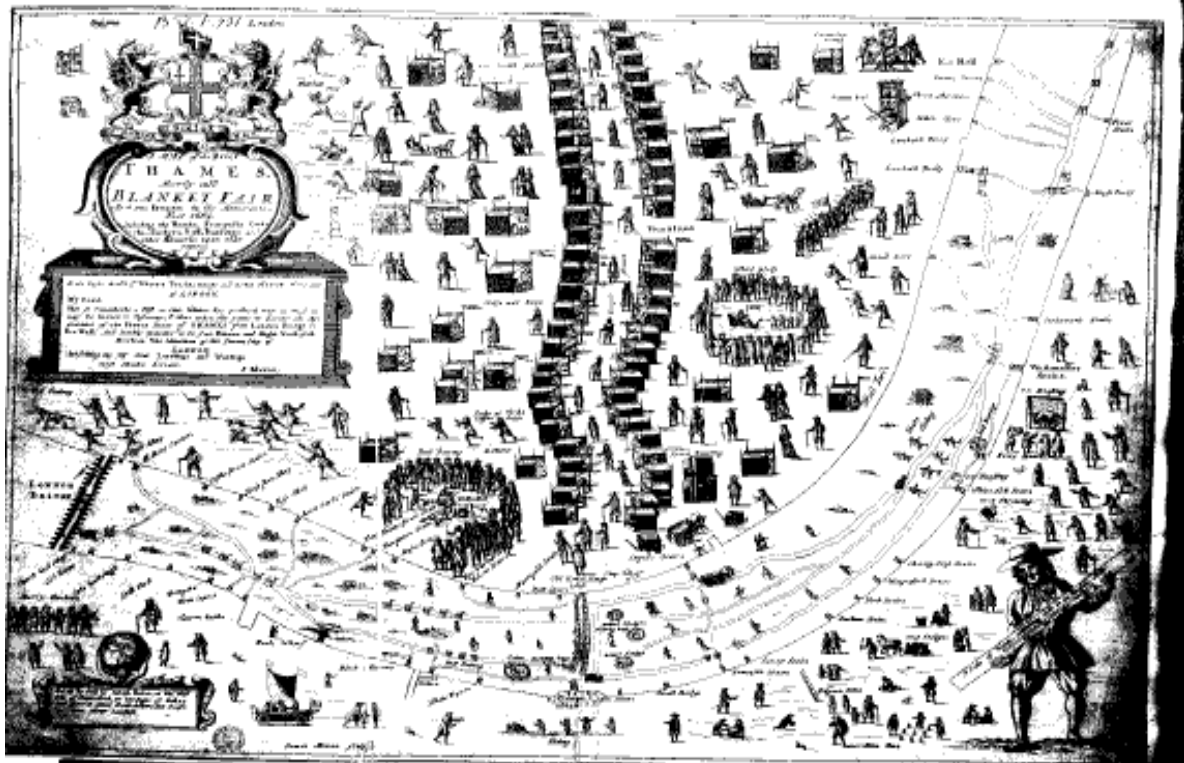
19. London, 1684

20. London, 1790

Historiographically, "maritime" is also a problematic label because it has been applied in such disparate ways. Traditionally, maritime historians have favored specificity, preferring to focus only on select communities like the navy or East Indiamen and excluding the coastal trades.[10] Similarly, maritime history has been dominated by technical specialists who seemed to revel in the complexities of sailing and ship building.[11] The field has also appealed strongly to antiquarians and amateur historians who pride themselves on the depth and specificity of their knowledge, as well as to aficionados of military history who are interested in the maneuvers, the parries-and-thrusts of battles at sea, as well as in biography, and -- deadliest of all – naval policy. [12]

But maritime history's strong and enduring popular following has also had the affect of pushing the field to the opposite extreme. Existing simultaneously with the minutia of sails and rigging are sweeping assertions about a timeless maritime culture, the eternal romance of the sea, and the nature of the sailor.[13] This leaves us with a strange,

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[10] Jeremy Black and Philip Woodfine eds., *The British Navy and the Use of Naval Power in the Eighteenth Century,*(Leicester, 1988); Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars,* (Leicester, 1983); N.A.M. Rodger, *The Admiralty*, (Lavenham, 1979).

[11] Charles Desmond, *Wooden Ship-Building* (Lanham, 1998); Andrew Murray, *Ship Building in Iron and Wood* (Edinburgh, 1863); A.J. Hoving, *Nicolaes Witsen and Shipbuilding in the Dutch Golden Age* (2012); David Davies, *Nelson's Navy: English Fighting Ships, 1793-1815* (Mechanicsburg, 1996); Rex Hickox, *All You Wanted to Know about the 18th Century Royal Navy* (Bentonville, 2005); Edward Archibald, *The Wooden Fighting ship in the Royual Navy* (London, 1968).

[12] Duncan Crewe, *Yellow Jack and the Worm,* (Liverpool, 1993); Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy*; Clive Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State in the 18th century*, (Woodbridge, 2004).

[13] John Laffin, *Jack Tar: the Story of the British Sailor* (London, 1969); J.D. McClatchy ed., *Poems of the Sea* (New York, 2001), 11 (We know "that all of us originally emerged from the sea. That fact may in part account for our abiding fascination with it, our longing to return there, whether to sail the main or merely contemplate its restless enormity… Like our bodies, the globe itself is mostly water, the ocean river of time circling, sweeping us towards our beginning and our end… Anonymous ballads and riddles, prayers and chanteys attest to the ancient effort to placate the sea's power. Nothing more mysterious – so huge and unpredictable, placid and ferocious, nurturing and destructive – has ever appeared before our eyes...."); Myfanwy Piper ed., *Sea Poems*, (London, 1944) v ("The sea is a playmate apt to turn nasty; it is alluring; it is hostile; it is indifferent; it is treacherous; human attributes that hang over from the time when it w as a fighting ground for the gods…"); *Thalatta: Book for the Sea-Side*, (Boston, 1853) 4-5 ("I greet thee, thou Ocean eternal!").

patchwork history: at times dashing; at times ponderous and unreadably technical; and at times populated by reenactors dressed in eighteenth-century clothes singing nineteenth-century shanties on seventeenth-century ships. This combination of data-collecting for data's sake and lively, costumed public history has served to ghettoize maritime history. It has been a field with a devoted following but without a critical framework or greater analytical goal.[14]

The study of merchants makes for a particularly telling example of the relationship between historians and the maritime. Before 1970, books about merchants were one of the most common forms of maritime history. They were either biographically focused or recounted the history of particular towns through the actions of a small merchant elite. Particular concerns included the growth and decline of personal fortunes, the output of ship yards, and ship tonnage.[15] In 1995, David Hancock placed those merchants on a far grander stage. They were no longer men from Boston or Bristol with a quarter interest in the 700 ton *Sallee*. They were citizens of the world with global interests. By framing his book in these terms, Hancock did two things. He appropriately represented the scope of merchant ambition and influence and he legitimized the subject. His book was neither parochial nor popular. Several scholarly works on merchants have followed it, all placing merchants in significant, but non-maritime, settings: they were

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[14] This is not to suggest that there is no role for the mechanics of seafaring. Anyone with a professional or personal stake in the seas had real incentives to concern themselves with their technical, pedantic side. Indeed, one imagines an eighteenth-century merchant finding more to interest him in the 1909 *History of New York Ship Yards* or in 1959's *The Salmon King of Oregon* than in, for example, 2009's *Soundings in Atlantic History*. Technical minutia does not have to obscure the more interesting and historically significant ideas and experiences of our subjects; it was a fundamental part of the ideas and experiences of our subjects. They were technical people. John B. Hattendorf, "Maritime History Today" *Perspectives* February 2012; Bernard Bailyn, ed., *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830* (Cambridge, 2009); John Morrison, *The History of New York Ship Yards* (New York, 1909); Gordon Dodds, *The Salmon King of Oregon* (Durham, 1959).

[15] See Appendix #2

patrons of the arts, political participants, social architects all while amassing personal fortunes and creating dynastic business alliances for their children.[16] And yet overseas merchants were every bit as connected to the maritime world as ship captains and sailors. They had offices and warehouses along the docks. They were friends with other overseas merchants. They gave money to causes associated with seafaring. Their correspondence was saturated with queries about ships, captains, weather reports, and the going rates for certain commodities. They were no less aware of the practical, physical experience of seafaring than sailors and ship captains. The maritime component has been downplayed in scholarly works on merchants, enabling them to go on to play a significant role in the field of Atlantic history.[17] Sailors retain their connections to the maritime and are interesting only to ideologues, popular historians, and those scholars who include them in studies of the poor and itinerant.[18]

More recently, maritime history has taken an analytical turn and has been brought to serve a variety of fields: gender, race, and the development of class, in particular.[19]

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[16] Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, chs. 9-10.

[17] Hancock, for instance, is interested in the logistics of making trade work: he examines the networks of people and the procedures that had to be in place for a voyage to be successful and for a business venture to make a profit. But despite some discussion of the length of voyages and the necessity of re-provisioning ships, *Citizens of the World* is a very dry book. Hancock demonstrates that these eighteenth-century merchants were men of significance, but does not connect them to the environment that made their ascent possible. They might just as well have made their fortunes from goods carried by camels or on covered wagons. The problems of distance and the need for personal networks would remain the same. Hancock mentions that keeping ships "full and under sail" could be a "logistical nightmare," (particularly regarding military contracts), but spends little time reflecting on why ships were any more nightmarish than any other form of trade and travel. Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 83.

[18] Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: the culture of mobility and the working poor in early modern England* (Chicago, 2006); A.L. Beier, *Masterless Men; the vagrancy problem in England, 1560-1640* (London, 1985) 93-95.

[19] Marcus Rediker has been instrumental in situating maritime history in a more analytical context, although the flamboyance of his Marxism may serve to undercut his rehabilitation of the field. Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: merchant seamen, pirates, and the Anglo-American maritime world, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, 1987); W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American seamen in the age of sail* (Cambridge, 1997); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed*

Even more significantly, Atlantic history has given maritime history a critical *raison d'être* and has shifted the field away from the particulars of military encounters and the engineering of ships to questions about community building and identify formation.[20] Simultaneously, however, a surge in general interest has loaded the shelves of bookstores with books on maritime history. We are left, therefore, with a field that is still strongly divided between an academic Atlantic history and a popular maritime history.

It is time to reassess maritime history. Seafaring was simultaneously exotic and mundane, a dangerous, provocative, anxiety-inducing part of ordinary everyday life. But the complexity and fundamental nature of the maritime has been subsumed by antiquarians' interest in naval life and technology, or the Victorians' romance with the past, or mid-twentieth-century historians' patriotism and pride in the aftermath of the war.[21] In the hands of popular historians it has become positively gothic – all rum, sodomy, and the lash. Consequently, maritime history is badly distorted, stretched as it is

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Hydra: sailors, slaves, commoners, and the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic (Boston, 2000); Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England women and the whalefishery, 1720-1870* (Chapel Hill, 2000); David Cordingly, *Women sailors and sailors' women: an untold maritime history* (New York, 2001); Marcus Rediker, *Villains of all Nations: Atlantic pirates in the golden age* (Boston, 2004); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: a human history* (London, 2007).

[20] David Cressy, *Coming Over: migration and communication between England and New England in the seventeenth century* (Cambridge, 1987); Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: the peopling of British North America* (New York, 2012).

[21] H.M. Tomlinson mulled over the significance of the maritime in the forward to sailor Edward Coxere's journal, edited in 1946. "A casual glance might see in this book no more than something slight, accidental, and curious, for the attention of readers of a special kind. Old snuffboxes have the same attraction for others. It might be thought to have no bearings on things as they are." But Tomlinson was proud to discover unexpected relevance. "Coxere was a character. He was the sort of man, smelling of his trade, that Whitman was hearty about. We have been thankful but recently for seamen of his very stamp… But for men of Coxere's kind, America and England would not be today what they are…" Ironically, assertions like Tomlinson's – both in tone and substance – have done much to create for maritime history a reputation of irrelevance. The stories of sailors, who Tomlinson meant to celebrate, now live in that part of the library where nobody goes, on shelves to which no new books are added. E.H.W. Meyerstein ed., *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere: a relation of the several adventures by sea with the dangers, difficulties and hardships I met for several years as also the deliverances and Escapes through them for which I have cause to give the glory to God for ever* (New York, 1946) xi.

between the pedants and the pirates. [22] We must develop a viable maritime history that is
neither stultifying nor salacious by allowing the field to become the sum of *all* of its
parts.

      Several historians have made a call for an Atlantic history that is more mindful of
the Atlantic, but what would such a history look like?[23] For N.A.M. Rodger, one of the
most consistent proponents of sea-mindedness, restoring the ocean to its rightful place in
the middle of the Atlantic world provides us with a better understanding of imperial
expansion and the dynamics of power between European countries and their colonial
possessions. The limits and liabilities of pre-modern navigation and mapmaking were
factors around which empire-builders had to work, from the Vikings to the Portuguese
navigators of the Renaissance to Victorian Britons. Currents, winds, trade routes, and
inadequate charts were all potential strengths or obstacles that might affect everything
from diplomatic strategy to the laws governing trade.[24] By contrast, Alison Games has

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[22] See for example David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: the romance and the reality of life among the pirates* (San Diego, 1995); Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (New York, 2003); Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: being the true and surprising story of the Caribbean pirates and the man who brought them down* (Orlando, 2008); Ed Kritzler, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean: how a generation of swashbuckling Jews carved out an empire in the new world in their quest for treasure, religious freedom – and revenge* (New York, 2008); Donald Shomette, *Pirates on the Chesapeake: being a true history of pirates, picaroons, and raiders on Chesapeake Bay, 1610-1807* (Centreville, 2008); Richard Sanders, *If a Pirate I Must Be: the true story of Black Bart, king of the Caribbean Pirates* (New York, 2009); George Choundas, *The Pirate Primer: mastering the language of swashbucklers and rogues* (Cincinnati, 2010); Mark P. Donnelly, *Pirates of Maryland: plunder and high adventure in the Chesapeake Bay* (Mechanicsburg, 2012); David Cordingly, *Pirate Hunter of the Caribbean: the adventurous life of Captain Woodes Rogers* (New York, 2012); etc. I have only surveyed popular *history* books. A more cursory examination of other genres suggests that publishers believe pirates to hold nearly universal appeal.

[23] N.A.M. Rodger, "Atlantic Seafaring," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, eds. Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71-86; Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006), 741-757.

[24] Rodger, "Atlantic Seafaring," 75-84.

focused less on the ocean as an international influence and more on the ocean as a space, specifically the space on which the drama of human migration was enacted.[25]

Many of these scholarly efforts to integrate "maritime" and "Atlantic" seem troubled by the same problem: an uneasiness with the relationship between the two categories. While the maritime world and the Atlantic world clearly overlap, they have never corresponded perfectly, either geographically or conceptually. The word "Atlantic" itself illuminates this challenge. The "Atlantic world" that historians imagine does not seem to have existed, at least in those terms, for the early modern Britons who were actively engaged in it. Instances of "Atlantic" are few in texts produced by the British maritime community. Instead, it was a scholar's word, appearing in works on geography, politics, history, and in poetry and the master plans of empire-builders.[26] It is not completely absent from printed texts for merchants or sailors, but the vague "sea" is much more common. Accounts by sailors rarely specify oceans by name. Instead, they wrote of passages between one port and the next or of the particular trade in which they were engaged. And for maritime historians, the specificity they so emphasize seems to have mattered far less to early modern Britons. They valued the skills and knowledge that came with experience. They prized technical knowledge. But when it came down to the essential nature of the world itself, each sea flowed into every other sea, every sailor

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[25] Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the Engilsh Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 1999); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford, 2008).

[26] A keyword search of the database Early English Books Online turns up 460 records that use the word "Atlantic." In contrast, a keyword search of "sea" produces 18,886 records. A search for "Atlantic" in the database Eighteenth Century Collections Online reveals 8041 uses of the word "Atlantic" as opposed to 115,034 uses of the word "sea." "Atlantic" appears most commonly in works like: George Abbot, *A brief description of the whole world*, (London, 1599); Joseph Hall, *The discovery of a new world world* (London, 1613); Edward Waterhouse, *A declaration of the state of the colony and affairs in Virginia* (London, 1622); Henry Gellibrand, *A discourse mathematical on the variation of the magneticall needle* (London, 1635); Nathanael Richards, *The tragedy of Messalina* (London, 1640); Joseph Beaumont, *Psyche, or Loves mysterie in XX cantos* (London, 1648); etc.

might one day sail some place else on a different kind of ship or cease to sail at all, and every merchant might suddenly engage in a new trade across a different ocean on the other side of the world. "Maritime" is a characteristic of the Atlantic world, but anyone or anything "maritime" cannot be considered part of the Atlantic world alone.

Perhaps what remains to be written is an integrated Atlantic history that takes into account the ocean's multiplicity of roles. It was a physical force making itself felt on the bodies of the people who crossed it. It was an imaginary world loaded with traditional and spiritual symbolism that worked forcibly on the minds of the people who contended with it. It was a chess board on which a political battle was played out. It was a stage for human interaction and emotion. It was a place and an experience and an idea.

Reinserting the ocean into the Atlantic means reintegrating and restoring to their cultural context both the technical side and the experience of seafaring. There is a need, albeit a modest one, for rigging. Sailors have the same analytic potential as merchants and were far more numerous, although they have yet to receive the same degree of scholarly contemplation. Atlantic historians should embrace the maritime and, in turn, maritime historians should embrace the Atlantic. Maritime history frequently addresses the extent to which seafaring created a closed community. Historians cite examples of landsmen scorning sailors' speech as an incomprehensible cant, or point out that distinctive dress and a rolling gait made sailors seem part of a separate world.[27] I suggest the separateness of that world has been vastly overstated. Seafaring did create exclusive bonds and present unique experiences, but Britain was not so large, nor the seas so

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[27] Laffin, *Jack Tar,* 1-18; Lemisch, *Jack Tar vs. John Bull*, 3-9.

distant, that the world of sailors could be fully separate. They were oddities perhaps, but familiar oddities: oddities who belonged.[28]

This is not a call for correction just for correction's sake; the value of a balanced, fully-realized maritime history is greater than the field itself. Nor should maritime history be reshaped into Atlantic history; it should do the reshaping. It is tempting to spot the fingerprints of the ocean everywhere and to write the kind of underdog history where a little known people or commodity or, in this case, chart or trade route actually altered the course of European history.[29] I suggest, however, the impact of the ocean was actually far greater than, say, a straight-forward connection between treaty-making and map-making. The maritime – the savage, tedious, technical, deadly, abstract, physical, spiritual, nerve-wracking, mercantile maritime – shaped common ideas and culture in the Atlantic world. The ocean was the Atlantic world's defining feature; it was the experience everyone shared; and the ideas about it were commonly held, rooted as they were in scripture and popular print. "Atlantic" has long been a useful label for describing Anglo-American phenomena; once the ocean is restored to its place in the culture of that Anglo-American world, however, "Atlantic" becomes a truly meaningful category.

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[28] Laffin, *Jack Tar*, 1-3. Sailor Edward Barlow wrote about his homecoming "So the next day being Sunday, I went to church in a good suit of clothes, which lay me in at £15: and at church I was saluted and welcomed home by many of our neighbours, being much wondered at to see me so brave, and I am sure I was more looked at by many than they looked or gave ear to what the minister taught, everyone calling me Master Barlow… taking me, I believe, to be the owner of the greatest ship in the river of Thames." Cynically, Barlow reflected that the clothes made all the difference and that if they had seen him in his usual attire "they would sooner have asked what beggar or what gaol-bird I had been, or from what prison I had come out of." "Edward Barlow: Returning to his Native Village" in David Booy ed., *Personal Disclosures: an Anthology of Self-writings from the Seventeenth Century* (Aldershot, 2002) 216-219. Even the inland parish of Myddle had its own exotic, yet familiar, sailor: Vincent, the son of Thomas Jukes. Vincent became a sailor, was captured by the Turks, "became a Turk," escaped to England, then bought a new suit of clothes and a horse and came home again. "He went after to sea again, and was heard of no more." David Hey ed., Richard Gough, *The History of Myddle* (New York, 1981) 115.

[29] For example: "This book will show how a single institution, the British navy, built the modern global system, which is *our* system, for better or worse." Arthur Herman, *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World*, (New York, 2004).

Delay and Damage

For many Britons, ocean-mindedness took the form of awareness – whether on land or sea -- of the difficulties the seas could present and their attempts to compensate for those difficulties. Although the number and variety of problems were endless, I focus here on two of the most common: delays and damage. Delays were not all caused by the ocean. Some captains deliberately chose to delay, while human error caused other holdups. But many were ocean related, either directly or indirectly, as captains waited on problems as immediate as the weather or as distant as information from a ship not yet arrived.[30] It was ideal from a financial perspective to sail with a hold as full as possible, with a full complement of provisions and supplies, and with any necessary business completed. Some captains lingered, hoping it would ultimately be to their advantage to do so. But speed was of the essence also, and the ocean could not be counted on to cooperate. When choosing to wait, captains and merchants had to balance their desire for the largest profits with their desire for rapid turn around with the ocean variable – would the winds and weather and currents cooperate? Some delays were not of their own making: captains had been specifically charged to collect a debt or load a particular cargo, but the goods or money were delayed at sea, overland shipments were held up and the ship still sat empty, legal problems prevented departure, or bad weather kept the ships

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[30] Perhaps a useful comparison is to a contemporary airport, where a flight from Dallas may be delayed because of bad weather in Portland. A perfectly straightforward voyage from Boston to London in clear spring weather might end up delayed because the necessary goods were still sitting on a dock in Barbardos. Although it is obvious, it bears repeating that there was no way to go any faster – not to deplore the privations of pre-modern life, but to acknowledge that the unknown but unavoidable ocean voyage had always to factor into maritime Britons' thoughts. An ocean voyage would take as long as it took. Frank Spooner, *Risks at Sea*, 6-7.

confined to a harbor. Ultimately, if a voyage was delayed too long, a captain might have to decide whether or not to sail during the wrong season when conditions were unsafe.[31]

The causes of damage were usually more straightforward: a rough crossing and exposure to the elements took their toll on ships and the cargo they carried. It was only when human actions were involved that damage became more complicated. Did the hungry crew, kept on short rations, break into a load of bread? Had cargo been mishandled, and thus broken? Had a ship been damaged or destroyed completely because of incompetence?

Delays

From the perspective of captains or sailors, delays at sea meant more time before they would be paid and, more critically if at sea, that their provisions might run out or spoil.[32] In the case of sailor Samuel Kelly, he worried about a food shortage which he brought to the captain's attention. The crew was put on emergency rations, while the passengers consumed fresh pork and fowl from their private stock. One of the officers had purchased a barrel of salted mackerel for his own consumption, but when the barrel

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[31] Frank Spooner, *Risks at Sea*, 12.

[32] It was not a scandal but a foregone conclusion that captains, officers, and paying passengers were supposed to live and dine in comparative comfort while sailors made do with squalor. Passengers also brought their own goods on board which, for long voyages on large, well-appointed ships, might include pets, furniture, and the equipment needed to keep a person of fashion looking his or her best, along with a valet or maid and other servants. Captains and passengers provided their own food, bringing on board live animals – usually goats, pigs, and hens – to provide milk and meat over the course of the voyage. For example, Mr. Peter Verstille of Wethersfield, Connecticut spent a significant sum to supply himself on a voyage to London. (Verstille had a wife and children, but does not mention if they accompanied him.) Among the items he purchased were almost £5 worth of beef, £1 worth of tongue, two dozen bottles of Madeira, 1 loaf of sugar, 4 gallons of rum, 6 ropes of onions, butter, and two cheeses for a total of £40.9.2 He also gave another £4.0.11 to the captain to purchase the rest of the provisions he would need. HL, MSS HM175, Diary 1768-1773, 4.

was opened, the contents were "rotten with age." The fish was consequently given to the crew who ate it with rice and bread.[33]

On land, delays led to idleness; captains feared with good reason that while their ships waited to sail, their unoccupied crews were running wild. After a ship arrived, months might pass before it was ready to sail again depending on the type of ship and the business in which it was engaged. This lag time between trips provided the opportunity for sailors to make trouble, desert, or waste their wages. An abstemious man, Kelly also deplored the effect of extended shore leave on other crewmen. After arriving in Charleston in March of 1782, he did not sail again until May. While he spent his time on shore observing the climate, plants, animals, and political situation in Charleston, Kelly commented disapprovingly on the activities of his fellow sailors. He was particularly disgusted by a group who became so intoxicated they took the valuable watches they had just purchased with their share of prize money and toasted them over the fire in frying pans for the amusement of hearing them tick.[34] Similarly, he waited in Nassau for seven months in 1784, and in 1785 waited seventeen weeks in Florida before his ship sailed again for England.[35]

The absence of crew members particularly troubled captains trying to plan a voyage. How many hands did they have? How many did they need to hire? The number was constantly in flux dince sailors vanished for the pleasures of land or signed on with

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[33] Crosbie Garstin ed., *Samuel Kelly: an eighteenth century seaman whose days have been few and evil, to which is added remarks, etc., on places he visited during his pilgrimage in this wilderness* (New York, 1925), 123-124.

[34] He also remarked that "sailors when idle are generally plotting mischief." Kelly's frequent moral assessments of his crewmates and profession were probably due to the fact that he energetically embraced Christianity at the end of his career and then wrote his memoir through that lens and with a certain amount of regret. Garstin.,*Samuel Kelly,* 54, 119.

[35] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 116, 123.

crews that promised more money or a better destination.[36] If a voyage was only halfway completed, sailors were contractually obligated to finish their term of service. But if the ship was back in its home port, sailors became essentially free agents, able to seek out preferable employment. Deserting sailors did not just aggravate their captain, but their fellow crewmembers as well, as the green fourteen year old Kelly had learned to his cost. In his memoir, he wrote of his arrival in Barbardos: "…one of our seamen taking the advantage of my simplicity borrowed a great part of my pocket-money under false pretences, and on his going on shore on liberty never returned to the ship…"[37] Captains were thus kept busy with prosecutions and recruitment.

For merchants, delays meant potential changes in the market, possibly in their favor, possibly against them and whatever goods they chose to ship. A ship delayed too long might arrive at a season when the goods it carried were no longer useful. Boston factor Thomas Moffatt and his secretary T. Jackson kept the Bristol merchants who employed them appraised on the constantly shifting markets in North America and London. But despite their diligence, it was difficult to compensate for the length of the sea voyage. On March 16, 1714, Jackson wrote to Charles Chauncey that, according to fellow merchant John Angier, the market for hops was not as good as it had been and that incoming shipments of hops might be sent out to the country where they would fetch a better price than in London.[38] When Captain Thomas Morey arrived in Salem and tried to sell his cargo, he refused several offers because he thought they were too low. Jackson tried to help him by advising him that "if he cold get £1150 for it to take it…" After

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[36] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 68.

[37] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 22-23.

[38] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 14.

prolonged negotiations, a gentlemen in Salem offered Morey £1100 and Jackson told him

to accept, writing that it

> was as much as I cold sell for here and I thought it would be more [in
> your] Interest to take… the offer… then to bring the goods up here… if
> they had been suitable I cold have sold them for 20 perCt more… and for
> [that] Reason will give the Capt invoice of [what] goods will suite either
> in the spring or fall…[39]

Morey's difficulties were typical examples of how complex and uncertain

Atlantic deal-making could be. Each party represented other parties with different

financial interests and investments at stake. Salem was probably not the best market for

Morey's cargo, but it was convenient. Even if Morey had abandoned the convenience of

Salem and tried for a higher price in Boston, there was no guarantee he would get it and

his return trip would be delayed even further, possibly at his expense. While advising

him on all of these factors, Jackson was also trying to protect his own interests. He

recognized that Boston was the better market, but that he could not sell what Morey had

to offer and did not want to be burdened with that problem. Most importantly, he

planned to address the problem by informing the captain about what goods would

probably sell the following year.[40]

On the 10th of August, Moffatt wrote to his clients that of their cargo, he had

disposed of the earthenware, sheloones, cantalloones, bayses, herseys, pennystones, short

pipes, checks, yealware, stone, wool cards, and druggetts. But he was unable to do

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[39] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 18.

[40] When Jackson wrote that he could have sold the goods for more if they had been "suitable," he probably meant if they had been of the right quality. Merchants and captains often ran into trouble by shipping the wrong type of a certain good. In the case of cloth, for example, there was little market for the highest quality materials and the finest weaves. Coarser cloth was more salable, so even though it was worth less, merchants could find ready buyers. Finer cloth, worth more, sat in ships' holds and warehouses unwanted. Jackson was trying to tip Morey off by providing a list of the goods that would suit the colonial lifestyle and climate, and that might be in short supply during the coming fall and spring.

anything with the grindstones, paving stones, biscuit, lead, shot, rugs, frize, rigging, or glass. Moffatt thought the reason for this was that "there has been such vast quantities of each sort imported this spring and summer they'l fetch no price at psent."[41] Moffatt's clients had missed the window when their goods were desirable and now those goods were going to sit, possibly for months, in a warehouse that would be better and more profitably filled with new goods currently fetching a high price. A few weeks later he wrote to Nathaniel Webb, an Antigua merchant, that the market had shifted so that "very few goods from England will fetch money," but he recommended "cantaloons shelloones… with some sorts of haberdashery as pins needles buttons mohair ivory and horn combes with cheap rugs and blankets."[42] (Even sailors noticed when the market changed. Sailor Joseph Banfield complained that there was no market for a smuggled cargo of New England rum in Falmouth and was obliged to get rid of the remainder of the rum in Guernsey and then Lisbon.)[43]

Knowing home markets intimately, merchants also had decided notions about what they wanted to import, but were often unable to get the goods they demanded.[44] The clients Moffatt represented knew there was a voracious need for turpentine – probably due to London and Bristol's docks and shipbuilders – but Moffatt could not get it for them, no matter how many letters they wrote. In this case, the merchants had cause

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[41] "Bayses" was probably baize, a type of coarse cloth used for linings, curtains, and covers. "Pennystones" probably referred to woolen cloth used for garment linings, but may have referred to iron ore or paving stones made of sandstone. Frize" was a kind of coarse woolen cloth, usually made in Ireland. OED; NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 31-32.

[42] Moffatt consistently gave his clients advice of this sort, recommending that they send small domestic novelty items rather than food or luxuries. NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 36.

[43] HL, MSS HM 57345, Memoirs of Joseph Banfield, not before 1796, 2.

[44] Moffatt wrote "I am getting wt goods I can to load Capt. Peare home butt goods is very scare and dear… ye countrey people are so busie about Harvest yt they have not time to bring yr goods in for a market or to buy servts…" NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 41.

to be anxious, not over their own judgment which was demonstrably sound, but over their ability to take advantage of what ought to be a sure thing. On March 17, 1714, Jackson wrote to John Angier that he wanted to find 40 or 50 barrels of turpentine, but it was "not to be got here because it is the wrong season, the right season being in June."[45] Another letter written on the 17th enquired after prices on sugars, indigo and fustick, then added "but here is none of these species to be had…" Jackson admitted "Trade is but dull and little money stirring at present, but I hope it will be other wise in a little time…"[46] A day later, Jackson wrote Mr. William Gibberd that Bristol gentlemen hoped to purchase turpentine but "there is not a vessel bound for Bristol and if there was there is not turpentine to be bought, being the wrong season."[47]

In some cases, cargo was available, the market was good, but ships bound to the proper destinations were not to be had. In July 1714, Moffatt wrote to connections in London that he was planning to send Captain Pearce home "directly" because the price of fish was up. (Presumably Pearce's ship was loaded with fish.) He also explained that there was a bottleneck in the flow of goods because "all the Bristol shipps was gone from hence… Capts. Curtis, Brisco and Pennery all Loaden home and Capt. Attwod and Capt. Jenkins loading fish at Marble Head and Capt. Morey and Capt. Portlock gone to… Cape Ann…"[48] As far as merchants were concerned, one of the biggest problem with ships was that they were never where they needed to be.

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[45] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 15.

[46] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 15-16.

[47] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 18.

[48] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 39.

Sometimes the interests of all parties involved conflicted with each other. When June and turpentine season arrived, Jackson wrote Angier that he could, after many months, finally ship him the barrels he wanted.[49] Unfortunately, added Jackson, Angier wanted the goods to go via Captain Jenkins who, in turn, wanted to sail with a full hold. The turpentine would not fill the ship completely, and so Jenkins was waiting until Jackson could "Compleat the Cargo, which I shall Endeaver for to do in good fish."[50] As if warning Angier not to get his hopes up, Jackson went on to describe how Jenkins was short crew members and that he would not be able to sail until he found more sailors.[51] By choosing to ship with a captain he trusted, Angier was also choosing to abide by Jenkin's schedule. It was in Jenkin's best interest to have his ship fully loaded. It was in Angier's best interest to get his turpentine quickly before the market shifted and the currently overwhelming demand for turpentine was satisfied by other merchants. It was in Jackson's interest to satisfy all parties involved as quickly as possible and so he scrambled to find another commodity – fish – that would make up the difference in

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[49] Turpentine was highly prized and high unavailable during the years covered by Thomas Moffatt's correspondence. The bulk of his time and energy was spent trying to find enough of it to satisfy his London customers.

[50] NYPL, Humaniities MSS, TMC, 26.

[51] Moffatt wrote Angier at greater length on June 13, 1715 about Jenkin's troubles manning his ship. He explained that Captain Jenkins "has met with a great deal of trouble by 11 of his men who left him in two days after he arrivd at Marblehd one of whom was his mate." The sailors demanded their wages and were paid; nevertheless, Jenkins could in "no ways oblige them to proceed with him…" In order to get sailors, Moffat predicted that Jenkins would have to pay "Excessive wages as [much as]… £4 for a mate, which be a great detriment to the ye voyage." This encounter illustrates the power dynamic between captains and crew. At sea, captains held nearly all of the power except in the unusual circumstances of a mutiny which still almost always resulted in death for the rebelling crew members. On land, however, the dynamic shifted. Sailors had more options and they had an audience for their tales of suffering. They also had certain legal recourses against captains of which Jenkin's crew may have availed themselves. Moffat wrote that they "Libled" Jenkin's ship for their wages, probably referring to legal action on the part of the crew and possibly vocal mud slinging until Jenkins came through with their pay. According to Moffat's cryptic note, after receiving their money, the crew then refused to sail with him again "because he was so short in shipping them." This would usually indicate that Jenkins provided inadequate provisions for his crew, but it might also indicate inadequate accommodations, too few hands for the size of the ship or nature of the voyage, or a general reluctance to pay promptly an adequate wage. All of these factors would have delayed the turpentine Angier wanted so badly. NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 26.

weight. Meanwhile, Jenkin's sailors found more amusing pastimes or deserted for better paying jobs, further delaying the return trip.

The longer an expected ship was delayed, the more likely it was that the ship had been lost entirely, a nerve-wracking waiting game. Although most ships arrived unscathed, some cargoes did not survive having deteriorated after long days at sea. As a merchant waited out whatever was causing the delay, his livelihood and profession could also be hanging in the balance.

Damage

Damage was an every-day part of seafaring. No matter how routine a voyage, a ship required basic maintenance afterwards to keep it sound.[52] After extreme weather, a ship might be essentially useless until it had been refitted, if it could be salvaged at all. By the time Samuel Kelly returned to London with a cargo of sugar from Jamaica, the ship needed to be repainted because of the damage caused by rotting sugar.

> Our cabin being cleared of the sugar was literally black where painted from the stench of the drainage of the sugar mixing with the salt bilge water which was stinking much before we left Jamaica, and must have been very unwholesome, as the paint in the cabin first turned black and then a silver or shining surface appeared thereon.[53]

The crew also performed more usual tasks like cleaning barnacles off the ship's bottom and caulking the open seams. They had to hurry, however, because the Thames was beginning to ice over. In cold water ports, ships had to be protected from freezes and floating chunks of ice that gouged out pieces from the sides.[54] But warm water ports had their disadvantages too. The longer a ship spent in warm water, the more vegetation

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[52] Spooner, *Risk at Sea*, 6-7.

[53] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 161.

[54] Spooner, *Risks at Sea*, 12.

would grow on its underside until it might be dragging a carpet of weed heavy enough to significantly lessen its speed. In Florida, Kelly observed that the surface of the river on which the ship was anchored was "almost covered with brown worms, very lively in their motions. Many of them took possession of the wood sheathing on our bottom and ate it to a honeycomb."[55] It was also necessary for the crew to spend time ashore hunting the wood suitable for new spars. Only after the ship's bottom had been repaired, new spars, masts, and riggings brought on board, could they begin the rest of the preparations to return to London.[56]

Ship builders assumed that their ships would take a considerable amount of abuse and that, in between voyages, regular repairs would include things like replacing entire masts or dealing with gushing leaks. While the notion of a leaking ship may have sounded extreme to a landsman, a leaking ship was not necessarily wrecked or even particularly damaged. To man the pumps was an everyday occurrence. Ships were not dry, not even healthy ships. While a ship needed to be tightly constructed, it also had to flex and give or be shattered by strong waves. Consequently, sailors pumped sometimes for their lives but more often as a usual course of affairs.[57] Nor were the types of repairs Kelly described extreme. No one expected a ship to go without sustaining damage, but they hoped the repairs could be done quickly and cheaply.

While the proceeding chapter addresses the experience of a shipwreck, here I want to consider the financial and logistical ramifications. When a ship wrecked, it sustained a level of damage far beyond repair and the owners were out of pocket for far

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[55] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 103.

[56] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 118.

[57] Meyerstein, *Edward Coxere,* 41.

more than they would have usually spent on routine maintenance. Merchants insured

their cargo with the assumption that wrecks were a real possibility. Nevertheless, ships'

log books are synonymous with tedium – entry after laconic entry describing fair

weather, the number of sails sighted, and the coordinates on the chart. I suggest that the

factor which determined whether wrecks were a common occurrence was the duration of

a sailor or merchant's career and the number of voyages in question. There was no

reason for a sailor to expect that any one particular voyage would end in a wreck and

every reason for a sailor who planned to spend his entire career at sea to expect to be

wrecked at least once. When Samuel Kelly described his father's seafaring career, he

asserted that Michael Kelly during a life at sea had survived two wrecks.[58] Joseph

Banfield was wrecked twice, and nearly wrecked once more: the ship was ruined, but was

eventually brought limping into port.[59] Edward Barlow was wrecked once.[60] Edward

Coxere was wrecked three times.[61] Samuel Kelly was never wrecked, although he was

on several ships nearly crippled by storms. All of these men continued to sail. Their

wrecks made up only a tiny fraction of their careers. There was no reason for a merchant

to expect that any particular voyage would end in a wreck, but every reason to expect that

some would. That, and the incredible financial blow a wreck would deal him, provided a

merchant incentive to insure both cargo and ship.

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[58] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly*, 17-18.

[59] HL, MJB, MSS HM 57345, 12-14, 24-26.

[60] Basil Lubbock, ed., *Barlow's Journal of his life at sea in King's Ships, East and West Indiamen and other Merchantmen from 1659 to 1703* (London, 1934).

[61] Meyerstien, *Edward Coxere,* 18-19.

Our Consert Sunk on the Coast of Barbary

21. Edward Coxere illustrated his memoirs with sketches of ships and battles at sea.

22. One of Edward Barlow's watercolors. He illustrated his journal with many images, including a portrait of each of his ships, scenes of sea battles, local fauna (a hammerhead shark and an elephant, in particular), and the maneuvers of ships along particular coastlines. While this ship did not wreck, the weather was so severe the crew was afraid it would.

Besides damaged ships, damaged goods created a loss that investors also had to swallow. In both cases, insurance might mitigate the losses, but led to its own complications since investors had to prove they had been the victim of events outside human control and ability. Even minor losses added up and debts owed by ship captains – always on the move – or by people an ocean away could be hard to collect. On what must have been an irksome day, Jackson had to write to inform his clients that they would now face a new charge for importing servants, that the hops they wanted were scarce, and that a box of glass had arrived in pieces. Although damages were due to Mr.

Pratt for the broken glass, Jackson was skeptical that he would be able to collect the money.[62]

While damage and delays were sometimes caused by purely human agency, they were often the product of the ocean environment with which maritime Britons had to grapple. That environment left its mark on the Atlantic world in other ways as well, from the picturesque (the rolling gait of the sailor) to the sensory (the smells of fish and tar and brine) to the temporal (the way the appearance of the community and the patterns of life changed with the tides or seasons). But delays and damages were probably the most constant ways the maritime nature of the Atlantic made itself felt. Lagging ships and broken masts were an everyday part of the Atlantic world and, when Britons contended with them, they confronted the extent to which the success or failure of their economic and cultural community depended on the behavior of the capricious seas. Thus they regularly confronted the maritime, not in rare and romantic moments, but as an integrated part of their professional and financial lives.

The Value of Information

It is hard to imagine any problem that cannot be made worse by putting it on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic. Problems on land often lacked the drama of problems at sea if for no other reason than drowning was not imminent. Keenly aware of risks, Britons involved in Atlantic trade and travel worried about a host of potential calamities

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[62] Certain goods consistently caused problems. Glass was fragile, awkward, and expensive, leading to heavy losses if it was damaged or failed to sell. Staples, luxuries, or very fashionable items in the latest British modes often flopped. In a letter to Angier about the fate of his cargo, Jackson told him that the only thing he has not been able to help the captain sell were "13 boxes of glass, which I cant get above 7d per foot for, and I am sure cannot be afford at that." And with unusual candor, Moffatt informed Captain Penery "the wigs you sent last I could not tell what to do wth'em, therefore when I see you could give no encouragement to send more…" NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 15, 16, 29.

that might befall their persons, property, and fortunes. They sought to make the best informed decisions they could before committing their lives and resources; and they sought to reassure themselves that the worst was not in store. Information was the only panacea for Atlantic anxiety and Britons pursued it exhaustively both for business and comfort.

Merchants, in particular, were devoted to the collection of information. While their correspondence focused on the going prices for commodities, they also gathered information on prospective business associates. They depended on a far-flung collection of informants, many of them not their social equals. Historians have already explored transatlantic, Anglo-American connections or traced the relationships that bound merchants together into profitable business associations. Merchant networks were unquestionably valuable, facilitating the spread of information, mitigating risk, and creating an environment that led to financial success, social change, and personal reinvention.[63] But as this chapter demonstrates, to write of "merchant networks" is to describe something that never existed in those narrow terms. Had merchant networks consisted of only merchants, they would have never made a penny. Instead, I suggest that what we see can be more accurately described as maritime networks: loosely connected groups of people whose relationships to the ocean ranged from personal to professional, whose financial stake in voyages ranged from tiny investments or the receipt of semi-regular wages to massive fortune-making speculations. The members of

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[63] David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995); Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: the overseas merchant in state and society, 1660-1720* (Oxford, 2001); Perry Gauci, *Emporium of the World: the merchants of London, 1660-1800* (London, 2007); Michael Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the maritime Atlantic world, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

these networks were connected to each other by their mutual awareness of the ocean and their mutual appreciation of the value of good information.

Even though sailors lacked the same financial incentives that drove merchants to keep their ears to the ground, they also worried and turned to inside knowledge from other members of their community to relieve their anxiety. To find out too late that one sailed with an incompetent captain was to end up dead. While sailors were paid badly and, if popular literature is to be believed, quick to waste their earnings, it was not their intention to come home poorer than when they started out. Sailors often purchased goods to sell once they returned home, depending on their means and the salary their position commanded.[64] Sailors had little protection for their goods, however, and often saw them stolen or confiscated before they had a chance to make a profit. Consequently, they were anxious to know as much as possible about the men with whom they sailed: were they honest? Would they fight the ship bravely if it was attacked? Would the captain find an excuse to add their possessions to his own?

In this section, I examine the role information in a maritime context. I look first at accurate information as a commodity with monetary value insofar as merchants were willing to pay employees to provide them with it and insofar as its lack could lead to financial loss. I suggest that merchant's passion for information was in part a product of their anxiety over what the seas might do to their ships and goods. Next, I examine the way information flowed regarding those goods and their shifting prices. Merchants' concerns about shortages and surpluses reveal their greater, underlying anxieties about the imperial project itself. Next, I turn to ships and the way their movements impeded the

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[64] Laffin, *Jack Tar*, 69-72.

flow of information as much as they facilitated it. Besides goods and ships, merchants and sailors wanted to know about people. I consider the importance of reputation and the way information flowed about who was, or was not, trustworthy. Finally, I consider maritime extremities and the way sailors educated each other about the dangers they faced.

