THE ATLANTIC ROOTS OF WORKING-CLASS INTERNATIONALISM: A HISTORICAL RE-INTERPRETATION

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Abstract

This dissertation offers a historical re-interpretation of working-class internationalism by situating its development within the early modern Atlantic-world economy (*c*. 1600-1830). Through an exploration of various moments of insurgency and revolt of an emerging Atlantic class of workers, among them slaves, sailors, servants, and others, it demonstrates that profound and decisive traditions of proletarian solidarity across borders existed prior to the nineteenth-century classical age of working-class internationalism. In doing so, this dissertation alters the prevailing standpoint of the free, white, waged, industrial worker of Europe by bringing in that narrative the agency of the unfree, black (and racialized), wageless, plantation-slave worker of the Americas. Underpinning this intervention is a more generous and complex understanding of capitalism as a mode of production inclusive of unfree forms of labour.

In order to recover and foreground early formative moments of working-class internationalism in the Atlantic-world economy, this dissertation proposes to re-theorize this development in terms of processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity in a *longue durée* frame. Rooted in a multidisciplinary framework of analysis situated at the intersection of Historical Sociology, Global Labour History, Atlantic Studies, and Social History, this strategy has allowed me to illuminate two world-significant moments of proletarian solidarity played out across colonial and imperial borders. The first is golden age piracy (1714-26), when thousands of insurgent seafaring workers of all nationalities revolted against capitalist exploitation at sea and took possession of their ships, instituting their own self-governments and creating multicrew alliances against imperial

navies. The second moment expressing a durable process of transboundary proletarian solidarity is offered by the Saint-Domingue revolution (1791-1804), when thousands of African slaves rose up to overthrow slavery, leading to the formation of the first independent black republic in the Americas. This dissertation highlights that during the revolution, underground channels of communication entertained by black sailors and corsairs linked revolutionary Saint-Domingue to other slave revolts elsewhere in the Atlantic world, which cumulated in, and intersected with, the wake of working-class internationalism during the 1848 revolutions in Europe.

Pour Valérie

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Now, for real: *après ça, ça va bien aller*…

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Introduction

All history must be studied afresh…[1]

In the fall of 1871, a few weeks after the defeat of the Paris Commune, Giuseppe Garibaldi, the famous Italian revolutionary patriot, who played a prominent role in the *Risorgimento* movement in Italy, wrote a series of letters in which he expressed his sympathy for the International Working Men's Association, later known as the First International, which had been founded in London seven years earlier. In the last letter he sent out to a friend who deplored this new act of faith incurring the wrath of the Mazzinians in Italy, Garibaldi reminded him: 'I belonged to the International when I was serving the Republic of the Rio Grande and Montevideo, therefore long before such a society was constituted in Europe ... if the International, as I understand it, is a continuation of the moral and material improvement of the industrious and honest working class, ... then I am with the International'.[2] Garibaldi was referring to his thirteen years of exile (1835-1848) in Brazil and Uruguay, where he took active part in the revolutionary wars of independence that had swept across the South American continent during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Such transatlantic connection between the popular movements in early postcolonial South America and the creation of the First International in Europe was

[1] Friederich Engels, "Engels to Conrad Schmidt," in *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, ed. Lewis S. Feuer (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1959), p. 396.
[2] Cited in Alfonso Scirocco, *Garibaldi: Citizen of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 379.

perfectly intelligible to the Italian activist, as he did not feel the need to further elaborate his thought. Yet it leaves today's reader wondering how exactly his South American experience could be similar, or at least related, to his experience in the international working-class movement in industrial Europe.

This doctoral dissertation offers a new historical-interpretive account of the emergence of working-class internationalism by shedding light on and investigating forerunner moments of transboundary proletarian movements of collective action and solidarity in the early modern Atlantic-world economy. It does so in an effort to deploy a broader, more complex, and more inclusive narrative that foregrounds long-lasting traditions of resistance and rebellion made by early proletarian workers—among them insurgent slaves, sailors, servants, and others—and which achieved an enduring form in the black liberation movements of the age of revolutions. At the end of this enquiry, the nineteenth-century 'classical' age of working-class internationalism will re-emerge as deeply entangled with this hitherto neglected Atlantic preface to proletarian freedom movements across borders.

From our current standpoint, the First International, let alone nineteenth-century working-class internationalism, is often believed to have marked a rupture with earlier proletarian movements of struggle and resistance. It is commonly accepted in the historical scholarship on the subject that early proletarian internationalism 'was based very much in the realm of ideas' and that, accordingly, the First International 'represented a break with the past ... revealed in its organization: the new Association had Chapters in various nation-states on the Continent, in the United States and even in Latin America'.[3] The genesis of

[3] Susan Milner, *The Dilemmas of Internationalism: French Syndicalism and the International Labour Movement, 1900-1914* (New York: Berg, 1990), p. 16; Marcel van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 14.

this view can be traced back to Karl Marx and Friederich Engels, who played a key role in the International, most especially by drafting reports and consolidating its theoretical positions vis-à-vis social change and workers' international solidarity. For them, the creation of the First International was a direct consequence of 'the natural and irrepressible tendencies of modern society'.[4] It could therefore not have existed earlier than under industrial capitalism, much less beyond Europe, because for 'the International to become a possibility, the proletariat had to develop further'.[5] As a result, it was seen as a 'pioneer' in the history of working-class internationalism, breaking with previous proletarian struggles and announcing a 'new Jerusalem' for global working-class solidarity.[6]

To be sure, these views held truth. After all, the International *was* the very first international organization 'established by the working men themselves and for themselves', as Marx pointed out.[7] And it did emerge as such when western European capitalism was undergoing its industrial revolution. For Garibaldi, however, inasmuch as it was created from below by factory workers, the International did *not* represent a rupture but rather, as he claimed in the passage just cited, 'a continuation' in the international movement for 'the moral and material betterment of the working class', which he situated in an Atlantic context, hence decentering the prevailing geo-historical trajectory of working-class internationalism.

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[4] Karl Marx, "Report of the Brussels Congress," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010a), p. 99.
[5] Karl Marx and Friederich Engels, "The Alleged Splits in the International," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), p. 299.
[6] Ibid., p. 307.
[7] Karl Marx, "Speech on the Seventh Anniversary of the International," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), p. 271.

To what extent, though, was the First International not in rupture but in continuity with the Atlantic 'International' to which Garibaldi claimed he was belonging? Conversely, just how 'international' were the popular movements in which he took part in Brazil and Uruguay, and how do they connect to the nascent working-class internationalism in industrial Europe? And, more generally, how do they transform—or approached as hypothesis to transform—our conceptions of the history of working-class internationalism, and in particular of those who are thought to have made it? In order to begin providing answers to these questions, it is appropriate to use Garibaldi's experience as a point of entry to the broader *problématique* of this dissertation, by briefly outlining his role in the wars of independence in South America. His experience reveals a unique Atlantic counterpoint that broadens and unsettles the narrative of working-class internationalism, providing a fresh vantage point from which to sketch a new interpretive approach.

Learning from Garibaldi: Toward an Atlantic *Problématique*

Garibaldi set foot in Rio de Janeiro in December 1835, where he took refuge from a failed Mazzinian insurrection in Piedmont, Italy, a year earlier. The decision to go into exile in South America was not arbitrary, but motivated by his desire to continue the insurrectionary work of the Young Europe movement, before returning to Italy to carry out another strike at the Holy Alliance once the conditions for it were re-established. Rio de Janeiro was well integrated into transoceanic shipping routes with Italy, and there was a significant Italian diaspora there, among which were many exiled radicals who kept alive Mazzini's revolutionary propaganda. Almost as soon as he arrived in Rio, Garibaldi set up a secret South American branch of Young Europe under the front association of the Italian

Philanthropic Society in America. Branches were created across the southern border to Montevideo and Buenos Aires, and contact was maintained with Mazzini who was hidden in Marseille.

In a January letter to the Italian revolutionary leader, Garibaldi requested the authorization to fit out a ship and prey upon Austrian and Piedmontese shipping as a corsair for the cause of revolutionary republicanism. Merchant seaman by trade who had attained the position of ship captain, he wanted to use his maritime skills and the autonomy that seafaring labour provided to prepare the establishment of what he called a 'Universal Young Europe', for which the corsair would serve as 'a bridge to cross the ocean' and to 'enlarge' the movement to 'those who reside in Brazil and the provinces of La Plata, so that Italy can receive as much assistance as possible from these countries, when it comes to the insurrection'.[8] Funds were raised among local Mazzinian sympathizers and a twenty-ton vessel was purchased. It was renamed the *Mazzini*. Two other Mazzinian activist veterans and petty coastal ship captains demonstrated their commitment to Garibaldi's plan by renaming their ships *Giovine Europa* and *Giovine Italia*.[9]

These initiatives in South America, motivated by the idea that the republican revolution would soon resume in Italy, were also intended as a temporary operational training ground. Yet a year passed and the long-awaited signal from the motherland never came. As ship captain, Garibaldi resigned to find employment in coastal shipping in which he made a tedious living. Soon enough, however, a local opportunity arose in the province of Rio Grande do Sul to support another kind of republican-secessionist war against another kind

[8] Cited in Scirocco, *Garibaldi: Citizen of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 33-4, 37.
[9] Ibid., pp. 35-6.

of 'empire', that of Brazil, which had won its independence from Portugal just ten years earlier.

In 1834, the province openly rose up against the Brazilian monarchy, captured the capital, Porto Alegre, elected a president, and declared the independence of Rio Grande do Sul, which was renamed the *Riograndense* Republic, often referred to as the Piratini Republic. The uprising came to be known as the *Farroupilha* revolt, as its rank-and-file was mainly constituted of petty rancher *gaúchos*, derided by the ruling class as *farrapos* ('poorly dressed, ragged people'), whose grievances leading to the outbreak centered around burdensome 'export' duties and taxes that made it impossible for them to compete with the prices offered in Rio by big traders. Although some of them owned a few slaves, their vision of revolutionary republicanism was intimately intertwined with abolitionism. Indeed, as Porto Alegre was captured, a decree that abolished slavery was issued throughout the new provincial republic. Many newly-freed slaves joined the insurrection, and came to constitute, according to one estimate, from one-third to one-half of the rebel army.[10] Before long, the rebels considered the idea of taking their uprising to the sea, dominated by the imperial fleet. Letters of marque were issued to corsairs of various nationalities. It was at that moment that Garibaldi dusted off his privateering ambition and joined the rebel cause, which he saw, as he put it in his *Memoirs*, as a South American occasion to continue 'to defend the cause of liberty and justice'.[11]

[10] Joseph LeRoy Love, *Rio Grande do Sul and Brazilian Regionalism: 1882-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), pp. 13-16; Ruben George Oliven, *Tradition Matters: Modern Gaúcho Identity in Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 37-8; Boris Fausto, *A Concise History of Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 91-3.
[11] Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Autobiography of Giuseppe Garibaldi*, trans. A. Werner, Vol. 3 (New York: Howard Fertig, 1971), p. 55.

Garibaldi transformed the *Mazzini* into a warship, after which he gathered a crew to launch the *Farroupilha* revolution to sea. As he wrote in his *Memoirs*, his followers 'were a truly cosmopolitan crew, made up of all colours and nations', among them 'freed Negroes or mulattoes … the best and most trusty', as well as 'seven Italians, all of them men to be reckoned on in an emergency'. 'The rest of the crew', he continues 'belonged to that class of seafaring adventurers known on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of America as *frères de la côte* – a class which, in former times supplied the pirates and buccaneers with crews'.[12] Despite their small number and limited resources, Garibaldi and his motley crew managed to capture several ships off the coast of Rio Grande. Most of the prizes had black slaves, who were immediately freed and offered to join them as crew.[13] Garibaldi was a fervent abolitionist, who regarded African-descended slaves as the 'true sons of freedom'.[14] During the American Civil War, for example, he refused Abraham Lincoln's offer to command one regiment in the Union Army because the president would not immediately emancipate the slaves.[15]

In the beginning of the 1840s, the Brazilian imperial forces were clearly winning the civil war in Rio Grande and the revolution had no real prospect of victory. As many rebels, Garibaldi crossed the border into Uruguay and removed himself to Montevideo, where a similar civil conflict had taken place, though with an even stronger international dimension. The constitutional president Manuel Oribe, who represented the conservative landowner

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[12] Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Autobiography of Giuseppe Garibaldi*, trans. A. Werner, vol. 1 (1807-1849) (New York: Howard Fertig, 1971 [1889]), pp. 54-55.
[13] Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Garibaldi: An Autobiography*, ed. Alexandre Dumas, trans. William Robson (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1860), p. 52.
[14] Quoted in Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 159.
[15] Scirocco, *Garibaldi*, p. 318; Howard R. Marraro, "Lincoln's Offer of a Command to Garibaldi: Further Light on a Disputed Point of History," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 36, no. 3 (Sep., 1943), pp. 242-43.

blancos , had been ousted to Buenos Aires by a French-sponsored *coup d'état* led by the liberal *Colorado* general José Fructuoso Rivera, backed by Argentine Unitarians, and an army of mixed-race urban plebeians, as well as 2,500 newly-emancipated black slaves.[16] When Garibaldi arrived in Montevideo, he joined the rebels by forming an Italian legion of common labourers and petty traders, for which posterity has most remembered his South American career. Dressed uniformly with red shirts taken from an abandoned slaughter house—what would become the distinguishing symbol of the Garibaldians during the 1848 revolutions—the Italian legionnaires even made their own black flag representing Italy in mourning, with a depiction of the Vesuvius volcano in the midst, symbolizing the sacred fire burning in her heart. As Montevideo was a truly cosmopolitan city, other 'national' legions were created, among them French, Basque, British, and Spanish, all of them united in arms with the Uruguayan *colorados* and the freed slaves, creating an internationalism of sort jammed inside the city's walls.[17]

As in Rio Grande, the conflict was played out as much on land as on the sea. With many captured warships at harbour, the Montevideans wanted to create a privateering navy to defend against Oribe's reactionary alliance. Garibaldi stood as the obvious commander. He was given command of the 256-ton corvette *Constitución*, the flagship of a fleet of three corsairs, manned by crews 'of all nationalities … for the most part sailors,' the rest being 'deserters from men-of-war – who ... were the least rascally', and several Americans who 'had been turned out of the land army for some crime'.[18] By the end of 1843, he had assembled a multinational naval force of more than a dozen vessels which were able to

[16] Bill Marshall, *The French Atlantic: Travels in Culture and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 265.
[17] David McLean, "Garibaldi in Uruguay: A Reputation Reconsidered," *The English Historical Review* 113, no. 451 (1998), pp. 355-54.
[18] Garibaldi, *Autobiography*, vol. 1, p. 154.

prevent Oribist forces from attacking the capital from the sea. After his most notable military success at Salto, defeating troops four times more numerous, Garibaldi made his last naval campaign in 1847.[19]

A few months later, news of the sudden revolutionary turmoil in Europe reached the American shores. The long-awaited call of return had finally come. 'We had fought gloriously to defend the oppressed in other countries', he wrote; 'now we were hastening to take up arms for our own beloved motherland'.[20] Along with sixty-three legionnaires, 'all young and all formed on the battlefield,' Garibaldi sailed back to Italy, where they continued the revolutionary siege in a European context, now fighting for the 'new Rome of the people', as they called it.[21] Among them was Andrea Aguyar, a 'giant black man', former slave, and 'dear fellow', who had fought as a republican legionnaire in Montevideo, but who now took part in a popular revolution that Marx and Engels, and others after them, have considered as the seedbed of working-class internationalism.[22]

Recovering Atlantic Internationalism in the Capitalist *Longue Durée*

Garibaldi's South American experience problematizes an Atlantic preface to the historical development of working-class internationalism as we know it. His revolutionary career in Brazil and Uruguay, as he himself recognized, anticipated an 'International' in the making—a workers' global organization that will arise later, but which is nonetheless easy to identify in the spirit, choices, and actions of people in revolt. That 'not-yet-International'

[19] McLean, "Garibaldi in Uruguay", pp. 358-59, 363-64.
[20] Giuseppe Garibaldi, *My Life* (London: Hesperus Classics, 2004), p. 3.
[21] Ibid.; George Macaulay Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic* (London: Longmans Green, 1908), p. 110.
[22] Ibid., pp. 157, 169.

was not brought about by nationally-organized blocs of industrial workers struggling for, and focused on, international socialism. Instead, it existed informally *in* and *through* the collective actions of motley crews, military legions, insurgent slaves, and other rebellious workers, finding at times some points of anchorage in secret societies and other non- or sub-institutional self-organizations. It was carried out across many kinds of borders, from colonial to imperial, from land to sea, from estate to city. It was ideologically complex (and sometimes contradictory), amalgamating revolutionary republicanism with radical abolitionism, with strands of social leveling-ism, cosmopolitan humanitarianism, and universal fraternalism.

This dissertation sets out to recover this Atlantic preface of working-class internationalism. In order to identify what exactly is to be recovered, however, I excavate two themes from Garibaldi's experience, each corresponding to a trajectory of struggle on which the Atlantic International hinged.

The first theme is maritime radicalism. Brought up as an ordinary seaman, Garibaldi problematizes a sea-centered way of approaching the development of working-class internationalism. His conception of the Atlantic International, I submit, was neither fixed nor landed, but profoundly *vehicular* and *floating*. This highlights the agency of proletarian seafaring people and, as such, calls for the exploration of their maritime episodes of mutinous actions and self-organization. Foremost among them, and to which Garibaldi's experience directly sends us back, is the golden age of piracy (1714-26), when thousands of insurgent sailors of all nationalities drew upon the earlier buccaneering traditions of *frères de la côte* and launched a cycle of shipboard rebellions against capitalist exploitation, oppression, and violence at sea (to be explored in Chapter 5). Approached from this

maritime standpoint, the idea of an Atlantic International invites us to seriously consider the instrumental role of the sailing ship as a channel or, as Garibaldi put it, a 'bridge' of rebellion and revolution. This dissertation will shed light on the fact that, long before the historic meeting at St. Martin's Hall in 1864, the sailing ship, to speak with Marx on the First International, served as an informal 'medium of communication and cooperation' in order 'to organize the forces of labour and link the various working men's movements and combine them' throughout the Atlantic-world economy.[23]

The second theme underlying Garibaldi's experience is revolutionary abolitionism, which was central to his vision of human brotherhood and republicanism. His conception of the Atlantic International, as we saw above, gave center stage to the African slaves, whom he considered as the true revolutionaries, the 'true sons of freedom'. Although their agency is rather absent from his *Memoirs*, as well as from most accounts of his exploits as a South American revolutionary, African slaves were nonetheless crucial to carry out both revolutionary movements in Brazil and Uruguay. Furthermore, the wars of independence in South America had been launched from Haiti (in 1816), where Simón Bolívar obtained assistance and resources (soldiers, sailors, munitions, and a printing press) from president Pétion on the condition that he would emancipate the slaves along the way—a policy that, for different reasons (to be discussed later), he only partially accomplished. In a way, then, the wars of independence in South America were in continuity with the Saint-Domingue revolution (1791-1804), the first successful slave revolt in the Americas (to be examined in Chapter 7). Thus, in addition to its maritime dimension, the Atlantic International that

[23] Karl Marx, "Provisional Rules of the International Working Men's Association," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010b), p. 83; Marx, "Speech on the Seventh Anniversary of the International," in D. Fernbach, ed., *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, p. 271.

Garibaldi experienced between 1835 and 1848 was also constitutive of decades of slave revolts in the Americas, of which the Saint-Domingue example is a case in point.

In exploring these themes, my objective is to reframe aspects underpinning the narrative of working-class internationalism in order to put forth a new theory of its historical development. I will perform this by concurrently developing two arguments. First, inasmuch as the Atlantic International remained institutionally undetermined, politically ambiguous, and operationally ephemeral, Garibaldi's experience disproves the claim that early proletarian internationalism was impractical in the pre-industrial era. As such, it calls for a partial revision of Marx's theory of working-class internationalism which, as we shall see in greater details in Chapter 1, was premised on the historical primacy of industrial capitalism and rested on methodological-nationalist and technological-determinist assumptions. As an alternative that is meant to stay within the Marxian historical-materialist tradition, I propose to re-thematize the study of the historical development of working-class internationalism in terms of *processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity*. Grounded in processual dynamics of collective action, freed from methodological nationalism, and suitable to a variety of material and historical circumstances, this theoretical strategy helps me to reset the matter right at the start of the capitalist mode of production as it expanded across the Atlantic in the early modern period. This ambition takes me to my other argument.

Secondly, this dissertation challenges the tendency to view black racial slavery (or other forms of extra-economically coerced labour) as 'pre-capitalists'. Drawing from a careful appraisal of Marx's thought on the subject, in particular the multilinear views that shaped his later work, I theorize black racial slavery as a historically-specific form of value-

producing labour *sui generis* to the Atlantic world. This argument will be made in Chapter 6 through a reconstruction of the historical process by which black racial slavery was formally subsumed under capital and, therefore, integrated into global value relations. In order to perform this, I distinguish—as Marx did—between forms of labour exploitation and relations of production. This distinction foregrounds a richer conception of the capitalist mode of production as based on a variety of modalities of labour exploitation, including coercive ones, and which can, as a result, encompass a broader geo-historical development. Respectful of Marx's method, such problematizing allows me to integrate black racial slavery, as well as other coercive forms of labour (pressed sailors, for instance), within the capitalist mode of production while maintaining 'free' wage-labour as central to its development. The implication of this theoretical position for the study of working-class internationalism is that it alters the prevailing standpoint of the free, white, waged, industrial worker of Europe by making possible to bring in that narrative the agency of the unfree, black (and racialized), wageless, plantation-slave worker of the Americas.

The foregoing arguments are developed through an explanatory framework situated at the intersection of four different, yet complementary, traditions of scholarships, to which this dissertation seeks to contribute in several important ways. First, because it is concerned with theorizing processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity as they developed and changed over time in the early modern Atlantic-world economy, the dissertation contributes to the field of *Historical Sociology*. According to Charles Tilly, one of the key practioners of the discipline, historical sociology aims to 'situate social processes in place and time'.[24] Most accounts directly related to the topic of working-class internationalism in this

[24] Cited in Stephen Hobden, *International Relations and Historical Sociology: Breaking Down Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 21.

scholarly tradition have taken for granted the historical primacy of industrial capitalism.[25] In rehabilitating the Marxian theoretical apparatus—one of the main pillars of Historical Sociology—in a way that makes it possible to recover the pre-industrial Atlantic roots of working-class internationalism, this dissertation will make an original intervention in this tradition of scholarship on a much neglected theme.

Secondly, because it lays out a trans-imperial, cross-border geography of proletarian resistance and movements, in which African slaves are conceived as proletarian workers and plantation-slavery as integral to the capitalist mode of production, this dissertation contributes to the growing effort to move toward a *Global Labour History*.[26] This emerging field of research has produced exciting insights, most especially about ways to transcend the free/unfree divide in our historical apprehension of capitalism. With one somewhat timid exception, scholars of this tradition have yet to take their approaches to reassess the classic narrative of working-class internationalism from the standpoint of the bonded worker.[27] Thus, by adopting the standpoint of the bonded racialized worker in the historical development of working-class internationalism, this dissertation will contribute to broaden debates in this specific tradition of scholarship.

Thirdly, because it grounds the study of processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity in an Atlantic framework of analysis, this dissertation contributes to the emerging field of *Atlantic Studies*. Building on the works of Atlanticist scholars as well as historians

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[25] See, for instance, Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Antisystemic Movements* (London and New York: Verso, 1989); Alejandro Colás, *International Civil Society: Social Movements in World Politics* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2002).
[26] Jan Lucassen, ed., *Global Labour History: A State of the Art* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008); Leon Fink, ed., *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays Toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).
[27] Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, "Fugitive Slaves across North America," in *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 363-383.

of the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe, this dissertation constitutes, to my knowledge, the first attempt the re-theorize the development of working-class internationalism in an Atlantic frame. Atlanticist historians of below Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have begun this important work in their groundbreaking book *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000) by charting out an entirely new landscape for research. This dissertation will draw much from their work. My contribution here is to bring Atlantic Studies to bear more directly on Marx's theoretical apparatus, in particular on his concepts of mode of production and class.

Lastly, because it draws upon the interpretive methods of what has been called 'history from below', this dissertation contributes to the scholarly tradition of *Social History*.[28] While building on the wealth of historical writings, this study also seeks to document processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity by employing a great deal of primary sources, mostly printed materials. My objective is therefore to reconstruct, as much as sources allow, the lived experience of proletarian workers as they shape the course of history. I set this reconstruction in a *longue durée* perspective, which I freely adapt from Fernand Braudel so as to mean the long social-historical time of Atlantic capitalism within which processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity were made and unmade.[29]

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[28] Frederick Krantz, ed., *History from Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology in Honour of George Rudé* (Montreal: Concordia University Press, 1988); Jim Sharpe, "History from Below," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 24-41; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), pp. 266-86; E. P. Thompson, "History from Below," in *The Essential of E.P. Thompson*, ed. Dorothy Thompson (New York: The New Press, 2001), 481-489.

[29] Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociales: la longue durée," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 13, no. 4 (1958), 725-753.

Chapter Outlines

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 begins conventionally with a review of the relevant scholarly literature. Two traditions of scholarship have been picked out for their topical cohesion and implicit dialogue. This first is, of course, the historiography of working-class internationalism in the classical age (1830s-60s). Here, I will start with the views of classical Marxism first put forth in the *Communist Manifesto*, before reviewing how they evolved and informed the construction of the narrative on working-class internationalism. This will take us through its congress-history phase (1900-60), social-history phase (1960-90), and transnational-history phase (1990-…). My contention with this tradition is that because the stadial historical imagination sketched out by Marx and Engels was uncritically endorsed and converted into paradigmatic certitudes from which to construct the narrative of working-class internationalism, earlier forms and moments of cross-border proletarian struggles were occluded and consigned to pre-history matters. Although recent interventions have pointed out this long-lasting shortcoming within classical Marxism and began—if slightly—to account for those precedents, they have done so less to engage and address it on its own theoretical terms than to historicize the 'new' qualities (grasped by terms like 'multitude', 'counter-global networks', 'transnational subjects', etc.) pertaining to current forms of internationalism instead. As such, this dissertation will venture where few studies have yet dared to go.

In the second part of the chapter, I will engage with the scholarly literature on the Atlantic world, in particular with what has been called 'the red Atlantic of expropriation and capitalism, proletarianization and resistance'.[30] Here, my focus will be on the most

[30] David Armitage, "The Red Atlantic," *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 4 (Dec., 2001), p. 479.

pertinent and, indeed, pioneering works in this Atlantic subfield, *The Many-Headed Hydra* by Linebaugh and Rediker. As we shall see, this work—along with some of their earlier ones—has charted out a new terrain in which to reset and ground the study of working-class internationalism in the *longue durée* of Atlantic capitalism. Linebaugh and Rediker have foregrounded traditions and movements of proletarian resistance, solidarity, and revolution, which together disclose an important pre-industrial preface to the First International. My contention with their work is strictly methodological. I emphasize the need, close to fifteen years after they published their co-authored book, to move beyond metaphorical reasoning (implicit in the hydra analogy) and engage in manners of theorizing, that is to say, providing a more precise, comprehensive, and grounded representation of the development of transboundary proletarian solidarity and connection in the Atlantic world. In pulling together and synthesizing the threads common to the two traditions of scholarship, the chapter concludes by proposing a way forward to sketch out an integrated approach for rethinking the genesis of working-class internationalism.

Chapter 2 puts forth and fleshes out a renovated historical-materialist framework of analysis. Grounded in the multilinear and non-reductionist shift in Marx's later works, the first part of the chapter sheds light on five key themes postulated as a new epistemological basis in which to ground my reassessment of working-class internationalism in the *longue durée*: (i) mode of production as epoch of production; (ii) formal subsumption of labour; (iii) primitive accumulation and period of manufacture; (iv) the modern working-class in general; and (v) proletarian world-revolution. I claim that these themes offer a historically and theoretically richer point of departure for reframing aspects of the history of working-class internationalism while remaining *within* the Marxist tradition. Building on this

renovated historical materialism, the second part of the chapter develops the notion of *processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity* as an alternative conceptual strategy capable of taking the study of working-class internationalism beyond methodological nationalism and, as such, back to the early beginnings of Atlantic capitalism. The third part of the chapter positions this strategy of enquiry within the geo-historical purview of a 'dark' Atlantic approach, as an attempt to integrate the 'black' (African-diasporic) and the 'red' (proletarian-centered) Atlantics, so as to figure a deterritorialized, multiplex, transoceanic basis for the multiform, racialized, class experience (of oppression *and* solidarity) between diverse groups of free and unfree Atlantic proletarian workers in the specific context of the early-modern Atlantic-world economy.

Conceived as a prologue, Chapter 3 launches the narrative. Covering Africa and Europe in the early modern era (*c*.1500 onward), the historical and geographical scope of the chapter is wide and far-reaching, but the ambition is modest. Without pretending to be exhaustive or assembling definitive documentation, the chapter seeks to recover and lay out an Atlantic repertoire of organizational and intellectual traditions of radicalism that were carried out from Africa and Europe during the early rise of Atlantic capitalism and which enabled Atlantic proletarians to 'handle' (to echo E.P. Thompson's term) their experience of exploitation in class ways. From resistance against the slave trade in the African interior to that onboard the slave ship in the middle passage to that on the plantation in the Americas, I will shed light on African traditions of radicalism rooted in features of military culture and spiritual practices. Although the knowledge we have of these traditions is partial and provisional, it is nonetheless illuminating of a profound and complex set of practices and ideas that informed slave resistance and rebellion in the Atlantic world. Next,

from popular revolts in the commons and *communes* of Germany, France, and England, I will also shed light on a European tradition of resistance rooted in egalitarian democratic communalism and Christian social radicalism. Through this exploration, I identify two key Atlantic sites of exploitation and resistance: the slave-plantation and the sailing ship. But because the latter was already *in motion*, and because it entailed a less oppressive regime of control, it allowed insurgent seafaring workers to create connexions and solidarities across borders sooner than African slaves. For this very practical reason, I posit the deep-sea ship as the original site where early signs of a process of transboundary proletarian solidarity eventuated.

The following two chapters develop this argument. Chapter 4 makes the claim the deep-sea merchant ship was a capitalist enterprise. It reconstructs the historical development by which the shipboard labour process was formally subsumed under capital and seafaring labour integrated into global value relations. It highlights the extent to which 'free' wage-labour as value-producing labour was imposed through coercion on sailors, especially those working on the slave trade. This transformation was accompanied by growing lower-deck militancy, leading up to the outbreak of waves of mutinies during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Those shipboard revolts were at the origin of golden age piracy, to which Chapter 5 is dedicated. Through a thematic reconstruction of that story, the chapter brings to the fore the ways in which insurgent-sailors-turned-pirates organized themselves democratically through transboundary multiship associations, fostered by an internationally-oriented code of fraternal sociability, and the regulative customs of the naval war council. This will illuminate a forerunner nautical moment in the development of working-class internationalism.

The last two chapters take the analysis back to the plantation and to the agency of African slaves. Chapter 6 argues that the slave-plantation, too, was a capitalist enterprise. In taking mid-seventeenth-century Barbados as case-study, it demonstrates that the formal subsumption of the plantation labour process under capital led to the qualitative reformulation of an early system of unfree labour based on indentured servitude into one based on black racial slavery, redefined as value-producing unfree labour. As such, the chapter makes the claim that a black African slave-labour force did not develop in the Americas, starting with Barbados, as a vestigial, pre-capitalist mode of exploitation, but rather as a differentiated local expression of a world-historical process of value production. This argument serves the purpose of integrating the labour and the agency of African slaves at the heart of the historical development of Atlantic capitalism.

Chapter 7 completes the narrative by focussing on the French colony of Saint-Domingue, where the slave-plantation regime developed to an unparalleled level of integration and exploitation in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Emerging in part as a result of this, the slave revolution that broke out in 1791 and led to the creation of the first black state in the Americas will be showed as embodying important features of transboundary process of black proletarian solidarity. In particular, the chapter provides a detailed analysis of how self-emancipated slaves and black sailors, through underground channels of communication and a seagoing form of abolitionist Jacobinism, played a key role in sparking other slave revolts elsewhere in the Americas—sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. It also highlights how the Saint-Dominguan slave insurgents understood and situated their revolt in global terms from the outset of their uprising, notably by making symbolic connections with the political powers in Paris.

This introduction began with an epigraph from Engels, emphasizing the need to study history afresh. When he made this claim to Conrad Schmidt at the heyday of Orthodox Marxism, he was critical of the many young German writers for whom historical materialism was 'a mere phrase with which anything and everything is labeled without further study, that is, they stick to on this label and then consider the question disposed of'. Engels wanted them to fully engage with Marx's thought 'as a guide to study' in order to enquire into 'the conditions of existence of the different formations of society', before extrapolating 'views corresponding to them'.[31] While adapting it to the current matter, this dissertation addresses Engels' admonition by exploring the conditions of emergence, continuity, and termination of processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the Atlantic *longue durée* by sustaining a close theoretical dialogue with Marx as my guide.

Inasmuch as it endeavours to present a thorough and credible analysis of the early modern Atlantic International, this dissertation cannot pretend to provide a complete holistic account. Admittedly, what is presented here, especially in Chapters 3, 5 and 7, is neither as exhaustive nor as detailed as I would have liked. For example, while one of my attempts was to come up with an integrated dark Atlantic approach inclusive of all racialized proletarian workers, it proved impossible within the scope of the study undertaken to include and engage with the struggles of the indigenous communities in the Americas. As a result, the image of the Atlantic International deployed in this dissertation lacks an important and not less central Amerindian dimension. At the time of writing this introduction, the very first monograph on a 'Red Atlantic' had just been published,

[31] Engels, "Engels to Conrad Schmidt", in L.S. Feuer, ed., *Marx and Engels*, p. 396.

restoring that important freedom story back to where it should be—at the center of the modern world.[32]

Another area where this dissertation could not pay as much attention as it should have is on the role and experience of women in the movements under study. As a result, it lacks a gendered perspective. To be sure, the rapidly accumulative research on the topic is making abundantly clear that the Atlantic world was far from being a 'male world'.[33] If only partially, I hope to make a contribution to this effort in Chapter 3 where I discuss the role of the Kongolese female prophet Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita in the organization of a mass movement against the slave trade in the Kingdom of Kongo in the early eighteenth century, as well as that of African women in staging shipboard mutinies on slave ships crossing the Atlantic. In Chapters 5 and 7, however, where I try to sustain compact arguments geared specifically to providing answers to the questions raised by this dissertation, the contribution of women is unfortunately lost from view. This means that I do not discuss the remarkable and inspiring careers of female pirates Mary Read and Anne Bonny in Chapter 5 on golden age piracy. For the same reasons, Chapter 7 could only make some punctual references to insurgent female slaves during the Saint-Domingue revolution. I believe that further research on these lines can only strengthen my overall interpretation of proletarian internationalism in the dark Atlantic.

[32] Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* (Chapel Hill: The University North Carolina Press, 2014); See also John K. Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250-1820* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chap. 4.

[33] See, for instance, Margaret Creighton and Lisa Norling, eds., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); David Cordingly, *Women Sailors and Sailors' Women: An Untold Maritime History* (New York: Random House, 2001); Ken Aslakson, "Women in the Atlantic World," in *The Atlantic World, 1450-2000*, eds. Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 135-150.

1. Before the First International but beyond the Many-Headed Hydra: A Critical Historiographical Reassessment of Working-Class Internationalism

The international activity of the working classes is not in any way dependent on the existence of the International Working Men's Association. This was only the first attempt to create a central organ for such activity.[1]

There exists a tacit dialogue in the humanities and social sciences between the historiography of working-class internationalism and that of the revolutionary Atlantic world. Indeed, whoever moves through them from either way would most likely be astonished by how both historiographies address, albeit differently, the question of proletarian solidarity across borders. If students of working-class internationalism have, from the outset, produced a history bounded by the conceptual and historical limits of the white, industrial, waged, self-conscious, proletariat of the second half of nineteenth-century Europe, those of the revolutionary Atlantic world, in turn, have enquired further back in the past into the solidarity practices and movements of multi-ethnic masses of expropriated proletarians—among slaves, indentured servants, sailors, waged-artisans, and others—who built as much as they resisted the early modern Atlantic-world economy.

Yet, in a general way, and with some exceptions, these two traditions of scholarship have developed without speaking much to one another, as if their objects of analysis were

[1] Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), p. 350

historically self-contained and, therefore, could not be reconciled. In fact, as we shall see in this chapter, it is only just recently that a few scholars began to draw some, if timid, parallels between them. Though extremely insightful these parallels have yet to be brought together into an integrated approach that would consolidate historical accounts in a new synthetic narrative. Beyond all their differences of methodology, conceptual tooling, and historical focus, and in spite of their respective disciplinary coherence, when one begins to think through these two historiographies in a synthetical way it becomes possible to generate a fresh historical outlook; an outlook that not only relocates the narrative's center of gravity from industrial Europe to the much broader social-historical dynamics of the Atlantic-world economy during the rise of capitalism, but also calls for a critical reassessment of the epistemological foundation that was brought to bear on the study of working-class internationalism since the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels in 1848.

It is with this synthetic aim that this first chapter sets out by performing a selective critical review of these two bodies of work. The first section deals with the Marxist historiography of working-class internationalism. Specifically, because this dissertation aims at going back to and reassess the genesis of that narrative, I will move chronologically through this historiography, yet engage exclusively with the works that focus on the beginning of what Marcel van der Linden and Frits van Holthoon have called the 'classical age' of working-class internationalism, namely, the period from the 1830s to the creation of the First International in 1864.[2] Though aware of old debates and issues raised by different contributions throughout the 160-year long existence of this historiographical tradition, I

[2] See Frits van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden, *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830-1940* (Leiden & New York: E.J. Brill, 1988).

shall disregard them on purpose and concentrate only on mobilizing the most relevant interventions that best address the specific question of the origins of working-class internationalism. My contention is that because of deep and enduring lineages to Marx and Engels's unilinear and Eurocentric historical framework, the historiography of working-class internationalism of the classical age has been grounded in, and structured by, an epistemological architecture that has exclusively privileged the epoch of capitalist industrialism, resulting in a serious lack of attention to early forms of proletarian solidarity across borders, such as those, I argue, that occurred in the early modern Atlantic-world economy.

The second section of the chapter deals with the scholarly literature on the revolutionary Atlantic world. However, because it is too rich and varied to be treated exhaustively in a single chapter section without the risk of cursing it, I shall give exclusive attention to the works of arguably the best representatives of this tradition, namely, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, with an emphasis on their co-authored book *The Many-Headed Hydra*. Approached chronologically, their works will reveal an extremely fertile ground in which to situate and reset the study of the historical formation of working-class internationalism. To be sure, Linebaugh and Rediker have attempted—to echo E. P. Thompson's felicitous phrase—to rescue the multi-ethnic class of Atlantic labourers from the condescension of posterity by exploring their traditions and movements of cooperation, resistance and solidarity. Yet, if they have convincingly uncovered a pre-industrial preface to the Marxist narrative of working-class internationalism, Linebaugh and Rediker, I submit, have metaphorically assumed more than theoretically substantiated and explained cross-border

processes of proletarian solidarity in the Atlantic world. In a way, then, it is to this shortcoming that the present dissertation is directed.

The chapter concludes with the effort of pulling together the threads of the two historiographies so as to lay down preliminary insights as part of sketching out an alternative approach. To that end, I shall first suggest a return to, and re-evaluation of, the traditional theme of working-class internationalism in 'classical Marxism' (i.e., the classic version of historical materialism as developed in the writings of Karl Marx) and, second, its insertion and articulation within a more open, Atlanticist, historical materialist framework of analysis. In the following chapter, I will start from there to forge my conceptual framework.

Working-Class Internationalism in the Classical Age

As labour historian Henry Weisser pointed out in the 1970s, 'Marxism has placed stress on working-class internationalism from the beginning'.[3] The publication of the *Manifesto* in 1848, when Marxism was still at its moment of genesis, confirms the point. Yet proclaiming working-class internationalism has not been unique to Marx and Engels. To be sure, if we think in general terms of global solidarity, the *Manifesto* belongs to a line of thought that runs arguably from Marsilius of Padua's *Defensor pacis* (1324), which first claimed the sovereign power of the 'universal multitude' and called for the seizure of church property to be shared in common, to William Lovett's *Address to the Working classes of Europe* (1838), cutting through Thomas Müntzer's 'Prague Manifesto' (1521),

[3] Henry Weisser, *British Working-Class Movements and Europe, 1815-48* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p. 195.

the Diggers' *True Levellers' Standard Advanced* (1649), and, at the climax of the age of revolutions, Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791). All these writings emanated from various social struggles and movements which, to different degrees and manners, stretched across local, regional and state boundaries, as we shall observe in more details in Chapter 3. But what makes the *Manifesto*, and most especially among classical Marxism, distinctive in this stream of texts, however, is that it constituted the very first attempt to put forth a historical theory of working-class internationalism.

In crafting their narrative, however, Marx and Engels established a significant rupture with the past. Indeed, by positing factory production and nation-state building as the two necessary conditions required for the making of working-class internationalism, they foreshortened that history in drastic ways, thus undermining the continuity of political and cultural traditions coming from earlier struggles and movement of resistance played out, too, across borders, though different ones, such as colonial and imperial, as well as more diffused local ones (of which more in Chapter 2). It is therefore necessary, at the risk of raising more questions, to first begin this section by addressing and unpacking these two assumptions, before moving forward and charting our way through the historiography proper, which I have circumscribed along these three lines: classic institutional history (1900-1950), social history (1960-1990), and transnational history (1990-…).

Classical Marxism

The overarching assumption governing Marx and Engels's theory of working-class internationalism rests on the idea that modern industry constituted its prime historical mover. It is arguably Engels who asserted the matter in its most clear and straightforward

way during a speech he gave on the occasion of a meeting in London on December 9 1847 organized by the Fraternal Democrats to commemorate the seventeenth anniversary of the Polish revolution. Having predicted that the Chartist movement would soon strike 'the first decisive blow from which … the liberation of all European countries will ensue', he then explained his position as follows:

> The English Chartists will rise up first because it is precisely here that the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is at its fiercest. And why is it at its fiercest? Because in England, as a result of modern industry and machines, all the oppressed classes have been thrown together into one huge class with common interests, the class of the proletariat …[W]ithout machinery there would be no Chartism, and even though your situation may be becoming worse at present as a result of machinery, it is, for this very reason, making our victory possible. But it has had this result not just in England but also in all other countries. In Belgium, in America, in France, in Germany it has reduced the conditions of all workers to the same level and it is making them increasingly similar day by day; … machinery therefore, remains an enormous historical advance. What conclusion can be drawn from this? Because the position is the same for the workers of all countries, because their interests are the same and their enemies are the same, for this reason they must also fight together, they must oppose the brotherhood of the bourgeoisie of all nations with the brotherhood of the workers of all nations.[4]

By privileging the vantage point of industry, Engels, along with Marx, then embraced a reductionist, technological deterministic approach to the historical formation of working-class internationalism, which resulted in cutting it off from its political and cultural genealogy. Nothing is more characteristic of this shortcoming than the weighty silence about proletarian agency that runs throughout their historical account of primitive accumulation.

[4] Friederich Engels, "Speech on Poland," in *Karl Marx: The Revolutions of 1848*, ed. David Fernbach, 2nd ed., Vol. 1: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), p. 101.

For example, in *The German Ideology* (1845-6), while the 'rabble' of the late Middle Ages '…carried out revolts against the whole municipal order', such occurrence of proletarian self-activity suddenly disappears from the account as the focus shifts ahead to the expansion of manufacture, world commerce and colonialism, only to come back a few pages later as the fully-fledged '…class movement of the proletariat … created by big industry'.[5] Similarly, the only place where Marx gives a voice to the proletariat in *Capital*, Volume I, is in 'The Working Day' chapter, when the separation between the workers and the conditions of their labour is fully completed. Before that, in the huge period that spanned '…from the fourteenth century until 1825…', proletarian self-activity consisted of nothing more than, in his own words, a 'threatening attitude'.[6] And when it took a more tangible shape, proletarian self-activity could only be, by virtue of the unilinear logic of the dialectical framework of history, a 'primitive' dead-end form of itself in the present, as this passage from the *Manifesto* exemplifies:

> The first direct attempts of the proletariat to attain its own ends, made in time of universal excitement, when feudal society was being overthrown, these attempts necessarily failed, owing to the then undeveloped state of the proletariat, as well as to the absence of the economic conditions for its emancipation, conditions that had yet to be produced by the impending bourgeois epoch alone.[7]

Thus, in conceiving working-class internationalism as being internally and exclusively related to industrial capitalism, Marx and Engels occluded an important chapter of early proletarian struggles played out in the pre-industrial era of capitalism. As we shall see below, it is precisely to this silence that Linebaugh and Rediker have addressed their work.

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[5] Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), pp. 177, 186.
[6] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1 (London & New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), pp. 901, 903.
[7] Karl Marx and Friederich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *Karl Marx: The Revolutions of 1848*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 1: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), p. 94.

Somewhat subordinated to the first, the second assumption that Marx and Engels held with respect to the historical formation of working-class internationalism has to do with the structuring role of the nation-state. Seen as both an achievement of modernity and a necessary framework for capitalist industrialization, the nation-state came to be quite naturally favored in their account as the primary (and privileged) terrain for working-class internationalism. ‘Since the end of the Middle Ages,’ Engels writes, ‘history has been working towards a Europe composed of large national states. Only such states are the normal political constitution of the ruling European bourgeoisie and, at the same time, an indispensable precondition for the establishment of harmonious international co-operation between peoples, without which the rule of the proletariat is impossible’.[8] In this sense, working-class internationalism could neither have antedated nation-states nor occurred anywhere else (in a colonial setting, for instance) than *within* and *through* national borders. After all, as Marx insisted, it is ‘perfectly self-evident that in order to be at all capable of struggle the working class must organize itself *as a class* at home and that the domestic sphere must be the immediate arena for its struggle’.[9] Therefore, ‘the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle’.[10]

Furthermore, importance was given to the principle of self-determination of peoples, as it guaranteed a relationship between equal nations. In a letter to Kautsky, for example, Engels claimed that ‘[a]n international movement of the proletariat is possible only among

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[8] Frederick Engels, "The Role of Force in History," in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, eds. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Vol. 26 (New York: International Publishers, 1990), p. 455.
[9] Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme”, in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, p. 350.
[10] Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party”, in D. Fernbach, *Karl Marx: The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 78.

independent nations'.[11] He pointed out that Ireland and Poland were 'two nations in Europe which do not only have the right but the duty to be nationalistic before they become internationalists', since working-class movements 'are internationalists of the best kind if they are very nationalistic'.[12] Thus, as John Bellamy Foster has rightly observed, working-class internationalism as set out by Marx and Engels constitutes 'a form of egalitarian universalism that could only develop through national struggles and the creation of multinational societies…'.[13]

But when understood from the material context in which they were postulated, these two assumptions—industry and nation-state—underpinning Marx and Engels's theoretical take on the historical formation of working-class internationalism disclose a striking paradox, which very few scholars seem to have remarked or, at least, explicitly acknowledged.[14] The *Manifesto* did not come out of Chartism but of a fusion between the Communist Correspondence Committee, created in 1846 by Marx, Engels, and a close friend, Philippe Gigot, and the League of the Just, a secret insurrectionary brotherhood created by German émigrés in Paris in 1834. If the Committee was the institutional outgrowth of common intellectual work, the League, in turn, had sprung from the conspirational Babouvist-Blanquist tradition and had been involved in the abortive Paris rising of May 1839. About this tradition, Eric Hobsbawm held the following observation: 'Whether their efforts were ever coordinated to produce simultaneous international revolution is still a matter of debate, though persistent attempts to link all secret brotherhoods, at least at their highest and most

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[11] Friederich Engels, "Nationalism, Internationalism and the Polish Question," in *The Russian Menace to Europe; a Collection of Articles, Speeches, Letters, and News Dispatches by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, eds. Paul Blackstock and Bert Hoselitz (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953), p. 116.
[12] Ibid., p. 117.
[13] John Bellamy Foster, "Marx and Internationalism," *Monthly Review* 52, no. 3 (2000), p. 19.
[14] To my knowledge, Perry Anderson is the only one who has raised this issue with regards to working-class internationalism. See Perry Anderson, "Internationalism: A Breviary," *New Left Review* 14 (2002), 5-25.

initiated levels, into international super-conspiracies were made'.[15] What Hobsbawm implicitly acknowledged here, in other words, was that without the aid of machinery, and despite a repressive social order put in place across Europe by Metternich's Holy Alliance, proletarian solidarity across borders nonetheless happened through underground plebeian networks.[16] The social basis of this plebeian form of internationalism, as the membership of the League illustrates, did not lie in any factory proletariat, but instead in a pre-industrial, exiled artisanate. The large majority of the league's leaders came from urban crafts—Wilhelm Weitling was a journeyman tailor, Karl Schapper a printer, Heinrich Bauer a shoemaker, Joseph Moll a watchmaker, and Herman Kriege a printer. Seen in this light, then, the *Manifesto*'s ending battle cry—'Working Men of All Countries, Unite!'—lends itself to an historical irony, for it was the radical, class-conscious, internationalist artisans who called upon the industrial proletariat to unite, not the other way around.

The production of the *Communist Manifesto*—not its content—had deep roots in an early form of proletarian internationalism in Europe which brings into view the international agency of pre-industrial artisanal workers. In 1848, Marx and Engels wanted to raise consciousness among the then-nascent industrial proletariat, whom they identified as the bearer of a world revolution based on the principles of scientific socialism. As a result, working-class internationalism, as both an historical practice *and* an object of analysis, was not only severed from its deeper historical roots, which Marx and Engels viewed somewhat negatively as 'utopians', but was also theoretical encapsulated in the

[15] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848* (London: Abacus, 1977), p. 145.
[16] Created in 1815, after the ultimate defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, the Holy Alliance was a coalition formed by the monarchist great powers of Russia, Austria and Prussia, and supported by the financial bourgeoisie of England and, after 1830, by the French Bourbon monarchy. Officially, its aim was to instill the divine right of kings and Christian values in European political life. In practice, however, the Austrian state chancellor Prince Klemens von Metternich made it a bastion against democracy, revolution, and secularism based on the 1789 French model. The Alliance finally broke up with the coming of the 1848 revolution.

stagist framework of scientific socialism. From henceforth, then, working-class internationalism appeared to be as if it had been the invention or discovery of Marxism—as if, in other words, it had sprung to life in 1848 along with the *Manifesto*. This 'proprietary bias' created a specious historical *quid pro quo* by which working-class internationalism became confused with Marxian socialist internationalism. As we shall see, this preconception has literally shaped the entire historiographical production on the subject since then.

Before we move to the scholarly tradition, however, it should be pointed out right away that from the 1850s onward, as recently argued by Kevin Anderson, Marx's historical outlook became increasingly 'multilinear' and, therefore, broke away from the deficient unilinear and stagist theoretical model of social progress laid down in his early works.[17] For instance, he began to consider that radical abolitionism in the United States, national liberation movements in Poland and Ireland, as well as peasant resistance in Russia, were all interwoven in a world-wide, anti-capitalist class struggle, and hence could, too, lead to communism in spite of the fact that they took place before the full development of industrial capitalism. Yet this 'subterranean outlook' has been unfortunately left unremarked by students of working-class internationalism, testifying of a serious blind spot in the historiography. In Chapter 2, it will be my ambition to reinvest classical Marxism and rehabilitate this 'multilinear epistemology' so as to take it back to and enquire into forgotten or overlooked historical moments of working-class internationalism, particularly in the early modern Atlantic-world economy. My aim, in other words, is to go back to and engage with Marx's multilinear outlook in order to reset the theoretical relationships of

[17] See Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

historical materialism to the formative process of working-class internationalism, and therefore generate, I hope, a more generous historical narrative. This task, it seems to me, has yet to be seriously undertaken by Marxist scholars until now. But, before pursuing it, let us move through the historiography and account for its merits and shortcomings.

Congress-history (1900-1960)

The historiography of working-class internationalism truly began to take shape at the turn of the twentieth century, when interventions on the subject moved from a merely militant orientation to a more scholarly and coherent program of historical research.[18] More precisely, it developed during the period of the Second (1889-1916) and Third (1919-1943) Internationals, in the intellectual context dominated by Orthodox Marxism. For Georg Lukács, Orthodox Marxism referred exclusively to method, that is to say, 'the scientific conviction that dialectical materialism is the road to truth and that its methods can be developed, expanded and deepened only along the lines laid down by its founders. It is the conviction, moreover, that all attempts to surpass or "improve" it have led and must

[18] The German militant Wilhelm Eichhoff wrote the very first historical account of the First International in 1868. This pamphlet was soon followed by a plethora of similar interventions, written by militants from within the movement, all aimed at addressing, let alone celebrating, the short history of the establishment, spread and activity of the International. For militant-oriented accounts on the creation of the First International, see Paul Brousse, *Le marxisme dans l'Internationale.* (Paris: Le prolétaire, 1882; Wilhelm Eichhoff, "The International Workingmen's Association. its Establishment, Organisation, Political and Social Activity, and Growth," in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, Vol. 21 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975 [1868]), 322-380; E. E. Fribourg, *L'Association internationale des travailleurs* (Paris: Armand Le Chevalier, Éditeur, 1871); James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs (1864-1878)* (New York: B. Franklin, 1969 [1905]); Émile de Laveleye, *Le socialisme contemporain*, 7th ed. (Paris: Librairie Germer-Baillière et Cie, 1883); Benoît Malon, *L'Internationale: son histoire, ses principes* (Paris: Propagande Socialiste, 1872); Jules-L Puech, *Le proudhonisme dans l'Association internationale des travailleurs* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1907); Varlaam Tcherkesoff, *Précurseurs de l'Internationale* (Bruxelles: Bibliothèque des "Temps Nouveaux", 1899); Oscar Testut, *Association Internationale des travailleurs* (Lyon: Imprimerie d'Aimé Vingtrinier, 1870); Oscar Testut, *Le livre bleu de l'Internationale* (Paris: E. Lachaud, Éditeur, 1871); Oscar Testut, *L'Internationale et le jacobinisme au ban de l'Europe*, Vol. 2 (Paris: E. Lachaud, Éditeur, 1872); Edmond Villetard, *Histoire de l'Internationale* (Paris: Garnier Frères, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1872); Georg Zacher, *L'Internationale rouge.* (Paris: Hinrichsen, 1884).

lead to over-simplifications, triviality and eclecticism'.[19] With respect to the history of working-class internationalism this orthodoxy hinged on tracing back the 'real' ancestors to the workers' international movement, which mirrored the theoretical conflict of the period between Marxists and Revisionists who claimed altogether to be the legitimate heirs of the First International. As a consequence, the Marxist historiography originated as a politically-instrumentalized field of research geared to meet the exigencies of ideological positions within the international Left.

In doing so, early Marxist historians took for granted the foundational tenets that underpinned Marx and Engels's views on the history of the working-class internationalism. In his *History of the First International* (1928), for instance, G. M. Stekloff argued that 'the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* gives an irrefutable demonstration of the fact that the class war, and therewith the struggle for proletarian internationalism, are natural outcomes of the conditions created by the development of bourgeois society'.[20] In this sense, the historical formation of working-class internationalism is 'intimately connected with its socialist aspirations…', because

> …from the moment when the workers begin to become aware that their complete emancipation is unthinkable without the socialist reconstruction of contemporary bourgeois society, they take as their watchword the union of the workers of the whole world in a common struggle for emancipation. From that moment the instinctive internationalism of the proletariat is transformed into a conscious internationalism.[21]

Based on this assumption, then, it was logical that '[t]he beginnings of internationalist sentiment and the awareness of the international solidarity of the workers developed in

[19] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 1.
[20] G. M. Stekloff, *History of the First International* (New York: International Publishers, 1928, p. 8.
[21] Ibid, pp. 4-5.

Britain, simultaneously with the development of class consciousness in general'.[22] This idea was generalized among the first generation of Marxist scholars. R. W. Postgate, for instance, argued that '[l]abour internationalism can only appear under modern capitalist conditions… [and] coincides with the first appearance in strength of the modern proletariat'.[23] Similarly, Theodor Rothstein claimed that '[i]t was precisely in England that the proletariat became aware not only of solidarity with foreign workers but of the indispensability of this solidarity in the struggle with the bourgeois society'.[24]

Furthermore, what also characterized the work of classical Marxist historians was their focus on the institutional aspects of labour history, such as formal institutions, parties, congresses, and so on. In endorsing such a perspective, they naturally came to set the beginnings of working-class internationalism in the Europe of the 1840s, when the first worker-based, internationalist organizations began to emerge, such as the Society of Fraternal Democrats (1845), the Communist League (1847), and the International Association (1855).[25] According to Rothstein, these internationalist institutions unfolded into 'an unbroken chain of thoughts and efforts which tended ever in the same direction, and which culminated in the foundation of the International Workingmen's Association or First International'.[26]

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[22] Ibid., p. 19.
[23] R. W. Postgate, *The Workers' International* (London & New York: The Swarthmore Press Ltd. and Harcourt Brace & Howe, 1920), p. 13.
[24] Cited in Weisser, *British Working-Class Movements and Europe*, p. 198
[25] For an historical account of the emergence of labour organizations during this period, see Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, chap. 6.
[26] Cited in Stekloff, *History of the First International*, p. 33

This straightforward congress-history lingered through the 1930s and 1940s.[27] In the following decade, the historiography began to make its way through the doors of the academia in a significant way, yet without challenging the foundational epistemology underpinning the historiography.[28] In 1953, British historian G. D. H. Cole began to publish his *magnum opus*, five-volume book, *A History of Socialist Thought*, which somewhat settled the 'classic' chronological ordering of working-class internationalism. Interestingly, however, Cole called attention to the French Revolution as the first historical moment of that history, for '[t]his is the point from which it is possible to trace not only a continuous development in the field of thought, but also a growing connection between the thought and movements seeking to give practical expression to it'.[29] Cole's insight is particularly significant here because, as we shall see later in the dissertation, the scope of the French Revolution went far beyond France's borders to the four corners of the Atlantic world, most notably to Saint-Domingue. Indeed, by taking Cole's insight to the Atlantic, we open up the possibility to locate the roots of working-class internationalism in a broader transoceanic, geo-historical ensemble.

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[27] Among main contributions during that period, see Max Beer, *Fifty Years of International Socialism* (New York : Macmillan, 1935); Salme A. Dutt, "Chartism and the Fight for Peace," *Labour Monthly* 21 (1939a), 367-374; Salme A. Dutt, *When England Arose: The Centenary of the People's Charter* (London: Fore Publications, 1939b); Reg Groves, *But we shall Rise again: A Narrative History of Chartism* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1939); Josef Lenz, *The Rise and Fall of the Second International* (New York: International Publishers, 1932); John Price, *The International Labour Movement*, ed. Royal Institute of International Affairs (London & New York: Oxford University Press, 1945).

[28] See, for instance, Roland Bauer, *Die II. Internationale, 1889-1914* (Berlin: Dietz, 1956); Julius Braunthal, *History of the International, 1864-1914.* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1966); Milorad M. Drachkovitch, ed., *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966); William Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals: The World Socialist and Communist Movements from 1848 to the Present* (New York: International Publisher, 1955); Jacques Freymond, *La première Internationale.*, ed. Henri Burgelin (Geneve: E. Droz, 1962); James Joll, *The Second International, 1889-1914* (London: Weindenfeld & Nicolson, 1955); Annie Kriegel, *Les Internationales ouvières, 1864-1943* (Paris: PUF, 1964); Carl Landauer, *European Socialism: A History of Ideas and Movements from the Industrial Revolution to Hitler's Seizure of Power*, Vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959); A. L. Morton and George Tate, *The British Labour Movement: A History* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956); Patricia van der Esch, *La deuxième Internationale, 1889-1923* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1957).

[29] G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, vol. 1: *The Forerunners, 1789-1850* (London & New York: Macmillan; St. Martin's Press, 1953), p. 11.

Social history (1960-1990)

In the 1960s, a new generation of scholars began to emerge and challenge the historiography from a social history perspective, also known as the 'history from below' tradition. In the general field of labour history, the contributions of E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, in Britain, and Rolande Trempé and Michèle Perrot, in France, to name perhaps to most cardinal ones, set the tone of the methodological transition as they pulled the historiography out of the narrow framework of ideological and institutional history in order to give a new direction to it, to bring it to explore new dimensions of history, and to open it up to broader theoretical grounds.[30] The emphasis therefore shifted from working-class institutions to its movements and from its leaders to its rank-and-files, that is to say, to the working people as they shape the course of history.

In the field of working-class internationalism proper, the advent of history from below brought on a shift of perspective from congress-history to praxis-history, or to amplify the contrast, to *movement*-history. In 1962, George Haupt, one of the leading figures of this generation of social historians in France, summed up the nature of the shift in these terms: 'History of the Socialist International or international history of socialism, this is how we could sum up the question'.[31] Calling for the latter proposition, he criticized the insufficiency of traditional history on the ground that it dissociates socialism, as both a

[30] See, in particular, Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (New York : Basic Books, 1964); Michelle Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève, France 1871-1890* (Paris : Mouton, 1974); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1980); Rolande Trempé, *Les mineurs de Carmaux :1848-1914.* (Paris: Les Éditions ouvrières, 1971).

[31] Georges Haupt, "Histoire de l'Internationale socialiste ou histoire internationale du socialisme? Sur quelques controverses à propos de Problèmes de recherche et de méthode." *Le mouvement social*, no. 41 (Oct. - Dec., 1962), p. 19.

movement and ideology, from the organized collective action of the working classes, that is, where it is brought to bear in the first place. As he claimed: 'We should now focus the analysis on the movement, not on the ideology'.[32] But while this generation of labour historians did set out to challenge the methods of traditional history, they did so, however, by staying within the same set of theoretical premises than their predecessors. Isaac Deutscher, for instance, argued that 'socialist internationalism developed from the cosmopolitanism of the trader; but it also surpassed that cosmopolitanism, overcame its limitations, and, finally, became its negation; socialist internationalism stood in opposition to the bourgeois cosmopolitanism'.[33] With respect to the primacy of the nation-state as political terrain and unit of analysis, Henry Collins claimed that the First International 'could not have existed earlier' because '[i]ts predecessors of the 1840s and 1850s – the Fraternal Democrats and the International Association – were cosmopolitan rather than international'.[34]

Social historians returned studying the classical age with the intention not to reassess its epistemological foundation, but to shed a different a light on it, thus giving them unchallenged *raison d'être*. French historian Jacques Rougerie summed up the historiographical shift thus: 'Where? When? How? Why the International? How many sections, how many members in these sections, and what kind of members?'[35] Firmly grounded in the paradigm of the nation, this research agenda ushered in the production of a collection of substantial studies on the internationalism in different national working-class

[32] Ibid, p. 19.
[33] Isaac Deutscher, *Marxism in our Time* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1971), p. 98.
[34] Henry Collins, "The International and the British Labour Movement: Origin of the International in England." in *La Première Internationale. L'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement.* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1968), p. 23.
[35] Jacques Rougerie, "Sur l'histoire de la Première Internationale: bilan d'un colloque et de quelques récents travaux," *Le Mouvement Social*, no. 51, *La première internationale* (May - Jun., 1965), p. 27.

movements, such as in Britain, France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Romania, and the United States.[36] In addition, social historians also set out to study different ideological expressions of internationalism, such as anarchist, and syndicalist; different internationalist agencies, such as youth and women; while others took issue with the question of the relationship of working-class internationalism to war and nationalism, as well as to anti-colonialism.[37] But these new concerns were mostly considered as twentieth-century

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[36] For Britain, see Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International* (London; New York: Macmillan; St Martin's Press, 1965) and Royden Harrison, "The British Labour Movement and the International in 1864," in *The Socialist Register*, eds. Ralph Miliband and John Saville, Vol. 1 (London: Merlin Press, 1964), 293-308; for France, see Maurice Moissonnier, *La première Internationale et la Commune à Lyon (1865-1871): spontanéisme, complots et luttes réelles* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1972); For Spain, see Max Nettlau, *La première Internationale en Espagne (1868-1888)*, ed. Renée Lamberet (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969) and Michel Ralle, "Notes sur la première Internationale en Espagne," in *Histoire politique et histoire des idées* (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles), ed. Michel Baridon (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1976), pp. 155-159; for Germany, see Roger Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International, 1864-1872* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); for Switzerland, see Jacques Freymond, ed., *Études et documents sur la Première International en Suisse* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1964); for Romania, see Ion Popescu-Puturi and Augustin Deac, *La première Internationale et la Roumanie* (Bucarest: Éditions de l'Académie de la République socialiste de Roumanie, 1966); for the United States, see Samuel Bernstein, *The First International in America* (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1962) and Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International: Marxism and the American Reform Tradition, 1848-1875* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[37] On anarchism, see Hermia Oliver, *The International Anarchist Movement in Late Victorian London* (London & New York: Croom Helm & St. Martin's Press, 1983); on syndicalism, see Wayne Westergard-Thorpe, "Towards a Syndicalist International: The 1913 London Congress," *International Review of Social History* 23, no. 1 (1978), 33-78; on youth, see John Bartier, "Étudiants et mouvement révolutionnaire au temps de la Première Internationale. Les congrès de Liège, Bruxelles et Gand." in *Mélanges offerts à Guillaume Jacquemyns*., ed. Guillaume Jacquemyns (Bruxelles: Université libre de Bruxelles, 1968), 35-60 and Richard Cornell, *Revolutionary Vanguard: The Early Years of the Communist Youth International*, 1914-1924. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982; on women, see Jean Dhondt, "Les femmes et la première Internationale en Belgique." in *Mélanges offerts à Guillaume Jacquemyns*., ed. Guillaume Jacquemyns (Bruxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1968), 239-250 and Jacqueline Heinen, "De la Ière à la IIIe Internationale, la question des femmes." *Critique Communiste*, no. 20-21 (1977), 109-179; on war and nationalism, see Madeleine Rebérioux and George Haupt, "L'attitude de l'Internationale," *Le Mouvement Social*, no. 45, *Le socialisme et la question coloniale avant 1914* (Oct. - Dec., 1963), 7-37; Georges Haupt, Michael Löwy and Claudie Weill, eds., *Les marxistes et la question nationale, 1848-1914: études et textes* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1974) and Victor Kiernan, "Working Class and Nation in Nineteenth-Century Britain." in *Rebels and their Causes: Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton*., eds. Arthur Leslie Morton and Maurice Campbell Cornforth (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979); on anti-colonialism, see Georges Haupt and Madeleine Rebérioux, eds., *La deuxième Internationale et l'Orient* (Paris: Éditions Cujas, 1967); Sheridan Johns, "The Comintern, South Africa and the Black Diaspora." *The Review of Politics* 37, no. 2 (Apr., 1975), pp. 200-234; Stephen White, "Colonial Revolution and the Communist International, 1919-1924." *Science and Society* 40, no. 2 (1976), 173-193 and Jacques Choukroun, "L'Internationale communiste, le P.C. Français et l'Algérie (1920-1925): éléments pour une étude de la question coloniale." *Cahiers D'histoire de l'Institut Maurice Thorez*, no. 25-26 (1978), 133-159.

phenomena. They were not taken up, in other words, as a means to revisit the classic Marxist framework upon which the narrative was built.[38]

The work of Marcel van der Linden deserves a special attention here. In 1988, the social historian sketched out an interesting historical typology of nineteenth-century working-class internationalism that somewhat amended the classic historical ordering. His typology was based on three phases: i) a pre-national phase (1830-1870); ii) a transitional phase (1870-1900); and iii) a national phase (1900-…).[39] Although his analysis took for granted the historical primacy of capitalist industrialism, it nonetheless sought to rethink the historical formation of working-class internationalism in a new insightful way. As he points out, the pre-national phase of working-class internationalism began in London, when the city was the capital of the world economy and attracted as much flows of commodities as of migrants and refugees who made it 'possible for a kind of sub-culture to arise in which working men of various nationalities communicated, and … developed a deeply rooted awareness of international relations and the necessity of international solidarity'.[40]

In echo to Benedict Anderson's distinguished concept, van der Linden goes on and makes the claim that working-class internationalism took shape 'from precisely the same idea of an imagined community, viz. the universal working class. Its emotional content is

[38] At the periphery of this literature during this period, scholars of the emerging Black radical tradition, such C.L.R. James, Eric Williams, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Richard Wright, to name just a few, were radically challenging the Marxian's stagist historical outlook. They set out to revisit the Marxist historiography through the prisms of slavery and colonialism, and generated new accounts of working-class movements. Starting in the next chapter, I will begin to mobilize the insights of this scholarly tradition.
[39] Recently, van der Linden has modified his typology so as to cover the contemporary period: i) the labour movement defines itself (pre-1848); ii) sub-national internationalism (1848-1870s); iii) transition (1870s-90); iv) national internationalism (1890s-1960s); and v) a new transition (since the 1960s). See van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, pp. 266-80.
[40] Marcel van der Linden, "The Rise and Fall of the First International: An Interpretation," in *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830-1940*, eds. Frits van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden (Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 326.

documented by the use of terms like “brothers”, “brethren”, “Brüder”, or “frères”’.[41] Thus, by grounding the pre-national phase of working-class internationalism in issues of exile and class-based brotherhood, van der Linden somewhat dissents with the technological-deterministic outlook and instead calls attention to the dialectics of (forced) migrant movements during the rise of capitalism.[42] What we have here, in other words, is a lever by which we can bring the historiography of working-class internationalism to speak more directly to that of the revolutionary Atlantic world. As we shall see below, scholars of the latter tradition have placed a great deal of attention on exile and movements—forced and free—of people across the Atlantic. With the exception of Linebaugh and Rediker, however, they have not addressed the matter in terms of working-class internationalism. Let us bear this issue in mind for later.

Transnational history (1990-…)

The end of the 1980s or so gradually abandoned the study of working-class internationalism. Many observers have put the blame on the so-called ‘linguistic turn,’ which carried away a great deal of historians from class analysis, and by extension working-class internationalism, to other objects, such as gender, race, and language.[43] Orphaned for a little while, working-class internationalism was re-adopted as a theme of

[41] Ibid., pp. 326-27.

[42] Hobsbawm also pointed out this relationship between exile and internationalism: ‘One accidental factor which reinforced the internationalism of 1830-48 was exile. Most political militants of the continental left were expatriates for some time, many for decades, congregating in the relatively few zones of refuge or asylum. … A common fate and a common ideal bound these expatriates and travellers together. Most of them faced the same problems of poverty and police surveillance, of illegal correspondence, espionage and the ubiquitous agent-provocateur’. See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, pp. 160-61.

[43] On the linguistic turn in social history, see Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Patrizia Dogliani, "Socialisme et internationalisme," *Cahiers Jaurès* 1, no. 191 (2009), 11-30; Chad Pearson, "From the Labour Question to the Labour History Question," *Labour/Le Travail* 66, no. Fall (2010), 195-230.

research in the middle of the 1990s, but this time by a cohort of multidisciplinary scholars concerned with the study of the anti-globalization movements. In effect, a third body of works took a shape of its own around the question of the relationship between globalization and labour. As Hermes Augusto Costa puts it, this relationship 'constitutes one of the most recurrent debates on the subject of the emancipatory possibilities of labour internationalism'.[44] The current assumption is that 'a "new world order" has given way to a "new internationalism" that transcends spatial (local and national), institutional and class boundaries'.[45]

This intellectual effervescence triggered an avalanche of studies from across disciplines of social sciences which, together, have produced a team of conceptual phraseologies, all aimed at addressing the 'revival' of internationalism: 'international social-movement unionism', 'global social movement unionism', 'anti-corporate movements', 'globalization from below', 'anti-globalization movement', 'global justice movement', 'new global solidarity unionism', 'new great counter-movement', and so on.[46] Beyond their respective

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[44] Hermes Augusto Costa, "The Old and the New in the New Labor Internationalism," in *Another Production is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, ed. Boaventura De Sousa Santos, Vol. 2 (London & New York: Verso, 2006), p. 252.

[45] Ibid., p. 262.

[46] Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy* (London & New York: Verso, 1997b); Kim Moody, "Towards an International Social-Movement Unionism," *New Left Review* 225 (1997a), pp. 52-72; Rob Lambert and Anita Chan, "Global Dance: Factory Regimes, Asian Labour Standards and Corporate Restructuring," in *Globalization and Patterns of Labour Resistance*, ed. Jeremy Waddington (London: Mansell, 1999), pp. 72-104; Amory Starr, *Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalization* (London & New York: Pluto Press, 2000); Alejandro Portes, "Globalization from Below: The Rise of Transnational Communities," in *The Ends of Globalization: Bringing Society Back In*, ed. Don Kalb and others (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), pp. 253-270; Joe Bandy and Jackie Smith, eds., *Coalitions Across Borders: Transnational Protest and the Neoliberal Order* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005); Frederick H. Buttel and Kenneth A. Gould, "Global Social Movement(s) at the Crossroads: Some Observations on the Trajectory of the Anti-Corporate Globalization Movement," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 10, no. 1 (2004), pp. 37-66; Barbara Epstein, "Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization Movement," *Monthly Review* 53, no. 4 (2001), pp. 1-14; David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Globalization and Anti-Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); Donatella Della Porta, ed., *The Global Justice Movement: Cross-National and Transnational Perspectives* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007); Peter Waterman, "Emancipating Labor Internationalism," in *Another Production is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Vol. 2 (London & New York: Verso, 2006), pp. 446-480; Ronaldo

theoretical standpoints, what gives these studies a unity of ensemble and a coherent place in the historiography of working-class internationalism is the commonly-accepted assumption that new labour internationalism is in fundamental rupture with that of the classical age. Indeed, new labour internationalism highlights 'an increased tension between an *archaic institutionalized* form of international labour identity and organization and the possibility of *a new social movement* labour internationalism'.[47] This, as a result, calls for 'the rethinking of longstanding and established notions of labour internationalism'.[48] Accordingly, to cope with the peculiarities of contemporary praxis, this literature has tackled and revised many of the assumptions embodied in classical Marxism, such as the working-class concept, the terrain of political struggle, and the nature and practice of transnational solidarity.[49]

Though important, these current theoretical revisions are characterised by a surprising degree of consensus vis-à-vis the actual shape of the narrative of working-class internationalism in the classical age. This consensus is reflected not only in the reduced pace of publication on this specific period since the 1960s, but above all by the somewhat

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Munck, *Globalization and Contestation: The New Great Counter-Movement* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007).

[47] Peter Waterman, "Talking Across Difference in an Interconnected World of Labour," in *Coalitions across Borders: Transnational Protest and the Neoliberal Order*, eds. Joe Bandy and Jackie Smith (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p. 152.

[48] Franco Barchiesi, "Transnational Capital, Urban Globalisation and Cross-Border Solidarity: The Case of the South African Municipal Workers," *Antipode* 33, no. 3 (2001), pp. 386-87.

[49] For accounts that deal with the working-class concept, see Ana Esther Cenena, "On the Forms of Resistance in Latin America: Its 'Native' Moment," in *Socialist Register 2008: Global Flashpoints. Reactions to Imperialism and Neoliberalism*, eds. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, Vol. 44 (London, New York & Halifax: Merlin Press, Monthly Review Press & Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 237-247; David McNally, *Another World is Possible: Globalization & Anti-Capitalism*, 2nd ed. (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2006); Peter Waterman and Jane Wills, "Space, Place and the New Labour Internationalisms: Beyond the Fragments?" *Antipode* 33, no. 3 (2001), 305-311; Arturo Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places: Reflection on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization," *Political Geography* 20 (2001), 139-174; on the terrain of political struggle, see Michael P. Smith, *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization* (Malden & Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001); Raúl Zibechi, "Subterranean Echos: Resistance and Politics "Desde El Sótano"," *Socialism and Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2005), 13-39; on the nature and practice of transnational solidarity, see Andre C. Drainville, *Contesting Globalization: Space and Place in the World Economy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004); Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval, *Globalization and Cross-Border Labor Solidarity in the Americas: The Anti-Sweatshop Movement and the Struggle for Social Justice* (New York; London: Routledge, 2005).

generalized efforts in the field today to engage more with the new material and intellectual circumstances of contemporary working-class internationalism than the need of reassessing its historical origins from a renovated, historical-materialist perspective. I would even submit the idea that by positioning itself in an epistemological rupture vis-à-vis an 'archaic' internationalism considered as *passé*, this scholarship has implicitly taken for granted the essential correctness of the classic Marxian assumptions on the historical formation of working-class internationalism. To be sure, its theoretical reflections are so fixed upon the 'newness' of the present moment that, despite of a great number of promising insights, this scholarship has failed to step out of itself and articulate its own critical appraisal of the historiographical production. And when scholars have sought to undertake such a task they did so more to historicize and, therefore, read back the 'new' qualities of contemporary forms of internationalism than to directly engage with and reassess the classic narrative, resulting in the production of theoretically self-contained, 'tunnel narratives'.[50]

Let us take three prominent examples. Critical geographer David Featherstone, for instance, has framed his object of study in terms of 'counter-global networks' and has accounted for what he calls the history of 'geographies of connection that have shaped forms of opposition to dominant forms of globalised practices', leading him back to 'spatially stretched forms of labourers' politics in the mid of the late eighteenth century', such as the Whiteboy political activity of the early 1760s which spread from Ireland to Newfoundland to London; the London Corresponding Society and its functioning as a

[50] Originating the term, historian J. H. Hexter defines the fallacy of tunnel history as a tendency to 'split the past into a series of tunnels, each continuous from the remote past to the present, but practically self-contained at every point and sealed off from contact with or contamination by anything that was going on in any of the other tunnels'. See J. H. Hexter, *Reappraisals in History* (London: Longmans, 1961), p. 194.

constitutive part of transatlantic abolitionist networks, and finally the United Irishmen's shipboard nationalist activity in the late 1790s.[51]

International political economist André Drainville, in turn, has framed the matter in terms of a history of 'global subjects' being made and unmade in the world economy according to two different modes of relations ('creative dislocation' and 'dialectic of presence'), a pursuit that has led him to claim, among other things, that the Paris commune and the 1909 strike of Jewish women working in New York shirtwaist factories, at the centre of the world economy, and the 1905 Chinese miners' strike at the North Randfontein Mine and the Great Christmas rebellion in Jamaica in 1831, at its periphery, all articulated 'a reticent enough subject, circumstantially sutured by quite specific struggles against world ordering'.[52]

Last but not least, philosophers and political theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have framed their object of study in *Commonwealth*—the last contribution that concludes their trilogy begun with *Empire* (2000) and continued in *Multitude* (2004)—in terms of a history of struggles between 'the republic of property', broadly incarnated by Modernity, and 'the forces of antimodernity', broadly incarnated by the class formation they call 'the multitude of the poor'. This drama was played out, they argue, in many sites across centuries—from Renaissance Italy, where '[t]he mendicant order of Francis of Assisi preaches the virtue of the poor in order to oppose both the corruption of church power and the institution of private property…', to the great sixteenth-century peasant wars and the rebellions against European colonial regimes and the 'many-headed hydra that threatens

[51] David Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), pp. 2, 60.
[52] Andre C. Drainville, *A History of World Order and Resistance: The Making and Unmaking of Global Subjects* (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 77.

property and order' at sea, up to the Haitian Revolution, 'the first properly modern revolution'.[53]

For all their merit in seeking to move beyond a 'wage-workerist' and nation-state-centred notion of working-class internationalism, and in spite of their historical ingenuity and analytical insights vis-à-vis the inclusion of a few Atlantic sites of struggle into their accounts, these interventions have nevertheless failed to directly reinvest classical Marxism's views on working-class internationalism of the classical age, so as to produce a refined, alternative approach 'from within' that very tradition.[54]

To sum up: the Marxist historiography of working-class internationalism has inherited the stadial historical imagination sketched out by Marx and Engels in their early works, and converted it into formal paradigmatic certitudes. If social historians shed a new light onto that narrative, by shifting the focus from congress-history to movement-history, it is only with scholars of new labour internationalism that, responding to today's neoliberal context, the epistemology of the classic Marxian narrative came to be seriously challenged. Yet this challenge was made from the outside in a runabout way, by putting a whole new set of conceptual vocabularies to work, as though the so-called 'archaic' form of internationalism had been assessed by Marx and Engels with archaic conceptual tools. To reconsider the historical development of working-class internationalism, therefore, we will need to, first, dislocate the narrative from its stadial bias and, secondly, to conceptually re-articulate *on*

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[53] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 43-4, 74. For accounts similar in theoretical orientation, see Robin Broad and Zahara Heckscher, "Before Seattle: The Historical Roots of the Current Movement Against Corporate-Led Globalisation," *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (June, 2003), 713-728 and Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).

[54] If it is true that Hardt and Negri have addressed Marxist theory directly in *Multitude*, they have done so less to revise it than to move beyond it and lay out another theoretical language. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), pp. 140-53.

its own terms the whole theoretical apparatus that was brought to bear by Marx and Engels on that development. But, before we undertake this task, let us turn to the literature on the revolutionary Atlantic world and assess its thematic commonalities with the historiography of working-class internationalism.

The Revolutionary Atlantic World

Over the last two decades or so, Atlantic history has been literally exploding as a proper field of transnational historical research.[55] Pioneered by C.L.R. James's book, *The Black Jacobins* (1938), which situated the insurrection of African slaves in Haiti in the international context of the French Revolution, the sub-field of 'the revolutionary Atlantic world' has produced a wealth of studies that look at the interconnectedness of slave revolts and other movements of emancipation mostly during the age of revolutions (1776-1848).

Drawing from James's scholarship, historians have looked at how the American, the French, and the Haitian revolutions generated a transnational context of struggle, linking together hitherto isolated resisting peoples, both free and unfree, in what Robert Alderson has called 'a revolutionary transatlantic public sphere'.[56] Another intervention even coined the term 'Black internationalism' to speak of the 'globally connected waves of struggles by African peoples' that followed the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution, and carried on to, and intersected with, anti-colonial movements that broke out in South America in the

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[55] Among key contributions, see Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Wayne Bodle, "Atlantic History is the New 'New Social History'," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (2007), 203-220; Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); William O'Reilly, "Genealogies of Atlantic History," *Atlantic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004), 66-84.

[56] Robert J. Alderson, *This Bright Era of Happy Revolutions: French Consul Michel-Ange-Bernard Mangourit and International Republicanism in Charleston, 1792-1794* (Columbia, S.C.: The University of South Carolina Press, 2008), p. xi.

opening decades of the nineteenth century.[57] Others, in turn, have sought out and followed currents of revolt that connected insurgents across national, linguistic, ethnic, and geographic boundaries, pointing out to the historic role of a multi-ethnic, mobile and cosmopolitan proletariat of seafarers and port workers, through which experiences of resistance were enabled to circulate and inform, indeed radicalize, different social contexts throughout the Atlantic world.[58] Cutting across plantations and port cities, these Atlantic social forces constituted, in the words of social historian Eugene Genovese, 'a vital part of the international revolutionary tidal wave that brought the modern world to fruition'.[59]

This scholarly literature, however, has not been concerned with the questions raised by this dissertation. As close as they got at times to transcend academic disciplinary boundaries and frame these movements as belonging to a broader narrative of global labour solidarity, scholars of this tradition have generally stayed within conventional topical thinking. Slavery, as a result, has been presented less as an integral part of global labour history than as belonging to a separate 'pre-bourgeois civilisation'.[60] My contention is that the wealth of studies in this tradition has yet to be fully mobilized and examined for what it has to say about the historical development of proletarian internationalism in the Atlantic world. In a way, this is the kind of integrated history James imagined when he wrote that

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[57] Michael O. West and William G. Martin, "Introduction. Contours of the Black International: From Toussaint to Tupac," in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution*, eds. Michael O. West, William G. Martin and Fanon Che Wilkins (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 3.

[58] See, for instance, Julius S. Scott, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Duke University, 1986) and Scott, "Crisscrossing Empires: Ships, Sailors, and Resistance in the Lesser Antilles in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, eds. R. L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 128-143.

[59] Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), pp. 117-18.

[60] The main proponent of this view is Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) and Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974).

the formation of a West Indian consciousness happened in the Caribbean during the period that spanned, as he entitled his 1963 Appendix to the text, 'From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro', a movement profoundly internationalist in orientation: 'In a scattered series of disparate islands the process consists of a series of unco-ordinated periods of drift, punctuated by spurts, leaps and catastrophes. But the inherent movement is clear and strong'.[61] Moreover, if James would have most likely agreed with G. D. H. Cole's claim that, as noted above, the French Revolution yielded the first practical expression of working-class internationalism, he would have certainly insisted, however, that we look at that revolutionary period in the following order: 'The San Domingo Masses Begin … And the Paris Masses Complete'.[62] He would have inverted the standpoint, as he wrote, from the '…workers and peasants of France [to] their black brothers in San Domingo…'.[63] As much thought-provocative as it is, and as explicitly as it speaks to the historiographical tradition of working-class internationalism, James's insight, it seems to me, has yet to be fully appreciated and engaged with by both Atlanticist and labour scholars. There is one important exception, however.

Social historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, both in their individual and collaborative works, have sought to recover hitherto hidden traditions of solidarity among what they call the 'Atlantic proletariat' of the early modern era. These traditions, as they argue, belong to an early chapter of the global history of the working class, when a motley proletariat was fighting across a variety of borders against slavery and other forms of capitalist exploitation. As such, their works constitute an obligatory halt for any discussion

[61] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 391.
[62] Ibid., pp. 85, 118.
[63] Ibid., p. 120.

on the historical development of working-class internationalism in the *longue durée*. For all their merit of having recovered a forgotten chapter of proletarian resistance and revolution—without which this dissertation would simply not have been possible—, their works present two main shortcomings that need to be briefly outlined here as they will structure the review that follows. First, their account has mainly put forth a one-dimensional (subjectivist) conception of the working class, thereby overlooking the objective process underpinning class formation in the Atlantic world. Secondly, they have attended and made sense of proletarian connections throughout the Atlantic world more by way of metaphorical reasoning (the hydra analogy) than by trying to draw general theoretical conclusions from their development. While building extensively on their work, this dissertation will try to propose a way forward to overcome these two shortcomings.