Information and Other Commodities

When we consider the perspectives of merchants, captains, and sailors together we see, first, that information itself became a commodity insofar as it had real value. Businessmen were willing to pay others to collect information on their behalf. While sailors could not do the same, they recognized that their profits and safety depended on accuracy. Second, we see that information – far more than any other good or market or connection – was the commodity that defined the Atlantic. Everyone wanted it. Everyone worried if they did not have it. Everyone recognized that its worth translated into profits, and everyone recognized that the lack of accurate information could spell disaster.

Recent scholarship has placed merchants and certain, highly valuable commodities at the center of Atlantic commerce and culture.[65] Considered in this context, eighteenth-century British merchants should have been the happiest men in the world. They were capable of making profits up to 5000% on an increasing variety of

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[65] Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: the place of sugar in modern history* (New York, 1985); Matthew Parker, *The Sugar Barons: family, corruption, empire and war in the West Indies* (New York, 2012); Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: an economic history of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore, 1973); Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: from Africa to America* (Oxford, 2007); Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: commercial change, political conflict, and London's overseas traders, 1550-1653* (Princeton, 1993); Joseph Miller, *Way of Death: merchant capitalism and the Angolan slave trade, 1730-1830* (Madison, 1988); David Richardson, ed., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool, 2007).

goods in ever-expanding markets.[66] Their ships called in ports all over the world. The range of their influence was also global, extended by vast networks of loyal subordinates. Their new wealth enabled them, not only to live in comfort, but to shape the cultural fabric of Britain through their patronage of the arts and sciences. They had the power to alter fashion and taste. They had the ears of the most powerful political figures of the day. Collectively, theirs was a voice that could not be ignored.

This image of the successful merchant becomes even more powerful when combined with the booming trade in sugar, the more problematic but still wealth-producing trade in tobacco, and the sale of enslaved Africans. By focusing on slaves and sugar, historians have contributed to a model of a profitable Atlantic that then buoyed a successful empire. If we examine different commodities, then merchants look far less powerful, the Atlantic far less profitable, and the empire far less successful. And even those men who did make fortunes in slaves and sugar wrote the same kind of anxious letters composed by Moffatt's Bristol merchants who dealt in logwood and cloth. We must incorporate into our understanding of the Atlantic the fact that success was not uniform, nor certain, and that "successful" and "confident" are not the same qualities. To exploit systematically another people for one's own profit may bring wealth, but it does not eliminate anxiety.

When we place the pursuit of information at the center of the Atlantic world we capture more of its nature: it was a site of possibilities and uncertainties. Had success been assured, there would have been no need to consult middlemen so assiduously. The notion that these arbiters of taste and fashion depended on the paid services of men

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[66] Bernard Bailyn "Preface" in *The British Atlantic World*, David Armitage and Michael Braddick eds. (New York, 2002) xv.

significantly inferior to them in wealth and status makes the rise of the British merchant less meteoric.

I suggest acknowledging the relentless quest for information may also add nuance to some aspects of our understanding of the slave trade. Re-conceiving Atlantic Britons as anxiety-ridden and fretful does nothing to reassign blame or expunge guilt. A nervous slave trader is no less guilty than a confident one, but he is more interesting. The slave trade is not the simple story of the strong against the weak, but something more complicated. Perhaps we see in British weakness an explanation for some of the tactics common to the trade, in particular the development and use of specialized equipment, and the use of terror and cruelty for purposes of control.[67] Perhaps these strategies were less expressions of power (or moral degeneracy) and more expressions of profound anxiety. Moreover, a slave trade undercut with worries restores a sense of contingency. The slave trade was not an inexorable, perfected system against which Africans stood no chance. It could be as potentially flawed as any other aspect of Atlantic trade: dependent on the oceans, on the weather, on halting communication between business colleagues, and on the flow of accurate of information. The energy Britons expended on mastering the trade is a reflection of the size of the profits they stood to make but it is also a reflection of the enormity of the difficulties inherent to any Atlantic trade.

Ultimately somewhere between 11 million and 14 million Africans were taken across the Atlantic, a grim testament to European perseverance in the face of uncertainty and discomfort. Britons were undeniably enriched and empowered by the trade; and once we add to this the eventual conquest and displacement of native North Americans,

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[67] Rediker, *The Slave Ship,* 14-40.

Britons appear successful, conquering empire-builders, the inevitable lords of all they surveyed. It is useful, therefore, to incorporate the trades in other goods into the picture created by slavery. Regardless of the money it made, the slave trade was only one of many Atlantic trades. Merchants dabbled in different commodities, diversifying their investments so that the loss of a slave ship – just as likely as the loss of any other ship – would not ruin them. The slave trade – for merchants, captains, and sailors alike – was often not the career of a lifetime, but the way to a comparatively quick fortune, to be then replaced by safer money-making ventures. The place of the slave trade in the greater scheme of Atlantic trade is, thus, complex. It is difficult to overstate its importance, affecting as it did so many millions of lives, producing such high profits, and, as many have argued, creating race consciousness besides specifically shaping an African American experience and culture. On the other hand, over-focusing on the slave trade to the exclusion of other trades and the people who dealt in them can lead to a distorted model of the Atlantic world: omnipotent Britons, powerless Africans, and a confident culture of empire divorced from the maritime environment.

Goods and Markets

We see the evidence of Briton's anxiety regarding the ocean's potential degradations and their own business acumen in the repetition of going prices in virtually every letter sent between colleagues. There was no interest in the "big picture," no willingness to let business matters slide or to trust blindly the judgment of one's clerks. In the first place, merchants knew the information they demanded was already out of date, six to eighteen weeks old assuming a reasonably straightforward voyage. Men of business like Thomas Moffatt sent out reports in every letter, in his case listing the price

of logwood, cloth, and turpentine, besides a revolving array of other sundries. Moffatt

and his secretary, Jackson, also did their job by collecting information on the market from

others to pass along. In a letter to Charles Chauncey, Jackson asked for prices on hops,

turpentine, tar, pitch, sugars, "oyle," logwood, fustick, "riggen new [and] twice laid,"

lead, duck and pigeon.[68]

Beginning to import a new type of good often caused merchants and their

employees a great deal of anxiety. Would the item prove to be the next sugar, a fabulous

wealth-maker? Or would it be a bust, damaged, spoiled, or otherwise unsalable and

taking up valuable space in a warehouse? Moffatt's clients mostly shipped cloth

(primarily a type of closely woven woolen cloth called shalloon and a wool blend called

drugget used for clothing), as well as ironware, glass, shoes, paving stones, turpentine,

tar, oil, fish, and wood. Small numbers of other goods were usually tucked away in the

ships as well. On February 8, 1714, for example, Moffatt's assistant copied a letter

ordering three or four boxes of soap from Mr. Robert Bryant, a merchant in Nevis, for

Captain James Berton, to arrive via the ship *Charlestown* commanded by Henry

Fowles.[69] In some cases, these items were special orders; in others, they were novelties

that would hopefully go on to make a profit. Mofffatt typically advised against luxury

items that few people could afford. Even though they *could* bring high prices, he

believed they probably would not sell at all. He explained to his clients that few people

could afford to deck themselves in the latest fashionable patterns and textures ("plads and

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[68] Fustick is a kind of a yellow wood. NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 10.

[69] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC 10.

sattents"), that what would sell in London might not sell in Boston, and that what would sell in Boston might not sell in the countryside.[70]

Understanding various and changing markets was an advanced skill. While Moffatt advised against shipping luxuries, he also advised against shipping bread. He was leery of importing people, although not because he had moral objections.[71] While Moffatt did not handle slaves during the years he worked as a factor, he did represent businessmen who wanted to ship indentured servants. Moffatt, however, advised against it because at a meeting the townspeople had decided that any captain transporting servants would be obligated to pay £3 a head for every male and 20 shillings for every female. Jackson, writing on Moffatt's behalf, noted that the majority of the town consented to this policy because the "servants that is thus transported are [the] verry scumb of [the] place from whence they came, and so prove such Rogues, and thieves amongst us." (In the same gloomy letter, Jackson noted that commodities his clients wanted were unavailable, trade was bad, money was not flowing, and that no ships had lately arrived from England.)[72]

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[70] Moffatt recognized how specific the market could be and tried to advise his clients accordingly. For example, he gave John Angier very specific instructions regarding the current tastes and needs in Boston, rather than advising him, merely, to ship cloth. Popular options included "checks, checks with tufts, lowprized with puckthred, stripe and ticks with inckles, nails, mohair, colors blew, black, red, lemon, and green also black, caddices… with fustian, cantaloons, [and] shelloons." Moffatt told the Bristol merchant John Teague that "sheloones… must be mostly plain mixt coullers very delightsome wth a few fresh lively stripes butt no plads or sattents for they will not fetch more than the others. Shelloons are fashionable cloths cullrs with some greys full browns or sad cullers some black and blews and one or 2… reds." (Inckle is a kind of linen tape; nail is the refuse of wool or flax; caddice is either yarn, floss silk, lint, binding tape, or cheap serge; fustian is coarse cloth from cotton or flax.) NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC 2-3.

[71] Several of the merchants whom Mofftat represented tried to ship bread which Moffat urgently warned them against. On July 20, 1715, Moffatt wrote "Bread is a very dull commodity…" In August, he warned John Angier that "the acct will be near closed wth what is like to prove bad debts… if you had harkned to my advice you had put not bread on board… which is like to prove as great a burden to me as it is loss to you for I can find no sale for it here at any price there has been such great quantities in from York and Philladelphia as has reduced it…" NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 27, 32.

[72] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 15.

Indentured servants were subject to the same fluctuations in price and demand as any commodity, but prone to making trouble in ways inanimate objects did not. On November 22, 1715, Moffat wrote to Mr. Gorden over a difficulty he was having with one of the servants for whom Gorden had arranged passage to Massachusetts. The servant, James Basker, claimed that he was due his freedom and that the indenture he had signed had been forced upon him. Moffat, acting for Mr. Gorden, claimed otherwise. Basker had

> petitioned the court that he might have his freedom on paying for his passage over wch he said he had agreed for in England with Mr. Gorden… but was drawn in to sign an indenture contrary to his inclination (but for your security) howe're he was promisd his liberty… although it was not mentiond in his indenture…

Basker was also able to bring witnesses who concurred that his version of the informal agreement was correct. "Mr. Tyndall who was a witness to the Indenture was sumond & swore… the Capt promised… he would take care that Justice should be done him…" Moffat explained to Gorden that he produced the indenture and "acquainted the court he had 12d per day to subsist on & offered to come as a Servt, yet all would not do, they gave it against me that he paying £9.20/ for his pssage should be free." Ever diligent in protecting his clients' interests, Moffat added that he had appealed to a superior court, "by wch time if you have any thing can contract this you may send it attested." Moffat also asked for accounts for the clothing and money advanced to Basker and cautioned Gorden that if he lost in the superior court, the charge there would be greater.[73]

Moffat gave no indication in this letter as to his own feelings on the matter. If he felt any sympathy for Basker, he did not show it. However, we see something of

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[73] NYPL, Humaniities MSS, TMC, 49-50.

Moffat's feelings in a letter to John Angier dated the previous day when he was clearly in the midst of sorting out Gorden's problem. He explained that he wanted to respond at greater length to a question he had already answered for Angier regarding why he no longer planned to deal in indentured servants. "…it's a verry slewish business no Credit with it, hinders [the] sales of other goods, & is verry casuall on their parts as to sickness, death, & running away here &c besides what may happen in Coming over…"[74]

Moffatt's letter to Angier also gives us a sense of some of the anxieties a middleman might experience. Although he did not stand to lose the same amounts that Gorden did over the disputed indenture, he would still be out his time and probably also some money. We see the complexity of Moffatt's position when he pointed out to Gorden that the evidence of Basker's witnesses "was all provd & not withstanding I producet his indenture…"[75] The court had just determined that Gorden was a liar who deliberately tried to cheat James Basker out of his freedom, but Moffat soldiered on regardless. His choice of "not withstanding" emphasized to his employer that he had not allowed himself to be swayed from his duty by the outcome of the case and the unfavorable reflections it cast on Gorden. He then diplomatically cautioned Gorden about the extra money that might be due if he lost his case in the higher court. Moffat had his own financial security to protect and would need to convince Gorden he had done his best and was due the money he had lost on his employer's behalf in court. Although Moffat offered no judgment or condemnation of his employer, and may even have believed Gorden in the right, his request for more documentation suggests he knew his position to be unenviable and wanted to prod Gorden to action. Ultimately, Moffat was

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[74] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 48.

[75] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 50.

in a situation beyond his capacities as a responsible factor; his critical words to Angier suggest that he knew the complications and failures that came with dealing in indentured servants did him no good professionally.

The Contingent Empire

Moffatt's letters burst with information, but what they convey most strongly was that he did not know. He did know when ships would arrive. He did not know when goods would become available. He did not know whether he would turn a profit. But most importantly, he did not know he was part of the British Empire. In small matters, he hoped he was correct and he worried. Regarding the fate of the American colonies, he was deeply concerned. It seemed possible that some at least would be losing propositions.

The turpentine shortage that took up much of his secretary's spring illustrates the interplay between land and sea, and the difficulties presented by trying to plan for maritime variables when the New World was equally uncooperative.[76] Disrupted by the Yamasee War, the flow of turpentine from the Carolinas had slowed to a trickle and was leaving importers in the lurch. Turpentine was already a seasonal product and the outbreak of violence between settlers and the Yamasee prevented the usual quantities from arriving.[77] Moffatt and Jackson did their best to explain this to their employers, but,

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[76] Shortly after Moffatt left for a visit to England, Jackson wrote to him that "Since your departure… [I have] received sundry letters from John Angiers in London… He orders shipped for London and Bristol turpentine and hops…" But there were no vessels for Bristol and no turpentine. Jackson also mentioned a person from "Connecticot wanting to buy turpentine… but none to be had." On April 30, Jackson wrote Mr. Gilberd that he had finally shipped him fourteen barrels of turpentine by way of Captain Upcot's pink and the clerk Charles Chauncy, to whom they were consigned. "I should have shipd you more, but they were not to be purchasd for mony: but since the shiping of these have meet with fifty barl and understandg that Capt. Pennergy who came out a fornight before Capt. Attwood arrivd here yesterday, will go directly home, so have housd them and I shall by him ship on your accot." NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 23, 25

[77] William R. Ramsey, *The Yamasee War: a study of culture, economy, and conflict in the colonial South* (Lincoln, 2008).

based in Boston, their own information about the war was second hand. Moreover, the information making its way north was so dire that Moffatt thought it incumbent on him to tip off other merchants in England: it seemed likely that the Carolinas would be lost. In August he wrote them that because of "The mallancholly affairs of Caroline… turpentine is now so much in demand [and] they are so eager after it when any comes in that they are ready to fight for it…"[78]

These letters contain a host of anxieties: the absence of goods, the absence of ships, the usual concerns about when a ship captain was due and whether or not he had arrived, in addition to the political and diplomatic problems facing the colonies as they dealt with the hostile uprising of an indigenous people. Although Moffatt did not mention it, turpentine was also the product of back-breaking labor, a process akin to the production of sugar or tobacco. A turpentine shortage would have raised all sorts of doubts about the availability of enough willing labor to make sufficient quantities of the product available and ultimately to hold the colony. Reading Moffatt's letters with the benefit of hindsight, it can be easy to miss the depth of his concern.

To make up for all he did not know, Moffatt supplied yet more information. When he finally secured some turpentine, his secretary wrote their client, Mr. Gilberd. Gilberd wanted, and received, detailed instructions regarding the number of barrels, how they were purchased, on whose ship they would travel, and when that ship would depart.

The Movement of Ships

Just like people, ships acquired reputations. They were known for intangible things like luck and for things easier to measure like a dry hold or for being speedy

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[78] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 35

sailors. Just as seamen warned each other away from bad captains, they also warned each

other away from ships that were leaky or unlucky. When Samuel Kelly became master of

the *John*, he visited several manufacturers in Birmingham looking for business. He wrote

dispiritedly that he was unable to find a single item for the ship's voyage to Philadelphia

"as the vessel, though only about three years old, was in a very bad credit as a slow

sailor, always making long passage."[79]

     The rather formulaic greetings that began business letters usually addressed

merchants' interest in the arrival and departure of ships, and the length of their crossing.

Moffatt opened by telling his correspondent that his letter had been received, when the

letter was dated, and the ship and captain by which it came. (He knew multiple letters

were probably en route to him and might arrive out of order, so he had to respond

specifically by date.) It was customary for an Atlantic letter writer to send more than one

copy to ensure its eventual arrival, so by providing information about who had carried a

letter, Moffatt was also letting his correspondent know the relative speed of the various

ships to which he might have entrusted his business. Moffatt then usually asked after

previous letters he had sent, including their dates and the ships and captains they went by,

before getting down to business.

     On the one hand, mail could arrive very speedily. The packet service out of

Falmouth had been carrying the mail since 1688, although the service itself was even

older. Packet ships were designed to be small, fast, and with a comparatively small crew.

They were not supposed to fight Britain's enemies, but outrun them. Although any

captain heading across the Atlantic was likely to carry both verbal and written messages,

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[79] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,*167.

the packet service was the official arm of the British post office on the seas. Many packet ships could make the trip in just over a month.[80] On the other hand, they were far from comfortable. The earliest and most poorly paid years of sailor Samuel Kelly's career were spent in the packet service.

Kelly described an encounter at sea in 1782 while on board a packet ship. He wrote that on March 18, a ship gave chase, catching up to them the following day. Initially, the ship called the *Trumball* claimed to be English and requested a crew from the packet be sent on board. The boat returned with armed men who told the captain they were American. The captain surrendered without a fight, to Kelly's disgust, and in the confusion *gave the signal for the mail to be sunk*.[81] This was typical response to being boarded; any papers would go over the side, often in a weighted bag. This, rather than a spectacular sea battle, was basic procedure. Neither ship was harmed and the captured crew was set on shore to find other ships, although, some lost valuable possessions in the process since the goods of the crew were usually treated as part of the prize. But every letter, every bit of correspondence between men like Moffatt and his clients, was lost over the side. Is it any wonder merchants worried about whether or not their instructions had been received? Is it any wonder they sent multiple copies of the same letter? Is it any wonder that anyone who did business in the Atlantic world prized information?

Reputation

Although anxiety-producing concerns about the fluctuating market and the safety and speed of ships were the most common, there were a host of other doubts that troubled the maritime community. They frequently found themselves worried about their

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[80] Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740* (New York, 1986), 168-188.

[81] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 46.

colleagues. Were they honest? Were they competent? Why had they not written? Where were they? Were they alive?

Moffatt worried about the reputations of others to the extent that he sometimes seems half clerk and half gossipmonger. He wrote to Captain Elbridge with a tidbit about Elbridge's cousin, Moll Smythe who had just married "A Barber & Perriwig maker by Trade… he's a pretty sort of a man & I doubt not but will do very well…"[82] He wrote John Kirkpatrick on August 22, 1715 a particularly juicy letter, describing the exploits of "C-d" who had cost his clients at least £600.[83] Moffatt grew uncharacteristically loquacious when he described "C-d's" character.

> As for C-d he is fled and it's said to France for Mr. Peter Waddings Friends took out a statute against him… C-d himself I believe will hardly ever come to England… having for ever sold each country for I believe never was a great rogue in either, all [that] having gon before him being youngster to him in Villany, should I pretend to give you a carracter of him it would fill up my lettr and [that] fall short vastly of his deserts…

The unscrupulous "C-d" illustrates several of the reasons that Atlantic Britons had to be nervous about their partners. C-d probably did business with men he never met or who were far away from the cargo in which he convinced them to invest. He was able to oversell the value of the cargo and then flee, leaving behind the naïve investors who let him have the money up front, leaving the ship's captain caught in the middle. Angry over their losses, the investors accused Captain Buck of having "broken orders in going to the [the] streights, he should have proceeded directly for Lonn and [then] would have secured [them] at least £600…" Moffatt lamented Buck's situation: "poor… Buck I am

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[82] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 63.

[83] "C-d" was probably named Credland. Moffat used this name once in his letter, but in all other instances abbreviated the name of the crook. Context indicates they were probably one and the same.

afraid will come off butt very indifferently…"[84] It is not clear whether he meant Buck would take a financial hit or that his reputation would be tarnished; either or both were likely possibilities.

Moffatt next explained how problems with the goods carried on the ship complicated the situation. The cargo was intact but it had been valued too highly. Even if it was sold off, it would not bring in enough to pay for the ship's return voyage to England let alone to reward the investors. "Freight" was available – cargo to fill the ship's hold – but there was no money to purchase necessary supplies or to pay laborers to load the ship. The ship had run aground for lack of money.

Sailors were also deeply concerned with the reputation and abilities of the men under whom they served and were frank in their assessments of their superiors' ability and moral quality. Sailor Joseph Banfield referred to the officers on the *Friendship* as "blagards" and the captain as "one of the biggest villains at that time left unhung."[85] Sailor Edward Coxere, who seems to have had a more charitable disposition than Banfield, remarked on the "whimsies" of his captains. Even without a stronger turn of phrase, the stories were sufficiently damning. "This new captain did soon begin to shew some kind of antic tricks, as if his brain had been cracked, much like unto Tucker, with whom I was before, when he got drink in his head." Tolerantly, Coxere seemed to imply that this was common with captains; they were just prone to cracked brains. The whimsies of the new captain included drinking with the crew, refusing to speak and communicating only in signs, and ordering the crew to row him six miles round trip so he could relieve himself.

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[84] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 47.

[85] HL, MJB, MSS HM 57345 29-30.

When they arrived in Tangier, the captain went ashore and was entertained with wine, which "inflamed his brain." He returned to the ship "with a whimsy in his head, telling us that the wind was fair for us, though we knew it to be calm." Coxere recounted in devastating detail the unspoken decision of the crew to humor the captain, a theater of seamanship – casting off, raising and lowering sails – while the captain stood on the quarter deck shouting orders even though the ship was still at anchor. When the captain perceived he had been tricked, he was "like a bedlam" and demanded a cutlass. Instead, Coxere locked the gunroom door and hid, while the captain chased the crew around the deck. In the future, Coxere referred to him as "the mad captain."

Although Coxere was able to dismiss the captain's antics with a laconic phrase – "a very notable whimsy of a commander" – other sailors were not so certain they wanted to trust themselves to him for the length of an ocean-crossing voyage. Coxere explained that when the crew perceived that the captain had a cracked brain, "several desired to have their wages and be cleared."[86] In other words, these were more than just sea stories, tall tales about the absurdities of the seafaring life to be exchanged during retirement. Captains' abilities had real consequences for the merchants who employed them and the sailors who served under them.

Besides nefarious doings, the financial fortunes of other merchants were also of great interest to the business community. While Moffatt was in England, his secretary kept him apprised of the latest scandals along with updates on his business affairs. In the closing paragraph of a letter dated March 18, 1714, Jackson ran swiftly through Moffatt's own troubles with other people and concluded with a tidbit on the fate of a Mr. Marriner.

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[86] Meyerstien, *Edward Coxere,* 51-54.

> As to Mr. Sweetsers affair, you will be a loser for he is afraid to stand it out… as Mr. Dudley… tells me, the law allows but one lawyer, and you fead two, so you will unavoidably be ten shillings out of pocket, Mr. Marriner has shute up shop, and become a bankrupt but his Cred. are going to give him three years time…[87]

Far away from the men he represented, Moffatt's own reputation and money were on the line when he defended their interests. He covered the bills and paid the lawyers on the hope that his clients' would win their cases, sell at a profit, and live to do another day's business and to pay their bills. Coming on the heels of Moffatt's ten shilling loss, the tale of Mr. Marriner sounds cautionary.

The most basic question, however, did not involve reputations or bank accounts but the whereabouts of a merchant's colleagues, customers, middlemen, and captains, and whether or not they still lived. Moffatt wrote about two his contacts: I "should be very glad to hear Capt. Norman and M. Nositer was arrivd, [the] Lattr bound here, [the] former it's uncertain where, but I hope his safe arrival some where will speedily discover…"[88] He wrote to Captain James Barton and the merchant Mr. Harrington Gibbs in Jamaica in August, 1715 with news, but concluded both letters by asking if they knew anything about the whereabouts of R. Poole. "I pray a word how R. Poole is because I heard he's dead wch I hope is not so…."[89] Given the varied content of Moffatt's correspondence, it is uncertain why he asked after Poole, whether it was because of friendship or idle curiosity or because they owed each other money.

These exchanges illuminate much of the cause of merchants' paranoia and pessimism. The simplicity of Moffatt's question – is he alive or dead? – reveals how

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[87] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 16.

[88] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 44.

[89] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 46.

little he had about which he could feel certain. Later in the fall, Moffatt had to write

Nicholas Dowding asking for news since he had not heard from him in four years and

wanted to know when he would get the money from £11.14.8 worth of goods. In this

case, the well-being of the missing party had financial implications for Moffattt

personally.

We see in Moffatt's gossipy exchanges the uncertainty of the Atlantic world; it

could easily disrupt or end lives in such a way that left little record. If R. Poole was not

dead, where was he? Who would know? Would *anyone* know? It would have been

nerve-wracking to do business with people who could so easily disappear; it would have

been nerve-wracking to know that one might share the same fate. All the more reason to

pursue the ultimate Atlantic commodity: accurate information.

Sailors lacked access to the same flow of information that kept merchants

alternately reassured and panicked. They had to wait until they got home again to find

what changes – for better or worse -- might have occurred while their voyage was in

progress. Sailor Michael Kelly met his wife in St. Ives, where he had been wrecked.

When he returned to their home in Falmouth from voyages to South Carolina, he learned

about the births of his eight children, the subsequent deaths of 5 of them, and ultimately

the death of his wife. Michael's son, Samuel, learned of his father's financial distress

when he arrived home from Jamaica.[90] Later Samuel Kelly learned about the debts of his

brother, also a sailor, and was obliged to pay them.[91] In popular stories and songs, port

cities were places of tragicomic romance, where women confronted unfaithful

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[90] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly*, 17-18, 31.

[91] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly*, 31, 68, 160.

sweethearts and sailors attempted to jettison emotional and financial obligations.[92]

Outside of songs, port cities were places where mortality made itself known: where

sailors learned who had died in their absence and landsmen learned which sailors had not

returned.

Extremity, Anxiety, and Information

Finally, there were the strange and unknown about which to worry. Although

merchant correspondence was usually devoid of anything as sensational as a sign or

strange occurrence, sailors consistently recounted tales of unusual events. The sensations

of a long career included everything from a period of Turkish captivity to devilish spirits.

Michael Kelly claimed that he was below deck asleep during calm weather and when he

woke up all the men on deck had disappeared. Samuel Kelly wrote that at various points

he sailed with a baboon, a black bear, and with an eccentric boatswain who "pretended

necromancy and dealings with invisible beings;" that he saw strange lights in the rigging

called "corps sants;" and that he had heard of a devil fish that carried a small schooner

away on its horns.[93] Joseph Banfield was in Gibraltar when "one of the Vehements

floods that ever wass known since the memory of man" washed away houses and people

and filled the streets with rubble. He was wrecked and temporarily enslaved by some

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[92] One ballad-sailor arrived home and found himself confronted with impending fatherhood. Another tried to pass off his angry fiancé to his brother rather than become a bigamist. He hastily reassured the angry woman that "A Seaman still shall have thy heart" and that "If you but saw [us] both together, / You could not tell one from the other…" He concluded that his brother would be the far kinder husband and that, "Although you prove not to be my Wife, / Yet my dear Sister all my life." Anon. *The sea-mans leave taken of his sweetest Margery* (London, 1626-1681); Anon. *The seamans adieu to his dear* (London, 1641-1674); Anon. *The Faithful lovers last farewell* (London, 1664); Anon. *A Dainty new ditty of a sailor and his love* (London, 1690); L.P. *Joy after sorrow* (1648); Anon. *The sea-man's answer to his unkind lover* (London, 1694).

[93] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly*, 17, 31-32, 98, 112, 115.

Africans.[94] And when yet another of his ships was wrecked on some rocks, he described how 23 people took refuge in a tiny boat. The weight of the survivors was too much for the boat. But the "Master by Providence hee happened to have one bolt of canvas… [and] the carpenter happened to have some small nails in his pocket…" Together they nailed the canvas to the gunwale, in essence raising the height of the sides of the boat to keep out the waves and used the weight of the crew to hold the canvas in place.[95]

Edward Coxere was taken prisoner by Turks; sailed with a captain prone to mad fits; and with a master who, having been persecuted by evil spirits, went mad, became convinced the ship had a sorcerer on board, then heated a marlin spike and drove it into the mainmast to kill the sorcerer.[96] The most unsettling story is also Coxere's because he told it so simply. Having come off the ship *Christopher* after an uncomfortable, leaky voyage through the English Channel, Coxere encountered his brother John, also a sailor. The *Christopher* was heading next to France and John Coxere had signed on to be one of the crew. Edward Coxere, distressed by his personal knowledge of the ship and its advanced age, advised his brother against sailing and offered John different employment through a brother-in-law. According to Coxere: "His answer was that he thought he was bewitched to her. He proceeded to sea in her, where they were lost and never heard from that day to this… sunk in the sea."[97]

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[94] HL, MSS HM 57345, MJB.

[95] HL, MSS HM 57345, MJB, 10, 23-24.

[96] Meyerstien, *Edward Coxere,* 44-45, 53, 80-82.

[97] Meyerstien, *Edward Coxere,* 38-45.

Information could mean the difference between life and death, success and failure. Coxere tried to give his brother useful information and it still did no good. The anxieties that accompanied seafaring and trade were so varied that useful information came in all forms. It included everything from updates on the price of turpentine to rumors about a mad boatswain. To satisfy appetite for information, merchants and sailors needed an Atlantic community. Professionally and sometimes physically, they could not survive on their own.

Maritime Networks and Sociable Sailors

One of the most common maritime stereotypes is of isolation: a vast, empty ocean on which a tiny ship bobs. Perhaps this image developed from earlier voyages of discovery. In the sixteenth century, trade routes had not been established and even rudimentary charts were few and far between. But by the middle of the seventeenth century it was usual to encounter other ships during a voyage, and by the middle of the eighteenth century one could reasonably expect to see at least one or two other sails each day. These mid-voyage encounters gave merchants the information they craved; a captain newly arrived in port could spread the word regarding who he had seen, where, and in what condition.

This is one of the great contradictions of the seas: they simultaneously impeded and created, divided and bound together. A ship's passenger was always on the brink of oblivion, one bad step or bad storm away from never being heard from again. And at the same time, the sea facilitated the spread of ideas and goods and people in a manner prolific enough that historians can write about Atlantic communities with shared Atlantic

cultures. The seas give the illusion of great space and variety: thousands of miles of open ocean and any number of places where a ship might choose to anchor. It seems a world in which it would have been easy to get lost, where, Odysseus-like, it was much harder to make one's way home than to somewhere fantastic and new. Any meeting up in all that open space would be a stunning coincidence worthy of a novel or film.

Ideally, ships did not sail across open ocean. They followed specific routes determined by the currents, winds, weather, and time of year. Captains put into a regular set of ports where they felt certain of acquiring provisions, knew what taxes and fees they would be assessed, had business connections to meet, or were otherwise certain of their reception. Moreover, a ship could not put in to any port in the world. Captains were constrained by the seasons. Certain cold water ports iced over. They were constrained by the time of day since some port cities like Bristol were essentially landlocked when the tide was out, the ships resting in the foul mud. And they were constrained by the size of the vessel they commanded. East Indiamen heavy with goods needed far deeper ports than small fishing vessels. And so the maritime world was, at the same time, terrifyingly limitless and almost humorously provincial. Port cities were like drains in which people collected, washed out of the ocean, to meet each other delighted but basically unsurprised to find another Dover man in Ouidah.

Perhaps one of the most common signs of the communal nature of the Atlantic is the names that pepper business correspondence. Moffatt and his clerk never bothered to explain to merchants in Bristol and London about whom they were writing when they referred to dozens of different captains and Boston suppliers. They assumed common knowledge, unimpeded by distance. Secretary Jackson, for example, wrote to William

Gibberd in March 1714 in a letter carried by Captain Norman that he knew of gentlemen

looking for turpentine to ship back to Bristol, but "there is not a vessel bound for

Bristol…" Jackson wrote Moffatt the same day and told him that he had promised 50

barrels of turpentine to Mr. Angier and preferred to ship them on Mr. Lull's pink or with

Captain Blair. Mr. Angier had also shipped "900 weight of hopps" with Captain Upcot to

London where they were consigned to Moffatt's British counterpart, Charles Chauncey.[98]

At no point in these letters does Jackson introduce any of these men.

Not only did Boston-based Moffatt assume that his clients had a comprehensive

knowledge of other people doing business in the Atlantic world, he assumed they owed

each other certain polite courtesies. When he went to London in the summer of 1714, he

was hosted by many of the men he represented. As I described earlier, the flow of

business letters was copious, but often delayed or interrupted. In those circumstances,

Moffatt thought he knew the wishes of his clients well enough to act – sometimes in

expensive or personal ways – on their behalf. A series of letters between Moffatt and

merchant Isaac Sperrin illustrate how professional relationships and personal knowledge

facilitated business. In a letter to Sperrin on October 11, 1715, Moffatt described two

decisions he made on Sperrin's behalf and a personal decision made at Sperrin's

recommendation. First, he acted for Sperrin by selling cloth at a price he believed good,

a basic job for a clerk to carry out. Then, he accepted Sperrin's recommendation that

Captain Potts was a competent captain and should receive his business, a more significant

interaction since it potentially involved larger sums of money and Moffatt's reputation

should he recommend Potts to anyone else. Next, Moffatt took it upon himself to pick a

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[98] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 15-16.

name for Sperrin's newly built ship, a decision that was almost too presumptuous as later letters showed. Finally, he adds on a rare personal note that he has shipped Sperrin a token of his esteem: "I have per Capt. Peare sent you a keg of sturegion which please to accept as a small remembrance…"[99]

Here we see an Atlantic community bound by very specific, intimate interactions, rather than ideas or national identity or the over-arching canopy of Protestantism. Britons on either side of ocean took each other's advice, trusted each other's judgment, flattered each other, and sent gifts of fish. These are interactions that could as easily have taken place between people in neighboring parishes.

To get these decisions to Sperrin as quickly as possible, Moffatt sent the letter twice, first with Captain Bonus. Then before he could send the copy with Captain Peare, Captain Brisco arrived in port with new instructions from Sperrin. (We can see from the dates, that by this point, Sperrin's instructions were two months old.) So Moffatt added more information to the copy before sending it off. He wanted Sperrin to know that any actions he took were based on information issued August 18 and received October 11.

Since Moffatt and Sperrin's letters had crossed, Sperrin's orders were not completely carried out. Moffatt wrote back on November 15 to explain. The "lettr came a little too late to give your ship the name of the Dove, having wrote you what name I designd to give her before & a bettr I think I could not give her, only if I had known yours & Mr. Angeiers Ladies Christian names, was about to give her that but that I could not tell.[100] Moffatt had named the ship *Sperrin* without waiting for his employers' orders. Here we see the limitations of the Atlantic business community. It was neighborly

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[99] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 55-56.

[100] NYPL, Humanities MSS, TMC, 61.

enough that it involved gift-gifting and the management of large sums, but not so intimate the Moffatt knew the first names of his two principle employers' (Isaac Sperrin and John Angier) wives. Although there is no copy of a letter of rebuke, Moffatt probably made a poor call. An expensive ship like the one he described would have been very dear to the merchants who paid for it. Moffatt groveled a bit by complimenting the existing name – "a bettr I think I could not give her" – and expressed his thwarted wish to pay a courtly compliment to the wives of Sperrin and his partner. Nevertheless, he had probably overstepped.

In the case of sailors, they expressed their sense that their world was small and neighborly by naming those who had aided or harmed them, by commenting on the reputation of particular port cities, and by trying to lead other sailors away from risky ventures, poor ships, and unfair captains. Like Moffatt, they never seemed to identify anyone, or explain the intricacies of their jobs. Where were these ports? What might a "packet ship" be? They assumed a knowledgeable audience acquainted with the rudiments of the maritime world and with many of the people who sailed across it.

Joseph Banfield considered that the mark of an unjust captain was keeping food from the crew, particularly when it was food they had supplied for themselves, and he wanted everyone to know who had committed this injustice. The crew of the *Friendship* had decided to supplement the standard provisions provided for them by the captain with "wines Rum &c," but once they were at sea, Captain Carter "ordered that wee have nothing but our salt provisions." Banfield wrote that they would have been "aperishing for want" had they not been "favored with a short passage." Besides not allowing them

their rum, Captain Carter also served at his own table the fowls the sailors had purchased.[101]

Samuel Kelly wanted to steer young men from the packet service where he had labored so unpleasantly. A captain who could offer high wages could entice a better quality of sailor. It might even be worthwhile for the captain of a wealthy, heavily loaded trading ship to Asia to protect his investment by hiring experienced sailors at a higher wage. Mail ships, however, or ships that carried smaller cargoes for lesser merchants, only hired those who were satisfied with less. Kelly remarked disparagingly of the packet service from Falmouth that

> these vessels seldom rejected any able-bodied landsmen that offered themselves, as they were cheaper than seamen, requiring only 16s to 18s per month. These ships were, therefore, receptacles for a number of dissolute and depraved young men, who were either ashamed, or afraid to continue in their native place in the county of Cornwall.[102]

Many sailors got their start on the packets or in the navy, leaving or deserting later on for more profitable forms of maritime employment.[103] He wrote of his own time in the packet service: "This ship being a contract one, our provisions were of infamous quality, the beef appeared coarse, and such as is cured for negroes, the barrels of pork consisted of pigs' heads with the iron rings still in the nose, pigs' feet and pigs' tails with much hair thereon."[104] Kelly also complained of sickness on board due to the food. The crew was attacked with pain "in their bowels" which the ship's surgeon diagnosed as poisoning.

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[101] HL, MSS HM 57345, MJB.

[102] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 69.

[103] In Kelly's estimation "Deserters from the Navy at Plymouth, frequently resorted to Falmouth, where many entered on board privateers and merchant ships. Others shipped themselves in the packets for the West Indies with an intent to desert in the Islands to the merchantmen, from whom they obtained thirty to forty guineas by the run to England." Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 70.

[104] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 29.

When the pots were inspected, "a quantity of verdigris was discovered on the inside of the pease copper…" Kelly was spared because he did not like pease soup and had not been eating from the dirty pot.[105]

Sometimes the intimacy of the maritime community was as much a source of resentment as it was of support. Sailors, particularly those in the navy, often received promotions only through the recommendation of influential friends. Likewise, captains might spend their entire careers working for other men because they lacked the wealthy associates who could join them in the purchase of a ship. In the case of Samuel Kelly, he refused an offer to be made a midshipman on the strength of his father's advice. "I… informed the captain that my father was averse to my going into the Navy… and his reason was this, that unless midshipmen had opulent friends to support their appearance on the quarter-deck, they were treated with not only neglect but contempt."[106] Just as officers had to purchase their commissions, sailors were responsible for supplying their own gear which varied depending on their position. A sailor on one of the packets could outfit himself for comparatively little. By contrast, a sailor on an East Indiaman needed £100 to be properly equipped as a mate. A sailor's financial resources were an open book to other sailors just by virtue of the position he occupied.[107] Since few sailors had sums as large as £100, certain positions or promotions could only be the result of unexpected windfalls or influence – all the more reason to be aware of who might act as a generous patron and who might sabotage one's chances.

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[105] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 29.

[106] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 38.

[107] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 57.

Just as sociability of merchants had its limitations, so did the casual jauntiness of sailors. By the eighteenth century, certain procedures were implemented particularly to control the spread of disease. It was no longer sufficient to swap gossip about bad captains and to suffer with bad food. British authorities wanted more control over ships, cargo, and men in the interests of preventing infection. Before the first sailor could set foot on shore or the first crate could be unloaded, port officials had to determine that everyone on board was healthy. The eighteenth century also saw the introduction of quarantine flags used on shipboard to warn other ships of the presence of disease. The presence of Health Officers in port cities is one sign of the professionalization that was slowly creeping into maritime life.[108] Before sailors could begin spending their wages, searching for a higher paying job, or slandering the reputation of the man under whom they sailed, they had to spend time being examined or in quarantine. Kelly described being questioned about whether or not they had had any Turks on board, while doctors pressed his sides and armpits looking for signs of the plague.[109]

The neighborliness of the Atlantic world should not be overstated. Sometimes it was a parochial, provincial world where neighbors did business with neighbors, even if they were an ocean away, and where everyone knew everyone else. And sometimes it was alarmingly complex and cosmopolitan world where a merchant's profits could disappear before his eyes because of a baffling conflict thousands of miles from his empty warehouse. As well as Moffatt knew Sperrin's finances, he still did not know his wife. At the same time, it is useful to remember the simplicity of Moffatt's interactions

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[108] This applied most to the navy and to the largest of merchant ships. For examples of new naval policies, see Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy*.

[109] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly*, 178.

with his employers or of sailors' critiques of their captains, especially in light of the connections that historians have drawn between empire and modernity. There is nothing in these interactions – gift-giving, gossip, the need for powerful friends with influence, complaining, haggling over goods – that could not have happened a century or two earlier in any English town. The Atlantic community, its limitations aside, was still rooted in traditional personal interactions.

The Hymn-Singing Sailor

In the midst of a providential Atlantic world, the records and correspondence of maritime networks can strike a secular note. Where is God among terse demands for the going price on logwood? Matters of faith are usually absent from ships' records, perhaps present only in a laconic observation that Sunday was observed with "prayers."[110]

In some instances, secularism is something that has been imposed on sources by impatient editors. In the case of Edward Coxere and Samuel Kelly, on whose memoirs I depend, they both had intense conversion experiences toward the end of their careers. Coxere became Quaker and was imprisoned for his faith. Perhaps because Coxere's religious experiences were as sensational as his maritime experiences, editor E.H.W. Meyerstein left most of his reflections intact. By contrast, Kelly did not specify which denomination or movement won his allegiance, although he generally expressed himself with piety. He remarked, for example, after having performed some very dangerous task "What a mercy it is that an elect sinner cannot lose his life till he has experienced the grace of effectual calling." He also mentioned having heard Mr. Wesley preach, both of

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[110] HL, MSS HM175, Diary 1768-1773.

which suggest he was probably attracted to a more stringent and nonconforming variety of Christianity.

Crosbie Garstin, who edited Kelly memoir, described the book as "intensely interesting – if you cut the psalm-singing," which he then did. Garstin wrote with exasperation that "Somebody falls off the yard-arm and is picked up little the worse for his ducking, but Kelly must needs moralize on the insecurity of life over a page and a half, ending with a string of Biblical quotations and a hymn." He proudly explained that removing all the hymns and moralizing reduced the book by half.[111] In this case, Garstin's sense of what a sailor was (profane, immoral, godless) got in the way of what this particular sailor actually had been. In general, maritime histories and literature collections of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represent the seas as essentially secular places, with the occasional navy hymn thrown in. The romantic, timeless sea is where adventurous young men went to escape sermons from moralizing landsmen.[112] One gets the impression that for some maritime aficionados, the notion of a pious sailor would somehow ruin all their pleasure.

I suggest that business letters between merchants have little in common with other forms of correspondence. The merchant letter was a type. In their private letters, the Dickinsons wrote about their community of faith, the doings of family members and fellow Quakers, and acknowledged the mercy of God in affording them particular blessings.[113] Moreover, merchant letters are remarkably similar, varying little in content

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[111] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 9-10, 88.

[112] Laffin is not certain of his views on this subject: "…for some earlier historians and observers were apt to see Jack as a devout, God-fearing man while other believed vehemently that he was irreligious and sacrilegious." John Laffin, *Jack Tar*, 117- 122; J.D. McClatchy ed., *Poems of the Sea*, 119, 127-134;

[113] For example, Jonathan Dickinson authored a pious narrative reflecting on his terrible ordeal in Florida after a wreck. Dickenson was a man of business who sailed with several slaves; nevertheless, his account

regardless of where the merchant lived, what goods he shipped, and when he was writing. An ordinary letter might include anything, but a "merchant letter," by definition, discussed a narrow range of material: prices, the date when information arrived, the arrival and departure dates of other ships, the exchange of money, and bills yet to be paid. If a merchant had other information to impart or personal (or religious) reflections to make, he would have written a personal letter that would not appear in the letter book copied out by his clerk. Merchant letters are more akin to ticker tape than to other examples of early modern correspondence. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century merchants were basically using an early version of the efficient, telegraph-generated paper strips that kept late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century businesspeople informed about the stock market. A prayer would no more be included on a ticker tape than it would in a merchant letter.