Atlantic proletariat

In 1982, Linebaugh and Rediker both published two pieces that can been seen as the first building blocks of the narrative they would develop later in *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000).[64] Rediker's essay, 'Good Hands, Stout Heart, and Fast Feet', sought to explore 'the structural and cultural dimensions of continuity and change in capital-labour relations, outlining the process within which early American working class activities and ideas were

[64] The year before, Rediker had published his important essay, 'Under the Banner of the King Death', which enquired into the social world of Anglo-American pirates and argued that piracy was, from their point of view, as a meaningful agency of resistance. Linebaugh, on the other hand, published an essay entitled 'What if C.L.R. James Had Met E.P. Thompson in 1792?', which imagined a fictional encounter between these two great scholars, raising the question of the Atlantic unity of the early modern proletariat, one shaped as much by white waged workers of Europe as by black chattel slaves of the Caribbean. See Marcus Rediker, "'Under the Banner of King Death': The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates, 1716-1726," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (1981), 203-227; Peter Linebaugh, "What if C.L.R. James had Met E.P. Thompson in 1792?" in *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work*, ed. Paul Buhle (London & New York: Allison & Busby, 1986), 212-219.

formed'.[65] Presenting his arguments 'as a set of questions and as a challenge to further research', he picked up the 1663 Virginia insurrection—where a group of indentured servants, and former soldiers in Cromwell's New Model Army in England, plotted with other radicals to kill and overthrow the planter class—as his point of departure, pointing out that, although the insurrection failed, the social process that led to it 'gives a look at a transatlantic class consciousness that was embedded in peculiarly American circumstances'.[66]

Crucially, Rediker sets the matter in the global context of primitive accumulation. This aspect is important, for the transatlantic mobility of labour that the historical process of divorcing direct producers from the land ultimately became, in a dialectical fashion, the very context from which a counter-movement of escape took shape:

> Many workers took to their feet, or threatened to take to their feet, in an effort to influence the conditions of their labour. They ran, individually and collectively, in 'confederacies' and after 'conspiracies,' from city to countryside, or vice-versa, in search of better work, from seaport to seaport looking for better maritime wages, or from one seasonal or casual labour market to another. They were truly footloose, pushed or pulled according to the vagaries of the economy, and they used their mobility in an effort to maintain a continuity of income in an era when there was little or no continuity of work.[67]

Running away, then, along with other modes of proletarian resistance such as strike, slowing down work, arson, murder of masters, and so on, is thus seen as a signifying practice from which an 'early labour movement' came into being, leading Rediker to even assert that 'an early version of the underground railroad [may have] existed for escaped

[65] Marcus Rediker, "'Good Hands, Stout Heart, and Fast Feet': The History and Culture of Working People in Early America," *Labour/Le Travail* 10 (1982), p. 124.
[66] Ibid., pp. 124, 123.
[67] Ibid., p. 139.

servants and other free labourers'.[68] Foreshadowing the many-headed hydra image, he concluded with the hypothesis that the mob in colonial America may have constituted 'a "horizontal" sort of beast, full of concerted solidarities'.[69] And while calling for more work on 'the networks of communication and the bases of cooperation and collective action within the culture of [Atlantic] working people...', he ended up wondering:

> What, for example, should we make of a situation in which a band of pirates – just a group of seamen who had crossed the line into illegal activity – took a ship full of servants and immediately ripped up the indentures and set the servants free? Or what is the significance of the solidarity of slaves, servants, and seamen who took the streets in common protest in Philadelphia and Boston in the 1770s?[70]

Although Rediker does not offer answers, his interrogations directly call into question the foundational Marxian epistemology underpinning the history of working-class internationalism, as they speak directly to the many silences in Marx's account of primitive accumulation. Linebaugh was more explicit in that matter.

Entitled 'All the Atlantic Mountains Shook', a phrase borrowed from William Blake's poem 'Jerusalem' (1804-1822)—which imagines a revolutionary humanity freed of the transatlantic chains of commerce, British imperialism, and war—Linebaugh's piece built on his 1981 article on James and Thompson and expanded its theme. His reference to Blake is not arbitrary. To be sure, it was informed by the 1981 Brixton riot led by leaders of the local African-Caribbean community, whose members were almost all descendants of West Indian slaves. This event, he notes, 'makes it difficult to accept a conception of working-class internationalism that depends only on the conception of geographically distinct

[68] Ibid., p. 140.
[69] Ibid., p. 142.
[70] Ibid., pp. 142-43.

national units. The 1981 revolt in Brixton invites us to search the past for alternative conceptions'.[71] This is a major claim, indeed, since working-class internationalism is now clearly and explicitly problematized within the broader historical context of the Atlantic world. According to the Linebaugh, the Brixton riot brought to the fore forgotten moments of labour history, that is, when workers' internationalism was less a matter of national border crossings than *in-situ* cosmopolitanism, 'an arcane tradition that has its connections … with strands of "proletarian internationalism"'.[72]

To situate his problematic, Linebaugh cross-examines the first chapter of E.P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*, 'Members Unlimited', with Eric Hobsbawm's essay 'The Seventeenth Century Crisis', published in *Past and Present* in 1954. Both pieces converge on the problem of arrested development in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century England.[73] Linebaugh's take on both pieces is synthetical. By bringing them together, Linebaugh enables himself to '…discuss the relationship between the evolving radical traditions that were largely English to the developing modes of production that were largely Atlantic'.[74] The historical hypothesis is straightforward: the 'Leveller challenge' undermined after the Putney Debates was, in fact, thrown out of

[71] Peter Linebaugh, "All the Atlantic Mountains Shook," *Labour/Le Travail* 10 (1982), p. 120.
[72] Ibid., p. 88.
[73] For Thompson the arrested development was political. He argued that the 'Leveller challenge' at Putney was altogether dispersed, if not almost extinguished, for the 100 years after 1688, before it was re-animated in the 1790s in a new context, with new language and arguments, and a changed balance of forces. But as Linebaugh contends, although the new language and arguments are well examined by Thompson, the changed balance of forces, in turn, are somewhat occulted from the analysis. Linebaugh puts this shortcoming on the account of 'the relative neglect [by Thompson] of the international, especially Atlantic, context of growth and development of the English working class' (1982, p. 90). Hobsbawm, in turn, argued that the arrested development was economic. His question was why the expansion of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not lead straight to the Industrial Revolution. Contrary to Thompson, he situated his study within an Atlantic scope – from Italy's feudal capitalists to Eastern Europe's peasantry to America's plantation slaves – and argued that the arrested development was caused by a crisis in the sphere of circulation among different modes of production. In this account, however, the proletariat appears as a secondary, let alone residual, character set on the margins of history. By bringing these two authors together, Linebaugh develops an Atlantic perspective from below.
[74] Linebaugh, "All the Atlantic Mountain Shook", p. 92.

England to the Atlantic where it '…regained [its] strength in wholly new circumstances and returned [to England in the 1790s] in a kind of Atlantic dialectical movement...'.[75] The expulsion was effected by and through the process of primitive accumulation, which, dialectically, unleashed 'a wide movement that questioned all kinds of authority: of the law, of the King, of scripture, of property, of patriarchy'.[76] Expropriated proletarians refused the servility inherent in wage labour and became a class of mobile masterless proletarians who were, ultimately, forcefully shipped to the plantations of the New World.

On the other side of the Atlantic, transported felons and political exiles would be inserted in two main modes of organizing labour, that is, the plantation and the ship, which Linebaugh considers as '…public realm[s] of working-class self-activity…'.[77] On the plantation, indentured servants, who had the events at Putney in fresh memory, resisted servitude and cooperated among themselves, re-animating 'the antinomian tradition … in an active and self-conscious way'.[78] The ship, especially, played a distinctive role in the material configuration of the Atlantic world, for it served as the vehicle through which the experience circulated within the huge masses of labour that primitive accumulation had set in motion. Thus, 'if not the breeding ground of rebels, [the ship] became a meeting place where various traditions were jammed tougher, an extraordinary forcing house of internationalism'.[79] With the creation of Pidgin English, shipboard cooperation allowed the radical proletarian tradition of Putney to mix with the Atlantic-born, anti-slavery ideology,

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., p. 93.
[77] Ibid., p. 108.
[78] Ibid., p. 105.
[79] Ibid., p. 112.

which together '…provided the background to the many instances of trans-continental, multi-racial struggles of the maritime proletariat'.[80]

In the 1790s, at the break of the age of revolutions, the ship carried this proletarian culture of resistance back to London in the form of a 'proto-pan-Africanism' intersecting with working-class politics and organizations, particularly the London Corresponding Society. The 'Leveler Challenge', in other words, returned to London more than a century later with a black skin. Echoing the agency of black mariners incarnated in the person of Olaudah Equiano, this return of politics was made possible by '[t]he political and social presence of a population of ex-slaves, experienced in the insurrectionary tradition of anti-slavery as well as the internationalism of the several sea voyages…'.[81] Thus, as Linebaugh convincingly asserts, '[l]abour history can no longer be written as the unilateral success of trade unions, political parties, and the socialist movement. Nor, can it be written as only a saga of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; it is present in the sixteenth century with the birth of the capitalist mode of production'.[82] We shall take him to his own words in the remaining of this dissertation.

These two early essays by Linebaugh and Rediker, as pointed out above, have a shortcoming: their approach to the working class is largely one-dimensional, as what is mostly emphasized is the extent to which the Atlantic proletariat 'makes' itself subjectively as a class in various moments of cooperation and solidarity. Shunted in the background is the extent to which, beyond the dialectics of mobility and counter-mobility inherent to primitive accumulation, the Atlantic proletariat 'gets actually made' as an objective class,

[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., p. 118.
[82] Ibid., p. 107.

that is to say, as a class-in-itself objectively positioned in the capitalist mode of production. In fact, how can 'free' wage earners, indentured servants, slaves, and other bond workers be taken altogether in one objective conception of proletarian class? And to what extent their structural relationships to capital 'unite' them as an Atlantic class of workers? Robert Sweeny raised these crucial questions in a 1984 debate with Linebaugh about the arguments the latter had advanced in his 1982 essay. Sweeny contended that while 'the basis is laid for an analysis which stresses the complexity of social relations of production and opens the way for a detailed class analysis ... the promise is never fulfilled'. [83] Yet if it is true that the promise is not fulfilled, what is best about Linebaugh and Rediker's approach is that, as van der Linden has pointed out, 'it forces us to abandon a "classical" *topos* of Western thought: the idea that "free" market capitalism corresponds best with "free" wage labour'.[84] In a way, they only sought to initiate a new project of historical research which now requires a more direct theoretical engagement with the interrelationship between capitalism, labour, and freedom. This is an issue that I will address in the next chapter.

The many-headed hydra analogy

Linebaugh and Rediker joined their effort for a first time in 1990 in an article that sought to abstract and articulate conceptually the coherence of these practices of labour solidarity in the early modern Atlantic world. Presented as a '"work-in-progress" that continued

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[83] Robert Sweeny, "Other Songs of Liberty: A Critique of 'all the Atlantic Mountains Shook' [with Reply]," *Labour/Le Travail* 14 (Fall, 1984), p. 163.

[84] Marcel van der Linden, "Labour History as the History of Multitudes," *Labour/Le Travail* 52 (Fall, 2003), p. 240. Emphasis in the original.

exploring the “themes [they] first struck in [1982]’,[85] the piece put forth the many-headed hydra analogy for the first time. It was used so as to shed light on ‘connections within the working class … that have been denied, ignored, or simply never seen by most historians’.[86] Still provisory, their arguments were based on the idea that ‘fixed, static notions of race, ethnicity, and nationality … have obscured a vital world of cooperation and accomplishment within a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, international working class’.[87] The publication of their co-authored book, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, ten years later was the culmination of that work. It is to it that I now turn.

Carrying and building on ten years of research in Atlantic history from below, Linebaugh and Rediker decide to ground their narrative in the myth of Hercules and the many-headed hydra. The former is a divine hero. He symbolizes power and order. The latter is a nameless, disorderly, many-headed, serpent-like water beast that grows two heads for every one cut off. It symbolizes inferiority resistance and counter-order. The two figures encountered and fought one another in the second of Hercules’s twelve labours, in which the hydra was ultimately defeated by the god’s sword. This myth was a compelling social metaphor that ‘suffused English ruling-class culture in the seventeenth century’.[88] The understanding that Francis Bacon assigned to it was particularly important to Linebaugh and Rediker, for the English philosopher did not employ the Hercules-hydra myth in the customary literal sense as a disincarnated figure of speech. Instead, he referred to it in a

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[85] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, "The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, and the Atlantic Working Class in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 3, no. 3 (1990), p. 226.
[86] Ibid., p. 245.
[87] Ibid., p. 225.
[88] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), pp. 36-7.

highly instrumental and immediate political sense, that is to say, as an ideological means to justify the colonization of the New World by England and, by the same token,

> …to impose a curse and a death sentence … [on] such "multitudes" that deserved destruction: West Indians; Canaanites; pirates; land rovers; assassins; Amazons; and Anabaptists. … This is the crux, or crucial thought, where genocide and divinity cross. Bacon's advertisement for a holy war was thus a call for several types of genocide, which found its sanction in biblical and classical antiquity. Bacon thereby gave form to the formless, as the groups he named embodied a monstrous, many-headed hydra.[89]

In this sense, once understood in the context of relations of power played out during the rise of Atlantic capitalism, the Hercules-hydra myth, ceases to be a mere classical trope in speeches, but instead appears as 'the intellectual basis for the biological doctrine of monstrosity and for the justification of murder … debellation, extirpation, trucidation, extermination, liquidation, annihilation, extinction'.[90] But once rhetorically turned against that herculean power, the hydra image then stands, according to Linebaugh and Rediker, as a remarkable heuristic device 'for exploring multiplicity, movement, and connection, the long waves and planetary currents of humanity'.[91] This is the rationale behind the choice they have made to use this mythological story.

But, as mentioned earlier, there is a methodological shortcoming with this stance, which needs to be addressed here before we proceed any further. What is specifically at stake is how Linebaugh and Rediker brought what seems to be a ruling class-specific understanding of the hydra to bear on the analysis of the 'multiplicity', 'movement', and 'connection' of the Atlantic proletariat. Indeed, to make a use of the many-headed hydra analogy is only

[89] Ibid., pp. 39-40.
[90] Ibid., p. 6.
[91] Ibid.

consistent with the tradition of history from below which privileges the heuristic usage of cultural concepts held by actors themselves as they lived and made history. For example, long before Linebaugh and Rediker, social historian Christopher Hill showed that the gentry in late Tudor and early Stuart era extensively referred to the hydra analogy in writings and speeches as a way to justify their prejudice that '"[t]he people" were fickle, unstable, incapable of rational thought: the headless multitude, the many-headed monster'.[92] Hill even went on to argue that this outlook signaled the formation of a 'class solidarity, among gentlemen and merchants alike, which bridged the religious differences of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'.[93] As such, the many-headed monster analogy not only embodied a 'contemptuous attitude', it also '…concealed the fears of the propertied class'.[94] To paraphrase E.P. Thompson, the analogy served the men of property as a symbolic means to handle their experience in class ways, providing them a scheme of intelligibility and truthfulness that corresponded to their class experience and interests.

Similar to Hill, whom they cite, Linebaugh and Rediker do recognize the specific class-based usage of the Hercules-Hydra myth in the Atlantic world, pointing out at the outset of their book that:

> From the beginning of English colonial expansion in the early seventeenth century through the metropolitan industrialization of the early nineteenth, rulers referred to the Hercules-hydra myth to describe the difficulty of imposing order on increasingly global systems of labour. They variously designated dispossessed, commoners, transported felons, indentured servants, religious radicals,

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[92] Christopher Hill, "The Many-Headed Monster in Late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking," in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly*, ed. Charles H. Carter (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 296.
[93] Ibid., p. 297.
[94] Ibid., p. 301.

pirates, urban labourers, soldiers, sailors, and African slaves as the numerous, ever-changing heads of the monsters.[95]

In this sense, their claim is simply that, by making reference to the many-headed hydra, elite colonists, capitalist merchants, and aristocrat intellectuals altogether, had something unique as well as important to say about the early modern Atlantic-world economy; namely, that they were engaged in a transoceanic struggle with a formless, disorderly, multinational and multiethnic class of labourers capable of all manners of resistance. The Hercules-Hydra myth, therefore, offers an intuitive and powerful glance not into the mind of the Atlantic proletariat but into that the Atlantic ruling classes.

Yet, to the extent that Linebaugh and Rediker seek to set out a vision that 'looks from below', the methodological choice of employing a cultural metaphor associated to, and hence meaningful for, the ruling class in order to study and interpret proletarian multiplicity, movement, and connection in the Atlantic world seems rather odd, if not contradictory.[96] In his review of the book, labour historian Bryan Palmer has raised this problem, pointing out that 'Linebaugh and Rediker orchestrate ... a look at the underside of the Atlantic of empire and exchange that depends, curiously, on a vision from above, one that sees only darkly, through the distorting exaggerations of eyes narrowed in fear and loathing'.[97] To be sure, what is intelligible and truthful from the view point of the ruling class cannot be assumed to be so from the view point of the lower ranks. Yet this is what Linebaugh and Rediker seem to do by taking the hydra image out of its class-based signification (i.e. as the negative mirror-image of Hercules), and, indeed, beyond itself, and

[95] Ibid., p. 3.
[96] Ibid., p. 6.
[97] Bryan D. Palmer, "Hydra's Materialist History," *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 4 (2003), p. 78.

applying it as a way to bring about analytical coherence to the struggles of the Atlantic proletariat, as if the latter had already accepted to act in this mythological play.

As a matter of fact, whereas the two historians illustrate extremely well how '[t]he classically educated architects of the Atlantic economy found in Hercules … a symbol of power and order … a unifier of the centralized territorial state … [and of] economic development', whose image was placed 'on money and seals, in pictures, sculptures, and palaces, and on arches of triumph', they are not able throughout their narrative for a lack of evidence to sustain the same level analysis with respect to the relationship between the Atlantic proletariat and the many-headed hydra.[98] It is actually very telling that the Atlantic proletariat, even in moments of relatively coherent self-consciousness, never articulates the identity of its interests or its movements and connections in terms of monstrosity, as if the Hercules-hydra myth did not have any cultural grip 'below'. As such, what seems to be more historically (and theoretically) insightful about the Hercules-hydra myth as a cultural paradigm is less the analogy of the Atlantic working class with a monster-shaped, dangerous 'other' (since this was made from outside the lower ranks), but rather the extent to which this very analogy was made by the rulers in order to represent themselves in new class ways, that is to say, as modern-day Hercules. As historian David Armitage has argued, '[t]he self-regenerating swamp-monster attacked by Hercules provided an apt emblem for rulers' fears rather than an inspiring object of self-identification for subjects or servants'.[99] While the hydra analogy has shed light on practices of proletarian solidarity across borders in the early modern Atlantic-world economy, it seems to me that, because of the reasons just mentions, it should be employed heuristically from where it was used

[98] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p. 2.
[99] Armitage, "The Red Atlantic", p. 482.

historically in the first place, that is to say, 'from above' as a historical hypothesis for enquiring and understanding on its own terms the cultural and historical formation of a transatlantic ruling class during the rise of capitalism.[100] By removing the hydra analogy from its historically-specific, class-based ideological meaning and projecting it 'below' as a means to enquire into the 'connections that have, over the centuries, usually been denied, ignored, or simply not seen, but that nonetheless profoundly shaped the history of the world', Linebaugh and Rediker have run the risk of importing within their narrative the very distorted, inflated, and totalizing outlook that was shared by the enemies of the very actors they have sought to save from the dustbin of history.[101]

In his epic dissention with Althusserian Marxism, E.P. Thompson reminds us to be cautious with the use of analogies in performing social analysis. For him, analogies must 'serve the purpose of explication or illustration—they are the condiment to argument … not the argument itself. … They cannot be transfixed with the arrow of theory, plucked from the side of the text which they explicate, and mounted as concepts…'.[102] Within only six pages of Linebaugh and Rediker's book, the analogy of the many-headed hydra, first picked up as a hypothetical pretext, is already 'plucked' and 'mounted' as a theoretical concept in and of itself:

> …the merchants, manufacturers, planters, and royal officials … organized workers from Europe, Africa, and the Americas to produce and transport bullion, furs, tobacco, sugar, and manufactures. It

[100] On this respect, *The Many-Headed Hydra* speaks directly to the growing tradition of scholarship in 'neo-Gramscian' international political economy that studies the making of a global ruling class, but situates the matter only in a post-World War II context. See, for instance, Robert W. Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Stephen Gill, *Power and Resistance in the New World Order* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Kees van der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2012).
[101] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p. 7.
[102] E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory: Or an Orrery of Errors*, 2nd ed. (London: The Merlin Press, 1995), p. 139.

> was a labour of Herculean proportions, as they themselves repeatedly explained. … But the heads, though originally brought into productive combination by their Herculean rulers, soon developed among themselves new forms of cooperation against those rulers, from mutinies and strikes to riots and insurrections and revolution. … The multiplicity was indicated, as it were, in silhouette in the multitudes who gathered at the market, in the fields, on the piers and the ships, on the plantations, upon the battlefields. The power was expanded by movement, as the hydra journeyed and voyaged or was banished or dispersed in diaspora, carried by the winds and the waves beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. Sailors, pilots, felons, lovers, translators, musicians, mobile workers of all kinds made new and unexpected connections, which variously appeared to be accidental, contingent, transient, even miraculous.[103]

As this passage reveals, the many-headed hydra analogy is not just of the order of 'as if'—such as: we may envisage the history of struggles of the Atlantic proletariat *as if* it was a kind of many-headed hydra. Instead, it is used in a literal sense by way of which the hydra becomes the class subject itself—such as: the history of the cross-border struggles of the Atlantic proletariat *is* the history of the many-headed hydra who '…journeyed and voyaged … beyond the boundaries of the nation-state'.[104] The consequence is that the analogy-as-concept becomes self-explanatory, for it already embodies within its meaning the characteristics of 'multiplicity', 'movement', 'connection'—it speaks for itself. And what should have been theoretically substantiated is left metaphorically assumed. Thus employed, the many-headed hydra analogy leads to the problem of asking Atlantic proletarians too much of what they were really capable of politically as a class, most especially in term of cross-border solidarity. With that said, let us look at how this argument unfolds in the narrative.

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[103] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, pp. 2, 4, 6.
[104] Ibid., p. 6.

Atlantic struggles and circulation of experience

The Atlantic proletariat struggles in four successive acts or moments attended by Linebaugh and Rediker: i) the sailors' hydrarchy, ii) the 1741 New York Conspiracy, iii) the period of the American Revolution, and iv) the 1802 Despard Conspiracy in London.

The sailors' hydrarchy corresponds to the golden age of piracy (1690-1725), which was characterized by an oceanic struggle between 'the organization of the maritime state from above, and the self-organization of sailors from below'.[105] Piracy, they argue, was an act of resistance and a process of collective agency against maritime discipline and shipboard capitalist exploitation. When sailors revolted and took possession of the ship, they instituted direct democracy, distributed justice, divided booty, and restrained the authority of the captain, as we shall see in more details in Chapter 5. The social order they created on board their ships was as much egalitarian as multicultural, multiracial, and multinational.[106] This last feature of the sailors' hydrarchy brings into view an inherent form of proletarian internationalism jammed within the pirate ship. While highlighting this aspect, Linebaugh and Rediker do not fully examine the extent to which different pirate crews could link up among themselves at sea and created multi-ships alliances, by which they could extend solidarity beyond their respective ships to other crews in order to challenge hydrarchy from above. After all, if there was ever a piratical 'head' in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world it would have been made at the point of encounters between pirate crews, out of which a common identity of interests would have developed. Their interconnection and cooperation

[105] Ibid., p. 144.
[106] Ibid., p. 162.

were assumed by way of metaphorical inference, as if the sailors' hydrarchy was already self-conscious as hydra:

> The sailors' hydrarchy was defeated in the 1720s, the hydra beheaded. But it would not die. The volatile, serpentine tradition of maritime radicalism would appear again and again in the decades to come, slithering quietly belowdecks, across the docks, and onto the shore, biding its time, then rearing its head unexpectedly in mutinies, strikes, riots, urban insurrections, slave revolts, and revolutions.[107]

While vainly re-formed on the waterfront of New York City in 1741 for what would have been the '…most horrible and destructive plot that was ever yet know in these northern parts of America', the hydra rose up again later, this time during the American Revolution or, more generally speaking, the age of revolutions.[108] Remarkably, it is here that Linebaugh and Rediker seem to resist the most to metaphorical reasoning, and, in effect, where the reader gets a real sense of how Atlantic proletarians shaped their agency and created their own currents of solidarity. Linebaugh and Rediker show that the 'motley crew' was not only capable of self-activity, but was, indeed, a central actor in the revolutionary crisis of the 1760s and the 1770s. 'At the peak of revolutionary possibility,' they write, 'the motley crew appeared as a synchronicity or an actual coordination among the "risings of the people" of the port cities, the resistance of African American slaves, and Indian struggles on the frontier'.[109] As they continue, 'sailors linked movements in England and America by engaging in revolts that combined workers' riots over wages and hours with protests related to electoral politics … [drawing] upon traditions of hydrarchy to advance a proletarian idea of liberty'.[110] On the verge of being a class-conscious, sociopolitical formation, the motley crew was, in fact, the real flesh-and-blood agency that

[107] Ibid., p. 173.
[108] Ibid., p. 174.
[109] Ibid., pp. 213-14.
[110] Ibid., p. 219.

internationalized the American revolutionary context, transporting radical ideas against the Stamp Act to the Caribbean. What is more, its typical militancy (strike, riot, arson, etc.) ultimately '…led to the formation of the Sons of Liberty, the earliest intercolonial organization to coordinate anti-imperial resistance'.[111] Here, Linebaugh and Rediker seems to have missed a remarkable opportunity to move into a more detailed, non-metaphorical account of proletarian solidarity across borders, in which connection and cooperation was rooted in the language of republican rights and brotherhood. If its worldviews were ultimately defeated in Philadelphia in 1787, the motley crew continued to be 'a vector of revolution that traveled from North America out to sea and southward to the Caribbean ... where they created new political openings and alignments in slave societies and helped to prepare the way for the Haitian Revolution'.[112] This assertion should be seen as a directional signpost to guide whatever research that intend to reassess the narrative of the history of working-class internationalism—a direction that I have followed.

Moved more 'by the circular currents of the Atlantic' than by self-conscious purposed will, the hydra journeyed one last time to London in 1802, where former soldier and sailor Edward Despard and his African-American wife Catherine planned a revolutionary conspiracy in London, whose goal was to attack the king, seize the Tower and the Bank of England, take over the Parliament, and declare a republic.[113] Putting forward a 'universalism from below', the conspiracy was Atlantic-significant, for it participated 'in the cosmopolitan shaping of revolutionary ideals', bringing to London radical experiences from Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Belize, as well as Haiti and mainland America, not to

[111] Ibid., p. 234.
[112] Ibid., pp. 241-42.
[113] Ibid., p. 247.

mention Ireland and London. [114] But the plans were killed in the egg as the authorities discovered the plot, arrested and hanged the complotters. 'What was left behind', Linebaugh and Rediker write, 'was national and partial: the *English* working class, the *black* Haitian, the *Irish* diaspora'.[115]

The narrative ends in London with the 'triangular friendship' of Olaudah Equiano, the African-American abolitionist, Thomas Hardy, the working-class militant of the London Corresponding Society and Lydia Hardy, his wife. For the two historians, this friendship indicates, on the one hand, that '[e]galitarian, multi-ethnic conceptions of humanity had not evolved in isolation, but rather through solidarity and connection, within and among social movements and individuals…', and, on the other hand, '…that Atlantic combinations—African and Scot, Englishwoman and African American man—were powerful and of historic significance'.[116] And in what looks like an attempt to rectify their thesis, they claim at last that the Atlantic proletariat '…was not a monster, it was not a unified cultural class, and it was not a race'.[117] Rather, it was '*...anonymous, nameless … landless, expropriated … mobile, transatlantic … terrorized, subject to coercion … female* and *male*, of *all ages … multitudinous, numerous*, and *growing … numbered, weighed*, and *measured … cooperative* and *labouring … motley … vulgar … planetary … self-active,* [and] *creative...*'.[118] But the methodological problem stands still; in casting these masses of proletarian workers as many-headed hydra, Linebaugh and Rediker have asked of them too much, and neglected, as Bryan Palmer has pointed out, 'the extent to which [their self-

[114] Ibid., p. 285
[115] Ibid., p. 286.
[116] Ibid., p. 352.
[117] Ibid., p. 332.
[118] Ibid., pp. 332-3. Emphasis in the original.

realization] was, sadly, too little'.[119] It does not mean, however, that the 'little' is historically insignificant—far from it. The issue is simply to better calibrate the approach to recover that 'little' and make more theoretical sense of it. This is what the next chapter will begin to do.

With all that said, and in spite of its shortcomings, much is to be kept and carried along with us from *The Many-Headed Hydra*. To begin with, this work—indeed, Atlantic history in general—urges us to move beyond 'terra-centric' narratives of global labour history, and illuminates the extent to which the world's seas and oceans are not voids between lands but real and concrete places where a great deal of history happens.[120] As the origins of working-class internationalism have traditionally been seen in the context of the proletarian transition from peasant agriculture to employment in urban industries, which involved a migration from rural areas to the cities, this outlook shifts and broadens the focus in the direction of the sea, inviting us to follow processes of proletarianization beyond Europe's manufactures to the decks of sailing ships and the fields of American plantations. This, as mentioned above, not only calls for a revised, theoretical definition of the working class under capitalism, but also, as Rediker himself claims, 'a new and different understanding of internationalism as something older, deeper, and more widespread than the cooperation of nationally organized blocks of workers operating through an international union or the Comintern'.[121]

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[119] Palmer, "Hydra's Materialist History", p. 392.
[120] Marcus Rediker has recently developed the theme in *Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates, and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), p. 2. See also Bernhad Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[121] Marcus Rediker, "The Revenge of Crispus Attucks; Or, the Atlantic Challenge to American Labor History," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 1, no. 4 (2004), p. 43.

Furthermore, sections of *The Many-Headed Hydra* display intellectual history at its best—not in the sense of the history of thought but of men and women thinking. It provides strong evidence that the Atlantic proletariat exchanged radical ideas, theories, and texts in and through many underground channels of communication, and that this occurred as much across geographical than ethnic, linguistic, and racial boundaries. In many ways, their claims about the many-headed hydra—the making and unmaking of an Atlantic proletarian class—hinge on how powerful this process was, particularly in terms of informing, indeed radicalizing, resistance and revolution from below in different places around the Atlantic world.

Whenever the hydra reared its heads, it *always* occurred in some kind of rootedness in radical ideological contexts. The struggle for the commons (what they call 'commonism') and the struggle against slavery which originated as univocal political ideologies at Putney in 1647 were 'Atlanticized' through the process of primitive accumulation and re-enacted, not without altering their meanings, in different New World sites, such as the plantation, the port city or the deep-sea ship. The age of revolutions, too, fuelled a great deal of revolutionary texts, tracts and pamphlets in which Linebaugh and Rediker saw fragments of a transatlantic class consciousness in the making. Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), for example, circulated in the hands of proletarians, artisans and slaves on both sides of the Atlantic. Constantin François Volney's *Ruins; Or, Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires* (1791), in turn, which called for religious tolerance and '…raised the motley crowd to a universal ideal', all in a remarkable class-based phrasing for the epoch, even found its way into the hands of a mulatto during the 1797 multiracial conspiracy in

Bahia.[122] In London, Scottish-Jamaican 'mulatto', ex-sailor, degraded artisan, and radical Spencean preacher, Robert Wedderburn played a prominent role in the reaction against the Peterloo massacre of 1819 and became a key figure in the revival of the anti-slavery campaign of the 1820s. Knowing from experience not only the London streets, the chapel, the political club, the workshop, and the prison, but also the plantation, the ship, and the port, he was able to synthesize Spencean ultra-radical theory and Painite republicanism, combining both with radical abolitionism. He published several pamphlets and addresses in which he claimed that 'slave revolt and urban insurrection could produce a great jubilee, the apotheosis of resistance, which would be inaugurated by a work stoppage that would "strike terror to [the] oppressors"'.[123] He even entertained a transatlantic correspondence with his half-sister Elizabeth Campbell, a Jamaican maroon, by which he laid down his vision of a revolutionary, international, pan-ethnic, Jubilee. Both Wedderburn and Campbell, Linebaugh and Rediker write, 'belong to a tradition in which the memory of struggle maintained through oral tradition, passed along by mnemonic devices governed by strict canons of secrecy'.[124] Their conversation 'crossed divides of continents, empire, class, and race'.[125] For all these reasons, Wedderburn should be seen, they claim, as a 'linchpin' of the Atlantic proletariat:

> Like the linchpin, a small piece of metal that connected the wheels to the axle of the carriage and made possible the movement and firepower of the ship's canon, Wedderburn was an essential piece of something larger, mobile and powerful.[126]

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[122] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, pp. 342-43.
[123] Ibid., p. 320.
[124] Ibid., p. 318.
[125] Ibid., p. 301.
[126] Ibid., pp. 325-26.

In unearthing these episodes, and highlighting the extent to which they articulated radical currents of thought, Linebaugh and Rediker have supported Marx's claim that although '[m]aterial force can only be overthrown by material force', under certain circumstances, however, ideas can themselves become 'a material force when [they have] seized the masses'.[127] And when they do, to continue with Gramsci, 'they "organise" human masses, and create the terrain on which men [and women] move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.'.[128]

Thus, it is on these two grounds—'maritimization' of global labour history and intellectual history from below—that *The Many-Headed Hydra* excels the most. And however heavy historically, stretched spatially and variegated socially they may be, these two aspects of research must be carried along with us as we move forward and revisit the classic narrative of working-class internationalism from an Atlantic approach. Indeed, the empirical context Linebaugh and Rediker have so extraordinarily uncovered just waits to be placed under a new theoretical microscope, one that precisely looks at situated processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity in order to re-theorize the historical formation of working-class internationalism in the *longue durée*. The remaining of this dissertation is an attempt at that.

[127] Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Norton & Company, 1978), p. 60.
[128] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 377.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to acknowledge and disclose a tacit conversation between the historiography of working-class internationalism of the classical age and the literature on the revolutionary Atlantic world from below. As I tried to make clear, both traditions of scholarship are preoccupied with the historical question of proletarian solidarity across borders. But a theoretical gulf still separates the two.

On one side, the historiography of working-class internationalism set the question of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the epoch of large-scale capitalist industry. In this literature the focus is on Marxian socialist internationalism, conceived as the 'classic' (and first) form of transboundary proletarian solidarity; a form brought to bear by the agency of a matured, class-conscious, nationally-organized, industrial proletariat, on whose shoulders the historic role of revolutionary overthrowing capitalism has been placed by Marx and Engels. And because transboundary proletarian solidarity, thus theorized, cannot logically pre-exist its own progenitors, the historiography has kept itself from inquiring further in the past, most notably the 'Atlantic past.'

On the other side, the works of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, taken up deliberately in this chapter as best representatives of the literature on the revolutionary Atlantic world, have set the question of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the manufacturing period of Atlantic capitalism. To a great extent in their account, transboundary proletarian solidarity is explained metaphorically with the image of the many-headed hydra, on whose behalf the Atlantic proletariat voyaged across the Atlantic, rearing its heads from above the waters in struggles against oppression and capitalist exploitation. Although put to use insightfully to unveil a pre-industrial tradition of working-

class internationalism rooted in egalitarian, multi-ethnic conceptions of humanity, metaphorical reasoning has kept Linebaugh and Rediker from fully engaging with the question of how proletarian solidarity across borders was made in the Atlantic world.

This disciplinary gulf ought to be bridged. Their topical commonality thus addressed, the two traditions of scholarship should be brought together in a synthesized narrative so as to rethink the genesis of working-class internationalism in the *longue durée*. If for now it is sufficient to have established an empirical foothold—a historical point of departure clear and coherent enough to talk of working-class internationalism before the industrial revolution without the risk of being taxed of anachronism—we can already circumscribe a new theoretical program moving forward.

The first element is obviously the concept of the working class. Indeed, the question is: were slaves, indentured servants, and working poor part of the working class? To answer it, we will need to grapple with the relationship between free and unfree labour in the capitalist mode of production. The second element to be addressed is the notion of 'solidarity across borders' that is embodied in the idea of working-class internationalism. Clearly, for the purpose of this dissertation, the idea needs to be transformed in ways that can be taken back to a pre-national phase. Crucial here is an engagement with the question of the border and boundary crossings. The last element to be addressed is the question of the relationship between the Atlantic world—as both a framework of analysis and a transnational historic space—and the historical process of primitive accumulation during the early moments of the capitalist expansion. It is, indeed, within this relationship that the structural roots of working-class internationalism can be found.

Thus, my objective is not to juxtapose or annex the two historiographies in a mechanical way—by taking uncritically, as it is, the literature on the revolutionary Atlantic world as 'moment one' of the genesis and, then, the literature on working-class internationalism as 'moment two'—but, instead, to reset them both in a new, integrated approach. This means, in order to find common ground between the two sets of literature, to attend and seriously reformulate our basic concepts and source of knowledge in historical materialism rather than trying to develop new theoretical language. My objective, therefore, should be seen as a 'traditional' inquiry, that is to say, to take on its own terms the classic Marxian epistemology underpinning the historiography of working-class internationalism, reassess its levels of generality, and tune up its theoretical assumptions, so as to make it cope with the empirical context of the early modern Atlantic-world economy. This task is the topic of the next chapter.

2. Processes of Transboundary Proletarian Solidarity in the Capitalist *Longue Durée*: Toward a Renovated Approach

Modern nations have been able to only disguise slavery in their own countries, but they have imposed it without disguise upon the New World.[1]

In his 1997 preface to his seminal book *Europe and the People without History* (1982), anthropologist Eric Wolf firmly reasserted the Marxian theoretical position he had adopted when he wrote it 15 years earlier in order ‘to challenge those who [thought] that Europeans were the only ones who made history’. As he was then observing, ‘[t]here is nowadays a temptation to consign this body of ideas to the scrap heap of intellectual history, as part of the unusable wreckage of the “really existing” socialist systems that collapsed at the end of the 1980s’. But, as he went on to claim with reason, ‘[w]e need to remind ourselves that the Marxian tradition encompassed many variants of thought and politics, some of which are intellectually richer than the orthodoxies that prevailed politically’. Snubbing this tradition altogether because of the pernicious connotations it came to denote historically would therefore greatly impoverish our apprehension of the world, ‘just as sociology would suffer should its practitioners turn their backs on Max Weber because he was an

[1] Karl Marx, "From Letter Written in French to Pavel Vassilyevich Annenkov," in *The Karl Marx Library*, ed. Saul K. Padover, Vol. 2: *On America and the Civil War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 36.

ardent German nationalist, or physics would suffer if physicists abandoned Newton because he was a closet alchemist'.[2]

With a similar mindset, this chapter sets out to claim a return to Marx in order to sketch out a renovated, historical-materialist approach to the study of working-class internationalism. Like Wolf, I maintain that classical Marxism still provides today the most analytically useful and intellectually productive, conceptual apparatus to reassess this specific narrative. In particular, as the first section of the chapter seeks to articulate, I focus my 'return to Marx' in the multilinear and non-reductionist shift that began to transcend his writings from the 1850s onward. Five specific themes of this shift will be brought to the fore: (i) mode of production, (ii) formal subsumption of labour under capital, (iii) primitive accumulation and period of manufacture, (iv) the modern working-class in general, and (v) proletarian world-revolution. I argue that engaging with, and learning from, the teachings of this shift will open up the possibility to reset the narrative on the history of working-class internationalism in a more generous and complex epistemology *within* the tradition of classical Marxism. In particular, it will allow us not only to decentre and expand the geo-historical framework of capitalist development from nineteenth-century Europe to the early modern Atlantic-world economy, but also to include *within* this very development a variety of free and unfree workers, among them slaves, servants, and sailors, most of them left out by the current narrative of working-class internationalism in the classical age.

Building on and expanding Marx's multilinear views on these themes, the second section puts forth and elaborates the notion of 'processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity' as an alternative conceptual strategy to the study of working-class

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[2] Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. x-xi.

internationalism in the *longue durée*—yet one that is designed to be faithful to the intellectual tradition of historical materialism. Crafted at the intersection of a multidisciplinary corpus of scholarly traditions, this approach will equip ourselves to not only overcome the methodological nationalist assumptions that had marked the historiography of working-class internationalism in the classical age, but also to provide a more theoretically grounded and empirically tangible account of forms of proletarian solidarity across borders than the hydra metaphor employed by Linebaugh and Rediker.

The third and last section of the chapter situates the analysis within the social-historical frame of the black Atlantic, but in a way that seeks to include not only the African diaspora but *all* racially-oppressed, free and unfree proletarian workers who were forcibly-transported across or on the Atlantic. In order to make it cope with the multiplicity of those experiences, I will draw from W.E.B. DuBois' work and propose instead the idea of a 'dark Atlantic' as a differentiated transnational vantage point that still emphasizes the historical centrality of black racial slavery while incorporating other racial-darkening patterns that were experienced not only by African slaves but also by many poor white workers excluded from the category of whiteness. In a word, the dark Atlantic approach is an attempt to bring the black Atlantic to bear squarely on the expansive idea of the Atlantic proletariat, and from there to begin our exploration of processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the *longue durée*.

As the epigraph from Marx opening this introduction seeks to indicate, the overarching objective of this chapter is to begin to rethink the history of working-class internationalism in a way that is more sensitive to both the capitalist character of New World slavery and the slave character of capitalism.

Epistemological reset: Marx's Multilinear Conception of History

Chapter 1 has highlighted that when the Marxist historiography of working-class internationalism began to take shape in the heyday of Orthodox Marxism, *The Communist Manifesto* stood as the theoretical cornerstone from which the narrative was to be constructed. As a result, the historical development of working-class internationalism was approached and accounted for not through the dialectics of *historical* capitalism *per se* but rather through the inner *theoretical* logic of the Marxian, dialectical schema of history, which laid on a set of Eurocentric, stagist, and unilinear assumptions. In the process, these assumptions were carried over into the narrative of working-class internationalism, bypassing a significant theoretical deviation in which Marx had already begun to engage.

By the second half of the 1850s, as Kevin Anderson has recently showed, Marx's theoretical conceptions were evolving into an increasingly complex, multi-layered, and non-reductionist direction, thus breaking away from what had been put forth earlier in the *Manifesto*. I suggest that in order to understand the genesis of working-class internationalism correctly it is absolutely essential to return to how Marx himself re-assessed his theoretical positions, most particularly with respect to his understanding of capitalism, and of its historical development, on the one hand, and of the working class and forms of anti-capitalist politics as they embodied to dynamics of race, ethnicity, and nationality, on the other hand.

I want to mention from the outset that what I aim to do in this section is simply to outline some of the key conceptual categories of Marx's theoretical apparatus, which will be applied and concretized empirically later in this study. My objective in the next section

is simply to chart out an alternative epistemological terrain *within* Marx's work in which to ground my reassessment of the history of working-class internationalism. I agree with historian and sociologist Dale Tomich that Marx's theory and method are neither intended to provide definitive holistic statements about the 'true nature' or origins of capitalism, nor to predict the actual course of its historical development, but rather to offer 'a cognitive structure that organizes and governs inquiry and allows us to arrange and order concepts, to contextualize categories, to construct data, and to formulate analyses in order to reconstruct historical processes. It is a point of departure, not a point of arrival for historical analysis'.[3]

Capitalism as mode of production

As Jairus Banaji has stressed, Marx defines capitalism as a mode of production to which he assigns two distinct conceptual meanings operating at two different levels of abstraction.[4] The first meaning relates to mode of production as 'labour process' (*Arbeitsprozess*), that is to say, the 'social and technical process [of production]' by which workers are mobilized and combined in a specific set of social relations among themselves and vis-à-vis the instruments of labour and raw material in order to establish the course of production.[5] At this level of abstraction, as Marx writes in the *Grundrisse*, the mode of production correlates with 'a *particular* branch of production – e.g., agriculture, cattle-raising, manufactures, etc.'[6]

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[3] Dale W. Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), p. 27.
[4] Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2010), chap. 2, esp. pp. 50-51.
[5] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 432.
[6] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Classics, 1993 [1939]), p. 86. Emphasis in original.

The other meaning (*Produktionsweise*) that Marx attributes to mode of production is broader and more historical. As he argues, 'production also is not only a particular production … it is always a certain social body, a social subject, which is active in a greater or sparser totality of branches of production'.[7] This viewpoint leads him, as Banaji highlights, to try to capture conceptually modes of production in various yet equal ways, including '"forms of production"; "forms of the social process of production"; "epochs in the economic development of society"; "epochs of production"; "periods of production"; or, finally, "historical organizations of production". Here, the "mode of production" figures as a "social form of production" or "social form of the production process"'.[8] At this level of abstraction, the mode of production is a 'connected whole' that comprises the '*relations of production in their totality*'.[9] What this means is that mode of production as epoch of production includes not only the relations between people involved directly and immediately in particular labour processes or branches of production, but also the much wider set of social relations which are required to exist in order to ensure that production takes place. Among them are relations of distribution, exchange and consumption, whose respective spheres, though bounded, are not external to the mode of production, but rather 'moments' of its general process, 'distinctions within a unity'.[10]

On the basis these conceptual grounds, we cannot reduce or conflate *Arbeitsprozess* to *Produktionsweise*, for the first is simply a conceptual category to capture the 'particular forms of production' concretizing in specific and situated arrangements the 'general

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Banaji, *Theory as History*, pp. 51-52.
[9] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 710; Karl Marx, *Wage-Labor and Capital* (New York: New York Labor News Company, 1902), p. 36. Emphasis in original.
[10] Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 94, 99.

characteristics of production at a given stage of social development'.[11] The conception of mode of production as labour process, therefore, has historical contingency built into it, for the ways in which it may correlate empirically with the specific features of one epoch of production (i.e. mode of production in the historical sense) remains unpredictable and only discoverable via social-historical analysis. This nuance, according to Banaji, bears a major theoretical implication for understanding capitalism because it brings to view the necessity to distinguish between 'relations of production' and 'forms of exploitation'. He claims:

> The point here is not just that relations of production include vastly more than labour-process and the forms in which it is organised and controlled (the *immediate* process of production, as Marx called it) … but that labour itself, the exploitation of labour, breaks down into comparable dimensions of complexity. … The conclusion here can be stated quite simply by saying that the *deployment of labour is correlated with modes of production in complex ways*. Not only are modes of production *not* reducible to forms of exploitation, but the *historical* forms of exploitation of labour (relations of production in the conventional sense) lie at a completely different level of abstraction from the numerous and specific ways in which labour is or can be deployed.[12]

If there is no necessary correlation of identity between relations of production and forms of labour exploitation, then how does that come into play in Marx's conception of the *capitalist* mode of production, most especially as it is a mode of production based on 'free' wage-labour?

As Banaji emphasizes, Marx developed a concept of wage-labour in a way that can function at both levels of the mode of production. What makes this possible is Marx's distinction of wage-labour as both a simple category and a concrete category. As a simple category, that is, as a category common to several epochs of production, wage-labour

[11] Ibid., p. 86.
[12] Banaji, *Theory as History*, pp. 5-6. Emphasis in original.

figures as a commodity labour-power. As a concrete category, however, that is, as a category specific to the capitalist mode of production, wage-labour arises as '*abstract, value-producing* labour, hence as labour which already posits the elements of capitalist production'.[13] From this standpoint, then,

> the historical specificity of wage-labour, its character as a specifically bourgeois relation of production, its position as a historically determinate abstraction equivalent to the abstractions 'capital' and 'commodity fetishism' – derived from quite other mechanisms than this mere generalization of the labour-power commodity. At this deeper level of abstraction, where it now figured, in the process of Marx's analysis, as a 'concrete' category, wage-labour was, for Marx, capital-positing, capital-creating labour. 'Wage-labour, here, *in the strict economic sense*,' Marx wrote, 'is capital-positing, capital-producing labour'.[14]

Thus, if wage-labour as value-producing labour is what distinguishes capitalism as a mode of production in the historical sense, it then logically follows that juridical and market freedom, while central to the condition of existence and reproduction of the capital-relation in general, do not *necessarily* constitute prerequisites for wage-labour to exist as a form of labour exploitation at the level of the labour process, precisely because at this level, as Banaji argues, 'it is accumulation or the "drive for surplus-value" that defines capitalism, not the presence or absence of "free" labour'.[15] This means, moreover, that labour-power, under specific historical circumstances, can appear on the market in a variety of forms, including in the form of bond or slave labour offered for sale not freely by its carrier but by a third party owner. In such circumstances, which are *not* central but nonetheless determined by the capitalist mode of production , the essential relation underpinning wage-

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[13] Ibid., p. 55. Emphasis in original.
[14] Ibid., p. 54. Emphasis in original.
[15] Ibid., p. 144.

labour is present, but simply external to the worker, for it is the owner of his/her person and the owner of money who meet at the market 'on a footing of equality as owners of commodities'.[16] This idea will get developed further later as I will be dealing with indentured servitude and black racial slavery.

It was according to this logic that Marx could argue, unfortunately without substantiating his claim, that wage-labour is only 'one of the essential *mediating* forms of capitalist relations of production,' which 'can be distinguished only formally from other more direct forms of the enslavement of labour and the *ownership* of it as perpetrated by the owners of the means of production'.[17] Marx, in other words, was ready to concede that a variety of modalities of labour exploitation, including coercive ones, could co-exist *within* the capitalist mode of production in the historical sense, without, however, being central to it. This is implicit in the following argument: 'the production of surplus-value ... forms the specific content and purpose of capitalist production, *quite apart from any reconstruction of the mode of production itself which may arise from the subordination of labour to capital*'.[18] This claim lies at the heart of the arguments developed in this dissertation, as it speaks to the ways in which different forms of labour are integrated into the process of value creation. Most of it is laid out in the often-neglected discussion on the subsumption of labour in the 'Results' appendix to *Capital*, Volume I, to which I now turn.

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[16] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 271. For a discussion of this subject, see van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, chap. 1, eps. 18-20.
[17] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 1064. Emphasis in original.
[18] Ibid., p. 411. Emphasis added.

Formal subsumption of labour

In this text written in 1865, discovered in the 1930s, but translated and published in English only in 1977 as an appendix to Volume I, Marx sketches out in a synthetic way the two modalities whereby labour gets subsumed under capital: the 'formal' subsumption and the 'real' subsumption. However, because the real subsumption speaks to a period of capitalist development—that of modern industry based on steam-powered machinery—that lies beyond the chronological scope of this dissertation, in what follows I deal exclusively with the formal subsumption, which was the chief feature of what Marx called 'the manufacturing period' of capitalism, extending approximately 'from the middle of the sixteenth century to the last third of the eighteenth century', roughly the period that concerns us.[19] I will return to the notion of manufacture in the following subsection.

The formal subsumption is premised on the idea that, in its initial moments, capital did not set off on a blank page and invented a whole new process of production in order to accumulate surplus value and valorise itself.[20] Instead, it proceeded by appropriating and subsuming a variety of pre-existing labour processes handed down from an earlier period. As a result, 'archaic modes of production', as Marx calls them (i.e. modes in the strict social-technical sense of labour process), were turned into 'the *instrument*[s] of valorisation process', in which the capitalist intervenes from the outside 'as its director, manager', converting his capital only in the prevailing factors of production and not (yet completely)

[19] Ibid., p. 455. In a nutshell, the real subsumption of labour under capital is associated with Marx called 'specifically' capitalist mode of production, that is to say, when the introduction of machinery in the labour process seizes it by the roots and revolutionizes its whole organization. This change resulted in the reduction of necessary labor-time through the use of technology and the appropriation of surplus value in its relative form. See ibid., chap. 15 and pp. 1023-25, 1034-38.
[20] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 278.

in their rationalization and restructuration.[21] This manner of subsuming labour under capital is *formal* because it does not involve *fundamental* transformation of the labour process, for capital has not yet acquired a direct control over it.

In spite of its incomplete or transitory character, the formal subsumption of labour under capital constitutes nonetheless 'the *general* form of every capitalist process of production', which implicates, conversely, that 'real' subsumption of the industrial age does *not* mean 'real' capitalism.[22] 'The work may become more intensive, its duration may be extended, it may become more continuous or orderly under the eye of the interested capitalist, but in themselves these changes do not affect the character of the actual labour process, the actual mode of working. … *Technologically speaking*, the *labour process* goes on as before, with the proviso that it is now *subordinated* to capital'.[23] In this sense, formal subsumption is mainly concerned, though *not* exclusively as I shall demonstrate later in the dissertation, with realizing *absolute* surplus-value through the manipulating of two strategic variables: the intensity of labour and the length of the working day. 'In the formal subsumption of labour under capital,' Marx argues, 'this is the sole manner of producing surplus-value'.[24]

Thus, because capital subsumes pre-existing modes of labour as it finds them, there is no reason why, in the specific terms in which Marx's argument is made, it could not subsume those which already relied on forced labour and forms of enslavement in order to put them at the service of value creation. In fact, as Banaji points out, '[i]t was precisely in the backward countries subjugated to world economy as "colonies" that the process of the *mediation of capitalist (value-producing) relations of productions by archaic ("pre-*

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[21] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 1021, 1019. Emphasis added.
[22] Ibid., p. 1019. Emphasis added.
[23] Ibid., pp. 1021, 1026. Emphasis in original.
[24] Ibid., p. 1021.

capitalist") forms of subjugation of labour assumed historically unprecedented dimensions'.[25] Marx acknowledged this fact in *Capital*, commenting that 'as soon as peoples whose production still moves within the lower-forms of slave-labour, the *corvée*, etc. are drawn [read: formally subsumed] into a world market dominated by the capitalist mode of production ... the civilised horrors of overwork [read: the extraction of surplus-value] are grafted on the barbaric horrors of slavery, serfdom, etc.'[26] I will undertake a careful historical examination of this issue later in the dissertation (Chapters 4 and 6). For now, it is sufficient to draw some guiding conclusions from the paradigm of formal subsumption.

First, the qualitative transformation of unfree forms of labour exploitation as value-producing labour mediating capitalist relations of production can only exist in a world system of commodity production based on wage-labour. It is no accident that Marx used the term 'grafted' to speak of the process by which the general characteristic of capitalism—the production of surplus-value—was attached to pre-capitalist modes of labour, thus integrating them into global value relations while keeping their pre-capitalist form of appearance.[27]

Secondly, if pre-capitalist modes of labour come to assume a capitalist form they might as well assume the *wage*-form in some concealed ways by embodying uneven repetitive exchange of value-producing unpaid labour for minimal means of subsistence—or what we would call the mediation of sale and purchase of labour-power for wages in a free-labour market setting. For one thing, this suggestion is consistent with how Marx defines wage-

[25] Banaji 2011, p. 62. Emphasis in original.
[26] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 345.
[27] By 'pre-capitalist' modes of labour I simply mean that they were predominant as such in earlier epochs of production, but which could nonetheless, as I have argued so far, mediate capitalist relations of production.

labour 'as a rich totality of many determinations and relations'.[28] Elsewhere, he writes that when 'production becomes the production of commodities', workers who had no *a priori* organic relation to the capitalist mode of production, such as slaves, labour-tenants, and other bonded labourers, 'become directly converted into *wage-labourers*, however various their activities and *payment* may be'.[29] The point is not that *all* slaves, labour-tenants, and other bonded labourers are necessarily wage-workers, 'but that these "forms" may reflect the subsumption of labour into capital in ways where the 'sale' of labour-power for wages is mediated and possibly disguised in more complex arrangements'.[30] This is why Marx argued in the *Grundrisse* that wage-labour '*can* stand in opposition to slavery and serfdom, though *need* not do so, for it always repeats itself under various forms of the overall organization of labour'.[31] This is also why he argued, as mentioned above, that the formal subsumption *is* the *general* form of capitalist production because it is not necessarily and exclusively limited to 'free' wage-labour in its pure money-form, though this pure form remains central. This implies, as Banaji argues, that the variety of specific individual forms of labour exploitation *within* the capitalist mode of production in the historical sense—such as, plantation-slavery, indentured servitude, labour-tenancy, etc.—'may just be ways in which paid labour is recruited, exploited, and controlled by employers'.[32] Chapter 6 will take up and expand this argument in a seventeenth-century slave-plantation context.

Thirdly, inasmuch as pre-capitalist modalities of labour based on extra-economic coercion can mediate capitalist relations of production by virtue of formal subsumption, we

[28] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 100.
[29] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 1041-42. Emphasis in original.
[30] Banaji, *Theory as History*, p. 145.
[31] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 467. Emphasis in original.
[32] Ibid.

must not presume that wage-labour is *ontologically* based on formal freedom.[33] Indeed, this becomes evident when we enquire into what Marx really meant by 'free' wage-labour as a concrete category. In his account of the primitive accumulation, to which we will return shortly, he argues that the rise of capitalism was made possible by the historical process by which direct producers were divorced from their means of production and transformed into 'free workers'. They were 'free' in a 'double sense', Marx writes, in that 'they neither form part of the means of production themselves, as would be the case with slaves, serfs, etc., nor do they own the means of production, as would be the case with self-employed peasant proprietors. The free workers are therefore *free from*, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own'.[34] The 'freedom' of free wage-labourers, in other words, was *negative* rather than a source of positive liberal rights. They were 'free' to move, but *not* necessarily free to choose. In the German edition of *Capital*, this idea was expressed by the term *vogelfrei* or 'free as a bird', that is to say, 'free but outside the human community and therefore entirely unprotected and without legal rights'.[35] As Robin Cohen has noted, '[i]n earlier translations [of *Capital*] the expression *vogelfrei* was rendered as "unattached", rather than "rightless", which perhaps better captures Marx's meaning'.[36] Thus, if 'free' wage-labour initially meant 'unattached' wage-labour, an outcome which 'comprises a whole series of forcible methods', then why could 'free' wage-labourers not be formally re-

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[33] In addition to Banaji, *Theory as History*, chap. 5, see also Sébastien Rioux, "The Fiction of Economic Coercion: Political Marxism and the Separation of Theory and History," *Historical Materialism* 21, no. 4 (2013), 92-128; Marc W. Steinberg, "Marx, Formal Subsumption and the Law," *Theory and Society* 39, no. 2 (March, 2010), 173-202; Rakesh Bhandari, "The Disguises of Wage-Labour: Juridical Illusions, Unfree Conditions and Novel Extensions," *Historical Materialism* 16, no. 1 (2008), 71-99.
[34] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 874. Emphasis added.
[35] Ibid., p. 896, editorial footnote.
[36] Robin Cohen, *Migration and its Enemies: Global Capital, Migrant Labour, and the Nation-State* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), p. 13.

attached into value-producing labour through a similar process of extra-economic violence and unfreedom?[37]

On many occasions, Marx seems to be ready to develop the idea that the reproduction of wage-labour depended on direct compulsion. For example, he noted in the *Grundrisse* that the 'relations of production develop *unevenly* as legal relations', hence suggesting that characteristics related to earlier juridical forms of property relations, among them bond servitude, were initially carried over into the institution of wage-labour as a new form of exploitation.[38] It was probably for this reason that, as he wrote in *Capital*, '[c]enturies are required before the 'free' worker, owing to the greater development of the capitalist mode of production, makes a *voluntary* agreement, i.e. is compelled by social conditions to sell the whole of his active life, his very capacity for labour, in return for the price of his customary means of subsistence, to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage'.[39] In those 'former times, capital resorted to legislation, whenever it seemed necessary, in order to *enforce* its property rights over the free worker'.[40] 'These [enforcing] methods', he writes, 'depend in part on brute force', that is to say, state power, of which more shortly.[41] Later on, the supposedly 'free' wage-labourers of the nascent factories of eighteenth-century England were not exempted of such relation of domination, for they were 'like the royal navy ... recruited by means of the press-gang'.[42] It is very fitting that Marx employs a maritime analogy. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the labour of a great deal of already-waged

[37] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 928.
[38] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 109.
[39] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 382. Emphasis added.
[40] Ibid., p. 719. Emphasis added.
[41] Ibid., p. 915.
[42] Ibid., p. 922.

mariners and seamen was formally transformed into value-producing, free wage-labour through extra-economic coercion in the early modern period of Atlantic capitalism.

'Free' wage labour as value-producing labour was most often, if not always, *imposed* on early expropriated workers through the use of direct force and dominance, as Marx noted. This view, I must stress, is neither random nor peripheral in Marx's work, but central and in straight line with his larger claim that the 'starting-point of the development that gave rise both to the wage-labourer and to the capitalist *was the enslavement of the worker*. The advance made consisted in *a change in the form of this servitude*'.[43] Indeed, what Marx so powerfully set out to do was precisely to unmask and defetichize this essential feature hidden at heart of wage-labour in capitalism. This highlights an important, though not sufficiently recognized, aspect of the historical relationship between capitalism and free wage labour: the wage earners' so-called right to *fully* and *freely* dispose of their labour power under capitalism—free to own, sell, and withdraw labour power as see fit—did *not begin* with proletarianization but *resulted from* it as a political claim.[44]

In sum, the formal subsumption of labour under capital provides us with a heuristic theoretical strategy that can account for the developmental variability and unevenness of capitalism in history. More precisely, it offers a model of inquiry with which to make sense of a variety of situated modalities of labour exploitation that are integrated into the global value relation in differentiated and complex ways *in spite* of what appears to be pre-capitalist features. By the same token, it allows us both to disentangle the association

[43] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 875. Emphasis added.
[44] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully develop such argument. Although not framed in the specific terms of this chapter, Emma Christopher makes a strong case in this direction as she argues that press-ganged sailors engaged in the transatlantic slave trade asserted through political struggle their own ideas of liberty associated to their status as free wage earners in contradistinction to the experience of the African slaves. See Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chap. 3.

between capitalism and freedom, and to integrate characteristics of unfreedom as constitutive of the proletarian class. And as we shall below, notions of race, ethnicity, and nationality most often informed coercive forms of exploitation.

Primitive accumulation and period of manufacture

Another area where Marx's thought evolved into a non-essentialist, non-reductionist, and non-Eurocentric approach to capitalism comes from his writings on the so-called 'primitive accumulation'—'the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production'[45]. As Anderson points out, this shift operated in the 1872-75 French edition of *Capital*, the last one Marx prepared for publication, almost twenty years after he had laid out his preliminary theoretical program in the *Grundrisse*. In fact, not only did he heavily edit and amend the French translation by Joseph Roy, but he also revised the entire book, which he wanted to be the basis for future translations.[46]

Marx introduced a major change to his account of primitive accumulation, in particular in the opening chapter of the section (Chapter 26), which, according to Anderson, 'has yet to make it into any of the standard English editions of *Capital*'.[47] While the latter editions keep maintaining that '[o]nly in England' the history of primitive accumulation has taken a 'classic form', Marx argued instead in French that '*it has been carried out in a radical manner only in England: therefore this country will necessarily play the leading role in our sketch*'.[48] He then immediately added: '*But all the countries of Western Europe are going*

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[45] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 875

[46] Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 174.

[47] Ibid., p. 179.

[48] Quoted in ibid. Emphasis by Anderson.

through the same development, although in accordance with the particular environment it changes its local color, or confines itself to a narrower sphere, or shows a less pronounced character, or follow a different order of succession'.[49] Though textually minimal and almost unnoticeably, this modification bears a major change in Marx's view of capitalist development, for it highlights that his intention was not to pinpoint and study the origin of capitalism from which it would then expand worldwide, but simply examine where it eventuated in a 'radical manner', in England. In fact, immediately at the end of this important passage, he added a footnote that could not clarify his thought more: it was in Italy 'where capitalist production developed earliest ... at about the end of the fifteenth century'.[50] From there, he adds a few pages later, the movement expanded 'to Spain, Portugal, Holland, France and England, in more or less chronological order'.[51] This brings to view that, while restricted to the specific geo-historical context of Western Europe, Marx's approach to the development of the capitalist mode of production was fundamentally multilinear in scope, and that, as such, it is ready to be taken and deployed elsewhere in non-European settings, such as the colonies.

Indeed, there are several indications in *Capital* that this multilinear outlook should encompass the colonial world, not as pre-capitalist but rather as integral to the capitalist mode of production as epoch of production. In the same part eight of Volume I, for instance, Marx attends the expropriation of the rural population in England, before shifting to a planetary standpoint on the same theme:

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginning of the conquest and plunder of India, and the

[49] Quoted in ibid. Emphasis by Anderson.
[50] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 876n1.
[51] Ibid., p. 915.

> conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.[52]

Here, Marx stands at the level of mode of production in the historical sense, which allows him to retrieve not so much differences as much as the commonalities of proletarian experience from the Americas to Africa to India. Implicit to this viewpoint is the idea that the proletariat was far more complex than a white, male, skilled, waged, industrial class of European workers—it was *global* and *multiracial*. More explicitly stated by Marx, however, is the central role of the state in the class-making process underpinning primitive accumulation. He argues that 'during the historical genesis of capitalist production', the 'rising bourgeoisie needs the power of the state, and uses it to "regulate" wages, i.e. to force them into the limits suitable for making a profit, to lengthen the working day, and to keep the worker himself at his normal level of dependence. This is an essential aspect of so-called primitive accumulation'.[53] These features—race and state—will be discussed further below.

Moreover, Marx's account of colonialism has shifted away from the celebratory progressive, unifying, and civilizing effects of capitalist expansion which had marked his earlier writings. The *Communist Manifesto*, for instance, argued that the colonial expansion of capitalism 'draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization … [and] creates a world after its own image'.[54] In *Capital*, however, especially in the discussion on Ireland, a former colony now internally dominated within the United Kingdom, Marx argues that the

[52] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 915.
[53] Ibid., pp. 899-900, and 915-16.
[54] Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", in D. Fernbach, ed., Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 71.

expansion of capitalism was, in fact, socially and ecologically destructive, leaving the dispossessed peasants in a state of misery, famine, and unemployment in rural areas. 'In England, the surplus rural labourers are transformed into factory workers; in Ireland, those forced into the towns remain agricultural labourers even while they exert downward pressure on urban wages, and constantly sent back to the countryside in search of work'.[55] So while capitalist expansion did bring Ireland to go through some kind of modern industrial civilization, it did so by turning it into 'an agricultural district of England', which 'brought about an absolute decline in some of its branches [of production]', while others were 'constantly interrupted by retrogressions'.[56] As we shall see shortly, this capitalist development in Ireland led Marx to hypothesize that the proletarian world-revolution should happen there *first* and not in advanced industrialized capitalist societies, hence modifying his earlier view that it was the British labour movement that would show the way forward.

This dissertation is rooted in the multilinear and variegated approach to primitive accumulation exposed above. There are, however, two shortcomings with this approach. First, in the specific English case-study in which it is deployed in *Capital*, primitive accumulation remains highly land-centered, thus neglecting an important maritime dimension in the development of capitalism. Secondly, the concept is inherently teleological as it seeks to analyze the origins of capitalism not in and for themselves, but rather as the sporadic, transitory, and partial preludes to industrial capitalism, which is implicitly posited as the 'true' character of the capitalist mode of production. I submit that

[55] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 866.
[56] Ibid., p. 860.

one way to overcome these shortcomings is to situate the process of primitive accumulation in what Marx called, as already mentioned, the period of manufacture.

Manufacture, for Marx, does not mean a plant or an early type of factory, in the sense of a workplace gathering together of large numbers of workers under one roof, though there were such factory-like workshops during the manufacturing period.[57] Rather, and more generally, manufacture refers to 'a productive mechanism whose organs are human beings'.[58] More precisely, it is a 'form of co-operation which is based on division of labour'.[59] As such, manufacture figures as 'the fundamental form of the capitalist mode of production', and is therefore positioned, within Marx's model, as a category of analysis congruent with the formal subsumption of labour under capital, just like large-scale industry is analytically congruent with the real subsumption. My reading of Marx, most especially Chapter 14 of *Capital*, Volume I, is that the formal subsumption of labour under capital in its initial stage was *generally* constituted as a manufacturing structure of capitalist production. Thus, manufacture as a social mechanism of production equips us with a functionally defined model to think about, and inquire into, processes of formal subsumption of labour under capital in the early-modern Atlantic world economy, independently of the forms of labour exploitation through which they happened. Furthermore, it is with the concept of manufacture and not primitive accumulation that Marx gets the closest to take his analysis to the maritime world. He argued in the *Grundrisse*, for instance, that the manufacture 'springs up where mass quantities are produced for export, for the external market – i.e. on the *basis of large-scale overland and maritime commerce*, in its emporiums like the Italian cities, Constantinople, in the Flemish,

[57] See ibid, pp. 455-56.
[58] Ibid., p. 457.
[59] Ibid., p. 455.

Dutch cities, a Spanish ones, such as Barcelona etc.'[60] In those seaside places, he adds, 'manufactures [were] directly connected with shipping, shipbuilding, etc.'[61] In Chapter 4, I will expand on this maritime subtext in Marx's work and make the claim that the deep-sea sailing ship, as a capitalist enterprise, was as much central to the development of capitalism as to early forms of transboundary proletarian solidarity anticipating working-class internationalism.

The modern working class 'in general'

Marx's evolving views also affected his conception of the working class, which began to shift in the 1860s from the reductionist, industrial, wage-centered notion prioritized in the *Manifesto*, to a much larger and dynamic notion encompassing wageless workers in less developed settings of capitalist production, with a greater emphasis on how it was dialectically related to race, ethnicity, and nationality. Interestingly, this shift was largely based on his militant participation in the activities of the First International, where, from discussions with fellow-members, Marx came to be highly interested in the Polish and Irish national liberation struggles as well as in the anti-slavery cause in the American Civil War.

The core idea of Marx's writings on Poland is that Poles' national liberation against the Russian empire would not come as a consequence of proletarian revolution but was, instead, a necessary precondition for the development of a workers' movement in Europe.[62]

[60] Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 510-11. Emphasis in original.
[61] Ibid.
[62] This new position, which reversed his 1847 claim that Poland 'must be liberated in England not in Poland', entailed a twofold argument. First, as Anderson notes, Marx 'was attempting to prove to his colleague in the International that in three key periods – the French Revolution of 1789-94, the Napoleonic era, and the Revolution of 1830 – the French betrayed Poland. He was doing so in a debate within the international Left, among supporters of Poland, some of whom he considered to be imbued with illusions about France as a

As such, Marx seems to move into the direction of a more historical and transnational view of the working-class, for he claimed, as Anderson points out, that 'unless democratic and class struggles could link up with those of oppressed nationalities, both would fail to realize fully their aims, if not go down to defeat'.[63] Furthermore, Marx not only placed Polish national liberation at the center of the workers' revolutionary movement; he also claimed that it was in Cracow in 1846 that the first political revolution to proclaim socialist demands actually broke out.[64] While the 1846 Polish uprising had been excluded from the *Manifesto*, it was now directly linked up with the rise of socialism in Europe. This relativizes the historical importance of the Chartist movement in the development of working-class internationalism in Europe, putting the nonindustrial Polish workers on the same historic footing as their English comrades.

In his writings on the American Civil War, Marx came to include black slave labour in his conception of the working class, and to articulate his views on working-class internationalism with radical abolitionism in the United States. This modification was the direct outcome of his political activism within the international Left, which led him to come to terms with issues of race and slavery. In April 1863, for example, he attended a meeting of the London Trades Union Council, held to express solidarity to the Union and abolitionists, and whose participants sent a long message to Abraham Lincoln who condemned slavery as an 'abhorrent crime'.[65] 'This meeting and others like it constituted an

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consistently revolutionary country'. Aimed at future revolutionary movements in Europe, his second argument was based on the idea that '...in betraying Poland, the French revolutionaries constricted or even destroyed themselves, leading to defeat by external enemies or a too-limited revolution at home, one that did not really uproot the old system'. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, pp. 71-72.

[63] Ibid., p. 72.

[64] This claim speaks to the radical democratic agrarian program that the Poles were fighting for, which Marx saw as socialistic.

[65] The essence of the message of this: 'You [Lincoln] have struck off the shackles from the poor slave of [the District of] Columbia; you have welcomed as men, as equals under God, the colored peoples of Hayti and

historic highpoint for British labor, not only as an expression of internationalism, but also of solidarity across racial lines', Anderson writes.[66] Marx played an important role in carrying on this political issue into the creation of the First International a few months later, in particular by inserting a explicit reference to it in the International's 'Inaugural Address': 'It was not the wisdom of the ruling classes, but the heroic resistance to their criminal folly by the working classes of England that saved the West of Europe from plunging headlong into an infamous crusade for the perpetuation of slavery on the other side of the Atlantic'.[67]

In his address on behalf of the International congratulating Lincoln upon his re-election, Marx even went a step further, concluding that '[t]he 'working men of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Anti-Slavery War will do for the working class'.[68] As Anderson notes, Marx's address 'linked the Civil War, which it viewed as a second American revolution, to what it saw as an impending upsurge of the working classes of Europe'.[69] Radical abolitionism in the United States was, in Marx's view, central to the development of working-class internationalism across the North Atlantic. The importance, however, remained mostly thematic. What this dissertation hopes to highlight is that its importance not just in the United States but in the Americas was also *practical*, in the sense that radical abolitionism entailed transboundary collective actions of proletarian solidarity that anticipated the coming of the First International.

Liberia, and by your [Emancipation] Proclamation, ... you have opened the gates of freedom to the millions of our negro brothers who have been deprived of their manhood by the infernal laws which have so long disgraced the civilization of America'. Quoted in Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, p. 107.

[66] Anderson 2010, p. 107.

[67] Quoted in Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, 2010, p. 108.

[68] Quoted in ibid., p. 110.

[69] Ibid., p. 110.

The interplay of race, labour, and slavery found also its way into *Capital*, Volume I, which was completed during those years. It is in Chapter 10, 'The Working Day', that we find the greatest attention to this subtheme. The chapter was a late addition to the early draft of *Capital*, as it was most likely conceived and written after 1866, when Marx had begun to participate in the International.[70] According to Anderson, this internationalist militant experience seems to have been decisive in Marx's decision to include a chapter that, for the first time in Volume I, directly addresses 'the voice of the worker', whose struggle was carried out as much by the agency of the African-American slaves in the United States and the Wallachian peasants in Germany than by that of the white American and English factory workers.[71] In the course of a few paragraphs, then, Marx depicts a transatlantic working-class movement over the length of the working day, inclusive of plantations-slaves and bonded peasants because at this point, he argued, their labour 'was no longer a question of obtaining ... a certain quantity of useful products, but rather of the production of surplus value itself'.[72] Together, these proletarian workers—slaves, peasants, factory workers—constituted what he called 'the modern working class *in general*'.[73] This constitutes a radical move toward a theoretically richer understanding on the concept of the working class under capitalism.

[70] Anderson quotes a letter that Marx wrote to Engels on February 10, 1866, in which he mentions that he had 'elaborated the section on the '*Working-Day*' from the historical point of view, which was not part of my original plan'. See Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, p. 276.

[71] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 342. As duly noted by Anderson, the claim that Marx's activity in the International was important in the process of adding a chapter on the working day was first made by Russian American Marxist philosopher and economist Raya Dunayevskaya. She argued that Marx's participation in the International created a 'new dialectic' between history and his theoretical assumptions, which 'led him to meet, theoretically, the workers' resistance inside the factory and outside of it. [...] Marx, the theoretician, created new categories out of the impulses from the workers. It wasn't he, however, who decided that the Civil War in the United States was a holy war of labor. It was the working class of England, the very ones who suffered the most, who decided that'. Cited in Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, p. 194.

[72] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 345.

[73] Ibid., p. 413. Emphasis added. To my knowledge, this is the only place where Marx uses this concept. Engels used it to criticize the work of British politician James Ph. Kay, who 'confuses the working class in general with the factory workers…'. See Engels, *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, p. 109.

Underpinning the concept of modern working class 'in general' is the mental movement from the particular to the general, which is peculiar to Marx's methods of abstraction that characterizes his work.[74] He proceeded in a similar fashion in the *Grundrisse* with respect to the concept of production, differentiating 'production' from 'production in general'.[75] He did the same in *Capital*, Volume I, with regards to the concepts of labour and division of labour.[76] The 'general' category, he writes,

> is an abstraction, but a rational abstraction in so far as it really brings out and fixes the common element and thus saves us repetition. Still, this *general* category, this common element sifted out by comparison, is itself segmented many times over and splits into different determinations. Some determinations belong to all epochs, others only to a few. [Some] determinations will be shared by the most modern epoch and the most ancient.[77]

In abstracting the modern working-class in general from the slaves, peasants, and factory workers, Marx sought to capture the common element uniting these different forms of labour at the level of the mode of production conceived as 'a historically specific form of the social production process *in general*'.[78] We know that this common element is value-producing labour, which constitutes the basis of the capitalist mode of production. We also know, moreover, that Marx accepted the idea that manners of producing surplus-value, in specific historical circumstances, could be 'grafted' onto slave- and other forms of bond-labour. Thus, the modern working class 'in general', at the level at which it is posited in Marx's exposition, is a conceptual strategy to speak of the working class under capitalism

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[74] For a detailed account on Marx's methods of abstraction, see Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), chap. 5.
[75] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 85.
[76] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 308, 471.
[77] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 85. Emphasis in original.
[78] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 3 (London & New York: Penguin Classics, 1991), p. 957.

as a world-historical process structured around the organizing principle of wage-labour, and whose concrete manifestations remained 'segmented' while displaying 'different determinations' in space. My point here is simply to shed light on an important aspect in Marx's thought from which it is possible to capture conceptually the global working class as a heterogeneous, yet coherent, unity based on the wage relation.[79] This is, of course, a global working class in the *objective* sense, existing only in theory. Below, I will elaborate on a strategy to grasp the making of that class on its own subjective terms.

Proletarian world-revolution

I want to foreground one last theme of Marx's multilinearism before turning to the conceptual framework. According to Anderson, Marx's writings on Ireland are the culmination of the interweaving of class with issues of nationalism, race, and ethnicity, as they pertain to proletarian world-revolution. In 1869, he began to work on a resolution on Ireland to be passed by the General Council of the First International. The resolution mentioned that 'the *General Council of the* "*International Working Men's Association*" express their admiration of the spirited, firm and high-souled manner in which the Irish people carry on their Amnesty movement'.[80] After a few weeks of debate in the General Council, the resolution was finally adopted, 'opening the possibility of a never-before achieved alliance across ethnic and national lines among British workers, British intellectuals, Irish workers residing in Britain, Irish peasants, and Irish intellectuals', as

[79] In the Volume III of *Capital*, Marx appears to have planned to elaborate on this concept of the working class in general, but never got to complete it. See Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, pp. 1025-6.
[80] Karl Marx, "Letter to Engels, 18 November 1869," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010b), p. 163.

Anderson writes.[81] This led Marx to change his position vis-à-vis Ireland, as he had done with Poland earlier. In a letter to Kugelmann written on November 29, 1869, he wrote:

> I have become more and more convinced – and it remains a matter of driving the point home to the English working class – that it can never do anything decisive here in England until it makes a decisive break with the ruling class in its policy on Ireland, until it … makes a common cause with the Irish … And, indeed, this must be done not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland but as a demand based on the interest of the English proletariat. … Every one of its movements in England remains paralysed by the quarrel with the Irish, who form a very considerable section of the working class in England itself. The *first condition* for emancipation here – the overthrow of the English landed oligarchy – remains an impossibility, because its bastion here cannot be stormed as long as it holds its strongly entrenched out post in Ireland.[82]

Then, as he claimed before for Poland, Marx argued that national liberation in Ireland was, too, a precondition to proletarian world-revolution:

> But once the Irish people take matters into its own hands there, once it is made its own legislator and ruler, once it becomes autonomous, the overthrow of the landed aristocracy (for the most part *the same people* as the English landlords) will be infinitely easier than here [in England], because in Ireland it is not only a simple economic question but at the same a *national* question, because the landlords there are not, as in England, the traditional dignitaries and representatives of the nation but its mortally hated oppressors.[83]

[81] Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, p. 138.
[82] Karl Marx, "Letter to Kugelmann, 29 November 1869," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), p. 165. Emphasis in original.
[83] Ibid.

Still, at that point, Marx continued to believe that 'as the English working class undeniably casts the decisive weight into the scales of social emancipation in general, the important thing is to apply the lever [of revolution] here [in England]'.[84]

In a letter to Engels written few weeks later, however, Marx had completely changed his mind, apparently after having given the issue some more historical thoughts. He was now preparing himself to present his view before the general council of the International. This is how he put the matter to Engels:

> I shall say that … it is in *the direct and absolute interest of the English working class* to get rid of their present connection with Ireland. … I long believed it was possible to overthrow the Irish regime by way of English working-class ascendency. This is the position I always presented in the *New York Tribunes*. A deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never achieve anything before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. This is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement in general…[85]

This statement constitutes another step forward in Marx's thought. Unlike the unilinear language of the *Manifesto*, Marx now claimed that the 'lever' of proletarian world-revolution could—or, in this case, should—be set elsewhere than in advanced industrialized capitalist societies. This bears incredible historical and theoretical implication for a dissertation that sets out to study cross-border collective actions among Atlantic proletarian workers in the early modern era. The implicit idea to Marx's views on Ireland is that anticapitalist politics can not only take place at the periphery of the capitalist core, such as New World colonies, but that it can also be central in launching proletarian world-revolution. After all, this claim is consistent with the idea that since capital can subsume a

[84] Ibid., p. 166.
[85] Karl Marx, "Letter to Engels, 10 December 1869," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), pp. 166-67. Emphasis in original.

variety of modalities of labour in different geographical settings, those settings can be dialectically turned into potential sites for revolutionary proletarian politics.

In his later writings on Russia, Marx even argued that noncapitalist peasant societies could move directly to socialism on basis of their indigenous communal forms of organization, without first passing through the stage of capitalism.[86] On this basis, Marx's work on rural Russia offers a remarkable counterpoint to his early idea that 'utopian' socialism was politically sterile as a transformative agency and that, for this reason, it needed to be transcended by 'scientific' socialism, which could only developed under industrial capitalism. Though Marx did not state it explicitly, his late writings nonetheless advance the idea that the cultural background of workers shapes as much revolutionary politics as productive relations themselves. This change of position adds weight to Linebaugh's and Rediker's claim that plebeian commonism as an early form of communism embodied revolutionary potential in the early modern Atlantic world. In this sense, what they argued in *The Many-Headed Hydra* was not so much against as it was *with Marx*, and so is this dissertation.

In sum, this engagement with Marx's late multilinear views has charted out new directions and highlighted innovative insights for both the study of historical capitalism and the working-class movement, which seem to have had a cumulative character over time (as represented in his views on Russian development in the 1870s, for instance). However, he did not systematically theorize these new directions in his thinking. At best, then, these new directions are approached in this dissertation not as definitive claims but rather as initial epistemological approximations from which to sketch out a renovated, historical-materialist

[86] On this theme, see Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, chap. 6.

framework for the study of working-class internationalism in the *longue durée*, to which I now turn.

Theorizing Processes of Transboundary Proletarian Solidarity

In order to engage with the insights just outlined and frame them within a *longue durée* Atlantic-world perspective, we need first to abandon the notion of working-class internationalism, which is rooted exclusively in, and therefore makes sense only for, the age of industrial capitalism. Alternatively, we need to articulate a more generic conceptual notion; that is to say, one that is supple enough to capture different forms of workers' solidarity across borders in the *longue durée*, yet tight enough so as to avoid ending up with a catchall container losing any heuristic value. The challenge, in other words, is to open up the concept of working-class internationalism to historical redefinition, yet without it becoming merged in the historically specific.

I believe that thinking with reference to *processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity* can achieve that. First, as a conceptual expression it still embodies the notional substrate of the 'classic' meaning, namely, a cross-border collective action rooted in proletarian solidarity. Freed from the constraints of methodological nationalism, this alternative conceptual formulation seeks to bring in and emphasize a multiplicity of transboundary practices that pre-existed nineteenth-century working-class internationalism, and which have been occluded in the current historiography. The latter tends to capture a 'pure' or ideal-typical form of internationalism between nationally-organized blocs of workers operating through formally institutionalized organizations. In contrary, my approach seeks to capture and make sense of inchoate processes of proletarian solidarity

across many types of borders—parochial, insular, colonial, imperial, oceanic, etc.—remaining institutionally undetermined, transient, and politically unresolved. Secondly, conceived in a materialist sense, the concept of transboundary proletarian solidarity as *process* aims to give more concreteness and theoretical intelligibility to different manifestations of cross-border solidarity among early Atlantic proletarians than what the hydra metaphor has allowed Linebaugh and Rediker to do. As such, this dissertation should not be seen as a refutation of the hydra tradition, but simply as an attempt to ameliorate and expand its theoretical reach within Marxism in general and the historiography of working-class internationalism in particular. What we will be finding are not monster-shaped nebulas existing only metaphorically over and above real contexts of class struggle in the Atlantic, but rather concrete, albeit fragile, small, and often short-lived, political arrangements of proletarian solidarity across borders

Drawing from the insights gained throughout our survey of Marx's multilinear views, three themes need to be expanded and articulated as the theoretical basis from which to launch the study of processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the capitalist *longue durée*. First, I want to bring Linebaugh's and Rediker's conception of the Atlantic proletariat to bear more firmly on Marx's multilinear account, before highlighting the extent to which its formative class-process was deeply intertwined with dynamics of racialization (and ethnicization). Second, in order to come up with a conception of class consciousness that copes well with the fragmentary and unsettled nature of proletarian consciousness in the early modern Atlantic world, it is necessary to move beyond the rigid dichotomy of class-in-itself/class-for-itself. As an alternative, I propose a focus on class experience (in the Thompsonian sense), as well as on what American labour sociologist

Rick Fantasia has called ‘cultures of solidarity’. Third, I will disentangle the theme of labour solidarity across borders from the notion of internationalism, so as to broaden the scope of analysis to multiple forms of border and boundary crossings. I argue that a translocal approach offers the best avenue to achieve this purpose. I will go through these themes successively, before tying them up, lastly, with the concept of process.

Atlantic proletariat (bis)

This dissertation builds on the concept of ‘Atlantic proletariat’ as put forth by Linebaugh and Rediker and discussed in the previous chapter. From what I have outlined above, this concept is perfectly compatible with Marx’s global and multiracial understanding of the proletariat under capitalism. Linebaugh and Rediker, as they recently put it, sought to articulate a conception of class that was to be ‘more inclusive of labouring subjects, longer in its chronological sweep, and wider in spatial settings’, emphasizing ‘the process of change over time in the constitution and experience of class – from expropriation through a middle-passage to a new reality of exploitation’.[87] I have two minor clarifications to make to this conception so as to align it more firmly with Marx’s multilinear account.

The first clarification is rather straightforward. In this dissertation, *Atlantic proletariat* will mean *all* expropriated workers freely or forcibly transported across or on the ocean in order perform capital-positing, capital-creating labour, among them servants, sailors, slaves, and many others bond workers. Although Linebaugh and Rediker do not deny the importance of productive relations as determining the historical shape of the Atlantic

[87] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, "*The Many-Headed Hydra*: Reflections on History from Below," in *Beyond Marx: Theorising the Global Labour Relations of the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Marcel van der Linden and Roth Heinz Karl (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), p. 36.

proletariat, their narrative has nonetheless tended to evade the matter, focusing instead and more generally on 'the lives, thoughts, and actions of footloose people as they connected the local, the national, the Atlantic, and the global'.[88] In line with Marx, my contention is that the Atlantic proletariat, as much motley, expansive, and spread out as it was, was *structurally* united as a class in the dark Atlantic through what Philip McMichael has called the 'global wage-relation', that is to say, a *political* ordering of proletarianized labour forces varyingly reconstituted as capital-positing, capital-creating wage-labour throughout the Atlantic world.[89] I emphasize the term *political* here because the state, as Marx made it clear in his account of primitive accumulation, and as Linebaugh and Rediker have highlighted in their work, was the main agency mediating the different settings of value-producing labour across the Atlantic world, tying down proletarian workers in different regimes of free and unfree wage-labour, transnationally integrated through various coercive politico-legal mechanisms of monopolized power. This, as we shall see later, contributed to maintain the essential separation between expropriation in Africa and Europe and exploitation in different Atlantic settings, hence enforcing (directly or indirectly) the wage-form on proletarianized labour, whether 'free', bonded or enslaved. Thus, the Atlantic proletariat, from both a geo-historical *and* theoretical standpoint, should be viewed as a coherent ensemble of many determinations governed by the wage-relation in the specific transoceanic context of the Atlantic world.

The second clarification I wish to make with the concept of Atlantic proletariat is how it embodied dynamics of racialization (and ethnicization), which functioned as dividing forces that most often impeded counter-hegemonic proletarian unity. As Cedric Robinson

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Philip McMichael, "The Global Crisis of Wage-Labour," *Studies in Political Economy* 58 (Spring, 1999), 11-40.

has argued, the development of the capitalist mode of production has not tended 'to homogenize but to differentiate – to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones'.[90] As a result, 'the dialectic of proletarianization disciplined the working classes to the importance of distinctions: between ethnics and nationalities; between skilled and unskilled workers; and ... in even more dramatic terms, between races'.[91] I will develop this point throughout most chapters of this dissertation, starting with the next section in this one. What I want to stress here before launching my analysis is that racial (and ethnic) distinctions are not 'primordial' relationships, but social-historical constructs that conflate with processes of class exploitation and which, therefore, contribute to their reproduction. Thus, it will be important in the course of this study to be attentive to how racial and ethnic distinctions participated in both shaping *and* impeding solidarity among Atlantic proletarian workers.

In a deliberate way, my conceptual discussion of the Atlantic proletariat has so far been rather objectivist. This begs the question: how are we now to capture the agentic self-activity of Atlantic proletarian workers as a class? To help me tackling this issue, I now turn to E. P. Thompson's unique interpretive approach to social class as an agentic historical process rooted in experience and social consciousness; an angle of analysis that can best serve our purpose when, I suggest, coupled with Rick Fantasia's understanding of class consciousness as 'cultures of solidarity'.

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[90] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 26.
[91] Ibid., p. 42.

Experience and cultures of solidarity

'Class happens', famously wrote Thompson in the preface to his ground-breaking book, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). As simple as it was, and as poetic as it resonated, this claim, made at the climax of the Stalinist historiography, shook up the pillars of vulgar Marxism. Thompson argued that class should not be seen as a structure or a category 'but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships'.[92] From this perspective, class is understood as both 'an *active process*, which owes as much to agency as to conditioning... [and] a *historical phenomenon*, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness'.[93] In grounding it in human agency, Thompson sought to free the class concept from the ossified categories of structural-functionalist analyses, as well as to remedy the 'silences' in the Marxist scholarly tradition.[94] To do so, he introduced the key concept of 'experience', which he defined as 'the mental and emotional response, whether of an individual or of a social group, to many inter-related events or to many repetitions of the same kind of event'.[95] As such, experience mediates between 'social being' (the lived realities of social life) and 'social consciousness' (the consciousness of these realities). He writes:

> Experience arises spontaneously within social being, but it does not arise without thought; it arises because men and women (and not only philosophers) are rational, and they think about what is happening to themselves and their world. ... Changes take place within social being, which give rise to

[92] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 8.
[93] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[94] In particular, Thompson criticized both the structural functionalism of Parsonian sociologists, such as N.J. Smelser and Ralf Dahrendorf, and the structural Marxism of Louis Althusser and his followers, who all worked from similar theoretical premises about class.
[95] E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory: Or an Orrery of Errors*, pp. 9-10.

> changed *experience*: and this experience is *determining*, in the sense that it exerts pressures upon existent social consciousness [and] proposes new question.[96]

Experience is therefore both structured and determined, but also shaped and re-shaped by human intervention; it is the way by which 'structure is transmuted into process, and the subject re-enters into history'.[97] Thus, it is also a cultural phenomenon, '[f]or people do not only experience their own experience as ideas, within thought and its procedures … They also experience their own experience as *feeling*, and they handle their own feelings within their culture, as norms, familial, and kinship obligations and reciprocities, as values or (through the more elaborated forms) within art or religious beliefs'.[98]

By circumscribing the realm of experience as 'social being's impingement upon social consciousness', Thompson sets out to a new type of historical-materialist inquiry of social class grounded in the dynamic interplay between structure, culture, and human agency.[99] This stance allows him to make the following claim in the opening paragraph of *The Making*: 'The working class did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making'.[100] We know what this figure of speech means; working people were 'present' as a class by virtue of their *experience* of exploitation from day one of their expropriation and insertion into capital-positing, capital-creating labour. As historical social beings, newly proletarianized workers carried with them a rich cultural heritage to the capitalist process of production, which enabled them, in turn, to shape the content of their

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[96] Ibid., p. 10. Emphasis in original.
[97] Ibid., p. 229. As he argued, '[m]en and women also return [to their knowledge] as subjects, ... not as autonomous subjects, 'free individuals', but as persons experiencing their determinate productive situations and relationships, as needs and interests and as antagonisms, and then 'handling' this experience within their *consciousness* and their *culture* ... in the most complex ... ways, and the ... acting upon their deterministic situation in their turn'. Ibid., pp. 221-22.
[98] Ibid., pp. 230-31. Emphasis in original.
[99] Ibid., p. 6.
[100] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 8.

fledging class consciousness and, thereby, 'handle' in class ways the determining pressures within their experience. This is how these assumptions are articulated in Thompson's conception of class:

> ...class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born – or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class consciousness does not. We can see logic in the response of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predicate any law. Consciousness of class arises in the same way in different times and places, but never just in the same way.[101]

Importantly, moreover, there is a dynamic aspect to class formation, which Thompson locates in class struggle. As he argues,

> …classes do not exist as separate entities, look around, find an enemy class, and then start to struggle. On the contrary, people find themselves in a society structured in determined ways (crucially, but not exclusively, in productive relations), they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over those whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes, they come to know this discovery as class-consciousness. Class and class-consciousness are always the last, not the first, stage in the real historical process.[102]

Thus, employing Thompson's interpretive approach to class formation will not only enable us to penetrate the experience of the Atlantic proletariat *in context* of class struggles,

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[101] Ibid., p. 8.
[102] E. P. Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?" *Social History* 3, no. 2 (1978), p. 149.

but also to recover their agentic self-activity performed 'in class ways' without the presence of consciously class-defined institutions and values.

Yet Thompson's approach somehow leaves aside the important question of how to grapple with fragmentary levels of class consciousness in theoretical terms. In his framework, experience is not a substitute for class consciousness; it is only, as Thompson put it, 'a very low level of mentation'.[103] Therefore, the question is: how can we conceptually capture class sentiments and identity—as 'low' as their 'level' can get—that are handled *in* and *by* experience, on the one hand, and that may give way to collective identity, on the other?

American labour sociologist Rick Fantasia has developed the concept of 'cultures of solidarity' so as to precisely move away from the rigid and dichotomous class 'in-itself/for-itself' notion and account for 'a wider range of cultural practices generated in social struggle'.[104] He defines it as

> …more or less bounded groupings that may or may not develop a clear organizational identity and structure, but represent the active expression of worker solidarity…. They are neither ideas of solidarity in the abstract nor bureaucratic trade union activity, but cultural formations that arise in conflict, creating and sustaining solidarity in opposition to the dominant structure. Forged in crisis, cultures of solidarity can represent, sometimes merely in germinal form, "micro-societies in which the laws of macro-society are not only suspended but replaced by a new regime of direct action"'.[105]

Attending to 'cultures of solidarity' within the realm of experience of Atlantic proletarian workers will therefore enable us to capture and examine 'a fluidity not easily available in

[103] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 10.
[104] Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 17.
[105] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

the traditional conception of class consciousness'.[106] This 'fluidity', Fantasia contends in a way kin to Thompson, is to be sought in material context of class struggle, where 'class consciousness seems less a matter of disembodied mental attitude than a broader set of practices and repertoires available for empirical investigation'.[107] In this sense, employing such a heuristic, middle-range approach to class consciousness, Fantasia claims, 'is meant to afford analysis of discrete case studies of collective actions of workers and their cultural expression, rather than beginning from a priori, generalized sense of class against class implied in common used of terms such as "class solidarity" and "class consciousness"'.[108]

With this mind, let us take our discussion to the theme of translocalism and boundary crossing, so as to equip ourselves with a strategy to observe how proletarian cultures of solidarity could have been made in the Atlantic world.

Of (crossing) boundaries

Having sketched out a more generous conceptual definition of the working class and a less totalizing approach to class consciousness as cultures of solidarity, what remains to be done in this section is to excavate the theme of 'boundary crossings' that underpins the concept of internationalism, and re-problematize its theoretical applicability at a fair distance from the commonly held purview of the nation paradigm. Indeed, if we are to successfully enquire into the 'pre-national phase' of working-class internationalism, it is imperative that we fashion an approach to boundary crossings that is rooted in *locational* imagination instead of national imagination. To begin to move in that direction, we must

[106] Ibid., p. 17.
[107] Ibid., p. 14.
[108] Ibid, pp. 17-18.

think beyond (or, indeed, below) 'the territorial trap of the state', and identify new analytical units *in* and *through* which to orient and ground our study of what we may call transboundary linkages of proletarian cultures of solidarity.[109] The best approach to do so, I submit, is the *translocal approach*.

The study of the 'translocal' and 'translocality' began to make its appearance in the mid-1990s across the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and geography.[110] Though geared at different objects of enquiry, it grew out of a common concern over the need, on the one hand, to working out a more 'rooted' notion of transnationalism, which was then primarily associated with processes of de-territorialisation and spatially unbounded communities, and, on the other, to overcoming the limitation that the transnational approach, in spite of challenging the limitations of methodological nationalism, remained deeply attached to a view of the globe as formed and ordered by a static framework of nation-states. Recently, in a piece that seeks to clarify key terminological debates in the current transnational turn in labour history, John French has posited that the translocal approach offers 'the best avenue to create "another world history"'.[111] In the same vein, historians Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen have argued that, because '[i]t demands attention to concrete processes and

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[109] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations," *Review of International Political Economy* 1 (1994), 53-80.
[110] In sociology, see Micheal Burawoy, ed., *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations In a Postmodern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); in anthropology, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and Anja Peleikis, *Lebanese in Motion: Gender and the Making of a Translocal Village* (Beilefeld: Transcript, 2003); and in geography, see Katherine Brickell and Ayona Datta, eds., *Translocal Geographies: Spaces, Places, Connections* (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).; and Andrew Herod, *Scale* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011).
[111] John D. French, "Another *World* History is Possible: Reflections on the Translocal," in *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3-4. Emphasis in original.

networks', the concept of translocality 'will contribute to the advancement of global social history'.[112]

Freitag and von Oppen define translocality as 'the sum of phenomena which result from a multitude of circulations and transfers. It designates the outcome of concrete movements of people, goods, ideas and symbols which span spatial distances and cross boundaries, be they geographical, cultural or political'.[113] Translocality therefore 'aims at highlighting the fact that the interactions and connections between places, institutions, actors and concepts have far more diverse and often even contradictory effects than is commonly assumed'.[114] In this sense, the translocal approach 'proposes a more open and less linear view on the manifold ways in which the global world is constituted: through the *trans*-gression of boundaries between spaces of very different scale and type as well as through the (re-) creation of "local" distinctions between those spaces'.[115] As such, the translocal approach will allow us to overcome the anachronism that the term 'transnational' would convey if employed for periods prior to the advent of nationalism, that is to say, prior to the middle of the nineteenth century.

Interestingly, in *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation* (1897), Karl Kautsky already acknowledged the importance of analyzing heretical communist internationalism in a non-national approach. Though set in a highly stagist reading of history, this account of class struggles in Central Europe brought to the fore not only what Kautsky called the '*interlocalism* of the merchant', but also the growing '*interlocal* feeling

[112] Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, "Introduction: "Translocality": An Approach to Connection and Transfer in Area Studies," in *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, eds. Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 17.
[113] Ibid., p. 5.
[114] Ibid., p. 5.
[115] Ibid., p. 6.

of the proletarian', giving rise to various forms of '*interlocal solidarity*'.[116] More than the fact that such a perspective was deployed a century before it became fashionable in social science, what is surprising is the discovery that, even within Orthodox Marxism, when one would imagine methodological nationalism to be at its zenith, an influential Marxist scholar presented an early period of working-class internationalism in a explicitly translocal setting, which almost immediately vanished in the historiography. In a way, then, this dissertation takes up where Kautsky left off.

Thinking in terms of translocality, as Arif Dirlik points out, 'involves more than choice of vocabulary; it carries us from one conceptual realm – that of nations and civilizations – to another – that of places'.[117] For a dissertation that seeks to take the study of the genesis of working-class internationalism back to early modern Atlantic world, such shift of perspective begs the question: what places? The simple answer for now is: *wherever are Atlantic proletarian workers put to work*, such as, the plantation, the sailing ship, the port, the workshop, the military fort, the trading post, etc. Thus, by 'places', I do not necessarily mean 'the local' in a narrow, territorially-fixed sense, but also 'mobile places', such as the sailing ship. These places are not randomly brought up here; they were central to how contemporaries themselves depicted the spatialities of the Atlantic world. The challenge, therefore, is to ground our analysis in the spatial imagining of contemporaries themselves, so as 'to escape the confine of anachronistic boundaries', as one historian has advised.[118] In the remaining of this subsection, I want to tease out some preliminary elements for what we

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[116] Karl Kautsky, *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), pp. 24-5.
[117] Arif Dirlik, "Performing the World: Reality and Representation in the Making of World Histories," *Journal of World History* 16, no. 4 (2005), p. 387.
[118] Allan Greer, "National, Transnational, and Hypernational Historiographies: New France Meets Early American History," *The Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (Dec., 2010), p. 700.

could call an Atlantic spatial imagining from below. I do this by drawing from two written accounts left to posterity by two slaves of African descent, Olaudah Equiano and Frederick Douglass.

In his *Interesting Narrative* (1789), abolitionist campaigner, seaman, and former slave Olaudah Equiano sets his autobiography in such a locational setting. This first-hand experience led him to assert that the terror of slavery was not 'confined to particular places or individuals; for, in all the different islands in which I have been (and I have visited no less than fifteen) the treatment of the slaves was nearly the same; so nearly indeed, that the history of an island, or even a plantation, with a few such exceptions … might serve for a history of the whole'.[119] Clearly, Equiano does not envisage the geography and spatiality of the Atlantic world as a colonially-bordered world, that is to say, in the same way we would understand nation-states today. Such mental mapping would be bitterly anachronistic, for it projects modern meaning of state borders as legal/territorial ones back into a period where states were defined centres and whose sovereignty was expressed 'in terms of its jurisdiction over subject, not over a delimited territory, relying on the inherited notions of "jurisdiction" and "dependency" instead of basing its administration on firmly delineated territorial circumscriptions'.[120] In the context of the early modern Atlantic world, as Elizabeth Mancke argues, 'cultural, economic, and political rights were often parsed among multiple claimants, creating quite literally overlapping spaces of power that were not easily transformed into colonies'.[121] As such, before they became central to the nationalist agenda

[119] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, ed. Angelo Costanzo (Toronto: Broadview Literary Texts, 2004 [1789]), p. 127.
[120] Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1989), p. 6.
[121] Elizabeth Mancke, "Time, Space, and the History of the Early Modern North America," *History Compass* 2 (2004), p. 6.

in the nineteenth century, ‘borders’, to speak with Benedict Anderson, ‘were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another’.[122]

But as indistinct and porous as they were, jurisdictional boundary lines that mapped out the early modern Atlantic world remained nonetheless meaningful for proletarian workers. For example, as he was leaving England for the West Indies, Equiano knew exactly that he was about to cross the boundary to what he called ‘a land of bondage’.[123] He also understood what he had left behind; a metropolis where life in bondage was more tolerable. It is surely for this reason that as soon as he learned that his master has shipped him in Montserrat in order to be sold, his ‘former sufferings in the slave-ship present[ed] themselves to [his] mind’.[124] ‘I at that instant’, he writes, ‘burst out a crying, and begged much of him [the ship captain] to take me to England with him, but all to no purpose’.[125]

Plantation slaves, too, had knowledge of what crossing imperial boundaries meant for their lives. In the middle of eighteenth century, for instance, slaves from the Danish West Indies had good knowledge of a ‘marine underground’ through which they could seek freedom across imperial borders in nearby islands, most especially in the Spanish territories of Puerto Rico and Vieques.[126] Likewise, slaves from South Carolina knew that crossing the imperial borderland to Spanish Florida would, too, grant them freedom.[127] And in the

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[122] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006), p. 19.
[123] Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, p. 115.
[124] Ibid., p. 109.
[125] Ibid., p. 116-17.
[126] Neville A. T. Hall, "Maritime Maroons: *Grand Marronage* from the Danish West Indies," in *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, eds. Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 47-68.
[127] See Patrick Riordan, "Finding Freedom in Florida: Native Peoples, African Americans, and Colonists, 1670-1816," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (1996), 24-43; Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 390; and Nathaniel Millett, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," *Early American Studies* 5, no. 2 (2007), 367-394.

much more inter-*nationalized* context of nineteenth-century North America, British Upper Canada West was considered as a real 'Canaan' by African-American slaves.[128]

Yet such imperial/colonial/national boundaries were not the only ones that shaped Atlantic proletarian workers' spatial imagining. I would even submit the idea that they were not primordial at all. Equiano, for example, did not conceptually grasp the West Indies as a patchwork of clearly delimited, colonial jurisdictional settlements but, instead, as 'West India islands', that is to say, as some kind of undifferentiated 'whole'.[129] He did not depict colonies but 'islands' made of 'estates' and, above all, 'plantations'. This was his day-to-day spatial reality, in which the plantation, as C.L.R. James argued, 'was the basic geographical structure'.[130]

Arguably the most significant and common boundary for Atlantic proletarian workers was that between the sailing ship and the plantation. After all, sailors and slaves understood these two sites as veritable social microcosms. When he was cabin boy slave on the *Royal George*—the naval ship in which his master was appointed lieutenant—Equiano described it as 'a little world' unto itself, comprising 'people … of every denomination … shops and stalls of every kind of goods, and people crying their different commodities about the ship as in a town'.[131] Such a portrayal was not uncommon for the epoch. Indeed, as early as 1708, in a controversial account of the Royal Navy, English satirical writer and publican Ned Ward had described the deep-sea ship as a 'wooden world'.[132] Similarly, in the words of Abbé Joseph Navières, the ship that took him from Bordeaux to New France in 1734

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[128] Fergus W. Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Triumph of the Underground Railroad* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2005).
[129] Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, p. 125.
[130] C. L. R. James, *You Don't Play with Revolution: The Montreal Lecture of C. L. R. James*, ed. David Austin (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009), p. 54.
[131] Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, p. 87.
[132] Edward Ward, *The Wooden World Dissected* (London: H. Meere, 1707).

resembled to a 'floating city'.[133] These images echo how sociologist Paul Gilroy has described the ship, namely, as 'a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion … by which the points within [the] Atlantic world were joined'.[134] According to Gilroy, to whom I will return below, '[t]he image of the ship … is especially important for historical and theoretical reasons… [for they] immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs'.[135]

In a manner exceptionally similar to how Equiano depicted the ship, famous African American abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass spoke of the plantation as 'a little nation by itself, having its own language, its own rules, regulations, and customs'.[136] Detailing the social organization of Colonel Edward Lloyd's slave plantation in Maryland where he grew up, this 'little nation' constituted, according to Douglass, 'a secluded, dark, and out-of-the-way place … [where] [t]he troubles and controversies arising … were not settled by the civil power of the State'.[137] This image of the plantation as a place where '…civilization was, in many respects, shut out...' strikingly parallels Equiano's description of the slave ship as a 'hollow place', that is to say, a place empty of any characteristics of humanity.[138] And like Equiano, moreover, Douglass sees the plantation as a bounded, yet permeable, social entity, for '[n]ot even commerce, selfish and indifferent to moral

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[133] Quoted in Benjamin Sulte, "Un voyage à la Nouvelle-France En 1734," *Revue canadienne* 6, no. 22 (1886), p. 22.
[134] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 4, 16.
[135] Ibid., p. 4.
[136] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), p. 19.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid., pp. 19-20; Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, pp. 71-72.

considerations as it usually is, was permitted within its *secluded precincts* … and yet some religious ideas did enter this dark corner'.[139] Although the plantation's social life was '…separated from the rest of the world…', Douglass was nevertheless aware of its integration in a broader economic network. He writes:

> Whether with a view of guarding against the escape of its secrets, I know not, but it is a fact, that every leaf and grain of the products of this plantation and those of the neighboring farms belonging to Col. Lloyd were transported to Baltimore in his own vessels, every man and boy on board of return, everything brought to the plantation came through the same channel. To make this isolation more apparent, it may be stated that the estates adjoining Col. Lloyd's were owned and occupied by friends of his, who were as deeply interested as himself in maintaining the slave system in all its rigor.[140]

The 'secluded precincts' of the plantation were not tangible, socio-territorial constructs. Yet slaves like Equiano and Douglass knew them well as broad limit-lines of social order. And while it was arguably easier for a boat slave like Equiano to crisscross them, for slaves like Douglass it was a different story. As he pointed out, '[s]laveholders sought to impress their slaves with a belief in the boundlessness of slave territory, and of their own limitless power. Our notions of the geography of the country were very vague and indistinct'.[141] What was not vague for slaves, however, is that as much as the ship could transport 'dead' and 'living labour' to the plantation, it could as well serve as mean to cross the boundary back to freedom. It is evocative that Douglass escaped slavery 'rigged out in sailor style', knowing well enough the emancipatory possibilities of seafaring life.[142]

Thus, drawing from these spatial insights, my dissertation will emphasize the socially-constructed nature of boundaries in the Atlantic world as limit-lines of situated

[139] Douglass, *Life and Times*, p. 19. Emphasis added.
[140] Ibid., p. 19.
[141] Ibid., p. 110.
[142] Ibid., p. 139.

collectivities. This strategy implicates, in turn, that I will enquire into processes of transboundary cultures of proletarian solidarity that were not only *inter*-imperial but also *intra*-imperial. First-hand testimonies by former slaves like Equiano and Douglass teach us to the importance of paying a closer attention to the boundaries that circumscribed the daily lives of proletarian workers *within* empires. In a passage describing a running away plot, Douglass reminds us that the early modern Atlantic world looked extremely different from below than it did from above: 'To look at the map and observe the proximity of Eastern Shore, Maryland, to Delaware and Pennsylvania, it may seem to the reader quite absurd to regard the proposed escape as a formidable undertaking. But to *understand*, someone has said, a man must *stand under*'.[143] It is therefore by trying to 'stand under' official Atlantic mapping (which, indeed, was only meaningful to colonial cartographers and state administrators) that I will seek to recover historical processes of transboundary cultures of proletarian solidarity.

Process

I conceptualize transboundary proletarian solidarity as *social process* rooted in class struggle context. By 'social', I mean to emphasize two important things: (i) *patterns of interaction and association* among proletarian workers and (ii) *collective agency*. By 'process', I mean the dynamic interaction between *continuity* and *change* in the *longue durée* of the capitalist mode of production. As such, instances of transboundary cultures of proletarian solidarity should be understood as 'collective action processes', that is to say, Atlantic proletarians consciously acting together across spatial boundaries in pursuit of

[143] Ibid, p. 110. Emphasis in original.

common interests. My objective, in other words, is to grasp and analyze historically those processes by which a situated collective action led by proletarian workers gets carried out beyond its context of origination and comes to be translocally articulated across Atlantic-world settings, hence generating class-based solidarity ties and identities. In thinking in terms of collective action processes, moreover, we displace the analysis of transboundary proletarian solidarity from formal organizations or institutions—which could not always exist at that time—to the dense and informal networks of proletarian life in the Atlantic world. What we have to be attentive to are not institutions but *institutional settings*, including workplaces, secret associations, city markets, ports, etc., which can provide an informal framework for organizing and translocalizing collective action. How exactly were those processes performed is the subject of the subsequent chapters.

With this conceptual apparatus at hand, let us now frame it within the purview of a fitting geo-historical approach, that of what I call the 'dark Atlantic'.

Toward a Dark Atlantic

This dissertation employs and expands the black Atlantic approach developed by Paul Gilroy to explore circum-Atlantic connections and solidarity ties established among proletarian workers during the early modern era.[144] Because it postulates a transoceanic scale of analysis grounded in the experience of racial slavery, this approach provides a valuable point of entry for re-contextualizing, re-exploring, and re-theorizing working-class internationalism as historical processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity in

[144] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*. The concept of a 'black Atlantic' was first coined by Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1984).

ways that disrupt the Eurocentric, terra-centric, and nationalistic views that predominate in the prevailing historiography. But while Gilroy has conceived the black Atlantic to invoke and capture the diasporic history and connections of African-descended people, I want to broaden its reach to include *all* forcibly-transported and racially-oppressed, workers, free and unfree, white included. My contention with this approach is twofold. First, it has not paid sufficient attention to the extent to which patterns of racial darkening developed under black chattel slavery were *also* transferred, reconfigured, and applied to many non-black workers in the Atlantic world. Second, Gilroy's approach posits the experience of African slaves as foundational to the black Atlantic, while, in fact, they were late-comers in the organization of New World unfree labour. Let me briefly develop these points, before proposing an alternative approach based on W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of 'dark proletariat'.

As Trinidadian historian Eric Williams (who is dubiously absent in Gilroy's account) argued a while ago, the development of Atlantic systems of unfree labour was accomplished through 'a relay of race', shifting across centuries from Amerindian to European to African to Asian workers.[145] In this sense, notwithstanding the unparalleled scale and levels of brutalities and degradation to which Africans were confronted under racial slavery, their experience of unfree labour, though *sui generis* to the Atlantic, was neither foundational nor entirely unique, but 'part of the age'.[146] In the British and French Caribbean, for instance, white indentured servitude was 'the historic base' upon which racial slavery was established as a system of unfree labour, an argument that will be developed further in Chapter 6.[147]

[145] Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), p. 7.
[146] Ibid., p. 13.
[147] Ibid., p. 19.

In many ways, though on a much smaller scale, the experience of white indentured servants shipped to the American colonies foreshadowed the horrors and terrors of the Middle Passage—the transatlantic slave trade. While those who were recruited willingly were most often either lured, tricked or simply forced into volunteering, a significant number, as it has been much described, were literally kidnapped by spirit gangs (kidnapper-traders affiliated to ship captains) in the streets of London, Bristol, Kinsale, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, and other seaports, before being sold and transported by force as 'white cargo' across the Atlantic, during which they 'were packed like herrings, each given but two feet in width and six feet in length for a bed, and sometimes kept beneath the deck for the entire voyage across the sea'.[148] While white servants, inasmuch as they may have been physically oppressed and cramped in the ships' lower decks, never had to face the extreme conditions of their African followers, their 'middle passage', as Williams argued, nonetheless 'established a precedent for the transportation of Negro slaves'.[149] Indeed, the ships involved in this '*white slave trade*', one contemporary commented, were evocatively called '*White Guineamen*'.[150]

[148] Frank Tannenbaum, "A Note on the Economic Interpretation of History," *Political Science Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (Jun., 1946), p. 247; See also Frank Wesley Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies, 1700-1763* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1917), pp. 46-7; Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1947), chap. 6; Hilary McD Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), pp. 59-67; and Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), chap. 8; For the French Antilles, see Gabriel Debien, *Les engagés pour les Antilles, 1634-1715* (Abbeville: Imprimerie F. Paillart, 1951), chap. 8.

[149] Williams cited in Beckles, *White Servitude and Black in Barbados*, p. 59; David Eltis has estimated that the density of white servants and convicts on board those vessels averaged less than one sixth the ratio of slaves per ton on slave ships. The servant/ton ratio was only 0.72, while the slave/ton ratio was 2.3. See David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 117-18.

[150] Henry Bradshaw Fearon, "Sketches of America: A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles through the Eastern and Western States of America," *The Edinburgh Monthly Review* 1 (January-June, 1819), p. 208.

On plantations, though treated differently on legal terms, servants experienced conditions not absolutely different from those of African slaves, with whom they worked side-by-side in regimented labour gangs, at least for some time during the kick-off of plantation slavery.[151] Considered property in custom (codified *de jure* in 1661), their labour—not their person—was 'often bought and sold while contractually bound; they were harshly punished for breaches of discipline, and many did not outlive the period of their bondage – much like the African slaves imported into the Caribbean area, who had a notoriously short life span'.[152] Moreover, servants could also be taxed as property, alienated in wills, used as currency, advanced as security in mortgage agreements, and attached to land—as real estate—to be sold as movable assets. As their black successors, they could not practice commerce and bear firearms, and their right to circulate in the colony was limited and subjected to a pass or certificate provided by their master.[153]

White indentured servitude had little in common with the medieval tradition of reciprocal obligation that had hitherto defined and structured the relationship between master and servant in England. As Hilary Beckles has argued, English planters, 'noting that capital investments in servant labor was second only to land in terms of value, developed and implemented an extreme market conception of labor, so that servants became generally

[151] Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Hilary McD Beckles, "The Economic Origins of Black Slavery in the British West Indies, 1640-1680: A Tentative Analysis of the Barbados Model," *Journal of Caribbean History* 16 (May, 1982), pp. 36-56. See also Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
[152] Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, p. 202.
[153] Debien, *Les engagés pour les Antilles*, p. 204; Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1947), p. 265; Yann Moulier-Boutang, *De l'esclavage au salariat: économie historique du salariat bridé* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998), p. 179; Hilary McD Beckles and Andrew Downes, "The Economics of Transition of the Black Labor System in Barbados, 1630-1680," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 2 (Autumn, 1987), p. 230.

known in Barbados as white slaves'.[154] Working alongside African slaves on plantations, before being eventually displaced by them, servants were increasingly racialized by their masters, who called them 'white trash', 'black men in white skins', or 'red legs'.[155] Among them, Irish servants were the lowest of the low, for not only were they referred to as 'white negroes' or 'niggers turned inside out', but were also believed to come from 'a separate caste of "dark" race, possibly originally African'.[156] It was because of the growing proximity with black slavery, as the most socially and racially degraded labour condition, that the planter class could negatively amplify white servants' racial or ethnic identities. From the planters' perception, white servants and black slaves were, for some time, interchangeable.

Thus, being 'black' or racialized as black in the Atlantic world was far more complicated than a person's skin colour, tone or continent of origin, for other factors like language, religion, culture and status came into play. In fact, if we accept the idea that the foundational experience of the black Atlantic was, as Gilroy submits, 'the abject condition of the slaves', then it could be argued that, for at least a few decades, the black Atlantic was, indeed, half-white, half-black—it was *dark*. In Barbados, for instance, the ratio of white servants per African slave on plantations remained almost in the near one-for-one between 1639 and 1657, before completely shifting to black slave labour from the

[154] Beckles, "Transition to black labor", p. 229. See also Hilary McD Beckles, "The Concept of 'White Slavery' in the English Caribbean during the Early Seventeenth Century," in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, eds. John Brewer and Susan Staves (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 572-584.
[155] Williams, Capitalism & Slavery, p. 17; Thomas J. Keagy, "The Poor White of Barbados," *Revista De Historica De America*, no. 73 (1972), p. 12.
[156] McNally, *Another World is Possible*, p. 170; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Revised ed. (London: Verso, 2007), p. 133. See also Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

following decade onward.[157] As the above examples illustrate, those white servants cannot be taken as simply 'whites', for many among them did not have the ability by virtue of their status to include themselves into the racial formulation of whiteness that was then emerging throughout the Atlantic world. And many among them had experienced a forced middle passage.

Such racial day-to-day discrimination and humiliation was not unique to white servants working on plantations. It also occurred for supposedly 'free' wage sailors manning the slave ships, a site that Gilroy considered as 'the first of the novel chronotopes' allowing the formation of the black Atlantic.[158] As we shall see later, the slave trade, contrary to what we might think, and in spite of having given rise to perhaps one of the most odious and destructive racist creeds the world has known, was not structured along clear-cut lines of black and white. Their crews were, in fact, highly multiracial and multiethnic, comprised of many sailors of Irish, Italian, Scandinavian, and other non-Anglo-Saxon origins which were not always considered 'white' in the early modern era.[159] Regularly crimped into the trade and forced to work in a highly racialized setting under slavish discipline, their position with regard to whiteness was always ambiguous, changing, and uncertain as they moved around the Atlantic Ocean, exposing them to constant threat of mistreatment and abuse. Representing a considerable percentage of all slaver seamen (in fact, the most numerous after non-English group), one Irish sailor, for instance, was called 'an Irish son of a Bitch'

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[157] In 1639-43, the ratio was 3.8 servants per slave, 2.1 in 1641-43, 1.8 in 1646-49, 0.8 in 1650-57, and finally 0.0 in 1658-70. These data are compiled in John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century: A New Perspective on the Barbadian "Sugar Revolution"," in *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 294.
[158] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 17.
[159] On these non-white categories, see Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, Vol. 2: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America (London & New York: Verso, 1997) and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

by his captain who allegedly beat him to death during the Atlantic crossing.[160] Far from being merely anecdotic, this episode is indicative of the extent to which the Middle Passage could be 'brutalizing to any man, black or white', as one historian argued.[161]

Indeed, it was common for slave ship captains to refer to their crew as 'white slaves'. One Captain Hugh Crow, for instance, commented that there was not 'a shade of difference' with the black captives shackled belowdecks 'save in their respective complexions'.[162] Such statement further adds to the complexity of race, since there were many sailors of African origins on board slave ships, and who were tolerated and accepted as crew by both the ship captain and their co-workers of European origins.[163] Although their dark skin colour made them particularly vulnerable to the all-pervading brutality aboard the vessel, and exposed them to the constant threat of being enslaved anywhere in the Americas, slave ship sailors of African origins saw their sense of blackness somewhat attenuated by virtue of their social position within the slaver crew.

Even for African captives transported as cargo, moreover, the slave ship could offer some room for thinly veiled improvements by which the relation between their skin colour and the abject condition of slavery could become, at the very least, less intense. For example, most if not all slave ships required the use of African 'guardians' or 'quartiers-maîtres' picked out by the ship captain from the black cargo in order to keep a watch and

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[160] Cited in Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes*, p. 106. See also Nini Rodgers, "The Irish and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *History Ireland* 15, no. 3 (May-Jun., 2007), 17-23.
[161] Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 100.
[162] Hugh Crow, *Memoirs of the Late Captain Hugh Crow, of Liverpool* (London: Longman et al., 1830), p. 22.
[163] See Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes*, chap. 2 and Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (London and New York: Viking, 2007), chap. 8.

police fellow captives during the Atlantic crossing.[164] As Stephanie Smallwood has argued, 'guardian status aboard the slave ship appeared to be an opportunity to enter into some other, less oppressive category of enslavement in the Euroatlantic system'.[165] In a way, the position of black guardians aboard slave ships mirrored that of slave drivers on plantations, who not only exercised wide authority in the supervision of field work, but were sometimes compelled to administer floggings to fellow slaves. These examples illustrate that, just like the pale skin colour of white seamen did not inevitably provide them with a position of absolute freedom aboard slave ships, the relationship of the terror of slavery to dark skin was no less automatic, but contingent and situational, taking different configurations under different circumstances.

Let me be clear about what I am arguing here. I am not suggesting that the conditions of white workers in the early modern Atlantic-world economy were comparable to African slaves under racial slavery. Clearly, they were not. But knowing who was the most victimized of all groups is beside the point here. My claim is not whether African slaves were more subjected to harsher treatment than white workers. Rather, I want to highlight that black racial slavery was one of many forms of labour exploitation in the early modern Atlantic-world economy. Its typical racial violence and terror was neither self-contained nor insulated but far-reaching and ramifying, converting itself as a broad strategy of class rule that could racially organize non-black workers in other, yet contiguous, settings of value-producing labour across the Atlantic world. Capturing this process is at the heart of

[164] Pierre Pluchon, *La route des esclaves: négriers et bois d'Ébène au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1980), p. 184.
[165] Stephanie E. Smallwood, "African Guardians, European Slave Ships, and the Changing Dynamics of Power in the Early Modern Atlantic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (Oct, 2007), p. 711.

what I propose to call the ‘dark Atlantic’, as a conceptual modification to Gilroy’s black Atlantic approach.

The dark Atlantic approach draws directly from W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of ‘dark proletariat’—‘[t]hat dark and vast sea of human labor in China and India, the South Seas and all Africa; in the West Indies and Central America and in the United States … who are yellow, brown and black’.[166] The dark proletariat, as Du Bois conceived it, not only include African-descended slaves and black free workers, but all racialized workers, among them Chinese, Indians, Amerindians, and to whom we can certainly add what he called the ‘half-starved Irish peasant’, who too suffered from ‘race antipathy’.[167] The concept does not deny the central experience of the ‘black workers’ as ‘the ultimate exploited’ among the dark proletariat, yet invokes transnational connections that have historically linked (and continue to link) them to other workers subjected to racialized class oppression, though in much less concentrated intensity. The focus, in other words, is primarily on class and not on African diasporic identity, although the first necessarily shaped the latter. As Du Bois points out, the dark proletariat shares a common experience of exploitation, ‘it is despised and rejected by race and color; paid a wage below the level of decent living; driven, beaten, prisoned and enslaved in all but name’.[168] Out of this exploitation, he adds in reference to Marx, ‘comes the Surplus Value filched from human beasts which, in cultured lands, the Machine and harnessed Power veil and conceal’.[169] Drawing from this view, the dark Atlantic approach is attempt to integrate the ‘black’ (African-diasporic) with the ‘red’ (proletarian-centered) Atlantics, so as to generate a transoceanic, multiplex, and subnational basis for

[166] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1998 [1935]), pp. 15-16.
[167] Ibid., pp. 6, 18.
[168] Ibid., p. 15.
[169] Ibid., p. 16.

the multiform, racialized, class experience between diverse groups of proletarian workers in the specific geo-historical context of the early modern Atlantic-world economy. While Gilroy's black Atlantic has looked for diasporic 'expressive cultures' among African-descended people, the dark Atlantic approach looks for translocal cultures of solidarity arising out common proletarian struggle and resistance against, and sometimes transcending, racialized class exploitation in the Atlantic world.

Conclusion

In returning to Marx's multilinear views, this chapter has assembled an expansive theoretical apparatus that will allow me to enquire into the pre-national phase of working-class internationalism. Thinking in reference to processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity does not mean to apply a pre-given theoretical framework to history or, instead, to come up with a new, grand meta-theory of working-class internationalism. More artisanal and heuristic, the aim is rather to use these open-ended, theoretical ideas with enough imagination and creativity so as to generate a new interpretive dialogue with instances of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the early modern Atlantic-world economy. As such, to free thinking as much as possible from long-held presumptions that shaped the historiography of working-class internationalism, I have made five basic propositions for a new research agenda which can be briefly re-stated here.

First, in order to foreground the nexus between capitalism and slavery, I have proposed to rethink wage-labour as capital-positing, capital-creating labour, which allows us to integrate unfree forms of labour within the capitalist mode of production. Second, at the level of experience, class consciousness is best captured as cultures of solidarity, that is to

say, as consciousness-in-association-and-action, however fragmentary and politically unresolved its form may take. Third, in focusing the analysis on the ways in which proletarian cultures of solidarity crisscross not only geo-political boundaries (inter-imperial) but also limit-line of situated collectivities (intra-imperial), I have called for a model rooted in translocal imagination. Fourth, conceptualized as collective action processes, transboundary proletarian solidarity seeks to move beyond a focus on formal institutions and organizations to encompass a large range of emancipatory associative practices. Fifth, employed to highlight a transoceanic, class-based experience of capitalist expropriation, forcible displacement, and racialized labour exploitation, the dark Atlantic approach aims to situate the study of processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity directly in the transnational historical context of Atlantic capitalism in the period of manufacture.

It is therefore with these theoretical considerations in mind that we can now embark on this effort to reassess the genesis of working-class internationalism in an Atlantic frame, which the next chapter begins.

3. Atlantic Traditions of Radicalism in Motion: A Prologue

Too often, since every account must start somewhere, we only see the things which are new.[1]

The last two chapters have sought to establish a new point of departure from which to reset the history of working-class internationalism in the *longue durée* of Atlantic capitalism. Critically positioned within the relevant literatures of scholarship, as performed in Chapter 1, and equipped with a tuned-up, historical-materialist theoretical framework, articulated in Chapter 2, we now face a daunting question: *where to start?* The quickest, and indeed most direct, answer would be to go straight to what I consider the first most coherent and structured instance of transboundary collective actions by proletarian workers in the dark Atlantic—golden age piracy—before turning next to an account of what I consider to be the second instance in this historical development—the 'Atlanticization' of the Saint-Domingue revolution. In addition to rushing things along, pursuing such shortcut strategy would impoverish the historical structure of the argument itself. To be sure, inasmuch as I might try to contextualize and historicize the matter in a most concise way, I start in the 1710s and golden age pirates would appear as a spontaneous generational movement of radical sailors, whose ideas of organizing proletarian resistance across space and boundaries would therefore appear as new while, in fact, they had profound roots in earlier times. In the same vein, turning next to a study of the Saint-Domingue revolution would

[1] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 27.

create the view that the insurgent slaves were revolting less for themselves than for the imported liberty-equality-fraternity slogan of the French Revolution.

Certainly, just like the context of the French Revolution played an important role in informing the slaves' own revolutionary project, the struggle of golden age pirates was, too, shaped by new experiences, of which the most damaging, as we shall see later, was the intensification of the capitalist labour process at sea. But even if one excels in the art of summarizing historical backgrounds, this strategy would leave a crucial question unanswered: beyond new contextual openings for action, what cultural elements made these two instances possible? In the first case, one would immediately find the tradition of maritime democracy that came from the medieval age, wrapped up in the new language of dissent coming from the popular revolts—most especially from France and England—of the seventeenth century, but reformulated in its turn by its maritimization. In the second case, if determined to go beyond what a few leaders had to say about the black revolution, and focus instead on the movement of masses of insurgent slaves, one would necessarily see, as Cedric Robinson has argued, that 'it was an African tradition that grounded collective resistance by Blacks to slavery and colonial imperialism'.[2] Therefore, in order to fully understand how these two traditions—one from Africa, one from Europe—came to be re-activated and acted upon in the new context of the dark Atlantic, and in a way that is consistent with our ambition to reset the genesis of working-class internationalism in a *longue durée* frame, a minimum of preliminary historical exploration is required. The scene, in short, must be set before the argument can be introduced and adequately deployed.

[2] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, p. 169.

By way of prologue, then, this chapter sets out to recover and lay out an Atlantic repertoire of organizational and intellectual traditions of resistance that were carried out from Africa and Europe during the rise of Atlantic capitalism. In the manner of E. P. Thompson seeking out pre-industrial traditions of plebeian oppositional culture in the first part of *The Making*, but in a manner more germane to a multi-disciplinarian only flirting with the methods of history from below, I want to track down and highlight how different cultural practices and worldviews came to shape and inform the experience of proletarian workers in their new experience of capitalist exploitation in the dark Atlantic. As I hope to demonstrate in this and the following chapters, the transformed continuity of these cultural practices and worldviews *within*, yet *opposed* to, the social order of the dark Atlantic tended to create relatively coherent 'traditions of radicalism', understood herein in the active sense of a continuous, yet always changing, organic development.

For the convenience of presentation, the narrative that follows is structured in terms of eventful sites. In the first section, I begin in the hinterland of the African continent and the slave-trade barracoons, before moving to the slave ship, the plantation, and finally the maroon community in the Americas. Here, I will foreground two interwoven features that shaped the construction of an African tradition of radicalism transcending these sites, namely, African military cultures and spiritual practices. Although the knowledge we have of these features remains partial and provisional, it is nonetheless illuminating of a profound and complex set of signifying practices and ideas that informed slave resistance in the dark Atlantic. This strand of black radicalism will later take us to revolutionary Saint-Domingue in 1791. In the second section of the chapter, I will visit insurgent commons and *communes* of Germany, France and England, at a moment where almost every corner of

Europe was swept by waves of popular revolts. Moving through these locales, I will highlight how they were interrelated by a common tradition of struggle rooted in egalitarian democratic communalism and Christian social radicalism. This tradition, as well shall see, was later transported beyond the Atlantic shores of Europe by the oceanic expansion of capitalism, which transformed and changed them along the way. There, we will see some of its elements being rearticulated on board the ships of the buccaneers—the first generation of pirates emerging *in vivo* in the Caribbean—who created their own independent communities which, for some times, challenged the emerging colonial social order. What had begun in revolt in Europe, as we shall see, was reshaped in the Caribbean so as to inform a new kind of revolt played out at sea.

It will be against these preliminary African and European backgrounds that my arguments on how transboundary proletarian solidarity eventuated in the dark Atlantic will unfold. In this chapter, I argue that, inasmuch as the early revolts and uprisings under study here happened in concomitance, sometimes transcending whole regions, they were rarely the result of premeditated, translocal political coordination. Though we can observe some clear ideological indications pointing in that direction, there were yet no meaningful and self-conscious efforts to organize localized revolts in broader, transboundary oppositional movements from below.

As such, this chapter will begin to lay out the idea that for this to happen, the deep-sea sailing ship was crucial as both a site of capitalist production and resistance. To be sure, the ship was first and foremost a vehicle that intrinsically entailed transboundary connections. Emerging as a mobile locale of capitalist production in the sixteenth century (an aspect developed in the next chapter), the ship occupied a pivotal position in connecting together

the producers and consumers of the world through global market networks. This vehicular aspect, in turn, had implications for seafaring workers who entertained the idea of staging a shipboard revolt and taking possession of their floating workplace. The most important one, at least as far as this dissertation is concerned, was that the vehicularity of the ship created the possibility for insurgent sailors to make their own connections, and therefore broaden the basis of their revolt across space. A sailing ship under proletarian control, in other words, could become an extraordinary means of communication conducive to transboundary solidarity.

In the early modern Atlantic-world economy, the specific mobile feature of the sailing ship, I submit, placed seafaring workers in a much better position to initiate transboundary collective actions than slaves on plantations, where the work regime was far more oppressive, and where rebellion, as we shall see in this chapter, most often implied protecting the political autonomy gained in revolt rather than broadening it to other places. Although there were some actions presaging self-conscious efforts to organize anti-slavery rebellion beyond original points of revolt, African slaves had to wait until the coming of the age of revolutions to link their movements into a broader, Atlantic-wide revolutionary project of black freedom. As we shall see in Chapter 7, the enslaved were the main instigators of age of revolutions, which they prompted in the United States in 1776 by their increasing insurgency. Fifty years before this event, insurgent proletarian sailors, black and white, had already managed to create a truly translocal form of maritime revolt, made possible by the movements of their self-appropriated ships. Because of this chronology, this chapter will take us there first.

Inevitably, constraints of space have not only led me to be highly selective in this chapter, but also to keep the flow of analysis relatively swift and at a certain distance from exhaustive detail. Moreover, as it is quite a challenge to thread together the pieces of this substantial history in a coherent narrative order without running the risk of oversimplifying, or worse ignoring, key events, and also because my aim here is only to set up a historical basis for subsequent chapters, the reader will, I hope, forgive me for being loose vis-à-vis the immediate concern of chronology, jumping, at times, from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, or vice versa, when analysis makes it necessary or when evidence is needed. My intention, in a word, is not to construct a continuous, linear historical narrative, but, rather, to develop a punctuated account—one which grasps specific proletarian practices and legacies in their moments of insurgence. Because of this very precise and circumscribed objective, I will consciously ignore the internal limits and contradictions of the movements and struggles studied in this chapter. To begin with, such task, even partially performed, would take the chapter way beyond conventional length. But more importantly, what interests me here is not to provide a thorough and comprehensive analysis of those movements and struggles, but rather, and more modestly, to tease out tendencies in their developments about the idea of organizing proletarian solidarity across borders.

'Cut off my head, I can't be killed': The African Stream of Radicalism

Lifting the curtain on the dawn of capitalist production, the Portuguese settlement in Madeira in 1415 was a world-historical turning point in the development of the dark Atlantic, for this venture led to the creation of the first true European colony committed to

near-sugarcane monoculture performed by African slaves, though not yet exclusively.[3] From this moment on, gradually and with different intensity, we can observe the long, laborious and uncertain movement to increasingly tie sugar production to African slave labour, first down the Atlantic Coast of Africa—from the Canary islands (1436) to Cape Verde islands (1461) to São Tomé (1485)—before shifting across the ocean to Brazil (1530), and a about century later to the entire Caribbean region, where export-oriented, large-scale sugar plantations hinged on fully racialized systems of value-producing slave labour—at which we shall have a closer look in Chapter 5.[4] This was, at a wide brush stroke, the structural context *in* and *against* which enslaved Africans revolted to regain their freedom in the dark Atlantic.

Hinterland and barracoon

The first act of this resistance was not played out on the plantations of the Americas but in and off the coast of Atlantic Africa, where it was directed against the transatlantic slave trade. If individual attempts to resist capture or to break away from the coffles in the interior were frequent among Africans, collective resistance to slave-traders by whole villages was, too, very common.[5] Equiano, for example, writes that when a slave raid was expected in his former village, inhabitants would '…guard the avenue of their dwellings, by

[3] On the development on the sugar industry in Madeira, see Sidney M. Greenfield, "Madeira and the Beginnings of the New World Sugar Cane Cultivation and Plantation Slavery: A Study in Institution Building," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 292 (June, 1977), 536-552; and Alberto Vieira, "Sugar Islands: The Sugar Economy of Madeira and the Canaries, 1450-1650," in *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 42-84.

[4] On this movement, see T. Bentley Duncan, *Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores, and the Cape Verdes in Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); and Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[5] Richard Rathbone, "Some Thoughts on Resistance to Enslavement in West Africa," *Slavery & Abolition* 6, no. 3 (1985), p. 13.

driving sticks into the ground, which are sharp at one end as to pierce the foot, and are generally dipt in poison'.[6] This state of military preparedness caused by the dynamics of the transatlantic slave trade, he points out, transformed the African village into 'a kind of militia'.[7] As we shall see shortly, this knowledge and commitment to preserving freedom in Africa affected, along with the conditions of plantation slavery, slaves' own assumptions of liberty in the Americas.

At other times, resistance to the slave trade moved beyond the village and took the form of genuine social movements, though these emerged less against the trade itself than against the deeper social harm in which the trade was implicated. Such a movement broke out in Kongo at the beginning of the eighteenth century, giving rise to 'the most significant "heretical" movement in early Kongolese Christianity'.[8]

In August 1704, a former *nganga marinda* (a traditional medium), a woman of modest origin named Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita was believed to have been resurrected from a deadly sickness as Saint Anthony—the patron saint of the lost people and objects canonized by the Church in 1232. The Saint had entered her body and commanded her to restore the Kingdom of Kongo and end the long-lasting and slave-producing civil war. He also communicated to Beatriz the real history of Christianity, one that the Capuchin missionaries were hiding from the Kongolese. She learned that Jesus did not come from Bethlehem but from M'banza Kongo, the capital. His baptism did not occur in Nazareth but in the northern Kongolese province of Nsundi. The Virgin Mary, in this version, was not

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[6] Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, p. 53.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Terry Rey, "Ancestors, Saints, and Prophets in Kongo-Dominguois Root Experience: A Revisionist Reading of Transatlantic African Resistance," in *Africa and the America: Interconnections during the Slave Trade*, eds. José C. Curto and Renée Soulodre-La France (Trenton, NJ & Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2005), p. 219.

only of Kongolese origin, but also the direct descendent of a slave woman. In other words, the Virgin Mary was now regarded as a Kongolese ancestor and, therefore, held up to cult veneration.

This Kongoized re-interpretation of the Nativity highlights a deep concern about race relations in early modern Kongo, and embodied a critique of the Catholic Church for the lack of black saints in its pantheon. Furthermore, because she conceived God's worship as an inward matter tied to the pious intention of the believer, Beatriz came to reject Catholic sacramental rites, such as baptism, marriage, confession, etc. Christian piety was internalized and, accordingly, nothing should stand in the way between the believer and God. As such, Antonianism favored a new sense of individual empowerment, freedom, and spiritual equality in faith away from traditional clerical control. In advocating such a radical change in Christian piety, 'Dona Beatriz had arrived at conclusions similar to Protestant thought by an entirely different route'.[9] As we shall see below, Diggers, Ranters, and radical Levelers of mid-seventeenth century England were also claiming that each believer had a priest in his own conscience and that 'God was no respecter of persons', that is to say, of social status. At roughly the same time in Kongo, Beatriz's preaching conveyed a comparable message in essence, but with a natural emphasis on race.

The majority of Beatriz's followers were Kongolese peasants and commoners, who were the most affected by the civil wars created by the intensification of the slave trade in the region. Against royal factions competing for the throne of Kongo, Beatriz preached that the kingdom needed instead to reunite under a new benevolent king chosen by the people, one who would rule by consent of the governed. In this sense, the Antonian movement

[9] John K. Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998b), p. 117.

embodied an early ‘republican-like’ political tendency that emphasized a popular conception of, and intervention in, Kongolese monarchism as a form of government. This is an important point to bear in mind, for it highlights that political leadership in Africa could be earned via some kind of election rather than passed on through inheritance. As Thornton has pointed out, ‘African states possessed a bewildering variety of constitutions: monarchs might be hereditary or elected, and they might exercise direct and fairly untrammeled power or be seriously checked by a variety of other institutions’.[10] Experience of these systems of government were carried across the Atlantic by enslaved Africans and provided them, as they revolted against plantation servitude, with concrete political frameworks in which to realize their ideas of freedom in a new context. Interestingly, at the same time in Europe, most especially in France and England, a plebeian vision of monarchy with a tinge of republicanism was, too, percolating among the lower orders and put forward in several popular movements, as we shall see below.

The Antonian project of building a new political order from below looked dangerous to the Portuguese clergy and their elite Kongolese patrons. As one Italian Capuchin missionary complained, the popularity that Beatriz enjoyed made her *de facto* ‘the restorer, ruler and lord of Congo, and was acclaimed adored and esteemed as such by everyone’.[11] As a result, the movement began to be violently suppressed, ushering in an outright civil war. In 1706, Beatriz was caught and burned at the stake as a witch and heretic. But because of strong local organizations the Antonian movement could outlive the death of the mystic black prophet. Antonian warriors continued to defend their villages against the

[10] John K. Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (Fall, 1993), p. 187.
[11] Cited in John K. Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p. 109.

attacks of the king's armies. In 1709, however, their resistance was crushed, and Antonianism defeated in Kongo. In an effort to rid the kingdom of the supporters of Dona Beatriz, King Pedro IV ended up exporting more than 30,000 of its subjects in the following years, most of them sent in the direction of the Atlantic, through the slave trading routes.[12] Among them, it has been estimated that there were approximately 5,000 prisoners of war, most likely male warriors, if not trained soldiers, who were all direct supporters of the black woman prophet, and who carried this thread of radical Catholicism to the plantations of the Americas where it resurfaced, most especially, as we shall see later on, among the insurgent masses of revolutionary Saint-Domingue.[13] As Eugene Genovese aptly observed, it was not only criminals and other unwanted people of West African societies who were swept up by the dynamics of the transatlantic slave trade, 'but also heroic rebels against oppression with prior experience in the organization of militant resistance to despotic authority'.[14]

African captives who could not escape from slave caravans on route to coastal trading ports were kept together in barracoons adjacent to the forts and factories of European traders. There, too, they showed their opposition to the slave trade, most especially by escaping. For example, the chief factor of the Royal African Company in Accra, Ghana, reported in 1681 that desertion from the barracoons was 'common', complaining that he received not enough assistance from local African rulers in guarding the captives.[15] At the end of the eighteenth century, it was well known among African captives held in the

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[12] Linda M. Heywood, "Slavery and its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1800," *Journal of African History* 50, no. 1 (2009), p. 18.
[13] John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998a), p. 204.
[14] Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, p. 19.
[15] Rathbone, "Some Thoughts on Resistance to Enslavement in West Africa", p. 13.

barracoons of Conakry, in modern-day Guinea, that the nearby Îles de Los was a haven for runaways.[16] These instances, among many others, point to an African equivalent of maroon communities in the Americas, which already highlights, if not yet a tradition, at least a general move of 'African' resistance against the transatlantic slave trade, reshaped in the Americas as an outright resistance against plantation servitude.[17]

Slave ship

Inasmuch as social movements in the interior or escapes from barracoons may have disturbed the flow of the transatlantic trade in slaves, shipboard revolts were dramatically more consequential. To be sure, compared to individual acts of flight or even mass mobilizations in Africa, an insurrection on a slave ship was, as Michael Craton contends, 'vastly more serious, since it came closer to a true political reaction to the socioeconomic system'.[18] Considering that slave insurrections occurred on one in every ten transatlantic voyages between the end of the seventeenth century and the middle of the nineteenth century, involving a total of 360 ships, such political challenge was far from being exceptional. In fact, this statistic indicates that there was hardly a generation of Africans that did not confront collectively their European enslavers in pursuit of freedom as they were forcefully transported across the Atlantic.[19] On this basis, the Middle Passage may

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[16] See John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone, on the Coast of Africa* (London: n.d., 1788), p. 16; and Ismail Rashid, "Escape, Revolt, and Marronage in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Sierra Leone Hinterland," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 34, no. 3 (2000), 656-683.

[17] On this subject, see Sylviane A. Diouf, ed., *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003).

[18] Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 53.

[19] This estimate comes from David Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 2001), p. 88.

have been as much contested by enslaved Africans in proportion than plantation servitude in the Americas—despite the fact that slave ships, with their *barricados* (the ten-feet high fence than run across the main deck of the vessel so as to separate slaves from crew) and their comprehensive hardware of bondage made up of manacles, shackles, neck rings, and chains, were technologically designed to prevent that kind of saltwater resistance. Rising up in such an oppressive context, by itself, gives the expression 'tradition of *radicalism*' its full meaning.

Contrary to what we might think, the majority of shipboard slave revolts were not launched when vessels were sailing in the open ocean. In fact, two out of three known slave insurrections occurred while slavers were in, or close to, African waters.[20] Staging revolts in such locations was, after all, 'the final, desperate expedient of captives to enable them to remain in their beloved homeland'.[21] As a result, the time of embarkation and the ship's departure from African coastal waters came to be considered by slaving crews as the most potentially dangerous phase of their business. Given the fact that completing the loading of 'black cargoes' could take up to several weeks, if not months, the threat of shipboard revolts was a constant concern for crews.[22] And they knew that as long as land was in sight, collective actions to escape bondage were worth undertaking by the captives kept below

[20] This estimate is based on a sample of 388 cases of slaves rising in revolt against ship's crew between 1654 and 1865, of which 92.5 percent occurred between 1698 and 1807. A third of slave mutinies, in turn, occurred on the Middle Passage. See Stephen D. Behrendt, David Eltis and David Richardson, "The Costs of Coercion: African Agency in the Pre-Modern Atlantic World," *Economic History Review* 54, no. 3 (2001), p. 464.

[21] Winston McGowan, "African Resistance to the Atlantic Slave Trade in West Africa," *Slavery & Abolition* 11, no. 1 (1990), p. 19.

[22] According to Daniel P. Mannix, the time for taking on slaves could range from one or two days up to a year or more. This was due to the fact that, as Michael Gomez points out, 'a slaver did not always take on its full complement of captives at one port of call. In fact, it was often necessary to sail from barracoon to barracoon until the quota was reached. In this way, the period of confinement for Africans war further prolonged by the process of collecting additional captives, during which time those already boarded remained in the bowels of the slaver for another several weeks or months'. See Daniel P. Mannix, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), p. 107; and Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 157.

decks. Were these attempts successful, the chances to regain the shore would still be good and manageable.

It was most likely this sentiment of urgency of action that compelled some Africans to foment an insurrection aboard the *Robert* in 1721. According to John Atkins, a Royal Navy surgeon to whom the event was recounted while he was sailing off the Atlantic coast of Africa, the mutiny had been 'near effected … by means of a Woman-Slave, who being more at large, was to watch the proper Opportunity'.[23] She had been secretly cooperating with a male slave shackled below deck. He was known as 'Captain Tomba', a Baga chief in the Pongo area in today's Guinea. During this period, the Baga tribes were renowned for their active resistance to slave-raiding operations led along the upper Guinea coast.[24] According to Atkins, Tomba had effectively led an effort to unite a group of villagers at the Rio Nuñez against those—most likely Muslim middlemen from the interior as they provided most of the slaves in that region at the time—who cooperated with European slave traders and raided villages for captives.[25] Tomba and his leagued warriors had attacked slave caravans, killing some raiders and 'firing their Cottages'.[26] In response, John Leadstine, also known as 'Old Cracker', and in charge of the factory of the Royal African Company on Bunce Island, near Freetown in the Sierra Leone estuary, sent his men—a

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[23] John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies; in His Majesty's Ships, the Swallow and Weymouth* (London: C. Ward and R. Chandler, 1735), p. 72.

[24] John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 129; Bruce L. Mouser, "Who and Where were the Baga? European Perceptions from 1793 to 1821," *History in Africa* 29 (2002), 337-364; Ismail Rashid, "'A Devotion to the Idea of Liberty': Rebellion and Antislavery in 18th and 19th Century Upper Guinea Coast," in *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, ed. Sylviane A. Diouf (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 139-140; Ramon Sarró, *The Politics of Religious Change on the Upper Guinea Coast: Iconoclasm done and Undone* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 62.

[25] Martin A. Klein, "Slave Resistance and Slave Emancipation in Coastal Guinea," in *The End of Slavery in Africa*, eds. Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts (Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 203.

[26] Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea*, p. 40.

gang of 'loose, privateering Blades'—who captured Tomba.[27] Taken to the barracoons of Bunce Island, the Baga chief was ultimately sold to Captain Richard Harding and put on the *Robert*, along with thirty other captives, some of whom were most likely fellow Baga warriors. As the slave ship was setting off to the Ivory Coast, the second place of slave purchase on this particular voyage, Tomba plotted an insurrection.[28]

One night, an unnamed woman from the adjacent apartment informed him that there were no more than five sailors on guard upon the deck, all asleep. The 'proper opportunity' to rise up was there to be seized. Tomba 'had combined with three or four of the stoutest of his Country-men to kill the Ship's Company, and attempt their Escapes, while they had a Shore to fly to'.[29] The woman supplied them with a hammer in order to break free, and 'all the Weapons she could find' to execute the attack. The Baga chief tried to recruit more accomplices, enticing them 'with the Prospect of Liberty,' but to no avail.[30] After they managed to make their way upon the decks, they killed three sleeping sailors, but the tumult awoke the rest of the crew as well as the ship's captain who knocked out Tomba with a handspike, leaving him unconscious. The revolt was quickly put down, and the remaining rebels put back in their shackles. Two of them were whipped. Three captives were randomly selected afterwards and killed in front of the others as examples. The female co-conspirator was 'hoisted up by the Thumbs, whipp'd, and slashed … with knives, before

[27] Interestingly, Leadstine was a former buccaneer recycled as slave trader in Sierra Leone; a path that most likely shared the 30 other Englishmen with him on Bunce Island. Captain Charles Johnson, to whom we will return later, wrote in 1724 that Leadstine kept 'the best House' in Sierra Leone, where he had three guns 'with which he salutes his Friends, the Pyrates, when they put in'. See Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pyrates*, ed. Manuel Schonhorn (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1999 [1724]), p. 226.
[28] For the itinerary of the *Robert*, see Voyage 16303, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces>.
[29] Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea*, p. 72.
[30] Ibid.

the other Slaves till she died'.[31] Much too valuable as property because of his 'strong Make, and bold, stern aspect', Tomba was severely whipped but kept alive.[32] He was sold at Kingston, Jamaica, like the rest the black cargo.[33]

In addition to the geographical cause, the revolt on the *Robert* highlights the importance of women's agency in staging shipboard mutinies. To be sure, the structure of the trade itself ensured that women captives were kept separate from the enslaved men. Contrary to the latter, they were seldom shackled and sometimes allowed free movement on decks, which not only provided them with a greater mobility on board, but placed them also in a key position to communicate strategic information about the management of the ship to male captives. Women in the organization of a mutiny played a similar role on board the Liverpool slaver *Hudibras* in 1786 just off the coast of Old Calabar, Nigeria.[34]

Furthermore, though less discernable from reports of the event, it is also very likely that the war experience of Tomba—and of his accomplices—was instrumental in executing the insurrection plot. As many scholars have documented, the vast majority of Africans ensnared in the net of the transatlantic slave trade were captured in wars, whether formal or civil, with varied intensity from region to region.[35] While a significant number of them were what we would call today non-combatant civilians, it has been argued that the percentage of soldiers captured as prisoners of war and sent through the slave trade networks 'was certainly high enough to make the African veteran a factor in American

[31] Ibid., p. 73.
[32] Ibid., p. 41.
[33] For another account of this story, see Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, pp. 14-16.
[34] See Henry Schroeder, *Three Years Adventures of a Minor in England, Africa, the West Indies, South-Carolina and Georgia* (Leeds: Thos. Inchbold, 1831), pp. 103-22.
[35] Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks*, p. 63; John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800* (London: UCL Press, 1999), pp. 127-29; Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 3.

life'.[36] As the *Robert* case seems to signal, shipboard revolts by slaves already prefigured this particularity in the Atlantic. The presence of African soldiers can be found also in the rebellion—a rare successful one at that—on the now famous slaver *La Amistad*, during which at least three Mende ringleaders, and probably several more, had direct military experience and training in Sierra Leone.[37]

This has considerable implications for our ambition to recover an African tradition of radicalism. Indeed, slave revolts—whether on slave ships or on plantations—were rarely the product of some sort of inherent or 'natural' militancy on part of the enslaved Africans. To be effective, or at least to stiffen and increase their viability, they required more than courage and boldness—they required practical skills and knowledge, which military experience certainly provided. African warriors like Tomba or those on the *Amistad* were surely familiar with weapon manipulation and various hand-to-hand fighting techniques, and knew from experience some organizational and tactical ideas about holding lines, manoeuvring a regiment, setting ambushes, and constructing fortifications—all knowledge that, along with the memory of African systems of government, would prove extremely useful for waging a different sort of war on the plantations of the Americas.

Though overwhelmingly unsuccessful, shipboard revolts by African slaves exhibit nonetheless a preliminary form of a proletarian culture of solidarity forged in the immediate context of the dark Atlantic. The slave ship may be viewed, in this sense, as one of the birthing places of an Atlantic proletarian class in the making. But it would be wrong to see shipboard mutinies by African slaves as isolated and localized events. As Richard Rathbone

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[36] Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa*, p. 140.
[37] Marcus Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), pp. 35-8.

insightfully noted, it is remarkable 'just how international the examples of insurrection are'.[38] He pointed out that as European traders knew all about what happened on other nations' slave ships, 'Africans involved in the trade in a variety of roles were presumably no less aware than their white trading partners whose knowledge of the interior was so slight'.[39] It is therefore quite plausible that stories of shipboard mutinies were part of popular knowledge among African slaves, especially along the Atlantic coast of Africa, where slave barracoons and forts, being traversed by constant back-and-forth information flow, 'were indubitably hot-beds of rumour both false and true…', which assuredly generated, Rathbone submits, '…something akin to "working-class consciousness"'.[40] In forceful and perhaps more lasting ways, this process continued on the plantations of the Americas.

Plantation

On plantations, African slaves were again quick to seize upon any opportunity to reverse their circumstances. One of their first and immediate forms of protest was what has been referred to as 'day-to-day resistance', involving acts such as sabotage, foot-dragging, feigning illness, etc.[41] Though this form of quotidian struggle was key for enslaved

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[38] Rathbone, "Some Thoughts on Resistance to Enslavement in West Africa", p. 17.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., p. 17-18. Arne Bialuschewski has recently pointed out that the knowledge of the successful shipboard revolt by African slaves on the French slaver, the *Vautour*, off Madagascar in 1725 inspired the slaves to launch further mutinies in 1726, 1727 and 1733. Though set in the Indian Ocean, this finding seems to confirm Rathbone's suggestion. See Arne Bialuschewski, "Anatomy of a Slave Insurrection: The Shipwreck of the *Vautour* on the West Coast of Madagascar in 1725," *French Colonial History* 12 (2011), 87-102.
[41] For classic accounts of day-to-day resistance to slavery, see Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1974).; Raymond A. Bauer and Alice H. Bauer, "Day to Day Resistance to Slavery," *Journal of Negro History* 27 (1942), 388-419; and Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972). In the same spirit, a more recent scholarship has looked at slave women's refusal to reproduce through

Africans to carve out certain semiautonomous, albeit restricted, aspects of their lives within the interstices of the slave system, from an analytical standpoint, it is arguably by looking into overt, large-scale collective uprisings that one can capture, in its most plain and spectacular terms, the dialectics of continuity and change of an African tradition of radicalism in the Americas. As we began to observe on slave ships, revolts on plantations seem to have been, too, deeply influenced by African military backgrounds, but also by various religious practices and ideologies of self-government. One setting out to verify this point would be spoilt for choice, but looking closely into one instance should suffice here.

The year was 1735, the place Antigua, where the sugar plantation system was striving, giving rise to full-scale black racial slavery based on the gang-labour system (to be discussed in Chapter 5). During this decade, Antigua had outstripped Barbados to become 'Britain's leading sugar island in the Lesser Antilles'.[42] African slaves had by then become the overwhelming majority on the island, outnumbering whites by almost seven to one, for a total of 24,408.[43]

In November, a group of Coromantees—the term used by contemporary Europeans to refer to Akan slaves shipped from Kromanti, the Gold Coast port—had decided to organize an island-wide rebellion with the assistance of creoles slaves (island-born), all of whom were drawn from the ranks of craftsmanship and other privileged positions, including 26

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individual acts of sexual abstinence, abortion, and infanticide as, too, a general attack on the system of slavery. See, for instance, Barbara Bush-Slimani, "Hard Labour: Women, Childbirth and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies," *History Workshop Journal* 36, no. 1 (1993), 83-99; Stella Dadzie, "Searching for the Invisible Woman: Slavery and Resistance in Jamaica," *Race and Class* 32, no. 2 (1990), 21-38.; and Darlene Hine and Kate Wittenstein, "Female Slave Resistance: The Economics of Sex," in *The Black Women Cross-Culturally*, ed. Filomina C. Steady (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1981), 289-299.

[42] Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 184.

[43] David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua, with Implications for Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 83.

slave drivers.[44] The plan was to take full possession of the whole island by blowing up the colony's governor and great planters as they would be brought together at a ball organized to celebrate the anniversary of King George II's coronation, on Monday, October 11, 1736. 'The blast was to be the signal for several groups of three to four hundred slaves to enter the town and kill all the whites, while other well-armed slaves prevented relief from reaching the beleaguered whites and seized the forts and the shipping in the harbor'.[45] But the plot aborted when the ball was postponed two weeks ahead of schedule, creating an atmosphere of anxiety and frustration among slaves which alerted planters that something was brewing. After further investigation, the plot was discovered, and 135 slaves were charged and condemned, of whom 88 were sentenced to death and 47 banished from the island.[46]

The organization of the plot seems to have been focused in significant ways by longstanding Akan cultural practices, whose influence only needs to be teased out here. To begin with, slaves had sworn oaths of loyalty across the island prior to the coup, so as to bind themselves—Africans and creoles—to the conspiracy, and most importantly to its secrecy. According to slave testimonies delivered to court officials during trial, oath-taking ceremonies were performed by *obeah* practioners (priests or sorcerers who manipulated spiritual forces to either heal or inflict harm) and consisted, in the words of the judges, of 'drinking a health in liquor, either rum or some other with Grave Dirt, and sometimes cocksblood, infused; and sometimes the Person Swearing, laid his hand on a live Cock'.[47] The oaths also implied solemn declarations of black solidarity against the whites. One

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[44] Ibid., p. 227.
[45] David Barry Gaspar, "The Antigua Slave Conspiracy of 1736: A Case Study of the Origins of Collective Resistance," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (Apr., 1978), p. 308.
[46] Ibid., p. 309.
[47] Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, p. 244, citing a contemporary source.

slave, whose testimony was recorded, testified in court that a rebel named Joe drank a 'Punch with the Oath Ingredients', repeatedly pledging to one slave recruiter that 'I will Stand by you and help kill all the Baccararas [whites]'.[48] In another ceremony, a slave named Secundi, as reported by another slave in court, had his forehead rubbed with the blood of a fowl, before being reassured by Quawcoo, the 'Obey Man', that 'all Should go well' while giving him a piece of knotted string that had soaked in the cocktail 'so [that] the Bacarraras should become Arrant fools and have their Mouths Stoped, and their hands tyed that they should not Discover the Negro's Designs'.[49] Similar rituals initiated a number of Akan rebellions in the Americas, such as in Barbados in 1692, New York City in 1712, St. Croix in 1759 and Jamaica in 1760.[50]

The loyalty oath ceremony or 'taking the swear', as Michael Mullin claims, was 'the most powerful ritual sanction in the worlds of slave and maroon'.[51] In Antigua, as elsewhere where the practice has been reported, adding dirt from the graves of deceased slaves sought to bind conspirators with their ancestors, who were thereby impelled to bestow their powers in the cause pursued by the oath-takers. According to David Barry Gaspar, 'taking the oath with grave dirt signified that the world of the living was

[48] Ibid., p. 241, citing a contemporary source.
[49] Ibid., p. 247, citing a contemporary source.
[50] For Barbados, see Jerome S. Handler, "Slave Revolts and Conspiracies in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 56, no. 1/2 (1982), p. 25; for New York City, see Walter C. Rucker, *The River Flows on: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), chap. 1; for St. Croix and Jamaica, see Monica Schuler, "Akan Slave Rebellions in the British Caribbean," *Savacou* 1, no. 1 (1970a), 15-23.
[51] Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 67.

intertwined with that of the dead, that they were united with the ancestors, by whom they swore to be true to their obligations or incur dreadful sanctions'.[52]

The usage of blood, on the other hand, served as a symbol to seal a political alliance among slaves of different ethnicities, places of origin, and statuses. In Akan societies, blood oaths of allegiance were tied to statecraft processes, in the sense that they could be employed either to enforce a political domination over subjected peoples or to break free from it by forming new alliances with neighboring tribes or clans.[53] In either case, blood is used as the basis from which to create fictive ties of kinship. 'Blood', Mullin writes, '…signifies nationality: it is public, it fixes one's legal and political existence, and it is used in oath rites to bind groups. No matter how widely scattered, rite participants remained brothers—"all of one blood"'.[54] While in revolts involving fewer participants slave rebels added their own blood to the magic potion, in those of broader scale, where it was literally impossible to collect the blood of all conspirators in one drink, animal blood—as in this case in Antigua—was used as an alternative, yet with a similar meaning: the creation of a blood brotherhood. As it implied some level of class consciousness against white masters, the blood oath of allegiance sworn by Antiguan slave rebels should be seen as one example of how proletarian cultures of solidarity were forged in the dark Atlantic.

Interestingly, the role of *obeah* practioners in these ceremonies echoed that of priests and magicians in military campaigns held in the Gold Coast, where they accompanied the

[52] Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, p. 245. One contemporary report, for instance, mentioned that Akan Africans believed that anyone guilty of violating an oath 'shall be swelled by that [Oath] Liquor 'till he bursts; or if that doth not happen, that he shall shortly die of a languishing sickness'. Cited in Rucker, *The River Flows On*, p. 46.
[53] Kenneth Bilby, "Swearing by the Past, Swearing to the Future: Sacred Oaths, Alliances, and Treatises among the Guianese and Jamaican Maroons," in *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, eds. Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott (New York & Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010), p. 253.
[54] Mullin, *Africa in America*, p. 68.

army in war. Among their functions, they prepared armies for battle by appealing to the supernatural powers for victory, advised the military command, administered oaths that soldiers would face the enemy bravely, and issued to the soldiers "protective charms and amulets, some of which were believed to make their wearers invulnerable to bullets"'.[55] The fact that Quawcoo rubbed fowl blood on slaves' forehead and gave them knotted strings as protective 'fetishes' suggests that he was preparing them for war against the white masters. Performed in a context of absolute oppression, such rituals must have given to slaves the necessary morale boost and sense of empowerment to cope with the challenge and risk of rising up against the planters. Wearing *obeah* objects, one Coromantee maroon headman in Dominica told his captors and tormentors, 'Cut off my head, I can't be killed', a declaration that emphasizes also the belief in the continuity of the soul in the spiritual world.[56] 'In the hands of relatively powerless slaves,' Walter Rucker maintains, 'Obeah became an important weapon in their struggles throughout the Americas'.[57]

In the same vein, a few days before the plot was discovered an elaborate martial display called the *ikem* ceremony or 'shield dance' was performed in broad daylight by nearly two thousand slaves.[58] White planters looked at the event as only 'an Innocent Play', but according to traditional Akan military conventions, the *ikem* ceremony implied a formal and public declaration of war of a state to another. Indeed, one published account of the performance highlights the ways in which the organization of the conspiracy itself had already created *in embryo* an Asante-type of government only awaiting the overthrow of the white plantocracy to arise from the underground.

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[55] Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, p. 246. See also Schuler, "Akan Slave Rebellions in the British Caribbean", pp. 9, 16-17.
[56] Cited in Mullin, *Africa in America*, p. 47.
[57] Rucker *The River Flows On*, p. 43.
[58] Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels* Ibid., p. 249.

During the performance, the main ringleader of the plot, an Akan slave named Court, alias Tackey, already assumed the title of state ruler, 'wearing a particular Cap, proper to the Kings of his Country'.[59] Importantly, as I began to point out above, Court had not declared himself 'king' with the intention of imposing his will autocratically on his 'subjects'. Instead, enslaved as a 'waiting man' or valet, he was exemplar of those skilled or high-status slaves naturally rising to a position of leadership and sanctioned as such by the rest of the slave population.[60] As Gaspar points out, '[o]ver several years Court had succeeded in establishing himself as a highly respected figure among all ranks of slaves, especially, however, among his Coromantee countrymen, "who all paid great Homages and Respect and Stood in great awe of him" as their king of chief'.[61] In other words, his fellow slaves, especially Akan Africans, who most certainly understood his authority and leadership as originating from the rank and file had chosen Court as 'king'.

While in Akan societies the *ikem* ceremony functioned as a formal declaration of war, in Antigua, reshaped by the conditions of slavery, it became instead a mechanism 'to ascertain how many followers he [Court] could count on, and to give notice to those who understood the meaning of the performance that he intended to go forward with the planned revolt'.[62] It had become both a means of communication and organizing. Typifying the ceremony, an oath of loyalty to Court and to his ability to lead slaves to freedom was taken by the crowd. Slaves showed their allegiance and solidarity by yelling '*huzzas*' three times, which, 'By the Custom of their Countrey…', the judges' report reads, '…signifies, not only a Declaration of their believing, … but … an actual & Solemn Engagement on their side to

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[59] Ibid., p. 252.
[60] On this subject see, Monica Schuler, "Ethnic Slave Rebellions in the Caribbean and the Guianas," *Journal of Social History* 3, no. 4 (Summer, 1970b), 374-385.
[61] Ibid., p. 235.
[62] Ibid., p. 250.

do as he does, and to join and go forth with him to the Warr'.[63] In retrospect, the judges rightly recognized that 'nothing could be intended by it, less than a Declaration of War, and of necessity against the Whites'.[64]

But what they did not know is that the war was only a violent means toward a more elaborate end. As Gaspar has revealed, the fact that the Antigua rebel leaders—some of whom had been cast in the roles of Court's generals, officers and guards in the *ikem* ceremony—had taken the surname and title of their masters and were referring to each other accordingly prior to the assault, suggests that they had presumably agreed upon a distribution of land amongst them, which, in turn, indicates that they may have had the ambition to set up an Asante-type confederal polity on the island—one from which, traditionally, they could only benefit.[65] Indeed, looking at the political organization of the revolt gives the impression that the slave rebels in Antigua aimed, like their Akan counterparts in Jamaica in 1760, at 'the partition of the island into small principalities in the African mode; to be distributed among their leaders and head men'.[66] Had it not been discovered and pre-emptively dismantled, the 1736 Antigua slave conspiracy, based on its scale and revolutionary scope, may have antedated the black republic of Haiti by more than half a century, for what they projected in their minds was, indeed, 'the Antigua world of slavery turned upside down'.[67]

It should be mentioned here that the 1736 Antigua slave conspiracy presents an interesting case of a pre-age of revolution slave revolt which, had it succeeded, would have

[63] Cited in ibid., p. 251.
[64] Cited in ibid., p. 252.
[65] Craton has pointed out a similar objective in the 1692 Barbados plot. See Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp. 111-14.
[66] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of the Island: With Reflections on its Situation Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government* (London: T. Lownudes, 1774), pp. 447-48.
[67] Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels,* p. 249.

most likely overthrown the slave system and replaced it with the self-government of former slaves. This feature stands in contrast with the restorationist-revolutionary historical typology put forth by Eugene Genovese. According to the American historian of slavery, slave revolts prior to the age of revolutions were 'restorationists' in practice and 'backward-looking' in outlook, as they did not aim to overthrow slavery but rather to run away from it and 'restore a lost world … of essentially primitive-communal social relations'.[68] The coming of the age of revolutions of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Genovese argues, 'imparted to subsequent slave revolts a new quality and power' which brought them to transcend their 'traditional-restorationist ideologies'.[69]

The 1736 Antigua slave conspiracy is interesting because it challenges this divide. The revolt was 'restorationist' in the sense that the slave rebels seem to have sought to establish an Asante-style state on the island. Yet it was also 'revolutionary' as the rebels intended to accomplish this goal not by running away but by overthrowing slavery as a system. This characteristic is explainable by the fact that Antigua was a small island where the expansion of sugar monoculture had cleared the territory of potential refuges for the slaves, hence making outright rebellion the only avenue of freedom. It also highlights that the slaves' African backgrounds could *alone* inform their revolutionary agency. Indeed, it is all the more normal that slaves interpreted their lived experiences in revolt in terms of their personal histories and knowledge, as anyone would, and for which the African side of the Atlantic continued to have meaning *even* for engaging in a transformative revolutionary process. Genovese, I should stress, somewhat recognized this possibility in his typological account, nuancing that 'the historical content of the slave revolts shifted decisively from

[68] Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, p. 91.
[69] Ibid., p. 94.

attempts to secure freedom from slavery to attempts to overthrow slavery as a social system'.[70] The key term here is *decisively*, by which Genovese suggests that the transition may have begun earlier than at the end of the eighteenth century, hence recognizing that slaves had their own autonomous and independent revolutionary agency.[71] Yet, as we shall see in Chapter 7 with the Saint-Domingue revolution, even during the age of revolutions slave revolts continued to rely deeply on their so-called 'restorationist' practices and 'backward-looking' outlooks in order to stage a revolution. Genovese's distinction, then, seems to hold only in a general theoretical sense and not in particular cases.[72]

Maroon community

Unlike the 1736 Antigua slave conspiracy, where the island's topography and size required rebels to take over the whole colony if they wanted their revolt to be really successful, the vast majority of pre-Haiti slave rebellions in the Americas did not aim at overthrowing the slave system, but at leaving it. In this sense, it may be apposite to approach those revolts in a carceral sense, that is, as it has been suggested, as collective 'breakouts'.[73] When slaves succeeded in breaking away from plantations, and in building and securing self-sufficient communities under their own leadership, they became maroons.

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[70] Ibid., p. 3. Emphasis added.
[71] On this nuance, see also Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels,* p. 255.
[72] Michael Craton and Carolyn Fick are also critical of Genovese's thesis. See Craton, Testing the Chains, p. 14 and Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), pp. 8, 243-44.
[73] Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, p. 282.

Marronage is as old as slavery in the Americas.[74] Indeed, as early as 1503, African slaves were colluding with the Taíno population of Hispaniola and fleeing to the mountains to establish maroon communities. While restricted to the insular context of the Spanish colony, this form of cross-cultural cooperation in struggle is a further illustration of the emerging transboundary tendencies of proletarian solidarity in the dark Atlantic, which also existed between white servants and black slaves as we shall see later. Two decades later in 1522, an important slave revolt broke out on the island—'often held to be the first major revolt in the Caribbean'—whose aim was to escape as much as to destroy plantations, leaving burned houses and crops in its wake.[75] Similar escapist revolts occurred, for instance, in Puerto Rico in 1527, Santa Martha, Colombia in 1529; Acla, Panama in 1530; Panama City in 1531; Mexico City in 1537; the Venezuelan towns of Coro in 1532 and Buría in 1555; and San Pedro, Honduras in 1548.[76] In Jamaica five major slave uprisings followed by mass flight occurred between 1673 and 1690, all which were led by Akan slaves. In the last one, in 1690, illuminating both the potential military backgrounds of the rebels and their desire to expand the revolt beyond local boundaries, they 'seized fifty muskets and a piece of artillery and tried in vain to persuade the slaves on neighboring estates to join them'.[77] In Stono, South Carolina, in 1739, about sixty African slaves rose up with the intention of heading southward to Spanish Florida, where a free black settlement

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[74] In this section, I deal exclusively with *grand marronage*, that is to say, permanent and large-scale maroon communities. This is not to say, however, that *petit marronage* or short-term absenteeism is not important. As scholars have showed, *petit marronage* was particularly widespread throughout American plantation colonies. Yet, because it remained mostly an individualistic form of labour bargaining ingrained in the political economy of the plantation, *petit marronage* had less to do with particular African cultural backgrounds than *grand marronage*. For the purpose of this chapter, then, I privilege the latter form of struggle. For an account on petit marronage, see Gabriel Debien, "Le marronage aux Antilles françaises au XVIIIe siècle," *Caribbean Studies* 6, no. 3 (Oct., 1966), 3-43.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Michael A. Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 111.

[77] Craton, *Testing the Chains*, p. 76.

known as Fort Mose granted sanctuary to all runaways.[78] And finally, the objective of the insurgent slaves in Tacky's Revolt in 1760 in Jamaica 'was marronage on an unprecedented scale'.[79] Seen from this broad hemispheric standpoint, marronage begins to look like a rather unitary, mass proletarian movement in the form of escape, which, indeed, was not any different from the reactions of any exploited group of workers anywhere in the early modern world.[80]

Breaking away permanently from plantations through revolt was one thing; creating an independent settlement of its own in the wilderness and keeping it free of colonial control was quite another. Success depended upon many factors, including leadership, location, and internal organization, not to mention, in some cases, the receptivity of the native population. But perhaps the most important factor was the runaways' ability to draw synthetically from their diverse African *and* American backgrounds so as to adapt them not only to an alien, sometime hostile, environment, but also to people of different ethnic origins. Here, too, in logical continuity with revolts on plantations, African military backgrounds, systems of government, and spirituality seem to have been important, along with what had been produced culturally during the Middle Passage and on plantations.

In mid-seventeenth century Brazil, while other similar experiments of self-rule were also taking place in Jamaica and Surinam, even leading to treaty agreements sanctioning their

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[78] Jane Landers, "Garcia Real De Santa Teresa De Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (1990), 9-30; John K. Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (Oct., 1991), 1101-1113; Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), chap. 12.
[79] Craton, *Testing the Chains*, p. 127.
[80] Peter Linebaugh, for example, has registered woodland communities of dispossessed peasants and craftsmen that surrounded London in the eighteenth century. These communities, he wrote, were 'analogous to the colonial frontier zones, the forests and mountains to which servants, slaves and runaways fled. … The communities were called "maroon villages" after the liberated West Indian colonies founded by fugitive slaves'. Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd Ed. (London & New York: Verso, 2006), pp. 188-89.

political autonomy, the so-called ‘African state’ of Palmares (‘palm forests’)—which we take as our case study here—was established as a confederation of ten independent, well-fortified settlements called *quilombos* or ‘war-camps’. According to Stuart Schwartz, the *quilombo* was a variant of the military institution of the same name in Angola (*ki-lombo*), where it had served to integrate, by social bonds of fictive kinship, exiled lineageless peoples (known as the Imbangala) who had been uprooted from their ancestral lands by slave feeding wars and failed kingdoms in the region.[81] It has been pointed out that many, if not most, of the Palmarinos were direct descendants of slaves from Angola, and many have been recent arrivals from among the Imbangala.[82] As such, beyond the immediate requirements of securing freedom from colonial attacks, the construction of Palmares as a war-camp on the model of the *ki-lombo* may have been influenced, at least in its formative stage, by the memory of the resistance to transatlantic enslavement in Africa.[83] The early residents of Palmares who called the settlement *Angola Janga* or ‘Little Angola’ show indication of this influence.[84] Thus, what seems to have been ‘re-created’ in Palmares was less an ‘authentic’ Africa than an historical form of resistance to capture and bondage, re-adapted to an American context.