References to God often show up, however, after the paperwork related to shipping and goods became preprinted. When documents regarding insurance or billing or inventory were handwritten by a clerk, they included only the most basic information. When printed forms with empty spaces came into use, a pious observation was often inserted into the text.[114] A shipping bill for one hogshead of tobacco sent from Virginia to London in 1730 included in the printed text that the voyage would take place "by God's Grace" and concluded by asking God to "send the good ship to her desired Port in safety Amen."[115] Invoices that recorded a ship's inventory might include a preprinted or

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is spiritually focused. Jonathan Dickenson, *God's Protecting Providence*, (London, 1720); SRO, DD\DN/199, Correspondence received by Caleb Dickinson; SRO, DD\DN/228, Correspondence received by Caleb Dickinson.

[114] VHS, Mercer Family Papers, MSS 1 M5345a 145-147, Section 27, item 146.

[115] HL, MSS BR Box 186(32), Merchant Shipping Collection, 1729-1880, The Brock Collection, Folder 1.

marginal note where the ship's master indicated he swore by "the holy gospel of God" that the ship's inventory was correct.[116]

Despite these exceptions, merchants may still seem like the vanguard of secular modernity, especially by the eighteenth century. How practical their correspondence seems. How sensibly they compartmentalized business from faith, unlike the frantic Puritan of the seventeenth century who saw God everywhere. Merchants, however, had been facing the accusation of comparative impiety since at least the sixteenth century. They were not newly secular, but, if anything, newly respectable.

In the mid-sixteenth century, sermon writers abused merchants for their lack of contentment with their lives, their greed, their willingness to cheat their countrymen, and the way they turned other Englishmen from sober employment to frivolity by importing luxury goods of no use. "Disceitful Merchauntes" were included in lists of the abhorrent alongside "crafty Lawers" and "covestous greedyguttes." Thomas White blamed usury on merchants. Andrew Willet accused them of selling "naughty wares" at "unreasonable prises." It was possible to be a godly merchant, but only if one was honest and willing to be content with what one had. Even better were those merchants who were willing to give up the sale of earthly goods and become like Saint Paul, "that Great trader both by sea and land, who accounted all things drosse… [except] for Christ Jesus alone, the onely pearle of price…"[117]

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[116] HL, MSS BR Box 186(32), Merchant Shipping Collection, 1729-1880, The Brock Collection, Folder 6, 94.

[117] Thomas Lever, *A sermon preached at Pauls Crossse the xiiii day of December* (London, 1550) 6; Thomas Lever, *A sermon preached the third Sondaye in Lente before the kynges Maiestie* (London, 1550) 22; Thomas White, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the 17 of November* (London, 1589) 38; Andrew Willet, *A fruitful and godly sermon preached at Paules crosses before the Honourable audience and assemblie there* (London, 1592) 30; William Pemberton, *The Godly Merchant, or The Great gaine A sermon preached at Paules Cross* (London, 1613) 4.

By the first half of the seventeenth century, merchants' stock seems to have risen

somewhat. Accusations of deceit and usury disappeared, merchants were often addressed

after "Gentleman" in the preface to sermons, and they were rarely accused of trading in

cheap goods with inflated prices. Rather sermon writers focused on merchants' illusion

of control, their increasing wealth, and the concentration of merchants in London which

might lure the city away from God toward the pursuit of strictly material things.[118]

Merchants' priorities were called into question, but they were not criminalized. One

sermon writer, for example, observed that "Merchants reioyce at the safe arrival of a ship,

& at the report of a boone voyage…" but cautioned that treasures laid up in the heart

were better. No matter how rich a merchant got, even "If the King should give thee a

pension… out of his Exchequer for thy life it were much, yet because of it thou canst not

surely say, thou shalt not want."[119]

Merchants, then, were not vermin to be speedily exterminated, but the faithful

who had been temporarily distracted and needed the careful guidance of a man of God to

keep to the path of righteousness. Immanuel Bourne expostulated that men engaged in

buying and selling would be set upon by temptations from all sides, that "there is a Scilla

and Charibdes in this Sea, and therefore this Merchants shippe standeth in neede of a

skillfull Pylot…"[120] By 1624, John Donne was encouraging merchants and gentlemen to

cease reproaching each other for their different ways of life. After all, "Merchants grow

up into worshipfull Families." Together, merchants and gentlemen formed one Christian

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[118] "This Citie is a place of Merchandise, of buying and selling to gaine this gold: and this gaine is oftentimes but like the apple of Paradise, which the Serpent deceived Eve…" Immanuel Bourne, *The godly mans guide with a direction for all, especially, merchants and tradesmen, shewing how they may so buy, and sell, and get gaine, that they may gaine heaven* (London, 1620) 1.

[119] Pemberton, *The Godly Merchant,* 80.

[120] Immanuel Bourne, *The godly mans guide*, 2.

body which could serve as an example to others through their just, pious behavior.[121]

And in 1628, a sermon writer praised "honest-brave Merchants-Adventurers," lamenting

that their trust was betrayed by the men they employed, secretly in league with the

Turks.[122]

Merchants still came in for the occasional slanderous accusation, but between the

establishment of the Virginia colony, their increasing wealth, and the threat of non-

Christians, merchants began to figure less as villains and more as civic patrons and

ambassadors of the faith. Even the symbolic use of "merchant" had changed. At the

beginning of the seventeenth century, sermon writer Thomas Thompson accused

advocates of Catholicism of being "merchants of the purple Whore," while by 1645 "true

beleevers" were "spirituall marchants" who "trade" and "traffick for Christ."[123]

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, merchants were so far from spiritual

pariahs that they were hosting sermons as honored patrons of their communities of faith.

A sermon addressed to a merchant audience might touch on any subject, nor were the

presumed failings of that audience the speaker's topic.[124] Possessed with wealth and

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[121] John Donne, *A sermon upon the eighth verse of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1624) 35.

[122] Edward Kellett, *A returne from Argier A sermon preached at Minhead in the county of Somerset* (London, 1628) 35.

[123] Thomas Thompson, *Antichrist arraigned in a sermon at Pauls Cross* (London, 1618) 61; Alexander Grosse, *Christ the Christians Choice* (London, 1645) 6.

[124] Henry Brydges, *A sermon preached at St. Mary Aldermanbury on Sunday the 15th of June 1701. Before the honourable company of Merchants trading into the Levant-Seas* (London, 1701); Nathanael Mather, *Twenty-three select sermons preached at the merchants lecture at Pinners Hall and in Lime Street* (London, 1701); Richard Taylor, *A discourse of Christ as he is a rock of salvation, Containing some sermons preached at the merchants lecture in Broad Street* (London, 1701); Edmund Calamy, *Divine mercy exalted, or free grace in its glory Being a sermon preach'd at the merchants lecture at Salters Hall* (London, 1703); William Crosse, *The nature and office of goods angels, set forth in a sermon preach'd before the honourable Company of Merchants trading to the Levant Seas* (London, 1713); Matthew Clarke, *The wisdome of this world made foolish, a sermon preach'd at the merchants lecture in Broad Street* (London, 1714); William Goldwin, *On the honourableness, usefulness, and duty of merchants. A sermon preach'd before the Society of Merchants in the City of Bristol* (Bristol, 1715).

having organized themselves in professional communities, merchants were in the position to act as benefactors. Even their despised profession was no longer quite so despised. Sermon-writer William Goldwin complemented his merchant audience on their advances in navigation and mathematics. These accomplishments were a sign that the city of Bristol, like the merchant cities praised by the prophet Ezekiel, was engaged in a worthwhile pursuit. "If Antiquity can give a Sanction and Recommendation to any Practice, the Merchants Employment derives Authority and Glory from ancient Precedents; and I dare say, the Moderns have not degenerated in this Point."[125]

While merchants' status as patrons of the church was new, their preoccupation with information was not, nor was it necessarily in conflict with the behavior of a godly man. In his sermon from 1620 expressly for merchants, Bourne explained that "it is the dutie of Christians… to promise nothing to themselves for doing things to come, except they first add this condition, *If the Lord will*: and thus submit their wills to the will of God."[126] Should a merchant forget that his own powers of prognostication were limited – no matter how good his information – he had the admonitions of the godly and even of scripture itself to remind him. Richard Madox reminded merchants in a Job-like passage that although they might "reioyce in the theyr ware and theyr money…" they could not "commaunde the tyde to staye tylle hee be readie, and charge the waters of the Sea to looke smoothlie…" By contrast, "let the windes rage, and the Sea roare, let the Cables cracke, and the Clowdes throwe dowen lyghtening, let the surges mount up to Heaven,

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[125] William Goldwin, *On the honourableness, usefulness, and duty of merchants. A sermon preach'd before the Society of Merchants in the City of Bristol* (Bristol, 1715) 9.

[126] Immanuel Bourne, *The godly mans guide*, 11.

and let the waves open and gape lyke hell, yet so long as Christ sitteth in the stearne, there is no danger."[127]

But how did one know if Christ sat in the stern? How did one know if Christ sat in the sterns of all of one's business associates' ships? The connection between faith and confidence was clear, but it was less clear how one negotiated the tangled world of Atlantic trade. Whose actions and words would God acknowledge: the pious merchant or the profane sailor? Moreover, there was no shortage of texts like Richard Maddox's, all reminding a merchant of the latent power of the seas just waiting to be unleashed on the heads of puny, squirming, sinful men. How could he possibly proceed with confidence? He was surrounded by potential sinners and dependent on a cruel ocean. Because he was able to support the church, he was able to demonstrate his piety. But God promised only safety for the soul. The material wealth that made a merchant respectable was never guaranteed. In light of these conditions, merchants' sins were not that they had failed to "repent and be saved," but that they neglected to "consider the lilies." This was a spiritual shortcoming, but it does not indicate the budding spirit of secularism.

In their business dealings, merchants prioritized information above everything else because it was the only way to deal with professional, environmental, and spiritual uncertainties. They wanted to transmit it and acquire it as efficiently as possible and, thus, created a medium designed to communicate business information and very little else. This silence is part of the nature of the sources, not the nature of the people. Religion was almost entirely absent from merchant business correspondence, but not from Atlantic merchants.

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[127] Richard Maddox, *A learned and a godly sermon, to be read of all men, but especially for all marryners, captaynes and passengers, which travell the seas* (London, 1581) 18, 30.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The people I have considered in this chapter were not part of a single community. Some dealt in cloth, others in tobacco. Some were based in Bristol, others in Boston or London. Some commanded ships and others scrubbed them. While this does not offer us any specific insights into a particular region or a certain trade good, it does reveal the underlying complexity of this world. This chapter has explored the disparate components that made up a voyage and the skill, effort, and luck required to synchronize those components so they might result in profits. It has revealed the importance of interpersonal relationships: the dependence that merchants had on their men-of-business and clerks, or the anxiety a sailor felt over sailing with a bad captain. Some of the most prolific scholars of maritime history have viewed sea-going vessels as a kind of incubator for modern class identities.[128] While this chapter examined a variety of tensions and clashes between members of the sea-faring community and also those who invested in it, it suggests instead that relationships formed or crumbled over the issue of self-preservation rather than because of a nascent sense of class. Dire circumstances and high stakes trumped other loyalties and grievances. Relationships were essential to the maritime world, but I argue it was not newly formed commercial relationships that mattered most. Instead, traditional sociability – neighborliness and the bonds of faith and family -- were brought to serve in a new environment.

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[128] The greedy bourgeois, in the case of merchants, or the aspirational bourgeois, in the case of the ship's officers, forced sailors to work in terrible conditions to maximize profits and used terror-based disciplinary tactics to ensure control. Sailors, on the other hand, formed bonds of solidarity over their shared status as the oppressed and their lack of access to the means of production. Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*; Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra;*; Marcus Rediker, *Villains of all Nations: Atlantic pirates in the golden age* (Boston, 2004); Rediker, *The Slave Ship*.

What emerges from this cross section of the maritime community are a shared set of problems and anxieties, as well as the shared passion for accurate information. The economical prose of captains and merchants letters reveals common preoccupations. Likewise, sailors' memoirs reflect both their fears and the premium they placed on a good tip, an insider's knowledge of a ship or her captain. This chapter has highlighted this passion for information and demonstrated how members of the Atlantic world depended on longstanding relationships to get them the information that was so essential to personal success and safety.

Not only did sailors, captains, and merchants, constantly grapple with the Atlantic (either physically or as a space that loomed large in their plans and calculations), but they also had to account for the influence of the ocean on the things that crossed it. The Atlantic was not a clean, accurate conduit for information. It shaped what passed through it. It destroyed, tainted, delayed, and inflated. What water could not ruin, time could – if not through decay then through shifting modes of fashion that made a previously valuable commodity hopelessly out of date. Ideas and information, which had no physical form to damage, could be distorted just as fatally by the number of mangling mouths and hands through which they passed. The Atlantic was not a road, but a sieve. While some things passed unchecked, others were reshaped and some impeded permanently. In the next chapter we turn to those who were dramatically and tragically reshaped by the ocean.

Chapter 3 – Wrecked: the world and words of shipwreck survivors

And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.[1]

The shipwreck was the ultimate maritime experience. It was the ultimate maritime fear. Britain's coastline was littered with the bodies of ships. The North Sea, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean held their share as well. Wrecked ships had a strange ghost-like quality: out of sight but not out of mind, present but inaccessible. Like a person walking through a graveyard, a working ship sailed over the bones of the dead.

Shipwrecks in deep water were particularly unnerving because they often left no trace; the ship, its cargo, and all its occupants simply ceased to exist. Shipwrecks off the coast left behind the equivalent of a blood trail. Floating wooden and fleshly remains pointed the way to the empty place where the ship had been. Shipwrecks close to land promised a different but equally terrifying end, the torture of a slow death from exposure, starvation, or by a savage people. To cross the ocean was to face these fears: death, torment, and perhaps worst of all, oblivion.

Sailors, unique of all Britons, expected no earthly resting place. Regardless of their station or style of worship, others expected a dignified burial in a decent earthen grave. Even the very poor were wrapped in a cloth; even the nonconformists who eschewed candles and mourning rituals wanted their bodies to be treated with respect. Anyone who chose to sail took the chance of being buried in the sea, to be gone more completely than just to be dead.[2]

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[1] Acts 27:20

[2] David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997) 389, 418-419, 426. "No one was lowered to the grave without some sort of

Accounts of shipwrecks were written down significantly after the fact. By the time a merchant wrote that a ship was "presumed lost," the fatal wreck might have been weeks previous. Wrecks which left no survivors, we know of only through deduction and archaeology. Even when people or cargo survived, records usually did not. Terrifying storms and physical infirmity also interrupted the usual rituals of shipboard record keeping. Between the psychological conditions and the physical conditions that accompanied a wreck, few survivors had the nerve or the means to take notes. Consequently, sources that describe the experience of being wrecked more precisely share the condition of being a survivor.

The literate public was attracted to shipwreck narratives. They were printed, reprinted, and repurposed consistently throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To the store of ideas generally available when Britons considered the Atlantic, shipwreck accounts added new elements: stories in the first-person that were supposed to be true.

This dissertation has so far suggested that widely-available forms of print told a consistent story about the seas. They were mercurial and dangerous, the province of God and an expression of God's will. They represented potential that would either be achieved or lost. Sources from within the maritime community, primarily for the maritime community, echoed those themes. Merchants and sailors wanted accurate information about everything from the going price for cloth to a ship captain's reputation. Their anxiety about their fortunes (and in some cases, their lives) created a community that was simultaneously far-flung and parochial. These two bodies of sources – popular

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covering. It was a point of human dignity to observe that only animals were buried naked. A winding sheet or burial shroud was the minimal equipment for the properly outfitted corpse…" 430.

print and maritime records – demonstrate that the Atlantic Ocean had a place in the Atlantic world as it was lived and as it was experienced.

Shipwreck narratives added physicality and urgency to the world of ideas. Depending on the locations of landsmens' homes and the nature of their professions, they might have had personal experience with the maritime world. But if they only had secondhand knowledge gained through print, how could they verify their impressions? Hymns and ballads, in particular, often lacked clear origins. Were they written by landsmen or sailors? Were they accurate or just sensational? Did they describe events through which real, contemporary Britons lived? Did the scriptural truths they offered reflect the experiential truth of seafaring? When survivors told their stories in shipwreck narratives, they provided confirmation: the ballads were true, the hymns were right. The ocean was hell.

This chapter examines the relationship between the physical experiences described by shipwreck survivors and the ideas already available in print. First, physical experience substantiated those ideas. Second, it tied those ideas to a real context and real consequences. Sea songs and plays suggested terrible things; shipwreck narratives reminded readers that if they ventured to sea, those things would be inflicted on fragile human minds and flinching human flesh. Third, physicality reinforced interdependence. The public encountered discomfiting proof, in the form of damaged bodies, that tragedies at sea were not literary, but actual events that required response. Because their bodies had suffered, survivors needed physical support and wrote with proportionate urgency. Finally, the physical nature of the shipwreck illuminates one aspect of Atlantic culture, that it was maritime; that it had people who thought about oceans, people who had

experience being on the ocean, and an ocean itself. To be maritime, a space must have connections to water even more substantive than ideology and metaphor. That shipwrecks were one of the dangers of the Atlantic world demonstrates its full maritime nature: not just a place with ocean-ideas, but a place with a real live ship-swallowing ocean.

This chapter will explore the other aspects of Atlantic culture – anxiety, godliness, and sociability – by focusing on four shipwreck narratives about three wrecks. First, I will examine the wreck that ruined the godly Anthony Thacher off the New England coast in 1635. Then I will turn to the wreck of the *Nottinghman* in 1711 as described by two very different narrators, each anxious about his role in the gory disaster. Finally, I will explore the wreck of the *Peggy* in 1756 and the account of her captain's recovery through the aid of a sympathetic maritime community. I use each text to exemplify one aspect of Atlantic culture, reflecting the particular concerns of its author. However, each narrative could reflect the four dimensions of Atlantic culture on its own; they all reflect a world that was maritime, anxious, godly, and sociable.

I chose these texts from the many examples of British sea disaster narratives because all four authors emphasized physical experience. They focused on bodies: their own and those of others, the body's needs and its frailty, and ultimately the connection between the health of body and the health of the mind. These survivors were painfully aware that a wreck was a physical process. Their readers would have become equally aware of the physicality of this particular seafaring experience. Threats to British bodies shaped the ideas that filled British minds. So too are we reminded that the Atlantic world was a place, in addition to a shared set of ideas and cultural practices.

By examining the voices of survivors over a period of 120 years, this chapter addresses the ways seafaring did and did not change. By 1756, the ocean was more densely populated than it had been in 1635, maritime technology more sophisticated, imperial ambitions realized at least in part, wilderness challenged by settlement, and Puritan separatism subsumed by mercantile zeal. The seafaring community had grown in size and developed more personal responses and formal institutions to meet its members' needs. We see many of these alterations reflected in the texts and yet the ocean – the largest, most unavoidable, most necessary part of any maritime experience – was essentially the same.[3]

Survivors' reactions to the ocean remained the same. They still feared. They still turned to God. They still turned home once they needed help. Time and progress could only accomplish so much when the physical environment seemed unchanging. Knowledge, in the form of better maps and instruments, brought the illusion of control. Better ships and equipment brought the illusion of safety. Dams and canals and bridges made waterways seem manageable, subject to feats of engineering. But it was still impossible to cross the Atlantic by any other means than a ship. It was impossible to experience the Atlantic world without experiencing the Atlantic Ocean. And it was impossible to master an ocean.

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[3] Scientists may cavil at this claim since oceans are constantly in flux. Tides slice away coastlines and storms disrupt the sea bed; eruptions force islands into being. Human interference accelerates change, particularly in relation to the size and health of fisheries and populations of marine mammals, and the presence of pollutants. In the early modern period however, the possibility that the ocean might change, insofar as it could, would have only exacerbated seafarers' fears. Human action, especially in the case of fishing and whaling, made the ocean more dangerous. Having exhausted accessible resources, sailors were forced to take longer, more dangerous trips if they wanted to turn a profit.

Sea stories (or, the problem of genre)

Maritime texts have suffered from an excess of interest. Antiquarians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries collected legends, poems, and songs and reprinted them, mostly stripped from their context. Editors asserted the texts' genuine maritime origins – the definitive version, as sung by sailors in traditional seafaring communities in olden days! --- but never grappled with the complicated relationship between oral culture and print. For most of the material they collected, there is no clear evidence indicating the original plot, lyrics, age, or origin.[4] Did sailors ever sing these songs or tell these stories? There is no way to tell. Maritime enthusiasts performed them with great vigor, but their interest served only to debase the texts among scholars. They were the province of folk singers and maritime museums rather than serious scholarship.

The music halls and theaters of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century further confused the issue. British theater-goers saw depictions of traditional rural culture, but only after they had been yanked from their usual settings, formalized for the theater, taught to professional performers, and reset on a stage in the heart of London before an audience of city-dwellers. *Heart of Oak* began in that environment, not on board a ship. If we ignore this ignoble birth story, the song's maritime pedigree is impeccable. It was adopted as the official march of the Royal Navy and the images it includes shaped how many Britons wrote about sailors and sailing. But there was nothing *traditional* about it.

If collectors have muddied the waters by claiming for their texts origins which cannot be proved, scholars have created further challenges through their interest in literary evolution. Maritime texts proliferated first in the rich world of early modern print

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[4] Laura Alexandrine Smith, *The music of the waters: A collection of the sailor's chanties or working songs of the sea, of all maritime nations* (London, 1888); Christopher Stone ed., *Sea songs and ballads* (Oxford, 1906); Joanna Colcord, *Songs of American sailormen* (New York, 1938).

and then in the new literary style of the eighteenth century, the novel. They were imperial texts, New World texts, and then played an important role in the specific development of American prose fiction. They fall into the tradition of spiritual autobiographies; they reflect in their form and content the peculiarities of different religious groups. They walked a line between fact and fiction and they were usually repurposed, printed in one context after first appearing elsewhere.

For scholars, this complexity has resulted in some breast-beating. In which genres do these texts belong? Who can rightfully claim the writings of Richard Hakluyt? Does he belong to those who study explorers or imperial propaganda? Do his sea stories count as sea stories or as histories or as adventure stories? Does John Smith's essential involvement in the founding of Virginia disqualify his sea adventures from the maritime genre? Should stories about sailors being taken prisoner by Turkish pirates be grouped with sea stories or Indian captivity narratives? Are sea stories examples of travel literature or examples of the new American voice? Should sea travel and land travel constitute separate genres? Are sailors stories and passenger stories fundamentally different? Are sea stories New World texts or Old World texts, a new way of writing about a new class of people in a new land, or a very old type of story that had been entertaining people since Odysseus set sail for Ithaca? To tackle these questions is to fall down the rabbit hole. Classification is compelling but endless, and leads to little of use. The first challenge, then, of working with shipwreck narratives is to overcome the desire to categorize them.[5]

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[5] Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1660,* (New York, 1988); Julie Sievers, "Drowned Pens and Shaking Hands: Sea Providence Narratives in Seventeenth-Century New England" in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, third series, vol. 63, no. 4 (Oct., 2006), 743-776.

Shipwreck narratives have a lineage every bit as complicated as any other type of sea text. To all the other genres to which they may belong (adventure story, ethnography, spiritual autobiography, sermon, captivity narrative, memoir and so on), we must add legal and financial documentation. Many shipwreck accounts started as the documentation supporting insurance claims. They went on to be other things, some ending up as the inspiration for modern short stories and novels. Ultimately, I suggest that trying to place these narratives within a single genre is unproductive and even inaccurate. They have always served many purposes; they have always been read in many ways.

The elements that appear in sea disaster narratives, that so confuse the issue of their appropriate genre, are also components that made up Atlantic culture. These narratives were written at an entirely different moment in the Atlantic experience by people who had been far more exposed to risk than the average ballad or hymn writer. Yet they echo the same elements that we hear in those hymns. They are godly and anxious. In their concern for the opinion of others, in their need for aid, and in their efforts to rebuild their reputations, they are communally minded. And they are absolutely focused on the ocean, products of extreme ocean experiences. The narratives were a product of Atlantic culture and they went on to reinforce that culture, shaping for non-seafaring Britons a sense of what the oceans were like and a sense of the magnitude of British accomplishment when they considered their empire.

Sea narratives to 1635

In 1635, when Anthony Thacher sat down to describe a terrible wreck off the coast of New England, sea disaster and shipwreck narratives were not as common as they would be 100 years later. Nevertheless, he would not have been without influences. In 1582, Richard Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages* was published, a flattering, political text, crafted in the hopes that England could be brought to realize her imperial potential and to glorify God.[6] Possibly because of Hakluyt's ambitions, his writing lacks some of the exoticism that usually characterized travel writing. Nevertheless, the ocean still provided some dramatic moments. Hakluyt described a "terrible tempest" that disoriented and finally wrecked some fourteenth-century Italian explorers in "Friseland" after they could no longer "sustaine the violence" of the sea. Even more dramatic was his description of the discovery of "Morum bega." The explorers, narrowly escaping death in the sea, found themselves facing "another [death] more cruel." They found themselves in hands of cannibals "and the most part of them eaten by the Savage people, which feede upon mans fleshe, as the sweetest meate in their judgementes…"[7] He followed up in 1589 with *The principall navigations*, a much more massive undertaking, which included accounts of Turkish captivities, shipwrecks, and voyages of discovery that left the globe strewn with the remains of notable explorers.[8]

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[6] David A. Boruchoff, "Piety, Patriotism, and Empire: Lessons for England, Spain, and the New World in the Works of Richard Hakluyt," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (Fall 2009), 811-814.

[7] Richard Hakluyt, *Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, and the ilands adjacent unto the same made first of all by our Englishmen, and afterward by the Frenchmen and Britons: and certaine notes of advertisements for observations, necessarie for such as shall hereafter make the like attempt, with two mappes annexed hereunto for the plainer understanding of the whole matter* (London, 1582) C1, D1v.

[8] Richard Hakluyt, *The principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation made by sea or over land, to the most remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth at any time within the compasse of the 1500 yeeres: devided into three severall parts, according to the positions of the regions whereunto*

Hakluyt was joined at the end of the sixteenth century by a few other Spanish,

French, and Portuguese writers whose travel adventures were translated in English, as

well as by Thomas Hariot, whose 1590 *A briefe and true report of the new found land of*

Virginia is almost completely lacking in drama. Aimed at encouraging more exploration,

Hariot's account focused on those aspects of Virginia that were likely to turn a profit,

speculated on resources that probably existed, and emphasized the native people's

docility.[9]

In terms of literary significance, the most influential early sea discovery narrative

was probably William Strachey's *A true reportory of the wracke*, written in 1610 and

printed by Samuel Purchas in 1625. Purchas had been busily covering world history

since the dawn of time in his first book, *Purchas his pilgrimage, or relations of the*

world. He concluded *Purchas his pilgrimage* with 100 pages on New World discoveries,

reserving his final section for a description of Spanish cruelties. In 1619, *Purchas his*

pilgrim Microcosmus, or the historie of man was published. It had a similarly broad

scope, combining Christian moralizing with philosophy and natural history in a series of

essays that tried to explain human nature. In 1625, he published *Hakluytus Posthumus,*

they were directed… Whereunto is added the last most renowmed English navigation, round about the whole globe of the earth (London, 1589).

[9] René Goulaine de Laudonnière, *A notable historie containing foure voyages made by certayne French captaynes unto Florida wherein the great riches and fruitefulnes of the countrey with the maners of the people hitherto concealed are brought to light, written all, saving the last by Monsieur Laudonniere, who remained there himselfe as the French Kings lieuetenant a yere and a quarter: newly translated out of French in Englahd by R.H.* (London, 1587); António Galvão, *The discoveries of the world from their first originall unto the yeere of our Lord 1555, Briefly written in the Portugall tongue by Antonie Galuano, governour of Ternate, the chiefe island of the Malucos: corrected, quoted, and now published in English by Richard Hakluyt* (London, 1601); Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia of the commodities and of the nature and manners of the naturall inhabitants. Discovered by the English colony there seated by Sir Richard Greinvile Knight in the eere 1585. Which remained under the government of twelve monethes, at the speciall charge and direction of the Honourable Sir Walter Raleigh Knight lord Warden of the stanneries who therein hath beene favoured and authorize by her Majestie and her letters patents: This fore book is made in English by Thomas Hariot servant to the abovenamed Sir Walter, a member of the Colony.* (London, 1590).

or Purchas his Pilgrimes, a compilation of tales of exploration carrying on the earlier work of Hakluyt. The collection was immediately reprinted as *Purchas his pilgrims in five books* (with *Purchas his pilgrimage* making up the fifth book), a massive, underfunded undertaking that ended in Purchas' death in debtors' prison. Purchas made available many of the texts that describe the earliest colonial efforts in North America, particularly surrounding the founding of Jamestown. These accounts tipped travel writing from patriotic, pious, and informative to grisly and terrifying. Strachey's account of a wreck off Bermuda stands out from such company as John Smith and Lord De La Warre because many scholars believe it probably inspired William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.[10] These were some of the texts to which Anthony Thacher might have been exposed; although Christian scripture would have provided an equally useful source of inspiration.

For sea survivors like Thacher, the Bible offered the account of Paul's shipwreck on the island of Malta, the storm miraculously quieted by Christ, and the fantastic account of Jonah's punishment inside a giant fish. Perhaps even more significantly, scripture offered an array of examples of suffering under extreme circumstances to provide a model of godly conduct for other victims. These stories were not just literary models, but access points for readers through which they could approach the

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[10] This idea is frequently used to introduce Strachey's account. Scholars base their argument not just on content, but also on similarities between Strachey's word choice and Shakespeare's. Since *The Tempest* was probably composed between 1610-1611, Shakespeare would have had to have access to Strachey's account in manuscript, however, which seems unlikely. Strachey's account did not appear in print for another 15 years; although other writers described the same wreck off Bermuda. Silvester Jourdain, *A discovery of the Barmudas, otherwise called the Ile of Divels by Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sommers, and Captayne Newport, with divers others. Set forth of the love of my country, and also for the good of the plantation in Virginia* (London, 1610); Richard Rich, *Newes from Virginia, The lost flocke triumphant. With the happy arrival of that famous and worthy knight Sir Thomas Gates: and the well reputed & valiant captaine Mr. Christopher Newporte, and others, into England. With the maner of their diestresse in the Iland of Devils (otherwise called Bermoothawes) where they remained 42 weeks, & builded two pynaces, in which they returned into Virginia* (London, 1610).

unimaginable horrors that survivors described. They also gave survivors a way to

contextualize their own experiences so that they could, simultaneously, beg for aid and

understanding – on the grounds that they were victims of events far beyond the pale – and

console themselves with the thought that these were only the promised tribulations the

faithful should expect to suffer in a fallen world. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego, or Daniel, or even like Jesus, all subjected to gruesome ordeals, survivors of

wrecks and storms had been through their own struggles. They could match the lions'

den or the fiery furnace with monstrous waves and vicious cannibals. They could tell

tales of Biblical proportions, casting themselves in the same roles as Bible heroes. They

were equally exceptional, but not entirely alone because Jonah, Daniel, Paul, and Christ

himself had also suffered and triumphed.

Narratives like Thacher's were filled with desperate prayers and observations on

God's power reflected in a hostile natural world. Providence was a survivor's constant

companion, divine mercy his constant hope, and judgment his constant fear. If the

narratives did not make that clear enough on their own, the writers who adapted them for

inclusion in sermon collections added material to them or prefaced them with prayers and

sermons to highlight the relevant concepts for readers.[11]

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[11] See, for example, Jonathan Dickinson, *Gods protecting providence, man's surest help and defence in the times of the greatest difficulty and most imminent danger evidenced in the remarkable deliverance of divers persons from the devouring waves of the sea, amongst which they suffered shipwreck: and also from the more cruelly devouring jawes of the inhumane canibals of Florida. Faithfully related by one of the persons concerned therein* (Philadelphia, 1699); James Janeway, *Mr. James Janeway's legacy to his friends containing twenty seven famous instances of Gods providences in and about sea dangers and deliverances, with the names of several that were eye witnesses to many of them: whereunto is added a sermon on the same* subject (London, 1674); James Janeway, *A token for mariners containing many famous and wonderful instances of God's providence in sea dangers and deliverances, in mercifully preserving the lives of his poor creatures, when, in humane probability, at the point of perishing by shipwreck, famine, or other accidents. much enlarg'd, with the addition of many new relations, one whereof happening this present year, and never before printed. Mostly attested by the persons themselves. Also The seaman's preacher, being a sermon on the right improvement of such mercies. And prayers for seamen on all occasions* (London, 1698); Cotton Mather, *Compassions called for. An essay of profitable reflections on*

From its inception, Thacher's narrative has been many things to many people. To Thacher, it was a simple letter home. The text circulated in manuscript many years, presumably a story of interest to other New Englanders. Forty nine years after the wreck, Increase Mather edited and added it to his collection of "illustrious providences." He read into it proof that God had always been on the side of the colonial project and that its success was divinely ordained. By 1684, Mather had some grounds for optimism. Thacher did not.

Scholars have echoed Mather's conviction that this is a New World text, filled with New World confidence and triumphalism. "Thacher and his wife had to leave… the Old World's society… and begin their roles in the divine plan for the New World… The story thus… ends on the New England shore with a reenactment of Adam and Eve stripped of all they have known yet equipped with a promise as they walk forth to establish a new phase of human history"[12] This view assumes confidence, that Thacher was as committed to the concept of New England as Mather. This is how Thacher's narrative has been used, but it is not the narrative he wrote.

The very fact of the text is proof of Thacher's essential, sustaining connection to the Old World. He wrote a letter home to England to tell his remaining family about the tragedy and to ask for help. Moreover, Thacher and his wife could only be Adam and Eve if the garden was well-populated. While Thacher was alone in spirit, crushed by his losses, his body was in the company of friends. A Christian community already in place

miserable spectacles. To which is added, a faithful relation of some late, but strange occurrences that call for an awful and useful consideration. Especially, the surprising distresses and deliverances, of a company lately shipwreck'd on a desolate rock, on the coast of New-England (Boston, 1711); Increase Mather, *An essay for the recording of illustrious providences wherein an account is given of many remarkable and very memorable events, which have hapned this last age, especially in New-England* (Boston, 1684).

[12] Julie Sievers, "Drowned Pens and Shaking Hands: Sea Providence Narratives in Seventeenth-Century New England" in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, third series, vol. 63, no. 4 (Oct., 2006), 744.

in New England sustained him. This is a New World text, insofar as it shows the sociability of the New World and its interconnectedness with the Old.

The wreck of Anthony Thacher

The story

Initially, Anthony Thacher had no reason to lament the perils of the Atlantic. He left Wiltshire with his family and with the Averys, his cousin's family, and settled after a successful voyage in Newbury, Massachusetts. Shortly after they arrived, "Cozen Avery" was invited to become the pastor in nearby Marblehead. At first, Avery refused. Like Jonah, who had no desire to labor futilely in the fleshpots of Ninevah, Avery rejected the call to Marblehead because "many there (the most being fishers) were something Loose and remise in their cariage and behaviour…"[13] But after extensive pleading from local leaders, and because of the counsels of the Reverend John Cotton, Avery agreed to go. A pinnace was sent from Marblehead to collect the Thacher and Avery families which, together, had eighteen members. Along with five sailors, they left for Marblehead on August 14, 1635.

Thacher's tragedy was simple: there was a storm. But not just any storm. Thacher explained that "it pleased God to send so mighty a Storme as the Like was never felt in New England sence the English Came there not in the memory of any of the Indeans…"[14] Having established the historic nature of the size of the waves and the strength of the wind, Thacher then explained how the ship was quickly crippled and

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[13] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" in Donald P. Wharton *In the Trough of the Sea* (Westport, 1979) 58.

[14] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 58.

driven onto the rocks. There the ship remained, held fast, while the waves beat it to pieces. Meanwhile, the passengers had to decide whether to remain within the marginal safety of the ship or to venture on deck. If the ship held together, they might drown inside as it took on water. On deck, they might be washed overboard and crushed against the rocks. If the ship broke up completely, they could be crushed or tangled in debris. The passengers could see land beyond the rocks. Thacher observed that the shore was not far off, but the storm was so fierce and the coastline so rough, safety might as well have been miles away.[15]

The ship was finally destroyed and the members of the two families swept away. Some managed to cling to parts of the ship, like Thacher's wife who washed to shore in the "scuttel of the halfe decke" and then struggled to drag her bruised body out of the water. The other members of the group clung to the rocks, calling to each other and trying to find more secure handholds farther out of the water. Thacher survived, first clinging to a large rock and then carried safely to shore by the wave that knocked him loose. When he looked out to sea again, the rest of his family was gone.[16]

Anthony Thacher's narrative exposes three aspects of the godliness that was a fundamental part of Atlantic culture. First, we see the tension between what Christians knew they ought to believe – about their endeavors, about their losses, about the nature of God and his providences – and what they were actually able to feel when confronting grief and uncertainty. Second, we see the ways the godly found to think about

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[15] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 59-60.

[16] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 61-62.

themselves and their suffering in the context of the New World. And finally, we see how

a wreck could undermine and unmake; Anthony Thacher was wrecked in every respect.

Christian guilt and providence

The Atlantic world proved the proverbial Christian stumbling block. It was

godly: full of godly people, made use of by God, and used by godly people as a symbol

when they strove to understand God. And yet it was also a space that provoked anxiety.

God's people feared what the ocean would do to them, despite the reassurances of

scripture that they should not. Jesus calmed storms, the disciples of Jesus calmed storms,

and the seventeenth-century hymn writer invoked these stories for his contemporaries

with the lines "God Speaks the word, peace and be still… Where now are all my fears?"[17]

But sea fears remained.

The God of the Atlantic world seemed to take particular pleasure in placing his

followers between the physical rock and the spiritual hard place. Anthony Thacher knew

that he had received a gift of divine mercy. He knew that God used storms and wrecks

and wonders to make his will known. He knew that in this tragedy there was great

meaning. But did he *believe* it? Could he be content in his own mind that this was the

case?

Thacher's letter grappled with this tension between his convictions and his

sorrow. He framed the letter home to his brother Peter in elegant, sermonly language.

He was going to tell

> the story of Such sad newes as never before this happened in New
> England And been Lamented both in the publik on the pulpitt and
> concourse of the people and in private in the Closett and in the same

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[17] Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns, Upon Several Occasions; suited to our common tunes, for the use of devout Christians, in singing forth the praises of God* (1694) 80.

places hath Gods Name bene magnified for his great mercy and wonderfull deliverance of mee out of the bottom of the angry Sea.[18]

But despite this strong opening, Thacher did not write like one was who ready to magnify a merciful God. He was not yet resigned to his loneliness. He was not yet resigned to the loss of his children. "…I would goe to see if any more was gotten to the Land in Safty, especially hoping to have met with Some of mine own poore Children, but I could find none, neither dead or yet Living." Even their bodies had been taken from him. What slowly dawned on him as the letter progressed was not the presence of mercy, but the magnitude of his suffering and the extent of what he had lost. What he described was not his peaceful acceptance of God's will, but his frantic search and his lingering hope that his children had escaped death. And what he asked for from his brother was not prayers of praise, but sympathy. "You Condole with mee, my further miseryes, Who now began to Consider of my Losses."[19] The mind of the survivor was not always accepting and grateful.

In the story of Antony Thacher, we also see something of the personal and emotional calculations Atlantic travelers had to make. Was it better to leave the things one cherished behind, in the hope that one would eventually be reunited? Or was it better to chance new world perils with the things and people one loved best? Thacher knew his

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[18] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 57. I find this passage to be one of the more suspect pieces of the text. While it appears in both the lengthier manuscript in the British Library and in Mather's shorter reprint, I do not think it is consistent with the rest of Thacher's style. It is more artful; the alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm in the sentence are not present elsewhere. While the letter is not short on drama and pathos, this sentence has a flourish the rest of the letter lacks. The writer almost seems to relish the prospect of revealing the saddest story ever heard in New England. The rest of the letter is more intimate. Thacher's voice is more involved with the story he tells and more urgent, unlike the opening sentence which sounds like he points to the events from a distance. There is, however, no way to substantiate this hypothesis or to make any claims for a definitive version of the letter. Therefore, beyond this observation, I have used the manuscript version unequivocally.

[19] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 62.

family traveled with him because he desired it. He was to blame. His children had been

like Isaac, sacrificed by their father, but not at God's command and not to be rescued

through timely divine intervention. His ambition had caused their sacrifice:

> Oh I yeet See their Cheekes poore Silent Lambs pleading pity and helpe at my hands. Then on the other side to Consider the Losse of my deare freends with the spoile and Losse of all our goods and provisions, my Selfe Cast upon an unknowen Land in a wilderness, I know not where… Then it Came into my minde how I had accationed the death of my Children, who had accasioned them out of their native Land, Who might have Left them there yea and might have sent Some of them backe againe and Cost me nothing.[20]

In this passage Thacher also seemed to conflate his children with the ultimate Christian

sacrifice. Just as Christians believe they share in the persecution of Christ by their

sinfulness, Thacher believed he brought about the deaths of his innocent lambs. Christ-

like, they were silent while sacrificed to the recklessness of their father who took them

from the safety of their home.[21] Thacher admitted that he did not even have the high cost

of an ocean voyage as an excuse. He had selfishly wanted his children with him and now

they, not he, had paid the price – again, an image of the sinner whose spiritual willfulness

was transformed into the physical suffering of the body of Jesus.

Other survivors also struggled to accept their losses in the spirit of submitting

Christians. When the *Alida and Catherine* began to founder, Joseph Bailey worried

about his widowed mother. Her husband and one son had already been taken from her by

the sea. Had he been selfish to leave her, or a dutiful son pursuing honorable

employment? He had sailed even though the weather was poor. Had he been

hardworking and ambitious or foolish beyond belief? Even though his right hand had

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[20] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea," 62.

[21] "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isaiah 53:7

swollen until it was unusable, Bailey exerted himself to carve onto a barrel stave the

name of the ship, the dates of its voyage and demise, and his own name, as the ship's

master, so his mother would eventually learn of his fate. Her grief and his fears of

oblivion spurred his efforts. Like Anthony Thacher, who thought that his decision caused

the deaths of his children, Bailey concluded his own judgment had imperiled himself and

his crewmates, and destroyed the ship.[22]

The Dickinson family was trapped in a similar dilemma, uncertain in their own

minds about the course of the path of righteousness. Quakers on their way to Florida,

they were wrecked off the coast of Florida and alternately helped and harassed by

Indians. Their infant son traveled with them, adding a horrible dimension to the

developing tragedy, and providing a weak and powerless target for the torment of their

enemies. Not only did they have to watch their baby suffer – "the poor Babe was black

with cold from head to foot, and its flesh as cold as a stone" – but they also had to worry

about his future should they perish and he survive. Dickinson wrote that "One thing did

seem more grievous to Me, and my Wife than any other thing. Which was. That if it

should so happen that we should be putt to Death. We feared that our Child would be

kept alive, and bred up as one of those People…" This was a reasonable prediction. The

Indian women treated the baby kindly, taking him from his mother to nurse him when

they saw that she had no more milk and rescuing him from suffocation by clearing sand

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[22] "I thought it was a terrible Thing should we all perish in that miserable Condition, and no Soul to be able to give an Account of us, especially considering that my Father was lost, with the only Brother I had… being bond from Piscataqua to Madeira and never heard of after…. I likewise consider'd my Mother… I being her only Son…" Joseph Bailey, *God's wonder in the great deep: or, A narrative of the shipwreck of the brigantine Alida and Catharine, Joseph Bailey, master, on the 27th of December, 1749. Bound from New-York for Antigua. Wherein, the wonderful mercy of the divine Providence is display'd, in the preservation of the said master, with all this men, from the time of the said vessel's over-setting, to the time of their being taken up by a vessel bound from Boston to Surranam, on the 3d of January following; all which time, being seven nights, they were in the most imminent danger and distress. Written by the master himself.* (New York, 1750) 17-18.

from his mouth. Initially, Dickinson's wife protested when Indian women fed her son, but as the weeks passed, she was forced to beg them to feed her child because she could not. The Indian women recognized and responded to the baby's physical condition, making it seem all the more likely that they would raise him if his parents died. Out of bodily harm, he would instead grow up in a state of spiritual peril, his immortal soul threatened by his ignorance of Christianity.[23]

But the Dickinsons were deeply conflicted, caught between their own parental love and their spiritual convictions, and not even certain that they properly discerned the will of God even as he was unfolding it to them. They longed to preserve their child, doing their best to warm and feed him, even if it meant giving up the fundamental task of nursing him to strangers and savages. But preserving him and protecting him were potentially conflicting goals. It would, perhaps, be better for him to die in his state of innocence rather than grow up in heathen ignorance. Better to lose his body to death than his soul for all eternity. Still the Dickinsons were not ready to embrace this spiritually pragmatic conclusion and so suffered on, caught between their fears and hopes. That the Indian women were nursing the baby makes the threat more immediate. The Dickinsons' child was not yet physically weaned nor mentally formed; mind and body both required the equivalent of a mother's milk. He would ingest whatever the Indians fed him. Dickinson did not explicitly address the properties of the Indian women's milk, but he

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[23] Although the local Indians sometimes showed consideration to Dickinson's wife because she still nursed, they also singled her and the baby out for torment. They snatched the baby from her and shook it, and tore away its clothes and blankets. One Indian poured sand into the baby's mouth until it was sealed. Jonathan Dickinson, *Gods protecting providence, man's surest help and defence in the times of greatest difficulty and most imminent danger evidenced in the remarkable deliverance of divers person from the devouring waves of the sea, amongst which they suffered shipwreck: and also from the more cruelly devouring jawes of the inhumane canibals of Florida* (Philadelphia: 1699) 27, 45, 69.

might very well have feared that, even in his presence, immorality was being transmitted from the breast to the baby.[24]

The opening lines of Anthony Thacher's letter situate the unfolding story firmly in a Christian world in which personal tragedy was educational, a chance to see the hand of providence at work. (In fact, the letter will not describe a tragedy, but provide an opportunity for praise and rejoicing over a "wonderful deliverance." Increase Mather placed the letter in the same context in his book; it was one of many "illustrious providences," a teachable moment that would reassure the godly and impress the sinner with God's power.) Although Thacher knew that tragedies were every bit as much an expression of God's power as blessings, he still seemed to struggle to be content with this aspect of his faith.