A chief who was, in fact, a military commander presumably elected by the residents, moreover, headed each *quilombo*.[85] According to one contemporary chronicler, the *quilombo* ‘elected one of their bravest and most intelligent men. Although his authority was

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[81] Stuart B. Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 126-28.
[82] Robert Nelson Anderson, "The Quilombo of Palmares: A New Overview of a Maroon State in Seventeenth-Century Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28, no. 3 (Oct., 1996), p. 559.
[83] With regard to this subject, Anderson has argued that the fortifications of Palmares had features of both the Buraco de Tatú *mocambo*—the typical Bahian runaway *mocambo*—and the Angolan palisaded *ki-lombo*. See Anderson, “The Quilombo of Palmares”, p. 555.
[84] Ibid., p. 559.
[85] John K. Thornton, "Les États de l'Angola et la formation de Palmares (Brésil)," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63, no. 4 (juillet-août, 2008), p. 778.

elective, it was his for life. Any Negro, mulatto, mestizo [*sic*] of superior judgment, value or experience was eligible'.[86] So democratic was this election that it was done by open ballot on a majority vote: 'Those voting for one man would stand in one place, while those who supported others stood apart. The office finally fell to the one chosen by the greatest number, so that the election was never the occasion for the slightest dispute'.[87] Once the elections were completed, everyone present showed 'alacrity and paid homage to the new king immediately...'.[88] Though most likely confined within the hands of a privileged caste according to the West African customs of checks and balances, such elements of participatory democracy suggests nonetheless, as the chronicler of Palmares himself commented, that 'all of the trapping[s] of any republic [were] found among them'.[89] As Alvin Thompson has argued, and as we began to observe above, '[t]he elective principle was common in Maroon polities', pointing out the presence of elective leadership among the Panamian maroons as early as the mid-sixteenth century, as well as among the Leeward maroons of Jamaica in the eighteenth century.[90]

The overarching authority of the whole maroon settlement was held by a chief figure called the *Ganga Zumba*, whose leadership seems, too, to have depended, like his Angolan equivalent (the *nganga a znumbi*), 'on some kind of popular acclaim or election…'.[91]

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[86] Cited in Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 87.
[87] Cited in ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Cited in Anderson, "The Quilombo of Palmares", p. 553. For works that deal with the customs of checks and balances in West Africa, see Cyril Daryll Forde and Phyllis Mary Kaberry, eds., *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1967); and Robin Law, *The Ọyọ Empire, C.1600-C.1836 a West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Aldershot, England: Gregg Revivals, 1991b).
[90] Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006), p. 219. See also, Orlando Patterson, "Slavery and Slave Revolts: A Sociohistorical Analysis of the First Maroon War, 1665-1740," in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave in the Americas*, ed. Richard Price, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 260.
[91] Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, p. 127.

Among the Imbangala, the *nganga a znumbi* was a religious title whose responsibilities was to protect by way of mediumship the *ki-lombos* from malevolent spirits who might intercede with the gods on people's behalf, taking advantage of a lack of normal lineage ancestors.[92] In Palmares, one contemporary visitor noticed that the maroons had constructed 'a chapel to which they resort in their need, and statues to whom they commend their petitions', one of them was a statue of 'Our Lady of the Conception'.[93] As we saw above with Dona Beatriz and the Antonian movement, Africans from the Kongo-Angola region had long adopted the Virgin Mary as a black divine ancestor. In addition to her spiritual significance, Mary also had a political dimension. She was mythologically tied to the very foundation of the kingdom of Kongo. According to the founding myth, King Dom Afonso defeated rival pretenders in the fifteenth century because of 'the presence of a lady in white, whose dazzling splendour who blinded the enemy', which was interpreted as a political revelation of the Virgin Mary, emerging as a savior, an advocate and a holy warrior.[94] In the Americas, slaves from that region infused revolts with Mary's memories and images of their own deities, so as to invoke her protective and revolutionary power in the their attempt to strike out for freedom.[95] One of the first maroon experiences in Brazil in the 1580s, the Santidade the Jaguaripe, had been apparently caused by rumors about the appearance of 'Saint Mary Our Lady, Mother of God' among Amerindian and African slaves of Bahia, which provoked an anti-slavery rebellion with strong millenarian

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[92] Anderson, "The Quilombo of Palmares", p. 559.
[93] Cited in ibid., p. 553.
[94] Cited in Thornton, *Kongolese Saint-Anthony*, p. 160.
[95] Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999); Mark M. Smith, "Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt: Reconsidering the Stono Rebellion," *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 3 (Aug., 2001), 513-534.

overtones.[96] In their settlement, maroons 'were to encourage the establishment of the confraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary'.[97] Though only one aspect of a highly syncretic slave cosmology, the presence of a statue of the Virgin Mary in Palmares suggests that the Marian cult somehow continued to focus the maroons' strategy to secure and maintain their freedom.

The democratic egalitarian ethos among Palmarino maroons, while constantly undermined by the necessary hierarchical power structure required by the military-like conditions of their community, seems to have been translated in economic terms. Sent by his master as a spy, one former African resident reported that work in Palmares was communal, asserting that 'everything is shared in common, and nobody owns anything, because what is harvested from the fields is handed over to the council, which redistributes to everyone what is needed for subsistence'.[98] We must not be tempted to wax romantic here, for as John Thornton reminds us, several clues point to the fact that, just like power itself, a certain concentration of wealth occurred among the Palmarino elites.[99] Yet, nothing in this supposition precludes the possibility that, '[a]s did agrarian communities in pre-colonial Africa, Maroons collectively cleared the bush, cut down trees and tamed the land. Sometimes they planted small plots that were allocated to single families, but they also planted some fields collectively'.[100] What is evident is that, in spite of some inequalities engendered by the re-creation of traditional tributary relations among the *quilombos*, the communal and diversified form that life and work seem to have assumed in Palmares as a

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[96] Alida C. Metcalf, "Millenarian Slaves? The Santidade de Jaguaripe and Slave Resistance in the Americas," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 5 (Dec., 1999), p. 1538.
[97] Ibid., p. 1547.
[98] This is a free English translation from John Thornton's French translation of the original text in Portuguese. Thornton, « Les États de l'Angola et la formation de Palmares (Brésil) », p. 781.
[99] Ibid., p. 776.
[100] Thompson, *Flight to Freedom*, p. 244.

whole certainly stood as an extraordinary counterpoint to the emerging sugar monoculture on Brazilian slave plantations. Although the historical records that have documented Palmares still remain fragmentary and incomplete, they nonetheless confirm the idea that 'the world the maroons made stands out as remarkably egalitarian for its day'.[101]

At its peak, it was estimated that Palmares may have had a population of between 10,000 and 30,000 people.[102] Such growth, R.K. Kent maintained, 'served to increase its fame among the plantation slaves', who fled to the settlement in a continuous flow throughout the seventeenth century.[103] This situation provided the *Ganga Zumba* with the leverage to establish lines of communication with Portuguese colonial authorities in order to negotiate a peace treaty with them, which happened in the late 1670s. This highlights, moreover, the potential capacity of maroon communities to reach a level of political power that enabled them to stand on equal footing with empires. As one commentator observed, the formality and solemnity through which the treaty was signed 'gave a real importance to the Negro State which now the Colony created as one nation would another, [for] this was no mere pact of a strong party concluded with disorganized bands of fugitive Negroes'.[104] However, friction between the Portuguese and Palmares continued, especially as an increasing numbers of runaways continued to escape to the Black state. After two decades of warfare, Palmares was finally destroyed in 1695.

As Palmares highlights, the creation of maroon communities struck directly at the foundation of the plantation system. They stood as a beacon of liberty and, as such, made

[101] Isaac Curtis, "Masterless People: Maroons, Pirates, and Commoners," in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and its Peoples*, eds. Stephan Palmié and Francisco A. Scarano (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 152.
[102] Laird W. Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 214-15.
[103] R. K. Kent, "Palmares: An African State in Brazil," in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, ed. Richard Price, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 183.
[104] Cited in ibid., p. 184.

invaluable contributions to the ongoing struggles on plantations, providing 'a constant reminder that slaves could flee and even offer armed resistance to the master class'.[105] Yet, this contribution remained excessively confined to the localized context of the colonial society. To put the claim boldly, Palmarinos were not aware that roughly at the same time as their struggle in the forests of Brazil, African slaves of arguably every colony in the Caribbean and North America were waging a similar resistance to slavery. This is, indeed, self-evident. As Alvin Thompson points out, 'the circumstance of Maroon existence would hardly have allowed the majority of them to think, much less to operate, in such global terms'.[106] Additionally, while communication among maroons, plantation slaves and free blacks was inevitable within any given colony—for matters of food and arm provisions, but also to maintain friendship—inter-insular or inter-imperial solidarity was, in turn, virtually impossible for them, as the lines of communication were dearly controlled by the whites.[107]

As I began to point in the introduction of this chapter, it is with the rise of the age of revolutions that slave rebels will begin to learn more about one another across the dark Atlantic. At the heart of this awareness, as we shall see in more details later, was the increasingly autonomous agency of black sailors who created underground networks of communication throughout the dark Atlantic, which broke down the tightly kept isolation and brought together hitherto disconnected slave struggles into a new, Atlantic-wide revolutionary project of black freedom. But more than half a century before the age of

[105] Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, p. 80.
[106] Thompson, *Flight to Freedom*, p. 315.
[107] On this subject, Craton writes: 'The maroon ideal was a completely independent existence, but at every stage there were necessary linkages. Interconnection was inevitable on islands, but even in mainland colonies where the opportunity for escape were seemingly limitless, maroon groups stayed curiously close, retaining and developing contacts at every level—with plantation slaves, with the backwoods economy, even (most dangerous for their independence) with the plantocratic polity. ... in disseminating information almost instantly over long distances by drums and horns in African style mystified and haunted the master class'. See Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp. 64, 100.

revolutions insurgent seafaring workers were already engaged in their own collective revolt at sea. For this reason, we will leave the African tradition of radicalism here and return to it in Chapters 6 and 7, where we will see it conversing with, and even integrating with, the tenets of the age of revolutions.

'All the world must suffer a big jolt': The European Stream of Radicalism

Like its Atlantic colonies, Europe too was the theatre of a wave of popular uprisings during the early modern period. Beginning in the first decades of the fourteenth century, the so-called 'crisis of feudalism'—characterized by a severe contraction of rural and urban economies and an important fall in population—had forced feudal lords, who wanted to maintain their level of subsistence, to increase productivity by squeezing the living standards of their peasants, primarily through increased rents and labour services.[108] In addition, wars were extended so as to compensate through pillage and ransom. But because the mobilization of armies was, in such a context, more difficult, complicated and costly, especially since military expeditions had to be paid in cash rather than on the basis of military service, all sorts of tax levies were implemented by the states, which dramatically increased the burden of peasants. What is more, royal officials, who were generally drawn from the country gentry or feudal lords themselves, gradually applied this fiscal and administrative pressure, so that those who levied taxes were also those who owned the lands and made the laws, hence exacerbating the level of frustration of peasants toward the

[108] For discussion on the notion of a crisis of feudalism, see Marc Bloch, *French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Guy Bois, *Crise du féodalisme* (Paris: Éditions de l'école des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1976); and Rodney Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History*, Rev. 2nd ed. ed. (London: Verso, 1990).

gentry.[109] A series of popular revolts broke out: in maritime Flanders from 1323 to 1328; in northern Italy in 1355 and 1378; the Jacquerie in the Paris region in1358; the Tuchin movement in central France in 1360; the English rising of 1381; and the *remensa* serfs' rising of 1462 in Catalonia, to name just a few.[110]

Beyond all their peculiarities and respective timing, and to different degrees, these movements can be shown as being nurtured by two overlapping intellectual traditions. The first is what we might call 'egalitarian democratic communalism'.[111] Textually codified first in the Magna Carta's Charter of the Forest (1217), this tradition propounded ideas about popular sovereignty, free status and tenure, and social (and, in some cases, gender) equality.[112] In urban areas, it objected efforts by merchants and nobles to assert their increasing authority over the craftsmen's customary autonomy and independence in trade and skill, while in rural areas, issues of struggle were based on the defense of communal living upon natural resources held in common against the encroachments of the state and private property, as well as the preserving of customary rights of consultation over matters of work, leisure, and daily life in general.[113] This tradition, to paraphrase E. P. Thompson,

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[109] See Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London; New York: Methuen, 1977), pp. 152, 174.

[110] For an account on the revolt in maritime Flanders, see William H. TeBrake, *A Plague of Insurrection: Popular Politics and Peasant Revolt in Flanders, 1323-1328* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); for northern Italy, see Victor Rutenburg, "La vie et la lutte des Ciompi de Sienne," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 20, no. 1 (1965), 95-109; for the Jacquerie, see Maurice Dommanget, *La jacquerie* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1971); for the Tuchin movement, see Vincent Challet, "La révolte des Tuchins: banditisme social ou sociabilité villageoise?" *Médiévales* 17, no. 34 (1998), 101-112; for the English rising, see Hilton, *Bond Men made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London; New York: Methuen, 1977); and for the remensa uprising, see Alan Ryder, *The Wreck of Catalonia Civil War in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[111] For a discussion of communalism as an organizing principle of medieval social life, see Peter Blickle, *From the Communal Reformation to the Revolution of the Common Man* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), chap. 1.

[112] See Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[113] Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, ""An Irresistible Phalanx": Journeymen Associations in Western Europe, 1300-1800," *International Review of Social History* 39, no. Supplement 2 (1994), 11-52.

was not in itself radical, but became so when defended against the dominance of the powerful and wealthy.[114]

The other tradition was Christian social radicalism. It opposed the centralizing and secularizing power of the Roman Church, and criticized the growth of ecclesiastical wealth, especially through acquisition of landed property and the selling of sacred ministrations.[115] As many disillusioned theologians and other literates, many of them former members of the lower clergy, began to turn to the Scriptures so as to handle their dissatisfaction vis-à-vis the Church and reorganize their religious, ethical, and social life on a primitive Christian basis, millenarian doctrines were developed.[116] Italian abbot and theologian Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202), for example, prophesized the coming of a new age, the age of the spirit, when all laws would be abolished, and all masters, both spiritual and temporal, disappeared, giving rise to the everlasting gospel on earth.[117] Millenarian doctrines appealed especially to those on the margin of society—peasants without land or with too little land even for subsistence; journeymen and unskilled workers living under the

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[114] E. P. Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?" *Social History* 3, no. 2 (1978), p. 154.

[115] For a classic discussion of these changes within the Church, see Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1906), chap. 1.

[116] In essence, millenarianism is a doctrine in Christian eschatology based on the reinterpretation of the Bible's Book of Revelation (20: 4-6), which prophesized that the Second Coming of Christ would establish a messianic kingdom on earth and reign for a millennium before the Last Judgement. According to the myth, the citizens of that kingdom were the Christian martyrs, resurrected for the purpose of the one thousand-year reign of Christ, before the general resurrection of the dead. But by the turn of the thirteenth century, however, as disenchanted Christians grew more dissident of the established Church, the prophecy began to be read in a broader liberal sense. Church's dissidents equated began to equate the martyrs in the Revelation with themselves as the suffering faithful, which logically transferred the advent of the Second Coming into their earthly lifetime. This exegetical twist not only gave a terrestrial meaning to salvation – in the sense that it was now to be realized on earth and not in some other-worldly heaven – but, with it, conveyed the imminent possibility of the Apocalypse and the Last Judgement. The best account of millenarianism from a socio-historical perspective is Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, Revised and expanded ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[117] On Joachim's millenarianism and its influence in Europe, see Morton W. Bloomfield, "Joachim of Flora: A Critical Survey of His Canon, Teachings, Sources, Biography and Influence," *Traditio* 13 (1957), 249-311.; and Marjorie Reeves, "The Originality and Influence of Joachim of Fiore," *Traditio* 36 (1980), 269-316.

continuous threat of unemployment; beggars and vagabonds—who found in them, as Sylvia Federici has noted, something akin to a liberation theology for the late Middle Ages: 'It gave a frame to peoples' demands for spiritual renewal and social justice, challenging both the Church and secular authority by appeal to a higher truth. It denounced social hierarchies, private property and the accumulation of wealth, and it disseminated among the people a new, revolutionary conception of society that, for the first time in the Middle Ages, redefined every aspect of daily life (work, property, sexual reproduction, and the position of women), posing the question of emancipation in truly universal terms'.[118] As a result, an impressive number of movements deemed heretical emerged from all across Europe, such as Cathars, Waldensians, Spirituals, Beguines, Brethren of the Free Spirit, and many others.[119] 'The movement grew everywhere', Max Beer wrote, 'in Lombardy, in Languedoc (South France), in Alsace, in the whole Rhine valley, in central Germany'.[120]

Although Christian social radicalism did not necessarily coincide with the tradition of egalitarian democratic communalism, they did converge and overlap. Indeed, formal distinctions between these two traditions are here strictly theoretical, for they were deeply intertwined in late medieval rebellious attitudes. But when such convergence and overlap happened *in context of struggle*, an impetus seemed to have been given to both threads; Christian social radicalism was carried beyond sectarian resistance to offensive revolutionary action with firm social, political and economic orientations, while egalitarian democratic communalism was taken beyond parochial politics and given a much broader

[118] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2003), p. 33.
[119] For a classic comprehensive account on medieval heresies and sects, see Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*.
[120] Max Beer, *The General History of Socialism and Social Struggles*, Vol. 1 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1957), p. 127.

ideological and geographical outlook. Following the most glittering points of convergence of these two traditions in Europe will take us to the doorsteps of the Atlantic, where they were launched to sea and beyond to the American colonies, informing new alternative ways of life at the hedge of colonial societies, while being transformed by them. Underpinning this movement was the process of primitive accumulation. Because 'the forcible expropriation of the people from the soil', Marx writes, 'could not possibly be absorbed by the nascent manufactures as fast as it was thrown upon the world', surpluses of dispossessed radicals with connections with these traditions were shipped to the colonies as servants, sailors, and poor workers, carrying with them ideas and experiences about popular sovereignty, republicanism, and communal social relations, all wrapped up in the language of religious dissent.[121] There, those ideas and experiences informed the distinctive cultures of the solidarity of the buccaneers, who carved out an autonomous existence at the margin of colonial society.

Germany, 1524-49

We begin in the midst of the Protestant Reformation, where the German peasants' revolts of 1524-26 gave way to 'the largest mass movement in Europe before the French Revolution'.[122] The movement broke out as a result of a competition between lords and peasants to exploit new opportunities within the existing feudal mode of production, on the

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[121] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 896.

[122] Govind P. Sreenivasan, "The Social Origins of the Peasants' War of 1525 in Upper Swabia," *Past & Present*, no. 171 (May, 2001), p. 30; The classic Marxist account of the uprisings remains Friederich Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (New York: International Publishers, 2000 [1850]); see also Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants' War from a New Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); and Robert W. Scribner and Gerhard Benecke, eds., *The German Peasant War of 1525: New Viewpoints* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979).

one hand, and of a struggle over the delineation of communal rights and the allocation of communal resources, on the other.[123] Before long, it brought in its sway plebeian workers, such as the Tyrolese and the Styrian *Knappen* (miners) who joined the revolt in 1525.[124]

During the course of the War, revolutionary bands of peasants and plebeians drafted manifestos and articles of grievances which articulated the identity of their common interests. In Upper Swabia, for instance, they published the Twelve Articles, a programme that, on the basis of Scripture, called for the realization of the earthly gospel. Its substance was structured along these demands: democratic Church government; abolition of hierarchical despotism and of dues; freedom of person and abolition of serfdom; restoration of communal rights in wood and waters; abolition of all arbitrary punishments; establishment of impartial tribunals; and finally the restoration of the inviolability of the village community, and the restitution of the meadows and arable land stolen by the nobles.[125]

As Tom Scott has pointed out, 'the most radical programmes of the Peasants' War were not the work of peasants. They were the Christian Utopias of the radical reformers, men such as Michael Gaismair in Tirol and Thomas Müntzer in Thuringia, who embraced the peasants' cause, became leaders of revolt and injected a genuine revolutionary and even chiliastic [i.e. millenarian] fervour into movements of social protest which would otherwise have compromised or collapsed in the face of military reprisals or political stalemate'.[126]

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[123] Tom Scott, "The German Peasants' War and the "Crisis of Feudalism". Reflections on a Neglected Theme," *Journal of European Modern History* 6, no. 3 (2002), p. 295.

[124] Herman Kellenbenz, "The Organization of Industrial Production," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, eds. Edwin E. Rich and Charles Wilson, Vol. 5: *The Economic Organization of Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 488.

[125] Beer, *The General History of Socialism and Social Struggles*, pp. 121-2.

[126] Tom Scott, "The Peasants' War: A Historiographical Review: Part I," *The Historical Journal* 22, no. 3 (Sep. 1979), p. 719.

Müntzer addressed his *Prague Manifesto* (1521) to 'the common people', the elect, urging them to rise up against 'the damned', the clergy and the 'profit-seeking and interest-boosting' lords.[127] Convinced that history had reached its tipping point that would veer into the millennium, he proclaimed that '[t]he time of harvest is at hand!' and that, accordingly, 'all the world must suffer a big jolt'—an early internationalist appeal to the 'downtrodden' of the world to rise up and throw the 'ungodly … off their seats'.[128] Gaismair, in turn, in his *Territorial Constitution for Tyrol* (1526), which set forth the provisions for the creation of an egalitarian Christian commonwealth, went as far as to call for the common ownership of mining manufactures of Augsburg, then under the monopoly of the foreign merchant houses of the Fugger, Hochstetter, Baumgartner and Bimmel, who were accused of 'getting money by shedding human blood'.[129] As in fourteenth-century Flanders and northern Italy, the early penetration of capital as a social relation was, too, resisted in some sections of the German Peasants' War.

Müntzer and Gaismair were representatives of what has been called the 'radical Reformation', an internal dissent within the Lutheran Reformation.[130] In contrast to magisterial reformers who only called for changes in devotional practices and ecclesiastical institutions, radicals took the Reformation to mean the transformation of the social order as a whole. They advocated a strategy of 'immediate Reformation through direct action from below … rooted in notion of local autonomy and community control which also implied

[127] Thomas Müntzer, "The Prague Protest," in *The Radical Reformation*, ed. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 5-6.
[128] Ibid., p. 10 and cited in Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, p. 21.
[129] Michael Gaismair, "Territorial Constitution for Tyrol," in *The Radical Reformation*, ed. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 259.
[130] Michael G. Baylor, ed., *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed., rev. and expanded. ed. (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992).

communalism'.[131] Ideas of popular sovereignty, republicanism, and civil equality transcended their sermons and writings. Furthermore, as a substitute to existing principalities ruled by monarchs, they embraced the idea of federal covenant (or *bund*). *The Memmingen Federal Constitution* of March 1525, for instance, created the Christian union of peasant armies from Allgäu, Baltringen, and Lake Constance—an association '…founded especially to increase brotherly love'.[132] This highlights the extent to which many radical reformers sought to bring about the Reformation through a truly translocal movement of solidarity among peasants and plebeians—a process largely helped by the invention of the printing press.[133] In their *Letter to Thomas Müntzer* (1524), for example, a group of radicals in Zurich led by Conrad Grebel expressed their desire to 'establish a mutual correspondence' and 'to create friendship and brotherhood' with Müntzer and his followers at Allstedt, asking them to '[r]egard us as your brothers'.[134] This is worth stressing: radical protestant theology provided early popular revolts of Europe with the language of the universal brotherhood.

These early attempts to maintain translocal forms of solidarity among radical reformers, peasants, and plebeians are not surprising. Indeed, as we have highlighted above, thirteenth- and fourteenth-centuries popular heresies were well immersed in such praxis. What is significant with the German Peasants' War, however, and which *The Memmingen Federal Constitution* of 1525 perfectly embodies, is that the traditions of Christian social radicalism

[131] Michael G. Baylor, "Introduction," in *The Radical Reformation*, ed. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991a), p. xv-xvi.
[132] "The Memmingen Federal Constitution."*The Radical Reformation*, ed. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 239.
[133] See Peter Blickle, "The Economic, Social and Political Background of the Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants of 1525," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 3, no. 1 (1975), p. 63.
[134] Conrad Grebel, "Letter to Thomas Müntzer," in *The Radical Reformation*, ed. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 36, 44.

and egalitarian democratic communalism began to be synthesized with doctrines of covenant or federal theology as both a mode of expression and an organizing principle for translocalism from below.[135] By necessity more than choice, self-freed Africans of Americas' maroon communities, as we have seen, had reached a somewhat similar federal-like conclusion, but through the medium of fictive ties of kinship.

By the 1530s, the peasant uprisings had been crushed in most parts of the Holy Roman Empire. Yet radicalism went underground, at least for a time, reshaping itself in the form of Anabaptism, in which the 'ancient tradition of militant millenarianism was finding a new expression'.[136] In 1534, believing that the Millenium would dawn in Münster and would, therefore, become the New Jerusalem, Anabaptist sects of mostly unemployed workers and poor peasants rose up from clandestinity, took up arms and besieged the market-place, where they sought to establish a new social order in which, as one of their leaders proclaimed, 'all things were to be in common, there was to be no private property and nobody was to do any more work, but simply trust in God'.[137] The Anabaptists were ultimately defeated, most of them beheaded. But radical pamphlets and texts—not to mention Anabaptist priests and other radical sympathizers—kept flowing clandestinely throughout Europe, particularly via Antwerp, then the hub of the European world-economy, and through which the traditions of the radical Reformation were kept alive.[138] After a quick halt in England, where, in 1549, a series of local rebellions broke out in the

[135] On covenant theology during the Reformation, see Shaun de Freitas and Andries Raath, "The Reformational Legacy of Theologico-Political Federalism," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Federalism*, eds. Ann Ward and Lee Ward (Surrey, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 49-70. On the theological origin of federalism more generally, see Daniel J. Elazar and John Kincaid, eds., *The Covenant Connection: From Federal Theology to Modern Federalism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000).
[136] Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 254.
[137] Cited in ibid, pp. 265-6.
[138] Alain Cabantous, *Le ciel dans la mer. Christianisme et civilisation maritime, XVIe-XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), pp. 249-50.

countryside in the name of the ‘common weal’, culminating to ‘the most serious questioning of the social order since the Great Peasants’ Revolt of 1381’, these traditions of radicalism reappeared next in France, to which we now turn.[139]

France, 1593-1637

In 1593, at the close of thirty years of religious civil wars, the peasant risings known as the *Croquant* revolt took place in Southwestern France, sweeping across the interior countryside between La Rochelle and Bordeaux, an area that included Poitou, Saintonge, Angoumois, Marche, Agenais, and Quercy, as well as Limousin and Périgord. Although the revolt had been sparked by the arrival of newly-appointed agents of the royal *fisc* sent to exact new taxation in order to meet war demands, a deeper grievance came from the abusive strengthening of seigneurial social relations over the course of the civil wars. Threatened with losing their place at the top of society to an emerging bourgeois middle-class, French seigneurs had tried to secure and sustain their position by increasing rents substantially. Moreover, the majority of them took advantage of the social chaos created by the civil wars to not only expand their seigneurial holdings, but also to increase their wealth by allying with harboring war bands so as to share booty and additional taxes extorted from peasants.[140] A circular distributed by the insurgent peasants complained that these increasingly arbitrary economic pressures had forced them to leave their lands, ‘which great

[139] Roger B. Manning, "The Rebellions of 1549 in England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 10, no. 2 (Summer, 1979), p. 93. See also Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[140] For a description of this issue, see Henry Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), chap. 2.

numbers of them languish in prison for failure to meet the enormous *tailles* and subsidies both parties have levied upon them'.[141]

This highlights that the civil wars in France, as Henry Heller has pointed out, 'were at one and the same time a seigneurial reaction and an important phase of bourgeois "primitive accumulation"'.[142] Viewed as both a failure of seigneurs to comply with their obligation of providing military protection to the peasantry and a usurpation of royal power, it was against the predatory behaviour of war bands and the complacent nobility that the revolts broke out. New taxation imposed by royal *fisc* agents was the last straw.

In Limousin and Périgord, where they first rose up, insurgent peasants named themselves *Chasse-Voleurs* (Thief-Hunters), in reference to their attempt to oust war bands from their villages, or *Tard-Avisés* (Late-Advised) because of the initial hesitation manifested by some communes to join the movement. From its beginning, the movement set out not only against the pillaging war bands but also against the property of complacent seigneurs. One of the leaders, for example, insisted on the need 'to raze the manors of the gentry, and to maintain the Croquant army in the field in the name of the king'.[143] Solidarity was, here too, expressed in the language of the brotherhood, peasants referring to each other as *frères*.[144] The rising was highly democratic, extensive, and independent from authorised local powers. Held in open fields, assemblies were called in advance to discuss about common grievances and opportunities to strike. Literates were elected to pen down the peasants' demands and broadcast the call for all parishes to 'take resolutions for the

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[141] Cited in J. H. M. Salmon, *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century* (London and New York: Ernest Benn, 1975), p. 284.
[142] Heller, *Iron and Blood*, p. 138.
[143] Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, p. 286.
[144] Yves Marie Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants: études des soulèvements populaires au XVIIe siècle dans le Sud-Ouest de la France*, Vol. 1 (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1974a), p. 275.

common good'.[145] A movement from below was therefore set in motion, as improvised *Croquant* armies marched from province to province to hold assemblies and garner momentum. Between 1593 and 1595, twenty-one popular assemblies had been held; thirteen in Périgord, six in Limousin, and two in Agenais.[146] Thousands of insurgent peasants attended them. In May 1594, for instance, they were approximately 8,000 peasants in Abzac to discuss the demand of liberation of fellow prisoners. In the same month, approximately 20,000 peasants were attending an assembly at La Boule near Bergerac where a proclamation was issued in the name of 'the third estate of Quercy, Agenais, Périgord, Saintonge, Limousin, and Upper and Lower Marche'.[147]

As for the German peasants' revolts, a federal vision seems to have focused the organization of the movement, as self-governed villages grouped themselves into associations of mutual aid.[148] It is not surprising, therefore, that nobles accused peasants of entertaining the desire 'to pull down the monarchy and establish a democracy after the fashion of the Swiss'.[149] While in most places, peasants marched under the banner of royalism, defending, too, a plebeian monarchism, in some towns the movement '…displayed itself as a democratic wave against all authority'.[150] It is perhaps not a coincidence that one contemporary account referred to the insurgent peasants as a 'league of crazy Anabaptists'.[151] Beyond their broad objective to restore village autonomy and 'to secure the rule of justice', the *Croquants* proposed new measures, such as the appointment

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[145] Ibid., 263.
[146] Ibid., 264.
[147] Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, p. 287 and Yves Marie Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants: études des soulèvements populaires au XVIIe siècle dans le Sud-Ouest de la France*, Vol. 2 (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1974b), p. 707.
[148] Heller, *Iron and Blood*, p. 125.
[149] Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, p. 288 and Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, vol. 1, p. 287.
[150] Heller *Iron and Blood*, p. 120.
[151] Cited in Yves Marie Bercé, *History of Peasant Revolts: The Social Origins of Rebellion in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 99.

of a tribune to preserve communal rights and liberties and the elections of *syndics* representing peasants before the king, both embodying a spirit of popular republicanism. In a word: they rose up for the right to be consulted. Let us bear this idea in mind as it will resurface later among golden age pirates.

Although the *Croquant* uprisings were not revolutionary *per se*, they nonetheless struck at the heart of nobles' privileges and authority. This was, indeed, how seigneurs understood it. As one anonymous chronicler of Limousin commented: 'They are threatening and spurning the nobility ... and are even uttering diatribes against the towns ... They are actually convinced themselves they could dispense with the king's authority and make new laws of their own. In a word, they were terrifying large numbers of people, and it seemed as though this was truly the world turned upside-down'.[152] Another noble, in turn, observed that '[t]hese wild ideas were injected into the skulls of the peasants so that some peasants spoke quite openly of destroying the nobility in order to be free of any kind of subjection'.[153] This spirit of rebellion has led historian J.H.M. Salmon to submit that, while not revolutionary, the risings of the *Croquants* nonetheless 'indicate clearly enough that the peasantry were engaged in a conscious struggle with the noblesse, and that, while they did not intend to recast the structure of society, they wanted to modify its balance'.[154]

In spite of its impressive scope, the *Croquant* movement was brought to heel and defeated by experienced and more heavily-armed soldiers. But the spirit of sedition persisted, and openly resurfaced a few decades later, first in Guyenne in 1635, in Agenais and Saintonge in 1636, and in Périgord in 1637. Emerging in the context of the Thirty

[152] Cited in ibid.
[153] Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, p. 290.
[154] Ibid.

Years' War whose supply increased the tax burden of peasants, these risings were, too, driven by anti-seigneurial and anti-fiscal ideologies. According Yves-Marie Bercé, the last one in Périgord was one of the greatest peasant uprisings in the history of France.[155] Calling themselves the 'Communautés soulevées de Périgord', insurgent peasants not only sought to restore justice and liberty, but re-appropriated these matters in the course of their struggle by self-proclaiming popular counsels which defied the hierarchical authority structure of communes.

But, again, the royal troops of 3,400 infantry and cavalry soldiers repressed the movement, killing approximately 1,500 peasants and turning about forty rebel leaders to Bordeaux magistrates.[156] Expropriated by the wars and debts, many others, as we shall see shortly, left voluntarily for Bordeaux, La Rochelle and other of France's Atlantic seaports, where their new proletarian conditions took them to the high seas and to the empire's colonies. But before following their tracks across the Atlantic, we need to make one last stop in England, where a constitutional polemic from above between Charles I and wealthy parliamentarians soon unleashed popular forces from below, re-enacting the traditions of Christian social radicalism and egalitarian democratic communalism in a near-revolutionary fashion.

England, 1642-50

I jump quickly over five years of civil war, anti-Stuart street politics and mob actions—caused, in large part, by Charles I's attempts to impose unlawful forms of taxation and

[155] Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, vol. 2, p. 403.
[156] Howard G. Brown, "Domestic State Violence: Repression from the Croquants to the Commune," *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 3 (Sep., 1999), p. 600.

Protestant religious orthodoxy—and go straight to Fall 1647. With the end of hostilities, the then Presbyterian-led Parliament sought to disband the bulk of the New Model Army without paying more than a fraction of arrears due to soldiers, and to pack the rest off for imperial service in Ireland. Created two years before as a professional fighting force deployed to defeat the king, the Army had been made possible by the massive conscription of what Christopher Hill called 'masterless men'—forest and land squatters, vagabonds, street beggars, itinerant labourers, unemployed craftsmen, impoverished tradesmen, and various radical sectaries.[157] Hitherto dispersed, unacquainted and disparate, this proletarian underclass had been given the chance, through martial service, to meet and organize itself within the regiment, where these new war workers shared their experience and discussed their radical views, thanks to the freedom of association and discussion that prevailed in the army. Radicalized by their bonding experience of war against royal absolutism, and increasingly self-conscious of their class position within the conflict, common soldiers viewed the attempt of the Presbyterian majority in the House to disband their troops without pay not only as a betrayal vis-à-vis their considerable labour sacrifice during the war, but also as a threat that the peace settlement would bear a Presbyterian stamp and, therefore, restore the king's prerogative.

The growing animosity between Parliament and the Army transformed soldiers' already sharpen political consciousness into revolutionary insurgency. As a result, they began to organize themselves by electing representatives—known as the 'Agitators'—from each regiment, who were appointed to a newly-created General Council of the Army.

[157] Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London & New York: Penguin Books, 1991), chap. 3. On the poor conscripted as soldiers in the Army, see Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1645-1653* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 31, 88.

Regimental committees were set up with representation from every troop and company, and to which soldiers were reportedly contributing 4d. so as to defray the costs of such organizing from below.[158] Initiatives for a broader mass movement were made as envoys were sent to forge links with non-New Model forces and civilian sympathizers, most of them Levellers, throughout the kingdom. A printing press was purchased and pamphlets, engagements, and declarations of grievances were produced and broadcasted.

After Charles I was seized and put in its custody as a bargaining weapon, the Army marched toward London in order to assert power over Parliament and prevent a Presbyterian counterrevolution. Soldiers besieged Westminster, and for a short while regiments of masterless men were in a position of effective political power in England. But in order to bring about a complete revolutionary social change, the Army along with their radical sympathizers and allies needed to lay down the principles of the new social order to come. This takes us to the famous series of debates of the General Council held at St. Mary's Church, in the London suburb of Putney, between late October and early November 1647. There, as they were determined to secure the popular understanding of democracy, sovereignty, and freedom developed in the bloody workshop of the war, common soldiers and their elected representatives were on the threshold of real revolutionary power.

The discussions at Putney focused on a radical and comprehensive constitutional text called *An Agreement of the People*, penned by army agitators and civilian Levellers a few weeks before. The *Agreement* sought to establish the constitutional '...grounds of common right and freedom...' before being submitted 'to the joint concurrence of all the free

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[158] Gentles, *The New Model Army*, p. 162.

commons of England'.[159] In addition to promoting the sovereignty of the people, a representative system of government, and regularly-held elections, the text listed a series of freedoms meant to be permanently granted to people without distinction of '...tenure, estate, charter, degree, birth or place...'.[160] The first promoted liberty of conscience in matters of religion. The second, speaking to the issue of labour, most especially forced labour, prohibited 'impressing and constraining any of us to serve in the wars...'.[161] According to Atlanticist historian John Donoghue, this anti-impressment provision in the *Agreement* 'represented one of the most radical political developments of the English Revolution...' because it '...wedded the bodily freedom of citizens to their liberty of conscience, as military service would now depend on the consent of citizens—a case study of how the Levellers made the foundational republican principle of government by popular consent operative within the unpropertied commonality, the demographic most impacted by impressment'.[162] Indeed, by claiming a labour-based freedom of conscience, common soldiers sought to gain control not only over their own martial labour but also over its righteousness for the commonwealth, a matter they clearly understood in class terms. As the provision further stated, 'we do not allow [the power to impress] in our representatives ... because money (the sinews of war) being always at their disposal, they can never want numbers of men apt enough to engage in any just cause'.[163] This statement, it should be emphasized, came from the expropriated and impoverished, who knew from experience that the enclosure process in the countryside and capital concentration in urban trades were

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[159] "An Agreement of the People." *The Putney Debates: The Levellers*, eds. Philip Baker and Geoffrey Robertson, 2007), p. 52.
[160] Ibid., p. 54.
[161] Ibid.
[162] John Donoghue, *Fire under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 191.
[163] 'An Agreement of the People', p. 54.

directly connected to many forms of forced labour which included not only military and naval impressment but also indentured servitude in the colonies—all serving the 'just cause' of a propertied oligarchy in power. In this sense, the subscribers to the *Agreement* attached a fundamental proletarian dimension to the concept of popular sovereignty.

Yet the most divisive issue of the *Agreement* at Putney, one that separated patrician high commanders—known as the 'Grandees'—from the ordinary battle-lines and their agitators, related to the question of universal manhood suffrage. While common soldiers and their commanders could agree on the abstract notion that republicanism meant government *by* the people, they disagreed over who concretely constituted *the* people, and to whom, accordingly, the franchise should be conceded. To the Grandees, represented by Commissary-General Henry Ireton, it was held that 'the people' were property-holders, most especially the landowners. Ireton contended that 'no person hath a right ... in determining or choosing those that shall determine what laws we shall be ruled by here ... that has not a permanent fixed interest in this kingdom', by which he meant 'those people that have a property ... in the land'.[164] To the soldierly, in turn, as voiced by Colonel Thomas Rainsborough who took their side in the debates, 'the people' meant *all* the commonality without distinctions (with the exception of women). In a celebrated passage responding to Ireton, Rainsborough boldly claimed that because 'the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live, as the greatest he ... the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he hath not had a voice to put himself under'.[165]

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[164] A. S. P. Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty: Being the Army Debates (1647-49) from the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents*, 3rd ed. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1986), pp. 53-4, 66.
[165] Ibid., p. 53.

This contention, however, was not strictly based on an abstract principle of democracy. Rather, as the *Agreement* had already articulated, it was directly tied to the question of the bodily freedom of the emerging working class in England. For Rainsborough, a propertied franchise was a threat to democracy because it would 'make hewers of wood and drawers of water' out of the propertyless, leaving 'the greatest part of the nation ... enslaved'.[166] A universal franchise, in this construct, would serve as a political tool for the working class to resist impressment and the forced commodification of their labour by the wealthy-property owners in power. Insisting on the class bias underpinning this method of mobilizing proletarian labour, Rainsborough reminded the audience that 'in all presses that go forth none must be pressed that are freehold men. When these gentlemen fall out among themselves they shall press the poor scrubs to come and kill one another for them'.[167] The common soldier, he further declared, did not fight royal absolutism 'to enslave himself, to give power to men of riches, men of estates, to make him a perpetual slave'.[168] As Leveller and elected Army agitator Edward Sexby put it, '[w]e have engaged in this kingdom and ventured our lives … to recover our birthrights and privileges as Englishmen … If this thing [be denied the poor], that with so much pressing after [they have sought, it will be the greatest scandal]'.[169]

Fashioned and put into practice in the regiment assemblies of war workers, this radical view of democracy was ultimately suppressed by the Grandees' oratory skills at Putney, where the right of private property triumphed over that of the common people. The 'scandal' had finally materialized. Feeling that they had been fooled in the negotiations,

[166] Ibid., p. 67.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., p. 71.
[169] Ibid., p. 69.

soldiers tried to organize several mutinies but were overwhelmingly defeated by commanders, who took the occasion to launch a purge of radicals and Leveller agitators within the troops, putting an end to the General Council and the rank-and-file democracy. In their turn, civilian Levellers were no longer tolerated by the House as Cromwell resolved to imprison their leaders for seditious activity.

In spite of being pushed back to the underground, the revolt within the revolution continued to carry on for a few more months. In the Spring of 1649 at St. George's Hill in Surrey, close to the radical South Bank of London, where there had been a great deal of enclosure and consequent hardship to the peasantry, a small group of less than a hundred dispossessed proletarians naming themselves the 'True Levellers' or Diggers seized upon a moment of acute instability to occupy eleven acres of waste lands and dig and plough up a colony as a practical experiment of voluntary agrarian communism. Led by destitute tradesman, virulent anti-cleric and millenarian extremist, Gerrard Winstanley, the Diggers sought to extend and translate the Leveller justification of a popular political democracy in concrete economic terms. As Winstanley declared in echo to Rainsborough's famous declaration at Putney, 'the poorest man hath true a title to the land as the richest man'.[170] It was under the conviction that 'the earth must be set free from entanglements of lords and landlords, and that it shall become a common treasury to all' that they established their egalitarian, communal and democratic colony in St. George's Hill.[171]

Believing in a universal brotherhood of the Christian poor, the Diggers were arguably the most ideologically internationalist group of proletarian radicals in England at the time.

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[170] Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom, and Other Writings*, ed. Christopher Hill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 131.
[171] Ibid., p.128.

They defiantly declared to the 'lords of Manors, and lords of the Land … [t]hat your Laws shall not reach to oppress us any longer', before informing them that they intended 'to send forth this declaration abroad'.[172] After all, they spoke 'for and in the behalf of all the poor oppressed people of England and the whole world'.[173] Although less organized than the Levellers, the Diggers nonetheless urged solidarity among the dispossessed, for 'wheresoever there is a people thus united by common community of livelihood into oneness, it will become the strongest land in the world, for then they will be as one man to defend their inheritance'.[174] Such defense of communal ownership of property legitimately implied, in Winstanley's words, '[t]he rising up of the people by force of arms … to beat down the turbulence of any foolish or self-ended spirit that endeavours to break their common peace'.[175] Stretching back, it was claimed, to the egalitarian and communistic state of nature of the Golden Age, the right to resist tyranny in the name of customs had become not only legitimate in the minds of proletarians but a duty—an idea taken up and further developed a century later by Rousseau.

The Diggers' apocalyptic message was heard among the poor of England, for several other like-colonies appeared in many places during the following year—in Northamptonshire, Kent, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, Bedfordshire, Leicestershire, Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire.[176] Yet, by April 1650 all Digger colonies were dispersed by the army and their residents convicted as trespassers, their huts and furniture burned. The movement was put down before it had reached any significant dimension. Beneath of the surface of the soon-to-come Cromwellian dictatorial stability,

[172] Ibid., pp. 98, 103.
[173] Ibid., p. 108.
[174] Ibid., p. 89.
[175] Ibid., p. 318.
[176] Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p. 124.

many other loosely-organized groups of religious enthusiasts multiplied exceedingly throughout England's underworld, among them Seekers, Ranters, Quakers, Familists, and Muggletonians, which, albeit differently and with some modifications, reconnected with the ideas of the radical Reformation. Forced to stay below the radar of official politics and religious piety in England, these currents of radicalism would soon re-remerge from darkness in a new Atlantic setting.

In spite of their widened translocal scope, and for as much as their ideologies of protest were rooted in universalist outlooks, these popular movements in Europe remained, like those of slaves and maroons in the Americas, confined to their original geography of occurrence and were barely able to extend their horizon beyond that point. The *Croquant* uprisings were limited to Southwestern France, while the English Civil War to England, in spite of some ramifications in Wales and Scotland. The only exception perhaps was the German Peasants' War, which came to engulf the Empire's southern and central tiers, while spilling over language barriers into French-speaking Lorraine and Italian-speaking South Tyrol. Indeed, as the *Letter to Thomas Müntzer* has exemplified, there seems to have been deliberate attempts to coordinate collective actions across borders during the movement. Another example of such transboundary coordination can be seen in the broad diffusion of, and subscription to, the Twelve Article of Upper Swabian peasants. According to Peter Blickle, the document 'held together the revolution of 1525 like a clamp both in terms of matter and in terms of time. … In barely two months 20 editions were printed and spread over the whole area of the uprising from Thuringia to Tyrol, from the Alsace to Salzburg'.[177] Similarly, Michael Gaismair had been involved in the construction of an anti-

[177] Blickle, "The Economic, Social and Political Background of the Twelve Articles", p. 63.

Habsburg multinational peasant army involving Zurich, the south German cities and Venice.[178]

In this sense, orthodox Marxists were quite right to look at the German Peasants' War as embodying a forerunner form of working-class internationalism—a movement that already promoted both 'the idea of the international solidarity of all the oppressed, and the need ... for a world-wide movement that should transcend the barriers of nationality'.[179] They were also right, moreover, to claim that, in spite of such early signs pointing toward working-class internationalism, the revolution of 1525 remained mostly 'a local German affair'.[180] As I tried to make clear in Chapter 1, their error, repeated so many times since, was to assert on the basis of a rigid, unilinear conception of history that only modern industry could break up such isolation of struggles and enable the development of working-class internationalism. Perhaps too teleologically minded about the so-called 'primitiveness' of the early accumulation of (industrial) capital during the period of manufacture, they did not see, or simply ignored, that the Atlantic expansion of the capitalist mode of production from the sixteenth century onward did create conditions for forms of transboundary proletarian solidarity to develop within the huge masses of proletarian labour that it has put in motion. As I began to do above with African slaves, in order to observe this development one must leave the European *terra firma* and turn toward the Atlantic.

[178] Walter Klaassen, *Michael Gaismair: Revolutionary and Reformer* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), p. 2.
[179] Stekloff, *History of the First International*, p. 1.
[180] Friederich Engels, *The German Revolutions: The Peasant War in Germany, and Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 119.

Taking the revolt to the Atlantic

The defeat of the *Croquants* in France and that of the Levellers in England coincided with imperial initiatives to consolidate colonial possessions in the Atlantic, and for which extensive maritime and plantation labour was required. Settled in the 1620s and 1630s, St. Christopher, Guadeloupe and Martinique were by then developing—though still modestly—their plantation economies, launching the transatlantic system of French *engagés*. As Gabriel Debien showed, the overwhelming majority of these white indentured servants during this period came from the west-central part of France, where most of the *Croquant* revolts took place, and where La Rochelle was the natural Atlantic doorway.[181] Similarly, the victory of the Grandees over the common people in England paved the way, after a first test in Ireland, to Cromwell's Western Design against the Spanish possessions in the Caribbean between 1654 and 1660, which ultimately led to the establishment of the sugar planting interest in Jamaica. From that moment on, as the dust of the civil war had not yet settled, merchant colonists and state rulers were sharing the thought that '[o]ne labouring man is of more advantage to England, though out of it, than any thirty of the like kind can be within it'.[182] As a result, what the *Croquants* and Levellers had stood for in their respective struggle was simultaneously expelled from Europe to the Atlantic by the forces of capitalist expansion. From the bay of La Rochelle and London's Thames, ideas and practices about popular republicanism, communal self-government, and liberty of conscience in religion and labour, would flow across the ocean to the colonies, where they would be given a new chance to shape proletarian resistance and revolt.

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[181] Debien, *Les engagés pour les Antilles*, chap. 5, esp. p. 113. See also Frédéric Mauro, "French Indentured Servants for America, 1500-1800," in *Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labour before and After Slavery*, eds. Piet Emmer and Ernst van den Boogaart (Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff, 1986), 83-104.

[182] Sir Dalby Thomas, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Growth of the West-Indies Colonies and of the Great Advantages they are to England, in Respect to Trade* (London, 1690), p. 411.

In 1660 and in 1665-68, for instance, mass uprisings led by *engagés* and small tobacco farmers broke out in Martinique against work conditions, poor social advancement and heavy-handed purchasing policies of the Compagnie des Indes, many of them expatriating to English and Spanish neighboring colonies.[183] In a similar context, another revolt erupted in the settlements of Saint-Domingue in 1670, where insurgent *engagés* and farmers, under the slogan of 'Neither Company, nor Governor', set up their own local self-governed assemblies, with *syndics* and other elected representatives, as the *Croquants* had done in France.[184] According to Père Jean-Baptiste Labat, the insurgents 'wanted to establish a republic, without depending on anyone'.[185] Such statement by one contemporary observer is consistent with the fact that, as historian J. S. Bromley confirms, many insurgents in Martinique and Saint-Domingue 'came from areas affected by peasant risings against the royal *fisc* and the proliferation of crown agents, not to mention plunder by unpaid soldiers, in the 1630s; the *Croquants* of Saintonge, Angoumois and Poitou, the *Nu-Pieds* of Normandy'.[186] Rural immigrants from Pays de la Loire who arrived in Saint-Domingue a year after as a new convoy of *engagés* were aware of the uprising on the island and attempted to reanimate it upon their arrival. Marine minister Colbert attributed this conspiracy to the presence of Saint-Domingue rebel deportees waiting their sentence in

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[183] Maurice Satineau, *Histoire de la Guadeloupe sous l'Ancien Régime, 1635-1789* (Paris: Payot, 1928), p. 73; Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), p. 26.

[184] Charles Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue aux XVIIe Et XVIIIe siècles (Haïti Avant 1789)* (Paris: l'École, 1975), p. 104.

[185] Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amérique contenant l'histoire naturelle de ces pays, l'origine, les mœurs, la religion & le gouvernement des habitans anciens & modernes*, Vol. 7 (Paris: Chez Theodore le Gras, 1742), p. 90.

[186] J. S. Bromley, "Outlaws at Sea, 1660-1720: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity among the Caribbean Freebooters," in *History from Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology in Honour of George Rudé*, ed. Frederick Krantz (Montréal: Concordia University Press, 1985), pp. 308-9.

Nantes, where they allegedly shared their experience with the Atlantic-bound departing *engagés*.[187]

In 1675-76, when many thousands of white servants, poor frontiersmen and African slaves rose up in Virginia against the colonial elite, plundered plantations and seized control of the capital, they constituted a revolutionary 'Association', swearing to each other 'to uphold the country as long as we can … rather than submit to any soe miserable a slavery (when none can longer defend ourselves, our lives and Liberties)'.[188] In what seems to be a clear inspiration from the Levellers' *Agreement of the People*, the Virginian rebels, under the leadership of radical colonist Nathaniel Bacon, published a 'Manifesto and Declaration of the People' that pleaded the 'cause of the oppressed … without any reservation', including '[our] dear Brethren bought and sold'.[189] While comprising the same radical ideas, the language of Putney had been transformed in Virginia by the conditions of colonization and slavery. This 'giddy-headed multitude' accused their colonial rulers and masters, whom they called 'Grandees', of having 'suckt up the Publique Treasure' at the expense of the multiracial 'commonalty', all for 'the advancement of private Favourits and other sinnister ends'.[190] One of those ends was to have carried on wars 'not only without but against the Consent of the People', a strong allusion to ideas of popular sovereignty and of the bodily freedom of the working masses.[191] In bold levelling terms, the Virginian rebels claimed that they stood for 'Equal Justice administered to all men', an objective that would make 'the meanest of them equall with, or in better condition than those that Ruled

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[187] Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue*, p. 117.
[188] "Narrative of Bacon's Rebellion." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 4, no. 2 (Oct., 1896), p. 150.
[189] "Proclamations of Nathaniel Bacon." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 1, no. 55 (1, 1893), 56.
[190] "Narrative of Bacon's Rebellion", p. 121; ibid., pp. 56, 57, 59.
[191] Ibid., p. 60.

over them'.[192] After the rebellion was quelled, one common Virginian declared to the judges that 'hee had no Kindnesses for Kings, and they had Noe Right but what they got by Conquest and the Sword', before adding in a way that echoes Winstanley's idea of the legitimacy of armed resistance against tyrannical rule that 'hee that could by power of the sword deprive them thereof had as good & just a Title to it, as the King himselfe: and that if the King should Deny to do him right … he would make noe more to sheath his sword in His heart or Bowells than in his owned mortall Enemyes'.[193] As one of the signatories of the 'Manifesto and Declaration of the People' said to the colony's Secretary of State, their rebellion aimed at nothing less than the 'subvercon of the Laws & and to Levell all'.[194]

In addition to rising up, flight from exploitation and oppression was, as for slaves, another option to white servants. In Virginia and North Carolina, as early as the 1630s, fugitives—among them participants in the Bacon's Rebellion—found refuge in the dismal swamp of Roanoke, where a 'multiethnic maroon state' was eventually created.[195] Similarly, *engagés* from Saint-Domingue and from other French Antilles islands escaped from their masters and fled to Tortuga Island, just north of the western tip of Hispaniola, where they joined the ranks of the *boucaniers*. In the early seventeenth century, these independent communities of wandering French hunters and butchers—some of them sailors, peasants and soldiers—occupied the inhabited northwestern coast of Hispaniola, where vast herds of hogs and cattle were running wild in the forest after the Spaniards

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[192] Ibid., p. 58; cited in Stephen Saunders Webb, *1676, the End of American Independence* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 145.

[193] Cited in Peter C. Herman, "'We all Smoke here': Behn's *The Widdow Ranter* and the Invention of American Identity," in *Envisioning an English Empire: Jamestown and the Making of the North Atlantic World*, eds. Robert Appelbaum and John Wood Sweet (Philadelphia: University Pennsylvania Press, 2005), pp. 267-8.

[194] Cited in ibid., p. 267.

[195] Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, pp. 138-9.

abandoned their *haciendas* in the south. They acquired their name from the word *boucan* in the Carib language, which referred to the way native people smoked their meat over a wooden frame made of sticks upon which wild hogs were broiled. *Boucaniers* lived in small groups of independent producers, supporting themselves mostly from selling hides and meat.

Ethnologist André-Marcel d'Ans sees a direct continuity between the communal social relations among the peasantry of Southwestern France and those among the *boucaniers* of Saint-Domingue and Tortuga.[196] Hunting-related decisions were made collectively, and everything was put in common by mutual agreements according to the naval institution of *matelotage*. Common throughout the early French Antilles, *matelotage* is described by former indentured servant, ship surgeon, and self-taught pirate historian, Alexander Exquemelin, who knew the life among the *boucaniers* first-hand:

> When a man has finished his service, he seeks a partner and they pool all they possess. They draw up a document, in some cases saying that the partner who lives longer shall have everything, in others that the survivor is bound to give part to the dead man's friends or to his wife, if he was married. Having made this arrangement, some go off marauding, others to hunt, and others to plant tobacco, as they think best.[197]

As this passage highlights, early *boucaniers* also practiced occasional plundering of passing Spanish galleons, especially in the rainy season when hunting was at a standstill. Eventually, they were ousted from Saint-Domingue by the Spaniards and re-settled in Tortuga. When the island was put under a loosely-centralized Huguenot colonial authority in the 1630s, the governor turned it into a privateering base as a factor of economic

[196] André-Marcel d'Ans, *Häiti: paysage et société* (Paris: Karthala, 1987), p. 101.
[197] Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2000 [1678]), pp. 53-4.

development, but also as a way to provide employment to unruly settlers. From then on, random piratical excursions off the coast of Tortuga 'began to mature into organized, large-scale operations as outlaws, marooned men and deserters of various nationalities joined the roving French hunters'.[198] With more than 500 French *boucaniers* of Tortuga turning to privateering in the 1650s, the term 'buccaneers' was soon adopted to mean privateers operating in the Caribbean and preying upon Spanish shipping and ports.[199]

The rough-and-ready egalitarian and communal impulses that *boucaniers* had established among themselves on land were therefore transferred to the seas. 'When a buccaneer is going to sea he sends word to all who wish to sail with him', writes Exquemelin.[200] Privateering ships were, at least in the beginning, the common property of buccaneers, owned according to an extended form of *matelotage*.[201] French Jesuit traveler and chronicler Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix wrote, for example, that early buccaneers 'began by joining together, & by forming these small societies, to which they gave, like the *Boucaniers*, the name of *Matelotage*'.[202] Unlike their golden age successors, as we shall see Chapter 5, buccaneers were largely the owners of their tools of production. 'When all are ready,' Exquemelin continues, 'they go on board, each bringing what he needs in the way of weapons, powder and shots'.[203] This communal feature imported from the land intermixed with the customs of maritime democracy (on which more later), which

[198] Jenifer Marx, *Pirates and Privateers of the Caribbean* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1992), p. 130.
[199] Jean-Pierre Moreau, *Une histoire des pirates: des mers du Sud à Hollywood* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006), p. 99.
[200] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, p. 70.
[201] Philippe Girard, *Haiti: The Tumultuous History--from Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 21.
[202] Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'isle espagnole ou de S. Domingue, écrite particulièrement sur des mémoires manuscrits du P. Jean-Baptiste Le Pers, Jésuite, missionnaire à Saint Domingue, & sur les pièces originales, qui se conservent au dépôt de la Marine*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Hippolyte-Louis Guerin, 1731), p. 52.
[203] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, p. 70.

must have been not so foreign to the landed *boucaniers*: ship captains were elected by the crew and decisions about destination were voted upon collectively. For example, after an expedition at Lake Nicaragua, Tortugan buccaneer captain François L'Olonnais 'held council with his whole fleet, proposing to go on to Guatemala. Some voted in favour, others could not agree'.[204] As we saw with the *Croquants* and New Model Army soldiers, the right to be consulted was also a standard feature among buccaneers.[205]

Furthermore, booty was equally divided among the crew according to ranks, all written down in a set of articles or what was called a *chasse partie* or charter party.

> Usually they agree on the following terms. Providing they capture a prize, first of all these amounts would be deducted from the whole capital. The hunter's pay would generally be 200 pieces of eight. The carpenter, for his work in repairing and fitting out the ship, would be paid 100 or 150 pieces of eight. The surgeon would receive 200 or 250 for his medical supplies, according to the size of the ship. … The captain draws four or five men's portions for the use of his ship, perhaps even more, and two portions for himself.[206]

They also decided collectively to allocate a portion of booty to a proto-health insurance fund, so as to ensure that if a crewmember becomes ill, injured or maimed during voyage he can obtain some compensation. At least in their enterprises, then, early buccaneers of Tortuga seem to have 'practiced notions of liberty and equality, even of fraternity, which for most inhabitants of the old world and the new remained frustrated dreams, so far as they were dreamt at all'.[207] Before long, these communal and egalitarian codes and practices

[204] Ibid., p. 113.
[205] Bromley, "Outlaws at Sea", p. 310.
[206] Ibid., p. 71.
[207] Bromley, "Outlaws at Sea", p. 310.

came to be known, Charlevoix reported, as *l'usage de la Côte*—the 'custom of the coast'.[208]

De facto exercising power in Tortuga, the buccaneers, Charlevoix wrote, 'established a kind of Democratic Government … [where] all was in common … there was no mine and thine in this Republic'.[209] This, above all, was their 'sovereign rule'.[210] So sovereign was such rule that when Tortuga's governor, D'Ogeron, tried to put the island under formal colonial rule in 1665 and imposed on buccaneering crews the obligation to bring back their plunders to its ports for tendering, a sedition was organized under the leadership of one Dumoulin. A year later, a similar protest erupted against the creation of a colonial militia on the island.[211] As Exquemelin observed, having developed a maritime popular republic, '[t]hese men strongly resented the attempt to bring them under subjection, in a land which belonged neither to the King nor the [French West India] Company'.[212]

Jamaica too was becoming a buzzing nest of buccaneers during this period. In 1655, Cromwell's Western Design against Spain's New World possessions had failed miserably, leaving the virtually-undefended island of Jamaica as the only potential take for the English. For this imperial enterprise, Cromwell had gathered a force of 3,000 soldiers from England, a great number of whom came directly from the New Model Army, either from those disbanded after Putney or those without work after the expedition in Ireland.[213] 'Some no doubts carried with them ideas which had originated in revolutionary England',

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[208] Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'Isle espagnole ou de S. Domingue*, p. 43.
[209] Ibid., pp. 9, 43.
[210] Ibid., pp. 100, 52.
[211] Moreau, *Une histoire des pirates*, p. 106.
[212] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, p. 62.
[213] Capp, *Cromwell's Navy: The Fleet and the English Revolution, 1648-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 88; Kristen Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean: Religion, Colonial Competition, and the Politics of Profit* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), p. 117.

Christopher Hill wrote.[214] Dropping anchor at Barbados, as well as on Nevis, St. Kitts, Antigua, and Montserrat, the convoy added an additional 2,000 men, most of them white servants and poor indebted planters, all either lured or pressed into infantry. Barbados at this moment, Hill pointed out, was a dumping ground of radicals, a forced home to 'the riff-raff of the London streets', such as Ranters, Quakers, Familists, Muggletonians and Fifth Monarchists, as well as criminals, beggars and vagabonds, not to mention Irish prisoners of war, who already represented more than half the population of the British West Indies in 1650.[215] Such social demographic situation was aversely acknowledged by one general who described the Design's Caribbean contingent as being made of 'the most prophane debauch'd persons that we ever saw, scorners of Religion, and indeed men kept so loose as not to be kept under discipline, and so cowardly as not to be made to fight'.[216]

As for the creation of the New Model Army in England, by forcefully gathering and setting these radical insurgent energies in motion in the Atlantic, the high commandment of the Western Design ran the risk that those 'prophane debauch'd persons' might eventually backfire when work conditions would become inadequate for them—and they did. In addition to the growing resentment within the troops in Hispaniola, where army officers had forbidden the men to engage in any plundering and pillaging, which violated soldiers' customary right to conquest that entitled them to the loot of a conquered foe, several mutinies or near mutinies broke out among the surviving regiments kept stationed by force

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[214] Christopher Hill, "Radical Pirates?" in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, ed. Christopher Hill (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), p. 173.

[215] Christopher Hill, "Radical Pirates?" in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, ed. Christopher Hill (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), pp. 167, 172. See also Larry Dale Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados: Challenging the Culture of the Planter Class* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

[216] Robert Venables, *The Narrative of General Venables, with an Appendix of Papers Relative to the Expedition to the West Indies and the Conquest of Jamaica, 1654-1655*, ed. C. H. Firth (New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), p. 30.

in Jamaica.[217] Along with protests over pay and provisions, a first dissension arose in 1656 and a second in 1660 against attempts by army commanders, on the orders of Cromwell, to turn permanently the soldierly into a field labour force so as to promote planting on the island.[218] Being ordered to perform such civil toil in a colonial venture whose official Protestant intention was 'for the glory of God, and propagation of the Gospel', as one commander put it, common soldiers, for whom the execution of Charles I had allowed new ways to think about political power and social hierarchy, interpreted it as a new form of tyranny and bondage in the Caribbean.[219]

Soldiers' mutinies in Jamaica coincided with the arrival of many Tortugan buccaneers, to whom letters of marque were handed out freely by island authorities as part of a policy to keep the Spaniards at bay and entrench the English colonial position in the Caribbean.[220] As a result, a great number of rebel soldiers, as well as other unruly settlers and runaway servants, joined the ranks of the sea rovers.[221] One of them was Henry Morgan, who became one of the most famous and successful buccaneers of the Caribbean. Born in Wales, Morgan was said to have been 'an indentured servant in the English manner' in Barbados.[222] He was recruited in the Caribbean contingent of the Western Design in 1655, and eventually, as the rest of soldiers, settled in Jamaica. We do not know how he came to 'go a-privateering', as the expression went, only that once on the island, he took part in three or four expeditions as crew, allowing him 'and his comrades … to buy a ship of their

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[217] Donoghue, *Fire under the Ashes*, pp. 233-35.
[218] On soldier mutinies in Jamaica, see Carla Gardina Pestana, "Mutinies on Anglo-Jamaica, 1656-1660," in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 63-86.
[219] Venables, *The Narrative of General Venables*, p. 88.
[220] Moreau, *Une histoire des pirates*, p. 113.
[221] Paul Butel, *Les Caraïbes au temps des flibustiers: XVIe-XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1982), p. 77; Hilary McD Beckles, "From Land to Sea: Runaway Barbados Slaves and Servants, 1630-1700," *Slavery & Abolition* 6, no. 3 (1985), p. 87.
[222] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, p. 119; Hill, "Rebel Pirates?", p. 173.

own' with which 'they went marauding along the coast of Campeche, where they captured several ships'.[223]

Having quickly risen to the rank of ship captain, Morgan organized three important expeditions, the most spectacular being his last one in Panama City in 1671, which comprised 37 ships and more than 2,000 men, plundering a record booty of 400,000 pieces of eight.[224] Not only had this expedition gathered many French buccaneers from Tortuga, for a total of 25 ships, but the fleet, according to one historian, also comprised 'troops by the faded red coats of the New Model Army'.[225] Similarly, at the end of the seventeenth century, English buccaneer and explorer William Dampier reported that among his crew was one 'stout old Grey-headed Man, aged about 84, who had served under *Oliver* in the time of the *Irish* Rebellion; after which he was at *Jamaica*, and had followed Privateering ever since'.[226] Whether levellers or not, for such English Civil War veterans transplanted in the Caribbean, as for former French *engagés* turned buccaneers in Tortuga, whom many had the revolts in Southwestern France in living memory, the degree of democracy, communalism and egalitarianism of buccaneering must have been recognizable, if not altogether familiar.

In a way, then, what had been separated a few decades earlier in Europe—the social revolts in Germany, France, and England—now seemed to have been joined together in the Atlantic. Maritime historian G.V. Scammell, for instance, wrote that '[d]uring the Interregnum munities took place, or were expected, from the influence of those radical

[223] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, p. 119.
[224] Raynald Laprise, "Henry Morgan," in *Dictionnaire des corsaires et pirates*, eds. Gilbert Buti and Philippe Hrodej (Paris: CNRS, 2013), p. 548.
[225] Peter K. Kemp, *The Brethren of the Coast: The British and French Buccaneers in the South Seas* (London: Heinmann, 1960), p. 17.
[226] William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World* (London: Printed for James Knapton, 1697), p. 219.

Protestant sects that had long troubled Oliver Cromwell's army'.[227] Highlighting the multinational character of the maritime labour market at the time, he added that the radicalism of crews 'was further strengthened by the presence of amongst them of French *Croquants* and English Levellers, notorious for their strong views on liberty and equality'.[228] In the Caribbean, as I tried to show, these two traditions of radicalism found their way aboard buccaneering ships, whose ideas and practices were integrated into, or simply found echo in, the custom of the coast. Beyond the mere promise of pillage and plunder of wealthy Spaniards, this set of codes and practices was at the source of, and behind, hundreds (if not more) collective actions of plundering by buccaneering crews. In federating themselves so regularly during the second half of the seventeenth century, the buccaneers ended up developing a kind of popular consciousness of their own—a buccaneering culture of solidarity, so to speak. In a way that stretched back to at least the language of the radical Reformation, they styled themselves, Charlevoix wrote, as the 'Frères de la Côte' or brethren of the coast.[229]

But what I especially want to emphasize here with the buccaneers is how the sailing ship begins to bridge and connect collective actions from below. Although the privateering ship was not the same site of proletarian resistance that its golden age piratical counterpart would be a generation later, it nonetheless allowed some coordination and synchronicity of actions among buccaneers, many of whom saw their life at sea, if not as a direct resistance to the landed colonial social order, at least as a way to attenuate its inequities and injustices.

[227] G. V. Scammell, "Mutiny in British Ships, C. 1500-1750," in *Seafaring, Sailors and Trade, 1450-1750* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2003), p. 338.
[228] Ibid., pp. 340-41. See also, Jan Lucassen, "The International Maritime Labour Market (Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)," in *"Those Emblems of Hell"? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870*, eds. Paul van Royer, Jaap Bruijn and Jan Lucassen, Vol. 13, *Research in Maritime History* (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1997), 11-23.
[229] Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'Isle espagnole ou de S. Domingue*, p. 52.

When Morgan and his crew, for instance, sailed to Tortuga to inform 'all the planters and hunters' of his intention 'to gather a force capable of attacking some place of importance', we must see not only a mere preparation for a piratical expedition, but also, and more crucially, a self-conscious transboundary action to create, if temporary, a floating self-governing community of expropriated proletarian workers, among them not only French and English, who constituted the majority, but also Dutch, Irish, Portuguese, Swedes, Spaniard renegades, as well as representatives of the non-white population—Africans, Amerindians and mulattoes.[230] This is not to say, however, that buccaneers were inter- or trans-nationalists. Yet their actions at sea implied a strong translocal and cooperative dimension that neither maroons nor early landed proletarians and peasants of Europe had managed to achieve. This is why, I submit, the sailing ship, as a connective site, is key to tracking down the early beginnings of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the Atlantic world.

Outliving the first generation of Caribbean buccaneers, the 'custom of the coast' was, at the end of the seventeenth century, referred to by Dampier as 'the Law of Privateers', hence indicating the transmission of a maritime experience in autonomous and democratic self-organizing from below in the Atlantic.[231] At the turn of the 1690s, the buccaneers had become a double-edged knife for colonial authorities. They were more and more out of control, eventually attacking any ship they thought carried valuable cargo, whether it belonged to an enemy country or not. They were becoming outright pirates who refused to recognize European treaties that, in reality, curtailed their plundering. Despite the prize money they brought in, they were increasingly seen as irritants to transatlantic commerce,

[230] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, p. 167.
[231] Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World* (London: Printed for James Knapton, 1697), p. 68.

obstructing the establishment of viable colonies with a sound economic base. It was not until the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 by which Spain ceded Saint-Domingue to France that the buccaneering phase of Caribbean piracy was ended. Finding new targets, some buccaneers turned to outright piracy and made their way to the Indian Ocean, where Madagascar served as their refuge and new base of operations for nearly a decade.[232]

Thus, the maritime radicalism that the buccaneers fashioned in the Atlantic was kept alive in the Atlantic maritime underworld and passed on to the next generation of sailors, so that when they encountered the new, hardened conditions of capitalist exploitation at sea, they had an alternative social order in fresh memory. The only difference, as we shall see next, was that the golden age pirates were not commissioned by states but by themselves, waging a war not only against the Spaniards but the powerful and wealthy of the whole world.

Conclusion

Focused on experience, this chapter has followed the dynamic trajectories of two early-modern traditions of radicalism in the Atlantic world. From Africa, I have demonstrated how forms of resisting the slave trade were mobilized in new inventive ways by masses of African slaves who fought against captivity on board slave ships and against plantation-slavery in the Americas. Military culture, emancipatory religious rituals, and elective self-governing principles constituted the repertoire that shaped an African tradition of radicalism in the Atlantic. From Europe, we saw how egalitarian democratic communalism

[232] See Arne Bialuschewski, "Pirates, Slavers, and the Indigenous Population in Madagascar, C. 1690-1715," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005), 401-425.; and "Pirate Voyages in History and Fantasy," *Global Crime* 7, no. 2 (2006), 256-259.

and Christian social radicalism influenced large-scale social revolts in Germany, France and England between the middle of sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century. With this broad overview, we are now better positioned to answer the question that opened this chapter: *where to start?* It is clear that, while African slaves were among the first true proletarian workers under capitalism, the scale of their revolts in the Americas remained, generally speaking, confined to the colony and their respective maroon communities. As I have already mentioned, the emergence of the age of revolutions, largely prompted by insurgent slaves in the United States in 1776 (as we shall see later), transformed this context, creating the possibility for cross-border linkages of black solidarity.

Not so much different, the revolts of white servants and *engagés* were, too, extremely localized to specific colonies, such as Virginia, Saint-Domingue, Barbados, etc. But with the emergence of buccaneering in Tortuga and, later, in Jamaica, many of those poor whites resisted with their feet and escaped to the sailing ship, where their ideas and experience of revolt underwent a *moving* shift. Like African maroons, then, poor whites fled from the colonial social order and too created independent, self-governing communities, with the only difference that their setting of freedom was already *in motion*, hence allowing them, by the very movement of the ship, to create transboundary connexions and solidarities beyond their individual floating sites.

Reanimating the tradition of radicalism fashioned in the Caribbean by the buccaneers, the first Atlantic proletarian workers who took advantage of the deep-sea ship as both a means of protest *and* a means of communication during the manufacturing period of capitalism were the pirates of the golden age. As a maritime revolt, golden age piracy, which lasted for about a decade between 1715 and 1725, clearly express internationalizing

tendencies, thus making it arguably one of the first experiments of proletarian internationalism in the dark Atlantic. But before we get to there, it is important to understand the underlying causes of the pirates' revolt, namely, the capitalist transformation of shipboard labour and the methods of exploitation and terror that accompanied it. This is the subject of the next chapter.

4. A 'Floating Factory', or, the Deep-Sea Merchant Ship as a Capitalist Enterprise: Theoretical Interlude One

...whosoever commands the sea commands the trade.[1]

As an interlude setting stage to the next one, this chapter seeks to perform an historical analysis of the formal subsumption of shipboard labour under capital during the rise of the age of sail, starting in the sixteenth century. Presumably because of a somewhat instinctive propensity of contemporary Marxist scholars to naturally favour the landed world, the sailing ship, let alone the maritime world, has been left out of the so-called 'debate' on the transition from feudalism to capitalism.[2] Yet the thesis that a fundamentally 'agrarian' capitalism makes up the core of the transition begins to lose some credibility when confronted with empirical data on the early ocean-going shipping industry processed through Marx's own multilinear theoretical roadmap, as outlined in Chapter 2.[3] Chronologically speaking, if by 'origin' of capitalism we typologically mean market-compelled extraction of surplus value from dispossessed 'free' workers in exchange of a wage—what is called, in Brennerian wording, the specifically capitalist social-property relation—it appears that, when the analytical radar gets 'maritimized',

[1] Walter Raleigh, *The Works of Sir Walter Ralegh, Kt., Now First Collected to which are Prefixed the Lives of the Author*, Vol. 8 (Oxford: The University press, 1829), p. 325.
[2] On this debate, see T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin, eds., *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
[3] Jorgen Sandemose holds a similar thesis but about the role of early-modern urban manufactures in the capitalist transition. See Jorgen Sandemose, "Manufacture and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism," *Science & Society* 76, no. 4 (October, 2012), 463-494.

this original breakthrough, as sociologist Arthur Stinchcombe argues, ‘was first found in port cities and on the high seas, and only later dominated the industrial revolution’.[4]

Grounded in Marx’s ideas and methods, this chapter argues that the deep-sea merchant ship of the early modern era was a capitalist enterprise. This exposition will serve us to get a sense of the structural class-making process that underpinned the sailors’ piratical revolt of the golden age, the topic of the following chapter. As such, this chapter seeks to contribute to the growing efforts in maritime history to foreground the idea that ‘the ship as both engine of capitalism and space of resistance was a mobile nodal point of great strategic importance, for both rulers and workers worldwide’.[5] I undertake this analysis thematically by exploring a set of four interrelated changes in oceanic shipping: (i) the concentration of capital in shipowning and victualling; (ii) the implementation of co-operation and division of labour on board; (iii) the proletarianization of seamen; and (iv) the imposition of an exclusive means of subsistence as money-wage. I begin my account by teasing out some sea-centered aspects in Marx’s work which, I submit, can be reinvested as constituting as a starting point for engaging with the maritime origins of the capitalist mode of production. As we shall see, Marx accepted the idea—if only implicitly—that the origins of capitalism had as much watery as earthly dimensions.

For all the care I took to document this specific development and to get it right as a historical narrative, I would like this chapter to be read as a preliminary account that attempts to outline key features that are not will be expanded and clarified further in a subsequent version.

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[4] Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Sugar Island Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment: The Political Economy of the Caribbean World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 58.
[5] Niklas Frykman et al., "Mutiny and Maritime Radicalism in the Age of Revolution: An Introduction," *International Review of Social History* 58 (Special Issue, 2013), p. 14.

Marx at Sea: Some Prefatory Remarks

Marx was a man of the land. He was brought up in Trier in the west central heartland of Germany, where the conditions of the Moselle peasantry shaped his early agrarian interests in historical development. This inherited landed outlook profoundly transcends his work. Indeed, the second theme of research he established after 'Capital' in the *Grundrisse* was 'Landed Property'.[6]

Yet Marx was by no means blind to the maritime aspects of the historical development of capitalism. After all, he wrote most of *Capital* at the British Library in London, located at a walking distance from what was in his time the world's biggest and busiest port. His account of the maritime development of capitalism, however, subsists only as a subtext in his work. On many occasions mentions are made to oceanic realms, but the analysis resists to being launched into sea. In the *Communist Manifesto*, for instance, he wrote with Engels that the 'East Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to *navigation*, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development'.[7] In *Capital*, Volume I, he wrote that the 'new manufactures were established at *sea-ports*, or at points in the countryside which were beyond the control of the old municipalities and their guilds'.[8] Here, seaward Holland (not England) stands as

[6] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 54.
[7] Marx and Engels, "The Communist Manifesto", in Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 68. Emphasis added.
[8] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 915. Emphasis added.

his primary example, where Marx develops his view in a passage on colonization that implied the colossal transoceanic labour of seafaring workers:

> The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mother-country and were turned into capital there. Holland, which first brought the colonial system to its full development, already stood at the zenith of its commercial greatness in 1648. It was "in almost exclusive possession of the East Indian trade and the commerce between the south-east and the north-west of Europe. Its fisheries, its shipping and its manufactures surpassed those of any other country. The total capital of the Republic was probably greater than that of all the rest of Europe". Gülich forgets to add that by 1648 the people of Holland were more over-worked, poorer and more brutally oppressed than those of all the rest of Europe put together.[9]

Then, Marx immediately makes the following claim:

> Today, industrial supremacy brings with it commercial supremacy. In the period of manufacture it is the reverse: commercial supremacy produces industrial predominance. *Hence the preponderant role played by the colonial system at that time*.[10]

There we have it. Marx was willing to reverse his perspective from an industrial landed outlook to a commercial maritime outlook which included transoceanic trade with the colonies. But because he was mainly concerned with the first in Volume I, he did not substantiate his position on the second.

In the volumes II and III of *Capital*, Marx began to move toward this perspective in a more committed way. Engels acknowledged this trajectory in his 'Supplement to Volume 3', where he argued, based on his own interpretation of Marx's three volumes which he wanted to be 'as authentic as possible', that the rise of capitalism can be located in 'three particular areas: shipping, mining and textiles. Shipping on the scale pursued by the

[9] Ibid., p. 918.
[10] Ibid.

Italian and Hanseatic maritime republics was impossible without sailors, i.e. wage-labourers (whose wage relationship might be concealed under the cooperative form of a share in the profit), or, for the galleys of that time, without oarsmen who were either wage-labourers or slaves'.[11] There we have it all. Not only had the capitalist mode of production profound maritime roots in the late medieval period, but those roots were developed *by* and *through* the waged labour of sailors, including coerced ones. Had he not died prematurely from chronic sickness in 1883, Marx would have most likely taken his approach to sea, as his fifth and sixth themes of research for his critique of political economy established in the *Grundrisse* were 'International Trade' and 'World Market'.[12]

The Deep-Sea Merchant Ship as Capitalist Enterprise

I want to emphasis an important stand that Marx took vis-à-vis maritime shipping before undertaking my analysis, for it has important theoretical implications. As much as it belongs to the sphere of circulation of capital, the deep-sea merchant ship was considered by Marx as a unit of capitalist production in its own right, just like he thought of a large-scale farm, a textile workshop or a factory. Capital investment in oceanic shipping was, in this sense, investment *in production*. This nuance is important because it complexifies the often-accepted simplistic view that the history of capitalism is divided into two distinct temporal epochs; an early one based on a merchant capitalism focused on trade and the world market, and a later one based on industrial capitalism focused on production and the factory system. Marx was clear about the productive quality of the

[11] Engels, 'Supplement to Volume 3 of Capital' in Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, pp. 1027, 1042.
[12] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 54.

sailing ship and, more generally, about the prominent role of the transport industry as a branch of capitalist *production*.

In *Theories of Surplus Value*, for instance, he claimed that the transport industry constituted 'a fourth sphere of material production', beside the 'extractive industry, agriculture and manufacture', and that it, too, 'passes through the various stages of handicraft industry, manufacture and mechanical industry'.[13] Through this historical process, he added, '[t]he relation of productive labour—that is, of the wage-labourer—to capital [becomes] here exactly the same as in other spheres of material production'.[14] In the same vein, in Volume II of *Capital*, he maintained that '[t]he productive capital invested in this industry … adds value to the products transported, partly through the value carried over from the means of transport, partly through the value added by the work of transport. This latter addition of value can be divided, as with all capitalist production, into replacement of wages and surplus value'.[15] What was produced, however, was not a *material* good but rather a 'useful effect', which, in spite of its intangibility, remained materially linked to the 'productive process of the transport industry'.[16] Indeed, Marx's account of the transport industry unveils the extent to which he held a broad conception of the production of commodity C'. As he argued, the 'product of the production process' ought to be conceived under the abstract form of 'result' or even 'useful result', which can be either 'a material thing different from the elements of the productive capital, an object that has an existence of its own', or else as

[13] Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value, Part 1* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books/Humanity, 1999 [1862-63]), p. 412.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 2 (London & New York: Penguin Classics), pp. 226-27.
[16] Ibid., pp. 135, 226.

'the attainment of particular useful effects'.[17] The only difference is that the useful effect as commodity 'can only be consumed during the production process; it does not exist as a thing of use distinct from this process, a thing which functions as an article of commerce and circulates as a commodity only after its production'.[18] The 'product' of transport that is sold on the market, in other words, is the production process, that is to say, 'the actual change of place itself'.[19]

Nothing could be more illustrative of this whole useful-effect production process than the labour of sailors in the transatlantic slave trade. To be sure, the slave ship was the vehicle by and through which Africans were transformed into commodities to be sold on the slave markets of the Americas at a higher price than what it cost merchants to transport them overseas. This acquisition of value, however, did not happen by the simple transatlantic voyage of the ship; it required the specialized labour of the crew. As Emma Christopher has remarked, it was only in the middle passage that the trade-specific tasks, such as cleaning, force-feeding, guarding, and punishing African captives, 'were required to change the form of the "merchandise" as it crossed the seas'.[20] One particularly important daily task was called 'dancing the slaves', which consisted of taking the captives up onto the main deck and forcing them to dance as a way of physical exercise to preserve their health throughout the crossing.[21] Just before landing at the port of destination, the crew undertook a final act of commoditization whereby they cleaned and immaculated the slaves in order to improve their buyable appealingness. According to

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[17] Ibid, p. 134; Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 756; Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3 (London & New York: Verso, 2010), p. 342.
[18] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 2, p. 135.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, p. 165.
[21] See Carole Maccotta, "Dancing and Exercise," in *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage*, eds. Toyin Falola and Amanda Warnock (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007), 132-133.

one slave trade sailor, this task included not only washing the captives but also rubbing them with palm oil so to make their skin gleam and, therefore, 'induce a healthful appearance'.[22] This sort of useful effect, as Marx argued, functions 'just like any other commodities', allowing the transformation of forms from shipboard captives to slaves to be sold at the colonial market, from where they entered, as such, the circuit productive capital on plantations (to be discussed in Chapter 6).[23]

With these preliminary remarks in mind, let us now explore the historical process of the formal subsumption of shipboard labour under capital.

Concentration of capital in shipowning and victualing

From the late fifteenth century onward as a result of concentration of capital in overseas shipping, whose deepwater commercial (and colonial) opportunities required increasingly larger and, therefore, more expensive sailing vessels, mariners began to gradually lose access to shipowning in favour of merchants, bankers and financiers.[24] Contrary to feudal coastal trades, sailing the high seas was, from the get-go, the domain of the wealthy, backed by the state, and sometimes without distinction between the two. For these new investors, Braudel points out, 'the voyage of the ship was … a completely

[22] Schroeder, *Three Years Adventure*, p. 132.
[23] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 2, p. 135.
[24] On concentration of capital in the Venetian shipping, see Bernard Doumerc and Doris Stockly, "L'évolution du capitalisme marchand à Venise: le financement des *galere Da Mercato* à la fin du XVe siècle," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 50, no. 1 (Jan.-Fed., 1995), 133-157; and Claire Judde de Larivière, *Naviguer, commercer, gouverner: économie maritime et pouvoirs à Venise (XVe-XVIe siècles)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 125-31. On concentration in England, see G. V. Scammell, "Shipowning in England, *c*. 1450-1550," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, no. 105 (12, 1962), 122 and Scammell, "Shipowning in the Economy and Politics of Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 15, no. 3 (1972), 385-407.

financial form of speculation'.[25] Facilitated by a relatively new, more flexible shareholding structure of ownership (*per partes*) replacing the ancient, riskier outright material property of the vessel (*per loca*), capital-intensive investments in shipping were negotiable as stock bought and sold on markets in Lisbon, Bordeaux, London, and Amsterdam, among other places, and which allowed proprietors to spread the risks and delays of longer voyages among larger numbers of investors.[26] As a consequence, the formal organization of the maritime labour process, which had been until then elaborated by mariner-companions themselves in common interest, was taken out of the crew's hands and subordinated to the exigencies of the self-valorization of capital, by which seamen discovered a new external relation to themselves and to their means of labour.

To begin with, shipboard authority became split up at the top between the ship's master and this new figure called the 'cape merchant', the travelling representative or 'factor' of investors owning and freighting the ship. His chief responsibility was to look after the cargo and oversee the ship's commercial operations and profitability. In a way, the cape merchant incarnated the beginning of the formal subsumption of maritime labour under capital, for while the ship's master remained the leading mariner on board, he was now bound to follow the market-driven instructions of the cape merchant, which, inevitably, overlapped over sailing matters.[27] This new figure marked a key step forward in the progressive sedentarization of the mercantile profession on board, on the one hand, and the beginning of a practical separation between ownership—vessel, nautical tools and

[25] Fernand Braudel, *Civilization & Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, Vol. 2. *The Wheels of Commerce* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p. 365.
[26] On the transformation of the structure of shipowning, see L. A. Boiteux, *La fortune de mer: le besoin de sécurité et les débuts de l'assurance maritime* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1968), chap. 4.
[27] Pauline Croft, "English Mariners Trading to Spain and Portugal, 1558-1625," *Mariner's Mirror* 69, no. 3 (1983), p. 251. See also, Jacques Bernard, *Navires et gens de mer à Bordeaux (Vers 1400-Vers 1550)*, Vol. 2 (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1968), pp. 539-50.

equipment—and naval management, on the other. With the cape merchant, in other words, merchant-investors, unlike their mariner-companion predecessors, could buy off their duties on board and started to focus solely on trade, leaving the matters of the sea to delegates. By the eighteenth century, the cape merchant had become almost completely obsolete on merchant ships, thanks to the creation of a network of overseas agents. The representative function, however, did not vanish, but was now assumed by a new, far superior version of the medieval ship's master, namely the ship's captain, who was responsible not only for navigating the ship but also for maintaining the business interests of the ship's owners while the vessel was far removed from their control.

The concentration of capital in shipowning, moreover, offered special advantages to merchants. Beyond squeezing out competition, controlling several ships allowed them to coordinate the sailings of their fleet in a sequential fashion, so as to have a constant flow of cash and, therefore, continue in full operation the year round, which would not have been possible for a single vessel owner.

Shipboard co-operation and division of labour

The increase in carrying capacity of deep-sea merchant vessels led to the development of a specialized crew subdivided into a hierarchical set of interconnected ranks and by which seamen were transformed as 'collective workers', typical of the capitalist mode of production of the manufacturing period.[28] In addition to the ship's master were now the mate, the quartermaster, the boatswain, the carpenter, the gunner, perhaps a cook and a

[28] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 464; Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 78 and ff.

surgeon, and at the bottom, the common sailors. According to one maritime historian, this 'typical crew' was abundantly found on the high seas already by the end of the fifteenth century.[29] Centered on the industry's essential economic role—the movement of commodities—a new co-operative form of labour re-organized maritime work, so that it 'assembled a complex and collective unit of labor, only to separate that unit into shifting, overlapping, task-oriented components'.[30] To put this 'mechanism of manufacture' into practice, and, more especially, to absorb as much quantity of surplus labour as possible, a system of rotating watches was introduced by which the crew's working time expanded to cover the whole day and night so as to match the 'production time' of the ship, that is to say, its navigating time or when the ship is actually functioning as a transportation machine.[31] Unlike the stationary machinery of the industrial age, the deep-sea ship could not be 'turned off' at will or simply for the night. Once at sea, it needed to be constantly manned 24 hours a day seven days a week in order to prevent shipwreck, storms or other casualty. As such, the deep-sea ship already posited within its own mode of existence the necessity of an unbroken labour process beyond the limits of the natural day. The global value relation, in other words, was not imposed on the deep-sea ship, but made possible *by* it, and the watch system was the manner through which this could be historically determined. It went as follows:

> Half the crew was assigned to the starboard and half to the larboard watch. The captain supervised one, the mate the other. On the largest ships, the first and second mates took responsibility for a watch. Each watch served four hours on duty, then four hours off, alternating in work shifts … around the clock. The dog watch, between 4 and 8 P.M., was subdivided into two-hour shifts. This

[29] Dorothy Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping, 1460-1540* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947), p. 39.
[30] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 89.
[31] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 464. On 'production time', see Volume II, chap. 13.

> produced a total of seven shifts, ensuring that watch would not work the same hours each day. Each sailor alternately worked a ten- and a fourteen-hour day. The starboard and larboard watches were the essential cycle groups on each ship. Their major responsibility was to guarantee the continuity of keeping the vessel running and true.[32]

Revealingly, the implementation of this technical and sequential division of shipboard labour led one contemporary seaman to claim at the dawn of the capitalist shift toward large-scale industry that the deep-sea ship resembled 'a floating factory'.[33]

Proletarianization

In relation to the concentration of property in overseas shipping, the exponentially rising costs of victualling created a situation where sailors were no longer capable of assuming the *estorement* of the ship, that is to say, the medieval obligation of furnishing one's own *rimage* (loading space aboard) with provisions and spare tools and sailing equipment for the benefit of the company. The custom of estorement had secured the direct communal access of mariners to both their means of production and subsistence on board. With the rise of ocean-going joint-stock companies, however, all of the traditional mechanisms for outfitting vessels were rendered inadequate to the task, and so estorement was outsourced to private suppliers. Before long, what became known as the 'victualling business' developed in all major Atlantic port towns, and from which substantial collateral profits were made from the interests on loans granted *à la grosse aventure* (bottomry).[34] For common sailors, however, the elimination of estorement was a

[32] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 88.
[33] James Field Stanfield, *Observations on a Guinea Voyage in a Series of Letters Addressed to the Rev. Thomas Clarkson* (London: Printed by J. Phillips, 1788), p. 5.
[34] Braudel, *Civilization & Capitalism*, vol. 2: *The Wheels of Commerce*, p. 368.

further step toward full-scale proletarianization, for they were thereby dispossessed or, rather, detached (*vogelfrei*) from their means of production and subsistence at sea, with the consequence of bringing their labour-power closer to becoming a full-fledged commodity.

Because capital subsumes the labour process *as it finds it*, it necessarily subsumes the historic wage-form found along with it. This first form taken by the capitalist exploitation of labour on the high seas was historically modelled on the medieval maritime institution of hired labour called *l'engagement à loyer* (literally, 'an agreement to lease'), whereby the sailor rented out his service to the ship's master or directly to the company's merchants for the duration of a specific sea-going voyage in exchange of a payment whether in money or in kind or, most often, both.[35] It would be erroneous, however, to assume that *l'engagement à loyer* continued to function as a pure feudal category of exchange without any relation of subordination, as if sailors were still mariner-companions. It might suggest so on the face of it, when regarded in isolation from capital. But beneath the phenomenological surface was a new set of social relations of production subjugated to the exigencies of valorization and accumulation. In other words, as a reconfigured manner to 'purchase' and exploit the labour-power of sailors, *l'engagement à loyer* embodied a concealed wage relationship through which absolute surplus value was realized via the watch system, blurring every trace of demarcation between paid and unpaid labour during voyage, and a subsidized reproduction of labour-power, ensuring that the 'renting-out' of labour-power was below its value, hence enabling masters and merchants to depress the prices of those 'services' to the level of bare survival. Thus, to

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[35] Boiteux, *La fortune de mer*, p. 49; Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping*, p. 47.

mobilize our conceptual language laid out in Chapter 2, *l'engagement à loyer* was qualitatively reconstituted by capital as a concrete category for the maritime form of appearance of the value relation in overseas shipping. It was transformed, in other words, as capital-positing, capital-creating labour (of which more below). The nature of the social relation was changed. What sailors received in money was no longer strictly revenue, that is to say, money as an equivalent medium of exchange for a service in kind as use value, but capital posited in the form of money to be valorized.

The imposition of the money-wage

Inasmuch as capital could manage to valorize itself within the limits of such form of labour exploitation, sailors could as well, for the time being, find some room for self-sufficiency and independence. This was made possible by the persistence of the customary right to portage which allowed them to carry some trade goods on their own account freight free and in addition to hiring payment. In the early seventeenth century, portage could worth half, and sometimes the same as the monthly wage of sailors.[36] When a sailor did not want to secure a cargo for himself or for someone else, he could be left it 'au fret de la nef', that is to say, received as a share of the freight payable on the amount of goods that he might have embarked on his allotted portage room.[37] In this sense, portage meant that sailors could keep functioning, though in an attenuated manner, as co-adventurers on board. This custom allowed them to operate as petty independent entrepreneurs who, as such, continued to participate *directly* into the commercial venture

[36] Peter Pope, "The Practice of Portage in the Early Modern North Atlantic: Introduction to an Issue in Maritime Historical Anthropology," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue De La Société Historique Du Canada* 6, no. 1 (1995), p. 31.
[37] Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping*, p. 44.

and benefits of the ship because a significant part of their total wage was tied to the fluctuation of freight rates and bounty. For a short while, then, the deep-sea merchant ship seems to have embodied what Marx called a 'hybrid' or, in another case, a 'transitional subform' of labour exploitation within the framework of capitalist production.[38] Surplus-value, in this context, was realized *in spite* of a complete and utter entrenchment of the wage relation.

In order to 'free' or, more precisely, detached sailors from this feudal mechanism of subsistence, impose the exclusivity of the monetary wage-form, and, therefore, fully break the capital-labour nexus in overseas shipping, the extent of portage needed to be reduced, if not completely eliminated. Already by the early sixteenth century, one historian writes, 'there are numerous references to money wages, but practically none to portages, which may indicate that the latter were falling out of use'.[39] In fact, portage was not so much extinguished as its proportion was diminished and relocated at the top of the crew to the ship's higher ranks, starting with the master or captain. At the end of the seventeenth century, for instance, the East India Company came to fix at 5% the crew's participation in the total tonnage of goods of the charted tonnage, which captains took great care to secure for their personal gain.[40] 'How this affected anyone beyond the officers is not clear,' maritime historian Ralph Davis writes, 'but the probability is that in many trades members of the crew who had a pound or two to invest could find opportunity to earn a few shillings on it; no more than this'.[41] Excluded from their

[38] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 645, 1023.
[39] Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping*, pp. 47-8.
[40] Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Vol. 48: *Research in Maritime History* (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2012), p. 141.
[41] Ibid., p. 143.

customary right to portage, common sailors were therefore placed in an exclusive relationship to the money-wage. As a result, remuneration ceased to be invariable in the organization of shipboard production, becoming both an indicator of class relation and a highly dynamic variable of exploitation, most especially with the primacy of the monthly wage at the turn of the eighteenth century.[42] This highlights the fact that the money-form of wage-labour was not inherently *structural* to capitalism but *situational* and *contingent* to class politics.

Still, the rule of capital in overseas shipping depended on the extent to which ship masters could not only find seafaring workers whose labour-power was accessible as commodity on the market, but who were also, and more importantly, compelled to place at their disposable. Yet contrary to other early enterprises of capitalist production (large-scale farming in rural England, for instance), oceanic shipping competed with already-existing labour markets for sailors, who could always find more advantageous wage system, better work conditions, and shorter voyages in either fishing, whaling or privateering, and therefore resist their entry into the deep-sea proletariat. Although most common sailors—many of them dispossessed landsmen—joined merchant ships out of immediate financial need, the labour supply of skilled seamen was never steady, most especially in the slave trade.[43] Analogous to, if not directly inspired from, naval and military impressment, a forcible recruiting practice known as 'crimping' was therefore developed in dockside towns throughout the Atlantic world. But while the former was

[42] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 119. See also Linebaugh, *The London Hanged*, pp. 127-29.
[43] Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, pp. 145-46. See also Niklas Frykman, "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships", in *Beyond Marx: Theorising the Global Labour Relations of the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Marcel van der Linden and Roth Heinz Karl (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 41-63.

organized by the state, crimping was a genuine invention of the market—'the commercial equivalent of the press-gang'.[44]

In essence, rather than just kidnapping men off the streets as the naval press did, crimping was an organized scam by which sailors were tricked into joining a crew. The most common technique was to persuade a sailor to stay at a particular lodging-house, where the innkeeper, in collusion with the crimp and the ship's captain, would make him drunk and spend more than what he possessed so that a huge debt would be incurred. With no money to pay back, the sailor, or rather his service would then be coercively sold to merchant ships for their debts in return of a commission. According to one eighteenth-century slave trade sailor, crimps were nothing less than 'dealers in human flesh'.[45] Through this trickery, 'free' wage labour was, to a great extent, imposed by force in oceanic shipping, so that sailors could be turned into free wage workers against their own choosing or, indeed, footing.

Conclusion

'By 1700 seafaring labor had been fully standardized', writes Rediker.[46] This was accompanied by the full-fledged development of an international labour market for seamen, first under the leadership of the Dutch Republic in the second half of the seventeenth century, then by Britain in the next century. Indeed, crew recruitments were so internationalized during this period that it has been estimated that 1 in 5 sailors

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[44] Michael Macilwee, *The Liverpool Underworld: Crime in the City, 1750-1900* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p. 145.
[45] Schroeder, *Three Years Adventure*, p. 6. For crimping in the slave trade, see Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors,* pp. 31-3; Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, p. 137; and James A. Rawley and Stephen D. Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History*, Revised ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), p. 220.
[46] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 83.

(between 20 and 25%) in every Atlantic-bound ship was foreign-born.[47] In addition, thanks to better port and commercial infrastructures throughout the Atlantic, especially in Africa, and to the creation of optimal medium-size ships, turnaround times were greatly reduced, which meant more frequent sailing for seamen and an increased turnover for capital. Moreover, as the gross cost and projected value—and, therefore, the risk—of each transatlantic voyage increased to spectacular proportions, work discipline on board grew excessively stricter and harsher than before. The eighteenth century was, indeed, a century where the deep-sea merchant ship was fully becoming a 'total institution', in which sailors were regimented into a labour process running from dawn to dusk to dawn.[48]

It is within the context of this long and arduous installation of the capital social relation at sea that sailors from every corner of the Atlantic launched one of the earliest proletarian revolts by turning to piracy as a way to recover their independence in labour and the control over their lives. Accordingly, their revolt was not so much anti-capitalist as it was anti-capital, in the sense that what was rejected and fought was not capitalism as a system, but capital as redefining social relations of production on board.

[47] See Jan Lucassen, "The International Maritime Labour Market (Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)," in *"Those Emblems of Hell"? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870*, eds. Paul van Royer, Jaap Bruijn and Jan Lucassen, Vol. 13, *Research in Maritime History* (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1997), p. 18; T. J. A. Le Goff, "The Labour Market for Sailors in France," in *"Those Emblems of Hell"? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870*, eds. Paul van Royer, Jaap Bruijn and Jan Lucassen, Vol. 13, *Research in Maritime History* (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1997), p. 306; and Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína, *Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Carla Rahn Philips (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 56-7.
[48] Vilhelm Aubert and Oddvar Arner, "On the Social Structure of the Ship," *Acta Sociologica* 3, no. 4 (1959), p. 200.

5. ‘A Declaration of War against the whole World’: Maritime Insurgency, Shipboard Democracy, and Multicrew Solidarity during the Golden Age of Piracy, 1714-26

The earliest, crudest, and least fruitful form of [workers’] rebellion was that of crime.[1]

Between 1714 and 1726, transatlantic merchant shipping was the object of mass attacks perpetrated by organized crews of pirates. Made of sailors rebelling against the ship’s system of capitalist exploitation and authority, of common settlers deserting the plantation economy, as well as of African seafaring workers and slave runaways, these motley crews constituted, at that time, the most remarkable threat to the social order of the nascent Atlantic world economy. As one contemporary observed in 1717, ‘the Pyrates are grown so numerous, that they infest not only the Seas near Jamaica, but even those of the Northern Continent of America; and that, unless some effectual Means be used, the whole Trade from Great Britain to those Parts will not be only obstructed, but in imminent danger of being lost’.[2] Because of its Atlantic-wide scope and destructive effects on trade, this popular maritime uprising is now commonly referred to by scholars as the ‘golden age’ of piracy.

An extensive scholarly literature exists on this story. Yet, while building from it, this chapter tries to put forward a new historical and theoretical interpretation of golden age

[1] Friederich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London & New York: Penguin Classics, 2009 [1845]), p. 224.
[2] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 38.

piracy by foregrounding an under-studied operational aspect of their collective action at sea. I argue that because most pirate crews self-consciously organized themselves into multiship associations their maritime revolt should be seen as constituting a significant forerunner moment in the development of working-class internationalism. This claim hinges on the idea that the pirate ship should be viewed—as it was at the time by pirates and rulers themselves—as a floating state in miniature, with its own elected government, set of laws and customs, and symbolic structure of unity. This standpoint brings into view the politically bounded character of the pirate ship, which in turn allows conceptualizing the development of cultures of solidarity among different pirate crews in the Atlantic as *cross-border* proletarian solidarity articulated across ships.

I deploy this argument into four parts. Setting the stage, the first three parts focus respectively on the shipboard direct-democratic order they implemented, the popular notion of justice underpinning their whole enterprise, and the relative and situational racial and ethnic egalitarianism that seems to have prevailed on board their ships. In the fourth part, I turn to their self-making processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity. Re-animating the buccaneering tradition and praxis of the mid-seventeenth century, these processes were made possible, as we shall see, by the vehicular movement of their ships, an internationally-oriented code of fraternal sociability, and the democratized regulative customs of the naval war council.

Some Preliminary Remarks on Piracy and Sources

Before we start, however, a few preliminary, cautionary remarks are in order. First, as I have established earlier in the dissertation, recovering the Atlantic roots of working-class

internationalism cannot be about searching for a pure, unblemished form of internationalism, as such thing did not yet exist in the early modern era. What can be recovered and brought to the fore, however, are *internationalizing tendencies* that were already and clearly expressed in the practices and outlooks of proletarian resistance and emancipation. Even today, all practices and worldviews are complex and have their limits and even contractions. Golden age pirates, as we shall see, were no exceptions. But in spite of those limits and contradictions, which do not invalidate the claims put forth in this chapter, the pirates' experience of struggle in the dark Atlantic reveals in remarkable ways such inchoate internationalizing tendencies which marked, I argue, working-class internationalism at its very moment of *becoming*, not as finished work but as a beginning point of a long, varied, and multilinear, formative process.

Secondly, anyone setting out to write about piracy, of the golden age in particular, runs the risk falling into two equally problematic traps: *romanticizing* pirates or *criminalizing* pirates. The first view naturalizes pirates as inherently-virtuous avengers of the working poor and the oppressed, uncritical of the contradictions and limits underlying their actions at sea. The second view naturalizes them as inherently-selfish criminals, uncritical of what it meant concretely for seafaring workers to stage and maintain a revolt at sea, while at the same projecting modern and fixed meanings of criminality into a period where criminal law was still in the making and, as such, highly contested.

In this chapter, I will try to manoeuvre between these two extreme positions, so as to provide a nuanced accurate representation of golden age piracy. In order to do so, I will use a great deal of primary sources, including accounts left by sailors and captains, as well as reports from colonial governors and some trial documents. An important, though

somewhat controversial, source which this chapter uses extensively, moreover, is *A General of the History of the Pyrates* authored by Captain Charles Johnson and first published in 1724. Controversies exist in the scholarly literature over the real authorship of the book, for there is no record of a former ship captain named Charles Johnson. I want to address this issue here for it has specific implications on the issue of pirate romance.

The mystery about Captain Johnson has led scholars into much speculation, starting with John Robert Moore who claimed in 1939 that the real author of the *General History* was Daniel Defoe.[3] His claim was clearly persuasive since all subsequent reprinting of the book—including the scholarly edition that has served this chapter—was re-catalogued under the name of the famous English writer. In 1988, however, two scholars, P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, demolished Moore's thesis, demonstrating that there was not a single piece of documentary evidence to link Defoe with the *General History*, highlighting that Moore's claim was uniquely based on speculations about literary and topical, cross-textual similitudes.[4] From this moment on, maritime historians have returned the authorship of the book to the elusive Captain Johnson.

Recently, however, Arne Bialuschewski may have found the key to the mystery, making a strong, persuasive documented case that 'Captain Charles Johnson' was, indeed, pseudonymous and that the real authorship of the *General History* should be assigned to a former sailor and self-made journalist and writer named Nathaniel Mist. Bialuschewski demonstrates that the book manuscript was first registered for publication

[3] John Robert Moore, *Defoe in the Pillory and Other Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1939).
[4] P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, *The Canonisation of Daniel Defoe* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988).

under Mist's name in London, and that the early distribution of the first volume, initially entitled *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates*, can be directly traced back to him.[5] The historian also gives evidence that Mist was already employing the pseudonym of the fictitious captain in other texts during that period, and that Defoe had no connections to him in the few years prior to the publication (although they had written for the same newspaper before but Defoe withdrew in early 1719, five years before the book went out).

Until Bialuschewski's discovery, we already knew that most of the information contained in the *General History* came from a mix of transcripts of pirate trials, reports in contemporary newspapers, as well as testimonies collected directly from sailors at the docks.[6] But this 'collection of data' was set exclusively in London. With his new findings Bialuschewski now situates the production of the book more firmly in an Atlantic context, for Mist served as a sailor in the Caribbean prior to entering the newspaper business in 1717. Such seafaring experience sheds a new light onto the *General History*. First, the book's deep familiarity with nautical terms and the complexity of handling a ship, as well as its very intimate knowledge of the Caribbean region can now be better understood as coming from a sailor. Secondly, while Mist was not a pirate—at least no evidence seems to exist to either prove or disprove it—his seafaring experience brings more reliability to the *General History* as a primary source on golden age piracy. As Bialuschewski points out, 'Mist clearly possessed the ability to write a

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[5] Arne Bialuschewski, "Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the *General History of the Pyrates*," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 98 (2004), 21-38.

[6] According to Manuel Schonhorn, who wrote the Introduction to the 1972 edition, the author of the *General History* (at that time, Schonhorn believed that Defoe was the author) obtained most his first-hand data from the ex-Governor of Bahamas Woodes Rogers, who had led the final offensive that put an end to piracy in the Caribbean. See his introduction to *History of the Pyrates*, pp. xxix-xxx.

comprehensive book on pirates, and he probably knew the subject better than most potential authors that were to be found in London in the early 1720s'.[7] In fact, the timing of his seafaring occupation in the Atlantic overlapped with the beginning of golden age piracy. One contemporary account, for instance, noted that Mist 'not long before [1721] was either press'd or listed in the Sea Service'.[8] This temporal connection raises the possibility that Mist may have gained most of his knowledge for his manuscript not only in London but directly from sailors while he was still at sea. Bialuschewski even suggests that Mist had most likely met Irish pirate captain, Walter Kennedy, in London in 1721, a figure to whom we will return later.[9] In this light, the voice directly given by Mist to many pirates cited throughout his narrative now gains some aura of authenticity.

Thus, the fact that the *General History* was most likely written by a former sailor transforms the way in which we should approach the narrative as a primary source, most especially with respect to how pirates are portrayed and their sea-going activities reported in it. For what we have here is no longer a mere pirate story, written by a landed intellectual interested in the topic of sea adventures. Instead, the *General History* now emerges as a *sailor's pirate story*, written by a literate sailor with a significant seafaring experience in the Atlantic. In this sense, while it is true that Mist borrowed from the romantic travel literature genre to write his narrative in order to please a readership eager for adventure stories, his views and interpretations of the events were most likely shaped by the fact he had himself 'travelled' as a sailor to probably most of the places where those stories happened. Underneath the romantic varnish, in other words, lies the voice of

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[7] Bialuschewski, "Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist and the *General History of the Pyrates*", p. 37.
[8] John Oldmixon, *The History of England during the Reigns of King William and Queen Mary, Queen Anne and King George I* (London: Printed for Thomas Cox, 1735), p. 712.
[9] Ibid., p. 32.

a real former sailor telling a story of which he had intimate, and to some extent, direct knowledge.

Furthermore, while his intention was, of course, to fill his purse, Mist wrote in a particular literary context where the reading public in London was saturated with romanticized and fictional works about piracy.[10] Indeed, as Bialuschewski points out, there was a demand at that time for stories providing 'the actual facts concerning the crime'.[11] This accounts for the detailed description of the events which make up the first volume published between May 1724 and May 1725, and which corresponds to the Volume I of the 1972 scholarly edition.[12] The second volume, as Bialuschewski notes, 'clearly suffered from a dearth of adequate sources' compared to the first one.[13] The inclusion of the fictitious story of Captain Mission in that volume, as well as a topographical and social description of Magadoxa in East Africa, confirm this point.

Mist had powerful insights as a sailor-writer. As we shall see, it is clear that he had acquired some knowledge of classical political philosophy which he mobilized to describe and give meaning to the self-organization of pirate crews. However romantic was the literary frame in which he advanced them, these insights came from the mind of someone who knew seagoing life first-hand and who, as a result, had certainly a good idea of what it might take to rise up at sea and take possession of a ship. In this sense, when he claims in the preface that piracy was an act of 'Bravery and Stratagem in War',

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[10] In addition to *The King of Pirates* (1719) and *Captain Singleton* (1720), newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets were filled with fictional pirate stories during those years. See Bialuschewski, "Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist and the *General History of the Pyrates*", pp. 30-31.
[11] Ibid., p. 31.
[12] The first volume comprises 17 biographic chapters on pirate captains and their crews from Captain Avery to Captain Gow, including two accounts on female pirates Mary Read and Anne Bonny.
[13] Bialuschewski, "Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist and the *General History of the Pyrates*", p. 36.

Mist was probably less celebratory than one might think two centuries and a half later.[14] After all, he had all the credibility to speak of piracy as a collective act of bravery at sea. Moreover, if Mist had, indeed, been pressed to enlist as a sailor, as noted above, then he surely understood the desire of common sailors to rise up and take their revenge on their oppressors. It may have been in light of this experience that he called the pirates 'the brave Asserters of Liberty', which, from his standpoint, may have been closer to reality than romance.[15] The point now, as I have already mentioned, is to establish who were the 'braves' and what were the limits of their 'assertion of liberty'.

In sum, for what it has to offer as a primary source on golden age piracy, and despite all of its shortcomings, the *General History* has yet to be surpassed as a historical document. But what is even more important is the extent to which the book offers a textual snapshot of an age of acute social disturbance when private property-rights on things and people were enforced through state-sponsored terror and blood-shedding violence; when emerging and deepening categories of race shaped the repression of one group as much as the elevation of another, impeding on solidarity and collective action for change; and when pre-capitalist communal forms of organization informed anti-capitalist resistance while without necessarily providing all the tools to overcome the prevailing social order. In this sense, the revolts of sailors during the golden age of piracy may have been contradictory and even backward-looking in outlook; their egalitarianism may have been limited and temporary; and their rebellion may have been violent, ransacking, and blood-thirsty. But they, including Mist, lived in that era, and we did not. However what posterity thinks of their aspirations, it changes nothing to the fact that

[14] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 6.
[15] Ibid., p. 588.

those were valid in terms of their own experience. And, in the end, this is what really matters.

To be consistent with what I have just exposed, I will, in what follows, continue to refer to the author of the *General History* as Nathaniel Mist. For citation and bibliographical convenience, however, I will continue to refer to Captain Charles Johnson, as it is currently common practice in the literature, and also because we now have very good evidence that it was Mist's pseudonym.

To Recover 'the choice in themselves'

The rise of golden age piracy can be characterized by two distinct constitutive phases. The first occurred when early pirate crews were drawn from privateers whose men refused to submit to, or had yet being made aware of, the Treaty of Utrecht that ended the War of the Spanish Succession in the Caribbean in 1713. Such was the fate of Captain Henry Jennings and his crew, among the pioneers of the golden age. As they were returning to their Jamaican base after an impressive pillage of '35 000 Pieces of Eight in Silver' from a poorly guarded entrepôt in Havana, the rovers soon discovered that their plunder had been made in time of 'full Peace' and for which, therefore, they would be facing charges with piracy. Consequently, 'they saw a Necessity for themselves; so, to make bad worse, they went to Sea again ... and furnishing themselves with Ammunition, Provisions, Etc. ... they turn'd Pyrates'.[16] In a similar fashion, Captain Samuel Burgess and 'the Gang he was with ... would make no Ceremony of prolonging the Commission

[16] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 36.

by their own Authority' in spite of the peace settlement.[17] For those former privateersmen, who had been trained in state-sanctioned piracy for just over a decade, it seemed quite easy to go from 'plundering for others, to do it for themselves', as naval surgeon John Atkins wrote.[18] In the end, as they continued their sea robbery beyond prescribed legality, they made 'very little Distinction betwixt the Lawfulness of one, and the Unlawfulness of the other'.[19]

Crucially, in turning to outright piracy, these early crews of outlaws carried with them the communal and egalitarian tradition of the brethren of the coast, which had tenaciously survived aboard privateers in spite of years of curbing state regulation, and whose ideas and manners of organizing were therefore imparted to the many new recruits who joined them from captured merchant ships in the few years following the end of the war. Yet as these former merchant seamen began to predominate in the pirate crews, especially after 1718 when most of the old-timers accepted the royal pardon, the national allegiance logic that underpinned privateering began to be gradually abandoned for a 'War against all the World', as one pirate enthusiastically exclaimed.[20] Pirate captain and former privateersman Benjamin Hornigold learned it the hard way when his mostly English crew dismissed him from captaincy for refusing to plunder English vessels, 'which were, after all, the most plentiful and lucrative ships to be found in the seas they sailed'.[21] This

[17] Ibid., p. 506.
[18] Akins, *A Voyage to Guinea*, p. 226.
[19] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 64.
[20] Ibid., p. 319.
[21] Marcus Rediker, *Villains of all Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), p. 7.

rejection of any national allegiance 'marks the biggest difference between the golden age pirates and the buccaneers who preceded them'.[22]

Furthermore, merchant seamen who turned pirates did so for a more pragmatic reason than their immediate predecessors; namely, to escape the rigorous and often brutal discipline of the now-consolidated capitalist labour process at sea. As suggested earlier, common seamen were experiencing an ever-growing factory-like work regime aboard deep-sea ships at the turn of the eighteenth century. This process intensified even more with the end of the War of the Spanish Succession. The huge surplus of maritime labour created by the demobilization of navies and privateering fleets pulled wages downward by nearly a half of what it was during the war.[23] Sailors competing for fewer and less-paid seafaring jobs placed merchants and their ship captain employees in a firmer position of power, allowing them to enforce a harsher work discipline at sea. This is illustrated, though by no means completely, by the cases of alleged excessive violence to the High Court of Admiralty between 1700 and 1750. Rediker has established that four of every five of such charges were registered between the years 1715 and 1737, a period that contains three-quarters of all murders, whether committed by captain against seamen or vice versa.[24] Such shipboard violence arose in tight connection with the explosive growth of the plantation system in the Americas and the improvement of cargo availability across the Atlantic basin, which called for the sailing of more loaded ships by seamen. As a result, during and beyond the first half of the eighteenth century the ton-per-crew ratio in English merchant shipping almost doubled compared to what it was in the 1680s, leading

[22] Gabriel Kuhn, *Life under the Jolly Roger: Reflections of Golden Age Piracy* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010), p. 59.
[23] See Rediker, *Between the Devil*, pp. 304-5 and *Villains of all Nations*, p. 23.
[24] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, pp. 214-15.

to major gains in productivity.[25] Such disproportion of growth between crew sizes and ship tonnage implied the extraction of more labour from sailors. Nowhere was this truer than in the transatlantic slave trade, where the average ship size increased by 20% and mean slave cargoes by 10% between the first and third quarters of the eighteenth century, while crew sizes remained relatively stable on average.[26] Further, as slave-trade infrastructures on the African coast were initially not able to keep up with the fast-paced improvements in transatlantic shipping and the rising American demand in Africans, slave-loading time increased significantly during the first half of the eighteenth century.[27] For sailors, most of whom, as noted above, had been physically coerced into the trade, longer stays on the African coast not only meant more exacting work with poorer-quality food, but also a greater chance of morbidity and mortality. In fact, port time in Africa had become so deadly by the eighteenth century that the some areas merited the sobriquet of the ‘white man’s grave’.[28]

Enduring such worsened work conditions at sea, sailors were quick to translate labour co-operation into collective self-defence, either by deserting the ship altogether or by

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[25] Peter Earle, "English Sailors, 1570-1775," in *"Those Emblems of Hell"? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870*, eds. Paul van Royer, Jaap Bruijn and Jan Lucassen (St. John's, NF: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1997), p. 76.; On productivity in oceanic shipping during this period, see James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), chap. 5.; and Douglass C. North, "Sources of Productivity Change in Ocean Shipping, 1600-1850," *Journal of Political Economy* 76, no. 5 (Sep.-Oct., 1980), 953-970.
[26] David Eltis and David Richardson, "Productivity in the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Explorations in Economic History* 32, no. 4 (Jan., 1995), p. 479.
[27] David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 134.
[28] Joseph Calder Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 284.; On this topic, see also Richard H. Steckel and Richard A. Jensen, "New Evidence on the Causes of Slave and Crew Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade," *Journal of Economic History* 46, no. 1 (Mar., 1986), 57-77.; and Stephen D. Behrendt, "Crew Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century," *Slavery & Abolition* 18, no. 1 (1997), 49-71.

rising up and taking full possession of it.[29] For the Anglo-American merchant shipping industry alone, Rediker found no fewer than sixty shipboard mutinies between 1700 and 1750, which represents 'only a small portion of those that occurred'.[30] Forty-nine or 82% of these registered mutinies broke out during the post-war years.[31] Of those forty-nine mutinies, thirty-one took place over the course of the decade that immediately followed the Treaty of Utrecht, many of them on vessels involved in the African slave trade. Roughly half of those thirty-one moved directly into piracy, so that approximately one in five pirate ships of the golden age—and probably one in five pirates—got its start in shipboard revolt.[32] Others—indeed, the majority—joined in by volunteering when their vessels were taken. Providing a rough sample, 55 out of 143 seamen (about 40%) from nine different ships captured by Edward England's crew in the spring of 1719 willingly signed their articles.[33] In fact, golden age pirates always preferred to integrate enthusiastic volunteers into their crews rather than resorting to impressment. Once a ship was captured by his crew, for instance, Captain Roberts assembled all seamen aboard the prize, 'whom he called aft, and ask'd of them, who was willing to go, for he would force no Body'.[34] He was reluctant, with reason, to 'force others, [because] that might hazard, and, in Time, destroy his Government'.[35] Exceptions, however, could be made in times of necessity, that is to say, when pirate companies had too few willing members to operate

[29] On desertion of slave trade crews in Africa, see Rediker, *Between the Devil*, pp. 101-6 and Emma Christopher, "Another Head of the Hydra?" *Atlantic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2004), 145-157.
[30] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 227, 308-9.
[31] Ibid., p. 227.
[32] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, 2004, pp. 46-47. David Cordingly, for his part, suggests that about twenty pirate ships representing one quarter the pirate fleet were acquired through mutinous seizure during the golden age. See David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life among the Pirates* (New York: Random House, 2006), p. 161.
[33] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 115-16; Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 47.
[34] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 248.
[35] Ibid.

effectively or when specific skilled men were needed, such as navigators, pilots, carpenters, sail makers, or surgeons.[36] The increased use of impressment by golden age pirates during the last two years of their reign in the Atlantic propelled dramatic mutinies on board their own ships, which, ultimately, to contributed to their fall in 1726.[37]

Yet even volunteering was at times preceded by some kind of covert defiance from below by sailors who thereby sought to hamper the good functioning of the ship in hope of being captured by pirates and, therefore, escape with them. Simon Jones, first mate on the slave ship *Bird Galley* from London, befell his captain William Snelgrave in this wise in 1719. As the slaver was running into the mouth of the Sierra Leone River, they were intercepted by the *Rising Sun*, a pirate ship commanded by Thomas Cocklyn. When Snelgrave ordered his men to come armed to the quarter-deck so as to defend the vessel against the pirates, no one showed up. They had been held back by Jones, who declared that this 'was an opportunity' for them, 'and that if they fired a Musquet, they would be all cut to pieces'.[38] Stunned by the balkiness, the slave ship captain then called up 'some brisk Fellows' who had proven obedient in prior voyages, but again in vain, for the first mate had pre-emptively sequestered the chest of arms so as to prevent the crew from arming up in such situation.[39] Unlike Snelgrave, Jones was familiar with the region and likely knew that it was sometimes used as a temporary harbour by the pirates, for 'several times in the Night-watch, before we came to *Sieraleon*,' one sailor later reported to the captain, 'he had heard him [Jones] say, That he hoped we should meet with Pirates when

[36] Lee A. Casey, "Pirate Constitutionalism: An Essay in Self-Government," *Journal of Law & Politics* 8 (1992), pp. 494-95.
[37] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 49.
[38] William Snelgrave, *A New Account of some Parts of Guinea, and the Slave-Trade* (London: Printed for P. Knapton, 1734), p. 222.
[39] Ibid., p. 204.

we came to that River'.[40] Hiding the weaponry from the crew was one way for the first mate to put his wishes into execution, or at least to increase its feasibility. Ten other sailors along with him voluntarily decided to desert the slave ship and join Cocklyn's company, confirming the opinion that some pirates shared with the merchant captain that 'the People were generally glad of an opportunity of entering with them'.[41]

It was therefore in this context of growing, covert *and* overt, lower-deck militancy on the high seas, which denoted an on-going self-activation of seafaring workers as a class, that the second, more radical and combative, phase of golden age piracy began. Indeed, this phase cannot be properly understood outside that context of maritime class-struggle played out on the decks of deep-sea ships for the simple reason that a great deal of those insurgent seamen now explicitly and increasingly articulated their piracy in labour terms. For example, off the African coast in May 1721 the slaver *Gambia Castle* was captured by about thirty mutineers led by second mate George Lowther and military commander John Massey, who rose up against 'the small Allowance and Provisions' they had been receiving in return of their death-defying labour, as well as to reply in their own way to the 'Barbarous & Unhumane Usage from their Commander'.[42] They insisted that 'it was not in their Business to starve, or be made Slaves; and [that] therefore ... they should seek their Fortunes upon the Seas, as other Adventurers had done before them'.[43] Similarly, second mate and gunner John Gow, along with 'six of the Hands' among the crew, staged

[40] Ibid., p. 221. In fact, pirates had appeared in sizable numbers off the coast of West Africa at that moment, where they found refuge after they had either run away or been expelled from their base in New Providence in 1718. Arne Bialuschewski has estimated at between 500 and 600 the number of pirates active on the west coast of Africa between 1718 and 1723. See Arne Bialuschewski, "Black People Under the Black Flag: Piracy and the Slave Trade on the West Coast of Africa, 1718-1723," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 4 (2008), p. 462.
[41] Ibid., p. 203.
[42] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 304; Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 231
[43] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 307.

a mutiny on the *George Galley* in 1724 as a way to settle matters with their captain, 'a peevish old Man, very covetous', who had been 'giving them a very scanty Allowance' during voyage.[44] Pirate captain Bartholomew Roberts too chose a sea-roving life as a way 'to get rid of the disagreeable Superiority of some Masters he was acquainted with', and perhaps best summed up how the piratical agency resolved the grievances of the early eighteenth-century seafaring workers: 'In an honest Service, says he, there is thin Commons, low Wages, and hard Labour; in this, Plenty and Satiety, Pleasure and Ease, Liberty and Power'.[45]

When mutinies succeeded sailors-turned-pirates took control of the ship and institutionalized their insurrection by collectively drawing up articles—a pirate constitution or social contract, sometimes written down, sometimes 'taken *verbatim*', and whose provisions, while stretching back to the egalitarian democratic communalism of the custom of the coast, now increasingly reflected the grievances of the lower deck.[46] The very first item in Bartholomew Roberts' articles, for instance, granted 'a Vote in the affairs of Moment' to every crewman, as well as an 'equal Title to the fresh Provisions ... at any Time'.[47] In practice, such right broke down privileges between the captain and crew with regards to rations. Every member of the pirate company now could, 'as the Humour takes him ... intrude into his [captain's] Apartment, swear at him, seize a Part of his Victuals and Drink, if they like it, without his offering to find Fault or contest it'.[48] The distribution of plunder was, too, regulated along such egalitarian and democratic lines. In fact, it seems that no pirate captains received more than twice the share of an

[44] Ibid., p. 359.
[45] Ibid., p. 244.
[46] Ibid., p. 342.
[47] Ibid., p. 211.
[48] Ibid., pp. 213-14.

ordinary crewman, with gunners, carpenters, boatswains, mates, doctors, and quartermasters receiving between one and two shares apiece.[49] This equitable manner of elaborating and organizing shipboard political economy was called by the pirates, with a strong levelling overtone, to 'ma[ke] their Vessel a free Ship'.[50] Such a parallel was clearly understood by contemporaries themselves. When his crew rose up in 1720 over matters of shipboard authority and equal allotment of shares, one privateering captain disdainfully referred to the mutineers as a 'gang of Levellers'.[51]

Interestingly, we can observe a relatively similar levelling-like process with regards to the spatial organization of a ship getting ready for piratical purpose. When Roberts and his men captured the *Onslow* in 1721 and kept it 'for their own Use', they set about 'making such Alterations as might fit her for a Sea-Rover, pulling down her Bulk-Heads, and making her flush, so that she became, in all Respects, as compleat a Ship for their Purpose'.[52] Likewise, Lowther and his mutineer accomplices 'knocked down the Cabins' of the *Gambia Castle* and 'made the Ship flush fore and aft'.[53] And we can presume that when Captain Edward England and his company seized the *Pearl* in 1719 and 'fitted her up for the piratical Account', it entailed the same work of revamping.[54] The task of 'making a ship flush' had both a navigational and military objective. In tearing down and removing as much parts from the ship and by lowering the quarterdeck, the pirates alleviated its weight significantly and, therefore, increased its speed and seaworthiness.

[49] Ibid., pp. 212, 307, 342. By contrast, buccaneer captains could receive the value of eight men's shares for the usage of their ship, on top of their own personal share of booty. See Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, p. 172.
[50] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 517.
[51] Capt George Shelvocke, *A Voyage Round the World by the Way of the Great South Sea, Perform'D in the Years 1719, 20, 21, 22, in the Speedwell of London* (London: printed for J. Senex; W. and J. Innys; and J. Osborn and T. Longman, 1726), p. 221.
[52] Ibid., p. 229.
[53] Ibid., p. 307.
[54] Ibid., p. 115.

By the same token, they created a smooth and clear deck without any break or step from bow to stern, hence providing an unobstructed fighting platform, as on warships, and on which they could carry guns anywhere and easily. But in doing so, moreover, the pirates also abolished in physical sense all privileges that pertained to space allocation on board. Even the captain, in spite of keeping a cabin for himself—though more for reasons of navigation than status since it served as a perch from which to steer the ship—was devoid of the luxury of privacy and comfort. Held captive, William Snelgrave noted that '[t]here was not in the Cabin either Chair, or any thing else to sit upon; for they always kept a clear ship ready for an Engagement', meaning that 'every one lay rough ... on the Deck; the Captain himself not being allowed a Bed'.[55]

Because it dramatically reduced the disparity between the top and the bottom of the scale within the crew, this social (and spatial) organization of the pirate ship must have been, as Rediker suggests, 'one of the most egalitarian plans for the disposition of resources to be found anywhere in the early eighteenth century'.[56] He continues:

> By expropriating a merchant ship (after a mutiny or a capture), pirates seized the means of maritime production and declared it to be common property of those who did its work. They abolished the wage relation central to the process of capitalist accumulation. So rather than work for wages using the tools and machine (the ship) owned by a merchant capitalist, pirates commanded the ship as their own property and shared equally in the risks of their common adventure.[57]

From the point of view of state officials and imperial traders, then, the social organization of the pirate ship was probably as much threatening to the right of private property as the act of piracy itself, since 'every Thing was in common' among the pirates, 'and no Hedge

[55] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, pp. 216-17. See also Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, pp. 159-60.
[56] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 70.
[57] Ibid.

bounded any particular Man's Property'.[58] Indeed, the Atlantic ruling class knew how dangerous such communal organizing was to their power, and addressed it on many occasions. As they were arraigned in front of the vice-admiralty judge of South Carolina in 1718, for example, tried pirate Captain Stede Bonnet and thirty-three of his crewmates were vigorously reminded that 'the Sea was given by God for the use of Men, and is Subject to Dominion and Property, as well as the Land' and that, accordingly, 'the Law of Nations never granted [the pirates] a Power to change the Right of Property'.[59]

The mutualist value that underlay the idea among pirates of allocating a portion of all the proceeds of their efforts to a 'publick Stock' so as to provide for the injured, the sick, and permanently disabled must, too, have been perturbing for rulers, yet extremely welcoming for common sailors tempted to take their chance on the account. As we have outlined in the preceding chapter, the charter parties of buccaneers had already established such a proto-health insurance system in the form of payments to men who had sustained injury of lasting effect during a privateering enterprise. But, as Kuhn points out, 'these payments were compensations rather than actual social service. The golden age pirate crews introduced the latter'.[60] Article number six of George Lowther's company, for example, promised not only that anyone losing a limb during engagement be paid out a sum of 'one hundred fifty Pounds Sterling' in compensation, but also that he could 'remain with the Company as long as he shall think fit'.[61] To put the distinction in modern terms, what golden age pirates set up on board their ships was no longer a system of compensatory insurance benefits paid *à l'aventure* but rather a relatively enduring

[58] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 427.
[59] *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet, and Other Pirates* (London: Printed for Benj. Cowse, 1719), pp. 2, 4.
[60] Kunh, *Life under the Jolly Roger*, p. 81.
[61] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 308.

welfare assistance program. While ill or wounded merchant and naval seamen were often disposed of by their captains and housed in over-crowded sick quarters and inns ashore, where they were left starving and ill-treated, some of them sinking into beggary, the pirates, in turn, transformed these cruel realities of social life at sea into a set of measures of social well-being and security.[62] Interestingly, moreover, golden age pirates, as far as available evidence shows, seem to have ceased to lay down health-care-related monetary compensations with equivalents in African slaves, as their buccaneer predecessors did.[63] Although this change may be attributed to the fact that the pirates came primarily from seafaring employments with no occupational ties to land, and who therefore had no need for slaves *per se*, there are also good reasons to believe, as we shall see shortly, that this modification may have resulted from a practical indifference vis-à-vis the racial prejudices of their time, as well as an unwillingness to enslave others, Africans included.

An area, however, where golden age pirates jealously preserved the customs established by their roving predecessors is the direct and everyday democratic process that governed and regulated their company. To begin with, they elected their captains 'by the Suffrage of the Majority', yet carefully limited their authority, which, here too, can be seen as a dialectical reaction to the arbitrary and near-dictatorial power of their merchant

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[62] On the question of health care in the early modern English shipping industry and in the British Royal Navy, see Patricia Kathleen Crimmin, "British Naval Health, 1700-1800: Improvement Over Time?" in *British Military and Naval Medicine, 1600-1830*, ed. Geoffrey L. Hudson (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 183-200.; Cheryl A. Fury, "Health and Health Care at Sea," in *The Social History of English Seamen*, ed. Cheryl A. Fury (Woodbridge, Suffolk & Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 193-227.

[63] Exquemelin reported that buccaneers compensated the wounded as follows: for the loss of a right arm, 600 pieces of eight or six slaves; for a left arm 500 pieces of eight or five slaves. The loss of a right leg also brought 500 pieces of eight or five slaves in compensation; a left leg, 400 or four slaves; an eye, 100 or one slave; and the same award was made for the loss of a finger. In turn, golden age pirates, in addition to indemnity in kind, compensated the wounded only in currencies, whether the Dollar, the Pound Sterling or the Piece of Eight. See Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, p. 71 and Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 212, 308, 343.

or naval counterparts.[64] With a death sentence looming over his head, Irish pirate Captain Walter Kennedy evoked this connection as he related his expeditions on the high seas: 'Most of them [the pirates] having suffered formerly from the ill-treatment of their officers, provided carefully against any such evil, now they had the choice in themselves'.[65] The manner in which the shipboard distribution of power translated concretely is this. The captain's authority was 'absolute and uncontroulable … in *fighting*, *chasing*, or *being chased*', while 'in all other Matters whatsoever, he is governed by a Majority'.[66] As a result, because he was the creation of his crew, the pirate captain 'had no private views to serve'.[67] Such accountability, moreover, also meant that they were always subject to, and obliged to comply with, 'the Test of a vote' by the crew, should his legitimacy or decisions be contested.[68] For example, pirate captain Charles Martel was 'deposed' by his men 'on Account ... of his Cruelty', and was replaced by someone considered 'more righteous'.[69] Captain Vane shared a similar destiny when he refused to go after a French warship, for which he was 'brand[ed] with the Name of Coward' and substituted by John Rackam who 'was voted Captain'.[70] Thus, it did not really matter who was elected as their leader since 'they only permit him to be Captain, on Condition, that they may be Captain over him'.[71]

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[64] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 214.
[65] Arthur L. Hayward, ed., *Lives of the most Remarkable Criminals: Who have been Condemned and Executed for Murder, the Highway, Housebreaking, Street Robberies, Coining Or Other Offences, Collected from Original Papers and Authentic Memoirs, and Published in 1735* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1927), p. 37.
[66] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 139.
[67] Ibid., p. 403.
[68] Ibid., p. 139.
[69] Ibid., p. 67.
[70] Ibid., pp. 138-39.
[71] Ibid., p. 213.

Yet it seems that pirates were not entirely satisfied with merely limiting their captain's power, nor were they fully assured that their company could manage to counterweight it when necessary. Therefore, they elected a second principal officer in order to ensure that their vision of shipboard democracy could be successfully achieved. That person was called the quartermaster. He was considered the 'Trustee for the whole', and acted as a 'sort of civil Magistrate' whose principal task was to 'consult with [the captain] for the Common Good'.[72] As such, with the exception of his unrestricted power in navigational and martial matters, the pirate captain 'can undertake nothing which the Quarter-Master does not approve'.[73] The tasks of the latter included: distributing plunder and provisions fairly to the crew in accord with their articles, resolving potential disputes between members, and in some instances leading the boarding party when a prize was taken.[74] His authority was, in this sense, executive, judicial, treasurial, and mediatorial. While the position existed on certain merchant and naval ships, it remained to the lower ranks of seafaring and was always the captain's privilege to fill it up with someone of his own choosing.[75] By making the position elective and equal in status with the ship captain, golden age pirates reinvented the quartermaster role, to the point that Mist saw it as 'an humble imitation of the *Roman* Tribune of the People', who 'speaks for, and looks after the Interest of the Crew'.[76] With such an independent and popular center of power on board, it was not rare, therefore, that the quartermaster was subsequently elevated to the captaincy when a prize vessel was captured and a crew placed on it or when the captain

[72] Ibid., pp. 213, 422.
[73] Ibid., p. 423.
[74] Ibid., p. 261; Snelgrave, *A New Account*, p. 200; Marcus Rediker, "The Seaman as Pirate: Plunder and Social Banditry at Sea," in *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader*, ed. C. R. Pennel (New York and London: New York University Press, 2001), p. 143.
[75] Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping*, p. 38.
[76] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 423.

was removed.[77] 'In this way', Rediker notes, 'the limits placed on authority were institutionalized and transmitted from ship to ship', which, I add, helped to create and structure an oceanic form of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the Atlantic, as I elaborate in greater details below.[78]

Notwithstanding all this shipboard system of 'checks and balances' the pirates themselves as crew remained the highest authority aboard. In their vision of democratic self-organization, Mist writes, 'the supream Power lodged with the Community'.[79] To this end, they instrumentalized and transformed the usage of a specific naval institution: the council of war. The buccaneers of the previous century, as we began to see in Chapter 3, had too employed such deliberative institution for the organization and coordination of their plundering expeditions, yet kept it mostly in the hands of the top officers, as on naval ships, with the only difference that they were elected. Golden age pirates, as it has been pointed out, democratized the institution to the extent that it became a sort of 'floating town meeting', where the voice of every crewmember was included, from captain to cook.[80] While some pirate crews seized the council for any decisions that they thought needed to be made, it was usually reserved for resolving issues that had implications for the whole company, such as electing (or removing) a captain or a quartermaster, deciding on which course to sail, or dispensing justice in a popular court.[81]

Both because of its proletarian status and its direct-democratic form of organizing, the pirate ship stands as an early example of what Marx called in reference to the Paris

[77] Ibid., pp. 138-39, 142, 598.
[78] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 68.
[79] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 194.
[80] Rediker, 'The Seaman as Pirate, pp. 143-44 and *Villains of all Nations*, p. 68.
[81] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 88-89, 117, 145, 167, 222-25, 292, 595; Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 68-69.

Commune, 'the self-government of the producers', that is to say, 'the [maritime] produce of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class'.[82] In taking possession of the ship as a common property, abolishing the wage relation, and establishing an alternative communal social order that instituted 'a formal Method of Government', golden age pirates converted the so-called floating factory into a 'floating republic'.[83] Let us bear this statist imagery of the pirate ship in mind as it will be essential in order to fully appreciate the transboundary deployment of the revolt in the Atlantic.

Thus, 'going a-pyrating' in the golden age should be seen, first and foremost, as an agentic proletarian practice through which early eighteenth-century deep-sea sailors—along with many runaway slaves and black seamen, as I will discuss shortly—sought not only to handle but also to overcome their experience of capitalist exploitation and oppression in class ways. At a moment where formal political organization was not possible, let alone optional, piracy provided Atlantic proletarian workers with an extraordinary means to channel, coordinate, and maintain their opposition and resistance to the nascent capital social relation in overseas shipping. In this sense, any constitution of a pirate crew ought to be regarded as a self-conscious effort by insurgent sailors to *make* themselves subjects of their own history. When they collectively decided to rise up, take possession of their ship, and draw up articles, insurgent sailors constituted themselves as a 'revolted Crew', who was now 'wickedly united, and articled together'.[84] Those instances of emancipatory mutual associations of sailors-turned-pirates were

[82] Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), pp. 210, 212.
[83] Alexander Justice, *A General Treatise of the Dominion and Laws of the Sea* (London: S. and J. Sprint [etc.], 1705), p. 476.; Bryan D. Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness: Night Travels in the Histories of Transgression* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), p. 191.
[84] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 206, 253.

powerful moments in the creation of a proletarian culture of solidarity in the dark Atlantic. Thinking that their ship 'would make a good Pirate ship', the crew of the Bristol slaver *Abington* plotted a mutiny in 1719, for which they all pledged 'to spend their dearest blood for each other'.[85] Sometimes, this included taking an oath on a bible or even an axe.[86] Such 'ritualization of "beginnings"', as Hobsbawm termed the practice characterizing early modern social movements, not only bound pirates to one another in a ceremonial fashion, but also *against* and *in sharp distinction from* the Atlantic ruling class as incarnated in the personae of the ship captain.[87] At the heart of this subjective class-making process, as we shall see next, was an ethics of vengeance rooted in a popular notion of justice.

'for ... doing justice to one another'

The Atlantic-wide momentum of shipboard class-struggle over matters of authority and labour conditions in the first quarter of the eighteenth century shaped the very form of piratical agency that insurgent sailors created during the golden age. Indeed, one distinctive feature with the buccaneering era is the pirates' strong desire and effort to get their revenge and retaliate on those who have oppressed them, starting with the ship captain. Earlier sea rovers may have been tempted to commit some kinds of reprisal against those they looted—ruthless and sadistic French buccaneer François L'Olonnais comes to mind here. Among golden age pirates, however, vengeance truly became a guiding principle—a praxis. 'The search for vengeance', Rediker explains, 'was in many

[85] Cited in Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 230.
[86] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 213, 307, 342.
[87] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1959), p. 154.

ways a fierce, embittered response to the violent, personal, and arbitrary authority wielded by the merchant captain'.[88] To be sure, vengeance was so badly wanted that golden age piracy, as one commentator noted, resembled 'a *jacquerie* directed against sea captains and merchants, almost a slave revolt'.[89]

The *Abington* mutineers, for instance, all swore to get their 'Revenge on those Dogs' who mistreated them, namely the ship captain and his boatswain.[90] In the same spirit, pirate Captain Howell Davis told William Snelgrave that 'their Reasons for going a pirating were to revenge themselves on base Merchants, and cruel commanders of Ships'.[91] In 1723, as they set sail toward the Caribbean, Francis Spriggs's crew all sworn to find a Captain Moore and 'put him to Death ... for falling upon his Friend and Brother [pirate captain Thomas Lowther]', and shortly after, similarly pledged to go 'in quest of Captain *Solgard*, who [had] attack'd and took their Consort *Charles Harris*' when they were sailing under Edward Low's command.[92] When Howell Davis was killed in an ambush at Príncipe Island in 1719, the crew elected Bartholomew Roberts to replace him and too pledged to revenge their former captain's death.[93] Like many other pirates, Roberts's hatred of all figures of authority went as far as to include colonial officials. After warships had vainly chased his crew from Barbados and Martinique, he swore vengeance against the governors of those islands, taunting them with a new jolly roger that portrayed him with a sword in his hand, and standing upon two skulls, one labelled

[88] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, p. 86.
[89] Malcolm Cowley, "The Sea Jacobins," *New Republic* (1 February, 1933), p. 327.
[90] Cited in Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 230.
[91] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, p. 225.
[92] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 355.
[93] Ibid., p. 195.

A.B.H. (A Barbadian's Head) and the A.M.H. (A Martiniquais's Head).[94] Roberts likely held similar feelings toward the Governor of Virginia, Alexander Spotswood, for he was reported to have planned an attack on the colony in 1721 as a retaliation to 'avenge the pirates who have been executed here'.[95] In 1724, Spotswood was terrified to cross the ocean and return to England because the pirates had marked him as the 'principal object of their vengeance, for cutting off their arch-pirate, Thatch, with all his grand designs, and making so many of their fraternity to swing in the open air of Virginia'.[96] When Charles Vane's crew escaped New Providence after Woodes Rogers had ended the pirate rendezvous on the island, they drank and made a toast to 'Dam the Governour'.[97]

Underpinning the desire of vengeance of golden age pirates was a popular notion of justice, that is to say, a communal and judicial form of self-defence against what they perceived as cases of injustices based on some prior order of things or contractual agreement. Key here was the pirates' conviction that they had a moral right, if not duty 'for … doing justice to one another'.[98] In correcting and avenging injustices, as Hobsbawm wrote of social bandits, they sought to 'apply a more general criterion of just and fair relations between men in general, and especially between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak'.[99] While such design was, to some extent, informed by some kind of aspiration to restore, or at least make reference to, the egalitarian and consultative

[94] Ibid., p. 234.
[95] "Lt. Governor Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 31 may 1721."*Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, ed. Cecil Headlam, Vol. 32: America and West Indies, 1720-1721 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933b), p. 328.
[96] "Col. Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 16 June 1724."*Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, ed. Cecil Headlam, Vol. 34: American and West Indies, 1724-1725 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), p. 113.
[97] Cited in Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, p. 93.
[98] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 532. On popular justice and social banditry, see Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Abacus, 2000), p. 29-30.
[99] Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Abacus, 2000), p. 30.

maritime order of the medieval mariner-companions, most evidence reveal that vengeance as a form of popular justice addressed, for obvious reasons, matters surrounding the social relations of production at sea.

As the Bristol slaver, the *Cadogan*, was captured by Edward England's crew out of Sierra Leone in 1718, his captain named Skinner was asked to come aboard the pirate ship, on which he met his former boatswain who allegedly accosted him captain in this manner: '*Ah, Captain* Skinner*! Is it you? The only Man I wished to see; I am much in your Debt, and now I shall pay you all in your own Coin*'.[100] According to Mist, some of England's men, including the menacing boatswain, had previously sailed under Skinner's command, during which 'some Quarrel had happened between them', resulting in the transfer of the unruly sailors onto a naval ship without their wages.[101] Impressment at sea was very common during the period, much like failure to pay sailors their wages. Slave ship captains knew how bad the Royal Navy needed complements of men to defend transatlantic commerce, and took advantage of the situation to get rid of straggling or unruly sailors onto passing naval vessels in order to enhance profits by eliminating wages as costs.[102] No wonder contemporaries tended to view the navy as a 'floating prison' in which pressed sailors were 'denied their liberty, and turned to slaves'.[103] Thus, the *Cadogan* sailors-turned-pirates had not only been victim of an arbitrary breach of their wage contract by Captain Skinner, but also, and perhaps more insulting, of their bodily freedom that such contract entailed (in theory). When such betrayal happened on top of

[100] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 115.
[101] Ibid.
[102] For captains refusing to pay wages to sailors, see Rediker, *Between the Devil*, chap. 3. For impressment at sea, see Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), chap. 3.
[103] Abel Boyer, *The Political State of Great Britain*, Vol. 35 (London: Printed for the Author, 1728), p. 249.

all the mistreatments that they surely endured in the middle passage, it is not surprising that Skinner's former seamen wanted to give him a taste of his own medicine. As it was reported, the slave ship captain 'trembled [in] every Joint, when he found into what Company he had fallen, and dreaded the Event, as he had Reason enough to do so'.[104] After having tied him up, the pirates proceeded to pelt him 'with Glass Bottles, which cut him in a sad Manner; after which they whipp'd him about the Deck, till they were weary … and at last … shot him thro' the Head'.[105]

This self-improvised business of judging and punishing merchant captains was called 'the Distribution of Justice'.[106] As it were, once a prize vessel was captured, its captain and crew would be called up onto the main deck by the pirates, led by their quartermaster, who lined up the sailors on one side, while putting the captain on the other. Then, most likely after having invited volunteers to step forward and join them, the pirates enacted what would have looked like a popular court of justice, which consisted of 'enquiring into the Manner of the Commanders' Behaviour to their Men, and those, against whom Complaint was made, [were] whipp'd and pickled'.[107] Such distribution of justice was so important for common pirates that they even designated what they called a 'Dispenser of Justice', who was in charge of executing the 'beating' that was collectively pronounced by the crew.[108] So important, indeed, that these justice proceedings sometimes interfered with plundering itself. As they were 'examining the Men concerning their Master's usage of them' on a prize vessel, the pirates of the *Scowerer* were interrupted by their captain who 'put an End to the judicial Proceedings, and fell

[104] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 115.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., p. 338.
[107] Ibid., p. 582.
[108] Ibid., p. 276.

rummaging the Ship, saying to them, *What have we to do to turn Reformers, 'tis Money we want*?'[109] It is worth considering the choice of word here.

'Reform' was an evocative term in the eighteenth century, one that resonated back into the midst of Revolutionary England. Although there were some Whiggery implied in that word at times, when a pirate employed it to describe the judicial interventions of his crew against a merchant ship captain, it is hard not hear an explicit reference to the levelling heritage of reform, especially as regards to law and justice. Against the centralization, bureaucratization and the complex codification that the legal system had begun to undergo in seventeenth-century England, the levellers were committed to make the law easily available, inexpensive, and comprehensible to all.[110] As such, they called for the abolition of lawyers—the 'vermin and caterpillars … the chief bane of this poor nation', wrote John Lilburn—for they believed that individuals should be allowed to plead their own causes and claim justice themselves, whether technically learned judiciary or not.[111]

In a way, this sort of 'levelling the law' is what golden age pirates sought to put into practice through the distribution of justice on board their ships. They were acutely conscious, like any unpropertied labouring poor in this period, that the rule of law served the interests of the ruling class, and that, accordingly, 'if there was less Law, there might be more Justice'.[112] In a famous exchange with a merchant captain whose ship was in pirates' hands, Captain Charles Bellamy expressed this idea as follows:

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[109] Ibid., p. 338.

[110] Barbara Shapiro, "Law Reform in Seventeenth Century England," *The American Journal of Legal History* 19, no. 4 (Oct., 1975), 280-312.

[111] 'An Agreement of the People', p. 55; Henry Noel Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (London: Cresset Press, 1961), p. 539.

[112] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 248.

> damn ye, you are a sneaking Puppy, and so are all those who will submit to be governed by Laws which rich Men have made for their own Security; for the cowardly Whelps have not the Courage otherwise to defend what they get by Knavery; but damn ye altogether: Damn them for a Pack of crafty Rascals, and you, who serve them, for a Parcel of hen-hearted Numskuls. They villify us, the Scoundrels do, when there is only this Difference, they rob the Poor under the Cover of Law, forsooth, and we plunder the Rich under the Protection of our own Courage.[113]

'Courage', in this construct, was a negative popular equivalent of law—a rough-and-ready ability to even things out against the legal theft of the labouring poor by the 'rich Men' and the 'Pack of crafty Rascals … who serve them'. In this sense, Bellamy's lecture 'was the secularized eighteenth-century voice of the radical antinomian who had taken the law into his or her own hands during the English Revolution'.[114] More than half a century later, Thomas Paine, who had himself served as a privateering sailor, re-worded this maritime idiom of class power, claiming that 'when the rich plunder the poor of his rights, it becomes an example to the poor to plunder the rich of his property'.[115] Law from above needed to be answered by justice from below.

As violent and cruel as it may have been, the distribution of justice was far from being conducted arbitrarily and gratuitously. Captain Kennedy, for example, got very angry when he learned that some of his crewmates had beaten a detained captain on their own initiative, to the point 'that he got into his Yawl, and put off from the Ship, swearing he would not sail with Men who so barbarously abused their Prisoners'.[116] This gesture seems to have impressed the detained merchant captain, who saw Kennedy as having

[113] Ibid., p. 587.
[114] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, p. 116.
[115] Cited in Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 101.
[116] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 69.

‘more Humanity than is commonly found in Men of his Profession’.[117] The conflict was resolved as soon as Kennedy ‘returned on board at their Perswasions, and on their Promise, that nothing like it should happen for the future’.[118] Indeed, his men had broken ‘that Maxim established amongst them, not to permit any ill usage to their Prisoners after Quarter given’.[119] Vengeance, in other words, needed to be always discriminate and collectively justified. A ‘case’, so to speak, had to be made for it, otherwise the ship captain and his men were either put back on their vessel or ‘taken off a Maroon Shore’, as they put it.[120] Captain Snelgrave, for instance, was told by one pirate quartermaster that ‘[his] Life was safe provided none of [his] People complained against [him]’, and despite the fact of having refused quarter to the pirates, which often led to an automatic death sentence.[121] The pirates later voted to ‘give him the remains of his own Cargoe, with what is left of his private Adventures, and let him do with it what he thinks fitting’.[122] Similarly, even if ‘the Pyrates were so provok’d at the Resistance he made against them,’ one Captain Macrae was spared from being tortured, and most likely killed, after one pirate, who ‘had formerly sail’d with him’, told the crew that he was ‘an honest Fellow’.[123] He, too, was eventually let go.

Thus, beyond the desire to settle old scores in vengeful ways, distribution of justice was a way for golden age pirates to collectively and subversively redefine the so-called ‘laws of the sea’.[124] The practice seems to have been widespread among pirate crews.

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, p. 219.
[120] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 106.
[121] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, p. 208.
[122] Ibid., p. 242.
[123] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 122.
[124] For a contemporary account of this subject from the standpoint of the ruling class, see Justice, *A General Treatise*, pp. 458-84.

When John Evans's crew 'began to take upon themselves the Distribution of Justice', for example, they did so 'according to the Custom of other Pyrates'.[125] This invites us to presume that vengeance as justice-from-below was a strong organizing principle underlying the pirates' revolt in the Atlantic—perhaps even more than, or at least equal to, plundering itself. Furthermore, they appropriated for themselves the idea of jury trial, while expanding it to the propertyless whose testimony was given equal weight with that of men of property in 'official' court settings. In a strong levelling connotation, they believed that 'if the civil Law be a Law of universal Reason, judging of the Rectitude, or Obliquity of Men's Actions, every Man of common Sense is endued with a Portion of it, at least sufficient to make him distinguish Right from Wrong, or what the Civilians call, *Malun in se*', that is to say, an act that is wrong in itself.[126] But, notwithstanding all this, what was truly radical, let alone experimental, with the pirates' self-understanding of law and justice, I submit, was that they extended the discussion of reform from a strictly constitutional to labour context Atlantic-wide. In this sense, and in sharp contradistinction with admiralty courts, their ships may be shown to have held arguably the first prototypes of labour tribunals.

Justice was not only distributed externally to ship captains, but also internally among pirates themselves. They adopted rules of behaviour built in their article lists in order to avoid or control proven sources of conflict. As the pirates were, in those days, the most wanted 'Disturbers of the Peace of the Universe', maintaining the order and harmony in their crews was a priority of life and death, since 'the least Discord among a few

[125] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 338.
[126] Ibid., p. 248.

Particulars would be the Ruin of a whole Body'.[127] In this sense, 'Articles of Indictment' were made specifically to forbid, for example, stealing, gambling, fighting, carrying women to sea, and deserting battle station in time of combat, hence ensuring that the pirates 'were arraigned upon a Statute of their own making'.[128] But what was most remarkable about them was that not only had they been the fruit of collective wisdom, but their enforcement *and* punishment were, too, collectively enacted. Prosecution and judgement, in other words, were initiated *and* handled by the crew as whole. Roberts's articles, for example, stipulated that 'in Case any Doubt should arise concerning the Construction of these Laws, and it should remain a Dispute whether the Party had infringed them or no, a Jury was appointed to explain them, and bring in a Verdict upon the Case in Doubt'.[129] Interpretation of claims, therefore, was accomplished by some of the same individuals who had concocted and signed articles. To my knowledge, unlike any existing court of justice at the time, the pirates refused to appoint a particular expert of authority, and instead allowed the decision about interpretation to be returned to members of the crew itself.[130] Although the quartermaster held some judicial power, he rarely acted as judge, but could serve as a sort of referee or moderator to ensure the proper proceedings were followed.[131]

In the same aforementioned spirit of levelling the law, this collective interpretive framework led to shipboard trials that involved 'no feeing of Council, and bribing of Witnesses … no packing of Juries, no torturing and wresting the Sense of the Law … no puzzling or perplexing the Cause with unintelligible canting Terms, and useless

[127] Justice, *A General Treatise*, p. 475; Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 527.
[128] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 211-12, 307-08, 342-43, quotes p. 222.
[129] Ibid., p. 213.
[130] Bernadette Meyler, "Daniel Defoe and the Written Constitution," *Cornell Law Review* 73 (2008), p. 122.
[131] Casey, "Pirate Constitutionalism", p. 505.

Distinctions; nor was their Sessions burthened with numberless Officers, the Ministers of Rapine and Extortion, with ill boding Aspects, enough to fright *Astrea* from the Court'.[132] When the pirates decided that prosecutions could be undertaken, a judge was appointed, a jury was empaneled as a set of 'assistant judges' by drawing names from a hat, and a court was convened at the ship's steerage.[133] Witnesses were heard, and after days of deliberation a sentence was pronounced, which always stemmed, as their articles read, from what the 'Majority shall think fit'.[134]

Golden age pirates turned judicial authority upside down, just like the rest of their social world. In carrying their ethos of egalitarianism into matters of administrating justice, they fashioned a 'legal system' that genuinely concretized—or, indeed, hoped to concretize—the ideas of equality under the law, fair trial and due process. On their ships, as it has been pointed out, 'those composing the laws are those applying them; those judging could well be those judged; and those being judged have made the very law by which they are condemned'.[135]

This egalitarian judicial outlook is perhaps best revealed, though in the negative, in the mock courts of judicature that the pirates performed as a play to kill time, and in which they tried one another for piracy so that, as for their own courts, 'he that was a Criminal one Day [could be] made Judge another'.[136] One of such mock courts was put on by Captain Anstis's crew as they awaited a response to their petition for pardon (which they likely knew they would not get anyway). One pirate played the role of judge, wearing 'a

[132] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 222.
[133] Ibid., p. 528.
[134] Ibid., p. 307.
[135] Meyler, "Daniel Defoe and the Written Constitution", p. 123.
[136] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 292.

dirty Tarpaulin hung over his Shoulders … by Way of Robe, with a Thrum Cap on his Head, and a large Pair of Spectacles upon his Nose'.[137] Another played the role of attorney general, and a few others acted as the criminals accused of piracy. The whole play ridiculed both the procedural formalism of trial and the combination of indiscriminate and systematic conviction. After one acting prisoner taken to the bar was immediately found guilty by the judge without any due trial, he asked the latter to reconsider his decision, and the following comical scene took place:

> Judge. *Consider! How dare you talk of considering? Sirrah, Sirrah, I never consider'd in all my Life. I'll make it Treason to consider*.
>
> Pris. *But, I hope, your Lordship will hear some Reason*.
>
> Judge. *D'ye hear how the Scoundrel prates? What have we to do with Reason? I'd have you to know, Raskal, we don't sit here to hear Reason; we go according to Law. Is our Dinner ready?*
>
> Attor. Gen. *Yes, my Lord*.
>
> Judge. *Then heark'ee, you Raskal at the Bar; hear me, Sirrah, hear me. You must suffer for three Reasons: First, because it is not fit I should sit here as Judge, and no Body be hang'd. Secondly, you must be hang'd, because you have a damn'd hanging Look: And thirdly, you must be hang'd, because I am hungry; for know, Sirrah, that 'tis a Custom, that whenever the Judge's Dinner is ready before the Tryal is over, the Prisoner is to be hang'd of Course. There's Law for you, ye Dog. So take him away Gaoler.*[138]

This was an early form of black humour, where tragic elements of seafaring life were converted into comic ones as a way of critic, and in which Peter Linebaugh discerns 'a histrionic class consciousness of legalistic countertheater'.[139] Indeed, the pirates were

[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid., pp. 293-94.
[139] Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto*, p. 110.

perfectly conscious, as the mock play highlights, that there was a specific ‘law for them’ and that, accordingly, the courts were simply anterooms to the gallows. The ‘Form of Justice’ that they rudimentarily instituted aboard their ships was fashioned in blunt opposition to the judges’ law, and to the point that they even ‘tried’ merchant ship captains in a way that they were themselves denied in official courts across the Atlantic.[140] Their egalitarian notion of justice was so paramount—among themselves and in their dealings with their class enemies—that it has been considered as ‘the foundation of their enterprise’.[141] As the next section outlines, this egalitarian spirit seems to have extended to race and ethnic relations.

‘no Man ha[ve] Power over the liberty of another’

The social order of pirate ships was not only democratic, egalitarian and communal; it was also multi-ethnic and multi-racial, which only reflected the global and multinational nature of seafaring work in the early modern Atlantic world, as pointed out earlier. There were approximately four thousand pirates sailing the Atlantic during the golden age. By far the largest number were of British descent, that is to say, those who had lived in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, among whom half were connected to England, and roughly a third to Greater London. About one-quarter would be known as ‘Americans’, coming from either the West Indies—Bahamas, Jamaica, Martinique, and Antigua—or North America—Boston, New York, and Charleston. The rest, a substantive minority, came from numerous parts of Europe, such as Holland, France, Portugal,

[140] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 222.
[141] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 287.

Denmark, Belgium, and Sweden.[142] The mutiny led by the Scot John Gow on the *George Galley* in 1724, for instance, included a Welshman, an Irishman, another Scot, two Swedes, and one Dane.[143]

Yet what is even more striking is the strong presence of people of African descent on pirate ships. Historian Kenneth Kinkor has estimated that approximately 25 to 30 percent of all golden age pirates were black.[144] The average percentage of black presence on the 21 pirate crews he has registered between 1717 and 1726 produces a similar score. Five of those crews were constituted of 50% or more black pirates, including one outstanding case at 98%.[145] Indeed, an all-white pirate crew appears to have been more of an exception than a rule during the golden age of piracy. For instance, Captain Bellamy's crew was constituted of '150 Hands of different Nations', including British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Swedish, Native American, African American, and about two dozens of Africans.[146] Edward England, one contemporary reported, 'had on board about one hundred and thirty white men and about fifty others, Spaniards, Negroes and Indians'.[147] Another witness mentioned that when England's company sailed in consort with pirate Captain Oliver La Buse, 'there were about three hundred Whites, and eighty Blacks in both Ships'.[148] Bartholomew Roberts's ship, in turn, was manned by 180 whites and 48 French Creole blacks, while his consort (companion ship) was manned by 100 white men, including 18 French, and 40 blacks.[149] Captain Lewis's crew was made of 'about 80

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[142] Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, p. 15; Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, pp. 51-53.
[143] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 359.
[144] Kenneth J. Kinkor, "Black Men under the Black Flag," in *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader*, ed. C. R. Pennel (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 200.
[145] Ibid., p. 201.
[146] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 585; Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 53.
[147] Cited in Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, p. 167.
[148] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 120.
[149] Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, p. 15; Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 252.

Men, Whites and Blacks'.[150] Blackbeard sailed with a crew of '*forty* White Men, and *sixty* Negroes'.[151] While the exact number is unknown, Stede Bonnet's crew, too, comprised many black pirates, along with at least one Amerindian, two Scots, one Irish, one Portuguese, and one Dutch.[152] One colonial governor wrote in 1721 that the *Good Fortune*, captained by pirate Thomas Anstis, had a crew of '60 white men and 19 negroes'.[153] There were at least 35 blacks on board Francis Spriggs's ship.[154] Finally, though we could continue the list, the *Royal Rover* captained by Walter Kennedy had 'nine Negroes aboard' when they ended up shipwrecked in Scotland in 1721.[155]

What was the status of these black pirates? The evidence is unclear. For some scholars, blacks occupied only minor roles on board pirate ships, where they would be pressed to perform the hardest and most menial jobs, such as working the pumps, going ashore for wood and water, washing and cleaning, and acting as servants to the pirate captain.[156] Arne Bialuschewski, for example, one notorious proponent of this interpretation, has argued that black pirates 'were usually slaves who fared no better than other Africans shipped in chains to the New World', despite admitting that this assertion is based on 'scanty' evidence, providing 'little more than a glimpse of the interaction of pirates with free and enslaved Africans'.[157] While I do not contest that such claim holds true in the records, most especially with respect to the pirates who had worked in the

[150] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 595.
[151] *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonner*, p. 46.
[152] Ibid; Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 103-4.
[153] "Governor Phenney to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 26 December 1721."*Calendar of State Paters, Colonial Series*, ed. Cecil Headlam, Vol. 32: America and West Indies, 1720-1721 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933a), p. 507.
[154] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 352-53.
[155] Ibid., p. 210.
[156] Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, pp. 16; W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 15; Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London: Methuen, 2003), p. 172.
[157] Bialuschewski, "Black under the Black Flag", p. 469.

slave trade and had, to some extent, internalized its racist ideology, it is important to point out that there is also some evidence that point to the contrary. None of this evidence, I should mention right away, proves that white pirates treated their black counterparts as equals. But their combination generates a more nuanced, though not definitive, picture of racial relations on board pirate ships in which black pirates may have not always and everywhere occupied subordinated ranks.

In fact, on several occasions black pirates appear to have been equal members in the crews. The testimonies of pirates brought to trial along with their captain Stede Bonnet, for example, provide an interesting window onto what the interactions among black and white pirates may have been on board. Testifying that he had refused to sign Bonnet's articles after the *Francis* on which he served was captured by the pirates, one Jonathan Clarke, for example, mentioned that he was consequently confronted by 'one of the Negroes [who] came and damned me, and asked me why I did not go to the Pump, and told me that was my Business', an order to which Bonnet concurred while threatening the common sailor of leaving him perishing ashore as a punishment—what they called 'marooning'—if he did not comply.[158] We do not know who that black pirate was or what status he occupied in the crew, but the simple fact that he allegedly took the initiative to summon a *white* sailor reluctant to 'go and work amongst the rest' suggests that he may have had a say in the organization of the pirate company.[159] This does not prove the existence of a racial equality *per se*, but it nonetheless highlights a certain form of equity among the pirates, which appears to have been less responsive to racial differences on board.

[158] *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet*, pp. 29-30; Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 211; Snelgrave*, A New Account*, p. 197.
[159] *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet*, p. 29.

Taken next to the bar, another sailor from the *Francis*, a free 'mulatto' named Thomas Gerrard, declared to the jury that he, too, refused to join Bonnet's crew at first, but resigned himself to the idea after he was threateningly informed by one pirate that he was 'like a Negro, and they made Slaves of all of that Colour, if I did not join'.[160] What Gerrard was saying is that his skin colour mattered to the pirates not in the absolute, but *only* because he declined their proposal and refused to volunteer with them. As these two testimonies illustrate, then, both impressment and volunteering on pirate ships could be colour-blind, for a sailor of African descent like Gerrard could be candidly offered to join the pirates as 'regular' crewmember and, therefore, 'Sharers in the Inequity of them', as the expression went, as much as a white sailor like Clarke could be compelled to work the pump and, therefore, 'used as a Negroe'.[161] The point, simply put, is that Bonnet's crew was as much willing to have a mulatto to sign their articles as to impress an involuntary white sailor forced into the most backbreaking work on board. As Peter Manwareing, the captain of the *Francis*, told the court, the pirates 'would have no regard for the Colour' of those on board, as long as they volunteer.[162] My interpretation of this evidence is that, while black pirates may have been confined—even forced—to work on the most degrading tasks on board pirates, it appears that these lowest positions were not necessarily and exclusively connected to skin colour, but also, and arguably more, to one's commitment to the crew's endeavors. We have here a good example of the limits of piracy as a liberty project, for pirates reproduced some level of hierarchy that typified merchant shipping.

[160] Ibid., p. 30; T. B. Howell, ed., *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Year 1793, with Notes and Other Illustrations*, Vol. 15: *1710-1719* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1816), p. 1280.
[161] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 213; *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet*, p. 29.
[162] Ibid., p. 30.

Other evidence of a potentially, though uneven, egalitarian form of racial relations on board pirate ships comes from other court records. When Blackbeard was killed and some of his crewmen captured in 1718, five of the sixteen pirate detainees—James Blake, Richard Stiles, James White, Thomas Gates and one named Caesar—were of African descent.[163] As they were brought before a North Carolina court, the colonial council needed to know first 'whether there be anything in the Circumstances of these Negroes to exempt them from undergoing the same Tryal as other pirates'.[164] The purpose of such enquiry was to determine whether these black pirates should be treated legally as slaves or not. Presumably after further examination, the council—whose members were all tied, directly or indirectly, to the colony's plantocracy—came to the conclusion 'that the said Negroes … were equally concerned with the rest of the Crew in the same Acts of Piracy', and that, for this reason, they 'ought to be Try'd in the same Manner'.[165] Interestingly, Caesar, 'who had been a member of Black-beard's crew and was a favorite of all the pirates', was the only one arrested who refused to testify against his comrades.[166] We can guess that it was because of this bold act that Mist described him as 'a resolute Fellow'.[167]

A similar faith waited the 'Mullatto' pirate who, along with seven others, all 'English Men', decided to break out from Kennedy's crew in 1720 and settled down for a while in Virginia.[168] Before long, their extravagant and debauched lifestyle sold them to the

[163] Robert E. Lee, *Blackbeard the Pirate: A Reappraisal of His Life and Times*, 2nd ed. (Winston-Salem, NC: J. F. Blair, 1974), p. 153.
[164] William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 2: *1713 to 1728* (Raleigh: P. M. Hale, 1886), p. 327.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Lee, *Blackbeard the Pirate*, p. 153.
[167] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 82.
[168] *The American Weekly Mercury*, Vol. 1: 1719-1720 (Philadelphia: The Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, 1898), p. 26.

authorities who discovered their piratical backgrounds and filed charges against them. They were all found guilty and sent to the gallows. 'When they came to the Place of Execution one of them called for a Bottle of Wine, and taking a Glass of it, he Drank Damnation of the Governor and Confusion to the Colony, which the rest Pledged'.[169] Here was a mulatto pirate along with seven white crewmates who were not only deemed equal under the law, but stood in defiant solidarity in front of it. Of course, not all black pirates were treated as such when captured by the authorities. The seventy-five Africans on board Bartholomew Roberts' ship in 1722, for example, were not put on trial but delivered straight to the Royal African Company and sold into slavery.[170] For what it is worth, many members of the Company were part of the jury at this trial. But such cases did not constitute the normal pattern, for, as Kinkor notes, '...trial after trial, blacks were placed on the same legal footing as whites. They comprise an undetermined percentage of an estimated four hundred pirates executed during the decade 1716-1726'.[171]

Most people of African descent that sailed under the black flag as regular crewmembers during the golden age surely had some kind of prior seafaring experience. 'It would be unrealistic', Bialuschewski rightly points out, 'that pirates placed their fate in the hands of Africans who were usually from the hinterland and had almost certainly never seen a ship prior to their embarkation'.[172] Indeed, possessing a seafaring experience may have been a primordial factor for blacks to secure a higher rank on board pirate

[169] Ibid.
[170] Kuhn, *Life under the Jolly Roger*, p. 69.
[171] Kinkor, "Black Men under the Black Flag", p. 204.
[172] Bialuschewski, "Black People under the Black Flag", p. 468. Yet, as Stephanie Smallwood has argued, even African captives from the hinterland could learn some seafaring skills during the middle passage, as captains at times selected some of the stoutest men among the slave cargo to help keep the ship afloat. See Smallwood, "African Guardians, European Slave Ships", pp. 682-83. See also Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes*, pp. 75-76 and Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, pp. 214-15.

ships, for what mattered the most to pirates, let alone any seafaring crews was not skin colour but maritime skills. 'Aboard ships sailors were "hands", not faces', Jeffrey Bolster writes.[173] The black pirates who sailed with Captain Lewis, for instance, were all 'able Negroe sailors'.[174] Likewise, when Captain Tew increased his crew with '200 Hands' after having plundered a Dutch East-India Galley at the turn of the eighteenth century, 37 Africans were part of the contingent, nearly half of whom were 'expert Sailors'.[175] Based on these qualifiers, the black pirates were most likely either former seafaring slaves or free seamen.[176] It is also possible that they may have been former *grumetes*. Working from the Upper Guinea coast down to today's Ghana, *grumetes* were skilled African boatmen employed on wages by European slave traders as pilots, interpreters and middlemen sailors. Their maritime work bridged the barracoon with the slave ship, from which they learned European languages and enough seafaring skills to serve on board slavers and merchant vessels. It has been suggested that some of the black pirates sailing with Bartholomew Roberts were *grumetes*.[177] Evidence about these African sailors, however, is even less clear as to what were their actual statuses as pirates.

Furthermore, there is also some indication that black pirates, just like their white counterparts, could have too risen up to a higher status than regular crewmates. Rediker, for instance, has documented a failed mutiny plot on board the *Zant* in 1721, which was

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[173] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p. 216.
[174] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 595.
[175] Ibid., p. 426.
[176] Ibid., p. 595. For an account on seafaring slaves, see Michael J. Jarvis, "Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2002), 585-622.
[177] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, pp. 47-60, quote p. 51; Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 226; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes*, pp. 143-45, 151-52. On this topic, see also two articles by Peter C. W. Gutkind, "Trade and Labor in Early Precolonial African History: The Canoemen of Southern Ghana," in *The Workers of the African Trade*, eds. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Paul E. Lovejoy (Beverley Hills: Sage, 1985), 25-50; and "The Boatmen of Ghana: The Possibilities of a Pre-Colonial African Labor History," in *Confrontation, Class Consciousness and the Labor Process* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 123-166.

instigated by the leadership of a 'free Negro' sailor and whose aim was to turn to piracy.[178] Though taking place in 1728, that is, two years after the conventionally-accepted end of golden age piracy, a raid on Gardiners Island, New York, was manoeuvred by an African American pilot from Rhode Island, who steered a ship manned by a crew of French and Spanish pirates.[179] If we expand our historical viewpoint to include the buccaneering era, the picture gets even more impressive, for we find at least three blacks who appear to have assumed a leadership role on board privateers, and sometimes on board outright pirate ships.

In 1696, for instance, a runaway slave from Martinique named Abraham Samuel sailed as quartermaster of the pirate ship *John and Rebecca* during a voyage from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean, after which he retired in Madagascar.[180] Similarly, Captain Kidd's quartermaster Hendrick van der Heul, a New Yorker sailor was described by one witness as a 'little black man'.[181] More stunning still is the story of Diego Grillo, a mulatto sailor from Havana, who commanded the *Saint-Jean* in Henry Morgan's expedition against Panama, and continued as an outright pirate captain following the 1670 amnesty. At this moment, he commanded a fleet of four pirate ships. After having plundered several Spanish and Dutch vessels in the Caribbean, Diego was caught in 1673 and hanged in Vera Cruz.[182] Though none of the renowned pirate captains of the golden

[178] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, pp. 231-32.
[179] Kinkor, "Black Men under the Black Flag", p. 201.
[180] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p. 15; Kinkor, "Black Men under the Black Flag", p. 200; Arne Bialuschewski, "Pirates, Slavers, and the Indigenous Population in Madagascar, C. 1690-1715," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005), p. 413.
[181] Ralph D. Paine, *The Book of Buried Treasure, being a True History of the Gold, Jewels, and Plate of Pirates, Galleons, etc., which are Sought for to this Day* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 69.
[182] Kinkor, "Black Men under the Black Flag", p. 200; Moreau, *Une histoire des pirates*, pp. 80-89; Philip Gosse, *The Pirates' Who's Who: Giving Particulars of the Lives and Deaths of the Pirates and Buccaneers* (Auckland, New Zealand: The Floating Press, 2012 [1924]), p. 118.

age seem to have been of African descent, sailors like Abraham Samuel, Hendrick van der Heul, and Diego Grillo nonetheless highlight that a commendable black man with maritime skills could elevate himself—in these cases, most likely through some kind of elective process—to a position of prestige and authority under the black flag.