In the context of the British empire, it is perhaps more usual to think about religion in terms of missionaries and militancy. Certainly Thacher's family was involved in a missionary endeavor, but their outreach was directed toward other, nominal Christians. They were propping up their backsliding coreligionists not blazing new spiritual trails and battling the devil for the souls of heathens. Nor was their God leading them on to victory. A providential God was complicated. His messages could be

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[24] A seventeenth-century debate over the merits of nursing one's own child versus wet-nursing came down firmly on the side of the biological mother. While custom and health maintained the need for wet-nurses, medical experts seemed to agree that it was best for a child to be kept at home and fed by his own mother. If a wet-nurse was essential, medical texts advised parents to be aware that moral qualities were transmitted from the breast along with milk. Just as parents should reject a wet-nurse who engaged in immoral behavior, they should also avoid anyone with physical imperfections like bad teeth, irregular features, or dark skin. Even if Dickinson did not subscribe to these medical notions, he could not have failed to note the differences between the woman who fed his child and his wife: physical reminders of the gulf between the upbringing he wanted for his child and the upbringing that child would have if he was orphaned. Certainly the contrast must have been striking between a Quaker family with their extreme sobriety and modesty and the native Floridians. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 87-94.

obscure. He might take with one hand and give with the other, leaving the faithful struggling to discern instructions and mercy in his actions.

Thacher's grief was so profound it even caused him to question the timing of providence. Although in the rest of the narrative Thacher pointed to moments when he felt he had benefited from God's mercy or intervention, he balked at including his children's death in a divine plan. He described many losses ("my goods and provision Swiming in the Seas, my Freendes almost drowned…"), but his children's suffering he singled out. "Mine owne poore Children So untimely (if I may so terme it without offence) [were] before mine eyes halfe drowned and ready to be Swollowed up and dashed to peeces against the rockes by the mercilesse waves, and my Selfe ready to accompany them."[25] Thacher's final comment is ambiguous. Perhaps he was ready to accompany his children because the storm was giving him no choice. I suggest, however, that Thacher may have been implying something more extreme. Their deaths were so unnatural they prompted him to consider an equally unnatural response. If not actually contemplating suicide, Thacher might have at least considered quitting his struggle to live.

New world saints and heroes

According to Thacher's narrative, the God of the Atlantic was prickly and demanding, judgmental and sensational, leading his people through unbelievable adventures, mercifully allowing them to survive but not unscathed. This was God, but what about the godly? Thacher suggested a model for the godly as well. In general, the participants in sea disaster and deliverance narratives usually fell into one of three

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[25] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 59.

categories: blessed martyrs, sinners meeting the consequences of their own actions, or well-meaning (and sometimes ineffectual) onlookers.

Other writers viewed their travel companions along these lines as well. As we see later in David Harrison's account of the *Peggy,* for example, madness was the price the faithless paid for cannibalism. Likewise, Jonathan Dickinson noted that his African slaves even though they were "used to more hardiness, perished."[26] He described the godly Quakers in his party, on the other hand, as if they were earning the white robes and crowns of sainthood. He focused in particular on the suffering of an elderly Friend, Robert Barrow, who bravely exhorted the other struggling Quakers despite his age and infirmity.[27] Once the party reached safety, Barrow died the good death. He was surrounded by coreligionists, discussed scripture and heaven, left his affairs in order, sent love and comfort to his wife, and was content in the knowledge that he had been the spiritual hero of a deadly adventure.[28]

Sea-deliverance narratives in general, and the narratives of Thacher and Dickinson in particular, can take on a hagiographical tone despite the beliefs of their authors. As a Quaker, Dickinson's knowledge of early Christian history and the tales of

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[26] Dickinson, *Gods protecting providence,* 1.

[27] Dickinson devoted most of his preface to Barrow's example. He described what he would reiterate in the narrative: Barrow's suffering after the wreck and adding a lengthy account of his calling by God to cross the Atlantic and the transcript of his dying words. According to Dickinson, "in the Year 1694 the Spirit of God… require[ed] him to come over into these parts, to Preach the Gospel… he was not disobedient to the heavenly call, but gave up to do the will of God, though in a cross to his own..." Barrow apparently had been loath to leave England, allegedly saying "That he had rather immediately have laid down his natural life there, if by so doing he could have kept his peace with God, than to have crossed the Seas to America." Dickinson, *Gods protecting providence,* 2.

[28] Dickinson eulogized him on the final page of his narrative, reminding the reader of his saint-like example. "… in all the times of our greatest Troubles [he] was ready to Connsell us to Patience and so wait what the Lord our God would bring to pass. And he would often express That it was his belief, that our Lives should be spared not be lost in that Wilderness and amongst those People who would have made a Prey of us. And so this good Man having finished his Course with Joy Laid down his Body and is with Him who rewards the Just." Dickinson, *Gods protecting providence,* 4, 96.

the saints could have been minimal; certainly, his spiritual life would have had little to do with any suffering martyrs besides his fellow Quakers. The company that Thacher kept indicates that his religious views were likely non-conforming. His letter was printed by a noted Puritan preacher, suggesting that was the religious community he knew best. Thacher, like Dickinson, probably spent little time contemplating extra-scriptural Christian heroes. The sainthood of most interest to him was probably his own. Yet their stories show the reader New World saints in the making: new heroes for a new church in a new land, tested by new torments.

Thacher described his children as if they were saintly heroes. Their innocence and bravery beatified them. Their youth particularly pained him. He had led them to "such an end in their tender years, when as they Could Scarse be Cencible of death."[29] Thacher understood the risks of sea travel; he would have known about the things that could happen, even though he trusted God to protect him. But his children, he believed, had not understood; their faith had been in him to keep them safe and he had failed. Given the context, Thacher may very well have felt that he deserved the judgment passed on those who led the innocent astray: that it "would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depths of the sea."[30] Thacher reflected in the narrative on the last time he saw his children:

> One was severed from me Sitting on the Rocke at my feete, the other three
> in the Pinnace. My Little babe (ah poore Peter) Sitting in hiss Sister

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[29] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 59.

[30] "Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless your are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heave. Whoever receives on little child like this in My name receives Me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" Matthew 18:2-7

> Ediths arms Who to the utmost of her power Sheltered him out of the waters, My poore William standing Close unto her. All three of them Looking ruefully on mee on the Rocke, there very Countinance Calling unto mee to helpe them, Whom I Could not go unto, neither Could they Come unto mee, neither Could the mercilesse waves aforde mee Space or time to use any meanes attall either to helpe them or my Selfe.[31]

In the passage the children seemed posed like the figures in a religious painting: a nativity scene, a crucifixion, an annunciation, a martyrdom of children in the wilderness. Perhaps they are most strongly reminiscent of the disciples gathered in a boat being battered by a storm until "in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." The Thachers had been sent out on the ocean they believed by God, had been battered by a storm, and now like the disciples waited for God's rescue. But Anthony Thacher was not Christ and could not save his Peter.[32]

Godly and innocent victims thus became heroes and martyrs for a new landscape; they set the standard for others to match. But what about those others? They were not villains; Thacher had not sinned, but he had not distinguished himself through a good death like his children. What role was there for survivors and onlookers? Despite

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[31] Thacher's ability to fulfill his paternal responsibilities had been stripped from him by the water. This passage also contains a striking inversion of Christ's injunction that one must "suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Thacher's children could not come unto him and even though they were within sight, the fury of the waves was so great he could not reach them. This passage highlights Thacher's limitations as a human father and reemphasizes his feelings of guilt; to gather in the children is the Christ-appointed task of Christians everywhere, but Thacher left his children to drown. Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 62; Matthew 19:14

[32] "And straightaway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightaway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they come into the ship, the wind ceased." Matthew 14:22-33

Thacher's unsettled, anxious mind, he was still a product of a Christian culture and he thought about his adventure in terms of God's plan. His guilt, his sense of his own villainy because of the part he played in his children's martyrdom, coexisted with his sense of himself as the hero in a spiritual adventure. Sea disaster and deliverance narratives functioned as ideal spiritual autobiographies; they contained both physical and spiritual struggles. The battle with temptation – with the devil in one of his many guises – is the ultimate heroic struggle in a Christian world. But the addition of the perilous landscape heightened the drama and gave physical shape to the metaphysical.[33]

The godly heroes who Thacher seems to have modeled himself on were Old Testament wanderers Ruth and Naomi. Indeed, Thacher framed the entire narrative in terms of a pledge of friendship, beginning his account by writing: "The Story is thus First there was a League of pertianall frendship Solumly made betweene my Cozen Avary and my Selfe… never to forsake each other to the death but to partake each of others misery or welfare as also of habitation in one place."[34] He returned to that vow as the ship broke up in a scene that seems to draw on the Old Testament language of the promise between Ruth and Naomi that their fortunes and fates should thereafter be linked.[35]

> …my Cozen thought I would have fled from him And sayd unto mee, O Cozen Leave us not, Let us die together, and reached forth his hand unto

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[33] Thacher and his cousin explored the relationship between physical challenges and spiritual salvation. As Christian heroes must, they concluded that spiritual deliverance was their sole ambition. "God be mercifull to us… the Lord is able to helpe and to deliver us. [Avery] replied Saying true Cozen, but what his Pleasure is wee know not. I feare we have bin to unthankfull for former marcys. But hee hath promised to deliver us from Sinne and Condemnation through the all Sufficient Satisfaction of Jesus Christ, this therefore we may Chalenge of him. To which I replying said that is all the deliverance I now desir and expect." Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 60.

[34] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 58.

[35] Widowed Ruth pledges to stay with her mother-in-law Naomi saying "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: they people shall be my people, and they God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Ruth 1:16-17.

> mee, then I Letting goe my Sonne Peters hand tooke him by the hand and said to him, I purpose it not Whither Shall I goe, I am Willing & ready here to die with you, And my poore Children…[36]

The echo of Ruth's promise to Naomi also enhances the sense that this is a historic moment. Ruth's counterpart, the pragmatic Orpah, returned to her family after her husband's death. But Ruth's impractical heroism was rewarded with marriage and her place in the lineage of kings. The story of Ruth could have been a powerful symbol for those leaving England for the American colonies since it emphasized the bonds of shared faith over the kinship networks of the home country. The created family superseded the ties of race or blood because it followed the true God.[37] Ruth prospered in a foreign land among strangers, just as Anthony Thacher and his family hoped to prosper. Naomi's losses – the deaths of her sons and husband – were redeemed by the birth of Ruth and Boaz's son.[38]

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[36] This promise constitutes a signature moment for the genre. It was not enough to meet death; one must meet death bravely. The characters in disaster and deliverance narratives were often judged based on the spirit in which they faced death. Devotional literature, sermons, and other disaster narratives contained plenty of digs at superstitious sailors who only turned to God in emergencies and almost immediately lost their faith when a rescue was not immediate. They had no spiritual staying power and no professional staying power either, panicking unproductively when it appeared the circumstances were extreme. In contrast, a spiritual hero did not wail and flap foolishly, praying with one breath and cursing with another. Thacher's letter communicated – at least in the scenes that did not involve his children – spiritual constancy. Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 60.

[37] No one appears to have explicitly connected the decision to leave England for the New World with Ruth's decision to leave her kinsmen for Naomi and Naomi's faith. Nevertheless, several sermons suggestively remark on the necessity of leaving one's native land, and on the troubles that can arise when one's enemies are fellow Christians fallen into error. See in particular, Jonathan Edwards, *Discourses on various important subjects, nearly concerning the great affair of the soul's eternal salvation, viz. I. Justification by faith alone. II. Pressing into the Kingdom of God. III. Ruth's resolution. IV. The justice of God in the damnation of sinners. V. The excellency of Jesus Christ Delivered at Northampton, chiefly at the time of the late wonderful pouring out of the spirit of God there* (Boston, 1735); John Macgowan, *Discourses on the Book of Ruth, and other important subjects; wherein the Wonders of Providence, the Riches of grace, the Privileges of Believers, and the Condition of Sinners, are Judiciously and Faithfully Exemplified and Improved by the late Rev. John Macgowan* (London, 1781). Edwards' sermon on Ruth was later reprinted separately from the longer work.

[38] "And [Ruth] said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it." Ruth 4:14-16 In an

When Thacher chose to describe his relationship with his cousins in language so reminiscent of the crucial promise between Ruth and Naomi, he invoked the idea that they too were heading into the unknown together. They would suffer losses, but ultimately God would reward them despite – indeed, because of – their vow of mutual support. But tragically for Anthony Thacher, his narrative did not end with the joyful creation of new life and the assertion of a proud patrimony. As the ship goes down, the echoes of the story of Ruth die away, taking with them the themes of travel, friendship, and rewards. Thacher replaced them with images of sacrifice. He specifically lamented loss of Peter, the child whose hand he released when he reaffirmed his bond with his cousin.

Wrecked

Thacher's final paragraphs enumerated the items salvaged from the wreck: a petticoat, a powder horn, his son's coat which he put on, a drowned goat which they cooked and ate, and a cheese. He also found the body of Cousin Avery's oldest daughter which he buried. These paragraphs communicated to his readers what it was to be wrecked in all senses of the word. A wreck was not just a storm or a ruined ship. It was a random assortment of possessions, none related to the others, a tenuous existence drinking brackish water and eating boiled goat until help could arrive, the body of one

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explication of the book of the Ruth published in 1628, Richard Bernard wrote of these verses: "Naomi had many crosses, she had lost her Husband and Children, yea, and her outward state in the world, which made her, as it were, dead with sorrow, which these Women and godly Neighbours well considered of, and here therefore doe enlarge their speech for Naomies greater comfort; to teach us, That true friends, affected with others miseries, cannot but meditate many arguments of comfort in the daies of their felicity. For the joy of their hearts is unfained for their friends prosperity, as truly as before they were mooved with their calamitie. Thus let us learn to trie the sympathy of mens hearts towards other in prosperitie and adversitie." Richard Bernard *Ruths recompence: or a commentarie upon the booke of Ruth wherein is shewed her happy calling out of her owne country and people, into the fellowship and society of the Lords inheritance: her virtuous life and holy carriage amongst them: and then, her reward in Gods mercy, being an honourable marriage made a mother in Israel: delivered in several sermons…* London (1628) 453.

child found out of the many lost, and a mental perturbation. After all that suffering and fear and loss, Thacher was basically fine. He wrote to his brother that he was "in helth and good respect though very poore…"[39] He was physically sound, but his mind was still disordered. Thacher was one of only two survivors; he had watched while twenty-two people drowned. Why had he, a sinner, been saved, while his innocent children were gone? Where was God leading him? He had already followed God into the wilderness. Where now? And by what means?

Although Thacher was wrecked, he was not alone. A community supported him. He listed for his brother all the people who had rallied to his help, how the attention and sympathy of the whole country had comforted him. These were all examples, he wrote, of God's goodnesses. Nevertheless, he named the island on which he and his wife were wrecked "Thachers Woe" and the rock on which he last saw his children "Avary his fall."[40] Thacher's gratitude was tempered by his still present, still fresh sense of loss. The storm was over, he was off that desolate beach; but he was still wrecked.

Ultimately the troubled, uncomfortable godliness described by Anthony Thacher had to coexist with proud assertions of divine master plans. Some of the best known expressions of faith in the context of the Atlantic world convey a sense of providentially ordained destiny: a city on a hill, a light, a promised land. But Thacher concluded his letter by writing "What I shall doe or what Corse I shall take I know not; the Lord in his mercy derect me that I may so Lead the new Life which he hath given mee as may be most to his owne glory."[41] He could not write his brother of his plans, because he had

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[39] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 63.

[40] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 63.

[41] Thacher, "Great Deliverance Out of the Sea" 63.

none. He did not know what his destiny was. It seems a measure of how thoroughly

Thacher believed he had been undone that he wrote of the new life God had given him,

rather than of rebuilding his old life. His choice of words also echoed the language of

baptism: water that leads to rebirth and the death of the old self. On the one hand, he was

a pathetic figure: damp, sad, and baffled, wanting only some sympathy and a sense of

purpose and desperately hoping his Christian community would provide it. On the other,

he was a saint who had earned his golden crown. Suffering in the wilderness had

transformed him.

Sea narratives to 1711

The competing and controversial accounts of the wreck of the *Nottingham-Gally*

suggest some of the ways both the maritime world and the world of print had changed by

the beginning of the eighteenth century. First, the number of printed sea stories had

grown steadily over the seventeenth century. Several narratives -- in which pity for the

drowned and smug patriotism coexist uneasily – described disasters that befell Spanish

ships. Others focused on wrecks off the coast of England, often in the North Sea.

Sermon writers combined disaster stories with the text of their sermons, including Cotton

Mather who incorporated the story of the *Nottingham* into his instructive text,

Compassions called for.[42] Most significantly, James Janeway's collection of "twenty

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[42] Anon., *A true relation of that which lately hapned to the great Spanish fleet, and galleons of Terra Firma in America With many strange deliveries of captaines, and souldiers in the tempest, and other remarkable accidents, worthy the observation. Also, a catalogue of those persons of account, which eyther perished in this tempest, or were miraculously preserved. Faithfully translated out of the Spanish originall, as it is printed and published in Madrid, Sevil, Lishbone, and other places.* (London, 1623); Anon., *A lamentable narration of the sad disaster of a great part of the Spanish plate-fleet that perished neare St. Lucas where the Marquis, his Lady, and children, and many hundredth of Spanyards were burnt and sunke in the bottome of the sea, by the valour and prowess of the two brave Generals Mountague and Blacke in the yeare, 1657. being their first victory obtained against the Spanyard in that voyage.* (London, 1658); Anon.,

seven famous instances of Gods providences in and about sea-dangers and deliverances"

was published posthumously in 1675. Later it was expanded into a larger collection of

stories and sermons, *A token for mariners*, first printed in 1698.[43]

Second, many of the authors of sea stories imbued their tales with a new focus

they seemed to think essential: evidence. Janeway's collection presented sea stories

much as men of Anthony Thacher's generation had: as moral lessons and examples of

God's mercy. But a different way of framing these stories began to emerge by the middle

of the seventeenth century. It was no longer enough explain how one's faith had been

tested; one now might have to satisfy legal authorities that a wreck really had been an act

of God rather than the result of incompetence.

A Letter from Scotland giving a true relation of the unhappy loss of the Gloucester-frigot, whereof Sir John Berry was commander: with a particular account of the persons of quality drowned therein, and the miraculous escape of His Royal Highness the Duke of York. (London, 1682); Anon., *The unfortunate voyage. or, A full and true account of fifty eight persons. Who were drowned as they were coming from Maidstone Fair to London, in the Grevesend tilt-boat. With a particular list of those that are known, with their names and place where they lived. As also, an account of two Blackwall-Wheries, which were cast away the same evening, with the loss of thirty passengers.* (London, 1698) John Tillinghast, *Saint Pauls ship-wrack in his voyage to Rome, with the entertainment hee found amongst the barbarous people of Melita Delivered in a sermon at Meechny, alias Newhaven in Sussex, on the 8th of February, 1634. and occasioned by a ship-wrack which happened in the same place Sunday-night before, being the first of February, to the losse of many mens lives.* (London, 1637); William Johnson, *Deus nobiscum. Or a sermon preached upon a great deliverance at sea, With a narrative annexed.* (London, 1659); C. Mather, *Compassions called for.*

[43] Janeway was a well-known author of spiritual texts and sermons. He was probably best known for his book *A Token for Children* which described the lives and deaths of holy children and was popular enough to be printed over a dozen times in London and again by colonial printers. His book of sea stories never circulated to the extent of *A Token for Children*, but was reprinted at least three times. James Janeway, *Mr. James Janeway's legacy to his friends containing twenty seven famous instances of Gods providences in and about sea-dangers and deliverances: with the names of several that were eye-witnesses to many of them: whereunto is added a sermon on the same subject.* (London, 1675); James Janeway, *A token for children being an exact account of the conversion, holy and exemplary lives and joyful deaths of several young children.* (London, 1676); James Janeway, *A token for mariners containing many famous and wonderful instances of providence in sea dangers and deliverances, in mercifully preserving the lives of his poor creatures, when, in humane probability, at the point of perishing by shipwreck, famine, or other accidents. much enlarg'd, with the addition of many new relations, one whereof happening this present year, and never before printed. Mostly attested by the persons themselves. Also The seaman's preacher, being a sermon on the right improvement of such mercies. And prayers for seamen on all occasions.* (London, 1698).

Since competence and morality were connected, the spiritual element to the stories remained, but sometimes took second place to the need to placate insurers and determine financial implications for investors. Some stories like the accounts of the *Nottingham* were written down specifically to be included with insurance claims. But even the sensational account of the *Hope-well* was prefaced with a letter by an uninvolved party, Nathan Jemson, who insisted of the reliability of the evidence for the story. He wrote his friend Mr. Clavel that Master John Pye's statement was true, that all of the men on board the wrecked ship had been questioned and had sworn oaths before Justice Wood, and that the burns on Pye's face were still visible.[44] Like the *Hope-well*, the *Margaret* was also troubled by hellish spirits. Some of the crew, according to a "person of worth and credit," had signed over their souls to the devil. Although this tale was even more outrageous than the story of the *Hope-well*, the author directed doubting readers to Lloyd's coffee shop, the heart of the insurance business, for proofs of its veracity.[45]

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[44] According to Master John Pye, the *Hope-well* was visited by an apparition in the shape of a man. Pye had time to observe that the figure wore a black hat, coat, and striped neckcloth before he disappeared in a flash of fire. Despite this unnerving incident, the *Hope-well* sailed. Once it was out of the harbor, however, it began to act as if it had been possessed; it would not respond to the sailors' efforts to steer or change course. Mysterious forces flung Pye across his cabin and pulled his hair. The figure of a man appeared again, but vanished when Pye questioned it in God's name. The ship then gave a crack and began to break apart and sink rapidly. Pye tried to reach the money in his sea chest, but was prevented by invisible forces. He escaped the ship with nothing but the clothes on his back and a bad burn on his face, part of his evidence that he story he told was true. Later, the rest of the crew swore to the truth of these supernatural events. John Pye, Master. *A true and perfect account of a strange and dreadful apparition which lately infested and sunk a ship bound for New-Castle, called The Hope-well of London. And of the strange deliverance of John Pye master, and nine men more; who were all examined and sworn to the following relation before Justice Wood of London*. (London, 1672).

[45] It is unclear from the text whether the strange events that subsequently occurred were the inevitable consequences of dealing with the devil or God's miraculous deliverance of the moral sailors who lived to tell the tale. Through divine or infernal means, the *Margaret* sank, but continued to sail underwater. Inexplicably, the crew were able to breathe, and while the water eventually galled their skin, they survived comfortably by eating the fish which swam over their heads. Anon., *Strange and wonderful news being a true, tho' sad relation of six sea-men. (Belonging to the Margaret of Boston,) who sold themselves to the devil, and were invisibly carry'd away: With an account of the said ship being sunk under water, where she continued full eleven weeks: all which time, to admiration, the rest of the ship's crew liv'd, and fed upon*

The assertion that one's story was true was hardly a new literary device, but the standards for truth were now centered on certain institutions. The authors of these two sensational narratives held out, like talismans, the names of a judge and the famous coffee shop as if they were universally recognized symbols of reliability. Narrative writers, in general, seem to have been careful to give the full names of all parties involved in the disaster.[46] Survivor Jonathan Dickinson included a list at the beginning of his narrative like a cast of characters with the names of his family members, friends, and slaves who were part of the wreck and subsequent trek through Florida.

This tendency to offer corroborating evidence points to several characteristics of the world of eighteenth-century Atlantic seafaring. First, it indicates the size and sociability of that world. The number of people involved in seafaring had gone up dramatically. The number of sailors alone had increased, to say nothing of all the people more peripherally, if no less essentially, involved in trade and travel. The presence of more newcomers required more information. An intimate community was becoming bigger and the demand for more information reflects that shift. At the same time, the Atlantic world had not gotten so large that a list of names failed to be meaningful. If the reader did not know personally Justice Wood who had heard John Pye's oath, then the reader might be acquainted with someone who did know him.

Second, the proofs suggest the sizeable amounts of money now tied up in the Atlantic world. We can see the change most clearly if we compare John Deane, the *Nottingham's* captain with, for example, an early New World adventurer like John Smith.

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raw meat, and live fish, that swam over their heads… *The truth of which strange and miraculous relation, will be attested at Mr. Lloyd's coffee house…* (London, 1700).

[46] Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca, 2000) 14-15, 63-104.

Smith was also caught in a war of words with those who criticized his performance.[47] He was also ambitious, a self-promoter who embroidered his original account of the Jamestown settlement several times over. But Deane did not want to appear like Smith who politicked, threatened, and bribed his way through controversy and close-calls with panache.[48] Deane portrayed himself as a rule-follower. He was not a daring solider of fortune. He did not want to demonstrate to his employers his creativity, but rather his reliability. Deane did what he was supposed to do and it was his devotion to duty and to his orders that made him the hero of his story. Here was a man who could be trusted with the value of a ship full of cargo. Here was a man who deserved to have his insurance claim honored.

These proof-oriented narratives offer a third insight: that reputation retained its value and meaning. Just as John Smith cared enough about his reputation for bravery and competence to fire back at his critics, so too did seafarers protect their reputations in the eighteenth century. Insurers wanted to know the names of people they could either blame or turn to for confirmation. Merchants wanted to know which captains to avoid. Even ships had reputations. The names of ships feature prominently in sea disaster narratives, providing those in the know with a context far greater than anything the text explicitly offered. Members of seafaring communities would have been able to apply their knowledge of certain builders, shipyards, and ship designs to the story of a wreck. The captain and crew of the *Nottingham* cared so passionately about their reputations that they defended themselves in print, repeatedly. They recognized that there were financial

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[47] John Deane's name was spelled both "Deane" and "Dean." Contemporary historians seem to use "Deane" consistently.

[48] John Smith, "A True Relation" in *Captain John Smith: Writings with Other Narratives of Roanoke, Jamestown, and the First English Settlement of America*, James Horn, ed., (New York, 2007) 3-36.

and personal consequences for being known as mutineers, cowards, cheats, and cannibals.

John Deane, Christopher Langman, and the wreck of the *Nottingham*

The story

In 1711, John Deane, commander of the *Nottingham-Gally*, and Christopher Langman, its first mate, wrote dramatic accounts of the ship's wreck. According to both narratives, in September, 1710, the *Nottingham-Gally* left London for Boston. In December, it ran aground on Boon Island off the coast of what is now New Hampshire and after several weeks on the island and several failed attempts at escape, the castaways were reduced to eating their dead. About almost every other particular, the two narratives differ.

The authors divided the adventure into three basic parts: the storm, attempts at survival on the island, and the necessity of cannibalism. Langman added a fourth substantial section to the beginning of his narrative describing examples of Deane's perfidy and tracing the subsequent wreck back to the captain's deliberate attempt at insurance fraud. The last part of the story took place long after the survivors were rescued. It involved the legal and print battle over who was to blame for the wreck and whose version of the story was accurate.

Deane, writing on behalf of himself and his brother Jasper, had creditors and insurance agents to propitiate and punishment to avoid. He came from a prosperous family, and sought and held minor positions in government. Thus, he had much to lose if

his reputation as a competent captain was damaged.[49] For Langman, writing on behalf of

Nicholas Mellen and George White (two other crew members) and generally taking the

side of the crew, the stakes were somewhat lower. Langman lacked the same level of

financial involvement that worried the Deane brothers. Consequently, he seemed almost

exclusively concerned with reputation. He wanted to be recognized as a hero and to

expose Deane's villainy.[50]

The story of the *Nottingham* was a grim reminder in the face of so much success

that the Atlantic had not been mastered and that the civilized professionalism of the

maritime world was a façade, quick to dissolve in desperate circumstances. The

Nottingham was wrecked a mere 36 miles north of the island where Anthony Thacher's

family drowned. But the 75 years that separated the tragedies had brought some

profound alterations. The North American coast was not the empty wilderness it had

been in 1635. The terrible mortality of the earliest colonies was a thing of the past and

the population was steadily rising. Ships were putting in regularly at colonial port cities,

not as part of a divine miracle bringing succor, but as part of ordinary business ventures.

Consequently, the wreck gained almost instant notoriety not just because it involved the

consumption of human flesh, but because it also took place so near established

settlements. No one could take comfort from the presence in the story of remote terrain

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[49] Deane served, for example, as His Majesty's commercial consul for the Port of Flanders. Richard H. Warner, "John Deane" in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

[50] Langman may also have been worried about his future; it was not uncommon for a first mate to end up eventually as the captain of a ship. To be implicated in a disaster like the wreck of the *Nottingham* would have done Langman no good if he aspired to anything greater. After the publication of their version, the sailors seem to have disappeared from the historical record, although this is not to say that their lack of prominence would have made them indifferent to perceptions of their competence and character. Mellen, White and the other surviving crewmen would have cared about the state of their reputations among an entirely different set of people than the politicians and officers Dean needed to impress. It is possible that among their fellow mariners, their account was automatically the more credible one.

or native savages. Boon Island, now home to a reportedly haunted lighthouse, is about 13 miles from Portsmouth Harbor and only seven miles from the nearest piece of the mainland. Christian Englishmen had engaged in cannibalism rather than been victims of it. This was shocking enough, even without the subsequent conflict between the captain and crew.

Mate Christopher Langman went after John Deane with a single-minded determination that must have worried other captains. He had learned the literary lesson of the age well. He named names and cited sources. He meticulously countered every detail of Deane's account. His narrative is tedious -- it lacks the adventurous flow of Deane's -- but has a conscientious thoroughness and a gravity that imply truth.[51]

The anxiety Langman expressed was an anxiety over bad shipmates. Regardless of one's social station, to sail with a captain like Deane was to court death. Langman emphasized this point by shrugging off the wreck itself: they were never in much danger, no one was injured getting ashore, and the water was only waist deep. Deane was the real danger. To demonstrate the magnitude of Deane's mistakes, Langman had to describe his own competence in comparison. But he also had to appear non-threatening.

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[51] For example: "Here again the Captain is false in the second Page of his Narrative; for he neither call'd us down to Prayers, not order'd us up again, nor did he either command or assist at cutting down the Mast. We know not whom he points at, when he says, several of the Company did so sink under Racks of Conscience, that they were not able to stir; for he himself had as great Reason to be under Terror of Conscience as any Man, since he was the Cause of all our Misfortunes. Accordingly he cryed heartily…" Langman also chose to debunk the story of a miraculous seagull that served as a meal. Both Dean and Langman agreed that Langman killed the gull; but Dean attributed this victory over nature to the direction of providence, while Langman dampeningly remarked only that he "knock'd it down with the Handle of a Sawce Pan." Christopher Langman, *A true account of the voyage of the Nottingham-Galley of London, John Dean commander, from the River Thames to New-England, Near which Place she was cast away on Boon-Island, December 11, 1710 by the Captain's Obstinacy, who endeavour'd to betray her to the French, or run her ashore; with an Account of the Falsehoods in the Captain's Narrative. And a faithful Relation of the Extremities the Company was reduc'd to for Twenty-Four Days on that desolate Rock, where they were forc'd to eat one of their Companions who died, but were at last wonderfully deliver'd. The whole attested upon oath, by Christopher Langman, Mat; Nicholas Mellen, Boatswain, and George White, Sailor in the said Ship* (London, 1711) 9-10, 16.

He was not a social radical trying to overturn maritime hierarchy. Intstead, Langman indicated that, as long as the captain was worthy, the command structure was in everyone's best interest.

I chose Deane and Langman's competing narratives as my lens for exploring Atlantic anxieties because they are simultaneously sensational and based in lived experience. They represent the outer limit, the kind of nightmare fantasies that landsmen would have imagined, but told from the perspective of seafarers and grounded by professional concerns. I will examine four Atlantic anxieties illustrated in the accounts of the *Nottingham* wreck: immorality, incompetence, dishonesty, and cannibalism. Immorality, incompetence, and dishonesty provoked fear on two fronts. One did not want to sail with inept, fraudulent companions. Bad shipmates were dangers. But one also did not want to be *thought* immoral, incompetent or dishonest by others. The experience and the accusation could be equally damaging. Cannibalism posed a triple threat: the fear of being consumed, the fear of having to consume, and the fear of public exposure as a willing cannibal.

Seafarers expressed these anxieties because all four had potentially significant consequences, everything from financial setbacks to death. And everything short of death reflected ultimately on their personal and professional reputations. At the heart of John Deane's and Christopher Langman's fears was their concern that their reputations survive the ordeal along with the bodies. If one's reputation and one's body were reasonably unscathed, everything else might in time be repaired.

Immorality

Neither Christopher Langman not John Deane situated his story among the godly, but rather among their professional and social peers. Still, proofs of morality were necessary to the competing tales. Both sides accused the others of crimes, ranging from fraud to the desire to commit murder. Each side claimed ordinary morality and standards of decency. The immoral man must have written the inaccurate account and, by extension, must also bear the blame for the wreck.

Deane was careful to portray himself as the calm center around which the weak and fearful revolved. Part of Deane's reputation as a captain hinged on his ability to keep command and maintain order even in unusual times. To be orderly was to be godly and so he counseled faith and hope. Deane included among soothing proofs of his morality that, once he had shepherded his crew to shore, he led a prayer of "humble Thanks to Providence for our Deliverance from so eminent a Danger."[52] He properly attributed small mercies to divine intervention. He wrote of himself:

> I did my utmost to… exhort the rest to trust in God and patiently wait for his Salvation; and Providence, a little to alleviate our Distress, and encourage our Faith, directed my Mate to strike down a Sea Gull, which he joyfully brought to me, and I equally divided every one a Proportion; and (tho' raw and scarce every one a Mouthful) yet we received and eat thankfully.[53]

Deane also appeared as the patriarchal distributor of divinely provided food, meat that had literally come from the sky. The Israelites had received miraculous food during their time in the wilderness. Hopefully the crew of the *Nottingham* would as well.

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[52] Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,* 3-4.

[53] Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,* 9-11.

If the seagull seemed like food from God, then the human flesh seemed diabolical. After the crew consumed the flesh, Deane wrote "I found all I cou'd say (every Prayers and Entreaties vain and fruitless) nothing now being to be heard but brutish Quarrels, with horrid Oaths and Imprecations, instead of that quiet submissive Spirit of Prayer and Supplication we had before enjoy'd."[54] This passage struck a powerful blow in Deane's favor. Not only did the crew descend to savagery, but it was also not Deane's fault. His abilities as a captain were still intact; he had maintained pious discipline until his subordinates tasted human flesh, a situation beyond the purview of even the most able captain. Deane drew heavily on the idea of forbidden fruit that, once tasted, leads to immorality. Deane did not claim that the temperament of the crew was permanently altered, but he still cast a very dark shadow on the reputation his crewmen. It would hardly be surprising if they were to disagree with his account of the voyage or try to blacken his character because they were no longer pious and submissive.

The potential for anarchy represented by a crew was nothing compared to the anarchy an out of control captain could unleash. In the case of Deane, Langman accused him of initiating the consumption of human flesh. According to Christopher Langman, John Deane was akin to the serpent who tempted Eve to eat from the forbidden tree. He even carried the liver of the deceased to the moral holdouts who, like Adam, gave in and ate also.[55]

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[54] Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,*16-17.

[55] "It is likewise false, that the Men first request the Carpenter's dead body of the Captain to eat, for he himself was the first that propos'd it, and the Three Deponents refus'd to eat any of it until the next Morning that the Captain brought in some of his Liver and intreated 'em to eat of it; so that the Captain's Pretensions of being moved with Horror at the Thoughts of it, are false, for there was no Man that eat more of the Corps than himself" Langman, *A true account,* 19

Both writers agreed that the flesh had a deleterious effect on the mental health of *some* of those who consumed. While Deane ascribed the change to the sailors who were unrestrained in their appetites, Langman accused the captain, his brother, and the merchant, Mr. Whitworth. The humble sailors, brother-seafarers, collectively and peacefully "limited our selves, lest our Deliverers should be detain'd from coming to us," while their social betters ran amok.[56] Not only was this group of sailors temperate in their appetites, but they were godly as well. Deane, on the other hand, was the author of evil plans, a weak link in the moral chain, and a corrupter of men.

Ultimately, the acrimony expressed by the survivors of the *Nottingham* seems less about class warfare and more about a general fear that an already difficult profession could be made fatal by the wrong companions. In the context of Atlantic travel and trade, accusations of immorality and dishonesty carried with them the suggestion of incompetence. On land, a person might destroy his immortal soul while inconveniencing no one. On a ship, bad behavior could be fatal. Thus the reputations of captains and crews had implications for more than just the safety of an investment. Whatever other grievances may have led Langman to denounce Deane and Deane to cast aspersions on the conduct of his crew, they fit into an already existing set of maritime concerns about the necessity of sound shipmates.

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[56] Langman continued his painstaking rebuttal of Deane's narrative: "And as to our Tempers being alter'd after the eating of humane Flesh, as the Captain charges us, p. 16, we can safely declare, that tho' he says, There was nothing to be heard among us but brutish Quarrels, with horrid Oaths and Imprecations, all the Oaths we heard were between the Captain, his Brother, and Mr. Whitworth, who often quarrel'd about their Lying and Eating. And whereas the Captain often went to Prayers with us before we had the Corps to eat, he never, to our hearing pray'd afterwards, but behav'd himself of impiously, that he was many times rebuked by the Mate and others for profane Swearing." Langman, *A true account,* 20.

Incompetence

Just by virtue of the fact that their ship was lost, captains of shipwrecked vessels

were open to accusations of incompetence. Deane had to defend himself against those

who would question his abilities by demonstrating his competence in some other area

once his ship was destroyed. This explains the measured way he described the process of

eating flesh. There was no cover-up. Deane never tried to gloss over their crime.

Rather, he demonstrated that he was a competent cannibal.   First, he protected the body

of the first crew member to die, the cook, by committing him to the sea.[57] The carpenter

died next and the crew requested that Deane allow them to eat the body. (It is important

to note here that the crew asked permission. Not having tasted the flesh, they were still

obedient to their captain.) Then he described a period of contemplation -- an

"Abundance of mature Thought and Consultation about the Lawfullness or Sinfullness on

the one Hand, and absolute Necessity on the Other" – until finally "Judgment,

Conscience &c were oblig'd to submit to… our craving Appetites…." Finally, he

described the treatment of the body. Once again, Deane appears like a family patriarch,

providing, dressing, and then handing meat around a table. Although it was the

willpower of the crew which broke first, they turned to Deane to prepare the body for

consumption, protesting that they were too weak to do the work themselves. In one final

gasp at decency, Deane made certain that the skin, head, hands, feet, and bowels of the

dead man were buried in the sea, before he cut the body into quarters to dry it. They did

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[57] Deane noted "About noon the Men acquainted me that he was dead, so laid him in a convenient Place for the Sea to carry him away; none mentioning eating of him, tho' several with my self afterwards acknowledged, had Tho'ts of it." Here Deane foreshadowed the things to come; no one was so far gone yet to suggest that the dead man be consumed for food, but he implied the sailors were sufficiently close to barbarism just by virtue of being sailors, and so unnerved by the wreck, that some were already beginning to contemplate cannibalism. Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings* ,4-6, 13-15.

not fall on the corpse, tearing at it and gnawing on it, but gave the most human parts of it a form of burial, cut it into manageable pieces, cleaned the pieces with saltwater – a process which implies both disinfecting and flavoring or curing – and then served the flesh along with rockweed as a bread substitute, as if these attempts at civilization would prevent an even greater slide toward barbarism.[58]

Atlantic seafaring and trade succeeded or failed based on the participants' mastery of detail and their possession of accurate information. If Deane was unable to get his details straight, he could not have been a successful captain. So just as Deane tried to demonstrate his competence through his attention to detail, Langman tried to demonstrate his captain's incompetence by questioning Deane's accuracy. Did it matter whether or not the body of the missing man from the ill-fated raft trip was found with the paddle tied to his wrist? (Deane writes that it was and Langman writes that it was not.) Why quarrel over whether the enterprising Sweed who built an escape raft was actually a Dutchman?

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[58] By 1711, England would have resembled a patchwork of different funerary beliefs. What everyone seemed united in, regardless of their sectarian preferences for funeral sermons, monuments, or the ringing of bells, was that burials should be respectful. Whatever the rituals employed or avoided, the dead must be handled decently; and the funeral, no matter how plain or elaborate, performed competently and reverently. The deceased should be provided with some kind of special resting place, the body should be wrapped, and all this should take place in a timely fashion, although not with so much haste that it was not done properly. Winding sheets or shrouds were far more common during the seventeenth century than coffins which were only available to the wealthy. Even the very poor who could not afford a cloth for their own burial were provided one by the parish. The treatment of human bodies was often contrasted with the treatment of animal corpses which could be handled in any manner expedient and were disposed of uncovered. Consequently, when a person died at sea and was wrapped in cloth and thrown overboard, as was the usual custom, the passengers were actually treating the deceased with a modicum of respect. It was not that burials at sea lacked coffins that marked them as unusual, but that the resting place of the corpse could not be marked. As long as the body was at least wrapped, propriety and piety were being observed. Deane's explanation of how the carpenter's body was handled acknowledged the existence of rituals and taboos about the handling of the dead. They had no cloth to wrap his body in, nor did they have the luxury of disposing of it. But Deane was careful to point out that he did his best for the dead man; first, in trying to remove the body from the company of the living and, then, in making sure the skin, head, hands, feet, and innards were given as decent a burial as he could manage. Deane even uses the word "buried" to describe putting those parts of the body into the sea. The captain's account acknowledged that he, at least, understood that the dead man was not an animal whose body could be disposed of without consideration. Even though they meant to eat the carpenter, they could still retain the vestiges of humanity. Langman, of course, asserted that Deane lied. Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,* 15-16.

But if Deane was wrong about the little things, how much more was he wrong about? And could anything really be considered so minor that accuracy did not matter? These were the questions that Langman's dissection was meant to raise.

Dishonesty

In the information-dependent Atlantic world, a merchant or investor could not afford to do business with a dishonest captain and worried constantly that they were. Honesty – far more than the moral stamina to abstain from eating flesh – made a captain's reputation. Although early modern sailors sometimes critiqued maritime hierarchy itself, Christopher Langman wrote as a supporter of that system despite his own place on a lower rung. As far as Langman was concerned, Deane's crime was not that he failed to be unexpectedly forward-thinking and egalitarian nor that he proposed cannibalism His crime was that he was not worthy of his position of power. Even before the wreck and its cannibalistic aftermath, Langman had reasons to believe that Deane was unworthy of his command. Langman's primary accusation was that Deane was dishonest. Even in the matter of cannibalism, it was not the crime of eating that exercised Langman but the fact that Deane lied about it.

Not only had Deane lied about his own actions under pressure, but he committed the ultimate Atlantic crime: he set out to lose his ship so he could collect insurance money. Langman focused on the provisioning and protection of the ship to explain the attempt at fraud. Langman wrote "Captain Deane in his Narrative has omitted to acquaint the World that 4 of the Guns were useless, and that not above 6 of the Men were capable to Serve in the Ship, in case of bad Weather."[59] In other words, the captain

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[59] Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* 1.

intended to facilitate the loss of the ship by making it sure it could not be properly

defended or effectively sailed. Deane, in collusion with his brother and investing

merchant Charles Whitworth, may even have tried to seek out French privateers.[60]

    According to Langman, it was because Deane was dishonest that the crew became

contentious. In particular, Deane used food and water punitively and lied about his

reasons. As the captain, Deane was entitled to a better diet than his crew and to use

rationing as an occasional punishment. But to pretend a reduced water allowance was

necessary when he was actually angry at the crew for thwarting his fraudulent plan was

unjust even by the harsh, inequitable standards of early modern seafaring. A tense scene

between Deane and Langman points to the complexity of the maritime hierarchy.