Another element pointing in the direction of a form of racial equality on board pirate ships is the permission for blacks to permanently carry weapons and take active part in plundering prize vessels, which contrasted with life on the mainland where black codes prohibited such practice.[183] For example, 'a Negro Cook doubly arm'd' led the boarding party on the *Morning Star* in 1721, and more than half of such boarding group was black on the *Dragon* in the same year.[184] Black pirates also appear to have been very active in defending their ships against naval authorities, such as those sailing with Bartholomew Roberts who played a prominent role in the battle against the HMS *Swallow* in 1722, during which three of them were killed in combat, the others made prisoners.[185] Similarly, as Blackbeard's crew were fighting to death against the royal navy, the pirate captain entrusted Caesar to hide in the powder magazine of the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, instructing him to stand ready to blow up the ship as soon as the naval officers would step on board.[186] As Frank Sherry has suggested, 'blacks, who usually feared a return to

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[183] Although it is true that slaves, as it sometimes happened, could be armed as soldiers to fight in the wars of the whites, such practice did not directly undermine the slave system, in spite of some manumission after service. On this subject, see Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan, *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
[184] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 54.
[185] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 245.
[186] Ibid., p. 82.

slavery even more than they feared death, were often far more willing than white pirates to fight and die in defense of their ships and their freedom'.[187]

Black and white pirates not only fought side-by-side to preserve their hardly-won autonomy at sea—though what that autonomy actually meant may have differed between the two groups—they also fought together to recover it once captured by naval authorities. For example, pirate surgeon Peter Scudamore, who had joined Roberts' crew 'with a great deal of Alacrity' attempted to stage a mutiny along with 'some of the Pyrates' Negroes, [and] three or four wounded Prisoners', as they were incarcerated on board the *HMS Swallow* after the man-of-war had killed their captain and sunk their ship.[188] According to one witness, the surgeon 'had been talking all the preceeding Night to the Negroes, in *Angolan* language', inquiring of them whether they were willing to rise up, kill the crew, escape with the ship, 'and endeavour the raising of a new [pirate] Company'.[189] While most the white pirate prisoners were not keen on the idea, Scudamore 'easily prevailed with the Negroes to come into the Design ... for many of them having lived a long Time in this piratical Way, were, by the thin Commons they were now reduced to, as ripe for Mischief as any'.[190] The plot, however, was discovered before its execution. The white prisoners were eventually hanged at Cape Coast Castle, while the blacks were sold into slavery.

As Emma Christopher has pointed out, '[s]ailors were used to working alongside men of different ethnicities and were happy to do so under a black flag as much as any other,

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[187] Frank Sherry, *Raiders & Rebels: The Golden Age of Piracy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), p. 212.
[188] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 247, 272.
[189] Ibid., pp. 272-73.
[190] Ibid., pp. 247, 273.

but this impartiality often did not extend to chained captives being taken for sale'.[191] This is true, and it is important not to deduce from our survey here that pirates were all driven by, or that their actions resulted in, antislavery or even abolitionist sentiments. In fact, even though many among them were of African descent, and even though many regarded their piracy as a resistance against bondage at sea, when they took prizes, slave ships in particular, the pirates often either left the captives in chains or treated them as 'booty' to be sold.[192] And yet, again, there seems to have been some exceptions, for golden age pirates, on occasions, did free the African captives they found on captured slave ships. This is confirmed in a letter wrote by one Captain Evans to the author of the *General History*, and which has been reprinted and included in the 1972 scholarly edition.

As Evans describes, he was in command of the slaver *Greyhound Galley* in 1716, with 250 African slaves on board, when he was chased by Walter Kennedy's crew off Puerto Rico. The slave ship was soon intercepted and plundered by the pirates, who increased their crew 'with 40 of the best Men Slaves'.[193] After having gone through the usual judicial proceedings, Evans was given mercy and put back on board his ship by the pirates, along with those who chose to stay loyal to his command (four sailors, including the second mate, joined Kennedy's crew voluntarily). To his surprise, the ship had been left topsy-turvy by the pirates, 'but this was nothing', he writes, 'to their leaving all my Negroes out of Irons, of whom I was more in fear than I had been of the Pyrates; for, among them, the Captain's Humanity protected us; but we could expect no Quarter from the Negroes should they rebel; and, in such Case, we had no Prospect of quelling them, for the Pyrates had taken away all of our Arms, and by opening a Cask of Knives, which

[191] Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes*, p. 119.
[192] On this subject, see Bialuschewski, "Black People under the Black Flag", pp. 461-75.
[193] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 68.

they had scatter'd about the Ship, they had armed the Negroes, one of whom had the insolence to collar and shake one of my Men'.[194] Taking up handspikes, the crew managed to keep the loose Africans under control and drove them back into their holds.

How do we interpret this benevolent-like act made by the pirates? First, it seems that such a case was more than merely anecdotal, for at least two other similar instances, based on Kinkor's findings, have occurred during the golden age of piracy.[195] What is certain, however, is that, from the standpoint of the African captives, it was a genuine act of liberation, an act against slavery. From the standpoint of the pirates, notwithstanding how many times they did so, one does not undertake the trouble of freeing hundreds of—and most likely hostile—African slaves for no reason. Beyond the mere pleasure, perhaps, to create disorder, the best, most plausible explication for this action is that it may have been a strategy by the pirates to obtain indirect vengeance against ship slave captains—the most detested of all. Indeed, not infrequently were slave ship sailors, especially black sailors, accused by their captains of having been involved in assisting the African captives to rebel as a way to use them in their struggle against authority and ill-treatment on board.[196] In a similar fashion, in setting free and arming African captives, Kennedy's crew may have sought to 'outsource' their own dispensation of justice to the slaves, who would then, should they rise up, create enough chaos to hamper the ship's business, and maybe even overthrow its crew. The pirates, in particular those who came from the slave trade, knew well what African captives were capable of during the middle passage if given only a slight chance of recovering their own freedom. By granting that opportunity to the *Greyhound* Africans, Kennedy's intent may have been to turn them

[194] Ibid., p. 70.
[195] Kinkor, "Black Men under the Black Flag", p. 198.
[196] Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes*, pp. 103-5.

into avenging human weapons with which to strike against sailors' most hatred trade. It is interesting to note, furthermore, that Kennedy was Irish, an ethnic background that, as we saw, was often racialized as a degraded dark race.

Beyond instrumental explanation, it seems possible to advance the argument that pirates also freed African slaves by solidarity or at least by compassion. Indeed, African-descended pirates, as I have demonstrated, were men whom white pirates relied on in mutiny, resistance, and plunder, as well as in a host of other life and death situations at sea. Furthermore, while the conditions of the slave trade sought to drastically antagonize racial identities against one another, the harsh work discipline on board brought sailors to invoke comparisons of their situation with that of those they carried as captive cargo. As I began to mention in Chapter 2, it was common for slave ship sailors to be not only racialized as 'white slaves' by their captains, but also to be punished with the same instruments of torture designed for use on the slaves. The disobedient or rebellious ones were severely lashed with the cat o' nine tails, before being shackled and chained up to the deck, sometimes by the neck. The greatest insult of all, one that surely reinforced the sentiment of a common experience of bondage and oppression, was when ship captains made the men slaves come up onto the deck and flog a defiant sailor.[197] As a result, European slave ship sailors, among whom many golden age pirates were drawn, developed a more complex understanding of slavery and its relationship to dark skin than what prevailed in plantation colonies. Their sentiments toward African slaves were, in this sense, ambiguous and contradictory, for they could as much quell slave rebellion as create affinities with some captives. Liverpool slave ship sailor William Butterworth, for

[197] Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargo*, p. 113.

instance, developed a friendship with one African slave named Bristol during the middle passage. While everything on board was either 'black or white' at the beginning of the voyage from Africa, the seaman was astonished to see 'how much were things altered in a few weeks sailing'.[198] The transatlantic crossing must have transformed his prejudices towards enslaved Africans because, 'from that moment', he writes, 'I became a citizen of the world' who 'looked on all mankind as my brethren'.[199]

Furthermore, Equiano's narrative makes clear that from the perspective of at least one black slave sailor, white seamen were less likely than other whites to abuse blacks, and therefore more incline to treat them as equals. In fact, he developed a friendship with two white sailors, Richard Baker and Daniel Queen, when he was sailing between the European metropolitan centers, the Caribbean, and the American colonies. They taught Equiano how to read and write, showing him 'a great deal of partiality and attention', which gave the black slave a 'new life and spirits'.[200] What is particularly significant for our discussion here is that Equiano well understood that the making of his friendship with the two white sailors was directly connected to the collectivism of shipboard labour. 'Although this dear youth had many slaves of his own', he writes of Baker, 'yet he and I have gone through many sufferings together on shipboard; and we have many nights lain in each other's bosoms when we were in great distress. Thus such a friendship was cemented between us…'.[201] What Equiano asserts here is fundamental because it highlights how the cooperation and interdependence of the shipboard labour process produced solidarities among seafaring workers that transcended racial differences, which,

[198] Schroeder, *Three Years Adventure*, pp. 77, 64.
[199] Ibid., p. 72.
[200] Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, pp. 80, 107.
[201] Ibid., p. 80.

in turn, could establish a basis, though fragile and not immutable, from which racial equality could develop in some perennial ways.

As much as this open-mindedness unique to world-traveling sailors made it possible for blacks to integrate into maritime society and be treated in less oppressive ways than on the mainland, it is not impossible, as illustrated by the case of Kennedy's crew, that it could have occasionally allowed golden age pirates to expand their 'cause of liberty' so as to include African slaves, who, in their turn, could too recover 'the justice in themselves'. Indeed, Mist's decision to include the fictitious story of Captain Misson in the second volume of the *General History* is instructive in that regard, for it allowed him to introduce an anti-slavery voice to his narrative that he most likely saw as consistent with the worldviews underpinning golden age piracy. According to that story, the anti-clerical and anti-monarchical French pirate captain summoned his crew that 'no Man had Power of the Liberty of another', telling them that 'he had not exempted his Neck from the galling Yoak of Slavery, and asserted his own Liberty, to enslave others'. In speaking of the African slaves, Misson said that however 'these Men were distinguish'd from the *Europeans* by their Colour, Customs, or religious Rites, they were the Work of the same omnipotent Being, and endued with equal Reason', and that, consequently, they should be 'treated on the Foot of free People'.[202]

In including the Misson story to his historical narrative, Mist may have sought to add a fictional voice to what he perceived, though in very germinal and incomplete form, as a real-life matter about liberty, equality, and fraternity among golden age pirates, which, as we saw, may have been inclusive of the blacks in some cases. In a way, then, it may not

[202] Ibid., pp. 403-4, 427.

be too far-fetched to suggest that rebellious sailors-turned-pirates anticipated inchoately in the early eighteenth century what would become more elaborated with the First International more than a century later, namely, that 'all societies and individuals adhering to it, will acknowledge truth, justice, and morality, as the basis of their conduct towards each other, and towards all men, without regard to colour, creed, or nationality'.[203] After all, the pirates sought to create, in Mist's own words, a shipboard social order in which 'might be drown'd the distinguish'd Names of French, English, Dutch, Africans, Etc.'.[204]

A 'Junction of Confederates and Brethren in Iniquity'

Having described the capitalist setting of the pirates' revolt and explored the inner organizing of their crews, we now to turn their social interactions at sea, out of which were created, sometimes suddenly and for a short while, multicrew associations by which shipboard solidarity was taken beyond and spread across the immediate 'borders' of the pirate ship and articulated into a broader collective action of revolt and defense at sea. Though on a much smaller scale, and while remaining rather undetermined politically, this genuinely translocal dimension of the revolt, as I argue in this section, makes golden age piracy arguably the very first independent experiment in working-class internationalism.

[203] Karl Marx, "Provisional Rules of the International Working Men's Association," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), pp. 82-83.
[204] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 417.

Ravaging transatlantic merchant shipping from Honduras to Nova Scotia to West Africa, insurgent sailors-turned-pirates needed somewhere safe to anchor and divide their plunders. In 1714, New Providence Island in the Bahamas had already been spotted by 'three setts of pirates' led by Benjamin Hornigold as such a suited place.[205] As one report instructed, the island had been raided by the Spaniards and French during the war, leaving only 'two hundred families scattered up and down ... who live without any face or form of government, every man doing onely what's right in his own eyes'.[206] The absence of a strong colonial government, combined with a poor population of law-abiding residents made the island the perfect hide for the pirates. Furthermore, New Providence was situated in the middle of the triangular trade lanes between Europe, the Caribbean and North America, hence placing them in a closer position to potential targets to prey on, as well as to additional markets for the disposal of booty. In addition, the many coves and inlets in the Bahamas accommodated their need to hide when pursued and to careen or repair ships without fearing entrapment. Limestone caverns became convenient hiding places for their treasure. Food, fresh water, and wood for repairs were in great supply.

In 1715, Hornigold and his crew descended from their first retreat in Eleuthera Island—a small islet located 80 km east of New Providence—and dropped anchor in Nassau, the capital, with the intention of releasing a crew of fellow pirates from prison, who awaited criminal prosecution. Returning from a piratical expedition off the coast of Cuba, they had been arrested and jailed by ship captain and Judge of the Vice Admiralty Court Thomas Walker, who wanted to make a case with them so as to strike a blow at the

[205] Cited in Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, p. 159.
[206] Cited in ibid.

burgeoning pirate power in the Bahamas.[207] Threatened with his life by Hornigold and his men, Walker was ultimately chased off the island, and the pirates rescued from the gallows—a victory that Hornigold took to his advantage by proclaiming himself the new governor of the island, where all pirates, he claimed, were now under his protection.[208]

Word of a colony in the hands of pirates quickly spread throughout the Caribbean and beyond. A year after the event, Hornigold was joined by pirate captains Henry Jennings and Thomas Barrow and their respective crews, who altogether constituted 'the nucleus of the golden age of piracy'.[209] According to Mist, they were soon followed by a plethora of other sea rovers, such as Edward 'Blackbeard' Teach, John Martel, James Fife, Christopher Winter, Nicholas Brown, Paul Williams, Charles Bellamy, Olivier La Buse, Major Penner, Edward England, Thomas Burgess, Thomas Cocklyn, Robert Sample, and Charles Vane.[210] Transformed as the new pirate rendezvous in the Atlantic, New Providence was by then completely taken over by the pirates, who mounted their own guns on the walls of Fort Nassau and hoisted their death's head flag on its mast.[211] In the words of Thomas Barrow, the pirates wanted to '...make it a second Madagascar', which is indicative of the generational transmission of the piratical experience that stretched back to the buccaneering era.[212] In 1717, as many other pirates sailed in—among them, Stede Bonnet, Howell Davis, Nichols, Miller, Napin, Fox, Porter, Macarty, Bunce,

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[207] Sandra Riley, *Homeward Bound: A History of the Bahamas Islands to 1850* (Miami: Island Research, 1983), p. 55.
[208] Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People*, Vol. 1 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), p. 112.
[209] Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, p. 160.
[210] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 41-2.
[211] Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 112; Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man who Brought them Down* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2007), p. 139.
[212] "Lt. Governor Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 3 July 1716."*Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, ed. Cecil Headlam, Vol. 29: America and West Indies, 1716-1717 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930c), p. 141.

Leslie, John Rackam, and the two famous woman pirates Mary Read and Anne Bonny—Nassau counted about thirty companies of outlaws in its harbor, with a population oscillating between 1,800 and 2,400 pirates.[213] Indeed, so prominent had become the pirates in the Bahamas that Lieutenant Governor Spotswood of Virginia commented in 1717 that they now looked 'upon these islands as their own...', and that they sought 'to strengthen themselves … under a Governor of their own choosing'.[214]

Before long, New Providence stood as a beacon of liberty in the Atlantic, and quickly became an encampment for runaways and castaways. Many of the incoming migrants were vagrant people, most of them unemployed former servants and indigent small planters from Jamaica, Barbados, South Carolina, and Virginia, where the large-scale monocrop plantation model offered little room for independent farming. As New Providence offered plenty of cheap and available lands, as well as opportunities in contraband trading, they made their way toward the Bahamas. These settlers would prove essential for the pirates not only because many of them joined their ranks, but also because those who stayed ashore created a relatively stable and permissive community that could re-absorb stolen cargoes in the formal economy in exchange of logistical support to the crews, most especially in terms of provisions and ammunition.[215] This highlights the fact that, inasmuch as golden age pirates contested the Atlantic social order, the very form of resistance they were engaged in did not allow them to fully escape from it, much less to overthrow it. In other words, these limits underline the fact their piratical activity could not transform the dominant social order but depended inherently

[213] Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, p. 151; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, p. 256; Earle, *The Pirate Wars,* p. 161; Moreau, *Une histoire des pirates*, p. 205.
[214] Michael Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 3rd ed. (Waterloo, Ont.: San Salvador, 1986), p. 92. and "Lt. Governor Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations", p. 142.
[215] Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 111.

on it, despite the fact that this very activity developed a culture of oppositional practices and attitudes to it. As one colonial official reported in 1718, '[t]he pirates themselves have often told me that if they had not been supported by the traders [bringing] them ammunition and provisions according to their directions ... they could never have become so formidable, nor arrived to that degree [of strength] that they have'.[216]

Other migrants who proceeded toward New Providence were logwood cutters from the bays of Campeche and Honduras, who had been driven out by the Spaniards just has the pirates were settling in the Bahamas.[217] One commentator wrote in 1720 that, following the peace of Utrecht, 'the mariners who were employed in it [the logwood trade] to the number of 3000, have since turned pirates and infested all our seas'.[218] As we noted in the preceding chapter, many of them were, in fact, former buccaneers who had found a refuge among these Central American woodland communities at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Finally, another effect of the news of the emerging independent pirate republic in New Providence was the unrest it created among African slaves in the neighboring sugar islands. The Governor of Bermuda, for instance, reported in 1718 that the 'negro men [have] grown soe very impudent and insulting of late that we have reason to suspect their riseing, soe that we can have noe dependence on their assistance but to the contrary on occasion should fear their joying with the pirates'.[219] A similar feeling was expressed by

[216] Cited in Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, p. 140.
[217] Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, pp. 147-50; Moreau, *Une histoire des pirates*, p. 201; Woodard, The *Pirate Republic*, p. 131.
[218] Cited in Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, p. 149.
[219] "Lt. Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 31 may 1718." *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, ed. Cecil Headlam, Vol. 30: America and West Indies, 1717-1718 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930b), p. 261.

the Governor of Antigua.[220] In Martinique, moreover, a mass breakout of fifty African slaves allegedly stirred up by a white man took place during this period. Their intention, it was said, was to escape to New Providence so as 'to seek a career in piracy'.[221] While runaway slaves were far from being guaranteed a free status in New Providence as elsewhere throughout the dark Atlantic, the fact a substantial number did, or attempted to, escape to the Bahamas suggests that they knew well how racial differences were somewhat attenuated under the black flag, at least compared to life under the black code. With all these streams of runaways and castaways heading for the Bahamas and joining its outlaw population, New Providence may, indeed, have looked like 'a Receptacle to Villains of all Nations', as one colonial official said.[222]

Having carved out such a space of freedom in the Atlantic, where they could meet and create affinities among themselves, the pirates soon developed an expanded culture of solidarity—a consciousness of kind that went beyond the boundary of individual ships to include virtually all pirate crews. Indeed, Nassau's underworld of taverns, grogshops, coffee houses, and brothels served as a focal point for socializing among the pirates temporarily in port. Those places were not just for lodging and entertaining, but also for pirates of different backgrounds to discuss any topic in their mind, presumably giving rise to a 'popular articulacy', that is to say, the way common people expressed their own aspirations, sentiments and opinions in class ways.[223] Thus congregated, pirates most certainly came to elaborate in an autonomous and independent fashion their own ethos of mutuality—the '…mutual study, disputation, and improvement…' among proletarian

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[220] See Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 55.
[221] Cited in Sherry, *Raiders and Rebels*, p. 212.
[222] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 45.
[223] John Money, "Taverns, Coffee Houses and Clubs: Local Politics and Popular Articulacy in the Birmingham Area, in the Age of the American Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (1971), 15-47.

workers, wrote Thompson—and through which a common, albeit crude and rudimentary, awareness of an identity of interests was formed.[224] Such a cultural elaboration from below is revealed by one contemporary who reported in 1716 that the pirates of Nassau had begun to call themselves 'the flying gang'.[225] This process of class identification was well perceived by another observer who wrote a year later that the pirates 'esteem[ed] themselves a community, and to have a common interest'.[226]

In the history of working-class internationalism this is not insignificant, for what we observe in New Providence were, for the most part, seafaring wage workers in revolt against the relations of production at sea, who self-identified *across* the boundary of their democratically and collectively self-managed workplaces. What was in germination in the Bahamas from 1715 onward, in other words, was a self-conscious, relatively coordinated, translocal collective action by insurgent proletarian workers in the Atlantic world. Yet not *all* pirate gangs would engage in such avenue of maritime translocalism. In fact, of the 55 pirate crews registered by Rediker between 1714 and 1727, 21 appear to have sailed alone.[227] As for their attitudes toward enslaved Africans, the pirates' culture of solidarity at sea remained uneven and contingent on navigation. But, as far as evidence at hand goes, extensive sociability and fraternity nonetheless existed among golden age pirates plying the Atlantic, out of which a certain pattern of proletarian transboundary association may be detected. A look at the converging trajectories of the pirate crews captained by Howell Davis, Thomas Cocklyn, and Olivier La Buse should illustrate the point.

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[224] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 817.
[225] "Lt. Governor Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations", p. 141
[226] Cited in Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 110.
[227] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 81.

In 1718, Howell Davis served as first mate on the Bristol slave ship *Cadogan* commanded by one captain Skinner. On its way to the coast of Sierra Leone, the slaver was intercepted and plundered by Edward England and his crew, leaving its captain dead from revengeful gruesome torture. As usual after capture, England proposed to Davis as well as to the rest of the *Cadogan* crew to join them in piracy, to which he replied that 'he would sooner be shot to Death than sign the Pyrates' Articles'. Impressed by such act of 'Bravery', England decided to let them go and appointed Davis as the new ship captain, 'commanding him to pursue his Voyage'. At the same time, the pirate captain handed him 'a written Paper sealed up, with Orders to open it when he should come into a certain Latitude, and at the Peril of his Life follow the Orders therein set down'. According to Mist, to whom the story had most likely been told by an eyewitness, this was made graciously in 'an Air of Grandeur like what Princes practice to their Admirals and Generals'. In due course not long after the pirates had left, Davis read the document to the crew and discovered that England had granted the vessel and its cargo to the sailors, while inviting them 'to go to *Brazil* and dispose of the Lading to the best Advantage, and to make fair and equal Dividend with the rest'. In this sense, their labour would be wholly reconnected to its object. The proposal was discussed over by the crew but, to Davis' 'great Surprize', was altogether rejected, most likely for fear of a criminal charge. Putting the next destination to vote, the crew decided to set sail to Barbados, where 'Part of their Cargo was consigned to certain Merchants', to which Davis complied, declaring 'in a Rage' that he would '...go where they would'.[228]

[228] Ibid., pp. 166-67.

In Barbados, as soon as the merchants became aware of the smuggling proposal to Davis by the pirates, he was taken into custody, but quickly discharged and released 'as he had been in no Act of Pyracy'. This whole chain of events seemed to have radically transformed him, for while he had boldly refused to join England's fleet off the coast of West Africa, he was now 'resolved to make one amongst them'. Finding no employment in Barbados, he decided to set himself off to New Providence, which he had heard was now 'a kind of Rendezvous of Pyrates'. But his arrival in the Bahamas had been just preceded by that of the newly appointed colonial governor, Captain Woodes Rogers, who carried a royal proclamation that fully pardoned any pirates who surrendered themselves to the authorities, and to which the majority of the sea rovers on the island decided to submit, at least in appearance. As a result, the only option left for Davis was to ship himself on the *Buck*, a merchantman fitted out by Rogers for the Caribbean market, but whose crew was mostly constituted of pardoned pirates, among whom many were 'ripe for Rebellion'. When the ship was anchored in Martinique, a mutiny was organized by Davis 'with some others', including Thomas Anstis, Walter Kennedy and Dennis Topping, who rose up at night and captured the vessel.[229] 'This core of conspirators', Rediker writes, 'would evolve into the most successful gang of pirates in the entire golden age'.[230] A 'Counsel of War' was immediately set up, at which the insurgent sailors, 'over a large Bowl of Punch', deliberated among themselves so as to choose their commander, for which they elected Davis 'by a great Majority ... all acquiesc[ing] in the Choice'. As the new commander, Davis had the responsibility to draw up the ship's articles, 'which were signed and sworn by himself and the rest'. Then, with a strong

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[229] Ibid., p. 288.
[230] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 39.

internationalist overtone, Davis made a speech to the crew whose exact content is unknown, but 'the sum of which was a Declaration of War against the whole World'. After having plundered a few ships and forts from which they strengthened themselves 'with a great many fresh Hands, who most of them enter'd voluntarily', the crew consulted about 'what Course they should steer [next], and by a Majority it was carry'd for *Gambia* on the Coast of *Guiney*', where 'a great deal of Money [was] always kept in *Gambia* Castle, and that it would be worth their while to make an Attempt upon it'. As they set off on this adventure, these insurgent proletarian sailors were about to encounter two other pirate crews, whose outcome, as we shall see, should be reassessed as an early instance of transboundary proletarian solidarity.[231]

The first pirate crew Davis and his company of outlaws encountered off the coast of Africa was that of captain Olivier La Buse. French by descent and most likely Protestant Huguenot by faith, La Buse was 'one of the more independent and long-lived of the West Indian Buccaneers'.[232] As such, he may have belonged to that generation of sailors whose experience stretched back to, at least, the ending period of brethren of the coast. When his ship was captured by Cocklyn, in which Davis and La Buse took part, William Snelgrave noticed the presence of many former privateersmen as well as 'several old *Buccaneers*' among the pirates.[233] La Buse, moreover, had been among the pioneers of the pirate republic in New Providence, from where he had preyed upon the Caribbean seas in company of Hornigold and Jennings, and later with Samuel Bellamy.[234] Later, he was one among those pirates who refused to submit to the king's act of grace in 1718. Leaving

[231] Ibid., pp. 167-68; 170-71.
[232] Ibid., p. 671,
[233] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, p. 253.
[234] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 80.

Nassau, he set course across the Atlantic to Africa. In May 1719, his ship manned by 'sixty four Hands, half *French*, half Negroes' entered the Sierra Leone estuary, where they chased upon what they thought was a merchantman, but proved to be Davis' pirate ship.[235] This encounter of two sea-going locales in revolt was, of course, coincidental. What came next, however, was deliberated and organized.

Hoisting his 'black Colours', La Buse fired a cannon shot to warn the ship of their piratical intention, which was quickly answered back by Davis, who 'returned the Salute, and hoisted his black Colours also'.[236] As soon as both realized whom they had engaged confrontation with, La Buse and Davis were 'not a little pleased at this happy Mistake'.[237] Consequently, Mist recounts,

> they both hoisted out their Boats, and the Captains went to meet and congratulate one another with a flag of Truce in their Sterns; a great many Civilities passed between them, and *la Bouche* desired *Davis*, that they might sail down the Coast together, that he (*la Bouche*) might get a better Ship: Davis agreed to it, and very courteously promised him the first Ship he took, fit for his Use, he would give him, as being desirous to encourage a willing Brother.[238]

This impromptu association between Davis and La Buse highlights how pirates, to speak with Rediker, 'consistently showed solidarity for each other', which translated into 'a recurring willingness to join forces at sea and in port, even when the various crews were strangers to each other'.[239] Such maritime culture of solidarity was fostered by 'an unwritten code of hospitality', kept alive in the popular memory of sailors since the hazardous and uncertain elaboration of the customs of the coast by the buccaneers almost

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[235] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 173.
[236] Ibid., p. 174.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 94.

a century before.[240] Indeed, golden age pirates continued to frame their Atlantic-wide reciprocity and sociability in the language of the brotherhood. When he faced the gallows in 1722, Thomas Howard, for instance, spoke of the pirate community as 'the Brotherhood'.[241] Likewise, before he decided to conform to the king's proclamation in Nassau, Hornigold was called 'Brother Pyrate' by his crewmates.[242] Others called themselves 'Brother Rogues'.[243]

What the encounter between Davis and La Buse shows, moreover, is the extent to which the Jolly Roger was key to the formation of this sense of fraternal unity at sea. In addition to embodying symbolically the terms of a common piratical 'program' or outlook, the black flag served also as 'a rallying point of solidarity' among the pirate crews who sailed sparsely about the Atlantic.[244] Let Marcus Rediker make the claim for us:

> ...when pirates created a flag of their own, as they did for the first time in the early eighteenth century, they made a new declaration: they would use colors to symbolize the solidarity of a gang of proletarian outlaws, thousands strong and self-organized in daring ways, in violent opposition to the all-powerful nation-states of the day. By flying the skull and the crossbones, they announced themselves as 'the Villains of all Nations.'[245]

The very making of a Jolly Roger, whose recurrent emblematic patterns across pirate ships plying the Atlantic suggest a certain sense of class belonging, should therefore be seen as an open-ended, symbolic call of solidarity to either those who have already

[240] Ibid.
[241] Cited in ibid., p. 95.
[242] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 640.
[243] Ibid., p. 75.
[244] Kinkor, "Black Men under the Black Flag", p. 197.
[245] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 164.

chosen to undertake such ‘a riotous Manner of Living’ or were desirous to do so.[246] The pirate flag, in other words, can be considered as an eighteenth-century emblematic equivalent of the proletarian internationalist slogan popularized later by Marx and Engels: ‘workers of the world, unite!’ The ‘black colours’, along with coincidence of navigational choice, were, too, at the origin of how Davis and La Buse encountered Thomas Cocklyn and his crew.

The story of Cocklyn comes to us from William Snelgrave. According to the ship captain, a few months before the capture of his vessel, Cocklyn and 25 other pirates had been ‘marooned’ by one pirate Captain Moody, who had forced them onto the new prize they had just plundered, the *Rising Sun*, yet without giving them their share of booty, leaving them on their own with little provision and ammunition. We can only speculate on the cause of this punishment, which most pirate articles established as being equivalent to a death sentence.[247] It may well have been a quarrel between Moody and a section of the crew over matters of shipboard power and equality, for when the marooned pirates elected Cocklyn as their new Commander, they resolved to ‘never to have a Gentleman-like Commander, as, they said, *Moody* was’. Captained by Cocklyn, the newly constituted pirate crew headed toward Sierra Leone, where they captured ‘several *Bristol* and other Ships arriving soon after ... many of their People entring with the Pirates’. The *Rising Sun* had now a crew of ‘near 80 Men in all’.[248]

Shortly after, in a similar scenario, they were chased on by Davis and La Buse. When they sighted that Cocklyn had too ‘hoisted his black Flag’, they became ‘easy in their

[246] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 135.
[247] Ibid., pp. 211-12, 342-43. See also David Cordingly, *Life among the Pirates: The Romance and the Reality* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), pp. 161-66.
[248] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, pp. 196-97

Minds, and a little after, saluted one another with their Cannon'.[249] The 'Satisfaction was great on all Sides'. So great, indeed, that they the three pirate crews spent two days 'in improving their Acquaintance and Friendship', before deciding to attack a fort together. This collective action of pillage must have crystallized a kind of multicrew solidarity among the pirates, for they held a 'Counsel of War' at which they all 'agreed to sail down the Coast together, and for the greater Grandeur, appointed a Commadore, which was *Davis*'.[250] The three crews sailed together as a flotilla unit for nearly two months.

Not much is known of these expanded councils of war. In some cases, it seems that even treaties were signed by the pirates, so as to institutionalize what Mist called 'their Joint-Piracies'.[251] In Madagascar in the early eighteenth century, for example, Captain Bowen and his crew collectively concluded that it was 'more for their Interest to join in Alliance' with Thomas Howard and his gang, for which a 'Treaty was ratified by both Companies'.[252] According to Peter Leeson, such documents worked out concertedly by different pirate crews 'created similar articles establishing the terms of their partnership'.[253] It is very likely that the joint-piracy agreement between Davis, La Buse, Cocklyn and their crews took, too, some kind of official form, either written or verbal. But what I especially want to emphasize here is how the council of war accomplished a strong transboundary associational function when adapted and put to use for goals collectively defined by pirate crews themselves in Atlantic-world situations. We can only imagine what content shaped the deliberations among Davis, La Buse, Cocklyn and their gangs of outlaws along the Atlantic coast of Africa in 1719. Yet if their council did

[249] Ibid., p. 199; Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 174.
[250] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 175.
[251] Ibid., p. 319.
[252] Ibid., p. 460.
[253] Leeson, *The Invisible Hook*, p. 61.

somehow involve the voice of all the pirates, directly or indirectly, it must therefore have been one of the most extraordinary exercises in popular democracy at the time, for their crews amounted to a total of about 240 pirates, and many of them Africans.[254]

Thus, what began as three separate, disconnected sea-going revolts waged by insurgent sailors in the Atlantic ended up—thanks to the very movement of ships, a 'pirate code' of fraternal sociability, and the democratized regulative customs of the naval war council—as a broader collective action that *explicitly* and *intentionally* aimed at transcending and federating each individual pirate crew. While the encounter of these pirates off the Atlantic coast of Africa was coincidental, the proto-International in miniature that came out of it, however, was premeditated, calculated and purposeful. In this sense, as I began to develop in the preceding chapter, golden age pirates seem to have managed to achieve what arguably no group of proletarian workers in the Atlantic world had hitherto been able to: a conscious, coordinated and synchronized transboundary action of solidarity. To be sure, this forerunner moment of working-class internationalism was acknowledged, though beforehand, by Nathaniel Mist, who wrote in the conceptual language of the epoch that Davis, La Buse, Cocklyn and their crews had organized themselves as a 'Junction of Confederates and Brethren in Iniquity', and that their revolt was, on this basis, carried out by 'confederate Ships'.[255] He made a similar claim about Edward Low and Thomas Lowther who too decided 'to pursue the Account ... [and] to join their Strength together', during which they sailed as 'Confederates'.[256] In many other occasions in his narrative, he spoke of the pirates as having created a 'commonwealth', a

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[254] Rediker, "The Seaman as Pirate", p. 147; Kinkor, "Black Men under the Black Flag", p. 201.
[255] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 174.
[256] Ibid., p. 312.

'Dominion' and even an 'Empire' of their own in the Atlantic.[257] At some point, he further noted, the pirates were not only concerned 'about preserving themselves from the Justice of Laws, but of advancing their Power, and maintaining their Sovereignty, not over the Seas only, but to stretch their Dominions to the Plantations themselves'.[258] Similarly, one colonial governor alarmingly commented that the revolt of pirates stretched out across all 'sea frontiers'.[259]

However, inasmuch as insurgent sailors sought to self-activate themselves in oppositional terms across their ships, their piratical agency remained an attempt at self-help. As such, their rudimentary and short-lived multicrew institutional arrangements on the high seas could be perhaps best understood as informal mutual-aid societies through which mutual assistance—in fighting as in wealth redistribution—was voluntarily provided among federated ships. To be sure, beyond strengthening plundering forces, the most important aim underlying these multicrew associations was for the pirates to ensure 'their common Safety', particularly against royal navies.[260] By making possible such informal practices of mutual aid across self-managed workplaces, the pirate ship in the golden age may have unofficially functioned, to speak with Marx on the role of trade-unions, as the very first '…*centres of organization* of the working class' in the Atlantic world.[261]

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[257] Ibid., pp. 7, 41, 85, 213, 620.
[258] Ibid., p. 87.
[259] "Lt. Governor Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 11 June 1722."*Calendar of State Paters, Colonial Series*, ed. Cecil Headlam, Vol. 33: America and West Indies, 1722-23 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934), p. 86.
[260] Johnson, *History of the Pirates*, pp. 52, 59.
[261] Karl Marx, "Instructions for Delegates to the Geneva Congress," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach, Vol. 3: *Marx's Political Writings* (London & New York: Verso, 2010a), p. 91, italic in original.

Lee Casey was right to argue that '[t]he unit of pirate society and government was the single company', but incorrect in adding that 'they never got beyond it'.[262] There were approximately 80 pirate ships that plied the Atlantic between 1716 and 1726, comprising a sea-roving population of about 4,000 souls.[263] As demonstrated with the example of the proletarian association forged between Davis, Cocklyn and La Buse, most—though not all—of those crews sailed in consort as federated ships. In fact, it appears that, at one time or another during that decade, more than half of pirate crews sailed in fleet of two or three ships, sometimes even more.[264] In 1716, for example, a crew of 40 naval seamen in Jamaica were reluctant to follow orders and patrol the Caribbean *in solo* with a man-of-war carrying only six guns because the pirates were 'generally going two and two, with seventy or eighty desperate rogues, and 10 or 12 guns in each sloop'.[265] Thus, this means that there may have been about more than twenty of these little floating Internationals informally created by confederate pirate crews during the golden age, and by which shipboard proletarian democracy was taken beyond individual ships and institutionalized through the custom of the war council or some other means, such as the transfer of a crew on captured prize vessel made consort.[266]

Of course, golden age pirates did not invent sailing in federated fleet units. It came from the naval tradition of warship commandment, which many of them knew from direct experience in navies or in privateering. Yet by adopting this naval strategy, the

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[262] Casey, "Pirate Constitutionalism", p. 535.
[263] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, pp. 29-30, 47.
[264] This estimate is drawn from the graphic representation made by Rediker of the connections among Atlantic pirate crews during this period. See ibid., p. 80.
[265] "General Heywood, Commander in Chief of Jamaica, to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 3 December 1716."*Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, ed. Cecil Headlam, Vol. 29: America and West Indies, 1716-1717 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930a), p. 212.
[266] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, pp. 71, 135-36, 226.

pirates enabled themselves to organize as revolted crews, through which they automatically conferred an Atlantic-wide, translocal maritime character to their social protest at sea. They did so, moreover, with a strong sense of group identification and loyalty. In 1723, for instance, when newly elected pirate captain Francis Spriggs and his crew decided to break up from Edward Low's fleet on a ship they had just captured, they made 'a black Ensign ... with the same Device that Captain *Low* carry'd, *viz*. a white Skeleton in the Middle of it, with a Dart in one Hand striking a bleeding Heart, and in the other, an Hour-Glass'.[267] This sense of class-based identification, Rediker pointed out, 'helped to ensure a cultural continuity among the pirates'.[268]

Although we may not be inclined to acknowledge it, the achievement of a multicrew culture of solidarity among golden age pirates solidarity truly implied a strong cross-border dimension. As I pointed out earlier, the pirate ship was a *bounded and discrete sea-going locale* that is to say, a self-contained social-spatial unit governed by its own set of laws and codes of conduct. The pirate ship, in other words, had all the qualities of a mini-state—a 'crew-state', so to speak. Such statist conception of the pirate ship was abundantly held by contemporaries themselves. According to Mist, because it instituted a relatively permanent, communal, direct-democratic counter-order, the pirate ship had to be seen as a 'little Commonwealth'.[269]

From this vantage point, multicrew associations of solidarity among golden age pirates really appear as having a strong transboundary feature. In fact, it is enlightening to note, as Henrice Altink and Sharif Gemie have pointed out, that the etymology of the term

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[267] Ibid., p. 352.
[268] Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, p. 81.
[269] Ibid., p. 342.

‘border’ has a marine origin. It goes back to the term *bort*, which in ninth-century Old German or Frankish meant the edge or the side of a ship, thereby suggesting a sharp differentiation between an inside and an outside, between the wet and the dry. Because the clinker-built boats of the early medieval period were constantly leaking, requiring frequent maintenance and repair of the ship’s integrity, what initially appeared ‘as an image of permanent and reliable solidity was actually an evocation of a constant effort to maintain a boundary’.[270] Similarly, the social order instituted on board pirate ships, too, sought to maintain a boundary of freedom and autonomy with the exploitative imperial order outside. In this sense, when pirate crews federated at sea, their associations of solidarity implied the ‘crossing’ of those ship boundaries, as they collectively confronted common problems and undertook common goals.

In sum, the self-making processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity by golden age pirates should be seen as forerunner moments in the development of working-class internationalism. Through them, however, pirates did not seek to create formal political organizations to defend their rights as workers. They instead drew from, and turned to their own advantage, institutions and practices they knew best from their maritime experience, which, in a context of revolt, came to function as organizational means whose implications became, as a consequence, fundamentally political. Indeed, more than a century before the creation of the First International, the vehicular form of transboundary proletarian solidarity fashioned by golden age pirates already posited in its basic

[270] Henrice Altink and Sharif Gemie, "Introduction: Borders: Ancient, Modern and Postmodern: Definitions and Debates," in *At the Border: Margins and Peripheries in Modern France*, eds. Henrice Altink and Sharif Gemie (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 7.

determinations and ambitions a coming 'international counter-organization of labour against the cosmopolitan conspiracy of capital'.[271]

Conclusion

For a little more than a decade after the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, hundreds of motley crews of insurgent proletarian sailors managed to carve out an autonomous zone of freedom in the Atlantic. This floating commonwealth came about through the creation of multicrew associations of solidarity among self-governed pirate ships. Eventually, their strength grew to such an extent that they 'were resolved to treat with all the World on the Foot of a free State'.[272] One pirate, for instance, called himself 'a free prince' who has 'as much Authority to make War on the whole World, as he who has a hundred Sail of Ships at Sea, and an Army of 100,000 in the Field'.[273] In a similar mindset, others presented themselves to a merchant ship captain as 'the Lords of the Sea'.[274] This is why golden pirates were so dangerous to the Atlantic ruling classes. Beyond their plundering enterprises, the revolt they carried out at sea embodied, if only in germination, an alternative social order that challenged the privileges of the wealthy and powerful. What they did create, however, was a momentum of proletarian resistance pointing in that direction.

In July 1726, after years of merciless repression, the very last pirate crew of the golden age was hanged at the mouth of Boston Harbor, and with it a forerunner moment in the

[271] Marx, "Civil War in France", p. 232.
[272] Johnson, *History of the Pyrates*, p. 87.
[273] Ibid., p. 587.
[274] Cited in Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, p. 170.

development of working-class internationalism. Although this tradition of maritime radicalism continued to persist quietly belowdecks and across the docks of the Atlantic world, the next initiative of transboundary proletarian solidarity, however, came from the plantations, and this time around with truly revolutionary hopes.

6. 'A Well-Constructed Machine', or, the Slave-Plantation as a Capitalist Enterprise: Theoretical Interlude Two

…the civilized horrors of over-work [were] grafted onto the barbaric horrors of slavery…[1]

This chapter is designed as an instrumental theoretical prelude to the following one on the Saint-Domingue Revolution. Similar to my analysis of the deep-sea merchant ship undertaken in Chapter 4, its purpose is to lay out the argument that the slave-plantations of the Americas, too, were capitalist enterprises. Opening with Marx's insights on the subject, and keeping up with the theoretical angle privileged thus far in this dissertation, the chapter then sets out to perform a careful historical analysis of the subsumption of plantation unfree labour under capital. In order to circumscribe my analysis both in time and space, I have chosen to focus on mid-seventeenth-century Barbados, without a doubt the first Atlantic-world colony where cash-crop plantations shifted toward *full-blown* capitalist enterprises. As I shall demonstrate, the colossal amount of credit and capital invested by London merchants and bankers in the Barbadian sugar boom was the driving agency of this shift. Compelled to carry on the same structuring logic of growth in a foreign environment, their capital contributed to *formally* integrate the Barbadian sugar-plantation complex *within* the global value relation, which ultimately, but contingently, led to the qualitative reformulation of an early system of unfree labour based on indentured servitude into one based on black racial slavery. As I will argue, a black

[1] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 345.

African slave-labour force did not develop in Barbados as a vestigial, pre-capitalist mode of exploitation, but rather as a differentiated local expression of a world-historical process of value production.

Consistent with my ambition to move the geo-historical framework of proletarian internationalism back the early modern Atlantic world-economy, the overarching objective of this chapter is to shed light on the extent to which plantation-slaves were neither outside nor predecessors to the capitalist mode of production but *central* to its very historical development. As we will move on to the next chapter on the Saint-Domingue Revolution, it will become clear from this theoretical interlude, I hope, that not only were plantation-slaves integral to the Atlantic working-class, but also that their collective actions of transboundary solidarity during and following the black revolution were, in this sense, another formative step in the development of proletarian internationalism, as golden age piracy had been a few decades earlier.

Marx, Slavery, and Capitalism: Some Prefatory Remarks

Though not argued in an extended systematic fashion, Marx made it clear in many occasions throughout his writings that the slave-plantations of the Americas were of paramount importance to the development of the capitalist mode of production. In an 1846 letter to P. V. Annenkov, for instance, he put forth this view in these terms:

> Direct slavery is the pivot of our industrialism today as much as machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton, without cotton you have not modern industry. It is slavery that has given value to the colonies; it is the colonies that created world trade; it is world trade that is the necessary condition for large-scale machine industry. Also, before the slave trade in Negroes, the colonies

> supplied the Old World with but very few products and did not visibly change the face of the world. Slavery is thus an economic category of the highest importance.[2]

What Marx claims here, in other words, is that slavery was not only *historically* essential to the industrial development of capitalism, but was also, and therefore, *analytically* essential as a historically determinate abstraction of actually-existing relations of capitalist production. To echo what I have already established in Chapter 2, this is, I suggest, an open-ended invitation to engage with the category of slavery not as a simple category, that is, an absolute idea carrying eternal verities, but rather as a concrete category, a polymorphous expression of real social relations of production in a particular time and place, and from which its situational, historical and sociocultural specificity is revealed.

As I have emphasized in Chapter 2, it was from the perspective of slavery as a concrete category that Marx argued that the starting point of capitalist production coincided with the 'enslavement of the worker', and that wage-labour, from this standpoint, was simply 'a change in the form of servitude'.[3] He reformulated this view in the section on the 'So-Called Primitive Accumulation', where he maintained that 'the veiled slavery of the wage-labourers in Europe needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal'.[4] The wording of these last two claims was neither accidental nor word-juggling, but tied back directly to the idea of slavery as a highly important economic category *under* and *for* capitalism. The same argument gets briefly historicized in the same section when Marx writes that 'the conversion of Africa into a preserve for

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[2] Marx, "Letter to Annenkov", in S.K. Pandover, ed. *The Karl Marx Library*, p. 36.
[3] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 875. Emphasis added.
[4] Ibid., p. 925.

the commercial hunting of blackskins...' marked a pivotal point that signalled 'the dawn of the era of capitalist production'.[5]

On a strict logical basis, it follows that slaves in general, African slaves in particular, by virtue of their useful character as commodities and regardless of their form of appearance as such, could assume the capital value, that is to say, function as creator of value and surplus-value, just like the commodity labour-power in a system based on wage-labour. The difference, as Marx argued in *Capital* Volume II, was purely formal, comprising two aspects. On the one hand, the 'pillage' of slaves through which they appeared on the market as commodities was 'not mediated by a process of circulation, but [was] rather the appropriation in kind of other people's labour-power by direct physical compulsion'.[6] On the other hand, '[i]n the slave system, the money capital laid out on the purchase of labour-power play[ed] the role of *fixed* capital in the money form, and [was] only gradually replaced as the active life of the slave [came] to an end'.[7] Under this form of market relation, then, '[t]he slaveowner buys his worker in the same way as he buys his horse. If he loses his slave, he loses a piece of capital, which he must replace by fresh expenditure on the slave-market'.[8] Thus, regardless of their form of appearance as commodities and in spite of the process of direct physical compulsion through which they both appeared as such on the market and entered the sphere of production, African slaves could as much mediate the laws of motion of capital as any other commodity. The total circuit of capital (*M ... M'*), in other words, could be achieved through the purchase and selling of their persons.

[5] Ibid., p. 915.
[6] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 2, p. 555.
[7] Ibid., p. 554. Emphasis added.
[8] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 377.

Yet Marx took great care unraveling that slaves, just like any fixed capital, were not value-producing commodities *in essence*. Though crucial to the process of commodification, being forced into the status of human fixed capital was not enough in itself for slaves to create value, at least not as self-acting *means* of labour. This commodity-form, however, was enough for merchants to extract value from the strict purchase and selling of slaves as such. In order to realize this function, and therefore transfer the use-value they posited into a commodity, their persons, together with their labour-power, needed to be consumed productively by capital in the labour process. In other words, enslaved Africans needed to be transformed into social labour through co-operation, that is to say, socially combined among themselves and in relation to the instruments of labour in the production process. This is likely what Marx implied when he wrote that '[a] Negro is a Negro. He becomes a *slave* only in certain relationships. A cotton-spinning machine is a machine for spinning cotton. Only in certain relationships does it become *capital*. Torn from these relationships, it is no more capital than gold in and by itself is *money* or sugar the price of sugar'.[9] In other words, only in certain productive relationships, which were fundamentally historical, could a slave create 'an excess, a surplus value'.[10] Or more broadly put: only in certain social relationships could slavery as a form of labour exploitation mediate capitalist relations of production. What were these relationships? Black racial slavery as it developed in plantation Americas seems to have provided Marx with examples of them.

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[9] Karl Marx, "What is a Negro Slave?", in Padover, ed., *The Karl Marx Library*, p. 13. Emphasis in original.

[10] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 317.

In *Theories of Surplus Values*, for example, Marx argued that the slave-plantations of the Caribbean were enterprises ‘where commercial speculations figure from the start and production is intended for the world market’.[11] There, he added,

> the capitalist mode of production exists, although only in a formal sense, since the slavery of Negroes precludes free wage-labour, which is the basis of capitalist production. But the business in which slaves are used is conducted by *capitalists*. The method of production which they introduce had not arisen out of slavery but is grafted on to it.[12]

This view of the slave-plantations becomes even more pronounced in a passage on the Southern United States in *Capital* Volume I, in which he maintained that as soon as ‘the export of cotton became of vital interest to those states, the over-working of the Negro, and sometimes the consumption of his life in seven years of labour, became a factor in a calculated and calculating system. It was no longer a question of obtaining from him a certain quantity of useful products, but rather of *the production of surplus-value itself*’.[13] Consequently, these plantations underwent ‘the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery into a system of commercial exploitation’, where ‘the capitalist conception prevails’.[14] This view is consistent with an earlier assertion Marx made in the *Grundrisse* as he was sketching out his whole theoretical program to come, namely, ‘that slavery is possible at individual points within the bourgeois system of production…’.[15] Such claim must not be interpreted in the absolute but in light of how Marx, as I exposed in Chapter 2, viewed wage-labour as a category intrinsic to the capitalist mode of

[11] Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 2, p. 302.
[12] Ibid., p. 303. Emphasis in original.
[13] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 345. Emphasis added.
[14] Ibid., p. 925; Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 940.
[15] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 464.

production, yet one that can but that can assume a variety of forms in mediating capitalist relations of production.

As he mainly set out to study the development of the capitalist mode of production in its classic English manifestation, Marx never really moved beyond this set of intermittent, almost-cryptic claims in order to demonstrate historically how capitalism could actually rest on direct slavery, in spite of 'the utterly monotonous and traditional nature of *slave labour*'.[16] Building from and fleshing out Marx's insights, the analysis that follows is a preliminary attempt at that, using the English colony of Barbados as case-study. I realize that this sort of undertaking touches directly a long-lasting and ongoing (and sometimes acrimonious) debate within the Marxian historiography of slavery.[17] Yet because my aim here is to carry out a careful and rigorous historical analysis deployed in a close dialogue with Marx, I will abstain—for now—from directly engaging with this literature.

My investigation is fairly straightforward. I want to show how plantation unfree labour came to be *formally* subsumed under capital in the form of black racial slavery. To reiterate a claim presented earlier in this dissertation, it is not the form of labour exploitation that distinguishes capitalism as a mode of production but the very fact that labour, in and through a variety of social arrangements, gets subordinated to the creation of value. As for the deep-sea merchant ship in Chapter 4, I intend to develop this

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[16] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 1034. Emphasis in original.

[17] The classic works on the topic are C.L.R. James, *Black Jacobins* (1938) and Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944). Among more contemporary contributions are Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967); Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974); Sidney W. Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1974); Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman, *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Caroline Oudin-Bastide, *Travail, capitalisme et société esclavagiste: Guadeloupe, Martinique (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005); and Charles Post, *The American Road to Capitalism: Studies in Class-Structure, Economic Development, and Political Conflict, 1620-1877* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

argument herein by foregrounding the unfolding of five interconnected historical processes that, together, grounded the laws of motion of capital in Barbados: (i) the rise of the sugar plantation as an integrated productive unit; (ii) the concentration of capital in landholding; (iii) the shift from white servitude to black racial slavery as a juridically-permanent, value-producing mode of unfree labour; (iv) the realization of large-scale co-operation on plantation via the gang-labour system; and (iv) the racial management of slaves as a disciplinary value-extractive strategy of rule. These processes were, of course, intimately interconnected as they eventuated. For a matter of analytical presentation, however, I will go about them separately.

The Barbadian Case

Beginning in 1627, the English colonial program in Barbados, as Hilary Beckles has argued, 'was from the outset private enterprise based on merchant capital'.[18] Drawing from the experience established by the Virginia Company, groups of merchant-entrepreneurs from London invested in expeditions that would create and organize large plantation estates worked by indentured servants, so as to break into the potentially lucrative West India trade and, consequently, integrate the colony into world-market networks.[19] Yet it is arguably not until the shift to sugar production starting by the mid-1640s—after roughly a decade of going about the task of successively producing tobacco, cotton, and indigo—that we can observe the emergence of a full-scale capitalist mode of production on the island (i.e. in the strict sense of labour process), for it was at that

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[18] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 15.
[19] Frank C. Innes, "The Pre-Sugar Era of European Settlement in Barbados," *The Journal of Caribbean History* 1, no. 1 (Nov., 1970), 1-22.

particular moment that capital arguably began to acquire complete formal control over the plantation labour process, hence making it its *own* self-valorizing process.

Integrated system of sugar production

Starting in 1643 when the price of indigo collapsed on European markets, the shift to sugar production in Barbados required huge sums of funding in order to create sugarcane fields and factories—such as sugar mills, boiling houses, curing facilities, distilleries—and to get multiple tools, not to mention human labour itself. For the prosperous planters already committed to indigo production—which, too, involved extensive capital and labour, as well as a more complicated agro-industrial process of manufacture than tobacco or cotton—capital was easily raised locally from Dutch merchants recently expelled from Brazil by the Portuguese. Migrating to Barbados, they brought with them their capital to reinvest, but also what came to be called the 'method of Pernambuco' about the know-how of cane production and processing, which they wanted to reapply.[20] For the average planter desirous too of testing his luck with the sweet commodity investments came primarily from the imperial capital market: London.

Refuting the long-held thesis that the Barbadian sugar boom had been financed mainly by Dutch merchants, a recent historiographical corpus of scholarship has demonstrated that most of the overseas inputs of capital invested in sugar production on the island came instead from the so-called 'new merchants' of England, a vanguard group of domestic

[20] David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture, and Environmental Change since 1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 178-84; Stephan Palmié, "Toward Sugar and Slavery," in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and its Peoples*, eds. Stephan Palmié and Francisco A. Scarano (Chicago and London: The Chicago University Press, 2011), p. 143.

tradesmen who did not belong to the established aristocracy of trade and who too sought, with the ending of trading monopoly privileges in the 1630s, to take advantage of the new commercial openings in the colonies.[21] Between 1640 and 1660 alone, these merchants together invested approximately £1.5 million sterling in the production of sugar on the island.[22] When they did not settle in Barbados and enter directly into sugar entrepreneurship as neophyte planters buying fully stocked plantations with the intention of converting them to sugarcane cultivation, they put their funds into business partnerships with resident planters. Richard Dunn has noted that '[t]he island records show repeated examples of partnerships between two, three, or four men. If two men shared ownership, as most commonly happened, one partner might operate the plantation in Barbados while his colleague marketed the sugar in England or Holland and sent out supplies'.[23] Such development, as another commentator has pointed out, caused a new associational form of plantation organization to emerge: 'the family farms became firms'.[24] This highlights the fact that these investors were as much 'new' merchants as they were 'new' industrialists *directly* committed to the production of the sugar-commodity. As David Watts has pointed out, 'successful sugar estate owners had to be skilled manufacturers as well as planters, technicians as well as businessmen, and those

[21] See Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London & New York: Verso, 2003), chap. 4; See also Larry Dale Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627-1660* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), chap. 7; and Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), chap. 3.
[22] Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 49.
[23] Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 65.
[24] Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 62; Sidney M. Greenfield, "Slavery and the Plantation in the New World: The Development and Diffusion of a Social Form," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 11, no. 1 (January, 1969), p. 56.

who were found wanting in any of these capacities quickly fell by the wayside'.[25] In general, as Robert Brenner has noted, merchants investing in sugar production 'tended to remain intimately involved with all aspects of the colonial economy'.[26] Thus, as I have begun to point out with the deep-sea merchant ship, the often assumed theoretical distinction between an early merchant-capitalism and a succeeding industrial-capitalism is purely ideal-typical, for merchants investing in the Barbadian sugar boom did not aim at controlling commodity production at the bottleneck of distribution but *directly* at the shop-floor level of production.

Once sugar production began to be more firmly established after a few years of experimentation and learning through trial and error, planters (and their business associates) quickly realized that economies of scale needed to be achieved in order to boost their output and reap a return on their investment.[27] This need of production rationalization became even more apparent as sugar prices, profits, and productivity began to fall as a result of economic crises and wars from the mid-1660s onward.[28] In order to cope with adverse market conditions, one of their first moves was to concentrate growing and milling through an integrated system of sugar production, which marked a significant deviation from the Pernambuco model.[29] Until then, the cane plant had always been cultivated according a system of managerial separation and subdivision of

[25] David Watts, *The West Indies*, p. 385.
[26] Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 114.
[27] On the learning through trial and error phase, see Richard Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, 1st ed. (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1657), p. 85.
[28] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 135-36.
[29] Some planters, as Hilary Beckles points out, even managed to integrate their operations vertically by including distributing and marketing. 'Successful planters such as Drax, Kendal, and Colleton', he writes, 'took over the activities of factors, merchants, and insurance agents. They bought their own ships, employed their own agents, and insured their own sugar by forming local syndicates'. See ibid., p. 136.

production between cultivation and processing.[30] Both operations were now in the hands of a single owner or group of owners. Consequently, unlike anywhere else in the Atlantic world at the time, Barbadian planters could take full command—supervisory and executive—of the sugar-making labour process as one homogenous and spatially-circumscribed mechanism of manufacture, which, in turn, allowed them to implement *in one complex* a paced, large-scale co-operation based on the division of labour between (and within) the two operations.[31] As Marx maintained, '[a]n increased number of workers under the control of one capitalist is the natural starting-point, both of co-operation in general and of manufacture in particular'.[32] The integrated sugar plantation was, in this sense, one of the keys to unlock the process toward the formal subsumption of plantation unfree labour under capital in Barbados. By 1680, it had become a dominant institution in the island's sugar industry.[33]

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[30] The 'dispersed' production system was found in Brazil and Madeira, where the sugar industry was structured and operated by the *lavradores de cana*, the cane farmers who grew the crop, on the one hand, and the *senhores de engenho*, the mill owners who processed it, on the other, both using slave labour though not yet exclusively. There, the relation between the finished product—sugar—and its diverse constituents—cane, land, labour, etc.—was external, and therefore uncertain and unpredictable. On this subject, see McCusker and Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century", in *Tropical Babylons*, ed. Schwartz, p. 297. See also Stuart B. Schwartz, "Patterns of Slaveholding in the Americas: New Evidence from Brazil," *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 1 (Feb., 1982), pp. 71-3; and Sidney M. Greenfield, "Madeira and the Beginnings of the New World Sugar Cane Cultivation and Plantation Slavery: A Study in Institution Building," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 292 (June, 1977), p. 546.

[31] Even in Europe, such characteristic of commodity production was yet unseen. Then a dominating form of capitalist relations of production, the 'putting-out system' spanned over distant areas, which, in addition to several restrictions on labour mobility, forbid entrepreneurs to integrate and concentrate the various processes of production under one roof. While some early forms of concentrated factory production existed—such as, for instance, the royal textile manufacture of van Robais at Abbéville, which employed thousands of male and female workers within one enclosed compound—it was nonetheless exceptional at that point to find all phases of a production process together in one workshop. See Herman Kellenbenz, "The Organization of Industrial Production," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, eds. Edwin E. Rich and Charles Wilson, Vol. 5: The Economic Organization of Early Modern Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 471; and Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London & New York: Verso, 1997), p. 333.

[32] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 480.

[33] Dunn, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 96.

Concentration of capital in landholding

More efficient in processing the cane into sugar, the integrated system of production made it necessary to put more acreage to cultivate the crop, which triggered an island-wide movement toward sugar monoculture. While planters, for instance, had 40 percent of their farm land planted in sugarcane in the 1640s, it had increased to 80 percent forty years later. At that point, something over 50 percent of the surface of the island was planted to sugarcane.[34] But because the cane plant is a land-intensive crop, the sugar rush also increased the need for large planters to acquire more farm land beyond their estates in order to continue exploiting the export boom.[35] With an increased demand for land in a limited insular context, prices skyrocketed, especially in arable areas. In just over a decade, for example, the average price per acre more than tripled, passing from £1.20 in 1638 to £5.50 in 1650 (in Barbadian currency).[36] Whereas in the tobacco era of the 1630s £200 could buy a good plantation of around 100 acres stoked with servants, in the 1640s a half share in a 500-acre sugar plantation cost £7,000—a sum of money that only the very wealthy could pull off.[37] This speculative movement in land price profited large planters who had the capital to amass more land and, therefore, consolidate their estates.[38]

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[34] J. H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 81.
[35] On this movement, see Watts, *The West Indies*, pp. 184-91.
[36] McCusker and Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century", in *Tropical Babylons*, ed. Schwartz, p. 299.
[37] Galloway, *The Sugarcane Industry*, p. 80. See also Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 25.
[38] In 1647, for instance, twenty-two of the island's big planters, acting alone or in partnership, all but two of them Londoners, purchased thirty tracts of land for developing sugar plantations, which corresponded to approximately 10 per cent of all land of the island. This obliged the colony's Lord Proprietor, the Earl of Carlisle, to issue on that year a proclamation informing the population that there was already no more available arable land on the island. Thirty years later, more than half the island's total acreage was owned by 175 planters, who made up less than 6 percent of all property holders, and whose estates averaged 270 acres in size. See Galloway, *The Sugarcane Industry*, p. 296; Vincent T. Harlow, *A History of Barbados: 1625-1685.* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 307; and David W. Galenson, *Traders, Planters, and Slaves: Market Behavior in Early English America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 12.

Thus, from the late 1640s onward, thanks to the creation of a freehold landholding system (recognized by law as simple fee and hereditary tenure in 1642), we observe the beginning of a steady movement toward the concentration of land ownership in large holdings in the hands of a relatively few large planters.[39] When such process occurs, as Marx argued for capitalism in general, it creates 'the necessary pre-condition for a specifically capitalist mode of production…' to be launched.[40]

Black racial slavery as value-producing unfree labour

Barbadian sugar plantations, then, did not emerge from scratch but *out of* already-existing plantations with a prevailing labour system based primarily on indentured servitude, which the new sugar planters took over and carried on as they found it for the time being. From the outset of English colonization in the Americas, as I began to discuss in Chapter 2, planters developed a downright, market-oriented conception of indentured servitude as a way to organize agricultural labour suited for the plantation system of cash-crop production for the world market.[41] In Barbados as elsewhere in English America, the legal foundation for such conception to arise was a loosely-defined common law tradition called 'the custom of the country', whose circumstantial malleability allowed planters to

[39] On the landholding system in the British West Indies, see Michael Craton, "Property and Propriety: Land Tenure and Slave Property in the Creation of a British West Indies Plantocracy, 1612-1740," in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, eds. John Brewer and Susan Staves (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 497-529.

[40] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 775.

[41] For this development in English North America, see Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, Vol. 1 (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1933), chap. 16.

establish formal or quasi-property rights in their servants as in any other commodity.[42] Those rights, however, were limited only to the time of indentureship contract.

As Richard Dunn argued, 'the English sugar planter was more strictly a businessman...' and so he strove to organize his plantation as much as his labour accordingly.[43] Literally removed from the framework of 'mutual obligation' and 'duty' associated with the paternalistic master-servant relation prevailing in England, servants were therefore freely bought, sold, gambled away, mortgaged, taxed as property, and alienated in wills by their masters, who, in this manner, exerted total control over both their working and non-working hours during their indenture.[44] Although servants were not 'slaves' as Africans were, such marketable legal status nonetheless made them, 'temporarily chattels', as Eric Williams put it quoting a contemporary source.[45] By establishing time-limited property rights in their servants and imposing market functions on their service, planters created 'a form of white "proto-slavery"' that enabled themselves, on the one hand, to maximize output out of their labour within the limits of available technology and land, and, on the other hand, to accumulate enough capital to make the transition from one valuable cash-crop to another, before finally taking the

[42] Richard Ligon acknowledged this commodification of servants in a cold manner, writing that among the 'Commodities these Ships bring to this Island, are, *servants* and *slaves*, both men and women; *Horses*, *Cattle*, *Assinigoes*, *Camels*, *Utensils* for boyling Sugar, as *Coppers*, *Taches*, *Goudges*, and *Sockets*'. See Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, p. 40. See also Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, chap. 3. On the custom of the country, see Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York: Columbian University Press, 1946), chap. 7 and 8; and Simon P. Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 62-3.
[43] Dunn, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 65.
[44] See Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 71-78. Morris makes a similar claim about servants of the North American colonies. See Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America*, pp. 412-14.
[45] Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*, p. 16. Similarly, Vincent Harlow argued that 'the indenture servant was a chattel, at the absolute disposal of his master'. See Harlow, *A History of Barbados*, p. 293.

plunge into the costly sugarcane cultivation.[46] Anticipating their black enslaved successors, servants were forced into the status of human fixed capital by their masters. This involved a contradiction, for human fixed capital, in this case, was also *living* labour, partly variable and partly constant.

The Barbadian sugar boom, moreover, also rested in a large part on black slave labour. In fact, prior to the rise of the sugar regime African slaves had been brought to the island in significant numbers to work cotton, tobacco, and indigo, so that already in the 1650s they dominated the plantation unfree workforce, outnumbering servants by nearly two to one.[47] This early increase of enslaved Africans, however, was not accompanied by a decline in servants, for the latter remained the cheapest option up to the early 1660s, with an average price between £10 and £14 per head, contrary to about £30 for a slave.[48] Despite their superior costs per capita, enslaved Africans nonetheless continued to be imported to sugar plantations in higher numbers and at a faster rate than servants.[49] Indeed, because the upgraded scale of operations of large-scale sugar monoculture impelled a demand for labour beyond what the British Isles could fulfill, planters seem to have been willing to pay a little more for the purchase of African slaves. First, because in terms of estimated lifespan, slaves were cheaper than servants, who were indentured only for limited time. Secondly, because the large profits generated by sugar production could now absorb, in the short term, the higher marginal costs of slave labour. When the English gained direct access to the slave markets in Africa in the early 1660s, by which they freed themselves from Dutch domination for the supply of slaves, they not only

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[46] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 78.
[47] Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 35.
[48] Beckles and Downes, "The Economics of Transition to the Black Labor System in Barbados", p. 236-37.
[49] Between 1635 and 1657, for instance, the servants per estate ratio rose from 15.4 to 18.4 while the slaves per estate ratio rose from 0.1 to 24.0. See Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 32.

secured an abundant, steady, and reliable flow of slave labour supply to the American plantations; they also greatly cheapened slave price levels.[50] At the same time, adverse forces affected the transatlantic servant market, which drastically reduced supply and pushed up costs.[51] As a result, after the mid-1660s enslaved African labour acquired a clear cost advantage over servant labour. It was then accepted among planters, as Harlow put it, that 'the money which procured a white man's services for ten years could buy a negro for life'.[52] By 1680, the shift to African slave labour was completed in Barbados, with a ratio of seventeen to every servant.[53] The total number of servants had by then shrunk to less than 3,000, while the slave population had risen to nearly 40,000.[54] Just like land, the ownership of slaves, too, became heavily concentrated, for half the slave population was owned by 175 planters in 1680, who represented only one-third of all slave owners, each owning sixty slaves or more.[55] 7 percent of the property holders

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[50] In 1663, the English Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa was authorized to transport 3,000 Africans per year to the American colonies. In 1672, the Royal African Company was created and for the next fifty years sold some 90,000 Africans in British Caribbean, of whom nearly a half were delivered at Barbados. See Michael Guasco, "From Servitude to Slavery," in *The Atlantic World, 1450-2000*, eds. Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 90; K. G. Davies, *The Emergence of International Business, 1200-1800*, Vol. 5: *The Royal African Company* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1999), p. 299.

[51] As sugar monoculture introduced more rigorous and degrading working conditions on plantations—a view reinforced ideologically by a greater African presence in the cane fields—and its expansive movement curtailed opportunities for self-sufficient independent living on the island, Barbados became increasingly unattractive to the fewer potential servants, who preferred to migrate to more promising British colonies instead, such as Jamaica, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland. This, moreover, happened in a decade marked by an effective 'nationalist' anti-emigration campaign in England which, too, contributed to diminishing transatlantic servant supply, at least to Barbados. Finally, the Navigation Acts of 1660 and 1661 made it illegal to ship Scottish servants to the colonies without first stopping at an English port and registering cargo. This legislation had the effect of driving the Scottish merchants out of the servant trade, thus taking the Scottish labour market out of the orbit of Barbadian planters. As a result of these factors, between 1660 and 1670, the supply of servants coming to the island from England fell by 70 percent, a labour shortage that contributed to increase their overall shipping costs by more than twofold. See Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 123-4 and Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 44.

[52] Harlow, *A History of Barbados*, p. 307.

[53] Beckles and Downes, "The Economics of Transition to the Black Labor System in Barbados", p. 228.

[54] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 125.

[55] Galloway, *The Sugarcane Industry*, p. 81; David W. Galenson, "The Settlement and Growth of the Colonies: Population, Labor, and Economic Development," in *The Cambridge Economic History of the*

during this decade held 54 percent of the most valuable properties, that is to say, acreage, servants, and slaves.[56]

Beyond economic motives, the transition from white indentured servitude to black racial slavery in Barbados must also be situated within, and, indeed, understood from, the social-political context of the island, in particular the growing social tension arising out of the master-servant relation of production following the shift to sugar cultivation. Indeed, it is in taking this context into account that one can observe the development of black racial slavery as a hardened and harsher institutional variant of white servitude—one that, unlike the preceding labour system, would thoroughly embody the characteristic dependency of the propertyless worker to capital. Highlighting the extent to which the capital-relation can bear '...endless variations and gradations in its appearance,' as Marx argued, this process was achieved in Barbados not by diverting from but, instead, by *continuing* further along the spectrum of unmediated domination and violence as pioneered by white servitude.[57] More precisely, my position here is that while the driving force behind the transition to black racial slavery, as just exposed, must be sought, though not exclusively, in the Barbados planters' economic needs, its concrete historical determination as a qualitatively new system of value-producing unfree labour, in turn, was linked as much to the inner institutional constraints of indentured servitude as to the issue of social control and labour discipline on plantations.[58]

United States, eds. Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman, Vol. 1: *The Colonial Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 164.

[56] Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), chap. 3.

[57] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 927.

[58] See David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), chap. 3; and David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), chap. 3-4.

It must be mentioned here, however, that social-cultural factors also influenced the decision of instituting black racial slavery as a system of unfree labour. Indeed, planters were already habituated to rely upon enslaved African labour at that time, and had drawn upon their stock of moral and religious values in order to rationalize this relation of proximity with those 'strange workers'. David Eltis, for instance, has argued that at the heart of the transition to black racial slavery was a socially-constructed 'insider-outsider divide' which *de facto* excluded Africans—indeed all non-Europeans—from the Christian social contract of freedom, hence making them perfectly compatible with enslavement and exploitation. David Brion Davis has tied this divide to the Biblical tradition of the 'Curse of Ham', whose assumptions were advanced by planters and colonial officials as ideological justifiers for black racial slavery during that period. Thus, economic and social-cultural factors must not be viewed in a hierarchical order but as a dialectical ensemble of forces contributing at a specific time and place to the breaking of full-scale black racial slavery out of white servitude

The production of a sugar crop was a most labour-intensive process. Richard Ligon, who witnessed the kick-off of the sugar boom, reported how servants, already by 1647, were 'put to very hard labour' by their masters, who forced them to work by the clock from sunup to sundown 'with a severe Overseer to command them'.[59] Taking place at a moment when the hyper-inflation of land prices and the consolidation of arable land into large estates had literally destroyed their chances at becoming landholders, such brutal labour conditions on plantations made servants psychologically more incline to rebel

[59] He continues: 'if they complain, they are beaten by the Overseer; if they resist, their time is doubled, I have seen an Overseer beat a Servant with a cane about the head, till the blood has followed, for a fault that is not worth the speaking of; and ye he must have patience, or worse will follow. Truly, I have seen such cruelty there done to Servants, as I did not think one Christian could have done to another'. Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, p. 43-44.

against their masters and, ultimately, to take desperate actions to improve their lot. In addition to individual acts of physical hostility, many of them persistently attempted to reject their indentureship by running away from the plantations. According to Beckles, this practice of resistance was 'quite abundant for the pre-1670s period', and involved as much servants as slaves, sometimes even in unison.[60] In 1655, for instance, the Barbadian Assembly was informed that 'there [were] several Irish servants and Negroes out in rebellion'.[61] Two years later, the question of the bodily control and discipline of both servants and slaves had likely reached considerable proportion, for the Assembly decided to launch 'a general hunting of runaways throughout the island'.[62] At that point, it was clear to the planters' mind that 'they needed a more settled, more dependable work force'.[63] Ligon wrote in this regard that they complained not only about servants running away, but also about the fact that they 'are theirs but for five years'.[64]

It was in this specific context—what Harlow called 'the labour problem'—that the Barbadian legislators adopted a comprehensive 'Act for the Ordaining of Rights between Masters and Servants' on 27 September 1661—a 'servant code', so to speak. Responding to the question of 'the Unruliness, Obstinacy and Refractoriness of the Servants' on the island, as its preamble reads, the act set on to take 'a continual strict Course ... to prevent the bold Extravagancies and Wandering of Servants, who frequently run from and desert their Masters' Service making use of all Advantages and Occasions to disturb Publick Peace'.[65] To remedy to this situation, the act prohibited servants from leaving their

[60] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 100, 108-9.
[61] Handler, "Slave Revolts and Conspiracies in Barbados", p. 9.
[62] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 101.
[63] Dunn, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 72.
[64] Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, p. 43.
[65] *The Laws of Barbados, Collected in One Volume* (London: Printed for William Rawlin, 1699), p. 22.

plantations at any moment of the week without a ‘License or Ticket’ signed by their masters (clause 10).[66] This provision was accompanied by a whole set of other provisions for the control of their mobility which were integrated into a surveillance apparatus disseminated through the free white population, foreshadowing what was soon to come under black racial slavery.[67]

Furthermore, servants’ legal right to prosecute theirs masters was considerably curbed by the act (clause 10). A maximum of two servants at a time and of the same estate could now undertake legal actions against their master; otherwise they would receive 13 lashes by the order of the court and taken back to their plantations by a constable.[68] As Beckles has pointed out, due to the absence of a large servant and free white population in which to hide, it was quite common for runaway servants to confront the law and petition for freedom in groups during this period.[69] The simple fact that Barbadian planters needed to restrict these early forms of class suit suggests that they may have become a real irritant to their hegemony.[70] To be sure, as they conceived their servants as ‘property’, they were certainly not attracted to idea of defending themselves in court against that property. Black racial slavery would resolve the matter.

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[66] Ibid., p. 25.

[67] Under clause 10, for instance, any free member of the white community could now apprehend a servant in transit, demand to see his or her pass, and take him or her to the authorities if it could be not produced. In the same spirit, substantial penalties in pounds of sugar forfeited to the master involved were also established for those who harbored runaway servants (clause 20). Moreover, clause 23 of the act required that all ship captains would search their vessels before departure and certify in writing that no servants were on board.

[68] *The Laws of Barbados*, p. 24.

[69] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 103.

[70] Based on an avalanche of legal proceedings against masters in both English North America and in the English Caribbean, Morris argued that ‘servants had considerable success in enforcing the principle that the essence of servitude was service for a limited term specified by contract or prescribed by custom. In suing for freedom on the ground of having completed their service or attained their majority, servants obtained their discharge by the courts in over 60 per cent of such cases’. Though more evidence is needed to make the point, it seems likely that Barbados was facing a similar situation at that time. See Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America*, p. 501.

The servant act sought to hinder unilateral breaks of contracts by servants—either with their running feet or their legal voice—in trying to tie them down not to their plantations in general, but more specifically to their value-producing labour positions. This aim appears quite obvious when read along with clause 3 of the act, which forbad servants from doing independent business during their indenture.[71] Interestingly, as we have observed earlier in this dissertation, a similar process in essence occurred on board the deep-sea ship, where common sailors were gradually dispossessed from their customary right to portage, so as to make them fully dependent on monetary wage work. The difference in Barbados was that in making independent trading illegal planters sought instead to make servants directly dependent on them as their sole and unique providers of means of subsistence—their wages in kind. While non-waged in its appearance, this relation of exploitation, to which I will return shortly, nonetheless implied a relation of economic dependence of labour to capital, typical to the wage-form in capitalism.[72]

With regard to discipline, Barbadian planters moved away (at least from what transpires in the act) from the strategy of severe corporeal punishments that characterized the early plantation regime, and chose instead to exploit another lever of class power: the length of service.[73] This is shown by the extensive and systematic effort to extend servants' time by criminalizing a vast array of infractions. This effort was pursue at the same moment as the act reduced the length of indenture contracts offered by law from five or seven years, to between two to four years, with the hope of attracting more

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[71] *The Laws of Barbados*, p. 23.
[72] See Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 270-71.
[73] This decision of loosening-up punishments of servants, as Theodore Allen has persuasively argued, was part of a wider and deliberate act by the Atlantic planter class during this period to create an intermediate buffer social-control stratum based on a skin-colour solidarity among upper- and lower-class whites, which was seriously complicated in the Caribbean, however, by a strong Irish presence and the emergence of a middle class of 'free colored'. See Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 2, chap. 12.

recruits to the island.[74] Given the increased demand sugar production had on labour, planters were left with no other option than to establish a tighter control over their existing servants, while doing so within socially-acceptable limits set by custom and law. Accordingly, any servant found off-plantation without a valid license or ticket would now be sentenced to serve one additional day of service for every two hours absent and for a maximum of three extra years.[75] Those who were caught attempting to escape 'aboard some Ship, Bark or Boat' were condemned to serve for three additional years after the expiration of current contracts (clause 22).[76] Servants trading on their own accounts would be convicted to serve two extra years at the end of their contacts.[77] Such effort also had its equivalent in day-to-day relations, where masters tried to keep (though with limited success) ex-servants on plantations by fraudulently withholding their freedom dues at the end of their indenture.[78]

Thus, enacted at the time when enslaved Africans were already becoming the majority on the island, the 1661 servant act is demonstrative of the ways in which the planter class attempted to cope on legal terms with a growing structural contradiction between the ever-expanding objective of labour exploitation inaugurated by the shift to sugar monoculture, on the one hand, and the institution of indentured servitude, on the other, most especially its time-limited contractual form and its remnants of legalistic protective

[74] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 104.
[75] *The Laws of Barbados*, p. 25.
[76] Ibid., p. 28.
[77] Other petty offenses such as employing blasphemous language or laying violent hands against the master or any person in authority (clause 4), embezzling property (clause 5), marrying without the master's consent (clause 8) or simply being taken in custody (clause 19) were too all sentenced with extra service penalties. See ibid., pp. 23-4
[78] See Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, p. 44; Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 79-97, 121-22; McCusker and Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century", in *Tropical Babylons*, ed. Schwartz, pp. 297-301; and Aflred D. Chandler, "The Expansion of Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 13 (May and Nov., 1946), p. 114.

paternalism. Indeed, now that sugar planters, certainly more than ever, desired a maximum returns on each unit of labour over the original capital outlay, these two long-lasting features became barriers for indentured servitude to fully become an unrestricted form of value-producing labour. Seen from this standpoint, the Barbadian legal codification of black racial slavery truly stands as a practical solution to transcend this contradiction by paving the way legally to a perpetual and completely depersonalized (i.e. non-paternalistic) form of value-producing unfree labour.

27 September 1661 was a world-historic day, as the Barbadian assembly decided to tackle its labour problem not only by revising the legal foundations of its relations to the servants but to do the same with regards African slaves. As a kind of sister-law to the servant act, a comprehensive 'Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes' was also passed on that day.[79] It sought to respond to the 'misdemeanour, crimes, and offenses' committed by the enslaved Africans on the island, in particular 'the running away of the Negroes' from which 'the inhabitants ... have much suffered'.[80] The legislators held that all prior laws and ordinances regarding slaves had 'not met the effect ... desired' and that, accordingly, they needed to be revised so as to 'fully comprehending the true constitution of this Government in relation to their Slaves ... an heathenish brutish and an uncertain dangerous pride of people'.[81] Such work of legal codification was seen as 'absolute[ly] needful for the public safety ... and utility of this Isle'.[82] In retrospect, 'public safety' meant the elaboration of an all-pervading system of control and discipline of the enslaved workforce, and 'utility', an all-out commitment to the

[79] Most of the act's provisions have been reprinted in "Barbados Act 1661." *Slavery*, eds. Stanley L. Engerman, Seymour Drescher and Robert L. Paquette (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 105-113.
[80] Ibid., pp. 107, 105.
[81] Ibid., p. 105.
[82] Ibid.

production of the sugar-commodity. Both features were firmly interlocked by then, and while indentured servitude as an institution had trouble adapting to them, black racial slavery had the advantage of being able to include them from the outset as its institutional constituent elements.

This is illustrated by the striking similitude of social control provisions between the two acts. As for servants, slaves could not leave their plantations without a pass signed by their masters (clause 1) and were, too, in serious trouble if they laid a violent hand not only on their masters but on any white person (clause 2). Likewise, these provisions were integrated into a broad and strengthened system of surveillance that hinged to a great extent on a 'white' category of race in the making and, crucially, inclusive of the laboring classes. Lacking a police force, all white Barbadian residents, servants and free, were now mandated by law to 'endeavour' and 'apprehend' any wandering slave so as to enquire whether he or she was ticketed or not.[83] In order to prevent any subversive collaboration between servants and slave, clause 4 provided that a servant who assisted or harbored a runaway slave would 'receive nine and thirty lashes upon his naked back ... and after Execution of his time of service shall serve the owner of the said Negro the full term and space of seven years'.[84] Furthermore, clause 5 obliged all overseers of plantations to 'twice every week search their Negro houses for Runaway Negroes', while clause 11 compelled them to search every two weeks 'for clubs, wooden swords, or other mischievous weapons'.[85] In the same spirit of social control, the act offered a reward of one hundred pounds of sugar to any white person capturing a runaway slave, and would

[83] Ibid., pp. 106, 108.
[84] Ibid., p. 107.
[85] Ibid., p. 107.

make servants doing so 'absolutely free and clear from his service'.[86] Indeed, 'slave hunting' was officially legalized, for any 'Company ... of Men not exceeding twenty' could now engage into the business of tracking down and capturing fugitives for which they would be rewarded in pounds of sugar.[87]

For a demographic reason, however, this social control formation could not entirely function without including the slaves themselves (and later the free blacks) by way of pecuniary and symbolic incentives. It was therefore provided under clause 12 that 'all Negroes likewise may receive encouragement to take fugitives and Runaway Negroes', which took the form of five hundred pounds of sugar paid by the owner in addition to 'a Badge of a Red Cross' to be worn in the right arm, whereby the cooperative slave 'may be known and cherished by all good people for his good service to the Country'.[88] Yet even such system of internal division within the lower ranks was not entirely satisfactory to the planters, for in order 'to balance their Strength' with the enslaved population, the act required that every freeholder on the island had at his disposal 'one Christian Servant' or 'the like number of hired Men' for every twenty acres of land that he possessed.[89] As elsewhere in English America, the poor whites in Barbados were now strategically targeted as the buffer social-control stratum by the planter class.[90] And to instil the moral and legal ethos associated the new racial consciousness that the slave act sought to impregnate among the shrinking white population, it required to be 'read and published in

[86] Ibid., p. 108.
[87] Ibid., p. 111.
[88] Ibid., p. 109.
[89] Ibid., pp. 112-13.
[90] See Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 2.

all the respective parish Churches in this Isle the first Sunday in February and the first Sunday in August every year'.[91]

Notwithstanding the question of legal rights, the overarching difference between the servant act and the slave act rested on the degree of discipline, which for slaves needed to be administered 'with a rod of iron', as the preamble to the latter put it.[92] In this sense, what stood as the most qualitatively significant transformation in the transition to enslaved African labour was not lifelong hereditary bondage *per se*, for this already existed by custom and law prior to the enactment of the slave code. Rather, it was the masters' power of life and death over their slaves, which did not exist under white servitude. Contrary to servants, a runaway slave could now be coldly executed by his master.[93] Likewise, a slave who laid violent hands on any white person would receive a severe whipping after a first offence, his nose slit and his face burned after a second offence, and a 'greater Corporeal punishment' until death after a third offense.[94] Furthermore, clause 20 provided that slaves embezzling property could be killed by 'any poor small freeholder or other person' without 'be[ing] [held] accountable for it'.[95] Finally, any 'Actors, Contrivers, raisers, fomenters and Concealers of Mutiny or

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[91] "Barbados Act 1661", in Engerman *et al*., eds., *Slavery*, p. 113.
[92] Cited in David Barry Gaspar, "With a Rod of Iron: Barbados Slave Laws as a Model for Jamaica, South Carolina, and Antigua, 1661-1697," in *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora*, eds. Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLoed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 346.
[93] "Barbados Act 1661", in Engerman *et al*., eds., *Slavery*, p. 111. Under clause 20 masters could be subject to a fine of thousand pounds of sugar for wantonly killing someone else's slave. Yet, as Richard Dunn pointed out, 'since the master could always claim to be correcting a slave for a misdemeanor, this fine was easy to evade'. Dunn, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 239.
[94] "Barbados Act 1661", in Engerman *et al*., eds., *Slavery*, p. 106.
[95] Ibid., p. 112.

rebellion'—the supreme infraction—would be submitted to martial law and 'punish[ed] by death or other pain as their Crimes shall deserve'.[96]

Consistent with the rest of the act, this voluntary absence of oversight into masters' behaviour should be viewed, I submit, as a way for them to break out legally as a class once and for all from any form of protective paternalism that had hitherto characterized plantation unfree labour in its servitude-form, and, consequently, enforce unrestrictedly and definitely what they had managed to do only seemingly and temporarily, namely, property rights in persons as human fixed capital. Although the 1661 slave act did not directly address the legal status of slaves as commodities, it nonetheless implied this view in its preamble, formulating that slaves were just like 'men's other goods and Chattels'.[97] After all, as it has been rightly pointed out, 'control, not commodification, was the legislators' paramount concern...' at that particular moment.[98] In Chapter 2, I have emphasized that Marx understood freedom in 'free' wage-labour as detachment (*vogelfrei*) from the means of living. Here, in the specific context of Barbados, we observe how the coercive *attachment* of slaves to plantation was essential as a means of control over unfree labour. The capitalist mediation did not need to go through market-driven commodification to extract production. It was executed directly through coercive means but whose ultimate finality was the same: the deepening of capitalist social relations of production.[99]

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[96] Ibid., pp. 110-11.
[97] Ibid., p. 105.
[98] Sally E. Hadden, "The Fragmented Laws of Slavery in the Colonial and Revolutionary Eras," in *The Cambridge History of Law in America*, eds. Michael Grossberg and Christopher Tomlins, Vol. 1: *Early America (1580-1815)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 260.
[99] On this issue, see Banaji, *Theory as History*, p. 142.

The conception of slaves as commodity-chattels, moreover, is also assumed indirectly by the silence of the act vis-à-vis their 'treatments', with the exception of a superficial provision about their clothing.[100] As Mary Turner has argued, clothing, along with food supplies and, in some cases, medical attention, 'comprised the slave workers' wages in kind'.[101] But as the slave-property relation itself allowed, the cost of wages in kind could not only be minimized by planters—by calculating whether or not the income derived from sugar is greater than the expense of provisions that are either locally-produced or imported from abroad—but even taken below absolute zero through planned starvation. In 1711, for instance, one Barbadian estate manager commented that 'the greatest misfortune in this island' was that of the poorly-fed slaves.[102] Another contemporary observer wrote later on that '[t]he quality of their diet … is far from being proportioned to the toil they undergo'.[103] Made possible by the large transatlantic supply of enslaved African labour, barely minimal wages in kind aimed at taking out of slaves the utmost amount of exertion planters were capable of putting forth in the shortest space of time, which most often led to working them to death as part of calculated business strategy. In the same exploitative spirit, at a moment when they attempted to restrict court actions undertaken by servants, planters obviously granted no legal rights to their 'brutish Slaves' because of 'the baseness of their Conditions'.[104]

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[100] Clause 3 provided that slaves should be clothed once a year—a pair of drawers and a cap for every male, a petticoat and cap for very female—so as 'to cover their nakedness'. See "Barbados Act 1661", in Engerman *et a*l., eds., *Slavery*, p. 107

[101] Mary Turner, "Introduction," in *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves: The Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas*, ed. Mary Turner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995b), p. 2.

[102] Cited in Jerome S. Handler and Frederick W. Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados: An Archeological and Historical Investigation* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 89.

[103] William Dickson, *Letters on Slavery* (London: Printed and sold by J. Phillips et al., 1789), p. 14.

[104] "Barbados Act 1661", in Engerman *et a*l., eds., *Slavery*, p. 110.

Thus, everything that stood in the way of really turning servants into commodities had basically vanished in the 1661 Barbados slave act. The transition to black racial slavery as a new institution allowed planters to deliberately ignore the conventions that protected English servants from overwork and other forms of abuses.[105] While African slaves were already expropriated from the ownership of the means of subsistence, they were now deprived *de jure* from any possibility of reconnecting with them as independent autonomous producers. Through an entirely different mechanism, therefore, they too were 'freed' (in Marx's sense of *vogelfrei*, as discussed in Chapter 2) from their own conditions of reproduction, ensuring a *direct* 'enslavement to capital', as Marx aptly put it.[106]

The historical specificity of the emergence of this form of 'economic bondage' in Barbados, however, was not based on the repetitive indirect enslavement of the worker to the capitalist class as a whole, but the one-time *direct* enslavement of him/her to the individual planter capitalist.[107] Indeed, the appearance of this form of labour exploitation changed nothing to the fact that, underneath the phenomenological level of direct domination, laid what Marx called 'the real transaction' of the capitalist mode of production: the uneven repetitive exchange of value-producing labour for minimal means of subsistence.[108] The only difference was that the constant (indeed, weekly) renewal of this transaction was veiled by the unfree-form of slave labour and by the use-form of

[105] This argument is advanced by Lorena Walsh in a Chesapeake context. See her chapter "Slave Life, Slave Society, and Tobacco Production in the Tidewater Chesapeake, 1620-1820," in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 170-199.
[106] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 763.
[107] Ibid., pp. 723, 764.
[108] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 1064.

wages 'paid' in kind.[109] African slaves, as Mary Turner has rightly termed it, were turned into 'an *immanent* form of proletariat'.[110] This is likely what Marx had in mind when he argued in the *Grundrisse* that '*Negro slavery ... presupposes* wage labour', by which he did not mean that the former antedated the latter but rather that it embodied underdeveloped, inherent, yet still very apparent, features of wage-labour in a process of becoming.[111] This sheds light on one of his important claims, as discussed in Chapter 2, that 'wage-labour' as a historically determinate category specific to the capitalist mode of production eventuated as a rich totality of many determinations and relations, that is, as a 'unity of the diverse'.[112] Yet, and to reiterate a point made earlier, black racial slavery could *only* become capital-positing, capital-creating labour in a capitalist world-system of commodity production based on wage-labour.

The institution of plantation slavery as it developed in its black Barbadian racialized form was therefore not the relic of some kind of pre-capitalist past. It was rather the contingent and situational outcome of a struggle between a capitalist planter class who sought to impose market functions on plantation unfree labour and a landed working class who sought to resist it by consistently running away and, on one occasion in the pre-servant act era, plot a full-scale insurrection so as 'to make themselves ... Masters of

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[109] On several occasions Marx conceded that the capitalist wage-form could comprise payments made in kind. In *Capital* Volume I, for example, he pointed out that a part of the wages paid to the English agricultural labourers by capitalist farmers and landlords at the end of the eighteenth century was made in money 'and the remainder in the form of parochial relief'. In the same vein, he wrote that the mining workers, who belonged to 'the best paid categories of the British proletariat', received a money-wage in addition to '[dwelling] cottages and coal for firing "for nothing" ... these form part of their wages, paid in kind'. The African slave, as he further pointed out, was a paid-worker who 'receives the means of subsistence he requires in the form of *naturalia* which are fixed both in kind and quantity—i.e. he receives use-values'. His means of subsistence constituted his '*minimal wage*'. Yet, as Marx maintained in Volume II, wages advanced to the worker '...in means of subsistence ... can of course only be the exception on the basis of capitalist production'. Marx, *Capital*, vol.1, pp. 750, 820, 1031; 1033; *Capital*, vol. 2, p. 292. Emphasis in original.

[110] Turner, "Introduction", in Turner, ed., *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves*, p. 11. Emphasis added.

[111] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 224.

[112] Ibid., pp. 100-1.

the Iland'.[113] To be sure, Barbadian planters simply achieved with their enslaved Africans what they had not managed to do with their white servants. It was not a pre-given or ancient notion of slavery but their practical experience with indentured servitude in the specific context of the sugar boom that historically and qualitatively *determined* (not caused) the specific capitalist form of the transition to black racial slavery. The first labour system, in other words, provided the social-legal matrix to the following one.

The preamble to the slave act is explicit in that regard, deploring that 'there being in all the body of that Law [i.e. 'the Laws of England'] no track to guide us where to walk nor any rule set us how to govern such Slaves'.[114] It was for this reason that Eric Williams argued that the experience of indentured servitude proved to be invaluable for English planters to execute the shift toward a plantation system of cash-crop production based exclusively on enslaved African labour.[115] It was arguably in this sense, too, that Marx, as cited above, contended that the logics of capital accumulation did not arise out slavery but were 'grafted' on to it; what was grafted came directly from the experience with white servitude. By virtue of its dialectical relation to black racial slavery, then, white servitude can be said to have featured one of those many 'transitional forms' of capitalist production to which Marx consistently referred in *Capital*.[116]

The grafting operation (to continue with Marx's biological metaphor), however, was performed externally or, more precisely, *around* the immediate process of plantation production. In mobilizing the political and legal structures of the colony to defend their economic interests against a mixed, mobile workforce, Barbadian planters seized indirect

[113] Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, pp. 45-46.
[114] "Barbados Act 1661", in Engerman *et al.*, eds., *Slavery*, p. 105.
[115] Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*, pp. 9-19.
[116] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 602, 645, 1023; *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 443.

control of the labour process by encompassing it with what sociologist Michael Burawoy would call a 'political apparatus of production', which implemented a social-legal regime of white rule aiming at tying enslaved Africans down to their plantations.[117] Inasmuch as this process involved extra-economic compulsion, it nonetheless constituted a fundamental feature of the laws of motion of capital by which the form of appearance of slaves as commodity capital, circulating first in the form of value-*positing* labour, needed to be transformed into productive capital, that is to say, into the form of value-*producing* labour. To borrow from the *Grundrisse*, enslaved Africans as fixed capital needed to assume a permanent 'stationary form' in the sphere of production.[118] As such, like any means of dead labour, they needed to become '*fixated* capital, *tied-down* capital'.[119] Unlike any of them, however, enslaved Africans, as just told, needed to be *literally* fixed up and tied down to the relations of production on plantations in order to impose this dehumanizing use-form on their persons and, therefore, extract surplus value from their labour.[120]

Gang-labour system

While the 1661 servant and slave acts did not prevent white and black workers from rebelling against their masters, sometimes in concert as in 1686, they nonetheless helped

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[117] Micheal Burawoy, "Karl Marx and the Satanic Mills: Factory Politics Under Early Capitalism in England, the United States, and Russia," *American Journal of Sociology* 90, no. 2 (Sep., 1984), p. 250.
[118] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 621
[119] Ibid.
[120] Seafaring workers, as discussed in Chapter 4, experienced a somewhat similar extra-economic process at roughly the same time, as a great deal of them were physically crimped on board deep-sea ships in order to tear them off from other existing labour markets (maritime and landed) and, therefore, take a grip at their labour-power through their persons and fix on it the specific use-form in which it entered the shipboard process of production, namely, as variable capital. This argument of disciplining and fixing up early proletarian workers into value-producing labour positions is extensively developed in Moulier-Boutang, *Salariat bridé*, see esp. chap. 10.

build and shape the legal foundations for a new regime of capitalist production in Barbados.[121] In this context, as Barbadian sugar plantations were evolving into large, productively-integrated units manned mostly by African slaves owned in more advantageous legal conditions, planters were allowed—indeed compelled by the competitive demands of the capitalist world market—to capture and execute the benefits of large-scale co-operation based on division of labour. In addition to the concentration of capital in land- and slave-owning, the qualitative reconfiguration of sugar cultivation as a new form of social labour, Marx would have claimed, 'also form[ed] the starting-point of capitalist production...' because '...[t]he mystification of the *capital-relation* emerges at this point'.[122] In Barbados as in other slave-plantation colonies where the sugar-crop was produced for export, the mystification appeared in the form of the gang-labour system, in which the socialized, value-creating power of slave labour was configured as the self-valorizing power of capital.[123] Through ganging, the Barbadian sugar planter intervened *directly* into the plantation labour process as its director and manager. In this sense, as we will now observe, the gang system of slave labour achieved what the integrated plantation had initiated, namely, the historical shift toward the *formal* subsumption of plantation unfree labour under capital, and that in spite of the persisting appearance of slave labour as non-waged labour.

Simply defined, the gang-labour system was a large-scale, regimented, hierarchical organization of labour, in which slaves were divided up into work-groups on the basis of their age and physical capacity, and in which everyone worked on the same collective job

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[121] See Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp. 111-12 and Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 111-12.
[122] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 453, 1021.
[123] According to historian David Eltis there is no firm evidence of gang labour being used before the slave-plantations of the Americas. See Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*, p. 221.

from dawn to dusk, under direct and close supervision. Although planters approached this form of labour organization in a variety of ways, on typical seventeenth- and eighteenth-century plantations it most often comprised three gangs. The first gang, often referred to as the 'great gang', came to be composed over time from thirty to near to, and sometimes over, a hundred slaves, all of them mature men and women (from the late teens upward), all selected to perform the hardest physical labour by far, such as digging cane-holes, cultivating new shoots, as well as dunging and harvesting the fields. Averaging between thirty and sixty slaves, the second gang, sometimes called the 'little' gang, was in charge of cutting, gathering, tying and transporting grass and weeds so as to keep fields clean and, therefore, maximize the intake of nutrients and water into the cane plant. It was largely composed of teenagers. Finally, the third gang was composed of small children (from five to twelve years of age) and the disabled. Its major function was to perform lighter field work, such as gathering grass for the livestock.[124]

Although it was not until the turn of the eighteenth century that the gang-labour system came to really dominate the way in which plantation labour was organized in Barbados (and elsewhere), Ligon's description of the island in 1647 already referred to 'several Gangs' of white servants and African slaves who were daily compelled 'to go out upon several Imployments ... some to weed, some to plant ... some to cut Canes, others to attend the Ingenio [sugar mill], Boyling-house, Still-house, and Cureing-house; some for Harvest ... other to gather Provisions'.[125] It is important, however, not to attach an eighteenth-century meaning to this description. As Menard has cautioned, 'Ligon's gangs were a way of seeing that each member of a large workforce had a job and that

[124] Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 73-74.
[125] Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, p. 114. See also Menard, *Sweet Negotiation*, p. 29 and Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 90.

each job on a large plantation producing a complex crop had workers assigned to it. In short, I am inclined to read Ligon as describing a step along the way to a fully developed gang system'.[126] What is indisputable from Ligon's account, however, is that notwithstanding its rudimentary shape, the practice of ganging plantation workforce in Barbados seemed to have existed prior to the full entrenchment of sugar cultivation on the island. But the origins of system itself 'remain shrouded in mystery'.[127]

The question of origins is a peripheral matter to the argument here. Of main concern is the extent to which the rise of the integrated, slave-based sugar plantations in Barbados *consolidated* and *standardized* initial ganging arrangements of labour so as to adapt them to the new exigencies of capital accumulation. While the very physical properties of the sugarcane may have further encouraged planters to gang slaves, the gang-system as such seems to have evolved into its new, sugar-driven capitalist form at the point of intersection between the movement to rationalize sugar cultivation in a more optimal usage of land and labour and the desire to exercise greater coercive and managerial control over slave labour.[128]

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[126] Menard, *Sweet Negotiation*, p. 96.
[127] Ibid., p. 102.
[128] The 'natural' relation between sugar production and ganging stems from the fact that, as a crop, the cane plant needs to be converted into sugar within hours after it has been cut or the juice would ferment and spoil, causing the yield to diminish and the quality of the product to decline. On mid- and late-seventeenth-century plantations, this meant that, once cut, the cane had to be hurried at the mill in order to be grinded before being processed into sugar. Such premium on haste may have encouraged teamwork, because the yield of a joint output was larger than the sum of the outputs of laborers working independently. Furthermore, because such naturally-imposed production schedule necessarily involved a careful synchronization between the two operations, a close supervision was therefore required, which ganging arrangements easily (and cheaply) allowed. Another natural reason that may have led sugar planters to keep up with the early Barbadian gang system was the difficulty to efficiently measure the productivity of a single field worker, as it was, for example, under the task system of rice or cotton cultivation. The measurement of collective outputs proved more applicable and, therefore, achievable through gang-labour. On this subject, see Philip D. Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems: The Organization of Labor on New World Plantations," in *Work and Labor in Early America*, ed. Stephen Innes (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), esp. p. 206.

In the 1670s, Barbadian planters grew increasingly concerned with the problem of soil erosion and depletion that the shift to large-scale sugar monoculture had caused on their estates. This worriment happened in a context of adverse market conditions created by a decline in sugar prices and a diminishing share of the European sugar market to the profit of other Caribbean colonies, such as Jamaica and Leeward Islands, using fresher soils on an extensive scale. 'Like most capitalist classes experiencing economic crises,' Beckles writes, 'the planters responded by asserting greater control over the entire range of their business'.[129] In addition to integrating operations, much time was also devoted to technical and scientific innovations pertaining to sugarcane cultivation, most especially in a way as to re-organize it into more efficient ratios of land, labour, and tools. To this end, planters introduced vertical cane-holing planting techniques, which consisted of digging larger and deeper holes evenly spaced in longitudinal rows lined up at equal distance from one another. At every two rows, planting beds were raised higher than normal so as to create natural gutters for draining water during the wet season. Once the plant was seeded dung piles needed to be thrown onto every hole and regularly turned in order to help them rot and, therefore, preserve the fertility of the soil.[130] Later known as the Barbadian style of cane-holing agriculture, this break down and qualitative redefinition of the various agronomic components of sugarcane cultivation transformed it into a new set of simple yet more arduous, degrading, and backbreaking tasks.[131] In order to be

[129] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 136.
[130] See Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 96-98 and David Watts, "Origins of Barbadian Cane Hole Agriculture," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 32, no. 3 (May, 1968), 143-151.
[131] By contrast, Ligon describes how early Barbadian planters cultivated the cane in approximate manners based on 'their own knowledge', which consisted of digging 'small holes, at three foot distance, or there about' in a series of undivided crosswise trenches covering the whole acreage under cultivation. As he mentioned, 'this way of planting was most pernicious'. David Watts has suggested that this first planting method appeared to have been derived from Arawak Amerindian techniques of cultivation with which

adequately executed, planters were therefore required to carefully divide their strongest workers from the rest of their plantation workforce, that is to say, determining who was capable of holing. Consequently, they began to conceptualize their plantation workers, most especially field slaves, on the basis of their physical strength, hence making it possible to allocate them into separate work groups so as to divide task accordingly. Thus, it was not the sugar crop itself that determined whether or not planters should gang slaves, but rather the grim labour demands of cane-holing agriculture as the agro-technical expression of market evaluations and adaptations.

A good example of such connection comes in the famous 'Instructions' of absentee Barbadian sugar planter and entrepreneur Henry Drax to his estate manager in 1679—exactly the period under review here. After having instructed his manager in considerable details about the new cane-holing planting techniques, Drax requested him to give priority to the purchase of 'Choyce Young Negros who will be fitt for plantt serwice'.[132] Although Drax did not explicitly required to divide slaves into several gangs, it was nonetheless implicit in his reference to those allocated to the plant service as the 'Howers', a term that would become characteristic of first-gang slaves in the eighteenth century.[133] Bringing into view the profit-driven economic motives underlying the implementation of cane-holing agriculture and the ganging arrangements of slave labour, Drax told his estate manager that the purpose of his instructions was 'to Carry on

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planters were completely familiar. See Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, p. 87 and Watts, *The West Indies*, p. 195.

[132] The instructions have been reprinted in full in Peter Thompson, "Henry Drax's Instruction on the Management of a Seventeenth-Century Barbadian Sugar Plantation," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (Jul., 2009), 565-604., quote p. 576.

[133] Ibid., p. 590

plantation bussines to a great height', reminding him in passing that 'our Money ... [is] the finall product of all our Endewors'.[134]

In ganging their slaves according to physical strength suited to holing, Barbadian planters could therefore achieve economies of scale within their workforce. As one contemporary commented, one of the purposes of the gang-labour system was to realize an economy and repetition of motion in which 'every Negro doth his Part according to his Ability, the weak Hands must not be pressed, nor the Strong suffered to shrink from their work'.[135] Moreover, in allocating slaves to different gangs planters enabled themselves to establish quantitative proportions of socially necessary labour for each ganged-job in the field, hence allowing them to cheapen production costs and, therefore, expand the amount of surplus-value (which I discuss below). In 1685, for example, 'A Moderate Calculation of the Annual Charge and Produce of a Plantation in Barbados' produced by the Barbados Assembly estimated that a sugar estate would best function with a labour force of fifty slaves and seven servants, establishing ideal ratios of 1 servant per 14.2 acres, 1 slave per 2 acres, and 1 servant per 7.1 slaves, to which many planters attempted to conform.[136] Likewise, it became commonly accepted over time that one-third of the enslaved workforce should be allocated to the first gang in order to generate a 'well-conditioned plantation'.[137] In the same spirit, one Barbadian plantation manual recommended to sugar planters by the end of the last quarter of the eighteenth century to 'proportion your second gang to the number of negroes employed in throwing out dung,

[134] Ibid., pp. 585, 588.
[135] William Belgrove, *A Treatise upon Husbandry Or Planting* (Boston: D. Fowle, 1755), p. 64.
[136] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 126-27.
[137] Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 1st ed., Vol. 2 (Dublin: Luke White, 1793), p. 120.

so that the former may follow and cover up the dung as fast as the latter throw it out'.[138] It was evidently on this ground that Marx, as cited earlier, held that slave labour under black racial slavery became a factor in a calculated and calculating system of capitalist production. In spite of resting on extra-economic compulsion, it too was governed by the 'iron law of proportionality subject[ing] definite numbers of workers to definite functions'.[139]

Under the cane-holing agricultural regime, ganged slaves, arguably to a degree unseen with white servitude, were stripped of their autonomy and individuality in order to maximize production. The new labour-intensive requirements transformed them as interchangeable units of production. Their value-producing function as chattels was now directly grounded in Barbadian agronomic science as 'a potentiality for production which is distinct from labour and presses it into the service of capital'.[140] Yet the plantation labour process was not revolutionized as it would become in the nineteenth century with the partial mechanization of field labour and the introduction of the steam engine at the mill—all characteristics of a *direct* subsumption of labour under capital. Indeed, in spite of being forcibly committed to a thoroughly reconfigured way of cultivating the cane plant, Barbadian slaves nonetheless continued to work the hoe as before, and sugar continued to be processed essentially in the same fashion. The fundamental change, which indicates the completion of the *formal* subsumption of plantation unfree labour under capital, was that slave-labour now needed to adhere to new standards of quality and intensity set up by the planters. This change operated the divorce of conception of

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[138] Cited in Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 144.
[139] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 476.
[140] Ibid., p. 482

plantation labour from its execution, resulting in a process of technological deskilling among slaves—a process that in a wage-labour setting would be automatically called 'proletarianization'. Before black racial slavery, as Beckles writes, 'servitude was viewed not only in terms of providing agricultural field hands, but also as a method of transferring technological skills. Blacks, on the other hand, as a result of their wholesale reduction to field labor, lost skills in these formative years'.[141] Now they were 'brought face to face with the intellectual potentialities [*geistige Potenzen*] of the material process of production as the property of another and as a power which rules over [them]'.[142]

In addition to agro-economic factors, social-control considerations might also have contributed a great deal to the consolidation of the gang-labour system when sugar began to reign supreme in Barbados. As discussed above, Barbadian planters were facing serious problems regarding labour discipline during the second half of the seventeenth century. Indeed, at least one major slave plot was uncovered at every decade between in 1675 and 1701.[143] In 1675, for instance, at a moment when sugar production and black racial slavery were becoming firmly interwoven with one another, one such conspiracy was defeated by the planters before it could be launched. A verbal exchange in court between a rebel leader named Tony and a white Barbadian is symptomatic of an exacerbated social tension between masters and slaves at that particular juncture.

In the aftermath of the plot, Tony was hauled before a judge to confess and to reveal his co-conspirators before being burned alive. As Tony remained silent, a white spectator

[141] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 115. See also Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, p. 22. For a similar claim but for the French Antilles, see Debien, *Les engagés pour les Antilles*, p. 46. On the separation of conception from execution in an industrial context, see Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), chap. 4.
[142] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 482.
[143] Craton, *Testing the Chains*, p. 335.

from the audience stood up exclaiming, 'Tony, Sirrah, we shall see you fry bravely by and by,' to which the convicted slave replied boldly, 'If you Roast me to day, you cannot Roast me to morrow'.[144] This created a general sense of turmoil among the plantocracy, which led directly, a few months later, to the inclusion of new amendments to the 1661 slave act. In order to increase or, at least, maintain the ratio of white-militiamen versus African slaves and, therefore, ensure social control, the term of servitude was once more reduced, while enslaved Africans were forbidden in certain skilled trades. In addition, the Assembly manumitted the woman slave who had revealed the conspiracy to the planters, so as to widen divisions among slaves and, therefore, hinder future rebellion.[145]

The decision made by sugar planters to organize their slaves into gangs should therefore be understood as a function of strategic choices *within* this particular social-political context of class struggle. Just like the question of soil erosion, social control and discipline may, too, have been a pressing, circumstantial imperative for them as they were still in the process of conceiving the best way to organize their enslaved workforce in the field.

In his *Treatise upon Husbandry or Planting* (1755), Barbadian planter William Belgrove suggests such a link. Interestingly, Belgrove claimed to have drawn his views directly from Drax's instructions on plantation management, declaring that they 'can't be too much admired, considered, and practiced by every good Planter'.[146] Following Drax, he claimed that '[t]he best Way ... to prevent Idleness, and to make the Negroes do their Work properly, will be ... constantly to Gang all the Negroes in the Plantations in the

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[144] Cited in ibid., pp. 109-10.
[145] On the legal consequence of the plot, see ibid., p. 110; Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 2, pp. 228-30; and Menard, *Sweet Negotiation*, pp. 99-100.
[146] Belgrove, *A Treatise upon Husbandry*, p. 50.

Time of Planting'.[147] However, the original version of the instructions—as made available by Peter Thompson—does not discuss this matter. As Justin Roberts has suggested, while it is possible that Belgrove was quoting a revised version of the text that no longer exists, it seems more likely that he added these comments himself.[148] After all, it became truistic over time for sugar planters like Belgrove that there was, as one historian has pointed out, '...no better-brigaded, better-supervised form of labor...' than the gang system.[149] One early nineteenth-century ameliorationist observer of slavery, too, conjectured that the gang-labour system had been 'perhaps ... the only one that was practicable 150 years ago, with *an untamed set of savages*'.[150] Yet data deficiency precludes our making empirical statements that would fully prove the claim. Indeed, Drax's instructions on plantation management indicate that the new cane-holing standards may have played a greater role than social-control considerations in the choice of ganging slave labour. What is certain, however, is that even though concerns of social control may not have been consciously taken into account in the early organization of the gang-labour system, they quickly became so as the backbreaking work of cane-holing agriculture began to be enforced upon slaves from sunset to sundown. Social control and discipline, in other words, were ancillaries to ganging.

Indeed, while the new agronomic factors certainly helped to conserve soil, they created the situation whereby only coercion could now really secure labour, for servants, as mentioned above, grew less inclined to work voluntarily in such degrading conditions in the fields. This too, in addition to supply cost factors, contributed to strengthen the

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[147] Ibid., pp. 64-65.
[148] Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic*, p. 136.
[149] Morgan, "Task and Gang System", in Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America*, p. 193.
[150] William Dickson, *Mitigation of Slavery in Two Parts* (London: Printed by R. and A. Taylor, 1814), p. 121.

growing nexus between sugar production and black racial slavery. On Barbadian sugar plantations as elsewhere, labour coercion evolved into a hierarchical, whip-driven, lockstep work discipline, whose daily enforcement rested on the shoulders of overseers and slave drivers. Ruling by the lash, they were responsible of assembling slaves in the morning, setting them to their work in the field, and ensuring that they kept up a controlled pace of labour in a manner acceptable to the plantation owner. As such, it was also their task to administer most of the corporal punishment carried out on plantation. Though set at a moment when cane-holing agriculture had become 'the general rule in Barbadoes', one eighteenth-century observer gives us an idea of the regimented, factory-like discipline of gang labour, which is worth quoting at some length:

> The holes are dug, with hoes, by the slaves, in a row, with the driver at one end, to preserve the line. They begin and finish a row of these holes as nearly, at the same instants, as possible; so that this *equal* task must be performed, in *the same time*, by a number of people who, it is *next to impossible*, should all be *equally strong* and dexterous; especially as few or no field negroes, who can wield a hoe, are exempted from it. Thus the weak must be oppressed. The driver is often obliged to set such negroes, as cannot keep up with the rest, to work, in a separate corner, by themselves; but ... he too often first tries the effect of flogging, which is also sometimes the punishment for not digging the holes deep enough.
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> In turning dung, a task equally as laborious, and, perhaps, more harassing than holing, each negro carries, on his head, a basketful of it. The gang must walk over a surface, now rendered by uneven by the holes, the driver bringing up the rear, and often smacking his whip ... to increase their speed. ... Here is another *equal* task, to be performed in an *equal* time, by people of *unequal* strength. In turning dung, therefore, as in holing, the weak, under strict drivers, at least, are oppressed. Both of them are very laborious tasks, considering the climate, the scanty fare of the negroes, and the number of hours they work; especially, as those tasks are often performed rather in a hurry, as when advantage is to be

> taken of a heavy rain; or when the plantation-work, from various causes, happens to be backward, or has not kept pace with the advancement of the season.[151]

In the words of Marx, the passage highlights the extent to which the gang-labour system through the directing authority of the driver converted the African slave into a 'collective worker' whose 'connection with the whole mechanism compels him to work with the regularity of a machine'.[152] Thus, when one Barbadian planter described the functioning of the sugar plantation at harvest as 'a well-constructed machine, compounded of various wheels turning different ways, yet all contributing to the great end proposed', he was more perceptive of its capitalist feature than he perhaps knew.[153] We now have a better idea of what Marx may have meant earlier by the so-called 'relationships' that transformed the 'negro' into a 'slave', and of how, by the same token, gang labour could actually concretize the 'mechanism of manufacture' in Barbados, which, as he maintained, was 'the predominant form taken by capitalist production' during this period.[154]

Synchronizing first-gang with second-gang field labour throughout the whole of the working day so as to create a 'collective working organism' was what made sugar plantations even more productive as it removed gaps in the labour process—what Marx called 'the pores of the working-day'.[155] Justin Roberts writes: 'During planting, for example, the secondary gangs on some estates would precede the first gangs, dropping a cane plant in each hole for the first gang workers, who would dig a little deeper in the

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[151] Dickson, *Letters on Slavery*, pp. 22-24. Emphasis in original.
[152] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 469.
[153] Samuel Martin, *An Essay on Plantership* (Antigua: printed by Robert Mearns, 1785), p. 18.
[154] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 489.
[155] Ibid., pp. 481, 534.

hole, place the plants horizontally, and cover them with dirt'.[156] Such interdependent gang-labour strategy could also be achieved on a yearly basis. As Drax insisted in his instructions, the new agronomic techniques required that the cane plant '…be Constantly observed...' by the slaves.[157] The tasks of weeding and dunging were particularly important in that regard, for they aimed at shortening production time, that is to say, the period between seed-time and harvest, while at the same time lengthening slaves' working time, so that the amount of absolute surplus-labour expanded, generating more absolute surplus-value.

While one prominent student of American slavery has recently maintained that 'this sort of *extensive* growth based on the absolute growth of surplus-labour is typical of non-capitalist forms of social labour', Marx seems to have held a more nuanced view, which is necessary to insert here.[158] For Marx, 'the process which constitutes the production of absolute surplus-value ... forms the *general foundation* of the capitalist system, and the *starting-point* for the production of relative surplus-value'.[159] In this sense, the idea is not that absolute surplus-value indicates the presence of a pre-capitalist mode of production, while relative surplus-value indicates the presence of capitalist one, but rather that '[t]o these two forms [of surplus-value] ... correspond two separate forms of the subsumption of labour under capital, or two distinct forms of capitalist production'.[160] What Marx took great care emphasizing throughout his work is that once formal subsumption of labour under capital takes place, as it happened in slave-plantation Barbados, 'surplus-value can be created *only* by lengthening the working day, i.e. by increasing absolute surplus-

[156] Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic*, p. 144.
[157] Tompson, "Henry Drax's Instructions", p. 590.
[158] Post, *The American Road to Capitalism*, p. 111.
[159] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 645. Emphasis added.
[160] Ibid., p. 1025.

value'.[161] Under the specific Barbadian conditions of black racial slavery as value-producing unfree labour, the increase of absolute surplus-value was identical with the increase of absolute surplus-labour. This is, indeed, what cane-holing agriculture under gang-labour permitted, that is, removing the crop cycle from its natural seasonal rhythms and placing it instead under a near-industrial, sunset-to-sundown capitalist work regime. Gang-labour allowed expanding absolute surplus-labour, which was at the same, as I have argued so far, value-producing value.[162]

The level of abstraction is, again, crucial in order to really grapple with Marx's own handling of the concept of surplus-value and of how it may apply to our discussion of plantation-slavery here. At the level of the mode of production as epoch of production, absolute surplus-value and relative surplus-value capture, as just mentioned, two distinct historical processes of capitalist production, namely, the formal subsumption of labour under capital that roughly corresponds to period of manufacture (the period under review here), and the direct subsumption of labour under capital corresponding to the period of machinery and large-scale industry. We must not interpret this statement as describing a static unilinear movement, however. As he further adds, while 'one form [of surplus-value] always precedes the other ... the second form, the more highly developed one [i.e. relative surplus-value] can provide the foundations for the introduction of the first [i.e. absolute surplus-value] in new branches of industry'.[163] At this level, in other words, the distinction between the production of absolute surplus-value and the production of

[161] Ibid., p. 1021. Emphasis added.
[162] Yet it is important to make clear here that absolute surplus-value and absolute surplus-labour are *not* identical in *all* circumstances, but only under plantation slavery as a specific form of value-producing labour.
[163] Ibid., p. 1025.

relative surplus-value is a distinction between the forms of labour subsumption under capital in the different branches of industry *within* the mode of production as a whole.

At the level of the mode of production as labour process, in turn, Marx points out that absolute and relative surplus-value appear instead as two interconnected aspects in a 'movement of surplus-value' whereby 'this semblance of identity vanishes'.[164] He notes: 'Relative surplus-value is absolute, because it requires the absolute prolongation of the working day beyond the labour-time necessary to the existence of the worker himself. Absolute surplus-value is relative, because it requires a development of the productivity of labour which will allow the necessary labour-time to be restricted to a portion of the working day'.[165] From this standpoint, then, 'the difference between absolute and relative surplus-value makes itself felt whenever there is a question of raising the rate of surplus-value'.[166] The logical analytical implication of this claim is that, at this level, one must distinguish mechanisms that increase the rate of absolute surplus-value (related generally to working time) from those that increase relative surplus-value (related generally to productivity) in order to single them out of their inclusive constitutive process.

While almost counter-intuitive to anyone today, the key idea to bear in mind here is that relative surplus-value is not in itself tied to machinery but more broadly to labour productivity, which can be increased through a variety of means and methods, including the slave driver's lash whose utilization served not only to punish but mainly to shorten or, at the very least, maintain the labour-time needed to produce the sugar-commodity

[164] Ibid., p. 646.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.

and, therefore, as Massimiliano Tomba puts it, 'to synchronize that particular labour to the universal chronometer marked by the temporality of socially-necessary labour'.[167]

Still, Marx would have most likely looked beyond the lash to the gang-labour system itself, as it featured a specifically capitalist form of the process of social production based on the division of labour. As he maintained, 'the division of labour in manufacture is merely a particular method of creating *relative* surplus-value'.[168] In this sense, arguing that 'it is relative surplus-labour extraction through mechanization that distinguishes capitalism from all previous forms of social labour' seems to be a metonymic error that confuses the form of appearance (machinery) with the thing which appears within that form (increased labour productivity).[169] In fact, industrial mechanization did not pave the way to the creation of relative surplus-value but simply to 'a change ... in [its] nature'.[170] Up to that particular moment, 'the principle of lessening the labour-time necessary for the production of commodities [had been] consciously formulated and expressed' by the capitalist class, but the use of machines to that end was only 'sporadic'.[171] As we shall see later in Saint-Domingue, sugar planters were far from being spared by this principle, for they too constantly sought out alternatives to move away from the 'starting-point' of absolute surplus-value and introduce labour-saving technologies, so as to increase the rate

[167] Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 149.
[168] Ibid., p. 486. Emphasis added.
[169] Post, *The American Road to Capitalism*, p. 111.
[170] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 534. This change, moreover, must not be naturalized as an inherent systemic attribute of the capitalist mode production. As Marx pointed out, the rise of machinery in the classic English case—his main case-study—was intimately connected to the peculiar dynamics of class struggle that brought Parliament to restrict the lengthening of the working day, at which point 'capital threw itself with all its might, and in full awareness of the situation, into the production of relative surplus-value, by speeding up the development of the machine system'. In this context, because it '...enabled the capitalists to tread underfoot the growing demands of the workers...' which, therefore, '...reduce[d] the refractory hand to docility...', machinery developed as a social-control device '...providing capital with weapons against working-class revolt'. Ibid., pp. 534, 562-64.
[171] Ibid., pp. 467-68.

of slave-labour productivity and, therefore, increase the amount—if only ephemeral—of relative surplus-value. Whether or not they succeeded at it is, of course, an entirely different matter, contingent upon what was materially (and politically) possible and technologically available at the time. In short, historical outcomes are not more important analytically than the driving forces that presuppose them or not.

Race-management

A final aspect of plantation-slavery as a capitalist enterprise must be attended to. As it should be clear by now, gang labour was as much supervisory as it was value-extractive. Through the labour of slave drivers and overseers, planters could systematically control every moment of plantation time, and therefore police movement and, ultimately, resistance. At the onset of the Barbadian sugar boom, however, these supervisory functions were not performed by slaves but by ex-servants working for wages or, on some occasions, trusted experienced servants. Ligon's description of a Barbadian plantation, for instance, indicates that one hundred slaves along with fourteen 'common Servants'—most likely Irish—were daily coerced into field labour by five white 'subordinate Overseers', who answered directly to the 'principal Overseer'.[172] They constituted, along with the field artisans and the mechanics working in sugar facilities, the plantation's white labour elite. This brings to view the extent to which the social regulation of the gang system hinged a great deal on race-thinking, not only in terms of occupational and social stratification, but also, and crucially, in term of enforcing the daily, disciplinary extraction of production. Ganging processes, from this standpoint,

[172] Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, p. 115.

were also racializing processes, involving a race-based, social-disciplinary device that drove the accumulation of capital and shaped strategies of rule on plantations. The roots of modern scientific management, as Elizabeth Esch and David Roediger have argued, lay in this very development during the era of plantation-slavery.[173]

Stereotypical assumptions about the mental and physical suitability of particular ethnic groups for specific plantation-style occupations were common throughout the Atlantic world. Before long, planters learned how to exploit these differences to stratify their workforce for divisive and, hence, productive ends. In the pre-sugar era, for instance, Barbadian planters consistently differentiated between the '...hardworking, loyal, unproblematic, and responsive...' Scottish servants and the '...violent, dangerous, untrustworthy, and aggressive...' Irish servants.[174] The continuation of this managerial strategy under black racial slavery was reflected first by the rapid pace at which servants, as just mentioned, came to mobilize artisanal and supervisory occupations, both on and off the plantation.[175] Indeed, standard ideological views, buttressed by racist assumptions about innate intellectual flaws, during this early period held that enslaved Africans were best used only for the simplest manual labour and with the most basic tools—a view reinforced by the climatic justification of black racial slavery. Ligon's description of mid-seventeenth-century Barbados echoes these racial assumptions among planters.[176]

The fall of white servitude and its substitution by black slavery, along with the inauguration of cane-holing agriculture, forced Barbadian planters to revise the

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[173] Elizabeth Esch and David Roediger, "One Symptom of Originality: Race and the Management of Labour in the History of the United States," *Historical Materialism* 17 (2009), 3-43.
[174] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 98.
[175] Ibid., p. 135.
[176] See Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, pp. 49-50.

organization of labour on their plantations. On the one hand, it was no longer possible for a shrinking white community to supervise effectively an overwhelmingly black, and potentially hostile, slave population, a contradiction further reinforced by owner absenteeism. On the other hand, the new techniques of cane-holing agriculture whose execution required some degree of expertise made it more profitable for planters to withdraw experienced slaves from the field in order to act as gang drivers than to hire a white overseer from outside. As a result, Barbadian planters embarked upon what Beckles has called 'the most progressive path in the process of overall production rationalization—educating and retraining slaves for specific artisan and supervisory roles on the plantations'.[177] Drax's instructions capture this trend in its infancy as they required the estate manager to 'Continue [to be] Kind to Moncky Nocco who has bene ane Exelentt Slawe and will I hope Continue Soe in the place he is of head overseer'.[178] Likewise, '...ffranck Sangan Will negro Dick Awara and Captt Blew Will spirit Manvera Old Bess Cormante...' were, too, considered slaves 'worthy of ... Countenance and Incoradgmentt', though the instructions are less specific about their exact statuses.[179] By the 1690s, slave drivers and slave artisans at coopering, masonry, and carpentry, for example, were common features in Barbados, an evolution that partially halted the deskilling process which had typified black racial slavery in earlier years.[180]

This reform, in turn, led planters to reshape their racial assumptions in order to justify and rationalize what could not have been possible only a few decades earlier. Indeed, because the formation of this lower-stratum of skilled slaves could not be explicitly

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[177] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 136.
[178] Thompson, "Henry Drax's Instructions", p. 600.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, pp. 136, 139.

rationalized in racial terms, planters moved from a strict racial-management strategy into an ethnic-management strategy *within* a broader racialized group. This shift had only begun to ramp up when Drax's penned his instructions. A century later, it had become common to differentiate the mental and physical suitability of particular ethnic groups for specific trades or types of work, though the actual realization of this scheme was considerably limited by the unifying pattern supplies of the transatlantic slave trade. Jamaican planter Edward Long, for example, considered that the 'Negroes brought from Senegal ... [made] good commanders ... having a spirit, and a tolerable share of fidelity', and were those '...brought from Senegal of better understanding than the rest, and fitter for learning trades'.[181] By contrast, the '...Congos, Papaws, Conchas, Whidhas, and Angolas...' were viewed as making '...good field labourers'.[182]

Yet ethnic-management was more easily applicable with regards to African-born slaves than island-born or creole slaves. Because they were born and bred in the vicinities of the colonial white rule, creole slaves could not be, by virtue of this relation of proximity (and, in many cases, of promiscuity), as easily despised as the enslaved Africans. Typical of how planters came to view them, another Jamaican planter wrote 'that the Creole race (with some few eminent exceptions) exceed the African in intellect, strength, and comeliness, in a very remarkable manner'.[183] For this reason, they were conceived as more fitted for skilled work, most especially in the sugar works or as skilled

[181] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica. Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island: With Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws and Government*, Vol. 2 (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), p. 404.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Edward, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, vol. 2, p. 155.

tradesmen.[184] Though it did not signify racially mixed in all cases, skin-colour contributed to enhance the occupational boundary between them and the Africans in the field, as well as fostered a more racially-convenient division of labour. Over the course of the eighteenth century, this boundary became increasingly gendered, as enslaved women found themselves confined to the monotony and drudgery of the field more regularly than their male counterparts. Although in case of female slaves, the division of labour was more complex, as they toiled for their master both in the field and sometimes in the latter's house, which included sexual exploitation. This was in addition to domestic labour in matters of social reproduction in the slave quarter.[185]

Crucially, ethnic-management allowed planters to drive a wedge among the enslaved workforce, with which slaves could be divided politically along both occupational and ethnic lines—though they most often overlapped. To this end, they tied production to a distinctive system of occupational incentives and rewards that mainly, though not exclusively, sought to secure the solidarity of the skilled slaves. While this feature seems to have been more an eighteenth- than a seventeenth-century phenomenon, it was already implicit in Drax's instructions, which singled out two distinct punitive regimes. Any misconduct or 'Mistake' in the sugar works by a skilled servant, he advised, must be 'Soberly punished', while any misbehaving slave '...must be Sewerely handled'.[186] The strategy was later transferred to the creole slave elite, whose key position in the political economy of the plantation was well understood by planters. As one contemporary put it,

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[184] B. W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 197-98.
[185] See Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic*, pp. 153-57, Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) and Emily West, *Chains of Love: Slave Couples in Antebellum South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).
[186] Thompson, "Henry Drax's Instructions", pp. 587-88.

'by judiciously working on their vanity ... [along] with [a] mild and humane usage, they are more likely to become the defenders than the destroyers of their country'.[187] In this spirit, creole slaves were granted lighter forms of punishment, but also better food and clothing, better lodging and medical care, extra land for provision ground or garden plot, some access to education, more freedom of time and motion, and greater opportunities to create stable and supportive family life.[188]

Others, especially craftsmen and tradesmen, could even receive money incentives in wages and bonuses for 'extra' services on plantation, while others could hire themselves freely or be rented out as wage-earners outside the plantation for jobbing work in exchange of a percentage of income given back to the owner or overseer.[189] In the 1670s, it was already common in Barbados to find skilled slaves to perform the same work for lower wages than freemen.[190] According to Robert Starobin, slave wages were 'part of a complex system of discipline-by-reward … a technique of slave control which had long existed and which supported the slave system'.[191] Indeed, while it certainly accentuated occupational, hence ethnic or racial distinctions between slaves, the cash-wage system remained as a strategy by planters to extract even more surplus-labour out of them. This brings to view that economic methods of labour exploitation could be utilized within the

[187] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, pp. 410-411.
[188] Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, p. 94. See also, Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean*, pp. 199-204.
[189] Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, p. 79; Hilary McD Beckles, "Creolisation in Action: The Slave Labour Élite and Anti-Slavery in Barbados," *Caribbean Quarterly* 44, no. 1/2 (Mar./June, 1998), p. 116.
[190] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, p. 147.
[191] Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 98-99.

slave system alongside direct force, which implied a certain form of conceptualization of the market value of the slave's labour-power.[192]

In the end, all these incentives and privileges contributed to set elite slaves apart from the field hands, giving them a material interest in maintaining the whole structure of racial oppression of plantation slavery. Over time, they contributed or, at least, sought to contribute to pre-emptively channel dissidence into a more negotiatory and conciliatory pattern of labour politics which, in turn, created a reformist ethos among them.[193] However, as the 1735 Antiguan slave plot discussed in Chapter 3 showed, and as the next chapter will further highlight, elite slaves could always bend the other way when material and ideological circumstances were worth it.

Slave drivers, too, received a somewhat similar treatment from planters. Indeed, the position of driver was one of the most prestigious in which a common gang-slave could hope to be promoted. It was thought to be comparable in terms of conditions and prestige to that of the slave artisans and household slaves.[194] Mainly for a matter of communicating with the newly-imported slaves, a number of planters preferred for their drivers to be African born or, in few cases, first generation creoles. Over time, drivers evolved into small cadres, for their functions were not only agronomic, supervisory, and disciplinary, but also administrative, involving tasks such as collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information from field production, which were then passed on to the overseer

[192] For accounts that highlight this feature, see Mary Turner, "Chattel Slaves into Wage Slaves: A Jamaican Case Study," in *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves: Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas*, ed. Mary Turner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995a), 33-47; and O. Nigel Bolland, "Proto-Proletarians? Slave Wages in the Americas," in *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves: The Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas*, ed. Mary Turner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 123-147.
[193] Beckles, "Creolisation in Action", p. 110.
[194] Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic*, pp. 213-14.

or directly to the plantation owner. It is no wonder, therefore, that planters believed that 'the welfare of a plantation depends mainly on a good driver'.[195] Consequently, it was imperative that the driver '[had] the interest of his master's property at heart'.[196] In order to instill in him (there were no female drivers[197]) such ideological commitment, planters granted them some distinctive privileges, such as extra food and clothing, better quarters, some freedom of movement, an exemption from night work during the sugar harvest, the possibility keeping relatives out of field labour, and even being allowed slaves of their his own.[198] In the later part of the eighteenth century, slave drivers received cash rewards of 6*s*. 3*d*., which counted, as it were, as their 'salary', though this practice was far from being standard across plantations.[199] Like the creole slave elite, these privileges elevated the driver over the mass of field hands, as his own individual interests were directly dependent on the economic well-being of the plantation as a whole. In order to keep his position and, therefore, his privileges, the slave driver, by the lash as by example, had to push for optimum labour productivity and efficiency to meet the production goals and profit expectations. Leadership as agent of management, however, could always veer into leadership as agent of change when circumstances asked for it, most especially when these became revolutionary, as we shall see in the next chapter.

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[195] Alexander Barclay, *A Practical View of the Present State of Slavery in the West Indies...* (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1826), p. 40.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean*, p. 193.
[198] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, p. 370; Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic*, p. 214.
[199] Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean*, p. 203.

Conclusion

Constructed on the basis of a commodity-producing agriculture driven by the pursuit of profit, the integrated, slave-based sugar plantation was a capitalist enterprise *sui generis* to the Atlantic world. Arising in Barbados in the second half of the seventeenth century, it featured characteristics typical of the manufacturing form of capitalist production, each of which intimately reflecting, let alone resolving, local differentiated circumstances of value creation. At the heart of this process, as I have attempted to demonstrate, laid the qualitative reformulation of black racial slavery as a new form of value-producing unfree labour *formally* and *politically* integrated into global value relations. There can be no doubt, therefore, that plantation-slaves were integral to 'the modern working-class in general', and to the Atlantic proletariat in particular.[200]

Yet, and to reiterate, class is neither a thing nor a strictly productive relation. It is an experience or, in this case, a transatlantic experience shared by the millions of enslaved Africans shipped through the middle passage to the new reality of capitalist exploitation on plantations. As I began to discuss in Chapter 3, this class experience was acted upon in subversive ways at arguably every step along the way between the African continent and plantation Americas. In Saint-Domingue, however, those acts of resistance culminated in an unprecedented scale of revolutionary action. There, as we shall see next, planters drew upon the Barbados estate model in shaping their own route to capitalist development, while adapting it to specific local conditions. Though the social relations of capitalist production in Saint-Domingue did not, in themselves, cause the slaves to rise up, they nonetheless provided them, as the merchant ship did for sailors-turned-pirates before

[200] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 413.

them, with an institutional context for, this time, a truly revolutionary political organizing with ramifications of solidarity stretching beyond the island limits to the entire Atlantic world, adding yet another step in the formative process of proletarian internationalism.

7. A 'Revolutionary Storm … Sweeping the Globe': The Saint-Domingue Revolution beyond Borders, 1791-1822

Et vous, esclaves de tous les pays, vous apprendrez … que l'homme porte naturellement dans son cœur la liberté, et qu'il en tient les clés dans ses mains.[1]

When I left off in Chapter 3, generations of Africans were actively engaged in a transatlantic resistance to the slave trade in Africa, to forced captivity on the slave ship, and to chattel slavery in the Americas. There, when it moved beyond subtle quotidian actions, resistance took the form collective break-outs whereby slaves ran away from plantations and established maroon communities under their own leadership. The maroon communities of Palmares in Brazil, as we observed, stood as an extraordinary counterpoint of black freedom to slaveholding societies in the Americas. In other places, especially in the sugar islands of the Caribbean, where the development of large-scale plantation systems considerably limited the marronage option, slave dissidents came to see open revolt as a more viable alternative. The 1735 Antigua slave conspiracy, as we saw, has exemplified this feature. Had they been successful, the Antiguan black insurgents would have overthrown the slave system and established freedom through an Asante-type confederal polity.

One claim advanced in that chapter was that those early forms of slave resistance and revolt remained generally confined to the bounded context of the colonial society. Few

[1] Louis Boisrond-Tonnerre, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire d'Haïti* (Paris: France Libraire, 1851 [1804]), p. 95.

among them, in other words, stretched beyond their local points of origin and informed slave revolts elsewhere. Seymour Drescher explains: 'Before 1775, the Caribbean sugar plantation zone partially replicated the slave ship in assuring the relative isolation of slaves from one colony to the next. A slave conspiracy or uprising in one island would usually be suppressed before it was widely known elsewhere'.[2]

With the outbreak of the age of revolutions in the North American British colonies in 1776, the tightly preserved social order that had kept distant slaves isolated from one another for so long began to crack. What helped to prompt this outbreak, as Gerald Horne has recently revealed, was the insurgent agency of the slaves themselves. In the few years immediately preceding the war, enslaved Africans in the North American British colonies had grown particularly rebellious, killing their white masters, organizing revolts, and running away in great numbers to join the British military which provided them with a sanctuary. As this black militancy was increasing, it became a major threat to the security of the prevailing social order. Potential alliance between the enslaved and the British was a vivid reality for the slaveowners, who had already begun to entertain the idea (since the Somerset case of 1772, in particular) that London was heading steadily toward abolition. In order to prevent it, they went to war, which broke out in large part as a white conservative, pre-emptive counter-revolution to preserve the system of slavery.[3]

In significant ways, then, African slaves initiated the age of revolutions, creating a fissure in the Atlantic social order which, more than ever, opened up the possibility to construct autonomous underground conduits of communication that would bring them

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[2] Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*, p. 117.
[3] Gerald Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014).

into closer, though mostly indirect, contact. News of the ‘counter-revolutionary war’ in the North American mainland, for example, provided a favorable circumstance for plantation slaves and maroon leaders in Jamaica to plot an island-wide revolutionary conspiracy and rise up against their oppressors in 1776.[4] From that moment on, as this example highlights, slave rebels could—and did—claim to be part of a broader Atlantic context of black self-liberation. The foremost instance of this development is the Saint-Domingue revolution which broke in 1791 and ended up in 1804 with the first independent black state in the Americas.

This chapter examines the Saint-Domingue revolution for what it has to offer to my reassessment of working-class internationalism in the *longue durée*. In line with what the preceding chapter has argued, I think about slaves foremost as coerced proletarian workers engaged in value-producing labour. Likewise, I think about plantation slavery as central to the early development of the capitalist mode of production as epoch of production. These standpoints allow me to integrate that story into global labour history in general and the development of working-class internationalism in particular. In this respect, this chapter should be read as a contribution to the growing efforts among scholars to revisit the story of the Haitian Revolution as world-historic moment of proletarian insurgency located at the heart of the capitalist modern world.[5]

The chapter demonstrates that the Saint-Dominguan slave rebels articulated their revolt in labour terms from the outset, while situating it in an Atlantic frame of reference.

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[4] Richard Sheridan, "Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776," in *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, eds. Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 26-46.
[5] David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

The main objective of the chapter is to tease out these Atlantic connections. As we shall observe, they were made possible by an increasingly autonomous black presence at sea established by corsair seamen and sailors, who served as transmission belts to link—and therefore politicize—other slave struggles with the ideas, symbols, and, at times, veterans of the Saint-Domingue revolution. Stretching from the United States to Venezuela to Cuba to Brazil, this process of transboundary black proletarian solidarity, I argue, needs to be recognized as yet another moment in the historical development of working-class internationalism. As such, the chapter is written with a mind to contribute to the growing body of Atlanticist works that proposes to view the radicalism of the age of revolutions 'as a geographically connected process', in which 'the maritime world was central to its multiple eruptions and global character'.[6]

I will develop these arguments through four sections. The first is concerned with the establishment of the plantation regime in Saint-Domingue, with an emphasis on the formal subsumption of labour under capital. It highlights how the plantation regime in the French colony adopted some features of the Barbadian model, while deviating from it in some others. The second part brings to view traditions of resistance, among them *grand* and *petit* marronage, that predated the outbreak of the 1791 uprising. Here, I begin to reconnect with the perspective put forth in Chapter 3, where I emphasized features of radicalism rooted in African military culture and religious spirituality. This section will highlight a certain momentum of black militancy that persisted up to the uprising, and how it intertwined with the French revolutionary context of the age of revolutions. The third section analyses the revolution as it unfolded. Emphasis is placed on slaves'

[6] Niklas Frykman et al., "Mutiny and Maritime Radicalism in the Age of Revolution", p. 4.

revolutionary self-organizing, which assumed a remarkable translocal character, stretching across distant plantations in the North Province and, at some point, over to Spanish Santo Domingo. I will also highlight how insurgent slaves came to skillfully employ and adapt the language of republican rights to win their freedom. The fourth section explores the translocalization of the revolution beyond the colony's insular boundaries. It grounds this process in the mobility of a class of black sailors and corsairs who contributed—sometimes directly through direct assistance, sometimes indirectly through circulation of news—to connect and integrate separated slave revolts into a broader movement of black revolutionary self-emancipation. This survey will take us from Saint-Domingue to the Lesser Antilles to Coastal Venezuela and, finally, to Cuba.

'Seizing the Way Forward to Earn a Profit'

The sugar boom in Saint-Domingue was an eighteenth-century phenomenon. Yet the construction of the plantation regime there followed the model and path pioneered in Barbados, though at a much slower pace and with some noticeable deviations. Indeed, as it circulated through formal and informal channels across the Caribbean basin and beyond, the Barbadian plantation model underwent an evolution from its original version, adapting itself to the local circumstances where it was implanted.[7]

In the 1660s, measures to promote tobacco planting had been adopted by Governor d'Ogeron in order to settle down buccaneers on the land and attract farmers and *engagés* to the colony. Although some tobacco plantations were established, buccaneering

[7] On the dissemination of the Barbadian plantation model, see Jack P. Greene, "Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 88, no. 4 (Oct., 1987), 192-210.

remained the main economic activity in Saint-Domingue up to the 1680s. A severe slump in the tobacco markets starting in late 1670s caused an already thin group of farmers to abandon their plantations for the ranks of the *Frères de la Côte*. However, plying the seas proved to be a temporary occupation for most of them. In the early 1690s, at the peak of the sugar boom, some buccaneers reinvested much of their booty to purchase land, slaves, boilers, tools, and draft animals in order to build sugar plantations in the colony's northern region around Cap Français.[8] This highlights the inner ambivalence of the 'custom of the coast', which could as much inform the manners and codes of golden age piracy, as we saw in Chapter 5, as to serve as a primary means of accumulation for setting up slave-plantations.

With 27,000 square kilometers of virgin, highly fertile soils, the colony was an ideal environment for the cane plant. In 1700, three years after the official colonial claim to the territory, there were already 18 sugar plantations (*sucreries*) there, and 35 a year later.[9] The majority of those settling buccaneers, however, opted for indigo production instead, which required a little less capital outlay than sugar while promising substantial returns. Sounding the collapse of tobacco, the indigo stage paved the way to the transition to sugar in Saint-Domingue. By the first decade of the eighteenth century there were nearly 1,200 *indigoteries* in operation in the colony, compared to 138 *sucreries*.[10] In the same process which had begun in Barbados during the 1640s, the growth of indigo production was accompanied by a growing pressure on land property caused by a ramping-up of concentration of capital in landholding by which smaller farm lands were aggregated into

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[8] Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), p. 31.

[9] Philip Boucher, *France and the American Tropics to 1700: Tropics of Discontent?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 241.

[10] Paul Butel, *Histoire Des Antilles Françaises: XVIIe-XXe Siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), p. 108.

larger estates (*habitations*) in the most arable areas. This led a priest to declare in 1690 that 'only rich planters can earn a living, because they have the money to cultivate indigo'.[11] The completion of the transition to sugar—not until the 1730s—contributed to amplify vigorously this early process of concentration of capital.

While literally building the colony's plantation system from the ground up, Saint-Domingue planters had the possibility to draw upon past experience and from it, as one of them put it, 'seizing the way forward to earn a profit'.[12] At that moment, the colonies of Martinique and, to a lesser extent, Guadeloupe had already gone through their own sugar boom. The first, for instance, had nearly two hundred sugar plantations in the 1690s, half of them already integrated with a sugar mill.[13] With the English invasions in the Lesser French Antilles in the 1680s-90s, many planters and their *engagés* migrated to the burgeoning Saint-Domingue, bringing along with them their experience and techniques of production, which they, too, had inherited from the Dutch immigrants a few decades before. As Richard Pares pointed out, however, 'it was beginning to be thought by 1700 that every planter must have a mill and a boiling house of his own'.[14] The integrated sugar production model seems to have informed the early construction of Saint-Domingue's plantation system.

Furthermore, Saint-Domingue planters, contrary to their Barbadian counterparts, manoeuvred from the outset within an already, legally-codified labour environment. The idea that enslaving Africans was the best option for planters to obtain field hands and

[11] Cited in Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue*, pp. 125-26.
[12] Jean-Baptiste Poyen de Saint-Marie, *De l'exploitation des sucreries, ou conseils d'un vieux planteur aux jeunes agriculteurs des colonies* (Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe: Villette, 1792), p. iv.
[13] Boucher, *France and the American Tropics to 1700*, p. 243; Clarence J. Munford, *The Black Ordeal of Slavery and Slave Trading in the French West Indies, 1625-1715*, Vol. 2: *The Middle Passage and the Plantation Economy* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), p. 517.
[14] Richard Pares, "Merchants and Planters," *Economic History Review* Supplement no. 4 (1960), p. 25.

extract production was well internalized at that time. In 1680, for instance, slaves already outnumbered whites by 5,257 to 3,670 in Guadeloupe.[15] Five years later, in order to deal with this disequilibrium and consolidate existing island laws and customs relative to black racial slavery into one single piece of legislation, the infamous *Code Noir* was promulgated throughout the French empire.[16] Thus, unlike Barbados and earlier French islands, the plantation system in Saint-Domingue started out directly with black racial slavery as its main labour basis. While whites had outnumbered African slaves there 4,386 to 2,939 in the 1680s, two decades later the tendency had completely reversed course, for the latter now outnumbered the former 9,082 to 4,560.[17]

The shift to black racial slavery in the French Antilles, however, did not eliminate the *système d'engagement* but conferred a new character to it. Contrasting with the early years of the system in the tropics, where its concomitance with slave labour had practically turned it into 'a different kind of slavery', as one Guadeloupian contemporary put it, *engagé* labour was by the end of the seventeenth century viewed primarily as a source of skilled workers for the sugar or indigo works or for artisanal and supervisory functions on plantations.[18] The construction of the plantation system in Saint-Domingue captured and expanded this transformation of *engagement*. Indeed, the numbers of annual departures of *engagés* for the colony remained relatively steady up to the French Revolution.[19] Between 1713 and 1787, for instance, 30,000 *engagés* were delivered to the

[15] Boucher, *France and the American Tropics to 1700*, p. 230.
[16] The Code is reprinted in full in Lucien Pierre Peytraud, *L'Esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1897), pp. 156-58.
[17] Boucher, *France and the American Tropics to 1700*, p. 230.
[18] Cited in Debien, *Les engagés pour les Antilles*, p. 208.
[19] Ibid., p. 253-54.

French Antilles, of whom eight out of ten arrived at Saint-Domingue.[20] Enslaved Africans, as we shall see shortly, were simply imported at a much faster and higher rate. By the 1720s, with slaves increasingly taking over their positions, *engagés* disappeared from plantations, moving into urban trades instead, while others took their chance as small farmers hoping to become *habitant-planteurs*.[21]

Because Saint-Domingue was a vast, poorly-settled colony, where land titles were loosely regulated at first, small farmers and cultivators, among them many ex-*engagés*, could find a niche in society. Lacking the capital necessary to become neither *habitants-indigotiers* nor *habitants-sucriers*—the *grand blanc* class in the making—small farmers and cultivators settled as *habitants-vivriers*, forming *matelotage* associations and agglomerating their plots around indigo and sugar plantations, which they supplied with foodstuff, at least for some time before the triumph of sugar would cause their expropriation.[22] Still, the shift to sugar would not entirely expel them from the colony, but pushed them further upon mountainous rugged terrains, where coffee production would break in later in the 1760s. The 'coffee revolution', as one contemporary called it, provided some of them—along with many freed men of colour (*gens de couleur*)—with an economic opportunity to rise up to the rank of *habitant*, for starting a *caféière* entailed considerably less initial and running capital than what was necessary for its indigo or sugar counterpart.[23] In short, these topographical, economic, and demographic conditions

[20] Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises*, p. 118.
[21] Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, p. 119.
[22] Ibid, pp. 233, 259 and Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue*, p. 127.
[23] Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l'état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Grangé, 1776), p. 80.; Michel Rolph Trouillot has estimated that a coffee plantation may have been to function and propser with one-sixth or less of the initial capital required for a sugar plantation, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Motion in the System: Coffee, Color, and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," *Review* 3 (Winter, 1982), p. 348.

created a situation where small cultivators and *petits blancs*—among them overseers and estate managers, small-time merchants, unemployed wanderers—would always inhabit the social-political landscape in Saint-Domingue, at least until slaves decided otherwise.

In 1701, according to Father Labat, the transition to sugar production was well under way in the northern part of Saint-Domingue.[24] Yet the shift at the level of the colony would never reach the stage of monoculture as in Barbados. In fact, plantation agriculture remained fairly diversified up to the slave uprising, constantly adapting to market conditions and prices in Europe, first with indigo and sugar, and later with coffee and cotton, all in relative concomitance. While appropriating most of the colony's cultivated surface than other crops, the Saint-Dominguan transition to sugar was only one, yet dominant, segment in a broader shift to an export-oriented, slave-plantation regime. For instance, the number of *indigoteries* continued to rise from 1,182 in 1713 to 2,744 in 1730, and reached 3,445 by 1739.[25] During the same period, by contrast, the number of *sucreries* rose from 20 to 350.[26]

The gradual, indeed hesitant, progression of sugar production in Saint-Domingue was hampered by three main obstacles: access to credit, access to slaves, and access to well-watered, good-quality land. The last challenge was the first to be overcome. A massive program of building irrigation canals in uncharted zones was undertaken in the 1740s, opening up 100,000 acres of new arable lands ready to be planted in cane.[27] Creating an incentive environment for investments, these schemes prompted a second wave in the

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[24] Cited in Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises*, p. 108.
[25] Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London & New York: Verso, 1997), p. 433.
[26] Watts, *The West Indies*, pp. 297-99.
[27] Ibid., p. 299.

transition to sugar, driven this time around by the agency of French merchant houses, as well as a plethora of individual *négociants* (large-scale wholesalers) and bankers, who advanced the capital necessary for it. Their investments in the plantation economy marked the beginning of Saint-Domingue's 'golden age' that would soon turn it into the most valuable colony in the world.[28]

Akin to the Barbadian path of sugar production, French merchants investing in Saint-Domingue plantations, most of whom tied to the rising maritime bourgeoisie of Atlantic France, desired to take formal command of production, whether directly by becoming planters themselves, or indirectly through the intermediary of a local partner. It appears that most *négociants*, especially from La Rochelle and the Dauphiné region, who invested in sugar during this period, chose overwhelmingly to settle as *planteurs* at one time or another.[29] However, moving to Saint-Domingue did not mean leaving former businesses behind. Indeed, most *négociants* amalgamated with planting the branches of industry and trade in which they had made their fortune. The Dolle and Raby merchant families, for instance, used their experience in the business of *toile* (linen cloth) to dress their slaves at cheaper cost.[30] Large merchant houses, on the other hand, operated first as money lenders. However, the draconian terms of their long-term credit arrangements with local planters ultimately made them in positions of virtual ownership. The Bordeaux-based firm Romberg, Bapst et Cie is a case in point here—one that offers a window into the

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[28] Charles Frostin, "Histoire de l'autonomisme colon de la Partie de St. Domingue aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. Contribution à l'étude du sentiment américain d'indépendance" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Université de Lille III), p. 507.

[29] See Gaston Martin, *Histoire de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1948), p. 31; Pierre Léon, *Marchands et spéculateurs dauphinois dans le monde antillais au XVIIIe: les Dolle et Les Raby* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1963); Brice Martinetti, *Les négociants de la Rochelle au XVIIIe siècle* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013), pp. 350-61.

[30] Léon, *Marchands dauphinois aux Antilles*, p. 47.

peculiarities of the process of formal subsumption of plantation unfree labour under capital in Saint-Domingue.

By the 1780s, the firm had contracted loans to nearly sixty planters in the colony, most of whom were largely in default of payments, amounting to the value of the property in several cases. But debt was not a cause of concern to planters, because foreclosure was practically impossible due to local customs of property rights. However far the planters fell behind in payments, there were no legal means to seize their plantations, their land, or their slaves. Saint-Domingue—like Guadeloupe and Martinique—was 'a debtor's paradise'.[31] Consequently, the firm had no choice but to reinvest more capital in those indebted plantations in order to hope to make a profit. Reinvestment was cheaper than losing an extraordinary source of revenue. New credit arrangements were made with planters whereby the firm agreed to pay off debts in exchange of taking full control over the organization and operation of the plantations, hence turning planters into salaried administrators and overseers. In this way, Romberg, Bapst et Cie came to own and manage 16 *sucreries*, 31 *indigoteries* and 16 *caféières* in Saint-Domingue by the end of the Ancien Régime, which meant that, at that moment, the firm employed a workforce comprising about one thousand plantation-slaves in the colony, two hundred merchant sailors manning her fleet, and perhaps as many textile workers in her North European manufactures.[32]

In a similar fashion, two great slaving companies established at Nantes in 1748, the Société d'Angole and the Société de Guinée, which had advanced capital to many Saint-

[31] Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 86.
[32] Françoise Thésée, *Négociants bordelais et colons de Saint-Domingue: liaisons d'habitations, la maison Henry Romberg, Bapst et Cie, 1783-1793* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 1972), p. 47.

Domingue sugar planters, found themselves in the position of having to take over troubled plantations, thus becoming concurrently plantation owners and buyer of slaves, as well as a suppliers of slaves and shippers of colonial raw material.[33] Together, merchants of Nantes had holdings of almost 80 million *livres* in the French Antilles by the late 1780s.[34] On the eve of the revolution, most sugar plantations in Saint-Domingue were owned and managed by metropolitan merchant houses or slaving companies, and sometimes jointly by both organizations.[35] The others were operated from France by individual absentee owners.

Propelled by French merchant capital, the growth the slave-plantation system in Saint-Domingue was in symbiosis with the growth of the French slave trade. In the 1740s, royally chartered companies had practically faded away from view, leaving the slave trade opened to individual merchants who quickly seized the profit opportunity to be made out of fulfilling the enormous labour needs of an expanding slave economy in Saint-Domingue. Nantes slavers led the way, accounting for between 55 and 72 percent of all French slave-trading voyages until the last decade of the eighteenth century.[36] Consequently, to the 4,110 enslaved Africans delivered annually to the French Antilles between in 1713-15, figures increased to 15,828 between 1737-43, and reached 37,000 in 1783-92, more than thrice what Jamaica received during this period.[37] In the twelve years after 1780, 370,000 slaves were delivered to France's Antillean plantations, almost all of

[33] Robert Louis Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), pp. 146-50.
[34] Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World*, p. 86.
[35] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass. London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 20.
[36] Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 179.
[37] Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, p. 88.

them shipped to Saint-Domingue, whose majority were absorbed into the striving coffee plantation zones, where one-third of the slaves lived in units comparable in size to most sugar estates.[38] A year before the uprising, nearly 48,000 enslaved Africans disembarked in the colony, where the total slave population amounted to roughly 500,000, more than two-third of whom born in Africa. As one historian has observed, 'eighteenth-century African culture was not surviving' in pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue: 'It was arriving'.[39] This signals that the revolution that was about to break out was in many ways an 'African' revolution set in an American context, although, as we shall see below, it originated in the part of the colony where locally born slaves were at their most numerous.

In 1789, there were more than 7,000 plantations in Saint-Domingue, over 3,000 in indigo, 2,500 in coffee, close to 800 in cotton, and some fifty-odd in cocoa.[40] But what really drove the colony to the status of 'pearl of the Antilles' was its 800 sugar plantations, with 314 in the West Province, 288 in the North, and 198 in the South, producing altogether nearly 200,000,000 pounds of sugar per year during this decade.[41] With workforce sizes averaging 200 slaves, Saint-Dominguan sugar plantations had among the largest slave gangs (*ateliers*) in the Americas, comparable to those of Jamaican sugar plantations, but much larger than those in Brazil or anywhere else in the

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[38] Stein, The French Slave Trade, p. 211; David Patrick Geggus, "Sugar and Coffee Cultivation in Saint-Domingue and the Shaping of the Slave Labor Force," in *Cultivation and Cultivation: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, eds. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1993), p. 76; David Patrick Geggus, "Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, eds. David Patrick Geggus and Normand Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 7.
[39] Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, p. 320.
[40] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 22.
[41] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, p. 433; Stein, *French Sugar Business*, pp. 42, 166.

Caribbean.[42] This brought them 'closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time', as James argued.[43] Furthermore, indicative of the scope of capitalist development there, more than half of the sugar plantations were by then integrated with their own refining facilities on site, which not only allowed planters to produce more sugar by-products, such as rum and molasses, without scarifying sugar output, but also to save on freight costs as refined sugar was much less bulky than raw muscovado.[44] According to Robert Stein, 'the plantation and the refinery exemplified the new forms of industrial organization being developed on the eve of the industrial revolution'.[45]

Indeed, as I began to mention in the preceding chapter, slave-plantations were not immune from the technological innovations of the time. One of them was the water-driven mill, which began to multiply in the colony in the 1780s, replacing mule- and oxen-driven mills.[46] Another invention of importance was the *doubleuse* or 'trash-returner', a curve metal plate installed along one side of the mill rollers to guide '*bagasse*'—the fibrous matter that remains after sugarcanes are crushed to extract their juice—out of the first set of rollers, so that a cleaner cane would return through the other set of rollers for a second crushing without human intervention, hence reducing risk of accident. Indicative of the planters' drive to increase labour productivity and, therefore, the amount of relative surplus-value, the *doubleuse*, according to its inventor, sought to accomplish 'a great economy of time & of means in the manufacture of raw sugar ... [by

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[42] Geggus, "Sugar and Coffee in Saint-Domingue", pp. 73-74. See also Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises,* chap. 8.
[43] James, *The Black Jacobins*, pp. 85-6.
[44] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, p. 433.
[45] Stein, *French Sugar Business*, p. 167.
[46] Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles*, p. 167; Pierre Léon, *Marchands et spéculateurs dauphinois dans le monde antillais au XVIIIe siècle*, pp. 76-77.

requiring] less blacks [*Nègres*] whose precious time can be put back to agricultural service'.[47] Its use, however, seems to have been somewhat limited, as least in the British Caribbean, where planters appear to have preferred continuing using slave hands instead.[48]

Production costs appear to have become much lower in Saint-Domingue than anywhere else within the region during the decade up to the slave uprising.[49] As Natacha Bonnet has demonstrated, however, this had less to do with technological improvements than to the deadly regime of gang-labour imposed on slaves by planters and overseers at that time. From the 1760s onward, as her study shows, planters had clearly decided to renew their workforce almost exclusively via the purchase of new slaves instead of providing those on plantations with adequate subsistence or enough time to produce it. Two years before the slave uprising, this method was still 'the most profitable', according to one planter.[50] As a result, on four typical sugar plantations during this period, nearly 50% of African slaves died within eight years after importation.[51] Estimates by historian Pierre Pluchon produce a similar score, while additionally indicating that more than one-third of new enslaved Africans delivered to Saint-Dominguan sugar plantations at that time did not survive more than two years of *atelier* labour.[52] These figures, along with the

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[47] Jacques-François Dutrône de La Couture, *Précis sur la canne et sur les moyens d'en extraire le sel essentiel* (Paris: Chez Duplain et al., 1790), pp. xiv-xv.
[48] Watts, *The West Indies*, pp. 420-21.
[49] Ibid., p. 299.
[50] Benjamin-Sigismond Frossard, *La cause des esclaves nègres et des habitans de la Guinée portée au tribunal de la justice, de la religion, de la politique: ou histoire de la traite & de l'esclavage des nègres, preuves de leur illégitimité, moyens de les abolir sans nuire ni aux colonies ni aux colons*, Vol. 1 (Lyon: De l'imprimerie d'Aimé de La Roche, 1789), p. 353.
[51] Natacha Bonnet, "L'organisation du travail servile sur la sucrerie domingoise au XVIIIe siècle," in *L'esclavage et les plantations: de l'établissement de la servitude à son abolition. Un hommage à Pierre Pluchon*, ed. Philippe Hrodej (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2008), p. 151.
[52] See his Introduction to Alexandre-Stanislas de Wimpffen, *Haïti au XVIIIe siècle; richesse et esclavage dans une colonie française*, ed. Pierre Pluchon (Paris: Karthala, 1993), p. 28.

demands exerted on the slave trade by the kick-off of coffee production, doubtless account for the astronomic numbers of slaves delivered to the colony up to the revolt. It was necessary for planters and their managers to purchase more than ten slaves—sometimes more than twenty—per year simply to keep the workforce up to strength.

More than fifteen years in advance, one contemporary foresaw the threatening contradiction of the deadly practices of exploitation on plantations, intimating that since 'three-quarters of the masters do not feed their slaves and rob almost all of them of the time provided them ... sooner or later these unfortunates will be driven to the horrors of desperation'.[53]

'We Are Sitting on a Powder Keg'

In 1784, social conditions on plantations had reached a point where the French Crown found it necessary to re-impose by royal ordinance the provisions of the *Code Noir* concerning hours of work, food allotments for slaves, restrictions on punishments, and establishing minimal controls over the inhumanity of overseers, especially by opening the door to the admission of slave testimonies in case of mistreatment. This intervention from the metropolitan government into plantation business provoked great tumults in Saint-Domingue, including protests in front of the Ministers of Marine. One military officer at Le Cap called it an 'attack to the sacred rights of property'.[54] A planter and victualler from Le Havre went further, declaring that, as a result of the ordinance, 'the whole bond of obedience is broken ... Accepting arraignments from the blacks [*nègres*] is to open the

[53] Cited in Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 33.
[54] Cited in Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, p. 486.

door to revolt, it is to arm them against the whites'.[55] Perhaps more than ever, white planters and *petits blancs* alike began to believe correctly that it was only a question of time before a slave revolt would occur. 'We are sitting on a powder keg', one alarmingly wrote.[56]

In fact, some *ateliers* appear to have been galvanized by the news of the royal ordinance. Some of them even rose up around it, especially in places where overseers and planters had refused to abide to the new provisions, which, in some instances, resulted in their assassinations.[57] Indeed, because it was interpreted as an intervention from afar in the favour of slaves, the ordinance indirectly established the King of France as a virtual transatlantic ally to their cause on plantations. It might offer one explanation for the compound royalist ideology that the slave insurgents would adroitly deploy in 1791, as we shall see shortly.

Though marginal, sporadic, and short-lived, the burst of *atelier* militancy in the aftermath of the royal ordinance was nonetheless in continuation with a relatively sustained momentum of grassroots resistance on Saint-Dominguan plantations, whose last culminating point went back to the 1757 Makandal conspiracy—'the only hint of an organised attempt at revolt during the hundred years preceding the French Revolution'.[58] The period between 1778 and 1783 was marked by an abrupt resurgence of marronage in the colony.[59] There are even some indications that the momentum may have persisted beyond that period. One Swiss visitor to the colony in 1785, for instance, commented that

[55] Ibid., p. 487.
[56] Ibid., p. 486.
[57] Ibid., p. 487; Geggus, "Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution", in D. Geggus and N. Fiering, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, p. 12.
[58] James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 21. See also Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, chap. 2.
[59] Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, p. 443.

‘nothing is more common than plots of marronage in the best *ateliers*’.[60] The same year, another observer reported, surely with some exaggeration, that ‘the number of maroons increases each day and even more their audacity’.[61] In Port-au-Prince, he continued, some of them ‘try to set some districts of the city on fire’.[62] In May 1786, two slave runaways, one *mulâtre* named Jérôme *dit* Poteau and a black man named Télémaque, had organized secret nocturnal meetings in the North Province, the heartland of the revolt that would break out five years later. Some of them were attended by apparently two hundred slaves. Religious rituals were performed and fetishes distributed.[63] According to one contemporary observer relating the event, ‘they all preached independence’, but this should be understood, as it has been pointed out, more in the sense of an individual self-assertion of liberty than the ‘political’ independence of slaves.[64] If these cases really involved marronage practices as contemporaries maintained, there are good reasons to believe, however, that they were not attempts at *grand* but at *petit* marronage.

By 1785, grand marronage—collective breakouts of slaves establishing or joining geographically implanted groupings, as briefly studied in Chapter 3—had already become a thing of the past.[65] That year, the colony’s longest-lived maroon community, Le Maniel, which was located in the frontier zone with Santo Domingo, left its mountain

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[60] Justin Girod-Chantrans, *Voyage d’un Suisse dans différentes colonies d’Amérique pendant la dernière guerre* (Neuchatel: De l'imprimerie de la Société typographique, 1785), pp. 161-62.
[61] Maurice Begouën Demeaux, *Mémorial d’une famille du Havre. Stanislas Foäche, 1737-1806: Négociant de Saint-Domingue*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions Larose, 1951), p. 110.
[62] Ibid., p. 111.
[63] Jean Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté* (Paris: Éditions de l’École, 1972), pp. 521-23.
[64] Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'Isle Saint-Domingue*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Société de l'histoire des colonies françaises, 1958 [1797]), pp. 275-76; Gabriel Debien, "Assemblées nocturnes d’esclaves à Saint-Domingue (la Marmelade, 1786)," *Annales Historiques De La Révolution Française* 44, no. 208 (Avril-Juin, 1972), 273-284; David P. Geggus, "Haitian Voodoo in the Eighteenth Century: Language, Culture, Resistance," *Jahrbuch Für Geschichte Von Staat, Wirtschaf Und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 28 (1991), p. 46.
[65] Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, p. 442.

stronghold to the small plots of land granted by the colonial administration, with whom the maroons had signed a peace treaty providing for the capture and return of runaways.[66] In fact, from the beginning of the eighteenth century up to the cooptation of Le Maniel, maroons in Saint-Domingue, as elsewhere in the French Antilles, had been systematically hunted down by campaigns of militia and *maréchaussée* corps (rural police forces), which greatly contributed to reduce their strength and, in many cases, to wipe out their communities.[67] Meanwhile, other factors had evolved into those unpropitious to grand marronage. By the time Le Maniel was dismantled, the mountainous zones of freedom where maroon activity had traditionally flourished had considerably shrunk to make room for coffee production. Moreover, the integration of *gens de couleur*—who amounted to nearly 30,000 in 1789—in the colonial *maréchaussée* guaranteed strong effective to police the slave population. In the 1770s, new chains of posts were stationed nearby the *caféières* of Cul-de-Sac and in other regions, so as to contain the newly-imported slaves on plantations.[68] These conditions, in short, may have contributed to deter the practice of grand marronage in the second half of the eighteenth century.[69] Such reduction of autonomous spaces of freedom in the colony, it has been suggested, may account in part for the outright rebellion of 1791, which, from the standpoint of the slave insurgents, might have been an alternative path to freedom.[70]

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[66] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 51-52, 55.
[67] Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, pp. 417-20.
[68] Ibid., p. 420.
[69] We must not exclude, however, that slaves could still have run away permanently to neighboring Santo Domingo or even to other nearby islands, which was common in the Caribbean. See Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789*, pp. 355-59 and Debien, "Le marronage aux Antilles Françaises au XVIIIe siècle", pp. 28-31.
[70] Geggus, "Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution", in Geggus and Fierning, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, p. 5.

At the same time, conditions emerged in Saint-Domingue for petit marronage—slaves absconding for short period of time—to flourish in its turn. According to Debien, this form of small-scale temporary absconding became a familiar aspect of plantation life in the colony after 1770s, that is to say, once grand marronage had ceased to be a serious challenge to the social order.[71] This is confirmed by the new colonial governor who reported in 1787 that grand marronage had been decreasing for three years, and that the great majority of cases were now short term and local.[72] While there were always some wooded areas in which to hide at the hedge of plantations, what certainly allowed petit marronage to arise in Saint-Domingue was the increased population density, most especially in the sugarcane and urban zones.[73] With a slave-master ratio of between 300 and 400 to 4 or 5 on the plantations and of 17 to 1 in the entire colony in 1789, temporary absentees could easily disappear within the huge black masses, either in town or in a sheltering slave quarter.[74] Already in mid-eighteenth century, one contemporary noted how practically impossible it had become to distinguish among the free blacks and the runaways in towns, especially since the latter had a 'too easy' access to counterfeit passes produced by slaves who could write.[75] *Cabarets*, in particular, were known as 'the common receptacles of maroon slaves [*nègres*], who find in their attics a retreat from the

[71] Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, p. 442. After all, article 38 of the *Code Noir* indirectly conceded that *petit marronage* was somewhat integral to the slave system, providing that flights were punishable by law at the moment it extended thirty days after official report by masters, hence leaving punishments to shorter cases to their discretion. See Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789*, p. 163.
[72] David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 71.
[73] Geggus, "Sugar and Coffee Cultivation in Saint-Domingue", in I. Berlin and P. Morgan, eds., *Cultivation and Culture*, pp. 77-78.
[74] Leslie F. Manigat, "The Relationship between Marronage and Slave Revolts and Revolution in St. Domingue-Haiti," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 292 (1977), p. 427.
[75] Cited in Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, p. 28.

prosecution of their masters'.[76] Furthermore, masters appear to have held a relatively tolerant attitude vis-à-vis individual cases of slave escapes, in particular when return was fast and voluntary, which did not mean, however, that it went unpunished but that punishment was adapted to circumstances.[77] This was especially true for skilled slaves who were more likely to be pardoned and even rewarded for returning voluntarily than to be punished for absenteeism.[78]

Motivations of petit marronage were varied and complex, ranging from increasing one's personal free time for independent work outside plantation, visiting a family member, a lover or a friend elsewhere in the colony, or for attending cultural activities, such as celebrations or funerals, to simply escaping work discipline, subsistence standard, sadistic punishment or quarrels in the slave quarter. In the first set of cases, petit marronage was conducive to the creation of an underground network of slave sociability and mutual-aid that could transcend several plantations. What appears to have further encouraged this development in Saint-Domingue was the interdiction for slaves, in the interests of security, to hold open religious gatherings, which were simply moved into the darkness.[79] Describing the colony on the eve of the slave revolution, French island-born lawyer and magistrate Moreau de Saint-Méry reported the existence of several secret societies, such as '*Chica*', '*Calenda*', and '*Don Pèdre*', each organized along loosely defined ethnic lines.[80] The most important, he claimed, was '*Vaudoux*'—a 'society' of

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[76] Yvan Debbasch, "Le Marronage: Essai Sur La Désertion De L'Esclave Antillais," *Année Sociologique* 3 (1961), p. 80, citing a primary source.
[77] Debien, "Le Marronage aux Antilles françaises au XVIIIe siècle", pp. 13-22.
[78] Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making the Atlantic World*, pp. 276-7.
[79] Debien, "Assemblées nocturnes d'esclaves à Saint-Domingue", p. 274; Pierre Pluchon, *Vaudou, sorciers, empoisonneurs. De Saint-Domingue à Haïti* (Paris: Karthala, 1987), pp. 29-49.; John K. Thornton, "Les racines du Vaudou. Religion africaine et société haïtienne dans la Saint-Domingue prérévolutionnaire," *Anthropologie Et Sociétés* 22, no. 1 (1998), p. 92.
[80] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique*, vol. 1, pp. 63-4, 69.

original Rada influence (Aja-Fon ethnic group from the Bight of Benin) that may have served as the launching pad of the 1791 uprising, as I will discuss shortly.[81] Interestingly, Moreau distinguished between the 'official' assemblies of the 'real' Vodou, that is to say, between those held at night in locations kept secret from the whites, and 'informal' assemblies for altered versions of the religious rites performed 'in public', often preceded by a meal 'in order to lessen alarms'.[82] As these meetings could gather slaves from several neighboring plantations, it is most probable, although evidence is obviously non-existent, that petit marronage was used to attend at least the 'real' ones.[83] According to James, 'the slaves travelled miles to sing and dance the rites and talk'.[84] In both instances, though under different display, an elected Vodou 'king' and 'queen' presided over ceremonies, administered rites, and communicated with spirits.[85] In this sense, as John Thornton has suggested, these secret societies may have operated as 'shadow governments' (Moreau viewed them as informal 'schools'[86]), whose antennas across several plantations made them particularly capable of becoming primary organizing units for a multitude of different enterprises, including revolt—a claim that the 1791 insurrection seems to confirm in retrospect, as there are some indications (to be discussed below) that the rebel war-bands may have, in part, grown out these very subterranean ethnic-based societies, at least at the initial stage in the North.[87]

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[81] Ibid., p. 65.
[82] Ibid., pp. 65, 68.
[83] Moreau identified the savannah nearby the La Fossette plantation at Le Cap as a place 'away from all eyes … [where] the slaves held their dances'. See *Description de la partie française de l'Isle de Saint-Domingue*, vol. 2, pp. 543-44. For the nocturnal comings and goings of slaves, see Debien, "Assemblées nocturnes d'esclaves à Saint-Domingue", pp. 273-84.
[84] James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 86. See also Debien, "Assemblées noctures", p. 280.
[85] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique*, vol. 1, pp. 64-5.
[86] Ibid., p. 68.
[87] Thornton, "African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution", pp. 200-01.