Langman had the skills to challenge Deane's position. Deane had already attacked him

once, drawing blood, and then threatened to shoot him when he argued about the course

of the ship. He "told the Captain he had no Business so near the Land, except he had a

Mind to lose the Ship… The Captain answer'd, that he wou'd not take his Advice though

the Ship should to the Bottom, threatned to shoot the Mate with a Pistol.[61] Langman may

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[60] "…we saw the two Privateers again, and the Captain propos'd to stand down towards them, or to come to an Anchor; but the Mate and the Men oppos'd it. The Captain was seconded in this by Charles Whitworth the Merchant, who said in the hearing of the Boatswain, and others, That he had rather be taken than otherwise, tho' he had an Eighth Part of the Ship, because he had Insured 200 1. And the Captain said He had rather run the Ship ashore than perform his Voyage, if he thought he could be safe with the Insurers, because his Brother had insur'd 300 1. upon her. Accordingly he put in towards the Shore… and ordered the Boatswain to get the Tackle upon the Boat and hoist her overside, that she might be in readiness to go ashore. At the same time the Captain and Charles Whitworth went to the Cabbin to get our the best of their Goods in order to carry them with them… The Captain promis'd that we should want for nothing, and resolv'd to go ashore; so that we all plainly saw he was resolv'd to lose the Ship. But we was opposed by the Mate Christopher Langman, who wrought the Vessel through between the Main and an Island, and she arriv'd safely at Killybags in Ireland that same Night." Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* 2-3.

[61] "… [we] sail'd for Boston in New England; which we were very uncapable to do, because the Captain, by his barbarous Treatment of our Men, had disabled several of 'em, and particularly two of our best Sailors were so unmercifully beat by him, because they oppos'd his Design [to lose the ship] that they were not able to work in a Month. This gave us a very melancholy Prospect of an unfortunate Voyage, since we perceiv'd he would either lose the Ship. or betray her to the French, because she was insured for much above the Value. Besides, he put us to short Allowance, so that we had but one Quart of Water per Head in

have been trying a spot of blackmail here. Insurance fraud was common enough that a professional sailor would recognize the combination of uncertainty and recklessness that indicated an attempt at fraud in progress. Finally, Langman accused Deane of causing the wreck itself. Having failed to lose the ship earlier, Deane was running behind schedule and got caught in a storm he might have otherwise missed.[62]

The last instance of Deane's dishonesty came after survivors of the *Nottingham* were rescued. According to Langman, he denied the sailors the food and clothes that had been donated for their well-being. He was "so barbarous as to get us turn'd out of our Lodgings, before we were able to shift for our selves."[63] Not only did he lie and cheat, but he failed to respect maritime traditions of charity and gratitude. He frightened the children in his host's home and "instead of being thankful to God for his own and our Deliverance, he retuned with the Dog to his Vomit, and behav'd himself so brutishly, that his Friend Captain Purver was obliged to turn him out of the his House."[64] In contrast, Langman assured the reader that the crew was humble and appreciative for few the bits they did receive, and wrote we "were glad of any thing, since we were then uncapable of

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[62] twenty four Hours, and had nothing to eat but salt Beef, which made us so dry that we were forc'd to drink the Rain Water that run off the Deck… In the mean time he wanted nothing himself, tho' he pretended to us that he confin'd himself also to short Allowance, yet he knew the contrary." Depictions of the seafaring life often emphasize social stratification: an economic elite grew rich from the labor of disposal workers who were unskilled or whose skills were under-valued. If that were solely the case, Langman would not have been able to damage Deane's reputation by claiming he abused his sailors. Deane's social equals would have been indifferent to sailor welfare so long as they made a profit. Yet Langman included in his list of grievances Deane's treatment of the sailors which suggests he knew how information traveled. Accusations made in a forum inaccessible to marginally literate sailors would still spread. Presumably he hoped that Deane would never be able to hire a crew to sail for him again. Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* 6.

[62] "When the Ship struck, the Boatswain told the Captain, he had made his Words good, and lost the Ship on purpose, wheras had he taken the Mate's Advice, he might in all probability have been safe at Boston Ten Days before. The Captain bid him hold his Peace, he was sorry for what had happen'd, but we must now all prepare for Death, there being no Probability to escape it." Langman, *A true account of the voyage* 7.

[63] Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* 7.

[64] Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* 23-25.

working for better." Moreover, he shifted the burden of truth-finding onto the public by refusing to deconstruct Deane's mathematical proofs of his innocence. Instead, he wrote only that he knew nothing more than what he heard about the investigation, "the truth of which is more proper for the Inquiry of others than us who are only Sailors."[65]

Cannibalism

The anxieties of a shipwreck survivor and the anxieties of the reading public were not necessarily the same. The cannibalism which looms so large in these texts for the reader was probably the least important aspect of the wreck to Deane and Langman. By the time Deane turned to composition, he was far more worried about whether he would survive professionally and financially. Cannibalism mattered, but only insofar as it reflected on his skill, or lack of skill, as a captain. But the further the reader got from the incident, the more significant cannibalism became, taking on increasingly horrifying dimensions. The act seemed like a sweeping commentary on the nature of man in the wilderness or on the inscrutable ways of God, while Deane's personal woes were mere trivia. It contributed to an overwhelming sense that the seas were comprehensively dangerous.

Cannibalism was frightening not least because it cause moral confusion. Should one thank God for the demise of a fellow Christian since it provided the starving with food? Should one omit praise and thanksgiving since cannibalism could hardly be pleasing to God? Perhaps the truly god-fearing should prefer death. That possibility –

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[65] "He barbarously told the Children in his Lodging, he would have made a Frigasy of them if he had had 'em in Boon Island…" Langman claimed that these comments alarmed Deane's listeners and "made them esteem him a Brute." Where Deane made a poor and grisly joke about cannibalism, Langman had the decency to avoid the subject as much as possible. He knew it was no topic for polite company. Here the humble sailor has better social instincts than the wealth captain. Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* 23-25.

that it was better to die than partake – placed whoever suggested cannibalism first under a

cloud. Based on the approach taken by both narrators, the best approach seems to have

been to present cannibalism with a kind of matter-of-fact dignity, while asserting that

someone else proposed the scheme. Deane chose to describe it as a grisly last-ditch

attempt at survival forced on him by his ravenous crew while he maintained his grave

composure.[66] Langman, on the other hand, wanted to make it clear that the onus for

suggesting cannibalism should rest on Deane. It was Deane, he wrote, who "propos'd the

fleying and eating of the Carpenter's dead Body" and he had to coax the more scrupulous

members of the crew into joining him. According to Langman, Deane even used his

moral authority to misrepresent the workings of providence. Deane argued,

> It was no Sin, since God was pleas'd to take him out of the World, and
> that we had not laid violent Hands upon him. He ask'd the Boatswain to
> help to skin and cut him up, which he refus'd because of his Weakness;
> whereupon one Charles Gray help'd the Captain to do it, and brought in
> several pieces of the Corps into the Tent, where some of our Men eat of it;
> but the Mate, the Boatswain, and George White would not touch any of it
> till next Day that they were forced to it by Extremity of Hunger.[67]

The three temporary holdouts were also the three men who put their names on the

contradictory account of the wreck. This scene reinforced Langman's overarching

message, that the voyage had been divided a competent, principled crew against an

immoral, cheating captain.

Reputation

Reputation was not ephemeral or abstract. It was as real as any of the other things

John Deane and Christopher Langman stood to lose -- their ship, goods, money, and the

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[66] "The nest Day, our Men urging me vehemently for Flesh, I gave them a little more than usual, but not to their Satisfaction, for they wou'd certainly have eat up the whole at once, had I not carefully watch'd 'em…" Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,*19.

[67] Langman, *A true account of the voyage,*18-19.

clothes and skin off their backs. By the time they were rescued, it was nearly all they had

left. Consequently, accusations of immorality and dishonesty had to be protested.

Although the crew members likely cared about their professional reputations, after they

presented their printed complaint before the world, they disappear from the records. It is

likely they went after Deane as they did because they knew how much more important

his reputation was to his prospects. Indeed, Deane spent eleven years in the Russian navy

following the wreck of the *Nottingham* presumably trying to avoid gossip and rehabilitate

his career. When he later sought minor political appointments, he found that the story of

cannibalistic wreck followed him. Dean died in 1761 at which point his narrative had

been reprinted at least four times, and in several of the editions he made substantial

changes, including strongly worded prefaces proclaiming his innocence.[68]

Lacking witnesses in his favor, Deane tried to preserve his reputation by

blackening the reputation of his crew and reminding his readers that sailors came from a

lower social order.[69] He set up an implicit comparison to remind readers of this.

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[68] The crew's account was probably only printed once, while John and Jasper Deane's version was reprinted at least eight times in the eighteenth century -- in 1722 and with revisions in 1726, 1730, 1738, 1762 – and in the nineteenth century as well. It was printed again with the sermons of William Shurtleff and Samuel Wilson. The wreck has also been the subject of an adventure novel and several popular histories. William Shurtleff, *Distressing dangers, and signal deliverances, religiously improv'd. A sermon preach'd at New-Castle in New-Hampshire, January 1. 1726,7. By William Shurtleff, M.A. In commemoration of the sufferings, preservation and deliverance of a company of marriners, many years since ship-wreck'd upon Boon-Island Rock. To which is added, a narrative of the same published by the commander of said company.* (Boston, 1727). Samuel Wilson, *Sermons on the following subjects; 1. Saints Imperfect whilst on earth. II, III, IV, V, VI. Saints Compleat in Glory. Vii, Viii. The Believer Seated. IX. The Saint's Extremity God's Opportunity. With an abstract of Consul Deane's Narrative relating to his suffering Shipwreck, and wonderful Preservation, in the Year 1710.* (London, 1735); Kenneth Roberts, *Boon Island: a novel* (Garden City, 1956); Stephen Erickson, *Boon Island: A True Story of Mutiny, Shipwreck, and Cannibalism*, (Guilford, 2012); Adam Nightingale, *The Shipwreck Cannibals: Captain John Deane and the Boon Island Flesh Eating Scandal*, (Charleston, 2013).

[69] He played to readers' fears about the seafaring class by mentioning a crime as sensational as cannibalism: wrecking. Allegedly, wreckers did not just scavenge from shipwrecks, but lured ships onto the rocks with false lights, deliberately destroying them to collect salvage. They murdered anyone fortunate enough to survive the wreck so no one else could present a legal claim to the goods. Wrecking has nothing to do with the story of the *Nottingham*, but the Deane brothers chose to mention it twice,

Murderous wreckers were to charitable gentlemen what the crew was to its captain.[70]

Even without this analogy, his readers would have known that sailors had an ambiguous

reputation. They were useful – necessary for defending country and commerce and for

facilitating trade – but they lacked the routines and patterns of behavior that rendered

other laborers safe. After long absences, they suddenly descended on their countrymen in

all their foreignness. They disappeared as suddenly as they arrived, leaving behind

pregnancies, debts, and responsibilities. They died in far off places, leaving no money,

no word, and their families to wonder and grieve. When they were in England they were

part of the itinerant, landless poor, a perpetual source of concern to settled landsmen.

Consequently, when Deane described the sailors' flesh-fueled descent, he was invoking

deep-seated anxieties and biases against a parasitic class who fed off the efforts of honest

laborers. In the case of the *Nottingham*, the feeding was literal.

The innate inferiority of the crew was confirmed because they were affected by

the taint of human flesh, while the better born Deane brothers were not. Only the crew

became disobedient and violent.

> …I found (in a few Days) their very natural Dispositions chang'd, and that
> affectionate, peacable Temper they had all along hitherto, discover'd
> totally lost; their Eyes staring and looking wild, their Countenance fierce

contrasting predatory wreckers with the charitable gentlemen who aided them after the wreck. Bella Bathurst, *The Wreckers,* (New York, 2005).

[70] For popular perceptions of "wrecking," or unlawful scavenging from wrecked ships, see, Thomas Francklyn, *Serious advice and fair warning to all that live upon the sea-coast of England and Wales, particularly to those in the neighborhood of Weymouth and Portland; addressed to them in a sermon preached the 22d of December, 1754, in the Churches of Fleet and Chickerill, on Occasion of several Shipwrecks at that Time upon the Coast of England. To which are added, some extracts from the several acts of Parliament relating to ships that are stranded on the coast.* (London, 1756). "In Consequence whereof, I cannot but use my best Endeavours, as a Pastor, and as a Friend, to promote your present and future Interest, by advising you to pursue such Ways as lead to Peace and Happiness, as well as to the Food that is convenient to you, warning you against the great Sin and Danger of making too much Haste to be rich, of shutting your Ears again the Voice of God and Nature, of being deaf to the Complaints of suffering Fellow-Creatures, intent only on Plunder, and so barbarous and inhuman, as to take Advantage of the Distresses of those unhappy Sufferers, whose Persons and Effects you should rather protect than violate."

and barbarous, and instead of obeying my Commands (as they had universally and readily done before) I found all I cou'd say (even Prayers and Entrieaties vain and fruitless)...[71]

In this passage Dean split the blame between the diabolical meat and the crew who were not strong enough to withstand its influence. Under such circumstances, he could hardly be held accountable.

Deane's captain-like composure and magnanimity slipped in one of the final appendices to the narrative. Probably written later than the earlier portions of the text, the note explained he was now forced to defend himself against claims so "base and villanous" that they "scarse merrit the Trouble of an Answer, were not Truth and Reputation so much concern'd…." The note went on to offer up the financial information that proved wrecking the ship to collect insurance money was not in the Deanes' best interest, and asserted multiple times that these rumors had been spread by unworthy villains. "…How absurd and ridiculous is such a Supposition" wrote Deane, "and yet this is the Reproach we at present labour under, so far, as to receive daily ignominious Scandals upon our Reputations, and injurious Affronts and Mobbings to our Faces…"[72] After reading this postscript, the preceding story appears in a different light. While he began his account by claiming he only wrote for readers' edification, his final note gave him away. He was fighting for his professional life. He was probably also fighting for his insurance money.

Lacking the resources of a person in a position of power, Langman had limited options for his campaign against Dean. Fortunately for the mate, he could use the

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[71] Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,* 16-17.

[72] Langman was very clear that "Interest only can induce Men to such Villanies." Deane appeared to be countering this. Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,* 22-23; Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* iii-v.

insurance claim that allegedly began the string of events that led to Boon Island. If he undercut Dean's story, damaged his credibility, and sullied his reputation enough, the captain might fail to collect on the ruined ship and cargo. The notes at the end of Dean's narrative suggest he might have been facing skepticism from his underwriters. His calm tone in the rest of the narrative had been part of his defense. A steady, competent, godly man does not make the mistakes he was accused of, abuse his sailors, or engage in fraud. To exonerate himself, he put the blame elsewhere, but in a compassionate way. After all, the sailors could not help themselves and he was too kind a man to hold a grudge.

It would be overstating the case to make Langman a champion of his class. Yet he does demonstrate an awareness of a common seafaring fear: that one would meet death because one was bound to follow orders in an unforgiving environment where there was no possibility of defense or legal recourse. Deane represents the worst-case scenario in a maritime system that could abuse and exploit godly, skillful men.

The eighteenth-century emphasis on proof is evident in both texts. Dean and Langman were aware that they could not defend, or destroy, a reputation on their own word alone. John Deane's version of the story of the wreck of the *Nottingham* begins with the assertion of personal and professional credentials in a preface written by his brother and fellow survivor. Brother Jasper explained modestly that he never had any desire to appear in print until curiosity and ill-will obliged him to take pen in hand. Consequently, he felt it necessary to "expose this small Treatise to publick View and Censure" and was confident that "what's here recorded will be entirely credited…" As further proof that his story was true, he reminded his reader of his brother's good character, and that there were witnesses available who could attest to their general

honesty and fellow sufferers who could corroborate the story.[73] He also thanked the "worthy New England Gentlemen" who provided for their kindness. The patronage of honorable, charitable men acted as proof that Deane's narrative was true and supported his assessment of himself as a reputable person. His depiction of the maritime world was of a place that took care of its own, where reputation was carefully monitored, and where people were divided between the humane and barbaric.[74]

Mate Christopher Langman demonstrated that the presentation of proofs was not a practice confined to social elites. Ordinary sailors knew they needed to defend themselves and gave the same types of references. Langman offered as evidence of his honesty his own behavior and the willingness of other crewman to swear under oath, and casting aspersions on Deane's proofs. He was careful to give names even on the title page, informing his reader as early as possible that "the whole [had been] attested upon Oath, by Christopher Langman, Mate; Nicholas Mellen, Boatswain; and George White, Sailor in said Ship." He contrasted their "Oath" with "the bare Word of Captain Deane," clearly an inferior way to make one's assertions.[75]

Langman, however, found himself in a difficult position. Perhaps realizing that there would be concerns over the loss of the ship and cargo, Deane apparently had asked crew members to sign statements that they agreed with his version of events. Langman was now attempting not only to put forward his proofs but to take back his earlier complicity with the captain. First, he asserted that two members of the crew had confronted Deane publically to tell him they disagreed with his version of events and

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[73] Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,* i.

[74] Deane, *A narrative of the sufferings,* iii-iv.

[75] Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* title page, v.

would not support him. Second, he accused Deane of playing on the public's sympathy

in New England by taking advantage of his crews' confinement for ill health. Langman

wrote "…he compell'd us to sign what our Illness made us uncapable to understand…"

Third, Langman offered up more specifics: a name, title, and location. As soon as the

crew was healthy enough to realize what they had done, they "made [their] Affidavits…

before Mr. Penhallw, a Justice of the Peace, and Member of Council at Portsmouth in the

Province of New Hampshire, New England, in the Presence of the said Dean…"[76]

Finally, Langman attempted to undercut Deane's equally specific proofs. He pointed out

the relationship between Deane and his brother. Could Jasper Deane possibly provide

unbiased testimony? Likewise Mr. Whitworth, who agreed with Deane's version, was an

"interested" party, rendering him unbiased as well. Most importantly, Langman wrote

with evident satisfaction, Whitworth was "since dead, so that the Captain has no

Vouchers but himself and his Brother."[77]

It was Langman's emphasis on proof that made his narrative the less successful

piece of literature. It reads poorly on its own. The mate seems to have been more

interested in writing a rebuttal than in crafting his own story. When it is read alongside

Deane's account, it methodically contradicts every point he makes. Langman also seems

to have tried to keep the tone of his narrative matter-of-fact, to the point of sometimes

being dry. He often avoided depictions of heroism or dramatic turns of phrase, as if

silently accusing Deane of unnecessary theatrics. Deane's narrative is perhaps a model of

an older style of sea narrative: emotional, impressive, full of heroes and villains.

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[76] Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* iv.

[77] Langman, *A true account of the voyage,* vi.

Langman's narrative provides a sense that the world was changing, that proof and heroism might become equally important.

Sea narratives to 1766

At the same time that David Harrison wrote his blood-soaked account of the wreck of the *Peggy*, a shift in tone was taking place. The site of cannibalism and savagery was becoming jolly. In 1759, only a few years before the *Peggy* was wrecked, professional actors first performed David Garrick's *Heart of Oak* on a London stage. Although the song included the familiar images of rough sea battles and made terrible predictions about what would happen to free Britons without their sailors to protect them, it included an important new phrase. The chorus referred to sailors as "jolly tars."

"Tar" crept into the British vocabulary as slang for "sailor" in the seventeenth century, probably a shortened form of the word "tarpaulin," a kind of water-proof cloth. (The longer "Jack Tar" did not appear until the late eighteenth century.) Many adjectives have been married with "tar" – cunning, honest, common, bully – but "jolly" may be the most familiar because of Garrick's song. One of the first sailors to become "jolly" appeared in a lengthy poem celebrating James, the Duke of York's second marriage in 1673. Probably because of James' connection to the Royal Navy, the anonymous poet imagined the court of Neptune rejoicing over the news of the marriage. Sea nymphs escorted the ship carrying Mary of Modena and "jolly seamen" marveled at her beauty.[78] It is appropriate that the jolly sailor made his appearance here first, in a poem full of

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[78] Anon., *A congratulatory epithalamium, or speech on the arrival of her Royal Highness, and happy marriage to the most illustrious prince James Duke of York* (1673).

equally mythological beings. Like Neptune, he was a symbol only, representing the great power of Mary's royal stature and appearance. That would eventually change.

From the end of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, authors began to create a very different type of sailor. When Britain's empire first began to expand, they were part of the roving poor, profane, drunk, and disorderly. Ballads explained that sailors were known for their good cheer, but theirs was an earthy sort of merriment; they were witty but their wit was crude; they were generous but their money went into buying drinks; they loved their sweethearts and left them too. By the time the empire had reached its nineteenth-century peak, sailors were rosy-cheeked, merry, and boyish. "Sailor boys" and "sailor lads" began slowly to replace lustful adult men. These sailors were gallant and that much braver for their youth. In *The Poor Sailor, or little Ben and little Bob*, the playwright celebrated the hardships the "poor sailor boy" had to endure. Little Bob bragged about the sailing career of his "daddy" and predicted that he would grow up to be a sailor too. The play ended with the recommendation that "lisping infants" should sing "Long live the King."[79] In 1846, the future Edward VII was painted wearing a sailor suit at the tender age of four. The most famous incarnations of the jolly tar are probably Arthur Sullivan and W.S. Gilbert's singing sailors and pirates who frolicked through several of their popular operettas. By the end of the nineteenth century, the transformation was complete.

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[79] John Bernard, *Song, &c. in The poor sailor; or, little Ben and little Bob. A musical drama, in two acts as performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent-Garden…* (London, 1795).

23. Prince Albert Edward in a sailor suit.

Despite these more wholesome depictions of sailors, the sailing life remained

perilous. Little Ben counted quicksand, rocks, storms, torrents, battle, tempests, high

seas, and wrecks among the dangers that awaited men like his brave father. He reflected

on a storm during which "ninety two brave souls were drown'd," while the nine survivors

spent "full fifteen days in open boat, / forlorn and lost to joy, / O'er oceans bosom

doom'd to float…" This apparently was the prospect that awaited those lisping infants

upon arriving at their chosen career.

The acknowledgement of danger did not alter the sailors' cheerful character. Professional seafarers seemed to embrace the appellation just as much as landsmen. The Royal Navy chose *Heart of Oak*, apparently rejoicing to be labeled "jolly." Like the sailor fathers of Ben and Bob, the sailors in Garrick's march knew about the dangers that awaited them. Nevertheless, their characters were fixed. To be truly courageous and bold, a man needed to show a kind of gaiety. It was not ignorance that made them unafraid; Britain's sailors knew the score and went cheerfully off to sea anyway.

Besides a new attitude toward sailors, the eighteenth century also introduced the novel, a new literary home for maritime adventures. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is probably the best known example and its popularity led to imitations.[80] As with shorter sea narratives, novels about seafaring have provoked debate regarding genre. What can properly be called the first sea novel? And what was the first example of an *American* maritime novel? Although purists often point to the nineteenth century as the age of the true sea novel, plenty of early novelists set at least part of their story's events at sea.[81]

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[80] Johann Gottfried Schnabel, *Die Insel Felsenburg* (Nendeln, 1968); Anon., *The Female American; or The Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield. Compiled by herself.* (Newburyport, 1800).

[81] Daniel Defoe, *The life and strange surprizing adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, mariner: who lived eight and twenty years, all alone in an uninhabited island on the coast of America, near the mouth of the great river of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished buy himself. With an Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates* (London, 1719); Daniel Defoe, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, being the second and last part of his life, and strange surprizing accounts of his travels round three parts of the globe. Written by himself. To which is added a map of the World, in which is Delineated the Voyages of Robinson Crusoe* (London, 1719); Daniel Defoe, *Serious reflections during the life and surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe with his Vision of the angelick world* (London, 1720); Daniel Defoe, *The Life Adventures and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton: Containing an Account of his being set on Shore in the Island of Madagascar… His great Deliverances from the barbarous Natives and wild Beasts: Of his meeting with an Englishman, a Citizen of London, among the Indians, the great Riches he acquired, and his Voyage Home to England; As also Captain Singleton's Return to Sea, with an Account of his many Adventures and Pyracies with the famous Captain Avery* (London, 1720); Daniel Defoe, *The history and remarkable life of the truly Honourable Colonel Jaque, vulgarly call'd, Colonel Jack, who was born a gentleman, put 'prentice to a pick-pocket, flourish'd six and and twenty years as a thief, and was then kidnapp'd to Virginia; came back a merchant, was five times married to four whores, went into the wars, behav'd bravely, got preferment, was made colonel of a regiment, return'd again to England, follow'd the fortunes of the Chevalier de St. George, is now abroad compleating a life or wonders and resolves to die a general* (London, 1724); Daniel Defoe,

Eighteenth-century novels also represented the dual nature of the ocean. It was a dangerous place, the site of shipwrecks and enslavement. But it was also a place that could make people rich, where sailors had the opportunity to be heroes and could come home jolly, generous, honorable British citizens. Novels that featured seafaring were not necessarily sensational adventure novels. Even Jane Austen touched on the vagaries of the sea life. Her 1817 novel *Persuasion* included a drowned sailor whose unsavory behavior caused his family to send him to sea and the cheerful, civil Admirable Croft who was generally well-liked even though Sir Walter worried that the sun had turned him hopelessly orange.[82]

Seafaring featured prominently in the true travel stories that proliferated in the eighteenth century. An eighteenth-century traveler was something new. He was not an explorer and not a pilgrim, but an ordinary person who was expecting new scenes rather than physical and psychological transformation. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century publications about "travels" focused primarily on the adventures of wanderers, on accounts of holy quests like crusades and pilgrimages, or on unpleasant journeys of exploration that emphasize the connection between the words "travel" and "travail." In the eighteenth century, the idea of travel took on more pleasant connotations. Britons could travel for pleasure, entertainment, or instruction. When they wrote about their travels afterwards, their memories reflected this perspective on travel. They wrote

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The fortunes and misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders Who was born in Newgate and during a Life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife, Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last great Rich, liv'd Honest, and died a Penitent (London, 1722); Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (Dublin, 1748); Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (Dublin, 1751); Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: a tragedy, Written by Tho.Southerne* (The Hague, 1712); Jonathan Swift, *Travels into several remote nations of the world. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of several ships* (Dublin, 1726).

[82] Jane Austen, *Persuasion* in *The Complete Novels of Jane Austen* (New York, 1978) 1222.

observations on the habits and appearance of foreigners, moralized about their

superstitions and rituals, and cautioned readers with the stories of perils and near-escapes.

It was no longer seemed acceptable that sea travel should be unsafe. There should

be no problem that British ingenuity and a sizeable reward could not fix. Finding a

method for calucating longitude was consequently the problem of the age. Of course,

even as official proclamations offered handsome monetary prizes to the person who could

discover the key to finding longitude at sea, a steady stream of texts continued to offer

advice to sailors or claimed to contain the wisdom of veteran mariners. They promised

formulas that would reveal longitude using clocks, needles, compasses, and the position

of the moon. What had become for some Britons the scientific puzzle of the age,

remained for others an ordinary, professional danger to be addressed using a blend of folk

wisdom, personal experience, and fatalism.[83] By the middle of the eighteenth century,

travel stories reflected a tension that the maritime profession also experienced: the

difference between the hope and even expectation that such a thing could be done safely

and profitably, and the frustrations that dangers and complications persisted.

Finally, to have one's story read and enjoyed was now an acceptable initial goal

for an author. While the reflections of Anthony Thacher and the insurance documents of

John Dean and Christopher Langman were repurposed in other styles for other audiences,

the writers of later stories recognized from the beginning that some of their readers would

be seeking entertainment. A text did not necessarily have to first serve a practical or

spiritual purpose. David Harrison, captain of the ill-fated *Peggy*, was conscious of his

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[83] Dava Sobel, *Longitude* (New York, 1995); John Skay, *The sea-mans alphabet and primer… also to find the difference of longitude by coelestiall observationl…* (London, 1644); John Tapp, *The sea-man's kalender… with a discovery of a way to find the hidden secret of longitude…* (London, 1672); John Seller, *Practically Navigation* (London, 1683).

narrative as a piece of literature. He appealed to "those who read for mere amusement" as a potential audience for his tale; although, he warned it might not appeal to people "too refined to put up in real distress with those circumstances which would possibly yield them most satisfaction in a work of mere imagination." But, he wrote, even the serious-minded would see in his text an opportunity to reflect on the wonderful works of the Lord.   Like Daniel Defoe, Harrison walked a fine line between story telling and moralizing. He had an exciting story to tell – he even had the advantage over Defoe in that his story was true – but he had to address his readers' still-strong spiritual sensibilities. For those who chose to look and see, the Lord was at work on waters of the deep. And for those who wanted to enjoy an adventure story, he could please them too.[84]

What caused this shift in literary tone and in the way authors and playwrights represented sailors? It was not a change in the condition of the lives of actual sailors, which Britons seem to have universally agreed, was harsh. It was not because ships had ceased to wreck. Britons were still being taken captive, pirates still preyed on shipping. In the midst of all this jollity, several notorious wrecks occurred (including Harrison's) that required torturous efforts to survive and culminated in cannibalism. The empire had grown, but it was still a place that was far from certain or safe.

Perhaps the appearance of the jolly tar was a sign, not so much of the success of Britain's empire, but of the evolution of imperial propaganda. Early propagandists like

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[84] David Harrison, *The melancholy narrative of the distressful voyage and miraculous deliverance of Captain David Harrison, of the sloop, Peggy, of New York, who Having lost all his Sails in a long Series of hard Weather, and entirely exhausted his Provisions, lived two and forty Days without receiving the least Food, till he was happily relieved by the Humanity of Capt. Evers of the Susanna, in the Virginia Trade. In this Narrative the Expedients which Capt. Harrison and his Men made Use of for their Subsistence are particularly set forth, who twice cast Lots for their Lives, and were to have killed the second Man on the very Morning they were providentially taken up. – The Whole being authenticated in the strongest Manner, by repeated Depositions, Before the Right Hon. George Nelson, Esq. Lord-Mayor of the City of London, and Mr. Robert Shank, Notary Public. Written by himself.* (London, 1766) 2.

Richard Hakluyt and Thomas Hariot focused on the new lands themselves: the resources

that could be claimed, the native inhabitants who could be controlled. They also told

stories of explorers. Britain had a destiny, a responsibility to produce (and fund) great

heroes who would be equal to conquering an empire. By the eighteenth century, Britons

were on the cusp of having it all, at least in print: physical resources, moral superiority,

financial success, and the practical know-how to pull it all off through the leadership of

godly men. All that was left to whitewash was the character of the sailors themselves. If

even the ships had "hearts of oak," how could Britons settle for sailors who were rotten?

The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century romance of the sea was just the

latest version of some of the conflicting emotions that Britons had always expressed

about the oceans and their empire. At this point, they were fantasizing about success in

the most forceful of terms, in terms of *ruling* the waves. But better music and more

bombastic lyrics could not change the underlying relationship between Britons' and the

seas: an uneasy, dangerous partnership.

David Harrison understood the romance of the sea. He knew that his readers were

torn between their interest in entertaining adventure stories, their moral scruples, and

their discomfort with the reality of his account. Did one really want to read the gory tale

of something that had happened before and could all too easily happen again? Britain

was still an island, its empire still an ocean away, its people still engaged in the

dangerous business of sailing. Were Britons ready to read stories like Harrison's for fun?

He also knew the general reading public was only the audience mattered least. Would his

investors understand the difference between the idea that Britain ruled the waves and the

reality he had experienced? Would they be inclined to be compassionate because of older

ideas about the maritime world, those that his adventure seemed to bear out, that

suggested the seas were the path to hell? He knew a maritime community was *supposed*

to exist; he had faith in that community to rescue him from the ocean and to take care of

him while he healed. He knew to his cost that sometimes the supportive maritime

community, like the bountiful, knowable ocean, was only a fantasy.

David Harrison and the wreck of the *Peggy*

The story

Most shipwreck narratives describe a sudden cataclysmic event: an unexpected

storm that turns the ordinary into a catastrophe, its very suddenness reinforcing the idea

of divine judgment and the survivors' sense of horror. David Harrison's narrative, in

contrast, is more agonizing. He saw his death coming and could do nothing but wait for

it.

In the fall of 1765, Harrison sailed across the Atlantic in the *Peggy* with a cargo

of wood, beeswax, and fish. Initially apprehensive because of the time of year, Harrison

soon discovered that his fears were well founded. For several weeks, the ship was

battered by the weather and gradually incapacitated as the sails, masts, shrouds, and

tackle were stripped away piece by piece. The ship had not yet wrecked, but the crew

was already buckling under the mental toll of fear, hunger, cold, and sleeplessness.[85]

This went on for nearly an entire month, until on the first of December, the ship

was dealt a crippling blow. Harrison summed up their position:

> If we contrived to keep the [ship] from sinking, we were, in danger of
> perishing with hunger, and if we contrived to spin out the [food] with a

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[85] Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 2.

>rigid perseverance of economy for any time, there was but little probability of being able to preserve our ship, -- thus, on either hand, little less than a miracle could save us from inevitable destruction…[86]

Harrison's only hope was that a passing vessel would see their signs of distress and help them. Instead other ships ignored or overlooked the *Peggy*. Their provisions were gone, and the crew was too weak to forage, when another storm – the fiercest yet – kept them in constant fear for two weeks. The end of the storm found the crew so desperate they announced their intentions to cast lots, then kill and eat the loser. By the time the people on board the *Peggy* were rescued, they had shot and consumed an African slave and had threatened other crew members, including the captain, with the same fate. They had lost several of their number to madness and were so ravaged by their ordeal that their rescuers were afraid to look at them.

Of all the writers I consider, David Harrison makes plainest the connection between the mind, the body, and the ship. The label "shipwreck" is deceptive. A wreck was not just something that happened to ships and property; they were rarely that benign. By the time a ship was incapacitated, so too were many of the human bodies that it had housed. As the ship suffered, so did the body and so did the mind as it imagined what was to come. In Harrison's case, the *Peggy* was crippled but not destroyed. The ship could shelter the sailors, but only as a floating prison that they could not direct or escape. Nevertheless, the ship was the least wrecked of all those who were involved in the shipwreck.

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[86] Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 7-8.

Besides exploring the connection between bodies and minds, experiences and ideas, I also use Harrison's narrative to examine the sociability of the Atlantic community as it was supposed to function and the terrible consequences that occurred when it abandoned its members. He spent more time than most narrators describing the immediate aftermath of his wreck and the help he received. He also reminded his readers that the Atlantic community was not water soluble, only to be reconstituted once people were back on land. Nor was that community a Darwinian world of eat-or-be-eaten or a modern, secular space where state-sponsored institutions took care of the needy. The Atlantic community was neighborly, close-knit, and sociable on land and at sea. The onus for acting charitably rested squarely on its members. Harrison's descent in to a cannibalistic, anarchic hell was ultimately redeemed by the compassion of his community, while the possibility that seafarers would fail in their duty to sustain each other was a source of deep anxiety.

Damaged bodies and minds

David Harrison confronted the physicality of sea disasters. He thrust at his readers the bodily truths that even the goriest ballads romanticized through their tunes and rhymes. Some of his story might have titillated readers who wanted a dose of bloody horror. But he offered another, more uncomfortable perspective. Shipwreck survivors were not interestingly grotesque. They were pathetic. Harrison lingered on certain scenes that emphasize the extremes between sensational and pitiful: the African slave's entrails pulled out to fry while an impatient sailor feasted on the raw liver versus the frantic crew exhausting themselves to attract the attention of a ship whose only goal was to abandon them. They were drunken devils, making a meal off of the head of a cat. And

they were embarrassingly human, convinced that they would be rescued in a Christmas-day miracle and then crying when the other ship sailed away.[87]

The term "shipwreck" emphasizes damaged property, but in describing a wreck, Harrison's narrative focused on damaged people instead. One episode, in particular, illustrates the relationship between physical bodies and minds. The drunken mate, supported by the rest of the crew, announced to Harrison that they would draw lots and eat the loser. They rigged the drawing, killed the African slave first, and offered their captain roasted flesh on a stick. The foremast-man, James Campbell, who consumed uncooked liver, paid for his impatience. "For in three days after he died raving mad, and was, the morning of his death, thrown overboard, -- the survivors, greatly as they wished to preserve his body, being fearful of sharing his fate, if they ventured to make as free with him…[88] In this case, the corpse literally affected Campbell's mind. His suffering shaped the crew's behavior: they abstained from eating him. Then survivors of the *Peggy* returned to England where the tale of their physical experiences shaped the minds of other Britons.

Shipwrecks were intensely physical, even when they were not dramatic. Harrison's depiction of his own suffering was a prosaic counterpart to the operatic behaviors of his crew. He was lackluster and almost prissy. Yet his pedantry made his complaints that much more realistic. Rather than getting desperately, riotously drunk, he sipped the brackish dregs of the water casks. Rather than raving and killing, he suffered

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[87] "Distress generally inspires the human mind with lively sentiments of devotion, and those, who, perhaps dispute or disregard the existence of a Deity at other times, are ready enough, in the day of adversity, to think every advantageous turn in their affairs a particular exertion of the Divine benignity. – It was, therefore, but nature for some of the people to think that the 25th of December was appointed for their preservation…" Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,*11.

[88] Harrison, *The melancholy narrative*, 24.

from "a very dreadful flux," "a severe rheumatism" and found his sight impaired. He

described a scene that sounds like something from a painting by Bosch and then fretted

that the smell of cooking flesh made him feel ill. After his rescue, he devoted a lengthy

paragraph to his efforts to regain the use of his bowels. Although Harrison's lack of

spirit can seem unsatisfying, it is part of his greater diagnosis: that he was "a wreck in the

fullest sense of the expression."[89]

These physical experiences were the foundation of the widely held ideas about the

Atlantic Ocean. Behind vague exhortations to "remember poor sailors" was the smell of

cooking flesh and the pain of shriveled bowels. Linda Colley describes the connection

between bodies and minds when she addresses the experiences of British captives.

Bodily suffering produced mental changes and, in the case of Britons imprisoned by the

Turk, perhaps some kind of religious conversion. Then the bodies and minds of captives

returned to England to act on the minds of people there. People who would never be

taken prisoner learned what to think through the evidence they saw inscribed on other

human bodies.[90] Likewise, people who would never cross the ocean learned what to

think when they saw what the sea had done to shipwreck survivors. Harrison's account

offers a useful corrective to the language of Atlantic scholarship, focused as it is on

networks, communities, and the spread of ideas and culture. The Atlantic had viscera as

well as ideas, smells as well as culture, physical sensations as well as networks.

Instruments of Deliverance

Harrison's narrative showed the maritime community at its worst and at its best.

When maritime enthusiasts wrote proudly about British discipline that never faltered,

[89] Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 10.

[90] Colley, *Captives,* 56-81.

they were not thinking of the crew of the *Nottingham*. When Harrison tried to talk his crew out of their cannibalistic plan, they told him bluntly that they did not care about his opinion. He would have to takes his chances just like them, and that "general misfortune had leveled all distinction of person."[91] It was only the prospect of killing a favorite crewmate, David Flatt, that temporarily sobered them. Moreover, maritime leadership did not show to advantage either. Other ships failed to help the distressed *Nottingham*. The one ship captain who promised bread – the least, he said, he could do – never returned with it. The illusion of a supportive maritime community wavered as his ship changed course.

But after a string of increasingly devastating disasters, the maritime world finally behaved as Harrison knew it could and even should. While his crew debated their second murder for sustenance, a sail appeared on the horizon. With the prospect of rescue at hand, the crew once again behaved as disciplined British sailors.[92] Despite Harrison's appearance, Thomas Evers, rescuer and captain of the *Susanna,* treated him politely and respectfully. Evers "absolutely shook with horror" as he escorted Harrison to his cabin, "thanking God for being made the instrument of my deliverance."[93] The presence of Evers and the space of his cabin – unpolluted with death or madness, and representing proper maritime hierarchy -- ushered in the return of civilization.

Initially, the survivors of a wreck were beyond the help of institutions. Rescue was only the first step in the long process of regaining a normal life. A person who had

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[91] Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 21-23.

[92] Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 33-39.

[93] "Our appearance was so ghastly that the men rested upon their oars, and, with looks of inconceivable astonishment, demanded what we were." Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,*37, 39.

suffered through a maritime disaster would not be set to rights with a ride home, a solid

meal, and a slap on the back. Harrison was insured, but at first that meant very little.

After his rescue, Harrison fell to his knees to thank God and Captain Evers. The

captain would continue to deserve his thanks. Evers represented the maritime community

at its best and most functional. He provided his fellow captain with choice

accommodations, allowed him to rest, endeavored to salvage some of the goods from the

Peggy so Harrison's financial ruin would not be complete, and took care of Harrison's

"people" as if they were his own.[94] When Harrison tried to consume meat – even healthy

meat – his body rebelled and Evers had to nurse him.[95] It was only when he was healthy

again and safe on shore, that he turned his attention to writing an account of the voyage to

defend his actions to his insurers.[96]

In this story, the ocean is both vast and intimate. While floating alone and

helpless, the survivors of the *Peggy* saw and spoke with several ships. And when

Harrison returned to England, he returned to a small community that knew each other by

name. In this context, the real crime committed was not cannibalism. The ship captain

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[94] The rest of the crew also needed the voyage to recover; although some were too far gone. An intemperate and violent mate died. Frightened to the point of madness by being chosen for death and consumption, "the unhappy Flatt still continued out of his senses…;" and only two of the remaining six were well enough to do any work during the remainder of the voyage to England. Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 45.

[95] "After I had gained a little strength on board the Susanna, I thought I might mess in common with the captain and passengers, but indulging myself rather too freely on a roasted turkey, it threw me into a fever; at which the good-natured captain was so much affected, that he took upon himself the office both of physician and nurse, and kept me under a proper restraint in my food during the remainder of the voyage. Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 42, 44.

[96] Unlike John Deane, who used his comparatively good health to reinforce his arguments about his leadership abilities, his control of the situation, and his accurate comprehension and recitation of the events; Harrison was happy to represent himself as the sickliest of the lot. His weakness appeared like a badge of honor since it marked him as the only man who did not eat human flesh. He had not consumed nor been consumed. His body, not his mind, had paid the price. It is during his description of financial recovery that he explained that the narrative was originally written as part of the insurance "protest" and that he later determined to place it before the reading public. Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 37-38, 45-46.

who deserted them on Christmas day, however, represented a breakdown of the maritime

community far beyond the lack of discipline exhibited by the starving, mutinous crew.

Harrison could not forgive him.

> I must feel an everlasting indignation against this barbarous man, for
> flattering people in our circumstances, with promises which he never
> meant to fulfill, I shall not hang him up to universal detestation or infamy,
> by communicating his name to the reader; -- if he is capable of reflexion
> his own conscience must sufficiently avenge my cause; and God grant that
> the pungency of that conscience may be my only avenger.[97]

 Although he did not ruin the reputation of the man who abandoned him, he condemned

him even farther by doing all he could for the reputations of those who saved him. He

praised them at length and by name.

Unlike Thacher who did not know what the future would hold and had no

financial safety net beyond others' goodwill, Harrison seemed optimistic that the

charitable maritime community and the insurers would all function as they ought. He

needed money which Evers provided, although he was quick to point out that other

generous men would have done the same. He had insured the ship in New York and took

the proper legal steps to see that his "owners" would be compensated. Unlike Deane,

struggling to convince his peers and investors that he was not guilty of fraud, Harrison

seemed to have no worries about his own conduct. Unchallenged by his crew and

supported by the testimony of Captain Evers, he went home.

The final shock in this sensational story is the notion of David Harrison boarding

another ship. There was no avoiding it, no possibility of developing a phobia that would

keep him land-bound. If he wanted to go home, he had to cross the ocean. He concluded

his narrative: "I am now returning to New-York, in the ship Hope, captain Benjamin

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[97] Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 14-15.

Davis; where I shortly hope the goodness which I have already experience at the hand of Providence will be crowned by a joyful meeting of my wife and family."[98] Depending on the speed of the insurers, Harrison may still have had little ready money. He probably borrowed the price of his fare or sailed for free through Davis' good will. The Atlantic community, after disappointing him so bitterly, carried him through to the end

Unlike a parish or a congregation, the maritime community was not defined by geography, politics, or theology. But it was real enough that people in Harrison's shoes automatically expected things from it and were ruined or saved based on whether their expectations were met. It was real enough that Harrison refrained from mentioning the name of the captain who abandoned him because he knew the community would condemn this breach of its moral code.

Conclusion

The connection between the teller of a sea story and his audience is particularly important in these stories that describe extreme calamities. The ordinary, everyday problems described in the previous chapter took place primarily on the pages of account books or in letters whose audience was limited. But spectacular disasters required a larger audience: family and friends who needed to be informed and insurance agents who needed to be convinced that the disaster had been unavoidable. Victims of spectacular disasters were usually in need of support – payouts from their underwriters, or less formal forms of aid from their friends ranging from nursing to loans – and so their need to persuade audiences of their honesty was urgent. But in some respects, victims projected

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[98] Harrison, *The melancholy narrative,* 47.

their stories to an even larger audience than immediate associates and professional

insurers. They were also telling their tales before the court of public opinion in a great

act of confession. Consequently, this multifoliate act of writing reflected the worries of

sea survivors but also went on to shape the ideas of Britons generally. Survivors *wanted*

the public to hear and judge their tales; they *wanted* to shape public opinion. I turn next

to that public and the ways they acted on their ideas about the godly, anxious, sociable

Atlantic.

Chapter 4 -- To Aid Poor Sailors

I have read somewhere that seamen are neither reckoned among the living nor the dead, their whole lives being spent in jeopardy. No sooner is one peril over, but another comes rolling on, like the waves of a full grown sea.[1]

At the conclusion of his first literary adventure, Robinson Crusoe observed "I might well say now indeed that the latter end of Job was better than the beginning." Like the suffering patriarch, Crusoe's life was divided by an episode of misfortune. But just as God rewarded Job twice over for his faithfulness, so too was Crusoe rewarded with faithful friends who had protected his interests.[2] When they presented him with the fruits of their labor on his behalf, he found himself the master of an estate and a fortune of over £5000. Crusoe then readily acknowledged that he owed this unexpected wealth to the industry of honest men and women and to the favor of Providence. His first act as a wealthy man was to reward the good captain, the "original benefactor… who had been first charitable to me in my distress, kind to me in my beginning, and honest to me at the end." Crusoe explained "I showed him all that was sent me; I told him that next to the Providence of Heaven, which disposes all things, it was owing to him; and that it now lay

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[1] Garstin, Crosbie, ed., *Samuel Kelly: an eighteenth century seaman whose days have been few and evil, to which is added remarks, etc., on places he visited during his pilgrimage in this wilderness* (New York, 1925) 138.

[2] "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days." Job 42:10-17

on me to reward him, which I would do a hundredfold." Besides giving the captain

money, Crusoe also forgave him a debt of 470 "moidores." Now it was possible for

Crusoe's role to expand: he was no longer just Job, either suffering or blessed, but also a

benevolent patron in his own right, an agent of a kindly providence dispensing blessings.[3]

Robinson Crusoe's homecoming was unusually splendid. Few survivors of an

imperial disaster returned home to find their bank accounts bursting and their friends all

loyal and true. But Crusoe's return correctly illustrated the expectation of reciprocal

support that existed among the British maritime community and some of its many forms,

from honest dealing to loans of money and the discharging of debts. Defoe has been

hailed as an innovator, both for his use of the novel form and for his modern and

individualist hero; however, Crusoe's much-debated individualism receded as soon as the

island was far behind him.[4] He was, once again, part of an interconnected community

which facilitated his miraculous return and which he, in turn, supported.

This chapter will explore the communal response to the victims of a range of

Atlantic calamities, from poor business decisions to Crusoe-like wrecks and captivities.

In so doing, it will show that, even as some Britons turned their energies to investigating

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[3] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York, 1981) 250-257.

[4] "That Robinson Crusoe… is an embodiment of economic individualism hardly needs demonstration." Ian Watt, "*Robinson Crusoe*, individualism and the novel" in *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley, 1957) 63. "Robinson Crusoe embodies a sturdy individualism, the values of the English yeoman. Yet, in ruling over his little kingdom, Crusoe also shoes a monarchist desire for order and control." Louis James, "Unwrapping Crusoe: Retrospective and Prospective Views" in Lieve Spaas ed., *Robinson Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphoses* (New York, 1996) 7. See also: Samuel Baker, *Written on the Water: British Romanticism and the Maritime Empire of Culture* (Charlottesville, 2010) 137.; Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton, 2010) ch. 2.; Alan Downie, "Robinson Crusoe's Eighteenth-Century Contexts" in Lieve Spaas ed., *Robinson Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphoses* (New York, 1996) 13-27.; E. Anthony James, "Isolation Dramatized: Defoe's Fictional Artistry in Robinson Crusoe" in Harold Bloom ed., *Robinson Crusoe* (New York, 1995) 120-134.; Geoffrey Sill, "Myths of Modern Individualism: Defoe, Franklin, and Whitman" in Maximillian E. Novak and Carl Fisher, *Approaches to Teaching Defoe's Robinson Crusoe* (New York, 2005) 61-68.; Ian Watt, "Individualism and the Novel" in Harold Bloom ed., *Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe* (New York, 1988) 16-20.

and developing the empire's potential, they were no less connected to communities and institutions at home. Traditional social structures like the parish and the family played a significant role in encouraging the imperial ambitions of their members and sustaining them through imperial crises. Relatively new manifestations of these structures, like groups of dissenters or recently-formed business communities, did their part to smooth the way for other Crusoes. Even that most modern-seeming of practices – insurance – had its roots in traditions of long-standing like charitable giving and sociability, and relied on rumor and reputation to evaluate the validity of claims.

To explore these issues, this chapter turns to a different set of perspectives and a different set of sources. I focus on those people only tangentially related through their interest and support to the maritime community. They did not cross the Atlantic, had no investments in international trade, and yet still found themselves part of the Atlantic world by virtue of the fact that their country had an overseas empire to support. Their perspectives are part of the records that represent the workings of formal and informal institutions which supported seafarers and sea-victims: families, local parishes, religious communities, and charities. The support of these traditional groups -- as opposed to organizations created specifically to address the needs of the modern, secular, imperial Briton – demonstrates the continued importance of the godly to the Atlantic world and the persistence of Atlantic anxieties in Britain. The ocean had a long reach. Even those not on the ocean continued to be affected by it: how many captives would they be called on to redeem; how many transient sailors would they be required to fund; how many coreligionists would come limping back in need of support?

While the fruits of the empire were rich, their cost could be high, as we have seen in the previous chapters. For those who succeeded, the empire could be a tool for self-reinvention. A successful imperial experience allowed for new modes of thinking and acting as other historians have demonstrated. On the margins of the civilized world, it was possible for someone equally marginal in England to gain power and status and to think of himself in bigger, less parochial terms. This has left us with the impression of the empire as the conduit to individualism, nationalism, a commercial middle class, and, ultimately, modernity. [5] This has left us with the impression of an empire that is dry, having little to do with the anarchic power of the seas.

But all of this evolution in thinking, self-image, and social worth is predicated on historians' assumption of success. What changes in thought did the empire produce in those who failed? Were the rules of society equally malleable for imperial victims? If a successful empire led to modernity, to what did a struggling empire lead? This chapter will address these questions by examining the relationship between the victims of imperial failures and the institutions that supported them and the forms that charity might take. It will show that the transformative power of the empire was matched by the destructive power of the ocean.

Counterintuitively, the seas had a conservative influence on the empire. They exposed Britons to the new and exotic and, for good or ill, caused profound alterations,

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[5] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992). Richard Drayton, "Knowledge and Empire" in P.J. Marshall ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1998) 231-252. Alison Games, *The Web of Empire* (Oxford, 2008). Jack Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution" in P.J. Marshall ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1998) 208-230. David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995) part III. Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995) Introduction.; Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003). Kathleen Wilson ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004).

but they staunchly resisted change themselves. Maritime communities clung to their traditions; sailors boasted of experience not innovation. In 1750 the seas presented the same dangers that they had in 1650 creating the illusion of stasis. For 200 years, the godly sang about the temperamental ocean, expressing the will of God who was one day angry and the next compassionate. For 200 years, the seas stayed the same, even in their mutability. Of course, the world had changed as had Britain's place in it, but ever present maritime anxieties argue against progress or transcendence. We can see the conservatism of the Atlantic in language with which it was described: the consistent repetition of worry and fear, of images of storms and wrecks and cannibals that persisted into the nineteenth century. We see the conservatism of the Atlantic in the way it resisted religious evolution; the God of those at sea remained a providential God well into the eighteenth century. And we see the conservatism of the Atlantic in the way, for all its size, it often acted like a small town; a sailor far from home was delighted to meet -- not another Briton, nor a fellow Christian -- but a Dover man. Consequently, as this chapter will demonstrate, the changes facilitated by success were constrained by failures; and the fortunes of the individualistic, modern, imperial Britons were inextricably tied to communities of traditional Englishmen.

This chapter also argues for understanding those connected to the sailing profession and to maritime catastrophes as different from the poor as historians usually discuss them. While sailors shared some characteristics with the traditional poor, their collective reputation set them apart. Like most of the itinerant poor, sailors were viewed with suspicion. Unlike other young landless men or the elderly and infirm, sailors were periodically heroes. Moreover, the seas rendered many Britons permanently or

temporarily poor. While the average member of the poor, as a class, spent his entire life in that state, the maritime poor had often suffered a sudden reversal of fortune.

Finally, this chapter will consider the role of insurance, a relative newcomer and a challenger to the power of older institutions when it came to providing support. Was insurance a development revolutionary enough to alter long-standing maritime practices and shake Britons' reliance on family, church, and God? It is tempting to argue that insurance constituted that modernizing shift that separates the uneasy maritime world of the Atlantic from the proud, successful British empire. It had been available to merchants wanting to protect ships and cargo since the 1540s, but by the latter half of the sixteenth century, there were still only 30 insurance brokers in London. By the end of the seventeenth century, marine insurance amounted to several million pounds of business but was in the hands of individual underwriters. In 1719, 150 subscribers were underwriting London's marine risks. A year later, the Royal Exchange Assurance and the London Assurance acquired royal charters to provide insurance for maritime ventures. The charters prevented other corporations from providing insurance, giving individual underwriters a boost. From 1720 on, the demand for insurance did nothing but grow.[6] Insurance brought with it a new professionalism, new expectations that a merchant had mastered the technicalities of his trade. Better funded than family and more communicative than God, insurance companies seemed poised to transform the maritime world. The extent to which they did, and did not, reveals the fundamental nature of the British maritime experience. While acknowledging that the increased role of insurance constituted a significant change for merchants and investors, this chapter argues that

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[6] H.A.L. Cockerell and Edwin Green, *The British Insurance Business, 1547-1970* (London, 1976) 3-6.

insurance retained its roots in charitable societies. Originally a form of charity itself, insurance offered no substantial challenge to the aid provided by family and friends.

The Transforming Empire

The field of cultural history is, perhaps, ill-equipped to demonstrate change, and this dissertation focusing as it does on sea songs, shipwreck narratives, and church hymns might be in danger of concluding that at the end of two centuries nothing was different. In contrast, for historians of the empire as a demographic, economic, political, or technological space, change is a constant theme in their work. They describe an evolving world and often a kind of progress which, if not always beneficial, brings the early modern world closer to the modern. In terms of technology, for example, several generations of scholars have produced a sizeable body of work that accounts for the evolution of improved maritime knowledge and equipment. Under the auspices of the expanding empire, British shipbuilders, gunners, and captains had the time and budgets to explore and perfect their craft.[7] When it comes to demography, historians have demonstrated how populations and the composition of populations shifted between 1500 and 1800 as a result of the empire. Migration, both voluntary and forced, changed the look of the North American and Caribbean colonies, from their racial makeup to their political allegiances. The empire altered and reaffirmed gender roles, besides creating notions of race along with the African diaspora.[8] According to economic historians, the

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[7] N.A.M. Rodger "Guns and Sails in the English Colonization" in Nicholas Canny ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: the Origins of Empire* (Oxford, 1988) 86-90.

[8] Lisa Forman Cody, *Birthing the Nation: Sex, Science, and the Conception of Eighteenth-Century Britons* (Oxford, 2005).; Joyce E. Chaplin, "Race" in David Armitage and Michael Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York, 2002) ch. 8.; Alison Games, "Migration" in David Armitage and Michael Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York, 2002) ch. 2.; Sarah M.S. Pearsall, "Gender" in David Armitage and Michael Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York, 2002) ch. 6

empire had a role to play in a host of financial developments, from the creation of trade networks to the exploitation of colonial markets. While the empire may have never added to the economy as much as its investors would have liked, the possibilities suggested by the empire went on to shape British fiscal priorities and policies well into the twentieth century. These are just a few examples of the more quantifiable phenomena produced or influenced in some way by the empire. In the case of all these examples, historians have represented their arguments in terms of progression -- from less skilled to more skilled, smaller to larger, poorer to richer.[9]

In the same manner, historians who consider the effects of the empire on Britons' sense of themselves have also identified progressive transformation over time. Just like technological improvements or economic flourishing, the British imagination moved from provincial to cosmopolitan, from communal to individualistic, from the pre-modern toward the modern. But unlike, for example, the development of faster, safer ships, these changes have not been hailed as unambiguous triumphs. Historians have been quick to acknowledge the costs that accompanied a new way of thinking about individual and national identity.[10] But whether these developments contributed to British growth and glory or the crimes of colonialism, historians are basically in agreement that change happened. For better or worse, people thought of the world and their place in it differently because of the empire.

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[9] This is not to suggest that historians have been unsophisticated in their representations of these fields. They have scrupulously accounted for financial collapses, disgruntled settlers who went home, and other significant trends within their area of study that pulled against the tide. But ultimately those are only minor aberrations compared to a prevailing tide.

[10] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000).

There are three main areas around which historians focus when they consider Britons' changing sense of self. First, they have noticed that the empire allowed the shape of a non-British Other to solidify as an identity against which Britons could define themselves.[11] They were not Catholic, Muslim or some unspecified variety of heathen. They were not Spanish and, therefore, also not lazy, cruel, deceitful, and lecherous. They were not French and, therefore, also not "superstitious, militarist, decadent, and unfree." They were not brown skinned, savage, or enslaved. They were not content to live in a state of nature. Because of the empire they knew who they were not. [12]

In many cases, the qualities of the Other are easier to describe than the qualities of the British. This is particularly true in the case of British Protestantism, a source of identity that historians consider paramount, but one so fragmented that it eludes definition beyond "not Catholic." We see this illustrated when we consider the work of missionary societies in the New World who focused their efforts more on converting other varieties of Protestants than on the Indians. Studies that focus on the New World

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[11] Colley, *Britons,* Intro.; Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000); Kathleen Wilson "Introduction: histories, empires, modernities" in Kathleen Wilson ed., *A New Imperial history: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004) 4-10.

[12] In *Captives*, Linda Colley describes the anxiety caused by British sailors and travelers who were taken captive in the Mediterranean. She explains that the common knowledge that Britons languished in captivity shocked people, in large part, because it went so strongly against the grain of British imperial identity. "Most of all, this mode of captive-taking provoked anxiety because it happened at sea… For generations of publicists and politicians, sea-power was what made British empire distinctive and benevolent. The empires of Ancient Rome and Catholic Spain, they argued, had nourished atrocity, corrupted their makers, and ultimately declined, because of military conquest. Britain's empire, by contrast – because it was predominantly maritime – would confer freedom and prosperity, and consequently endure." Thus, while Colley explores the reality of British captivity and its undermining effect on that aspect of British identity associated with freedom, she also demonstrates that Britons thought of themselves as fundamentally deserving of freedom. Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York, 2002) 46-47. See also: Colley, *Britons*, 5.; J.N. Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain, 1500-1700* (Ann Arbor, 2000) 309-327.; William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: the development of anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660* (Durham, 1971) Introduction.; P.J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New Worlds in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1982) chs. 7 and 8; Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self,* 122-126.

experiences of particular Protestant communities – usually Puritans and Quakers –

demonstrate the importance of religion to imperial formation. But peculiarity and

insularity of both groups calls into question the notion that they might have contributed to

a collective British identity or a widely shared vision of Protestantism. Colin Kidd takes

a stab at solidifying the mushy label "Protestant" by pointing to a specific theological

argument he suggests contributed to "the formation of British patriotisms." He describes

how advocates for empire-building connected their ambitions to the "sacred genealogies"

of scripture. According to the account in Genesis of the peopling of the world after the

flood, the "isles of the Gentiles" were settled by the descendants of Noah's son Japheth.

For early modern intellectuals who wanted to claim a sacred history for Britain and to

assert Briton's superiority over Semitic and African peoples, this was a useful if

labyrinthine argument. Kidd concludes, however, that this idea had limited influence

beyond clerical elites and the intelligentsia and played only a minor, if "vital" role in the

development of British ethnic identity.[13]

Second, historians have argued that empire-building created a sense of national

identity, of Britishness that, in a pinch, might trump all other identities (regional,

religious, professional, etc.).[14] This occurred, in part, as a consequence of the newly

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[13] Kidd seems to want things both ways, simultaneously arguing for the limited influence of the idea of Japhethian descent, while maintaining that "Mosaic history, in all its hermeneutic variety, is a neglected but necessary backdrop to the history of ethnic identity." Kidd's argument might be most valuable not for uncovering the Mosaic underpinnings of nationalism, but for setting the example that "Protestant" in the context of empire, identity and nascent nationalism includes substance beyond "not Catholic." Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1999) chs. 2-3.

[14] The extent to which Britishness overwhelmed other identities is a matter of scholarly debate. Linda Colley writes "I am not suggesting for one moment that the growing sense of Britishness in this period supplanted and obliterated other loyalties. It did not. Identities are not like hats. Human beings can and do put on several at a time." But she concludes "Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other…" Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood refine Colley's model of identity. They agree that Britishness was one of many identities available to Britons but

defined Other; and, in part, from patriotic pride in imperial successes. By the mid-eighteenth century, Britons had a reason to want to claim that label for themselves. Not only did it now have a meaning, but it had a meaning of which to be proud. It implied strength, prosperity, Protestantism, and the protection of God and the British government.[15]

Third, the empire made Britons modern, or in other words, secular, industrial, and nationalistic. Empire contributed to modernity either by aiding in the development of institutions that were essential to the creation and maintenance of the modern British nation, or by encouraging modern ways of thinking. The empire produced an economic climate that led to industrialization and a commercial sensibility, both hallmarks of modernity. It also led to the aforementioned sense of national pride which functioned like a kind of forbidden fruit. Once tasted, it opened the mind of Britons, not to the knowledge of good and evil, but to national consciousness. That, in turn, led to nationalism somewhere between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Although the

argue that in the eighteenth century it was only really meaningful to British elites who, because of their professions, frequently encountered the non-British Other. They point to "ethnic, religious, economic and spatial loyalties" as identities relevant to more eighteenth-century Britons. Scholars Monod, Pittock and Szechi suggest that the recent surge in scholarship in Scotts nationalism and Jacobitism has demonstrated that there were other viable alternatives to Britishness and exposed "the fragility of British national identity." Colley, *Britons,* 6.; Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood eds., *A Union of Multiple Identities: the British Isles, 1750-1850* (Manchester, 1997) Intro.; Paul Monod, Murray Pittock, Daniel Szechi eds., *Loyalty and Identity: Jacobites at Home and Abroad* (London, 2010) 2-4.

[15] Linda Colley addresses this idea throughout *Britons*. In particular, she writes: "God, Britons were encouraged to believe, watched over them with a particular concern. Nothing in their troubled past had escaped his notice or eluded his influence, for they were special." Also: "Great Britain was forged in the way that it was after 1707… because different classes and interest groups came to see this newly invented nation as a usable resource, as a focus of loyalty which would cater to their own needs and ambitions. From patriotism, men and women were able to anticipate profits of some kind." Colley, *Britons,* 20, 55. See also S. Ellis and S. Barber eds., *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State, 1485-1720* (London, 1995); A. Grant and K. Stringer eds., *Uniting the Kingdom? The making of British history* (London, 1995); Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830* (London, 1987); Karen O'Brian, "Protestantism and the Poetry of Empire" in Jeremy Black ed., *Culture and Society in Britain, 1660-1800* in (New York, 1997) 146-162; Kathleen Wilson, "Empire of Virtue: the Imperial Project in Hanoverian Culture c. 1720-1785" in Lawrence Stone ed., *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689-1815* (London, 1994).

emergence of true nationalism is hard to fix, it is generally considered a sign of a modern people with a modern state. Finally, the empire led to modernity by breaking down traditional identities. The distances, dangers, and novelties of the empire all shaped Britons, made them different from their countrymen, and demonstrated to them that their old, often religious, ways of thinking would not be sufficient to explain this brave new world. Dror Wahrman addresses this in *The Making of the Modern Self*, writing that "the empire [is] one of the enabling preconditions feeding into the long-term undermining of traditional categories of identity, categories that were repeatedly found wanting in accounting for… quintessential colonial experiences."[16]

But most of the arguments about the transformation of British identity through empire work from a model of a powerful empire that made Britons feel powerful as well. There are a few notable exceptions. In *Captives*, Linda Colley describes the way the experiences of captivity in the Mediterranean, North American, and India made Britons' nervous about their empire. She argues that Britain is a small country which tried to control an enormous empire, that British military might could not keep up with the drive to expand, and that, consequently, Britons were often left unprotected to the mercies of the savage empire.[17] Her book is a useful corrective but it does not alter our initial impression of the empire as successful. It is because the empire was ultimately successful that she wants to tell this story. Wahrman is not particularly concerned with whether or not the empire was successful, but with modern views of the self as opposed to traditional ones. The empire, he writes, caused people to question those identities in many ways; everything from the disruption of migration to the discomforts of travel to

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[16] Wahrrman, *The Making of the Modern Self,* 216.

[17] Colley, *Captives*, 1-20.

the sheer *difference* between the metropole and the margins could make people uneasy with their old categories of identification. Tellingly, however, Wahrman's example of an imperial Briton who cast off his old identity for a new one is not a shipwreck victim or a bankrupt merchant or an illiterate sailor. He chooses instead the comic opera about the hookah-smoking nabob who returns from India as a strange hybrid. It is a wealthy character, made rich in the empire, who can luxuriate in his exotic new identity, who can amuse and titillate the audience when his nature ("blackamoor" or not) is questioned.[18] Even those historians who investigate failure or who do not predicate their definition of empire on success ultimately represent the empire as a powerful place that needs to be investigated *because* it flourished so strongly that it changed the ways Britons lived and thought.[19]

Perhaps it is most useful to look on these arguments about the transformative empire as models for what *could* happen under particular conditions. Those Britons who met with success had the luxury to be transformed. They were in a position physically, intellectually, and economically to become modern, Protestant (or even secular), British individuals. But under other conditions, these models did not apply. Transformation might still take place, but it did not lead to any place new or better. It led to rejection, shattered health, bankruptcy. Those who were made to feel powerless did not have the same access to new identities. Those who found themselves dependent on charitable support were forcibly reminded that they were not modern and independent but members of age-old communities on which they were depending for help. For them, as this

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[18] Wahrrman, *The Making of the Modern Self,* 216.

[19] Colley, *Captives*; Kathleen Wilson, "Introduction: histories, empires, modernities," in *A New Imperial History*, Kathleen Wilson, ed., (Cambridge, 2004).

chapter demonstrates, what mattered most were regional identities and the traditional

institutions of faith and family. Britons acquired modernity, individualism, and national

pride from the empire only in a piecemeal fashion and only if they prospered. For

everyone else, the Atlantic was soberingly retrograde. The seas were consistent in their

chaos, changing Britons only to bring them back to all the things they already were.

Charity and the Poor: an overview

In 1572, an act of parliament created a tax to be collected from English

parishioners and distributed by the parish to aid the deserving poor.[20] Historians have

argued that that law, and subsequent revisions of it, fundamentally altered the nature of

charitable giving in England.[21] The effects of the poor laws are considered so great that

they also dominate the historical discussion of charity. Just as the empire is variously

linked to modernity by technological change, economic innovation, or the promotion of

individualism, so too then has charity become connected to modernity because of its

connection to the poor laws and their associations with state-mandated giving, emergent

capitalism, and ideas of class, responsibility, progress, and reform that developed in the

late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[22] While the complexity of the Poor Laws and

the scope of Victorian reform movements more than justify the preoccupation of

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[20] For a concise history of the poor-law see Paul Slack, "Poverty and Social Regulation in Elizabethan England" in Christopher Haigh ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (London, 1984) ch. 9.

[21] Slack, "Poverty and Social Regulation," 233-239.

[22] "English poor relief was the first permanent welfare state (as we recognize it today), having developed within the confines of what would become the first capitalist society." Larry Patriquin, *Agarian Capitalism and Poor Relief in England, 1500-1860* (New York, 2007) 5.

historians, they have lent the discussion of charity a tone both legalistic and teleological.[23]

Some historians, however, have been quick to acknowledge the ambiguities of the poor laws: how they were supplemented informally within and outside of legal boundaries, and how the poor found ways to avoid the final indignity of being forced to accept a monetary handout from the parish. Strategies ranged from exploitation of common rights, gleaning, begging, theft, and asking for aid from family and neighbors in the form of food, fuel, money, clothing, and, perhaps most importantly, debt forgiveness and the extension of credit. All of these were preferable to falling on the parish, a shameful declaration that a family had lost the means to preserve its dignity by surviving independently, even if in the most marginal way. [24]

While the survival skills of the poor were vast and endlessly creative and the application of poor laws equally so, the poor themselves appear mostly as a homogenous lump of humanity. They emerge from the records in the form of blind widows, feeble old men, arthritic spinners no longer able to grasp their yarn, and improvident fathers unable to care for their children; they are tragic, but rarely a forceful enough archival presence to emerge as distinct, complex personalities. They blend back together into "The Poor," a great underclass defined by the ways it contended with its poverty and was managed by its betters. "The Poor" of historical scholarship are primarily rural and agricultural, a burden on small towns and parishes.[25] They are also mostly unwelcome. Historians have described how hospitality changed and ultimately faded over the sixteenth and

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[23] Patriquin, *Agrarian Capitalism and Poor Relief in England,* 79-116.

[24] Hindle, *On the Parish?*, 22.

[25] Paul Griffiths, Review of *On the Parish?,* H-Albion, (June 2006); Patriquin, *Agrarian Capitalism and Poor Relief in England,* 35-44, 90-92

seventeenth centuries; but, even at its charitable peak, the ideal of hospitality never

transformed the care of the poor into anything more than a duty no matter how splendidly

that duty was carried out.[26] Finally, the ranks of "The Poor" were filled almost entirely

with lifetime members, individuals born into poor families where they learned strategies

for making do and getting by, which they, in turn, passed along to their children.[27] Once

they were too old or unwell to labor in a valuable fashion and more active compensatory

methods (like gleaning) failed as well, the poor turned to begging. Steve Hindle suggests

"that the aged poor actually thought of begging as just another form of work, the last

phase in a life-cycle of labour…"[28]

Historians have largely divided their scholarship on early modern poverty along

rural / urban lines without much crossover. While perhaps the most intensive work has

been done on villages – painstaking reconstructions of village life and the power

dynamics that determined who was worthy of help – the urban poor have received some

attention as well.[29] Certainly, the urban poor were significant numerically and contributed

to popular fears about criminal behavior and social decay. Nevertheless, the studies that

seem to have contributed the most to the existing historiographical conversation on the

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[26] Slack, "Poverty and Social Regulation in Elizabethan England," 233-239.

[27] Hindle, *On the Parish*? 24. "For a growing proportion of the population, the diminishing capacity of earnings to meet their household needs meant that periodic hardship was inevitable. By the turn of the sixteenth century, therefore, poverty had become structural."

[28] Hindle, *On the Parish*?, 71.

[29] David Hey, *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974); Hindle, *On the Parish?*; Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in and English village: Terling, 1525-1700* (New York, 1979); Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: the Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago, 2006).

rise of the gentry, secular society, and social control focus on the more settled, rural poor.[30]

But perhaps we should also question the usefulness of the rural / urban divide in light of the unfixed nature of a poor person's life. In *Unsettled*, Patricia Fumerton argues that mobility was necessary for the poor, often a defining characteristic of the jobs available to those with few resources beyond their own labor. The poor laws distinguished between the poor belonging to a given parish who deserved that parish's help and vagrants who should be driven out, but Fumerton points out that any laborer could easily fall into the category of "vagrant" at some point in his life, and probably did, until he became unable to work. She draws attention to occupations like chapman, tinker, entertainer, button-maker, wire-drawer, and harvest worker all of which required time spent on the road.[31] Like Hindle, who describes the ingenuity with which the poor assembled a host of money-making tasks – spinning, harvesting, ale brewing, water carrying, churning, charring, nursing and even begging – Fumerton suggests that it was common for the poor to change professions as opportunity and need dictated. She points to the record of a Wiltshire man accused of vagrancy who called himself "sometimes a weaver, sometimes a surgeon, sometimes a minstrel, sometimes a dyer, and now a bullard."[32] Consequently, the working poor can defy categorization as either urban or rural. A chapman might collect his wares in London and sell them throughout the

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[30] Paul Slack points out that the implementation of the poor laws, themselves, also obscured the lives of unsettled poor people. In order to make the management of the poor into a doable task, local authorities singled out the resident poor and drove away "strangers and vagrants" leaving only "a rump of respectable paupers…" It is these people, consequently, that parish records represent, while the experiences of vagrants are more difficult to recover. Slack, "Poverty and Social Regulation in Elizabethan England" 230.

[31] Fumerton, *Unsettled,* Introduction, ch. 2.

[32] Hindle, *On the Parish*? 24-27; Fumerton, *Unsettled,* xi-xii.

country. Laborers might leave the cities during the summer and fall months to hire themselves out as agricultural workers, then return in the winter to pursue other occupations. Even after the Settlement and Removal Act of 1662 cracked down on itinerant workers by defining the obligations of the home parish and the necessary requirements for being considered a resident, itinerancy remained a fact of life for at least some wage laborers. Only a few generations after the Settlement Act was passed, the development of the factory system created a need for laborers that drew the working poor away from their home parishes and into the cities. But even before the industrial revolution provided a new reason for itinerancy, a growing profession -- that of the sailor -- kept the experience of the landless, traveling laborer alive and well.

The Maritime Poor

The maritime poor were different. It was a group that included people commonly lumped into "The Poor" as a social class and those who never expected to suffer financially. In the mid-sixteenth century, somewhere between 3000 and 5000 Englishmen worked for a least part of their lives as sailors. Two hundred years later, the number had grown to 60,000.[33] To be a sailor was, by definition, to be mobile. While working, the sailor was only as fixed as his ship. On shore, he might be temporarily part of the urban poor of a great port city until he put to sea again on a different ship. Depending on the destination of the voyage and the terms of his employment, he might be part of the urban poor of multiple cities in different countries. If he decided to visit

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[33] Fumerton, *Unsettled,* xx.

home, he temporarily joined the itinerant rural poor as he made his way inland.[34] The

ever increasing numbers of sailors who spent their salary on bad company and beer, fell

on the parish, and died penniless are classic examples of "The Poor." More specifically,

they were "the disorderly poor" or "sturdy beggars" or perhaps just "the ungodly."[35]

But as the need for sailors increased and the maritime profession swelled, the

number of other people involved directly or indirectly in seafaring increased as well and,

consequently, the number of people touched by maritime calamities. Consequently, we

cannot consider only the people traditionally covered under the Poor Laws. The maritime

poor was ultimately a group far more diverse than "The Poor" as historians have usually

understood it.[36] The maritime poor included men Samuel Lillie, one of Boston's

wealthiest merchants who, Bernard Bailyn asserts, by 1707 was "the biggest shipowner in

the western hemisphere." By the end of 1707, he was bankrupt. The group also includes

men like Anthony Thacher, literate, educated, respected, and godly, who survived his

ocean catastrophe but lost everything but the clothes on his back.[37] (Even the pestilential

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[34] In some instances, sailors traveling home were not poor – merely itinerant. If the voyage had gone well and they were unusually thrifty, a sailor might arrive home as a kind of local celebrity with funds to spare. Sailors, however, had the reputation for spending their wages quickly. What some considered foolishness, others considered generosity, as they bought drinks to celebrate a safe return, presents for wives or sweethearts, and new clothes to make them look the part of a landsmen. Most people, therefore, would have assumed a traveling sailor was impoverished. That assumption and the necessity of dodging pressmen lent traveling sailors a disreputable air. Paul Slack suggests that vagrancy was a growing problem at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, so much so that vagrancy itself became a crime. Although other Englishmen assumed that "the mobile poor were a willfully idle, deceitful and criminal class," they were usually accused of no other crime than vagrancy itself. Slack, "Poverty and Social Regulation in Elizabethan England," 229-230.

[35] For a breakdown of the poor, see A.L. Beier, "Poverty and progress in early modern England" in A.L. Beier, David Cannadine and James Rosenheim eds., *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989) ch. 6.

[36] Although A.L. Beier points out that, contrary to expectations, many "pauper" families had servants and that some vagrants had servants travelling with them as well. The maritime poor are equally difficult to classify. Beier, "Poverty and progress in early modern England" 217.

[37] Bernard Bailyn and Lotte Bailyn, *Massachusetts Shipping, 1697-1714: A Statistical Study* (Cambridge, 1959) 70-71; Increase Mather, *An essay for the recording of illustrious providences wherein, an account is*

sailor – despite his reputation for immorality, drunkenness, violence, and theft – periodically was hailed as the nation's hero and the same parishioners grudgingly doling out pennies to hasten his departure from their community were requested to thank God for the essential service he had done them. When were poor landsmen ever hailed as heroes?) If poverty is defined only by financial resources, then Thacher, the Boston merchant, and the ubiquitous blind widow were all part of "The Poor" together. But Thacher and Lillie knew nothing about the strategies by which the rural, agricultural poor managed to survive. They had never gleaned, or taken advantage of their rights to the common to collect firewood. They were unaware that the life cycle of labor included, and ended with, begging. To become poor temporarily or permanently because of a maritime calamity did not make a merchant part of the "The Poor." The merchant had resources, levels of education, options and opportunities that most of the English poor never had. When we investigate charity in connection to the empire and seafaring, we must recognize that it could affect anyone along the social spectrum. The seas harmed people indiscriminately.

Just as maritime victims are not easily categorized, neither are the forms of charity accessible to them. In some instances, the existing permutation of the Poor Laws was applicable, particularly in the case of sailors forced to return to the care of their home parish, or in the case of the ship passengers put ashore in desperate circumstances and trying to make their way home. But for many others, the Poor Laws played no part in the shape that charity took.

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given of many remarkable and very memorable events, which have happened in this last age; especially in New-England. (London, 1684) 1-14.

Despite the financial chasms that separated them and the differing ranges of their resources, maritime victims at any point on the social scale took advantage of many of the same charitable sources: namely networks of family and friends. They asked for loans, the extension of credit, and forgiveness for debt, forms of charity equally useful to the sailor short a few shillings and the merchant who had just lost thousands of pounds. They petitioned for aid through charity briefs and took advantage of the charitable institutions set up for people in their circumstances. It was common, especially for those outside the official church, to turn to co-religionists who offered all forms of support. And after all these charitable resources were tapped out, some became their parish's pensioners.

While rate paying united middling, landlocked parishioners, coastal parishioners may have felt less confidence that their community was joining together in a mutual obligation – not when seafarers came and went, often unattached from the burdens of property.[38] But perhaps they were united instead by the human drama that was constantly playing out because of the sea. Parishes which included a sea port seem to have dealt with more indigent poor people -- both those temporarily and permanently impoverished -- than a comparably sized landlocked parish.[39] In response to this steady flow, these

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[38] Keith Wrightson and David Levine describe how religious dissent in the mid-seventeenth century led to the breakdown of a religiously homogenous parish, but argues that "parish leaders… continued to stand together in the administration of the parish, united by a shared social position and identity of interests which was demonstrably stronger than their differences of theological emphasis." These interests were, namely, the management of the parish's poor. Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village* (Oxford, 1995) ch. 7, esp. 182-183.

[39] Making this claim authoritatively would require an extensive survey of parish records. However, there is evidence to suggest that this may be the case. Ronald Herlan writes in his survey of the parish of Dunstan that its location near the Thames and Fleet, and near "both north-south and east-west trade axes in the City helped to determine, in part at least, the occupations of some of the parish's inhabitants. Employment in such market and entrepôt work as carting, portering, stabling, etc., involved seasonal and part-time work which ensured the parish a continuous migratory population and a certain number of masterless men and women frequently in need of its charitable assistance." Ronald W. Herlan, "Poor

communities turned to special collections and the creation of institutions specifically to address the needs of sailors, their families, and distressed travelers.

Historians have ably demonstrated that the poor supplemented parish pensions in many creative ways, or only turned to accepting it after all other possibilities were exhausted. They have emphasized how those alternatives were constrained as the Christian context of charity faded and the secular character of rate paying increased.[40] In a maritime context, we certainly see creative strategies for getting by come into play, perhaps an even greater variety of them than in an agricultural setting. However, it is less

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Relief in the London Parish of Dunstan in the West during the English Revolution" in *Guildhall Studies in London History* (Vol. 3, No. 1, 1977) 15. A.L. Beier describes an uptick during the seventeenth century in the number of vagrants arrested in the coastal county of Essex, but writes that this occurs throughout the Midlands as well. He attributes this to increasing numbers of "vagabonds, demobed soldiers, gypsies, and foreigners," particularly the Irish. Presumably the foreigners inflicted their unwelcomed presence on coastal communities first, before spreading throughout the rest of England. Beier, "Poverty and progress in early modern England," 233-234.

[40] Some scholars have specifically connected the English Reformation to a decline in charitable giving. They argue that Protestantism did not replace the forms of charity that traditional Christianity had provided. After the dissolution of monasteries, there was no comparable forum to which the poor could turn for aid. Likewise, the editing of the sacred calendar diminished the number of occasions for giving. Other historians have, instead, looked more to the development of Puritan ideas associating poverty with immorality and piety with work. These ideas caused livelier forms of raising money to be replaced by sober petitions for aid once the moral character of the petitioner was established. Still other historians argue that economic and demographic pressures caused by the crises of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (poor harvests, inflation, unemployment, and a rise in vagrancy) led to a change in attitudes toward the poor. Those who were comfortable (often called the 'middling sort') wanted to distance themselves from the truly poor and prevent the types of immoral behavior associated with poverty and vagrancy. It was, consequently, the desire for order and social discipline that led to the dole and discouraged informal fund-raising and almsgiving. The extent to which Puritan ideas resulted from these social pressures and contributed to subsequent attitudes toward charitable provisions for the worthy poor is a matter of debate. These historians locate this shift in attitudes toward giving in the mid-seventeenth century. Steve Hindle describes the process: "Help-ales… seem to have been extremely common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries… The fact that the hosts of such gatherings should, by the 1650s, increasingly fall foul of prosecution suggests that the same kinds of pressures that curtailed drinking, dancing, and sport at church ales were also operative on more ad hoc festivities. If church ales for the relief of the poor of the community gradually gave way to formal assessments for the poor of the parish, help-ales were similarly supplanted by the more regularized practice of securing a charity brief, in which a distressed person would have their circumstances rehearsed from the pulpit in order that formal collections could be made on their behalf." Hindle, *On the Parish?*, 59. See also: Beier, "Poverty and progress in early modern England," ch. 6.; W.K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660*, (London, 1959) 254; Patriquin, *Agrarian Capitalism and Poor Relief in England*; J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968) 511, 520-526; Slack, "Poverty and Social Regulation in Elizabethan England," ch. 9.; R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 1960) 110-117.

clear that charitable instincts toward the maritime poor waned or that they became more secular in nature. This is yet another way in which the maritime poor constitute a category different than "The Poor" as historians have typically defined it.

Coastal communities were constantly reminded that charity did not just take the form of the portion of their rates that went to the local poor. Anecdotally at least, it seems that notions of that older form of charity remained, at least in respect to those who were damaged at sea. We see this specifically in the form of sermons exhorting listeners to offer up prayers on behalf of those on the sea – not seafarers on land who were within the reach of human aid and who could be helped by the listener's pennies, but sailors and travelers who only God could help. They figured in a community's charitable responses long before they came within the reach of a churchwarden bearing a parish pension. They were remembered in prayer, the only kind of charitable act that could assist them until they were safe on land.

We have ample evidence of the compassion of parishioners for their own poor, and an equally substantial body of evidence for their apparent callousness to strangers. Anyone who did not belong was hurried on his way. Notoriously, this extended to forcibly evicting women in labor so their babies would not be entitled to the parish's support. Despite this well-documented hostility toward outsiders, parishioners seem to have been willing to make exceptions for maritime victims. Sea-crises seemed to move people as, perhaps, more everyday occurrences did not.

English Protestantism, as it appears in histories of the poor laws, takes on a kind of bloodless quality. It is given the role of a tool -- social discipline – that was wielded in pursuit of certain bourgeois aims, namely social order. In these accounts, the parish

becomes less relevant to a fractured religious community, more bureaucratic, and exists

mainly to collect taxes from the unwilling and redistribute them in the form of aid to the

victims of a kind of oppressive class warfare. Underneath these images seems to run an

unarticulated argument of secularization. As the parish becomes less about the church

and more about taxes, it takes charity along with it. The example of the maritime victims

– the consistency with which they couched their tales in Christian terms and the role of

churches in subsequently advertising their plight – suggests that the religious component

had not been completely eliminated from the idea of charity.

<u>Ideal Charity</u>

While financial records of parishes and charitable institutions account for the

totals doled out to the needy in the moment, we must turn to other sources to see how the

idea of charity was understood more abstractly. Ideal charity was *caritas*, godly love and

love of God. If one could bring a sinner to salvation, one was showing godly love.

Failing that, one could bring a sinner to God's attention, placing the reclamation of that

soul in divine hands. In this section I will demonstrate that sermon writers described

moral instruction as charity. By providing sailors with the steps to salvation, they were

giving them a helpful gift of value. Ordinary Britons could remember sailors in prayer,

thus petitioning the only power that could reach a sailor at sea. Because prayer and

repentance could move God to take action, these forms of charity were not necessarily

even intangible or impractical; although, it seems likely most sailors would have

preferred a more worldly manifestation of charity.

The rough life of a sailor frequently put men in that profession at odds with civilized society. The image of the sailor – profane, boisterous, intoxicated, and speaking in an incomprehensible cant – is consistent for most of the early modern period.[41] By the time the profane sailor had become the Jolly Jack Tar, the sailing life had taken on a degree of professionalization. The mariner making his way home or the rough port city was not entirely a thing of the past, but the navy at least was better able to take care of its own. Until the end of the eighteenth century, fellow passengers, fellow victims of maritime calamities, were quick to distinguish themselves from the crew in their pious reflections on the tragedy. While the sailors superstitiously watched for signs, wailed, and gave up hope, the godly passengers held firm to their manners and their faith. So when sermon writers composed messages of hope and instruction addressed to a maritime audience, everyone knew what the profession "sailor" implied.

Sermon writers held out their texts like a charitable gift. Yes, sailors were wicked. Yes, they neglected the state of their souls. Yes, all of the rumors and stories about their conduct were true. But how much more miraculous would that make their redemption? How much more evident would God's power be if it could work in a person as depraved as a sailor? And finally, how much more eloquent would any sea-traveler's testimony be about God's mercy in the face of death? We see these ideas come into play in the vigorous prose of Elizabethan clergyman Richard Maddox.[42] Although it was a commonplace that spiritual knowledge was valuable, Maddox wanted to make it clear

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[41] See for example, John Taylor, *Faire and fowle weather: or a sea and land storme between two calmes. With an apologie in defense of the painefull life, and needful use of sailors*, (London, 1615).

[42] Richard Maddox took part in several voyages himself which probably accounts for his interest in the spiritual state of sea-travelers. He loaded his text with sea metaphors, perhaps feeling himself an old hand at sailing or trying to establish credibility with his listeners. Maddox's interest in travel was fatal. He died during his second voyage off the coast of Brazil and was probably buried at sea. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

that what he could teach had a worth akin to money or merchandise. He addressed this

specifically, writing

> If any man were able to undertake the safe landing of all your commodities,
> and warrant every voyage that you make, I doubt not but you would gather
> about him in a throng, and listen to all his wordes and admonitions. If
> therefore the preacher will warrant the safetye of your soules, with al the…
> spirituall merchandize thereof, be not slacke to heare him…[43]

As Maddox saw it, he was giving his listeners access to a never-ending source of

help.[44]   Christ would always be charitable; indeed, no one could ask for more effective,

generous help. While ordinary humans – from snobbery, laziness, or miserliness – might

be slack in their charitable duties, Christ was broadminded, a friend even (or perhaps

especially) to poor sailors. Using the story of Jesus and the storm at sea, Madox

encouraged his listeners to think of Christ as present in the stern of their ships, but

sleeping if they did not wake him and ask for deliverance.

> If he heare not at the first, call to him the second tyme: if not the second
> tyme, crie upon him the thyrde tyme, yea, cal and ceasse not, tyll ye have
> awaked him: be sure, he wyll both heare and helpe at the last. Christe is
> not lyke one of these testie squires, or those nice Dames that can abyde no
> noyse in the house, for breaking theyr morning sleep…[45]

Maddox concluded by reminding his audience that the only kind of charity of value to

passengers on a stormy sea came from God.[46]

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[43] Richard Maddox *A learned and godly sermon* (London, 1581) 4.

[44] Published in 1581, this sermon predated the rise of insurance. Maddox' language, however, suggests a model for the business practice to come. Men could, after a fashion, "warrant" voyages for each other, but their results were far from divine.

[45] Maddox, *A learned and godly sermon*, 19.

[46] "Kinges may boaste in the multitude of thyr people, and Merchauntes reiyce in theyr ware and thyr money… The Captaine in a Shippe of warre is a iollie fellowe, and thinketh himselfe a little God, because hee speaketh prowdlie to the Souldiers, and maketh them quayle at the shaking of his lockes… But let the Prince or the Potentate, the king or the Captaine, the Merchaunt of the money man, saye to the South winde, cease thy blowing or to the Clowdes, holde your selves drie: let him bidde the Sunne shyne in a gloomie day… let him commaunde the tyde to staye tyll hee be readie, and charge the water of the sea to

Divine charity was also superior because it was instructive. God first allowed

calamities at sea to show wicked sailors or greedy merchants the error of their ways and

then provided deliverance to demonstrate his power and grace. Storms and wrecks were

punishments and gifts in one. Naval chaplain, Samuel Page, encouraged his congregation

at Deptford to consider what role their sins might have played in a threat – successfully

averted – against a fleet of merchant ships returning from the East Indies.[47] What caused

the "dangerous opposition?" Page asked his listeners. "Was it for the sinne of the whole

Land… Or was it for the sinne of your owne company at home, because you have either

too much affected your gaine, in the Trade; or too seldome called upon the name of God

in prayer… Or was it for the sinne of the company whom you did employ in your

shipping…?"[48] Page did not commit himself. He was adamant, however, that the attack

was God's punishment "to make the memory of your deliverance more pretious to

you…" Page exhorted his audience:

> so let me direct you in the celebration of this mercie… that you may know
> to whom to acknowledge this favour. Your rivers of plenty, and fullness,
> and deliverance, came from the sea of bountie, and let the full streames of
> your heartie thankses-givings, fill their bankes… that the giver of every
> good and perfect gift may have the glory of his owne worke.[49]

God chose to give his gifts along with a lesson that would turn people away from sin,

cause them to acknowledge his presence, and give them reason to appreciate their

blessings.

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looke smoothilie, and I will saye, hee is a Captaine in deede, and wyll confesse that hee is worthy to be
honoured and followed." Maddox, *A learned and godly sermon*, 24-25.

[47] *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

[48] Samuel Page, *God be thanked*, (London:1616) 6-7.

[49] Page, *God be thanked*, 9.

Even if the best, most ideal charity came from God, merciful Englishmen still had a part to play as well. First and foremost, they could pray. Prayer was the only form of consistently efficacious charity. Sailors at sea were beyond help. Funds sent to redeem captives could get lost. The empire was too big and the Atlantic too wide for relief efforts to reach their destinations quickly. But prayer transcended all these problems. We see evidence for the importance of prayer as a kind of charitable obligation in prayer books, both those composed specifically for maritime settings *and* those intended for general use.

While *The Book of Common Prayer* guided most Britons through the charitable act of praying, there were other prayer books as well, including those designed specifically for a maritime setting. [50] *The Book of Common Prayer* included petitions for deliverance "from lightening and tempest." It brought to the worshipers' attention the plight of travelers; every time a minister directed the faithful through the Litany, they remembered "all that travel by land or by water."[51] Later editions of the Prayer Book also included a special prayer for fair weather. The prayer was not specific to travelers, but it would have reminded readers about the dangerous potential of the seas. It began by

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[50] Judith Maltby passes along rough estimates made by Ian Green: 290 editions of the Book of Common Prayer printed and over half a million Prayer Books in circulation between 1549 and 1642. Judith Maltby *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England,* (Cambridge, 1998), 24-25.

[51] *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1549, 1552, 1559, 1662. It is interesting to note the proximity of travelers and women in labor in the Prayer Book as well as in other pieces of devotional literature suggesting a general connection between these ideas. The word "travel" now carries no negative connotations, but the link between the words travel and travail (here used to describe specifically a woman's travail, her painful efforts to give birth), suggest the word may have originally possessed a different associations. The Oxford English Dictionary asserts that "travel" and "travail" share a similar origin, which also indicates that those who composed and used these prayers assumed that travel was, by definition, difficult and unpleasant.

addressing the God who "didst once drown all the world" and asked to be rescued from "this plague of… waters."[52]

Samuel Page decided there was a need for a "divine sea-service" that would provide liturgical language for those particularly concerned with the maritime world. His prayer book offered a number of prayers suitable for situations as varied as ordinary meal times ("A Prayer before Meate"), setting sail, storms, battles, and "infectious sicknesse." He also included a prayer "to bee used aboard for the Adventurers and Owners at home" during which sailors could ask God to help them advance their masters' interests. But the prayer that opened the collection was not for use on board ship. It was composed "to be be used in our owne land for all our brethren at Sea."[53]

In his prayer book, John Norden included two prayers: one for the start of a journey and the other, of thanks, for a safe homecoming. Even though the prayers were not specifically composed about sea journeys, Norden justified their inclusion in the prayer book by referring to the story of Tobias and his rescue by the angel Raphael from "the fishe, which was like to have devoured him." The prayer asks for protection on "troublesome and daungerous coastes" and from "the merciless and great water…" The prayer for homecoming thanks God for preservation "from drowning by water…"[54] In general, prayer books included some or all or the following: prayers for before and after

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[52] *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1559, 1662.

[53] Page, *God be thanked.*

[54] John Norden, *A pensive mans practice,* (London, 1584), 61-63.

For other examples see: Phillip Stubbes *A perfect pathway to felicitie conteining godly meditations and praiers* (London,1592); John Wood, *The true honor of navigation and navigator*, (London, 1618); I.C. *The ever-burning lamps of pietie and devotion*, (London,1619); Michael Sparke *The crums of comfort with godly prayers,*(London, 1629); John Evans *The sacrifice of a contrite heart in teares, meditations, and prayers,* (London,1630); John Elias, *Elijahs fiery chariot,* (London, 1659); Edward Wolley, *A model of private prayers*, (London, 1661); Jeremy Taylor, *A choice manual containing what is to be believed*, 1664; Anonymous, *Christian Devotion, or, The Pious souls daily supplication* (London, 1679).

journeys, prayers for travelers, merchants, and sailors, and prayers for storms and sea battles. These texts reminded the public that sea travel created urgent need which they could alleviate if they attended to their Christian duties of addressing God in prayer and being charitable to their neighbors.

When charity took a more physical form, it was still presented within the context of a divine plan. In 1679, a short story was published in London about the "wonderful preservation" of a sailor, one Gregory Crow. The tale explained how Crow and his companions were wrecked on a sandbar off the shore of Kent. Although they were within sight of land, it was beyond their means to reach, so the sailors said their prayers and settled in to wait for a ship that would rescue them. Crow distinguished himself early on by rescuing his Testament from the water and putting it in the front of his shirt. He also made a gesture unusual for a poor sailor. When the sailors found the ship's money chest on the sandbar, Crow emptied it of five pounds, six shillings, and eight pence and threw the money into the sea, saying "If the Lord will save our lives he will provide us a living." As the days dragged on, the sailors succumbed one by one to hunger and exhaustion until only Crow was left.[55]

Thomas Morse, the narrator of the story and the captain of the ship who rescued Crow, described bringing him on board. "As soon as we had him in our Ship, he began to put his hand in his bosome; and one asked him if he had money there. No, said he, I have a book here, I think it be wet; and so drew out his Testament which we then dried." Having seen to the care of his Bible, the sailors then turned to caring for Crow who was

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[55] Thomas Morse, *The Wonderful preservation of Gregory Crow being shipwract upon the coast of Kent" shewing how this poor man threw away his money, saying if it pleased God to preserve him, he would likewise find him sustenance, and that his whole care was to preserve the New Testatment he had, by putting it into his bosome.* (London, 1679) 2.

badly damaged by his ordeal. Morse explained that "we made a fire and shifted him with dry clothes, and gave him Aqua Composita to drink, and such meat as was in the Ship, and then let him sleep." The next day, much revived, Crow was able to tell his story.[56]

Full of wonder at Crow's faith and the power of God, everyone who heard the story was moved to help the sailor, both in England and in Antwerp, where the ship was bound. "Some gave him a Peticoat, and some a Shirt, some hose, and some money (always noting how he cast away his money, and kept his book.)" He was put up for free at the "Host-houses" of the English Merchants and given six pounds and ten shillings." Besides the money, he received the admiration of the people who flocked to see him, the living manifestation of God's mercy. But the moral of the story is, perhaps, unexpected: Morse used the last paragraph to denounce the pope and to accuse Catholic priests of "condemning" the New Testament. [57]

Morse's concluding swipe at Catholicism explicitly situated the tale of Gregory Crow in an English, Protestant context. His wreck occurred in English waters. He lovingly preserved his Bible, a symbol of Protestant worship and spirituality. Even his recovery and care were overseen by other people awed by this Protestant-style miracle. Crow's plight was a Biblical one.[58] When Crow threw away his money and announced his intention to live or die, as God willed it, he placed himself in the tradition of other travelers, refugees, and spiritual leaders who made their way on faith. Simultaneously,

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[56] Morse, *The Wonderful preservation of Gregory* Crow, 2-3.

[57] Morse, *The Wonderful preservation of Gregory Crow,* 3.

[58] While the Bible does not abound with shipwrecked mariners, there are accounts of men and women who, when faced with deprivation, determined that they would survive, or not, dependent on God's mercy. See, for example, the story of Elijah who was fed during a famine by ravens. 1 Kings 17 1-7. See also the story of the manna, quail, and water provided in the desert to Moses and the Israelites. Exodus 15-17. Similarly the twelve disciples were told by travel without money or extra clothes, but to depend on the generosity of worthy strangers. Should a community fail to care for the disciples, they were told to shake the dust of that town from their feet. Matthew 10, Mark 6, Luke 9.

Crow's gesture placed the Christian burden of charity on the shoulders of those who heard the story. To fail Crow would have been to bring down the judgment of heaven. And if a reader failed to be moved to give in similar circumstances, he was acting like someone unsaved who did not hear and believe. He was acting like a Catholic who did not value scripture enough to be amazed at its miraculous preservation in Crow's shirt front.[59]

In his account of Gregory Crowe, Morse described a godly marvel while also providing readers with a model for their own behavior. If one lacked the opportunity to prove oneself a Christian hero like Crowe, one could always support Christian heroes. Needy survivors proved their worth through the very fact of their survival. God had chosen to express his mercy by saving them and now the rest of God's people had an obligation to be part of God's plan for that physical salvation.

The idea of charity was not secular no matter how the Poor Laws might change practice. Charity was not just Christian, but, ideally, from Christ. The modest contributions made by mere mortals to the welfare of others should, at their best, blend care for the soul with care for the body. John Wood made this connection explicit in the

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[59] The story of Gregory Crowe is unusual because it is explicitly Protestant, functioning just as much as a piece of Protestant propaganda as it does as a sea deliverance story. Once again, we see Protestantism defined against Catholicism; although, Morse at least provided a definition that can stand without reference to the Catholic Church. He believed Protestantism should be defined by its close proximity to the Bible. Not only did Protestants read scripture and worship scripturally, they carried the Bible with them and ascribed to it physical value. But despite the story of Gregory Crowe, I maintain that the religious attitudes apparent in a maritime context are better described as "godly" rather than Protestant. Ship's crews were rarely homogenous, sailors hailing from all over the Atlantic world. The sea-fears that plagued English Protestants were shared by English (and French and Spanish) Catholics who expressed their anxiety in prayers and petitions to God that echo Protestant prayers. The fractured nature of British Protestantism makes "Protestant" an unwieldy label. Other than their mutual rejection of Catholicism, what of religious identity did all British Protestants share? To avoid defining only in negative terms, I have avoided "Protestant" as a category in favor of the more inclusive "godly" which can incorporate the shifting faith of a Robinson Crusoe, the occasional faith of a sailor in a storm, the scripturally-grounded observations of a Puritan, and the belief in a specifically providential God which seems to have survived longer in maritime contexts than in others.

flattering prologue to his sea-sermon and prayer book. He addressed his efforts to the attention of the East India Company, its officials, and members; complimenting them on their charitable instincts. His sermon, he modestly suggested, could be another such gift. As the "benefactor [of] Sea-men," the Company would surely want to provide their sailors with this text as "a meanes… to beguile some idle howres, [and] teach them in all places of the world, to make spirituall use to their soules…" He knew that the East India Company would agree with these sentiments since God was already blessing them with good fortune because of their charitable acts: supplying "the wants of [your] poore members: your dailie reliefe of poore Ministers of the Gospell, your charitie to Prisoners, to Widowes, to Orphans, and to all well minded poore people that you find to stande in neede of your help…"[60]

What was simple to describe in prayer books and fawning sermon dedications was more challenging to put into practice. Where should aid be distributed? How much should be given? Who should give it out? How could a prospective benefactor distinguish the "well minded poor" from all the rest? How could the charitably inclined offer that perfect blend of spiritual and physical comfort to a population known mostly for transience, intoxication, violence, theft, and debauchery? What of the victims of unusual circumstances, those who were not normally part of the poor, nor sailors by profession? And what happened when the benefactors became those in need of aid themselves, when too many ships went down and too much merchandize was unsalable? It is to these questions we now turn our attention. If ideal charity was *caritas* – godlike

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[60] Wood, *The True honor of navigation and navigator,* (London, 1618).

love, preferably from God – then what did charity toward maritime victims look like when it was actually put into practice?

Family Charity

For those who fell on hard times, the first port in the financial storm was usually the family.[61] Although the distances involved with sea-faring and empire-building sometimes made this impossible, many imperial adventurers continued to act like the provincial poor when they were in dire straits: they returned home. The bonds between families might also be strained by more than distance. Like Crusoe, who ran away to sea against his father's wishes and advice, some individuals embraced the risks of the Atlantic without their family's blessing. When Charles Stafforde wrote to local gentleman Richard Bagot in 1590 asking for help after a debilitating wound received at sea, he explained that he had gone to sea only because of his "unbridled youthfull humors" that he "unadvisedlie quitted my contry and alliance."[62] Nearly two hundred years later, sailor Joseph Banfield wrote in his memoirs that his father's first reaction to hearing that he wanted to go to sea was to "refuse" him.[63] The decision to leave England for the career of a sailor or New World adventuring remained a touchy one throughout the early-modern period and well into the nineteenth century. Would-be sailors who left home rebelliously were often later devastated to learn of an estranged parent's death or

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[61] Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, "'Good Works' and Social Ties: Helping the Migrant Poor in Early Modern England" in Muriel McClendon, Joseph Ward, Michael MacDonald, eds., *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society and Self-Fashioning in Post-Reformation England* (Stanford, 1999) 127.

[62] Folger, L.a.865, Bagot family papers.

[63] Huntington Library, mssHM 57345, Memoirs of Joseph Banfield, 1.

some other circumstance that had dissolved their family unit.[64] Some parents also

expressed sorrow or regret about a son's seafaring career, especially in the case of

impressement.[65]

Even as the dangers of the profession made families resistant to the prospect of

sacrificing their sons to the sea, the lure of a seafaring career remained: it was a sure

thing. Captains were always on the lookout for more help. A man who wanted to give

his family one less mouth to feed had only to pack his bag and head to the coast to find

employment. He might even make a fortune, an enticing possibility, but at the very least

he removed some of the economic pressure from his family. Sailor Edward Coxere

describes this experience when he recounted the events that led him to his career. His

family sent him as a boy to France to learn the language so he could be trained as a wine-

cooper. But he disliked the work and signed on with a ship captain instead. He wrote in

his memoir about his first voyage:

> …I was mostly very sea-sick, which did so discourage me that I concluded
> not to live that miserable sea-life. But this was not all; but to harden me to
> the sea the master would run after me with a rope's end… I did not like
> such sea-tricks; for when it was foul weather I was sick, and when fair
> then scared me with a rope's end. In the Downs I got ashore, and travelled
> to Dover, where I was gladly received by my mother again.[66]

Despite Coxere's resolutions and the initial joy of his mother, he soon found life at home

unwelcoming. After a short visit, "the old tiresome tone was sounded in my ears again:

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[64] For example, Edward Coxere's wife died while he was away. He wrote that he left her sick when he left "for Flushing" in May, 1681. She died two days before he got home. E.H.W. Meyerstein ed., *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere, a Relation of Several Adventures by Sea with the Dangers, Difficulties and Hardships I met for Several Years, as also the Deliverances and Escapes through them for which I have Cause to Give the Glory to God for Ever* (New York, 1946) 165.

[65] Roy Adkins and Lesley Adkins, *Jack Tar* (London, 2008) ch. 2, esp. 46, 52, 67.

[66] Meyerstein, *Edward Coxere,* 6.

'What trade now?"… My life began then to be uncomfortable."[67] At fifteen, Edward

Coxere was too old to be untrained, unemployed, and loitering unprofitably at home. His

brother John was already a sailor, his parents were urging him to pick a trade – any trade

– and so Edward Coxere tried seafaring again. He was neither rebellious nor lured by

riches, but responded to family pressure to employ himself profitably and the knowledge

provided by a family connection – his brother – that the sailor's life was a viable option.

Therefore, from the very beginning of a sailor's career, his family could be involved,

trying out of concern for the perspective sailor's wellbeing either to prevent that career or

to further it.

In addition to its sense of duty or *caritas*, a family might also be moved to give

aid because of an economic obligation. While some sailors cut family ties when they

went to sea, or went to sea because they lacked family ties, others were dutiful in

maintaining their connections and responsibilities to their kin. Sea songs explained that

the money a sailor brought home would compensate for the sorrow caused by his

absence. The songs also represented fortunate sailors as generous and honest and

described them stimulating local economies by buying gifts and rounds of drinks, and

giving loans.[68] Port cities had the reputation of being filled with hopeful women, either

prostitutes trying to profit from the drunken high spirits of sailors on shore leave, or

wives trying to meet up with a husband and collect part of his pay before he put out to sea

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[67] Meyerstein, *Edward Coxere*, 6-7.

[68] "If fortune doe befriend us, / In what we take in hand, / Wee prove our selves still generous / When ere we come to land, / Ther's few yt shall out brave us, / Though neere so great in show, / Wee spend / and lend, / How ere the wind doth blow…. Into our native Country, / With wealth we doe returne: / And cheere our wives & children, / Who for our absence mourne…. For when we have received / Our wages for our paynes: / The Vintners & The Tapsters / By us have golden gaines. / We call for liquor roundly, / And pay before we goe: and sing: / and drinke, / How ere the wind doth blow." M.P., *Saylors for my money* (London, 1630). See also, for other examples: J.P. *Neptunes raging fury* (London, 1650-1655); L.P. *Joy after sorrow* (London, 1648); Anon. *The seamans adieu to his dear* (London, 1641-1674).

again. Those sailors who did not want to subject their family to the uncertainties of a
chaotic port city meeting made arrangements to have part of their wages sent home
directly. Although some sailors left England and never looked back, there were still
plenty engaged in economic relationships with family members at home.[69]

Once a man went to sea, the nature of concern by and about his family changed.
In the case of the sailor, he could exercise his charitable instincts by looking out for other
family members also in the profession. Edward Coxere worked first on the same ship
with his brother. When the powder in the gunroom caught fire, Edward searched
frantically for John and was finally forced by another sailor to leave the ship. John had
also been searching and barely escaped being burned.[70] Although their careers then
diverged, Edward tried to keep track of John. In 1663, they found themselves both at
port in London. Edward heard that his brother planned to be part of the company on
board the *Christopher*, the leaky, ill-fated ship Edward had just left. He wrote in his
memoir "…I being there and not well satisfied in my mind, called on board and wished
my brother not to proceed the voyage in that old bark, but to ship himself with my brother
[in law] Hiway."[71] Edward had an insider's knowledge of the *Christopher*; he had spent
his voyage on that ship pumping for his life. He had an uneasy feeling, an inexplicable
instinct that the proposed voyage would go badly. And he was willing to share a
professional connection, to use his influence with his wife's family to make a job for his
brother. While these manifestations of Edward Coxere's concern for his brother's
welfare do not constitute charity in the usual sense, they were undeniably valuable gifts.

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[69] Adkins, *Jack Tar*,169-175.

[70] Meyerstein, *Edward Coxere*, 8-9.

[71] Meyerstein, *Edward Coxere,* 45.

A sailor could also be compassionate, if not precisely charitable, by getting his anxious family news of his welfare. Since his communications and visits home might include gifts of goods or money, easing minds and enriching poor family members often went together. Coxere took advantage of a friendly merchant neighbor to surprise his mother. He wrote that, because the merchant was one of the owners of Coxere's ship, she would frequently ask him "for news when I was abroad, for they knew not whether I was dead or alive, though I did send sometimes home when I had an opportunity." Dressed as a Dutchman and in the merchant's company, Coxere's mother did not recognize her son and asked, as usual, if "Master Dehase" had any news. But Coxere could not bear to play the trick for long, writing "I discerned the yearning bowels of a mother…"[72] Coxere wrote that besides filling his parents with "joy and gladness," he also gave them 120 pieces of eight.

On the family's part, they could help a sailor when he was gone primarily by praying for his safety. However, those who wanted to take a second approach as well, often turned their ingenuity towards money-making so if a sailor came home ill or maimed or just empty-handed, he would still be comfortable. We see this particularly in the case of sailors' wives. After his ship was taken by the Spanish, Edward Coxere came home much poorer than he had hoped. Nevertheless, his wife took the holland cloth he brought home and sold it for nine pounds. Coxere commented that "my wife, having good friends, with her own industry kept me out of debt."[73] He came home again in 1658 after a year and a half away and was even poorer than before. He had been a prisoner of both the Turks and the Spanish and had, he wrote, "only my clothes to my back to my

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[72] Meyerstein, *Edward Coxere,,* 27-29.

[73] Meyerstein, *Edward Coxere,* 76.

poor wife…" But despite bearing one child and burying another while he was gone, his wife had found the time to begin keeping shop so they were not completely destitute.[74]

The aid provided by families ranged from small informal gestures, like sympathy or small amounts of money, to providing a long-term home for a sailor or his family. It was common, for example, for a poor sailor's wife and children to return to the family home while he was at sea, an arrangement that would last until the voyage was over.[75] In the case of some of the more extreme circumstances recounted in disaster and deliverance narratives, the family home provided a place of refuge while the afflicted told their story and resumed their old life. After finally escaping the pirates who had captured him, fisherman Philip Ashton went home to his father's house, "where [he] was received, as one coming to them from the Dead, with all Imaginable Surprise and Joy."[76] Nicholas Merritt, captured by the same pirates who seized Ashton, also returned to his "Father's House."[77]

Ashton and Merritt's biographer, John Barnard, added his own sermon to the adventurous accounts he copied down from the two former captives. He instructed readers about God's power to save the body from danger and the soul from sin. Barnard's sermon concluded, however, with a rousing celebration of the men's return from the perspective of their parents.

> And O Joyful Parents! (who have been in Anguish of Spirit for this your
> Son, and have Travelled in Pain a Second time for him, Mourning in

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[74] Meyerstein, *Edward Coxere,* 119-120.

[75] Ben-Amos, "'Good Works' and Social Ties," 127.

[76] John Barnard, *Ashton's memorial. An history of the strange adventures, and signal deliverances, of Mr. Philip Ashton, who, after he had made his escape from the pirates, liv'd alone on a desolate island for about sixteen months, &c With a short account of Mr. Nicholas Merritt, was was taken at the same time. To which is added a sermon on Dan. 3.17* (Boston, 1725) 38.

[77] Barnard, *Ashton's memorial,* 44.

> Bitterness of your Souls, because this your Joseph was not) behold the Lord hath looked upon you, he hath considered your Affliction, and turned again his Captivity, Surprising you with the unexpected, but Joyful Acclamation, that this your Son, which was Dead, is alive, he was lost, but is found.[78]

In this passage, Barnard conflated the story of Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, and that of the sinful prodigal in Jesus' parable.[79] Consequently, this exhortation encompassed good sons and bad: the Josephs who were betrayed and enslaved through no fault of their own and the prodigals who ran away to sea, fell in with bad company, wasted their money, and came shamefacedly home again. According to Barnard's model for parents, the compassion of charitable Christian families could extend to the most disreputable of seafarers, provided they returned in a properly humbled state of mind.

Family obligations often overlapped with those shouldered by religious communities. We can see the interconnectedness of family, religion and business in the example of the merchant, Graffin Prankard. Born in Somerset around the beginning of the eighteenth century, Prankard engaged in a career as a Bristol merchant. In 1719/20 he married Sarah Alloway and spent the rest of the decade growing increasingly successful. He became a freeman of the city in 1734 and a member of the Society of Merchant Venturers in 1737. His daughter, Sarah, married one of Prankard's apprentices, in 1738/9.

In 1740, one of the largest of Prankard's ships, the 350 ton *Baltick Merchant* was captured by a Spanish privateer after leaving South Carolina. Prankard's business appears to have already been in some trouble when he lost the ship and its cargo, a blow

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[78] Barnard, *Ashton's memorial,* 66.

[79] Genesis 37. "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Luke 15:24.

estimated to cost around £6000.[80] Throughout the spring of 1740, Prankard sent out the

typical merchant's letters; he commented on monies due and received, the going price of

various commodities, and whether or not sent letters had been received. By April his

letters indicate that he had invested heavily in the ship, along with interests in several

more engaged in trade with Europe. On April 4, he wrote – nervously perhaps – to

business correspondents Smith and Lake that the "Baltick she has been gone now 13

weeks" and he had heard nothing about her progress. Shortly afterwards, the bad news

made its way back to Prankard.[81] Perhaps smelling the blood in the water, some of his

associates immediately demanded payments he could not make and he was declared

bankrupt less than a month after the *Baltick Merchant* was captured.[82] Luckily for

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[80] Prankard seems to have made his fortune by taking chances. Based on a survey of correspondence
spanning the bulk of his career (1714-1742), Prankard was frequently engaged in juggling funds –
collecting on debts to pay off debts that he, in turn, owed. His expressions of concern are common to other
merchants and it is uncertain whether or not he was taking greater chances than anyone else in his uncertain
profession. He was, however, taking greater chances than Quakers were supposed to take. SRO
DD\DN/137, Marriage articles; SRO DD/DN/423-434, Letter Books and correspondence.

[81] SRO, DD\DN/149, Litigation papers; SRO DD/DN/428

[82] Prankard's troubles were particularly troubling because of Quaker views on bankruptcy. In December,
1680, the Men's Meeting planned a paper to be published the following month that cautioned Friends to
avoid financial difficulties. They described the proposed paper as "a testemoney against publick disorders
& particularly against those who have broaken their promises & engadegments, & run behind hand in their
estates…" When this paper was published, the Society of Friends was still made up of members from
mostly modest backgrounds; although, the members of the Bristol meeting were probably some of the
Society's wealthiest because of their connection to the port city. By the time Graffin Prankard found
himself facing bankruptcy in 1740, many more Quakers were well-off and actively engaged in shipping and
trade. Quakers maintained their position on the immorality of falling into debt through reckless
speculation, but it became a harder position to enforce as their members became more prosperous.
Nevertheless, they insisted that bankruptcy was immoral because it implied dishonesty. One had promised
money one did not have and possibly driven others into debt as well. Meetings would even go so far as to
disown members for failing to pay debts. The Hopewell Meeting, in Virginia, disowned Richard Beeson in
1763 for this offense. The Hopewell Meeting continued this practice into the nineteenth century. In 1807,
Martha Morgan was disowned because she "encouraged gambling by lending money." David Barrett was
disowned in 1811 for failing to pay his debts as was John Smith in 1813. Joint Committee of Hopewell
Friends ed., *Hopewell Friends History, 1734-1934* (Strasburg, 1936) 497. Other meetings followed this
practice as well. In 1681, the Gainsborough Meeting disciplined Edward Chessman for doing business
unfairly. The business was complicated because the Meeting was, at the time, gathering in Chessman's
house. In 1690, John Odlins was disciplined over his debts and in1692 Nicholas Wilkinson was
condemned for debt and "disorderly walking." In 1711, the Gainsborough Meeting disowned Josiah
Chessman for failing to pay his debts, and condemned him especially because he was healthy and strong
and chose not to work. Brace, *The First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting,* vol. 1, 87;

Prankard, his new son-in-law was Caleb Dickinson, part of a successful merchant family.

Dickinson, along with Prankard's brother-in-law, John Galton, temporarily took over the

affairs of the business and kept his father-in-law from the shame of debtors' prison. With

Dickinson's help, Prankard was able, by 1741, to begin a modest trade with South

Carolina.[83]

Sailors were not the only people engaged in supporting a family with money

earned, in some way, through an ocean crossing. Many Britons planned to make their

fortune in a far flung corner of the globe and then send, or bring, it back to Britain.

Consequently, not all maritime victims who returned to their families came as

professional parasites. While Christian love might impel a family to give to irresponsible

relatives, many offered support because a struggling merchant, sailor, or imperial investor

had been supporting them.

Meeting House Charity: giving and the Society of Friends

The Prankards, Alloways, Dickinsons, and Galtons shared the double bond of

kinship and faith. They were all Quakers and part of the prosperous, industrious network

of Friends that encompassed Bristol and the surrounding counties of Somerset and

Gloucestershire. In general, members of the Society of Friends were simultaneously

separated and connected to other Britons by their charitable activities. On the one hand,

they had their own members and families for whom to care. Because they wanted to

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Harold W. Brace ed., *The First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1669-1719*, vol. 2 (Hereford, 1943) 12-13, 25-26; Harold W. Brace ed., *The First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1669-1719*, vol. 3 (Hereford, 1947) 8; McGrath, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting 1667-1686*, 153-154.

[83] SRO DD\DN/208, Correspondence received by Caleb Dickinson.

preserve the integrity of their community, they had an added incentive to support and monitor the welfare of those who traveled abroad. On the other hand, there is evidence that they – just like conforming English people -- dug down into their pockets and purses on behalf of the maritime cause célèbre: captive sailors.

The example of the Society of Friends indicates that early-modern charity sprang not just from a progressive impulse to ameliorate suffering or the traditional custom of supporting one's local poor. Friends exerted themselves to the fullest to help fellow members, even preemptively, because they were religiously bound to do so, both by their understanding of Christian scripture and by the peculiar practices of their Quaker faith. Charity was given and accepted from a desire to obey the rules of Quaker life which required that members endure a high degree of oversight from what were known as "worthy Friends." Quakers presumed that their co-religionists were less likely to stray from the truth if they had a community of fellow Quakers holding them accountable for their behavior. Because they needed to acquire accurate information about their members before issuing certificates for marriage – among other things -- they carefully maintained transatlantic connections between meetings that could then be put to use to aid travelers.

The insularity of the Quaker community meant that, often, the bulk of their charitable giving went to other Friends. In 1679, for example, the Bristol Men's Meeting gave £20 to help Friends in London raise the £220 required to ransom "such friends taken captives by the Turkes as are not capeable to redeem themselves…"[84] A few years later, in [1679], the Somerset Quarterly Meeting agreed to pay an unspecified sum because of "serverall friends hard Suffering in Captivity under the Turks…" and paid out £15 in

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[84] Patrick McGrath ed., *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, 1667-1686* (1971) 145.

1684 to the same cause.[85] But sometimes Meeting minutes do not specify to which

religious community a captive belonged. In 1674, the Bristol Men's Meeting gave "tenn

poundes out of ye Publique Stocke towards ye redemption of ye 2 Captives in Turkie

whose conditions was presented to us."[86] Since the minutes do not specify that the two

captives were Friends, as they do elsewhere, it is certainly possible that the Bristol

Meeting was moved to give only because of the captives' plight and not because they

were co-religionists. Likewise, the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting scraped together 4£

7s 6d in 1684 to redeem an unknown collection of captives.[87] The bonds of non-

conformity were strong, but not so strong, it seems, that they allowed Quakers to ignore

the outrage of an Englishman in chains.

Besides collecting ransom money, the Bristol meeting also provided funds to

people like the Borranskull family, newly arrived from Pennsylvania, who received 30

shillings, and to John Camm who received 10 shillings so he could return home to

Cork.[88] But the nature of charity, at least as far as the Society of Friends was concerned,

is most obvious when money was not the only thing involved. In the case of Elizabeth

Walker, a woman who wished to emigrate to Barbardos, the Bristol Meeting agreed to

care for the children she was leaving behind.[89] This involved much more than an outlay

of money. The meeting was taking on, besides the cost of their care, the responsibility

for the children's future and their moral and physical welfare.

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[85] Stephen C. Morland ed., *The Somersetshire Quarterly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1668-1699* (1978) 132-133, 162-163.

[86] McGrath, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting, 1667-1686,* 93.

[87] Harold W. Brace ed., *The First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1669-1719*, vol. 1 (1941) 105.

[88] Mortimer, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting, 1686-1704*, 47, 109.

[89] McGrath, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting, 1667-1686*, 87-88.

Charity might also include oversight. By cautioning and keeping track of members' conduct, Friends believed they provided valuable aid, besides preserving the purity of their Society. In 1700, the Bristol Meeting published a paper warning Friends traveling to America to be careful in their conduct, scrupulous in their business dealings, and to be sure to put themselves under the care of a meeting once they arrived.[90] This paper reminded Quakers both of the resources available to them and their obligations, as Quakers, to behave honestly. To relocate without seeking Friendly council first was punishable with disownment as in the case of John Hackney. The Hopewell Meeting disowned him in 1770 for moving to South Carolina.[91] Like the sermons delivered by conforming preachers, these recommendations were issued in a spirit of compassion. Worthy Friends nagged and prodded their erring coreligionists into right thinking and behavior out of love. To set another Quaker on the proper path, to caution him out of danger, was to offer a valuable gift. The gift had spiritual value, but it had a practical value as well. Following these guidelines – avoiding debt, entering into the care of a meeting – established the reputation of Friends as honest businessmen enabling their personal fortunes to grow and connected them to resources in communities where they were strangers.

The Gainsborough Monthly Meeting's minutes also indicate that Quakers saw their responsibility to would-be travelers in spiritual terms as well as economic. Part of smoothing the way for a Quaker venturing out into the empire was to provide the

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[90] Mortimer, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting, 1686-1704*, 162.

[91] The Hopewell Meeting was still requiring that its members consult the Meeting before relocating into the nineteenth century. In small Meeting like Hopewell, much of the recorded business consisted of keeping track of requests for certificates which allowed people to travel or relocate. John W. Wayland, *Hopewell Friends history, 1734-1934,* (Baltimore, 1975) 499 533-541.

necessary documentation certifying that he was in good standing with his home meeting and should be cared for accordingly. But besides taking care of the spiritual needs of travelers, certificates of good standing paved the way, in advance, for charitable relief should it be needed. An American meeting would not have to write away for information on Abraham Kent and his wife and family before rendering them any help they required. By issuing them a certificate of good standing, the Gainsborough Meeting provided the Kents with the means to have their spiritual and financial needs met.[92]

The emphasis the Society of Friends placed on keeping track of its members' movements mirrors merchants' obsession with information and reputation. Merchants could never know enough to soothe their nerves sufficiently or to confirm (or deny) the merits of a business decision. Mostly basically, their need came from a desire to make money, but as I have previously demonstrated it also exposes the fundamental anxiety the Atlantic world provoked. Similarly, Quakers kept track of members out of a basic desire to behave charitably towards strangers and to maintain the solidarity of a small religious community. But the stakes were high for Quakers as well and they had good reason to be concerned. They were willing to turn over generous sums to help new arrivals. What if - - in the ever-shifting world of post-Reformation English Protestantism – those people then ceased to be Quaker? What if they were bad Quakers, a burden and shame to the community that initially sponsored them? The Society of Friends was sensitive to the fact that it had been persecuted, long after the persecutions had stopped. Its members did not want to commit their patronage and resources to people who might act immorally and bring persecution down on their heads again, or simply stop attending after taking the

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[92] Brace, *The First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting, 1669-1719* vol. 3, 56.

Meeting's money. The seas and the New World provided the illusion of escape, that one could leave one's past behind. This was the last thing a charitably-mind religious organization wanted. It was only by knowing a person's past that the community could decide whether or not to give money and sponsorship to newcomers.

As an organization, the Society of Friends did not involve itself in the founding of institutions for the relief of maritime victims. Their philanthropic efforts outside each individual meeting tended to run to charity schools and, in the eighteenth century, towards organizations dedicated to ending the African slave trade. However, individual Quakers -- particularly those who had made fortunes in trade -- donated generously to organizations unaffiliated with the Society that went to caring for wounded sailors, or their widows and children.

Parish Charity

For conforming Britons, local parishes played probably the most consistent role in meeting both day-to-day demands for financial relief, and in responding to the stream of briefs that requested special aid for victims of unusual or exceptional catastrophes. But before money could be doled out, parish leaders had first to determine who was worthy of help. Parishes had to confront an intractable problem: sailors were simultaneously national heroes and undesirable vagrants. It was a Christian's duty to care for the stranger, and the parish's duty to hurry the stranger along lest he linger to strain already meager resources. Into this conundrum stepped the authors of guidebooks for parish officials who boiled down the legislation relating to the poor and spelled out, in detail, who should be helped and who should be punished.

The book *The Office and Dutie of Constables, Churchwardens, and other Overseers of the Poore*, for example, described the current state of the often misunderstood laws on begging. Begging had been regulated in 1531; outlawed in 1536, 1547, and 1552; then licensed again by statutes in 1555, 1563, and 1598; only to be outlawed in 1601.[93] Although begging was outlawed in 1641 when *The Office and Dutie of the Constables* was printed, there were so many exceptions to the law as to make further explanation necessary. The manual explained that "every person whatsoever… that under any pretence or colour whatsoever shall wander and beg out of their own parish… shall be apprehended, punished and conveyed as a rogue…" The list of people likely to fall into this category included gypsies, Irish people, minstrels, bearwards, "persons calling themselves scholars," and "all sea-faring men pretending losses of their ships or goods."

The manual, however, was quick to explain the loopholes available for legitimate sailors, and how they were to be treated. Parish officials were warned that disabled or lawfully discharged sailors would carry papers from their captain indicating the location of their home parish. If those papers were in order, then the sailor should be allowed enough to time to make his way home, and the funds to do so. Officials were instructed that "in this their travel [sailors and soliders] are to repair to the Treasurers of every town and County through which they passe, who is to allow them sufficient means to convey them to the next Treasurer until they arrive at the place limited." Lest these terms seem too generous, the author went on to add that, unless a sailor had suffered a shipwreck, he

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[93] Hindle, *On the Parish?*, 67-68.

was not allowed to beg from anyone other than a Treasurer and should be punished as a rogue if he did.[94]

These terms were basically consistent with general trends in attitudes toward poor relief in the seventeenth century, and possibly even on the tolerant side given sailors' terrible reputation. That sailors were considered worthy of charity at all is a testament to the gratitude English people felt for their service in defense of the empire. Moreover, as historian Steve Hindle has argued, there is evidence to suggest that charity – as defined as hospitality to the stranger – was in decline. The parish saved its resources for its own poor and displayed increasing hostility toward people unknown to it. Where wealthy landowners might previously have welcomed the grateful poor into their home for a meal, they now satisfied their Christian obligation to be charitable by giving money.[95] But sailors, perhaps, provide something of an exception. Their heroism balanced their notorious reputations enough that they were legally entitled to relief. Although they were strangers, communities overcame their mistrust of vagrants to support them. But neither were Britons sufficiently enamored with sailors to give them charitable carte blanche. They had to prove that they were legitimate hero-sailors first – not to be tarred with the brush of the idle sailor's reputation – and, thus, earn their rewards.

Even with these regulations, coastal parishes in particular had no shortage of requests for funds from sailors and civilian victims alike. According to the 1652 churchwardens' accounts for Walton-on-the-Hill in Lancashire, the parish paid 2s 6d for the "releefe of Ten distressed passengers" who carried the necessary documentation. In

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[94] Anon., *The Office and Dutie of Constables, Churchwardens, and other Overseers of the Poore,* (London, 1641) 31-36.

[95] Hindle, *On the Parish?*, 104-109.

1663, the same parish gave a Captain and ten other travelers 3s, "hee haveinge beene in his majesties service beyond the seas and robd homeward bownd."[96] Likewise the parish of Cratfield paid out 1s in 1639 to "Cornelias Newman with his wife and sister and too children who had a surteficat of a lose by sea of 6 hundred pound and were to goe to London," 8d to John and William Dennes who also had "surtefficats" of great losses at sea, 1s to Mary and Kattrin Browne and their three children who had "sustained the lose of 4 hundred pound by the Turkes," 1s to Thomas Willobie, his wife and children, who had lost £1000 to Turkish pirates, and 1s to John Stanton who had lost £300 "by sea," among many others.[97]

These examples illustrate several important points. First, they demonstrate the diversity of maritime victims. The captain, presumably with no particular fortune, was in need of funds just like the Willobie family who had lost £1000. Second, we see the strength of traditional relationships, their attraction in times of trouble. The captain was already homeward bound after service overseas when he was robbed. The other victims carried the proper documents, indicating that they were on their way to their homes as well. It was acceptable for Walton-on-the-Hill and Cratfield to dole out funds because there was no chance any of these sufferers would stay. Finally, these individuals were transient strangers, the type of poor viewed by parishioners with the most suspicion. Nevertheless, the churchwarden's account mentions no hostility or malice towards them. The detail in which their plights were recorded suggests that the parish may have even have treated them with sympathy.

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[96] Esther M.E. Ramsay and Alison J. Maddock eds., *The Churchwardens' Accounts of Walton-On-The-Hill, Lancashire, 1627-1667* (2005) 92, 150.

[97] L.A. Botelho, *Churchwardens' Accounts of Cratfield, 1640-1660* (1999) 32-33.

Like the Society of Friends, parishes also involved themselves in collecting funds to redeem enslaved captives. In 1636, Charles Fitz-Geffry addressed the people of Plymouth and, in a series of three sermons and praised them for their "compassion towards captives… who are in miserable bondage in Barbarie." He then went on to compliment their "monethly collections for this pious purpose."[98] Fitz-Geffry also described at length the lot of the poor prisoners, presumably to motivate his listeners to dig deep. He asserted that the markets of Barbary were "fuller of our men then ours are of horses and cattle" and described in graphic language how captured slaves were branded and beaten.[99] These regular contributions were just a small slice of what was ultimately a lengthy giving campaign that stretched over much of the seventeenth century. In *Captives*, Linda Colley describes how Christians throughout England and Wales organized mass collections in 1579, 1624, 1647, 1670, and 1692 for imprisoned sailors which raised tens of thousands of pounds. This did not include the money raised in response to regular Charity Briefs that appealed for aid on behalf of particular individuals in captivity whose families sought to ransom them. This massive effort was directed at rich and poor alike, rural and urban dwellers, the coastal and the landlocked. Everyone down to the meanest servant contributed, all sharing the conviction that it was intolerable for a free, Christian, Englishman to suffer slavery in a heathen land.[100]

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[98] Charles Fitz-Geffry, *Compassion towards captives chiefly towards our brethren and country-men who are in miserable bondage in Barbarie. Urged and pressed in three sermons on Heb. 13.3. Preched in Plymouth* (1637) title page, preface 2.

[99] Fitz-Geffry, *Compassion towards captives,* preface.

[100] Colley, *Captives*, 75-78.

The Professional Society and the Charitable Insitution

It was not just religious communities that took a broad and varied definition of charity when it came to caring for sailors, passengers, and merchants in distress. Institutions founded by the wealthy, the religious, or by the well-meaning united around a shared cause stepped up to provide regular support of all kinds. Professional organizations, like the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol, played a multi-faceted role when it came to taking care of the maritime community. Predictably enough, they gave money. The Merchant Venturers' records are full of charitable gifts; although, they particularly tried to help families or widows of captives or deceased mariners. Their charitable responsibility extended not just to seafarers, but to their families as well. In 1622, the Society gave 20s to goodwife Trippett "towards the Relief of herselfe and Children in their sicknes, her husband being in Captivitie in Algier." In 1640, it provided a weekly allowance of 2s 6d to Elizabeth Davis, the widow of John Davis, mariner, so she could care for herself and her six children. And in 1644, it awarded Edward Wickham, "a poore aged Seaman," a room in the "Marchants Almeshouse" for the rest of his life. These are just a few examples from the list of "decayed merchants," "poore widows," and "cast away seamen" that populate their records. Besides ransoming captives and pensioning off sailors, the Society of Merchant Venturers also provided schools and teachers for the children of sailors, and paid to educate the sailors, themselves, in the art of navigation.[101]

As an organized body of influential men, the Merchant Venturers had the power to petition the government for attention and aid. Like sermons, these petitions served two

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[101] Patrick McGrath ed., *Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century* (Bristol, 1951) 101.

purposes. The first, far from altruistic, was to raise profits. But the second was often to ensure the safety of sailors and ships. In 1620, for example, they wrote the Mayor of Bristol requesting help with their attempts to suppress Turkish pirates. In 1665, they wrote the king to request a navy convoy to protect their ships en route to Virginia. In 1689, they wrote the king again, asking him to send ships to defend the coasts from French privateers.[102] In their case, personal interest and brotherly love mixed nicely. What was good for ships and profits was often good for sailors, at least when it came to matters of safety. This may not have been charity from the purest of motives, but the Merchant Venturers did look after the welfare of sailors in a way parishes could not. They had the power to minimize danger or to prevent it *before* it occurred, besides caring for victims afterwards.

In general, professional organizations served both others and themselves. They paid to educate young boys, providing them with a future livelihood and the means to help their families; but they also provided themselves with skilled workers. Jonas Hanway, who founded the Marine Society in 1756, intended that it would serve as "a charitable recruiting agency for the fleet and merchant shipping." Neale's Mathematical School also taught navigation to boys who attended only through other people's charitable gifts. These schools and societies provided a moral service: occupying young boys and distracting them from criminal behavior that idleness was believed to produce. They provided a charitable service: educating and uplifting and ultimately employing the

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[102] McGrath, *Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers*, 185, 193, 195.

poor. And they provided an economic service: supplying the country with skilled workers while their own businesses reaped the financial benefits.[103]

Less well-heeled than the Merchant Venturers, the mariners of Scarborough decided to found an almshouse to care for the widows of poor sailors. Established in 1602, Trinity House was the first almshouse founded in the seventeenth century. The mariners raised £100 and established an arrangement with the shipowners of Scarborough that every ship leaving its port would contribute 4d a voyage. Every mariner was expected to put in an equal amount, and every sailor earning more than 15s was expected to add 2d.[104]

We see in these societies the reciprocal element of charity that Crusoe demonstrates. Philanthropic merchants donated to many causes, but they made a careful point to take care of their own. Sailors were all too cognizant of what would become of their wives and children if they failed to come home. They had, no doubt, seen shipmates killed or wounded and knew the financial repercussions of such an event. Perhaps they had even spent time after a calamitous journey making their way home, parish by parish, living on the few pennies they were given. But when their pockets were full, when a merchant had reached the peak of his career, they responded to the expectation of their community and offered support.

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[103] David Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (Cambridge, 1964) 15.

[104] W.K. Jordan, *The Charities of Rural England, 1480-1660: the Aspirations and the Achievements of the Rural Society* (New York, 1961) 265.

Insurance

"...the losse lighteth rather easilie upon many…"[105]

By focusing on the charity of religious communities, I have intended to emphasize the traditional nature of the Atlantic world. Rather than creating new sources of aid, needy Atlantic Britons turned to the same institutions and networks that had supported them long before their country had an empire. Even professional organizations, while newly developed in response to the ever-increasing needs of a growing maritime community, used as their justification for charity the same arguments that had prompted charity in the past. The Bible instructed Christians that it was their duty to take care of the poor, sick, and orphaned, and to redeem the captive.

Professional organizations, however, added progress to their list of goals along with expressions of piety and Christian goodwill. They could bring about positive change through charity. It was compassionate to care for a sailor's widow, but how much better would it be to educate sailors in the latest techniques, rendering the seas that much safer? Merchant groups, like maritime lobbyists, promoted the development of new technology and petitioned the government to sponsor advances that would lead to safer, faster, more profitable sea travel. While family, friends, churches, and parishes continued to bear the charitable brunt of caring for maritime victims – as they always had – the eighteenth century saw an increase in the availability of organizations specifically created to address the needs of those damaged on the oceans.

More far reaching, however, than professional organizations was another new development that also seems to indicate an interest in progress and the mitigation of risk.

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[105] Act for the hearing and determining of causes arising from policies of assurance, 1601 -- 43 Eliz 3 12

Insurance seems like the innovation of the age. In one practical, secular swoop, insurers took business and sea travel from the hands of a mercurial God and placed it squarely under the laws of probability. The end of the godly, anxious, traditional Atlantic was at hand and providence had spoken its last. Or had it? In many respects, the history of insurance bears a strong resemblance to that of those professional organizations. While its goals were forward looking, it was a practice that remained rooted in much older things: Christian charity, information, reputation.

The history of insurance and the history of maritime travel and trade are inextricably intertwined. The fear of losses at sea gave birth, early on, to marine insurance; but the sea also encouraged the development of life insurance as well, a telling indication of the perceived risks associated with sea travel. Some of the earliest examples of insurance policies come from the fifteenth-century Mediterranean world. Investors took out policies on ships and then added to them a life-insurance-like supplement that covered the health of the passengers and slaves. In general, the trade in human beings did much to advance the development of insurance since investors wanted to guard against the loss of this valuable cargo in wrecks and to pirates.[106]

In Britain, we begin finding records of insurance policies around the middle of the sixteenth century taken out by shipping companies who wanted some assurance regarding the fate of their ships and the cargo they carried. Fire, life, and accident insurance followed marine insurance in fairly short order. Insurance became more common during the seventeenth century, but flourished most exuberantly from the 1690s on into the eighteenth century. Coffee houses, the most famous of which was Lloyd's, set up shop as

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[106] Geoffrey Clark, *Betting on Lives: the culture of life insurance in England 1695-1775* (Manchester, 1999) 14.

clearing houses for information and as increasingly formal forums for business deals. A monopoly created by the "Bubble Act" in 1720, gave Lloyd's, in particular, a boost.[107]

The Bubble Act, so called because of the infamous South Sea Bubble, attempted to regulate the financial markets and to prevent the kind of uncontrolled speculation that had led to the crash. When the South Sea Bubble burst, it took with it millions of pounds and the confidence of the British people in sure-thing financial investments. The legislation also incorporated two companies at King George's request. He had been given stock in the Royal Exchange Assurance and the London Assurance and wanted to be certain of their success. The terms of their charter prevented other corporations from offering insurance; although, it placed no restrictions on individual underwriters. While the two corporations foundered, coffee house insurers enjoyed unprecedented levels of business.[108]

Social critic Jonathan Swift recorded his observations on the financial crash in his frequently referenced poem "The Bubble." In the poem, he compared investors to sailors seduced by visions of land into jumping over board to die; to Pharaoh whose ambitious pursuit of the Israelites was destroyed by the crashing waters of the Red Sea; and to Icarus flying too close to the sun with wings held together by wax. Swift pondered the baffling nature of financial success, wondering why on these dangerous South Seas "Fools chiefly float, [while] the wise are drown'd?" Besides fools, he identified one other group that came out on top as well: underwriters. He described naïve investors as passengers on unseaworthy ships: "Subscribers here by thousands float, / And jostle one

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[107] Cockerell, *The British Insurance Business,* 4-5.

[108] Cockerell, *The British Insurance Business,*5; Antony Brown, *Hazard Unlimited: the Story of Lloyd's of London* (London, 1973) 23-24; Elizabeth Luessenhop, *Risky Business: an Insider's Account of the Disaster at Lloyd's of London* (New York, 1995) 53-54.

another down, / Each paddling in his leaky boat, / And here they fish for gold and drown…" In contrast, he described the insurance underwriters. "Meantime, secure on Garraway cliffs, / A savage race, by shipwrecks fed, / Lie waiting for the foundred skiffs, / And strip the bodies of the dead."[109]

Garraway, like Lloyd's, was one of the many coffee houses that specialized in doing business to merchants, investors, and other participants in business, trade, and finance. Men of business set up shop in coffee houses, even giving out the name of the house they favored to people who wanted to know where they should pay a call. Insurance underwriters particularly favored coffee houses. Working there kept them abreast of the latest news and close to many of the people who needed their services.[110] Swift's poem compares these coffee house denizens to wreckers, preying off remains of other people's bad judgment like the remains of a shipwreck. This grim stanza gives us the sense that the budding insurance business was already emotionless, calculating, and fixated on nothing more than the bottom line.

Even after the crash, speculation and insurance retained a sense of creative chaos. The boundaries of what could be insured seemed limitless. Because news traveled unreliably, the fate of a ship might be known in one place before it was heard about in others. It was, therefore, possible to take out a policy on a ship that had already come into port, ensuring a guaranteed profit, before the owners or underwriters heard of its safe return. It was equally possible to take out a policy on a ship that had already sunk if its demise was not yet common knowledge.[111] Added into the mix was the fashion for

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[109] Jonathan Swift, "The Bubble," (London, 1721).

[110] Brown, *Hazard Unlimited,* 14-19.

[111] Luessenhop, *Risky Business,* 56.

gambling which many Britons embraced wholeheartedly. Insurance policies became not just the product of actuary tables, but a manifestation of the fad to bet on anything and everything. By the second half of the eighteenth century, policies were taken out on the likelihood of war, the health of the king, and the duration of his latest affair. When a notable individual made the newspaper for being sick, bets were immediately made on how much longer he would live. The reputations of the coffee houses suffered. Were they places of business or glorified gambling halls?[112]

The hagiographic histories of Lloyd's attribute it with a shift toward sober-minded professionalism in the face of immoral excess that changed the business world for the better. [113] This change is described like a combination of the arrival of Prometheus bearing fire from the gods and the first meeting between a lawless Western town and the quick-drawing sheriff who plans to clean it up. These rapturous enthusiasms aside, some of Lloyd's more cautious members feared for the club's reputation as well as their own. They broke from their reckless colleagues in 1769, forming the New Lloyd's Coffee House. Eventually prudence and regulation triumphed over the power of tradition, New Lloyd's put its rival out of business, and gambling became the employment of men's clubs and places of entertainment.[114] However, the unsavory reputation of insurance in the eighteenth century belies the charitable purposes for which it was, in part, created.

In the late seventeenth century, a number of societies were established by cautious, civic-minded Englishmen with the goal of providing aid to bereaved families

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[112] Brown, *Hazard Unlimited,* 26-29.

[113] Brown, *Hazard Unlimited,* 26-30; Godfrey Hodgson, *Lloyds of London: a Reputation at Risk* (London, 1984) 51-53.

[114] Brown, *Hazard Unlimited,* 28-29.

and preventing them from falling on the parish. Policyholders paid in regular contributions and were assured that, should they die, their widows and orphans would receive a set lump sum from the society. Like the mariners who established Trinity House, subscribers intended to care for their own and, by doing so, also help their communities by removing from them a charitable burden. As the societies grew more organized and successful, members grew more ambitious in their aims. Insurance was not to be a way to shift the responsibility of caring for the poor, to draw back and detach from distasteful people and problems, but instead a way of making charity more comprehensive and more effective. Eventually, some evolved into organizations more like joint-stock companies with goals that were even more ambitious still: they would enable the poor to be self-supporting by stimulating the economy which in turn would create jobs.

While the earliest societies acknowledged the Christian nature of charity and the sacred component of their organizations' work, later societies were more secular in expressing their mission. Historian Geoffrey Clark writes "These new types of foundations were superseding traditional forms of poor relief…" He describes the ineffectiveness of older charitable models in meeting the needs of the poor and the incongruence of alms-giving and English Protestant culture; thus, demonstrating the need for a new method of raising and distributing funds. He observes: "In a parallel movement, the religious obligation of the rich to relieve the poor as a matter of Christian justice was gradually reconceived in more worldly terms as a moral commitment – to be voluntarily embraced by those in easy circumstances – to show mercy to the abandoned, impecunious, or oppressed." Merchants, in particular, seem to have played a key role in

the establishment of many of these societies. Practically, they had every reason to be interested in minimizing their risks by taking out insurance and in the promises made by joint-stock companies of economic growth. Personally, they were flexing their new merchant-class identities, created by financial success, by thinking philanthropically and in terms of social improvement. [115]

The two strands that wind together into the history of the British insurance business both lend themselves to a narrative of modernization. The community-specific, religiously-minded assistance societies evolve into profit-driven joint-stock companies and larger insurance businesses that are generically moral and replace insufficient, traditional forms of charity. The practice of using insurance as a form of gambling fades away in favor of professional standards; it has been ultimately only a detour down a brutal and callous side road, a brief aberration in what is otherwise a history of progress.

This narrative of progress that accompanies histories of insurance is not necessarily born out by the experience of ordinary sailors. Insurance was available to some and might save the wealthy from ruin, but it rarely improved the lot of sailors who had been part of a wreck or taken prisoner on a captured ship. Michael Kelly was uninsured when he was wrecked and Samuel Kelly was obligated to go to London to "be examined" regarding the capture of the packet ship. The underwriters from Lloyds questioned Kelly, the second mate, and the steward regarding the events surrounding the ship's capture and "plunderage" to determine whether or not the captain could be held accountable.[116] Kelly did not mention the underwriter's decision. He was more concerned with his own plight. Because he had been captured, he had lost all of his

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[115] Clark, *Betting on Lives,* ch.3, esp. 83-84.

[116] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,* 18, 65.

personal possessions. He was put in the way of a better paying position by his maritime friends, but was unable to accept it. It was not just that he lacked the extra money to outfit himself as a mate, but he was actually in the hole, needing to replace all of the clothes and gear he had already earned. The packet ship's capture made him ill-equipped for his own job, let along a better one.[117]

Atlantic trade provided numerous opportunities for theft and deceitfulness. Kelly, for example, described sailors inflating on paper the prices of wine by 10% to 15% and taking the extra money as a kind of commission for transporting it. He called the doctored receipts "saltwater invoices."[118] As far as Joseph Banfield was concerned, insurance was another opportunity to cheat. When Banfield was wrecked in 1772, he was able to save some of the rum he had bought as an investment from the ruined ship. The captain auctioned it off, but still included it as part of the cargo that was lost when he submitted his account to the underwriters. Banfield wrote: "I never saw afarthing of that money never since." For Banfield, insurance meant not protection but fraud.[119]

As I demonstrated in chapter 3, insurance also meant the opportunity for fraud to the mate of the *Nottingham*. According to his narrative of the wreck, the progressive use of insurance had only led to under-provisioning, a cruel captain, the loss of the ship, and cannibalism, the ultimate act of savagery. The captain had tried in various ways to collect on the ship and had finally sailed too late, putting the *Nottingham* in the path of a storm. He abandoned the ship without a struggle then forced the crew to sign documents

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[117] Garstin ed., *Samuel Kelly,*57.

[118] Garstin, *Samuel Kelly,*45.

[119] HL, MSS HM57345, MJB, 28, 33.

attesting to his competence. The subsequent print battle over reputation between the captain and mate may have occurred solely because of the insurance claims; by denying the captain's account, the crew found a way to punish him for him conduct and, they hoped, to ensure that his future was ruined. The dispassionate, modern practice of insuring a ship still came down to the same questions of judgment and reputation that dominated before insurance was common. To prove his honesty and competence, the captain even cited examples of his Christian conduct and called on other Christians to bear him out.

Insurance was a comparatively new part of maritime life, but it did not reshape the experience. It id not replace the role of traditional communities or the need for sociability. It did not alleviate the anxiety that the seas created. It rendered neither seas nor shipmates inherently safe. Born out of an impulse to distribute charity more effectively and dependent on men's reputation as Christians, it was not secular. Insurance was the formalization of existing bonds of sociability that already existed. A community already formed found ways to take care of itself by spreading risk among its members. Merchants and underwriters alike were able to bear only as much risk as they could afford by gambling together with their colleagues on the safety of a ship and its cargo. For those with the resources and connections to insure their goods, the Atlantic was a little less risky but it was no less intimate.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Robinson Crusoe's modest success depended on the goodwill of other people. Whatever individuality he might have discovered on his island would have done him no

good when he finally returned to England. He needed money and it was the kindly efforts of others on his behalf that provided him with it. The story of imperial failures is full of the kindly efforts of others. For all that it takes place on the immense stage of the oceans, it is a strangely provincial tale. The depredations of Turkish pirates are countered by the Somerset Quarterly Meeting. Edward Coxere sails the seven seas, but is confident in the word of another man when he finds that he is also from Devon. Coxere's mother questions passing merchants about whether or not they have seen her son. Graffin Prankard ships goods to Ireland, the continent, and the North American colonies; he is undone by Spanish pirates; and he is rescued by a neighbor and fellow Quaker who also happens to be his son-in-law. When a merchant fleet is attacked on the other side of the world, a knowing preacher scolds the people of Deptford for their sins. These are not the stories of modern, individualistic Britons who were reveling in their new, proud identity.

When it came to the ocean's victims, the casualties of empire, families, religious communities, and professional organizations maintained their commitment not only to charity, but to an explicitly Christian version of charity. The profits of empire and the sophisticated institutions that managed them seem absent from the reciprocal arrangements of sympathy and aid. Sailors protected the nation and Britons rewarded them with prayers and tolerance. Their countrymen redeemed them from captivity not just because Britons never, never, never shall be slaves, but because they were from Devon and Plymouth and Portsmouth. Merchants were benevolent patrons to their communities in good times, and their neighbors and co-religionists vouched for their good character in bad times. New identities are fragile things and the vigor of the oceans

often required something hardier from people who were suffering. They needed an old

identity with all the traditional support that came with it.

Conclusion -- God speed the barge

Thy mightie and out-stretched Arme hath supplied the defect of our Mast; thy Mercie stands us in stead of our Anchor; thy ever-shining goodnesse made way for us through the midst of all darknesse; and thy eternall Providence, our never-fayling Load-stone, mercifully directed us in the unknowne waies of the wilde Ocean… There is none like our God, who hath saved his people in the midst of destruction…. Amen.[1]

Early modern Britons were amphibious. They were surrounded by water; their island home was penetrated by water. Their colonies were an ocean away and began either perched on barrier islands and on comparatively hospitable coasts or just upriver from the sea. Their enemies could only attack by water. Their economy ran along their waterways and flourished in their port cities. However, if one were to survey the scholarship on British domestic history, this might not be readily apparent. Social historians, in particular, have emphasized agrarian Britain. They have focused on yeoman farmers, the life of the parish, controversies over enclosure, and post-Reformation social polarization. The Britain of popular imagination is also landlocked. It is not until the nineteenth century that the idea of the brave Jack Tar gained as much traction as the idea of the honest farmer or the generous manorial lord. Why are the touchstones of domestic early modern British history predominately agricultural? Why has water been almost exclusively the province of historians of empire? Why is the symbol of ritual life the maypole and not the Jonah pageant, the typical Briton the plowman and not the bargeman?

In part, the division between dry domestic history and wet imperial history can be connected to the specificity demanded by maritime historians, who have seemed reluctant to define their terms broadly. Nor are they wrong to recognize that there were differences

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[1] I.C., "A Prayer for Mariners," *The everburning lamps of pietie and devotion*, (London, 1619) 138-140.

between ships whose service the monarch could demand and a proper navy, between

bargemen and fishermen, coastal fishers and deep-sea fishers, landsmen who made a

single voyage and career sailors, sailors who were educated to their trade and sailors who

were only trained for physical labor, merchants who occasionally sold goods overseas

and merchants who only sold goods overseas. Historian David Loades observes "…it

would be unrealistic to count everyone who had at some time in their lives been to sea as

a part of the maritime community, just as it would be unrealistic to include every

merchant who had at some point used a seaborne carrier."[2]

These distinctions were real. It mattered to a ship captain whether his crew was

made up of master mariners or unskilled, pressed landsmen. It mattered within

communities of mariners who had earned the right to claim the titles that indicated

ability. It mattered to a merchant whether he took big risks or small ones. Within the

framework of shared culture, however, specialization mattered very little. Common

knowledge of the seas was very common indeed: widespread and influential. Images of

the maritime appeared in popular print far too often for them only to be relevant to the

few Britons who were long-distance career sailors, or members of the royal navy, or ship

owners, or whatever other professional specialization was necessary for a person to count

as "a part of the maritime community." Hymn writers, in particular, who hoped for

emotional, spiritual reactions from the Christians who sang their verses would not have

chosen maritime metaphors if they did not resonate with a general audience.

When a Briton came home from a sea voyage, this then was his audience: people

who were acquainted with the particulars of the maritime. They probably lacked his

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[2] David Loades, *The Making of the Elizabethan Navy, 1540-1590* (Woodbridge, 2009) 125.

expertise; they probably had not seen the places he had seen. But they also were not ignorant. He did not tell his stories into a vacuum, but rather to savvy listeners who were awake to the implications of storms, captains, leaks, damages and all the usual maritime dangers. We see the relationship between career seamen and their inexpert but hardly uninformed counterparts on land illustrated through coastal parishes like Whalesbone outside of Brighton. Historian Cynthia Herrup describes the contentious relationship between landsmen and fishermen in Whalesbone who viewed their ways of life as distinct enough to warrant dividing parish offices equally between the two groups. Besides the different environments in which they worked, their respective occupations imposed different constraints on their time. The fishermen, for example, were not always present at Quarter Sessions because they were away at sea for several months out of the year.[3] Nevertheless, landsmen and fishermen worked alongside each other and shared public duties in a tiny parish. They must have possessed rudimentary knowledge about each others' lives and professions. Britons were not so agricultural, so locked into the rhythms of agrarian life that they could forget the sea was close at hand.

In part, however, the division between land and sea can also be traced to historians of empire. If maritime historians have been reluctant to embrace all but the most professional of sailors, historians of empire have been reluctant to embrace the oceans at all. Even historians of the Atlantic, who have defined their terms more broadly and created a category for analysis that can transcend the political, geographical, ideological limitations of empire, still limit the influence they are willing to ascribe to the Atlantic itself. For all its ferocity, it is strangely mute. For all its size, it is strangely

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[3] Cynthia Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987), 108-109.

absent. For the most practical of reasons, the Atlantic must be incorporated into the empire; empire was only possible because of it.

Perhaps this silence is understandable if we approach the oceans solely through empire. Did the residents of Whalesbone think about Britain's empire? Did they contemplate the exchange of natural resources for civilizing knowledge that Britain's leaders planned in other lands? It seems unlikely. But they contemplated the ocean regularly. For ordinary Britons – those unattached to political schemes and foreign investments and great migrations – their one connection to the empire might have been the ocean.

Consequently, when we set out to understand Britain's relationship with its empire and with the people and countries who shared the Atlantic world we must see the ocean as a starting point rather than an afterthought. It was the lowest common denominator; at the very least, an idea considered by any Briton who ever knew a sailor or bought a piece of cod. It was a scriptural fact, a spiritual truth that God spoke through the natural world and specifically through the seas. Anyone who listened to the prayer book in church or sang any of the numerous hymns praising God the Creator and God the Worker of Wonders had to think about the ocean. And of course, anyone who needed to cross the Atlantic had to do far more than think about oceans; he had to endure one, creating the experiences that went on to shape the ideas of others.

Having established the ocean's formative role in empire and the Atlantic world, we must next acknowledge that the ocean continued affecting that world. The ocean did not set the empire in motion and then step back. Like the providential God, it continued to hold out promises and deny successes to anyone who wanted to cross it. It continued

to serve as a source of anxiety that did not seem to dissipate even as the Atlantic became more familiar.

Anxiety is complicated emotion, consisting as it does of a blend of hope and fear. By the end of the eighteenth century, there was every reason to hope that a voyage would prove unexceptional; there remained every reason to fear that it would not. It is that blend of glorious potential and terrible possibility that made Britons so nervous. We can see the cause of this tension in the diaries of two seafaring contemporaries. Even by the end of the eighteenth century, the ocean was an uncertain place.

In 1768, Bostonian Peter Verstille penned his observations on a voyage from London to Boston. He began with a list of prices on the goods that made up the cargo – raisins, nutmegs, logwood, chocolate – and then jotted down the kind of laconic observations characteristic of ships' logs and captains' record books. Having a background in New England commerce, he was familiar with the ship's rigging, interested in the price of commodities, and generally conversant with wider issues of Atlantic trade and seafaring.[4]

The voyage lasted a little over a month and seems to have been completely unremarkable. He mentions the observance of the Sabbath, the raising and lowering of the sails, the preparation of fresh food, and the weather. The nearly constant list of vessels hailed or observed gives the impression of a sociable Atlantic. On May 8, the writer mentioned that "we spoke with the *Harriot* N. York packet." On May 10, he wrote that they "spoke with a ship from Lisbon bound to London… [and] with the Brig

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[4] HL MSS HM175, Diary 1768-1773,49.

Resolution, John Pursaval Master of Boston from Georgia for London." Over the course

of a six week voyage, he recorded encounters with fourteen different vessels.[5]

The weather appears to have been rough, but not unusually so. He wrote that on

May 12, it was "very Squally & Cloudy." On the May 14, the Sabbath, he noted that

there was "Dark Cloudy weather… [and] Waves very high & rough Sea." He added that

they also "read Prayers." On the 17th, he observed that the "Sea [was] running

Mountainous & very Blustering." And on the 23rd, he wrote: "Mr Clark had his hatt blew

away. A very great Sea." No one was eaten. No one starved or went mad. The only

casualty was a hat. [6]

Joseph Banfield left Falmouth when he was almost 13 to go to sea. By 1768, he

had been a sailor for 14 years and had shipped as a second mate with "Capt. Archabald

Robe." While Verstille observed nothing of significance during his voyage of the same

year, Banfield wrote that on his ship they "buried a number of the people as weel as the

third mate who wass murdered by the people that was in the longboat atrading with him."

During subsequent voyages, Banfield was castaway and enslaved in Africa, shipwrecked

in a storm, taken from a privateer and held prisoner in France, and part of the crew on a

slaver whose human cargo died from malnourishment and suffocation because the

weather was so bad they could not be fed.[7] His memoir stretched from 1754 to 1796 and

is full of close escapes, brushes with death, profound discomfort, and the hand of

providence. We see only one exception. In 1775, Banfield shipped with Captain James

Fraser in the *Valliant*, carrying a letter of marque against the Americans. He described

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[5] HL,MSS HM175, Diary 1768-1773, 59.

[6] HL,MSS HM175, Diary 1768-1773, 61.

[7] HL,MSS HM57345, MJB, 14.

the weight of their canons and the number of men available to fight the ship. But this entry is usually concise. He concluded: "we mett with nothing during our whole voyage."[8]

We are left with two very contradictory accounts of the trade and travel in the maritime world. Peter Verstille's matter-of-fact records suggest that even bad weather had become commonplace, that sea-travel was routinized and safe. On the other hand, Joseph Banfield's memoir suggests that the oceans were just as full of peril and adventure as they had ever been. We must conclude, therefore, that both experiences – the ocean of blessings and the gateway to hell that had defined maritime experiences in the seventeenth century -- were possible still. With two such disparate outcomes possible, who would not feel anxious?

Not only did the possible danger of the seas themselves cause anxiety, but they attached a price to interpersonal relationships which in turn created a need to collect information, to prove truthfulness. The stakes were too high – there had to be a way to confirm whether a captain was competent or not, whether a shipyard built sound ships, whether a mate knew his business. The seas created anxiety because they held the potential for extremity and barbarism. Like those who suffered through captivity, sailors could not bring home the world of a wreck. They left it behind on a beach or the ocean floor, just like those prisoners of Indians or Turks left behind the culture of their captors, their slavery, their chains. But their experiences were inscribed on their bodies: concave bellies, missing teeth, ulcerous sores, blackened frostbitten skin. Even though

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[8] HL,MSS HM57345, MJB, 33.

comparatively few wrote about their adventures, the stories were still there written on

their flesh and bones to be read by their countrymen.

Anxiety and godliness were mutually reinforcing. As long as Britons had reason

to be anxious about the seas, they would turn to God for help. As long as God continued

to express his displeasure or mercy through the seas, Britons would have reason to be

anxious. We see the impact of Christianity on the Atlantic world, most clearly in some of

the most anxiety-producing texts: the shipwreck narratives considered in chapter 3.

While Anthony Thacher's spiritual self-examination placed him solidly in the midst of a

godly community, even the accounts of self-interested men of business of like John Dean

and David Harrison reflect a Christian sensibility. They recognized the power of religion

and used it. They cast themselves as observant if not passionate, appealed to benevolent

Christians for sympathy and support, and offered up both their faithfulness and the other

Christians who believed them as signs that they were reputable truth-tellers. This may be

pragmatic, but it is not secular. In a world where religion was losing its power, there

would have been no advantage to claiming the ritualistic high ground that was prayer and

piety.

The problem of cannibalism further highlights the way religion was integrated

into concerns about professional conduct and reputation. No one wanted to be saddled

with the blame for initially proposing the consumption of human flesh. Even the sailors –

who would have been used to accusations that they were a profane and immoral lot –

were loathe to get stuck with the label "willing cannibal." It was one thing to swear and

drink and neglect one's prayers; it was another to be so lost to godly decency that one

would suggest eating flesh. Yet whoever first proposed cannibalism ultimately saved his

fellow crew members. In a strictly secular environment, this might be a boast-worthy claim: to have been the man of action who took the grim but necessary steps. In an environment where reputation was based solely on effectiveness the man who suggested cannibalism would have been a hero. But matters of faith remained powerful enough to constrain and propel action even in the most extreme of circumstances.

A pragmatic maritime faith was not necessarily an inferior faith. Sermon-writers played with metaphor, comparing the Bible to a compass or a navigational chart, to point out to sailors the practical applications of a strong Christian foundation. God would help in the here-and-now, not just the afterlife to come. An anonymous poet explored the sea-storm-conversion in a humorous poem that made gentle fun, but did not disparage these sudden shifts in temperament. On the way to Virginia, a storm caused so much distress that "The Masters Faith begun to tack about… For which way into Heaven could his Soul Steer…?" Observing this soul-searching, the poet offered a formula to readers; they would know that danger was great "If Sea-men once begin to Kneele, and Pray." But the storm had its advantages: "What Holy Church ne're could, Rough Seas have done / Made Sea-men buck to Devotion…." He concluded by offering up a hope for his readers: "So pray I… good Lord deliver thee, / From being taught to Pray at Sea."[9]

Being taught to pray at sea was unpleasant. It was a Jonah-like last ditch intervention by God into the lives of the intractable and perverse. And it was a move God continued to make, long after Enlightenment thinking had pushed providential wonders to the side in so many other forums. At sea, at least, the God of signs and wonders remained. Most famously, God admonished slave trader John Newton through

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[9] One of the company, *A description of a great sea-storm, that happened to some ships in the Gulph of Florida, in September last; drawn up by one of the company, and sent to his friend at London* (London, 1671).

rough weather at sea during a voyage in 1748. Christian apologists have subsequently

compressed the several decades it took Newton to embrace faith fully, renounce the slave

trade, become an abolitionist, and finally turn to hymn writing. (The storm was not as

all-powerful as Christians distressed by Newton's life-long involvement in the trade

would have liked.) Nevertheless, Newton's experience demonstrates not only the power

of providence to Newton, but that the idea of a providential God who speaks through

nature continued to resonate.

The alternative to a sea inhabited by the will of God was a sea inhabited by devils.

Perhaps the most unnerving wreck narrative is that of William Walling, a Nantucket man

who found himself stranded in a leaky boat with only one other man for company.

Walling had bargained to travel for a reduced fare in exchange for working the pumps.

When a storm came up, the two men found themselves helpless and drifting in the

freezing weather. According to Walling, his companion first began "to talk idle." He

said that they were bewitched and that he had seen spirits in the shape of women who

told him that if he dressed like a woman he would be unharmed. He then tried to kill

himself with a handkerchief made into a noose and by gashing at his neck with a dull

knife. His suicide unsuccessful, Walling's companion then claimed that the devil was on

board. "He stands in the Hold of Vessel, telling me to kill myself or he will carry me

away alive… he stands all of a light Fire, laughing and Grinning at me…"[10] Both men

were eventually rescued, but Walling required months of treatment for what he called

"frozen" feet and his companion revived enough after food and water that he "talk'd very

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[10] William Walling, *The wonderful providence of God: exemplified in the preservation of William Walling, who was drove out to sea from Sandy-Hook near New York, in a leaky boat and taken up by a whaling sloop and brought into Nantucket, after he had floated on the sea eight days without victuals or drink*. (Boston, 1730) 6-10.

sensibly" before dying. Walling wrote "Now altho' this Man was but a Stranger to me,
yet it griev'd me sore when he died. The next Day they sow'd him up in a Rug, and
Buried him in the Sea."[11] Walling's wreck did not last long enough that the two men
were required to contemplate cannibalism. But even without that fearful burden, we see
Walling's body deteriorate, his feet eaten up with frostbite; and his companion's mind
deteriorate, consumed with suicidal fantasies. A providential God was all that stood
between the desperate and the devil, grinning in the firelight.

Walling's rather pathetic account reminds us that the ocean was not a place for
individuals; it was too dangerous. Merchants looked for ways to spread risk out among
many investors. Sailors traveled the world and still came home to the care of family
members and the support of a parish to see them through their ill-health or old-age.
Walling needed someone to bandage his feet. And even his dead companion needed one
final service: a person to sew the wrapping around his body. The ocean connected the
empire geographically, but it also connected the empire into a community of need. The
sociability that Peter Verstille described – ships hailing each other in passing in a flurry
of shots and signals – had not come about for pleasure, but out of necessity.

Sailors hoped for adventure and riches, merchants and captains for routine and
predictability. Under these circumstances, they profited. Under these circumstances and
through the economic advantages of successful Atlantic trade, they evolved into people
who thought and acted differently. When it was not necessary to contend with the ocean,
the Atlantic world by the end of the eighteenth century could be a cosmopolitan place

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[11] Walling, *The wonderful providence of God,* 13-14.

headed purposefully toward secular modernity. Unfortunately for those budding Britons,

it was never possible to remove the ocean from the equation. This then was the Atlantic:

anxious, godly, dependent on communities of other Britons; and fundamentally,

unavoidably an ocean.

Appendix 1
Hymn Singing: a brief overview

English hymn singing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was in flux, just as much as the rest of the practice of English Christianity. The lyrics, music, style, audience, and method of distribution for a hymn were every bit as controversial as the contents of the prayer book or the design of the interior of a church. As churches splintered and coalesced, and apologists staked out their plots of theological territory in print, hymn singing was made, unmade, and remade too. But despite the host of different positions that English Christians assumed on issues like the form and content of hymns, hymn singing became only more common and more accessible as the seventeenth century progressed. What the hymns lacked in quality and originality, they made up for in quantity. The number of bound hymn books being published increased steadily; along with Bibles and sermons, hymn books were best sellers, some with as many as 20 or more editions.

Typically, it is hard to learn much about the audience and reception for specific hymns. *A Song of Praise for Peace of Conscience* which introduced the first chapter may have been widely despised and never performed. However, we can still be confident in that people generally agreed upon the sentiments it expressed for, even if they hated that song, there were dozens more essentially just like it. Written in different meters, sung to different tunes, arranged with different rhymes, cosmetically, English hymns were different. But the images the hymns contained were all drawn from the same large, but ultimately finite, pool. Disagreeable tunes could be avoided; English hymn motifs could not be. In his exposition on the 148th Psalm, St. Augustine provided a Christian

definition of the hymn, by asking: "Do you know what a hymn is?... A hymn implies three things: it must be sung, it must consist of praise, and the praise must be offered to God."[1] But in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, a hymn required one thing more: the approval of its message by those singing it.

Congregational singing changed the nature of the English hymn by introducing the fourth element – approval – to Augustine's classic definition. The majority of seventeenth hymns were essentially rhymed versions of the Psalms and, thus, popular both in conforming churches because they were traditional, and with dissenters because they were scriptural. This is not to say that arguments over psalmody did not occur. Far from it. Debates were frequent and fervent over the quality of the verses into which the Psalms were rendered, the degree to which scripture might be changed to fit meter, or even whether it was even proper to turn sacred text into songs for the tone-deaf to mangle. Yet even while they grappled over the particulars of hymn-writing, English Christians became increasingly accustomed to singing in church and had an increasing pool of hymns to choose to sing. Seventeenth-century psalmody formed both a foundation for later, more original compositions, and common ground for nearly all English Christians.

Differences over performance and presentation remained, but everyone approved of the psalms themselves. For example, in 1648, a dense little book was published "for the use, edification and comfort of the saints in publick and private, especially in New-England." Tightly printed columns, indistinguishable in appearance from scripture, contain the Psalms in number order along with chapter and verse references. It is only if

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[1] Boniface Ramsey ed., *Expositions of the Psalms, 121-150* (Hyde Park, 2004) 490.

one scrutinizes the pages very carefully that it becomes apparent that the verses have

been altered so that they fit a consistent meter and, more or less, rhyme. In the preface,

the anonymous author defended his style by discussing the hymn singing controversy.

The singing of Psalms, he argued, is a holy pastime and that "Crotchets of Division" have

arisen because of the "subtilty of the Enemy" and "the enmity of our Nature against the

Lord."[2] He went on to provide a catechism of questions and answers, explaining what to

sing and the proper way to sing it. He was careful to mention that "Neither let any think,

that for Metre sake we have taken liberty, or Poetical license to depart from the true and

proper sense of Davids words in the Hebrew Verses, no, but it hath been one part of our

religious care and faithful endeavour to keep close to the Original Text."[3] While this

book represents one of the least flexible, most literal attitudes toward psalm singing, it

still advocates for the use of the psalms as appropriate content for songs, and for singing

itself; indeed, the author was explicit that singing during worship must be congregational.

Some people, like the anonymous author of 1696 edition of *Select hymns and*

anthems thought singing certain portions of the psalms might be objectionable because

they were being used out of context and because of poor translations into English meter.

This author worried about "exposing those Sacred and, in their Original, Elegant

Composure to the Contempt and Derisions of the loose and prophane People" and,

consequently, he offered up his own selection of hymns, including psalms. However

despite all of these concerns and caveats, he too admitted that "The Singing of Hymns

and Anthems to God, hath so great Authority both of Heaven and Earth, that none but one

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[2] Anon. *The Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of the Old and New Testament, faithfully translated into English metre For the use, edification and comfort of the saints in publick and private, especially in New-England* (London, 1648) 3.

[3] Anon. *The Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,* 5.

fill'd with either the Gygantick Spirit of the Old World, or the Anti-Christian Spirit of this, can oppose the thing it self."[4]

This new trend toward hymns as statements of universal belief grew only stronger in the eighteenth century. Although he was a non-conformist and sufficiently radical in his youth to be jailed several times for his beliefs, Isaac Watts' hymns achieved popularity and approval across sectarian lines during his lifetime. Hymn-writer and historian of hymnology Louis Benson suggested that the strength of Watts' compositions was "his gift for locating the common level and his refusal to soar… This self-restraint gave his work something like universal appeal." In Benson's estimation, Watts' "System of Praise, without sifting or retrenchment, commended itself alike to Independents, Presbyterians, and Baptists."[5] Publication rates seem to bear out Benson's assessments. For example, at least seven editions of Watts' *Hymns* were published between 1707 and 1720.[6] In 1715 he put together another collection called *Divine Songs attempted in easy language, for the use of children, with some additional composures*. Here Watts explicitly explains that he meant to avoid theological controversy, writing in the preface "children of high and low degree, of the Church of England or dissenters, whether baptized in infancy or not, may join together in these songs."[7] Responding to Isaac Watts' success, many imitators added "supplements" to his collections, essentially following his example in their non-controversial, non-confrontational presentation of spiritual subjects.[8] Even the few hold-outs, like the group led by Thomas Bradbury who

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[4] Anon. *Select hymns and anthems* (London, 1696) 2.

[5] Benson, *The English Hymn,* 257.

[6] Benson, *The English Hymn,* 123.

[7] Benson, *The English Hymn,* 121.

[8] Benson, *The English Hymn,* 126-127.

objected to singing "Watts' Whims," continued psalm singing. [9] Hymn singing and the

psalms themselves transcended controversies over style and performance.

One of the best examples of the flexibility inherent in hymns and hymn singing

can be found in the songs from William Barton's collection *Hallelujah* from 1651.

Unequivocally pro-Parliament, *Hallelujah* provides the singer with a selection of words

that may be substituted into key verses depending on whether the singer wished to

describe an Old Testament battle or a royalist defeat. Although only one word could be

sung at a time, the juxtaposition of the words reminded the singers that the events were

equivalents. Thus, we have verses like this one from the hymn that "celebrates Nazeby

and other great Victories of the Church." "Awake awake, O [Parliament or Deborah], /

Rise [Barak or Conqu'rors or Fairfax or Cromwel], sing a Song."[10] Not only did hymn

singing survive controversies, they were like ballads and other types of popular print that

intermingled with oral culture. They were an opportunity for the literate, semi-literate,

and illiterate alike to put their own stamp on the words that they spoke, and that they

spoke in one of the most significant of all forums: church.

In *The Eighteenth Century Hymn in England,* Donald Davie takes up the theme of

universality and asserts that, "… to be successful a congregational hymn has to be

nonsectarian; it must speak to the condition of *all* believers, not to the adherents of any

one persuasion, of some one or some few sects."[11] Davie, however, gestures at one of the

problems with evaluating the audience and reception of English hymns through his

choice of the word "successful." In the case of hymns composed by prominent church

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[9] Benson, *The English Hymn,* 126.

[10] William Barton, *Hallelujah, or certain hymns composed out of Scripture, to celebrate some special and publick occasions* (London, 1651) 12.

[11] Donald Davie, *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn in England* (Cambridge, 1993) 17.

leaders or copious authors like Watts or, later, the Wesleys, we often know something about the reception and popularity of their music through their writings, those of their contemporaries, and through publication data. We can also evaluate the probable popularity of a hymn, or parts of a hymn, based on whether it is still in use. For example, the quatrain commonly known today as *The Doxology* was written by bishop and hymnist Thomas Ken in 1674.[12] It is, in fact, the last verse of Ken's twelve- verse *Evening Hymn*, eleven verses of which are now largely ignored. Ken was "successful" in one verse, at least.

As the seventeenth century progressed, congregational hymn singing became increasingly important as the one part of a worship service that could be entirely participatory. Hymns gave people of all ages and both genders one of their few regular chances to be vocal during worship. In 1694, an anonymous collector of hymns argued passionately for the importance of the printed hymn book. Singers needed to be able to see what they would be singing in advance, he wrote, because, unlike in prayer where worshippers could "say Amen to all that they apprehend hath been according to the will of God," hymn singing was immediate and everyone was involved. Sermons and prayers depended on a single mouth directing and instructing an audience which might disagree or fail to attend. But "in Psalms and Hymns they are all Mouths…"[13]

What then were all those mouths singing? If congregational hymns were, as Watts claimed of himself and Davie posits for others, written to appeal to Christian worshipers regardless of sectarian identity *and,* as the anonymous seventeenth-century

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[12] The portion of Thomas Ken's hymn commonly called *The Doxology* are these four lines: Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; / Praise him, all creatures here below; / Praise him above, ye heavenly host; / Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

[13] Anon. *A Collection of Divine Hymns,* A2.

author asserted, a time for everyone to participate during church, then the contents of the hymns give us one of the broadest pictures possible of English Christian belief. The hymns contain what was irreducible about Christianity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the things about which all singers could agree and with which they could demonstrate their agreement out loud.

Appendix 2

An overview of maritime history published or republished between 1900 and 1972[1]

Themes	Number Published
Biographies and Travel Narratives	30
Fiction and Literature	3
Fishing and Whaling	16
Lighthouses	2
Merchants and Trade	60
Pirates, Smuggling, and Piracy	12
Port Cities, Coastal Regions	18
Sailing	7
Sailors	20
Sea Power	51
Ship Building	19
Ships	54
Slaves and Slavery	4
Social History	6
Technical Subjects	37
Technology	4
Wars and Navies	18
Wrecks	8

These numbers do not claim to be comprehensive; rather, they represent a survey of one historian's sense of the field. For a more comprehensive bibliography of maritime titles before 1972, see *Naval and Maritime History: an Annotated Bibliography*, compiled by Robert Albion.

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[1] Data collected from Edward W. Sloan, *Maritime History: A Basic Bibliography* September 1972, Vol. 9, No. 7, A Publication of the Association of College and Research Llibraries, CHOICE

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-----. *The seamans adieu to his dear. This man was prest to serve upon the seas*. London, 1641-1674.

-----. *The sea-man's answer to his unkind lover* (London, 1694).

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