With regards to the other set of causes, petit marronage was also a practical means that slaves had to address grievances on plantations by withholding their labour temporarily in order to negotiate better work conditions. This has led several scholars to argue that, when used as such, petit marronage was closer to an early form of individual labour bargaining than an attempt at liberty.[88] Such motive may well have been the reason why most runaways stayed hidden closer to or even within their plantation. In this way, they could keep contact with a mediator on site—most often the slave-driver—who could, in turn, negotiate the terms of return.[89] Furthermore, when protest against the conditions of work became collective petit marronage was akin to a strike, hence becoming what Yvan Debbasch called 'strike-marronage'.[90] In such cases, a large section if not the whole *atelier* was mobilized into one common action of work stoppage, often under the leadership of a slave-driver or a skilled slave, which was followed by a group escape as a grievance procedure. One absentee planter from Saint-Domingue commented that collective work stoppage resulted from 'a desire to overthrow the manager or overseer'.[91] Because these actions required some level of collective coordination within the institution of the *atelier*, they necessarily entailed the formation of a culture of solidarity among complicit runaways. After all, they had to discuss what action had to be taken, as well as plan and organize a temporary camp outside the plantation, and for which they had to resort to already-existing petit marronage networks for subsistence and communication. As Mary Turner has argued, collective work stoppage 'constituted a political struggle to

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[88] Manigat, "The Relationship between Marronage and Slave Revolts", pp. 428-29; Turner, "Chattel Slaves into Wage Slaves", in M. Turner, ed., *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves*, pp. 33-47; Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, pp. 274-79. See also Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).
[89] This aspect is studied in Turner, "Chattel Slaves into Wage Slaves", in M. Turner, ed., *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves*, pp. 33-47.
[90] Debbasch, "Le Marronage", p . 29.
[91] Cited in ibid., p. 28.

establish the procedures necessary to express grievances and secure their resolution: to establish a customary right to the labour bargaining process'.[92] Under specific circumstances it could therefore become 'an opening to true political consciousness'.[93]

Thus, petit marronage already embodied *in embryo* an element of small-scale translocalism from below. In this way, as Hilary Beckles has argued for Barbados but which certainly applies to Saint-Domingue, 'most runaway slaves were concerned more with establishing reliable contacts on the various estates for food, shelter, information and social interaction, than with raising additional recruits who might, in fact, jeopardise their rather tenuous and uncomfortable "semi-freedom"'.[94] In addition to the authorized opportunities to meet—at Sunday markets, on the way to the provision grounds, at weekend festivities—slave runaways managed to carve out a space of temporary autonomy *from within* the system—a marronage turned inward so to speak, concealed from the purview of masters and overseers, but where we can only imagine that runaways wholly, albeit temporarily, reconnected with their own self-existence. In a rare testimony, one runaway slave who had just returned to his plantation told his master the following: 'It is not that I wish to go away, sir; it is only for the name and honour of being free'.[95] This brings to view the extent to which petit marronage was for slaves an act of resistance against the dehumanizing conditions of enslavement, one that in spite of being geographically limited and momentary nonetheless challenged the carefully crafted controls their masters moulded to regulate their lives.

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[92] Turner, "Introduction", in Turner, ed., *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves*, p. 3.
[93] Manigat, "Relationship between Marronage and Slave Revolts", p. 431.
[94] Beckles, "From Land to Sea", p. 83.
[95] Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of a West-India Proprietor Kept during a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (London: John Murray, 1834), p. 77.

Historians of revolutionary Saint-Domingue have long debated whether maroon activity increased prior to the revolt, and more precisely whether it contributed to launch it any direct way. This is not the place to intervene in this polemic. However, as Geggus has persuasively demonstrated, it seems clear that petit marronage at least persisted up to the revolution, with a proportion of reported runaways at any given time of about 1% of the slave population. In 1790, for instance, there were 2,652 reported runaways in Saint-Domingue, consisting of 0.5% of the entire slave population.[96] This slight decrease is probably due to the fact that planters and overseers had begun a year before to exert a tighter control over their slaves, worrying that the news of the French Revolution would inspire them to rise up.[97] Notwithstanding these small figures, it nonetheless appears that, by their very actions, a few bold runaway slaves managed, or at least were caught trying, to keep alive a spirit of resistance up to the revolution. In fact, there is some strong evidence for a case that the tradition of petit marronage, in particular that of marronage-strike militancy, may have intersected with the kick-off of the slave uprising in 1791.

To begin with, it is now accepted that at least two slaves had been fugitives prior to the revolutionary uprising. One was the coachman Jean-François who became one of the revolution's leaders, and who had been reported as 'a poor fugitive' for four years before

[96] David Patrick Geggus, "On the Eve of the Haitian Revolution: Slave Runaway in Saint-Domingue in the Year 1790," *Slavery & Abolition* 6, no. 3 (1985b), p. 117.
[97] Jacques de Cauna, *Au temps des isles à sucre: histoire d'une plantation de Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Karthala, 1987), pp. 199-200.

the revolt.[98] The other was a slave named François Dechaussée, who was identified as 'maroon' by the authorities, and who later took part in several attacks on plantations.[99]

Furthermore, two plantations in the immediate surroundings where the conspiracy had been elaborated by slaves experienced at least one marronage-strike action within less than two years prior to it. In 1789, on La Gossette plantation located on the Gallifet sugar estate—among the largest and wealthiest in the colony—20 slaves organized a collective work stoppage and fled into the woods for two months in order to have the manager replaced for bad treatments, but without success. A serious drought had hit the North Province that year, resulting in an increase of arrested runaways by 34%.[100] At La Gossette, conditions had badly deteriorated as slaves, reduced in numbers because of high mortality, were subjected to a harsher work regimen so as to swing the estate back to profit.[101] Less than twenty-four months later, not only do we know that there were slave delegates of that plantation present at the assemblies that planned the revolt, but also that they were those who, led by their *commandeur*, had prematurely launched it by attempting to kill their estate manager.[102] Whether or not these insurgents were the same who organized a marronage-strike a few months earlier remains unknown, but the probability is high.

Likewise, in July 1790, 9 slaves 'maroons for a long time' refused to return on one of Bréda estate's sugar plantations—where Toussaint Louverture worked as a coachman—

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[98] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, pp. 72-73; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 75. Fick also argues that Boukman, the famous Vodou priest, was also at large before the meeting at Bois Caïman, but this claim has been contested by Geggus, "Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Revolution", in D. Geggus and N. Fiering, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, p. 5.
[99] Geggus, "Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Revolution", p. 16n13; *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, pp. 73, 245n28.
[100] Geggus, "On the Eve of the Haitian Revolution", p. 123.
[101] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 94; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 252n38.
[102] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 98-99; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp. 93-94.

until the replacement of the manager.[103] They had escaped together after the latter had beaten a slave to death, joining a group of nearly 30 other *petits marrons* who had fled this plantation for the same reasons.[104] They finally all returned two months later after they had won their case and a new manager was put in place. According to David Geggus, marronage had been 'endemic' there; in fact, an earlier instance of marronage-strike occurred in 1774, when 25 slaves took to the woods as a protest to bring back the old estate manager who had been replaced by a harsher one.[105] It is unknown how many—if any—slaves from the Bréda plantations were involved in the elaboration of the revolutionary plot, and there is no evidence that Toussaint Louverture took active part in it either, although it is alleged that he was in close communication with the ringleaders.[106] But considering that the estate was located only a few kilometers northwest of where the last slave assembly occurred—the famous Bois-Caïman ceremony—and that the plantation at Plaine-du-Nord was squarely in the region where most slave delegates had been sent to the meeting, it seems very likely that if Bréda slaves were absent from the ceremony, some of them were surely aware of what was going on. Indeed, as soon as the August uprising in 1791 began, 20 of them (out of 318) fled together to the rebel camp.[107] Marronage was now intertwined with the revolutionary process.

Although partial and fragmented, these cases bring to light the existence of an ongoing, persistent tradition of grassroots resistance on Saint-Domingue plantations on

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[103] Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, p. 458.
[104] Jean-Michel Deveau, "Le marronage dans les Antilles françaises au cours des années 1780-1790," in *Moreau de Saint-Méry ou les ambigüités d'un créole des Lumières.*, ed. Dominique Taffin (Fort-de-France: Société des Amis des archives et de la recherche sur le patrimoine culturel des Antilles, 2006), p. 107.
[105] Debbasch, "Le Marronage", p. 29.
[106] Geggus, *Revolutionary Haitian Studies*, p. 90; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 92, 95.
[107] Debbasch, "Le Marronage," p. 29; David Patrick Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 41.

the eve of the revolution—one that was maintained in the underworld of the slave quarter, possibly transmitted through generations via secret societies, and continued in the midst of the revolution. Contrary to what C.L.R. James claimed, it seems that a section of the Saint-Dominguan slaves, most especially those of the northern plains, were far from being 'asleep' in 1789, but was already self-activated as a class.[108] First, they had managed to create underground associations in which they could handle their class experience on plantations in ethnic and religious ways. Rooted in dynamics of locality and fraternal spiritual association, these wider webs of connections among slaves, in addition to the integrative dynamics of *atelier* labour, would also be important in shaping their politics of class in revolutionary Saint-Domingue, that is to say, their ability to rise up and challenge the white planters, to organize their movement politically and militarily, and to ground their self-emancipation into real cultural institutions. Second, they had engaged in small-scale escapades and strike actions. This petit marronage tradition, it is important to stress, would not 'cause' the outbreak of the revolution, and nor was it increasing in momentum. It simply subsisted, providing, at best, a training ground for actions that would take place if not in preparation of, at least during the revolution. As Robin Blackburn has argued, petit marronage produced 'a layer of slaves with outside knowledge, experience and contacts, yet a continuing presence within the plantations, a combination that could, under the right conditions, lead to plantation revolts'.[109] As we shall see, many *ateliers* that decided to join the 1791 August revolt did so by engaging in mass work stoppage followed by flight.

[108] James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 73.
[109] Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London & New York: Verso, 1988), p. 208n13.

The conditions for a revolt in Saint-Domingue emerged in France, where the spark that would light up the string to the colonial 'powder keg' was ignited, enflaming it all the way across the Atlantic to the colony, in spite of attempts to blow it out before full detonation.

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In August 1788, King Louis XVI called up the Estates General as a way to channelled and tempered growing popular unrest over matters of taxation and rising cost of living in the kingdom, advising them to prepare *cahiers de doléances* that would spell out their grievances and propose solutions. The strategy proved to be counterproductive, to say the least. Hitherto isolated and uncoordinated in its mob actions, the Third Estate—artisans, shopkeepers, peasants, middling professionals and tradesmen, and so on—was offered the opportunity to meet and discover itself as one interest bloc at a critical moment of political instability. The ensuing year was marked by an unseen level of political discussion and debates in workshops, on the streets, in salons, coffeehouses, and on paper.[110] The widening split between the privileged and the unprivileged was challenged from below in the language of equality, citizenship, and nation-ism. On 17 June 1789, after deliberations had reached an impasse at Versailles, the Third Estate proclaimed itself the 'National Assembly', moving forward with a project for a republican constitution that would destroy the feudal regime. This project was endorsed through a collective oath made at a nearby tennis court. In a desperate strategy of absolutist power, the King formed a new government made up entirely of Old Regime representatives, provoking even more popular animosity. Less than a month later, a crowd of a thousand

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[110] Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World*, p. 49.

people gathered in Paris and stormed the Bastille prison, a hated symbol of royal despotism. In the night of 4 August, privileges of birth (not of property) were officially abolished, leading up to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen three weeks later. The French Revolution had started, on its way to convert an absolutist monarchy into a republic.

Before long, these revolutionary events in the metropolitan heart of the French empire produced loud resonance in Saint-Domingue, destabilizing the pillars of the social order from all sides. Resident planters, merchants, *petits blancs*, *gens de couleurs*, and, ultimately, slaves—all social groups saw the Revolution as an opportunity to advance their own interest. For many resident planters and merchants, it was the occasion to reanimate and achieve a long-held aspiration at commercial and political autonomy against the restrictive imperial regulations of the *exclusif* system which required them to trade their products exclusively with France.[111] For *petits blancs*, the French Revolution was an opportunity to protest and fight against the social hierarchy that had kept marginalized, unemployed, and often landless in the colony. For *gens de couleur*, who were as numerous as whites in 1789 (28,000 and 31,000 respectively), it was an opportunity to struggle for political rights that would end decades of humiliating and restrictive local legislation.[112]

While localized agitation by *petits blancs* took place as soon as news of the fall the Bastille arrived in the colony—some celebrating by pillaging and setting fires in the

[111] On this tradition, see Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue* and *Histoire de l'autonomisme colon*.
[112] Laurent Dubois, "The Haitian Revolution," in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and its Peoples*, eds. Stephan Palmié and Francisco A. Scarano (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 277-78.

towns, others by creating and joining political clubs—the first battleground for the other two social forces was not Saint-Domingue but Paris. A colonial delegation representing the planter-merchant lobby had been sent to the Estates General in order to present their own *cahiers* of grievances. Rejected by both the royal bureaucracy of the First and the noblesse of the Second Estates, the colonial representatives found their last refuge in the newly-constituted National Assembly, from which they ultimately obtained the right to have six elected deputies. In doing so, however, the white colonial elite bound itself—indeed, literally since all of them took the tennis oath[113]—to the prime mover of what was about to become a full-blown revolution whose unfolding, by virtue of this alliance, could no longer be dissociated from Saint-Domingue's future. After all, underpinning the right to have political representatives laid a much more consequential principle, namely, that 'all men are born and remain free and equal in their rights'. Thus, under the initiative of the white resident section of the Saint-Dominguan ruling class, the French Revolution was now set on a path to become an 'Atlantic Revolution'.[114]

Meanwhile, a similar initiative was made in the metropolis by a delegation of *gens de couleur*—led by figures such as Julien Raymond and Vincent Ogé, both wealthy men with substantial holdings in land and slaves—who basically aspired at obtaining the same gain as their white counterparts. In spite of an astute utilization of the republican and egalitarian language and symbolism produced by the Revolution, and in spite of having a powerful ally in the Société des Amis des Noirs—a moderate abolitionist organization that mainly opposed the barbarities of the slave trade and not slavery itself—the *gens de couleur* failed to make headway in the National Assembly in Paris and obtain equal

[113] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 77.
[114] Laurent Dubois, "An Atlantic Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 32, no. 4 (Fall, 2009), 655-661.

rights. For a disabused and frustrated Vincent Ogé, it became clear in July 1790 that the only strategy left for the *gens de couleur* was to strike directly in the colony and seize power through an armed uprising. Ill-conceived and undermanned, the coup was defeated after a few engagements with white militias and soldiers. Ogé was finally captured and publicly executed at Le Cap, along with 20 other rebels. This created great chaos in the colony. For the first time in almost a century, the 'colours' had openly fought each other in Saint-Domingue, an antagonism that could only be further radicalized by an ongoing revolutionary process now stretching across the French Atlantic.

The enslaved had observed and carefully listened to these quarrels all this time. Indeed, as early as September 1789, only a few weeks after the storming of the Bastille, the colonial Intendant commented that the slaves knew 'the white slaves [in France] had killed their masters, and now freed, they governed themselves and enjoyed the fruits of the earth'.[115] A month later, the free-coloured François Raymond, who had stayed on his plantation, wrote to his brother in Paris that some slaves, after having heard that tricolour cockade stood for liberty and equality, had attempted to rise up at Le Cap, but were immediately put down and their leaders executed at the gibbet—'this appeased everything', he wrote.[116] This highlights that planters and colonial officials could not prevent slaves from hearing exterior news, for which the waterfront stood as a formidable conduit.

One 1802 account that looked back on the 1791 slave uprising, for instance, mentioned that French sailors in Saint-Domingue, 'fed on the burning slogans of the clubs, [and] friends of the constitution', had shared their enthusiasm of the revolution in

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[115] Cited in Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, p. 38. My translation.
[116] Cited in Pierre Pluchon, *Toussaint Louverture. De l'esclavage au pouvoir* (Paris: Fayart, 1989), p. 40.

France with their black enslaved co-workers at the port. 'Opportunities abounded' for such exchange of experience, the author writes, as 'they were always together; sometimes folding sugar and coffee in harbour; sometimes picking them up at the piers; and sometimes, more frequently, loading and unloading vessels. What a seething school of insurrection!'[117] Sailors also distributed tracts, pamphlets, and engravings authored by the Amis des Noirs, as well as some radical texts, such as Abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes* (1713-1796), which the author 'saw in the hands of a few blacks'.[118] Through the movement of slave transport workers whose labour connected the waterfront with the plantation, these ideas and materials made their way into the slave quarter, although they were altered along the way as the slaves reinterpreted them to fit their own frame of reference.[119] This brings into view the role of the waterfront as a vibrant cultural hub for revolutionary self-activity in the dark Atlantic.[120] This is something we must keep in mind for later in order to understand how processes of transboundary proletarian solidarity among distant slave rebels developed throughout the Caribbean and beyond during the age of revolutions.

By 1790, the slaves had clearly begun to understand that a significant fissure had been created within the colonial social order, which, from their standpoint, was enough of an opening to try their shot at its transformation. The failed Ogé insurrection had dramatically widened this fracture at the top, bringing the colony closer into a polarized

[117] Félix Carteaux, *Soirées bermudiennes, ou, entretiens sur les événemens qui ont opéré la ruine de la partie française de l'Isle Saint-Domingue* (Bordeaux: Pellier-Lawalle, 1802), p. 77.
[118] Ibid., p. 76.
[119] On slave transport workers connecting plantation with the wharves, see Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean*, pp. 174-75; 235-36.
[120] Linebaugh and Rediker have extensively developed on this theme in the *Many-Headed Hydra*. For other relevant accounts, see Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1968), 371-407 and Paul A. Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

atmosphere of civil war.[121] In May 1791, there was a 'general tumult' in the colony, one observer wrote.[122] A few months later, conscious of the breach, a group of enslaved conspirators decided to strike in their turn, launching what became the largest, and only successful, slave uprising in the history of the Americas.

'The Tree of Liberty of the Blacks'

The revolution breaks out in Saint-Domingue in August 1791, a few hours after a ceremony that has come to be known as Bois Caïman was held in the northern plain region. Although there has been some controversy about exactly when and where this event took place, not to mention about its content, the most careful and extensive examination of the evidence reveals that, in fact, two separate meetings were organized before the uprising.[123]

The original plans for rebellion were first discussed at 'a large dinner' on Sunday night, August 14th, on the Lenormand de Mézy estate in Plaine-du-Nord parish.[124] Local planters were aware of the event, as such social gatherings were commonly held on the way back from Le Cap's Sunday market.[125] There, 200 elite creole slaves gathered, most of them *commandeurs d'atelier* and coachmen—the most mobile layer of the enslaved. They were, as reported, 'delegates' from about 100 plantations—2 for each—in the

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[121] Jacques de Cauna, *Haïti: l'éternelle révolution. Histoire de sa décolonisation (1789-1804)* (Monein: Pyremonde/PRNG, 2009), pp. 125-27.
[122] Général Pamphile de Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti*, ed. présentée et annotée par Pierre Pluchon (Paris: Karthala, 1995 [1819]), p. 82.
[123] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, chap. 6.
[124] Ibid, p. 85, citing primary source.
[125] Ibid., p. 87. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 97.

central region of the northern plain.[126] Although it is difficult to prove beyond the persons of Jean-François and François Dechaussée that petit marronage provided the organizing structure for the meeting, it was nonetheless the outcome of 'a network of inter-plantation contacts'.[127]

The full extent of discussions is obscure, although we know from fragments of testimony that the political developments in France were on the agenda. One conspirator read a statement that the king and the National Assembly in Paris had apparently passed a decree abolishing use of the whip by masters and provided slaves with three free days a week instead of two, but that the local authorities were refusing to put it into effect.[128] It appears also, as one representative of the insurgents told the French authorities a few weeks after the meeting, that the conspirators believed the king was held prisoner by the whites in Paris because 'he had wanted to free the blacks, his faithful subjects'.[129] To complicate the matter, others declared that they had met prior to the revolt because 'they wanted to enjoy the liberty they are entitled to by the Rights of Man'.[130] At the heart of the conspiracy, therefore, lay a complex inventive process of political ideology that drew on a variety of ideals, motives, and rumours in order to give some kind of direction to an insurrectionary movement that was itself inherently variegated and complex, a point that will be developed shortly.

What the slave conspirators gathered at Lenormand concluded was that only an armed revolt could force the planters and the colonial authorities to abide to the reform intended

[126] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 91.
[127] Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, p. 40.
[128] Ibid., p. 98; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 91.
[129] de Lacroix, *La Révolution De Haïti*, p. 94.
[130] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 105, citing a primary source.

by the metropolitan powers. Some of them proposed to launch it immediately; others wanted to wait for the royalist troops, whom they estimated as potential allies, to land in the colony first. David Geggus estimates that the date of revolt was most likely fixed for the night of Wednesday, August 24th, that is, just a few hours before the Colonial Assembly was to resume in Le Cap on the 25th, which would have offered slave rebels, as in Antigua in 1735, with a unique opportunity to eliminate in one blow almost all Saint-Domingue's political elite.[131]

The elite slaves had drawn up a plan for revolt, but they could not stage it alone. They had to obtain the support of the rank and files. In order to do so, a second, perhaps even larger, meeting needed to be held. It appears, however, that unforeseen events following the Lenormand assembly had precipitated the organization of this second meeting. Two or three days after, the 16th or 17th, some slaves had been caught trying to set fire to a trash house on one sugar plantation in Acul parish. One *commandeur* was arrested, put into irons, and brought to the authorities. Upon questioning, he revealed details of the conspiracy and even named some of the other ringleaders. Investigation started, although the whites appear to have treated the threat as a local affair and seemed unaware of its general nature.[132] On the 20th, however, one slave whose name had been revealed by the arrested slave-driver was intercepted and put to questioning during which he finally confessed the whole plot elaborated at the Lenormand meeting. In the hours that followed, warnings were sent out to all parishes of the North Plain that an insurrection had been planned by the slaves. It was probably in view of these developments that a

[131] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 88.
[132] Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973), p. 47.

second meeting was hastily held by the conspirators, so as to launch the revolt before the masters could organize.[133]

As best we can tell, the meeting was called up on the following night, Sunday August 21th, in a thick logwood forest of Caïmittier trees—popularly called 'Caïman'—located on the Choiseul Plantation in Petite-Anse parish.[134] Evidence for this meeting—the so-called Bois-Caïman ceremony—is not very good, however, and it appears that, for different reasons, much fabrication has been made in its recounting, in particular by inserting retrospectively important actors in the revolution, most especially Boukman Dutty, one of its main leaders.[135] From what is known from primary accounts written closer to the event, the meeting was attended by 'a large number of blacks', where a pig was sacrificed, and whose blood served for the performance of a ritual oath allegiance among the conspirators.[136] At that time, 'Congos' made up sixty percent of the African-born slaves in the North Province, where both these meetings were held and where the rebellion was about to begin.[137] Elite slaves, therefore, may have addressed their plan to an overwhelmingly Kongolese audience, which was doubtless facilitated by the fact that, as Moreau de Saint-Méry noted, Kongolese slaves had some 'facility to speak creole'.[138] On this basis, then, 'it would not be surprising if Bois Caïman indeed was a Kongolese counterpart to the Creole-dominated Lenormand meeting of the previous Sunday'.[139] This

[133] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 95-6.
[134] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 86.
[135] See Ibid., pp. 81-92.
[136] Ibid., p. 85, citing a contemporary source.
[137] Geggus, "Sugar and Coffee Cultivation in Saint-Domingue", in I. Berlin and P. Morgan, eds., *Cultivation and Culture*, p. 81. See also Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, chap. 1.
[138] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'Isle de Saint-Domingue*, vol. 1, p. 53.
[139] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 91.

demographic feature makes the performance of a Vodou ceremony all the more relevant politically.

As it has been documented, and as I began to discuss in Chapter 3, Kongolese had a long history of religious syncretism that started with the integration of Christian elements within their own cosmological systems in the early colonial time.[140] In Saint-Domingue, they were later known to have organized secret societies around the petro cult or rite (what Moreau de Saint-Méry called the *Don Pèdre*), a variant of the Dahomean Vodou which suggests that their religious practices may have undergone another form of transformation in a colony once dominated by Africans from the Slave Coast. As Kongolese became more numerous over time, however, the Dahomean elements of Vodou appear to have been 'Kongoized' in their turn.[141] In his description of a Vodou initiation for which 'Rada slaves [*nègres*] ... maintain the principles and rules', Moreau de Saint-Méry referred to a chant that was sung in the Kikongo language by the participants in order to bring the neophyte into trance and integrate him or her afterwards into the society.[142] The chant was addressed to 'Bomba' (*Mbomba*), the Kongo deity, and asked for 'Canga' (*kanga*) or divine salvation, protection, and deliverance—an idiom that, as we have seen earlier, stretched back directly to the Antonian movement of Beatriz Kimpa Vita.[143] It was preceded by the pledge of a ritual oath of allegiance administered by the Vodou 'queen' and sealed with goat's blood so as to bind the new member to the

[140] For the Kongolese influence on Vodou, see John K. Thornton, "On the Trail of Voodoo: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas," *The Americas* 44, no. 3 (Jan., 1988), 261-278.
[141] Moreau mentioned that the ritual also incorporated some 'European ideas … for example, the scarf or the rich belt which the Queen wears in these assemblies, and which she sometimes varies'. See Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'Isle de Saint-Domingue*, vol. I, p. 65.
[142] Ibid., p. 67.
[143] This is how Moreau reported the chant: 'Eh! Eh! Bomba, hen! hen!/Canga bafio té/Canga moune dé lé/Cango do ki la/Canga li'. It has been translated by Thornton as follows: 'Eh! Eh! Mbomba [Rainbow] hen! hen!/Hold back the black men/Hold back the white man/Hold back that witch/Hold them'. Thornton, "African Ideology and the Haitian Revolution", p. 210.

utmost secrecy.[144] Unfamiliar in Kongo, as Robin Law had persuasively demonstrated, the 'blood pact' was widely practised in the Dahomey area where the Aradas came from.[145] This highlights that the Dahomean blood-oath ritual described by Moreau de Saint-Méry was well entrenched in the immediate pre-revolutionary period, in spite of a growing and influencing Kongolese presence. Its persistence as a ritual may be explained by its inherent integrative and disciplinary function, which allowed different people to create and maintain prohibited communal bonds in a context of absolute violence and terror.

All these elements point to the fact that it was no accident that the revolution had roots in Vodou traditions from the outset. Not because Vodou was inherently revolutionary, but, rather, because, as a complex religious arena, it had all the characteristics to function as a means for mobilizing support and organizing collective action, while maintaining the autonomy of the different 'national' groupings involved by virtue of distinct worship traditions. In this sense, more circumstantial than structural, the role of the Bois-Caïman ceremony in the revolt may have been primarily to communicate the plan of rebellion elaborated by the elite slaves directly to the rank and files in a socially-accepted, culturally-coherent forum of exchange and symbolism in order to find and sacralize a common ground for action among disparate groups. It is arguably in this very precise political sense that Vodou was, to speak with James, 'the medium of the conspiracy'.[146]

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[144] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française de l'Isle de Saint-Domingue*, vol. I, pp. 66-67.
[145] Robin Law, "On the African Background to the Slave Insurrection in Saint-Domingue (Haïti) in 1791: The Bois Caïman Ceremony and the Dahomian 'Blood Pact'." Paper presented to the Harriet Tubman seminar, York University, Toronto, Ontario, 8 November, 1999.
[146] James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 86.

Although elite slaves rarely participated in Vodou rituals—most of them, with some exceptions, mocked it and Louverture and Dessalines would even persecute Vodouists later on in the revolution[147]—, they knew well that the hierarchical organization of the *atelier* from which their power and leadership normally derived could not alone suffice, given the circumstances of a life-threatening event, to stage a popular insurrectionary mobilization across the plantations. They dealt with heterogeneous masses, most of them African-born, as said earlier, whose different beliefs and backgrounds had to be taken into account somehow. Vodou, and in particular the ritual blood-drinking oath, served to overcome these disparities among the conspirators by cementing their solidarity to a collective action of revolt, which was essential to ensure success. In remarkable ways, what we see at Bois-Caïman is the development of an insurrectionary culture of solidarity across ethnic and occupational differences.

As much significant, moreover, at least from what this dissertation aims to examine, is the extent to which possibly both meetings—the Lenormand assembly and the Bois-Caïman ceremony—were dependent upon, and disseminative of, a transatlantic rumour of reform, as mentioned above. Though little evidence exists to confirm it, this aspect raises the question of a plausible connection between the two conspirational meetings and the waterfront, from where, as I have pointed out earlier, news about the broader world made its way to the plantations. The rumour, of course, was a fabrication of the slaves or, more precisely, a modification of real news about the French Revolution, which had most likely been heard outside plantation, before being altered along the way to the slave quarter and adapted to give local meaning to local grievances. In fact, the powers in Paris

[147] Geggus, "Haitian Vodou", p. 42. With the exception of Biassou, the early creole leader, who was known as a 'fiery and impassioned Vodou adept', according to Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 115.

had done nothing to improve the lot of the slaves, and gave no sign that they were about to. Yet, from standpoint of the slaves, the rumour was very productive politically, for it established a common identity of interests with the king and the National Assembly, which they believed were acting for their benefit and, therefore, as 'allies'.

Anthropologist James C. Scott has argued that rumour can serve subaltern people as a 'hidden transcript' for collective action, and should be viewed, therefore, as an important agentic strategy capable of infiltrating the 'public transcript' in a context of repressive, non-democratic social order where overt, political self-organization is not possible.[148] In Saint-Domingue, unlike the nationally-confined 'Great Fear' in France, the slaves' hidden transcript was shaped from the start by what we could call an anonymous infrapolitical dialogue of transatlantic solidarity with benevolent powers—king and National Assembly.[149] While works on the Saint-Domingue revolution, from James' *Black Jacobins* onward, have rightly highlighted its co-evolution with the French Revolution, few have stressed the fact, it seems to me, that the uprising was, in a way, an explicit action *to link up* with virtual allies in France in a common transatlantic collective action against the local whites—a sort of Atlantic *infra*-International, so to speak. In the months immediately following the August rebellion, for instance, the insurgent creole leader Georges Biassou told that he had revolted to 'serve his king, the nation, and its representatives'.[150] They did not need to meet these allies in person before rising up, for the latter had already sent them signals filtering through the tightly control slave regime that they were on their side. As much symbolic and ambiguous as it was, this anonymous

[148] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 144-48.
[149] Georges Lefebvre, *La grande peur de 1789*, new ed. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970).
[150] Cited in Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 107.

form of transatlantic solidarity of monarchist/republican tone was for the slaves, to speak with E.P. Thompson, 'fully as "real" as [their] objective', and 'fully as effective ... in their historical agency'.[151]

A general insurrection broke out within hours after the blood pact made at Bois Caïman ceremony. It is unclear whether this timing was really planned since, as mentioned earlier, the slaves of La Gossette plantation had apparently jumped the weapons too soon in trying to kill the manager, which gave another strong clue to the authorities that something was brewing. Whatever the scenario, several *ateliers* had begun to rise up late in the night of August 22th, starting in Acul parish, where the slaves of the Flaville-Turpin estate in a broad work stoppage deserted *en masse* to make their way to the Clément plantation, where they teamed up with the insurgents led by Boukman. Strong by the hundreds, the bands then proceeded to the nearby Trémes and Noé plantations, where the slaves had already begun to rise up, killing the white managerial personnel and setting cane fields and houses on fire. The *ateliers* of the Molines, Flaville, Plaigne, Sacanville, and Pillat plantations joined the rebellion, which according to one eyewitness 'spread like wildfire'.[152] By the next morning, only two of the hundreds of plantations in Acul parish had refrained for the time being from participating in the revolt.[153]

The movement then split into two sections, one moving westward to Limbé, the other eastward to Petite-Anse, advancing in the same fashion by killing the white managers and setting the cane fields and houses ablaze, with their numbers augmenting to close to

[151] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 54.
[152] de Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti*, p. 86.
[153] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 96.

2,000. In Petite-Anse, they were immediately joined by the Gallifet slaves, including those of La Gossette plantation, who had been on a standstill after the failed attack two days earlier. At Gallifet, the insurgents decided to spare most the estate in order to turn it into a military camp. From there, another contingent moved to and destroyed nearby plantations, before making their entry into Quartier-Morin parish and, then, Limonade further east. Meanwhile, the westbound group had moved the rebellion up to Port-Margot and Plaisance parishes, so that by the 25th the insurgents, whose force was by then estimated at close to 15,000, were in full military possession of the entire North Province, with the exception of Le Cap.[154]

In fact, a conspiracy against the colony's capital seems to have been planned by the insurgents, in coordination with the revolt in the plain. In a letter that gives weight to the idea that the slaves had precipitated their uprising, one white resident wrote less than two weeks after the event that the insurgents 'aimed to set le Cap on fire and to massacre the whites at the same time. ... As they acted in a hurry, it gave time to those who lived on nearby *habitations* to be informed and to escape the carnage'.[155] In fact, rumours of a plan to burn down the capital had been uncovered by the authorities on the 22th, which put them on the lookout. When news that a revolt had broken out in Acul and that it had gained momentum across the plain, a military detachment was called back to safeguard the capital. Still, an attempt to take the upper part of the city was nonetheless made on the 30th, but was immediately put down. One of the ringleaders, a free black, was captured and sentenced to death. His testimony reveals that the uprising had, in effect, been

[154] Ibid., p. 100.

[155] *Une correspondance familiale au temps des troubles de Saint-Domingue; lettres du Marquis et de la Marquise de Rouvray à leur fille, Sainte-Domingue-États-Unis, 1791-1796*, eds. M. E. McIntoch and B. C. Weber (Paris: Société de l'histoire des colonies françaises, 1959), p. 29.

scheduled for the night of the 24th, and that the plan was that 'all the negroes in the plain were to attack the city in different parts; to be seconded by the negroes in the city, who were to set fire to it in several part at once ... in every workshop in the city there were negroes concerned in the plot', he declared.[156] Had Boukman and his troops not been forced to move sooner by the early attack on the manager at La Gossette, the insurrection would have had probably an even more spectacular outcome in taking control of the capital as well, the heartland of the colony's slave regime and Atlantic nerve of the French empire.

In spite of its false start, the kick-off of the Saint-Domingue revolution was, in the words of Carolyn Fick, 'a brilliantly organized and strategically maneuvered plan of revolt'.[157] We know that much of its organization had been the work of elite slaves. With regard to strategic manoeuvring, however, there is strong suggestion that the revolt had been carried out by semi-independent 'national' or ethnic regiments of African-born slaves. Madiou's narrative, for instance, mentions that the insurrection was accomplished by 'bands composed of Congoes, Mandingues [Mandinka], Ibos [Igbo], Senegalese, etc.', which fought 'in African style [*à l'africaine*]'.[158] Several accounts of the event confirm these points.

In a September 1st letter written by one estate manager, for instance, it is mentioned that the insurgents advanced 'in platoons' whose skirmishing attacks proved impossible to stop as they were 'everywhere at the same time'.[159] Similarly, one French general

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[156] Cited in Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 103
[157] Ibid., p. 100.
[158] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, Vol. 1: 1492-1799 (Port-au-Prince: H. Deschamps, 1988a), pp. 96, 133.
[159] Pierre Léon, Appendix 8 'L'insurrection des nègres à Saint-Domingue' of *Marchands et spéculateurs dauphinois dans le monde antillais au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1963), p. 193.

wrote that the slaves did not throw themselves in fight like 'fanatics', but carefully moved 'spread out and dispersed', so that they could 'envelop and crush their enemies by their numbers'.[160]Another observer mentioned that these military-like deployments involved a religious preparation, noting that the 'platoons' advanced through a 'heavy silence' broken only by the 'devilish' singing and dancing of the 'magicians' preceding them, and who had prepared protective charms (*ouanga*) in order 'to ensure the success of the attack'.[161]

John Thornton has argued that these 'African' military features in the revolt were attributable, in part, to the strong presence of Kongolese soldiers who had fought in the civil wars that had ripped apart the kingdom in 1770s-80s. Many of these 'African veterans' had been captured in these conflicts and sold into slavery, bringing with them their military skills to Saint-Domingue, where they put them to use for the rebellion's early success.[162] Their is no doubt, as creole slaves lacked military skills at this early stage, that these ex-soldiers were the true engineers in developing war-bands quickly out of the *ateliers* when the revolt was launched in August 1791. The creoles Jean-François and Biassou, who emerged as two insurgent leaders in the North, attested their contribution in a 1791 letter, in which they wrote that most of their followers were "'a multitude of *nègres* from the coast'—that is from Africa—'most of whom can barely say two words of French but who in their country were accustomed to fighting wars'.[163] Overtime, this 'multitude' was gradually regimented into more disciplined armies

[160] Lacroix, *Révolution de Haïti*, p. 87.
[161] *Histoire des désastres de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Chez Garney, 1795), pp. 192-93.
[162] Thornton, "African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution". The free blacks who joined the insurgents and who had experience in the French colonial militia or the *maréchaussée* also brought their skills into the rebellion, not to mention the very tools of war. See Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp. 109-10.
[163] Cited in Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 109.

commanded by a more experienced, self-tought creole leadership, although the manners of fighting *à l'africaine* persisted in some areas.[164]

The rising insurgents had adopted the white cockade of the royalists and fought in the name of the king of France himself. They even called themselves the 'army of the king', in which the creole leaders decorated themselves with 'crosses, blue and red ribbons, and all the distinctive marks previously known in France'.[165] A white banner was made on which 'Vive le roi!' was written on one side and 'Ancien Régime' on the other.[166] Still, as much as they adopted royalist positions, their slogan—at least that of their creole leaders—was resolutely framed in the language of republican universalism: '*vaincre ou mourir pour la Liberté*'.[167] As already mentioned, the insurgents had serious motivations to amalgamate both stances. First, the creoles had probably integrated the paternalistic elements of French imperial political culture, which had repetitively placed the king as some kind of protector willing to intervene at times for the slaves' own benefit, such as in 1784-85 with the new provisions to the Code Noir.[168] Indeed, the 1791 reformist rumour was, from their standpoint, another of such an intervention, though one impeded by the local whites. Second, the monarchist ideology of the insurgents was closely in line with the political backgrounds and worldviews of the African rank-and-files, most especially

[164] In North and West, for instance, Madiou writes that a multiplicity of competing bands emerged in armed resistance against the French immediately after the deportation of Louverture. Most of these rebels were 'Africans who refused to be commanded by the creoles. ... They had a special horror military organization; they consistently refused to adopt it. They fought, as in Africa, divided by tribes, preceded by their sorcerers and emblems of their superstitions. Their principal leaders ... were all pronounced enemies of Christophe, and even Dessalines'. See Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, Vol. 2: 1799-1803 (Port-au-Prince: H. Deschamps, 1988b), pp. 395-96.
[165] *Histoire des désastres de Saint-Domingue*, p. 191.
[166] de Lacroix, *La révolution de Haïti*, p. 94.
[167] Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, vol. 1, p. 76.
[168] On this subject, see Gene E. Ogle, "The Trans-Atlantic King and Imperial Publich Spheres: Everyday Politics in Pre-Revolutionary Saint-Domingue," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, eds. David P. Geggus and Normand Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 89-90.

those from the Kongo who had recently arrived in Saint-Domingue with a particular understanding of kingship.

Kongolese political thought, as I began to discuss in Chapter 3, had been structured by a long-standing conflict over the nature of kingship which opposed strands that emphasized a more centralized 'absolutist' form of rule and others, among which the Antonian movement was a vital eighteenth-century incarnation, that emphasized a more decentralized and limited form of rule featuring 'republican' and democratic tendencies. According to Thornton, the 1770s-80s civil wars in the Kongo gave way to another round in these debates. Three families claiming royal descent partitioned the country among themselves and raided each other in aggressive attempts to unite the kingdom by force and centralize power. As factional struggles intensified, feeding the transatlantic trade in slaves by the thousands, a grassroots movement led by two men named Besekele and Nkabi emerged in the Kongo with the objective, as one missionary reported, 'to suppress the lawless-ness then prevalent throughout the country' by reemphasizing the idea of a decentralized form of rule, which was 'accepted by village after village, and district after district'— a process of counter-mobilization that was reminiscent of the Antonian movement of Dona Beatriz Kimpa.[169] 'These ideas', Thornton suggests, 'did not vanish when those unfortunate soldiers who served in the civil wars were captured and transported to Saint-Domingue, nor did they cease to operate when the conspiracy of 1791 resulted in the slave revolution'.[170]

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[169] John H. Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo: A Record of Thirty Years' Close Intercourse with the Bakongo and Other Tribes of Equatorial Africa, with a Description of their Habits, Customs & Religious Beliefs* (London: Seeley, 1914), p. 61.
[170] Thornton, "African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution", p. 198.

Yet the Kongolese slaves were not the only ones in Saint-Domingue who could have held such views. In Dahomey, for instance, where the Arada came from—the second ethnicity in importance at the time of the revolt in Saint-Domingue—the throne had been elective in the early eighteenth century, when the heirs of deceased monarchs could be chosen by the people, that is to say, from those among selected family lineages.[171] Though less numerous in the colony, the Senegalese of the Wolof kingdoms, too, may have had experience or knowledge of 'an elective monarchical system' by which the *Brak* or kings were elected by an electoral council constituted from three matrilineal kin groups vested with hereditary eligibility.[172] Furthermore, it is also quite possible that the elective system of kings and queens in secret societies that existed in pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue was even more important as a practice of collective self-organizing than the memory of African systems of government, since it was *already* regulating social life on and across plantations when the revolt broke out. Boukman, for instance, was 'headman of a plantation' when he launched the uprising in Acul parish, and his followers knew him as *Zamba* Boukman, a term that suggests a strong Kongolese presence among them.[173] There is also some indication that he may have been a Vodou

[171] Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550-1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 75.
[172] Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade: Senegambia before the Colonial Conquest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 30-31. On ethnic demographics in Saint-Domingue in this period, see Geggus, "Sugar and Coffee Cultivation", p. 81.
[173] James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 86; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 92, 297n5. According to Thornton, *Zamba* or *nzamba* in the Kikongo language means 'elephant'. The term may have been used by Boukman's followers as a nickname for his large and powerful stature. The fact he was considered headman by common slaves on his plantation was certainly due to his privileged status, for he had been a *commandeur* and later a coachman, and may, therefore, have exerted some leadership and influence over the rest of the *ateliers*. See Thornton, "African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution", p. 186.

priest as well, although this has been a matter of dispute in the literature.[174] One primary source mentioned in the early months of the revolt that 'he passed for a Magician'.[175]

In any case, and however altered by years of plantation life, these democratic traditions of self-rule that existed either concretely (though often furtively) on plantations or in memory of an African past may account for the syncretic royalist ideology developed by the insurgent slaves, whose political worldviews and frames of reference made it possible to amalgamate monarchist *and* republican ideas and symbols in order to organize their movement and articulate their demands to their masters. Once we begin to take into account these 'African' backgrounds, moreover, it becomes very problematic to identify the insurgents' royalist outlook as 'a reactionary position', as one historian has argued.[176] Not only does this interpretation frame the revolutionary agency of the enslaved in Eurocentric terms, whose signification makes sense only in the specific geopolitical context of the French Revolution, but it also completely ignores the slaves' own African heritage of self-government, which, in case of 'monarchies'—although this term may pose problem for Africa—did not always entail absolute autocratic rule but allowed for some form of democratic participation toward a limited and decentralized system of kingship.[177] So what may look like a reactionary, backward-looking position from Europe may appear from Africa, and perhaps even more so from the Kongo, as a progressive, forward-looking movement in the direction of such a plebeian vision of monarchy based on benevolent power and local autonomy. This hypothesis carries some

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[174] For diverging views, see Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 92-3, 298n10 and Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, pp. 88-90, 248n64.
[175] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 253n51.
[176] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, p. 41.
[177] To some extent, this was also true in Europe, as I have discussed in Chapter 3, as seen earlier in pre-revolutionary France, where the kind called up the three Estates to initiate discussion about grievances and forms of rule.

weight when we begin to penetrate the early movement of revolt and account for its ideologies of protest and manners of self-organizing.

Insurgent slaves often referred to their leaders as 'kings', even though some of them were creoles and free blacks. Those kings appear to have been either 'elected' or popularly acclaimed upon conquering territories and establishing their own government. Jean-François, for instance, was chosen as 'king' by the war-bands he commanded in the North, among them many Kongolese. As he told one French lawyer held prisoner: 'It is not I who have installed myself as general over the slaves. Those who had the power to do so have invested in me with this title'.[178] Jean-François knew that his rule as king was not absolute but, as he mentioned later in a letter, 'entirely dependent on the general will' of what he called the 'multitude'.[179] Jean-Baptiste Cap, the free black who had led a failed attack on le Cap on the 30th and who had afterwards revealed the plot to the authorities, had been elected a few days before as 'King of Limbé and Port-Margot', the two parishes that his bands had conquered and controlled.[180] One Jean-Louis le Parisien was chosen 'king of Dondon', a parish further south.[181] In the West Province, one free black named Romaine Rivière called *la prophétesse* organized a mass movement of revolt on the basis of a revelation from the Virgin Mary, a prophetic tradition that stretched back to the Antonian movement.[182] They established a maroon camp of several thousand near Léogane. Indicative of his type of rule, once the whites were to be

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[178] Cited in Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 114, citing a contemporary source.
[179] Cited in Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 127.
[180] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 103.
[181] Thornton, "African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution", p. 209.
[182] On this connexion, see Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999) and Rey, "Ancestors, Saints, and Prophets in Kongo-Dominguois Root Experience: A Revisionist Reading of Transatlantic African Resistance," in *Africa and the America: Interconnections during the Slave Trade* (Trenton, NJ & Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2005), 215-230.

completely eliminated, a source claimed, Romaine was to become 'king of Saint-Domingue'.[183] In the South Province, a group of insurgent slaves who rose up in arms, too, created a maroon camp called the 'kingdom of the Platons', where they elected a king as their leader.[184] Understood in connection with what they replaced, namely, colonial autocratic white rule, these experiences in self-government in Saint-Domingue, though informed by past 'African' backgrounds, stood as extremely forward-looking experiments to channel and entrench self-emancipation.

Furthermore, these small territorial polities created within the slave insurrectionary movement highlight the extent to which the Saint-Domingue revolution, in spite of being integrated into the age of revolutions, continued to embody 'restorationist' features typical of 'escapist' maroon communities. As I have begun to discuss in Chapter 3 with the 1736 conspiracy in Antigua, such feature brings to view once more that the 'restorationist-revolutionary' typological divide put forth by Eugene Genovese has some applicability problems once applied to specific revolutionary contexts, such as now in Saint-Domingue. While drawing upon persisting 'African' ideas and beliefs of self-rule, insurgent slaves' territorial polities, as Carolyn Fick has argued, were inscribed of a process of revolt that qualitatively transformed their nature and function as means of revolutionary collective organization, for what they aimed to achieve was not to escape enslavement such as with maroon communities, but, ultimately, to overthrow slavery as a social system.[185] To be sure, they were essential to ground self-emancipation into real social institutions right at the outset of the revolt, which necessarily drew on the known African experience, albeit distorted by chattel slavery.

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[183] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 128.
[184] For an extensive treatment of the Platons, see Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, chap. 6.
[185] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 151-52

In this sense, the 1791 slave uprising was both backward- *and* forward-looking, as these political expressions of collective agency served to overcome the slave system *through* the transfer and adaptation of 'African' ideas and beliefs about political self-organization, which were consistent with the plebeian vision of monarchy found in Africa, in particular in the Kongo, where the majority of the enslaved population came from. What was transferred (or 'restored') to the insurrectionary movement, however, were not surviving artefacts of a pure African past but hybrid expressions of cultural exchange and growth, though surely shaped in their turn by the immediate political and military necessities of rebellion. The slave insurgents, as mentioned earlier, did not rise up as African subjects but as *gens du roi*, the King of France's 'faithful subject.' Jean-François, furthermore, the new king popularly acclaimed by the 'general will', reigned over his troops wearing 'a uniform decorated with cords, stripes, and a cross he had stripped from the clothing of dead white officers', all symbols of French royalism.[186] As the slave revolution mutated into a struggle for independence, this partition of Saint-Domingue into small territorial kingdoms became an obstacle to Toussaint Louverture and, then, Jean-Jacques Dessalines in their attempt to achieve a 'national' independence in Haiti.

Another element that is indicative of a forward-looking slave revolt while rooted in African legacies of kingship can be found in the ways in which the masses articulated their ideologies of popular protest. Let us demonstrate this point by returning to where we left off in the sequence of events.

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[186] Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, vol. 1, p. 96.

Fighting had continued in the North until November. At that time, amazed American soldiers noted that, unlike the early weeks of the revolt, when the insurgents 'made their attacks with irregularity and confusion', fighting with their 'instruments of labor', they 'now come in regular bodies, and a considerable part of them well armed with the muskets, swords, &c. which they have taken and purchased'.[187] From the beginning of the rebellion, the Spanish had given military supplies and encouragement to the insurgents from across the border in Santo Domingo in a bid to take over the western end of Hispaniola—a strategy that would eventually prove counter-productive when Spain, like England, decided to invade Saint-Domingue, which led to the loss of Spanish Santo Domingo to the black armies of Toussaint Louverture. According to one eyewitness, white Spanish soldiers had been at the head of several black insurgent regiments as early as September 1791.[188] In spite of having some momentum, months of war had caused great loss of life among the black insurgents, and those who remained were wearied, sick and hungry. Believing that a large French army would soon arrive in the colony, Jean-François was particularly anxious for peace and thought it was time to make it. Sceptical, Biassou agreed. After having unsuccessfully tried to present their claims to the Colonial Assembly, they turned to the French commissioners who had been sent by Paris to the colony in order to settle peace. A first meeting was set for December 22. Their original proposal was quite minimal, perhaps for strategic bargaining reasons. 'They asked for freedom for themselves and fifty high-ranking black leaders; in exchange their followers

[187] Cited in Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 116.
[188] *Une correspondance familiale au temps des troubles de Saint-Domingue*, p. 27.

would return to the plantations of their former masters'.[189] But both leaders were under the pressure from the masses—the 'general will'.

In a letter to the commissioners, they exposed how they could not ignore the 'representations' the rank and file made to them in the camps. The document emphasized 'the bad treatment they receive from their masters, most of whom make themselves the executioners of their slaves, mistreating them with all kinds of torments, taking away their two hours [of free time], their holidays and Sundays, leaving them naked, with no care when they are sick, letting them die of misery'.[190] This voice of the masses transmitted by Jean-François and Biassou highlights the extent to which the revolution was still articulated in strict labour terms at this early stage and not yet in the name of an abstract ideal of liberty. On this ground, the August uprising may have represented, from their standpoint, a province-wide, armed continuation of a marronage-strike action aiming at reasserting their collective 'rights' on plantations, and for which the metropolitan powers, they believed, had just intervened.

Furthermore, their grievances implied replacing leadership on the plantation, and not necessarily replacing the plantation system itself. According to one French prisoner detained in the camps as negotiations proceeded with the commissioners, the slaves had risen up especially 'against *procureurs* and overseers [*économes*]', and that, accordingly, 'they wanted to include an article in the conventions that would provide for their abolition in Saint-Domingue'.[191] This highlights that the slave revolt—not yet a

[189] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, pp. 56-57.
[190] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp. 127-28, citing a primary source.
[191] Debbasch, "Le marronage", p. 27, citing a primary source. In addition to estate managers and overseers, French absentee owners also had a *procureur* or prosecutor in the colony to whom they had given their power of attorney to oversee their plantations. They hired the manager, bought slaves at the market, sold the proceeds of the plantation, and kept the books. They rarely visited the plantations, leaving the managers

revolution in the full sense of the term—was still narrowly defined ideologically and politically limited in scope at that point. Yet in 'abolishing' prosecutors and overseers the slaves wanted to regain full control over their labour at the level of the plantation by getting rid of an abusive, intermediate managerial layer between them and the King. While this demand did not mean the abolition of slavery *per se*, it would have dramatically reduced its terms by leaving the organization of plantation agriculture to the slaves themselves. As the black insurgents had already elected their leaders and exerted near-sovereignty over specific conquered territories when they expressed these grievances, it is hard not to see the early organization of their movement as pointing in the direction of a limited and decentralized form of monarchy based on a benevolent power from France and on plantation-level autonomy in Saint-Domingue. Goals and ambitions were soon to expand along with the revolutionary process itself.

The negotiations with the French commissioners broke down and no deal materialized. The Colonial Assembly had planned to massacre the insurgents once they would have been disarmed by an agreement, for they feared any settlement would have brought emancipation.[192] Their plot was discovered and put the blacks under fury. A new wave a revolt ensued. By mid-January, the slaves under Jean-François attacked and recaptured the district of Ouanaminthe, on the border with Spanish Santo Domingo. At the same time, Biassou's troops attacked the outskirts of le Cap in order to secure ammunition and to replenish their diminished resources. Meanwhile, a three-way civil war among whites, *gens de couleur*, and slaves had broken out in the West Province. There, it was at the

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with enormous autonomy, which many exploited. See Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 37 and Frédéric Mauro, "À Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 3, no. 4 (1948), p. 535.

[192] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, p. 57

command of these two elite groups that the slaves first took arms, before reclaiming the autonomy of their revolutionary agency by initiating their own revolt for emancipation with a strong marronage dimension.

Meanwhile, developments in Saint-Domingue had repercussions in Paris. In September 1791, the slave revolt had forced the National Assembly to annul the decree of a few months before that had given *gens de couleur* full civil rights. With the election in early 1792 of Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville and Jean-Antoine-Nicholas de Condorcet, both prominent members of the Amis des Noirs, the Assembly began to lean slightly toward gradual abolitionism. In April, a new decree was adopted, reversing that of September, granting back civil rights to *gens de couleur*. In order to implement it, seven civil commissioners were to go to the colonies, including three to Saint-Domingue, among them Étienne Polverel and Léger Félicité Sonthonax, two republican radicals, who would be forced, most especially the latter, by realpolitik circumstances to intervene for the revolutionary movement that the slaves had initiated.

As the commissioners were leaving France in July, the Paris masses—peasants, *sans-culottes*, and Jacobins—were entering the revolutionary stage as an autonomous force, calling for collective liberties, universal manhood suffrage, equal distribution of wealth, and, increasingly, the abolition of slavery. They had been self-organizing their agency in popular societies, clubs, and assemblies, where they had followed and discussed the events in Saint-Domingue, speaking of the black insurgents as 'the new heroes of the Bastilles', as one French abolitionist put it.[193] One such plebeian society stated that 'the rights of the *colons* over the slaves [*nègres*] were the same as those of the tyrants over the

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[193] Jean-Daniel Piquet, *L'Émancipation des noirs dans la Révolution française (1789-1795)* (Paris: Karthala, 2002), p. 172, citing a contemporary source.

sans-culottes'.[194] Another one stood by the claim that slavery in the colonies should be abolished 'because it is against our sublime Declaration of rights'.[195] All forms of servitude needed to be destroyed, and the French plebeians were now willing to make it happen in a common transatlantic action with 'our brothers the Ethiopians'—the generic term for African slaves.[196] Others called them *les sans-culottes noirs*.[197]

'Henceforth', as James put it, 'the Paris masses were for abolition, and their black brothers in San Domingo, for the first time, had passionate allies in France'.[198] Growing incredibly critical of their King who had failed to acknowledge the will of the people, they demanded him to be dethroned, and when the Assembly refused to comply with their wish, they took action themselves by forming a commune of their own, independent of the existing municipal council. In August, they marched in two armed columns on the royal palace in the Tuileries, and forced the King and his family to escape. Having besieged the Assembly building, the rebellious communards imposed their will on the legislature, putting the abolition of slavery at the heart of the revolutionary agenda.[199] The National Assembly gave way to the National Convention, and France became a republic.

Polverel and Sonthonax arrived in the colony in September 1792 along with a troop of 6,000 soldiers and sailors. They easily retook the northern plain in November, along with the stronghold at Ouanaminthe, forcing Jean-François and Biassou to move their troops

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[194] Jean-Claude Halpern, "Sans-culottes et ci-devant esclaves," in *Esclavage, colonisation, libérations nationales: de 1789 à nos jours.* (Université de Paris VIII à Saint-Denis: L'Harmattan, 1990), p. 141, citing the minutes of the popular society of Mas d'Azil (Ariège).
[195] Ibid., p. 139, citing the minutes of the popular society of Etain.
[196] Ibid., p. 142, citing the minutes of the popular society of Vervins.
[197] Jacques Adelaïde-Merlande, *La Caraïbe et la Guyane au temps de la Révolution et de l'Empire (1789-1804)* (Paris: Karthala, 1992), p. 118.
[198] James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 120.
[199] Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World*, p. 66.

into the mountains. Similar expeditions were made in the South against the Platons, where the insurgents were massacred and the settlement destroyed. But these victories remained partial, as the slaves continued to be backed and protected by the Spaniards. With the outbreak of a war with England and Spain in the spring of 1793, the republican French and the Spanish, preparing to invade Saint-Domingue, began competing to win over the black insurgents. Sonthonax and Polverel used rhetoric about republican and citizenship virtues, and liberalized the plantation regime by reiterating the terms of the 1784 royal ordinance improving labour conditions on plantations.[200] All vainly—the black rebels continued to fight under the Spanish colors now in formal alliance. For all they knew, the French Revolution in the colony still meant the return of slavery. Jean-François and Biassou were appointed lieutenants-general of the armies of the king of Spain, and Louverture was named brigadier-general (*maréchal-de-camp*), commanding a force of about 500 insurgents but now independently from the authority of the two other black leaders.[201] It was at that moment that Louverture's star would begin to rise, winning a series of startling military victories against the French and free coloreds which made his reputation as an 'opener' of breaches. In a few months, his army grew from a hundred to several thousand men.[202]

In June 1793, six months after the execution of Louis XVI in France, the royalist planter camp found a new leader to their cause in the colony, a man named François Thomas Galbaud, the new governor recently named by Sonthonax and Polverel. Born in Port-au-Prince, Galbaud was vehemently against the proclamation that the French commissioners had issued protecting slaves from their masters. Contention increased and

[200] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp. 154-55.
[201] Geggus, *Revolutionary Haitian Studies*, p. 17.
[202] Ibid.

the governor was eventually arrested by the commissioners and confined to a ship at harbor, where there were scores of antirepublican prisoners incarcerated and eager to make common cause against the godless republic in the colony. They persuaded 2,000 sailors to make an armed landing and captured le Cap, Sonthonax and Polverel barely escaping, thanks to the decisive intervention of militias of free-coloreds, and notably an African-born officer named Jean-Baptiste Belley to whom I will return. The capital was burned to the ground and shifted to the royalists. Desperate for support, Sonthonax made a bold move: he offered the black insurgents who were camped just outside of the city to join with them in recapturing le Cap.[203] In return he offered amnesty, freedom, and French citizenship. One band of black insurgents of several thousand strong under the command of an African-born leader named Pierrot abandoned the Spanish cause and accepted the offer. They integrated an army unit of whites and free-coloreds, and together ousted Galbaud and retook the capital.[204]

But the commissioners had failed to persuade Jean-François and Biassou, who continued to fight the French in the royalist cause. Yet rank-and-file demands had evolved and expanded all this while, some calling for an outright abolition of slavery in the name of universal ideals of liberty. At that point, the uprising had become a full-fledged revolutionary in its aim and scope, providing an opening for slaves to think differently about their potential political power. A year before, for instance, a young

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[203] As Robert Stein has revealed, Sonthonax had been a fervent abolitionist in France prior to his assignment in Saint-Domingue. This raises the fact that his swift decision to abolish slavery may have been grounded as much on ideological conviction than on realpolitik. It also sheds some light on the popular protest that his arrival caused among planters in the colony, as if his reputation had preceded him. See Robert Louis Stein, *Léger Félicité Sonthonax: The Lost Sentinel of the Republic* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985). See also, Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 39 and Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 144.

[204] For an account of this watershed event in Saint-Domingue, see Jeremy D. Popkin, *You are all Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

leader named Charles Belair advocated this claim to the two black leaders. A letter was issued to the Colonial Assembly and the commissioners, which stipulated that they were 'within their rights' to resist slavery as stipulated by the Declaration of the Rights of Man.[205] A few weeks after the manoeuvre against Galbaud at le Cap, moreover, a petition signed by 842 free blacks demanded that the rights of man be extended to the slaves, in the name of whom they spoke.[206] In the same vein, one primary account of the insurrection citing insurgent slaves themselves mentions that, while they had been 'in insurrection for two years, instructed from the flames & gun shots', they presented themselves in front the colonial assembly, declaring that they were 'negroes and French' (*Nègres français*), who were willing to 'fight for France' but that in return they wanted 'our freedom ... [and] our *Droits de l'homme*'.[207] They added to their demands the emancipation of women and children.[208] Thus, the enslaved were now acting as uninvited citizens deploying the republican language of rights in pursuit of liberty, hence forcing French administrators to embrace their cause which, indeed, was the same as theirs. This strategy would prove immensely effective in following months.

Louverture had sensed this shift of tone in demands of the masses and was now prone to carry them forward as a leader. As he was operating under Spanish authority, he had proposed to his military superiors to conquer the French colony by granting freedom to all the slaves, but the proposal was turned down. In the aftermath, he reached out across the border to the French military officer in charge of the North Province Étienne Laveaux—who will later become Louverture's key ally in Paris—with the same plan but

[205] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 141, citing a primary source.
[206] Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World*, p. 102.
[207] Louis Pierre Dufay, *Compte rendu sur la situation actuelle de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1794), p. 7. Emphasis in the original.
[208] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

this time around executed under French colours against the Spaniards. Same result. The emancipation of the enslaved for Louverture was a project broader than the colours of the flag under which it would be made. Until that point, it was the Spaniards of Santo Domingo that had offered the slaves with guns, ammunitions, and supplies, and who had recognized them as brothers in arms. In August 1793, however, with an imminent invasion by English troops, with an increasing Sonthonax proclaimed general liberty in the north and granted French citizenship to the slaves. In the subsequent months, Polverel followed suit in the other parts of the colony, though more gradually. Beyond gaining new valuable allies against tyranny, Sonthonax's decision made ideological sense as the slaves, he wrote a few months before, were already 'fighting for the same cause as the French armies'.[209]

Although limited and partial, the abolition of slavery gained new recruits for the commissioners, but the most important leaders—Jean-François, Biassou, Toussaint—remained loyal to the Spanish.[210] The first two claimed that kings had ruled since the 'beginning of the world', and so they were not willing to risk of losing the autonomy they had carved out for themselves in Santo Domingo for a freedom granted by an uncertain, let alone hitherto unknown, regime.[211] Another black leader, a Kongolese named Macaya, rejected republican freedom and declared himself 'the subject of three kings, the King of Kongo, master of all the blacks, the King of France who represents my father, and the King of Spain who represents my mother'.[212] Louverture, who had been willing to turn on the Spaniards a year before seems to have awaiting confirmation that Sonthonax's

[209] Quoted in Stein, *Léger Félicité Sonthonax*, p. 83.
[210] It was limited and partial in the sense that it included a forced return of the freed slaves to their plantations, where they would receive wages. Whipping was outlawed and punishment restricted.
[211] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 160.
[212] de Lacroix, *La révolution de Haïti*, pp. 166-67.

unilateral decision would be approved by France. Still, he was proactive, probably discerning that the emancipation was still very fragile and precarious politically. Five days later, from his camp in Spanish Santo Domingo, he made a call of cross-border solidarity with the blacks in the French colony on the slogan of general emancipation in the name of royalty:

> Brothers and friends,
>
> I am Toussaint L'Ouverture, my name is perhaps known to you. I have undertaken vengeance. I want Liberty and Equality to reign in San Domingo. I work to bring them into existence. Unite yourselves to us, brothers, and fight with us for the same cause, etc.[213]

Here we have, arguably for the first time since the uprising of August 1791, a former slave, self-tought military commander, and soon-to-be revolutionary leader, making an explicit call of transboundary solidarity with the black workers across the border to Saint-Domingue. And he did that, as James put it, while 'riding two horses at once. He uses the prestige of his position as general of the general of the armies of the King, but he calls on the Negroes in the name of liberty and equality, the watchwords of the French revolution, of which royalty was the sworn enemy. Neither would help his aims, so he was using both'.[214]

The abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue was ratified by the National Convention on February 4, 1794, after a delegation of elected deputies sent by Sonthonax made a case in front of the assembly in Paris that the proclamation had been both politically and militarily necessary. Among them—three in total—was one African-born, raised in slavery, the officer Jean-Baptiste Belley, who had played a key role in ousting Galbaud

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[213] Quoted in Victor Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Karthala, 1982 [1889]), p. 94.
[214] James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 126.

and the royalists from le Cap. Stepping up before a fervent assembly, he exclaimed: 'It is the tricolor flag that has called us to our liberty; it is under it that we gained our liberty ... and as long as there is a drop of blood in our veins, I swear, on behalf of my brothers, that it will fly upon the shores and mountains' of Saint-Domingue.[215] A motion was carried which ran as follows: 'The National Convention declares slavery abolished in all the colonies. In consequence it declares that all men, without distinction of colour, domiciled in the colonies, are French citizens and enjoy all the rights assured under the Constitution'.[216] What had begun with a distorted rumour of transatlantic solidarity harvested by a hundred slave conspirators in the woods of the northern plain had now officially materialized in a self-elected popular parliament in Paris. In a skillful use of moral, ideological and political connections between the colony and the mother-country, and by overtly exposing the contradictions and inequalities upon which the advance of the French Revolution in Saint-Domingue was built, the insurgent slaves had been the real architects of their emancipation. Through their military strength they ultimately forced the Republican administration to deal with the question of slavery.

For uncertain reasons, it took three more months—around May 5th—before Louverture finally made the move and deserted the Spaniards along with his troops to team up with the black Jacobins across the colonial border.[217] This was, as history has proven, a turning point in what would now become the 'Haitian' revolution. 'Now associated with the ideology of the French Revolution,' Geggus writes, 'black militancy became

[215] Quoted in Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, vol. 1, p. 228.
[216] Quoted in Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, pp. 224-25.
[217] These reasons are discussed in Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, chap. 8.

unequivocally directed toward the complete overthrow of slavery for perhaps the first time in the Americas'.[218]

The four years that succeeded the 1794 emancipation decree were marked by constant warfare in the colony, leading up to the surrender of Santo Domingo to France in 1795 and to the expulsion of the British in the southern part of the colony in 1798, which had a strong echo back in Britain where abolitionists seized the momentum to increase militancy, setting the stage for the British suspension of the slave trade in 1807.[219] It was during this period that Louverture rose to prime leadership in the black revolution, appropriating formal state powers for the cause of emancipation. 'In the next three years', Geggus writes, 'the ex-slave Toussaint Louverture built up a black state in the heart of slave-owning America that remained ostensibly a French colony but in effect was autonomous'.[220] As the British were withdrawing from the colony, he signed a secret treaty of nonaggression with General Maitland, promising him not to attack or encourage sedition in Jamaica in exchange for commerce with British merchants. Although France and Britain were still at war, this agreement ensured Louverture a market for the export of coffee and sugar the colony produced. Furthermore, in August 1796, Louverture encouraged Étienne Laveaux to sail back to Paris as a colonial deputy, where he was asked to mount 'a spirited—and necessary—defense of emancipation'.[221] Laveaux was not forced to leave the colony, and once in Paris he did actually undertake what Louverture had proposed by reanimating, along with other African-descended elected

[218] Ibid., p. 18.
[219] See Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, p. 37; David P. Geggus, "Haiti and the Abolitionists: Opinion, Propaganda and International Politics in Britain and France, 1804-1838," in *Abolition and its Aftermath: The Historical Context, 1790-1916*, ed. David Richardson (London: Routledge, 1985a), p. 114-140.
[220] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 176.
[221] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 205.

deputies, the Société des Amis des Noirs in order secure black freedom at the epicenter of the French empire.[222] Through their work in Paris, the Saint-Domingue revolution had now real antennas across the Atlantic.

Locally, Louverture was preparing for the possibility of transforming the black revolution into a war of independence against France, which would ultimately guarantee black emancipation, at least from external factors. There is no need to elaborate on this story here, for it is beyond the scope of what this chapter is proposing to study—the translocalization of the Saint-Domingue revolution throughout the dark Atlantic. What it is necessary to mention, however, is that the movement toward independence in Saint-Domingue was important, though not necessarily essential, for this transboundary process to take place. To be sure, independently of what happened during that development from 1794 to 1804 and beyond, the colony under Louverture's leadership and, even more so, an independent Haiti later, created an anchor point for whoever wanted to extend and spread the black revolution elsewhere. Likewise, as a symbolic beacon of liberty, Saint-Domingue and, then, Haiti could well serve to inspire others in their freedom struggles, despite the fact that Louverture dealt with important contradictions, such as forcing the blacks back to plantation labour, or that his successors, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, proclaimed themselves emperors and, too, defined the new nation as based on forced labour. For these reasons, my account now breaks off from the usual course of events in Saint-Domingue and sets out to sea, where 'the three of liberty of the

[222] Ibid.

blacks, as Louverture termed the revolution, was carried out and tried to be planted elsewhere in the dark Atlantic.[223]

'The Contagion of Liberty'

From the outset Saint-Dominguan slave insurgents understood and situated their revolt in global terms. Informed by their transatlantic experience of enslavement and the spatial nature of imperial power, they developed an alternative notion of social revolution which was inherently transnational and expansive, beyond the immediate insular context of the colony to the Atlantic world as a whole. 'The king, [and] the universe, have groaned at our fate', they told the colonial governor in the first month of the insurrection.[224] Two years later, Biassou looked back to those days as 'a period that will be forever memorable among the great deeds of the universe', and that '[a]ll Europe and the entire world have their eyes turned toward us, watching what course of action we are going to take'. [225]

But this outlook, as this section argues, was more than merely ideological—it was grounded into real practices organizing black solidarity across borders. To put it directly, from the beginning of the slave insurrection in Saint-Domingue, news and stories of its occurrence circulated abundantly throughout the Caribbean and beyond, supplying distant but interested slaves engaged in their own battle against slavery with a broader Atlantic context for collective struggle and black solidarity. Not even a month after the outbreak of the rebellion in the North Province, for example, slaves in Jamaica were singing songs

[223] Cited in Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture*, p. 349.
[224] de Lacroix, *La révolution de Haïti*, p. 93.
[225] David P. Geggus, "Preface," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), p. x, citing a primary source.

about it 'with their usual chorus', leading one planter to say that 'the Ideas of Liberty have sunk so deep in the Minds of all Negroes, that whenever the greatest precautions are not taken they will rise'.[226] In December, martial law was declared in the colony, 'for Jamaica was on the brink of its own slave revolt, and the threat was real'.[227] In a similar fashion, a few weeks after the insurgent slaves had assisted the French troops in expelling the royalists from le Cap, a rumour of an interstate slave revolt gripped Charleston, South Carolina, with fear, as it was believed by the authorities to have direct connections with both the French and Saint-Domingue revolutions.[228] How can we account for such translocal connections over colonial and imperial boundaries between revolutionary Saint-Domingue and slave revolts or plots of revolt elsewhere in the dark Atlantic? And to what extent did the first contribute the latter? To answer these questions, we must first consider the social forces from which these points of contact could have been established, to which they may appeal, and from which subversive ideas and ideals could circulate and be re-enacted elsewhere.

This 'circumstantial' strategy of inquiry allows for the need to substantiate interconnections among slave revolts with actual evidence which unfortunately but understandably remains scarce. And when they do exist, they are indirect and oblique. There very is good reason for this, however. Conspirators, if conspiracies there were, necessarily depended on stealth for executing plot, let alone securing their survival while planning it. As we shall observe in what follows, notwithstanding a few exceptional cases

[226] Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, pp. 90-91, citing primary sources.
[227] Olwyn M. Blouet, "Bryan Edwards and the Haitian Revolution," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), p. 46.
[228] Robert J. Alderson, "Charleston's Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David Patrick Geggus (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 93-111.

that will be attended herein, the contribution of revolutionary Saint-Domingue (and Haiti, later) to slave rebellion elsewhere in the dark Atlantic was very rarely a matter of direct assistance or official calls to the slaves of the world to rise up in solidarity. Its contribution, as far as evidence shows, was mostly symbolic and inspirational, functioning, as James Sidbury has argued, 'as a metaphorical tool that … slaves could use to inspire resistance and to fight for a broader, non-racist version of the revolutionary tradition that their masters revered'.[229] Still, to be inspired by something means to have at least some knowledge of it, which in turn may involve some form of *direct* and *intentional* transmission to interested people. As for the transatlantic rumour of solidarity galvanizing the slave conspirators gathered at Bois Caïman, the analytical key to understanding African slave workers' own processes of transboundary solidarity in the age of revolutions should not be sought upstream, that is to say, where a call to rise up in common could have been made, since this is practically impossible to locate, let alone to do for the enslaved, at least before an independent Haiti, as we shall see. Rather, it must be sought downstream, that is to say, where such call or rumour of it was answered, interpreted, adjusted to local goals, and re-enacted by the enslaved, notwithstanding its exact provenance, distortion, and genuineness.

Several cases amongst the 178 slave rebellions or conspiracies that Geggus has computed between 1791 and 1848 are known where, as we shall see, conspirators made explicit reference to revolutionary Saint-Domingue/Haiti or sought to learn from it, 'and there were presumably more'.[230] These local instances or revolt bring to view a sense of

[229] James Sidbury, "Saint Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790-1800," *The Journal of Southern History* LXIII, no. 3 (1997), p. 551.
[230] David Patrick Geggus, "Slavery, War, and Revolution in the Greater Caribbean, 1789-1815," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, eds. David Patrick Geggus and David

political belonging to a broader revolutionary emancipationist movement in which transboundary solidarity is not institutionally articulated but informally assumed. Thus, if we can barely retrace transboundary calls of black solidarity in the records, we can easily locate, on the other hand, where some of them were received by the enslaved and acted upon in a common collective action. As I began to discuss in Chapter 1 citing Marx and Gramsci, and as Linebaugh and Rediker have pursued in their work, this *problématique* offers a critical case for the study of working-class internationalism in the pre-classical age where the role of ideas as material forces organized the enslaved African workers across colonial and imperial boundaries in the absence of political institutions of their own.

There were many ways through which news and rumours about revolutionary Saint-Domingue could be disseminated to slaves elsewhere in the dark Atlantic. I have mentioned earlier the role of white sailors working on the docks alongside slaves. We could also add the French *émigrés* who fled the insurrection with some of their slaves elsewhere to plantation Americas, hence bringing with them not only stories about it but proofs, symbolized by their very immigration, that the slave revolt had some success. The Charleston's rumoured slave revolt of 1793, for instance, coincided with the arrival of the brig *Maria* bearing hundreds of civilians and French soldiers who had escaped from le Cap after the royalists' defeat. Among them were many 'people of colour' considered

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B. Gaspar (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University, 1997), p. 14; David Patrick Geggus, "Slave Rebellion during the Age of Revolution," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795-1800*, eds. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), pp. 40-49.

‘dangerous to the welfare and peace of the state’, one of which known as an ‘apostle of liberty of the blacks’.[231]

In addition to these channels of communication, we can add two more, whose role may have been even more crucial in connecting revolutionary Saint-Domingue with the other slave revolts of the age. The first one was made of slave sailors and boatmen, free black seamen, and other itinerant renegade traders and slave runaways whose shifting, and sometime furtive, sea-going mobility created what Julius Scott has called a ‘shadowy circum-Caribbean black maritime underground’.[232] Navigating on vessels connecting all corners of the Atlantic world, these ‘crisscrossers of empires’ were also newsmongers central to keeping local black communities informed of events elsewhere in the Americas. According to W. Jeffrey Bolster, this network was ‘for black people in the Atlantic world what newspapers and the royal mail service were for white elites: a mode of communication integrating local communities into the larger community of color, even as they revealed regional and local differences’.[233]

These networks, I argue, could be put at the service of translocal political organizing. The seafaring career of Olaudah Equiano, for example, was essential not only to himself as an abolitionist in London, but also in order to feed Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce, and others in England with news of the Americas, so as to rally popular opposition to the slave trade and, later, slavery. Likewise, African-American abolitionist

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[231] Alderson, “Charleston’s Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793”, in D.P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, pp. 97-8, citing primary sources.

[232] Julius S. Scott, "Afro-American Sailors and the International Communication Network: The Case of Newport Bowers," in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, eds. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), p. 34; For slave runaways using maritime networks, see Neville A. T. Hall, "Maritime Maroons: *Grand Marronage* from the Danish West Indies," in *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, eds. Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 47-68.

[233] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p. 39.

David Walker disseminated his *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) through the underground network of black sailors and ships' stewards that connected Boston to the leading Southern ports in order to spread furtively his anti-slavery message with the hope of stirring up the enslaved in revolt.[234] Although it did not seem to have sparked a joint revolt, Bermudian slave sailors transported oral news to the island's slave community about the New York conspiracy scare in 1741.[235]

With the outbreak of the age of revolutions in the Atlantic world in 1776, but most especially with its 'Haitian' variant in 1791, this black maritime underground allowed for the rapid circulation of news and experience that connected and provided continuity to slave unrest throughout the Americas, hence creating a 'common wind' of black self-liberation for which this constant yet shifting stream of itinerant seafaring folk played a pivotal role.[236] One Jamaican slave contemplating the idea of insurrection in late 1791 confirmed this point, mentioning that 'while the whites were possessed of the communication with the Sea, the Negroes could do nothing'.[237] According to Bolster, thousands of black seamen voyaged to Saint-Domingue and Haiti between 1790 and 1830.[238] Indeed, revolutionary Saint-Domingue/Haiti created an unprecedented situation: a government working on behalf of all black people in slave-owning Americas. Taking advantage of this break, black mariners visiting Saint-Domingue/Haiti were made 'honorary' citizens, returning to the seas 'as roving ambassadors of the black

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[234] William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Walker's Appeal Comes to Charleston: A Note and Documents," *The Journal of Negro History* 59, no. 3 (1974), 287-292; Marshall Rachleff, "David Walker's Southern Agent," *The Journal of Negro History* 62, no. 1 (1977), 100-103; Hasan Crockett, "The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker's Appeal in Georgia," *The Journal of Negro History* 86, no. 3 (2001), 305-318.

[235] Michael J. Jarvis, "Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2002), p. 612.

[236] Scott, "The Common Wind".

[237] Cited in ibid., p. 295.

[238] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p. 145.

sovereignty', who would then 'spread individual stories of freedom throughout the Atlantic, firing the imagination of slaves with untold possibilities'.[239]

Unfortunately but understandably, the black maritime underground left practically no trace of itself. 'In such networks,' Alderson argues, 'written notes would not only be dangerous, but unnecessary'.[240] Beyond a few figures that have surfaced in the records—among them, Tom King, Paul Cuffe, Newport Bowers, Jon Jay, Joaquín García, Denmark Vesey, and, most famously, Equiano—its existence as an underground maritime network is indirectly suggested by the simultaneous inter-linkages of many slave revolts in the Americas, whose ideological cohesiveness reveals the circulation of a what Deborah Jenson has called 'a silent narrative of subversion'.[241] Indeed, the strongest evidence of the black maritime underground's subversive role on slaves is shown by the concerted attempts made by colonial officials of all slaveholding powers from the 1792 onward to limit, if not suppress, the boundaries of human mobility in the region in order to stop 'the contagion of liberty', as one contemporary put it.[242]

The other, more overt, agency that appears to have significantly contributed to export slave insurrection across the dark Atlantic was what Robin Blackburn has termed 'buccaneering Jacobinism'—the Republican corsairs that roved the waters attacking enemy and neutral ships.[243] Immediately after abolishing slavery, the National Convention began to assemble an expedition to the Americas, with instructions to

[239] Ibid.
[240] Alderson, "Charleston's Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793", in D.P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, p. 102.
[241] Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p. 162.
[242] *Une correspondance familiale au temps des troubles de Saint-Domingue*, p. 15; Scott, "Common Wind", pp. 301-2; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 27.
[243] Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 227.

undertake a revolutionary war in the tropics for the liberation of the slaves and the entrenchment of the Republic. A force of 1,200 soldiers and sailors arrived in the Caribbean in April 1794. One contingent was commanded by French commissioner Victor Hugues, whose Jacobinism was firmly rooted in the aggressive Robespierrian phase of the French Revolution. They landed in Guadeloupe, re-conquered the colony from the British, and liberated the slaves (though forcing them to stay on plantations as unpaid *cultivateurs*). In order to continue the imperial conflict with Britain, Hugues mobilized a huge numbers of these new black *citoyens* as Republican soldiers, before turning Guadeloupe into a base for French privateering as his chief weapon of sea warfare, which soon became a rallying point for the patriots of the seas seeking shares in the spoils of war. Over the following year, Hugues organized a successful flotilla of 25 Republican corsairs. In 1798, there were between 60 and 80 such ships registered at Basse-Terre, with a peak of 121 at the end of Hugues' regime, leading one historian to claim that Guadeloupe in this period may have looked like 'a sort of Barbary State transposed to a Caribbean setting'.[244] To illustrate the importance of privateering during this period (1794-98), 1,800 ships were either seized or destroyed by Guadeloupean corsairs only.[245]

At the same time, Laveaux, then governor *ad interim* in Saint-Domingue, was too in desperate need of supplies of all kinds to safeguard the northern coasts from English and Spanish attacks but also to strike out offensively at sea. He appealed for aid to Charleston, where he received an enthusiastic response from the French consul, who organized a fleet of republican corsairs to be deployed to Saint-Domingue with

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[244] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, p. 242; H. J. K. Jenkins, "Guadeloupe's Commerce Raiding 1796-98: Perspectives and Contexts," *Mariner's Mirror* 83, no. 3 (Aug., 1997), p. 307.
[245] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, pp. 241-42.

munitions, provisions, but most importantly, with crews of fervent patriot sailors carrying out the new duty of republican emancipationism. The names of those ships speak for the ideology of their crews: *Le Républicain*, *Le Sans-Culottes*, *L'Anti-Georges*, *Le Vainqueur de la Bastille*, *L'Incorruptible*, *La Tyrannicide*, *L'Ami du Peuple*, *Le Terroriste* and *La Bande Joyeuse*.[246] Controlling the South Province, which was by then cut off from Laveaux in le Cap and functioned, therefore, as an autonomous district, free-coloured André Rigaud also set out to arm many small corsairs in order to carry war at sea in the name of the Republic.[247] According to Madiou, their crews were particularly fond on the idea of capturing British slave ships *en route* to nearby Jamaica in order to free the slaves and granting them asylum in Saint-Domingue.[248]

Sailors of all nationalities constituted the crews of those republican corsairs. One visitor noting the presence of several such ships in St. Thomas in 1795, for example, noted 'only fifteen to twenty Frenchmen' among their crews, recording many Italians and Danes together with a substantial number of whom he labelled 'people without a fixed place of residence'.[249] This multiracial feature of buccaneering Jacobinism, according to Dubois, became 'a symbol as clear as the Republican tricolor'.[250] The overwhelming majority, however, was made of black people, among them former free coloureds and ex-slaves. For Guadeloupe only, it has been estimated at 3,500 the number of black people

[246] Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 227; Alderson, *This Bright Era of Happy Revolutions*, chap. 7; Melvin H. Jackson, *Privateers in Charleston, 1793-1796: An Account of a French Palatinate in South Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), chap. 4 and 5.
[247] Cousin d'Aval, *Histoire de Toussaint-Louverture, chef des Noirs insurgés de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Chez Pillot, 1802), pp. 171-72.
[248] Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, vol. 1, p. 221.
[249] Julius S. Scott, "Crisscrossing Empires: Ships, Sailors, and Resistance in the Lesser Antilles in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, eds. R. L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), p. 132.
[250] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, p. 243.

working as corsair seamen.[251] One impressed British officer commented in 1797 that the French corsairs were 'chiefly blacks and Mulattoes'.[252] Some of them rose up to the rank of ship captain. Anne Pérotin-Dumon has reported at least 15 Guadeloupean corsair captains of African descent between 1793 and 1801. They appear to have come from the lower stratum of the free-coloured class, who had previously worked as coastal captains in the interisland colonial trade. Experienced coastal mariners, they transformed their small row-boats into lightly armed corsairs best used to impinge upon shipping lanes and transport expeditionary troops. According to James, many ex-slaves in Saint-Domingue, too, jumped at the opportunity offered by revolutionary privateering. 'Building light boats, they skimmed over the rivers and around the coasts, attacking ships, massacring the prisoners, and carrying off plunder'.[253] In 1799, one British report estimated that Louverture had organized a 'force by sea' of thirteen such ships manned 'chiefly with negroes' and numbering close to 700 sailors.[254]

Reanimating the tradition of maritime radicalism of golden age piracy, the republican corsairs spread the revolutionary cause throughout the Caribbean and beyond, hence bringing continuity between hitherto disconnected slave revolts. In fact, their actions in mid-1790s provide the 'only real case we have of subversive proselytizing' throughout the dark Atlantic at that moment.[255] Hugues, who had arrived in Guadeloupe with a printing press, had copies of the French abolition decree, of the Rights of Man, and other revolutionary documents translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and English, ready to

[251] Louis-François Tigrane, "Histoire méconnue, histoire oubliée que celle de la Guadeloupe et son armée pendant la période révolutionnaire," *Revue historique* 282, no. 1 (Juillet-Septembre, 1989), p. 180.
[252] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, p. 242, citing a contemporary source.
[253] James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 366.
[254] Scott, "Common Wind", p. 302, citing a primary source.
[255] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 27.

be funnelled into all parts of the Americas in order to raise the enslaved. A first expedition of five corsairs, along with ten armed row-boats, one them captained by a black sailor named Modeste, dropped anchor at St. Lucia in January of 1795, where reportedly 6,000 corsairs allied with insurgent slaves, including some French deserter soldiers, who had styled themselves 'l'armée française au bois' in their anti-British insurgency.[256] As the republican motley crews were gaining ground, they capitalized on their success and dispatched two other contingents to invade nearby Martinique, St. Vincent, and Grenada, creating an 'overwhelming flood of negro insurrection' in the Lesser Antilles.[257] Among those sent to St. Vincent, were a hundred newly freed Africans whom Hugues integrated into a French battalion headed by their own insurgent leaders.[258] Through this action, former slaves from St. Lucia took direct part into raising the enslaved in St. Vincent in a common interinsular revolt. There, the uprising was soon joined by the black Caribs who had been resisted the British since the 1770s, hence adding an 'Amerindian' dimension to the age of revolutions.[259] In Grenada, the corsairs teamed up with an already ongoing slave revolt led by the free-colored Julien Fédon under the war cry that echoed the slogan under which that the Saint-Dominguan slave insurgents had rose up: *Liberté, Égalité ou la Mort*.[260] Throughout these islands in revolt,

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[256] Anne Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux Iles, la ville dans l'île: Basse-Terre et Pointre-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, 1650-1820* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2000), p. 236; J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, Vol. 4: *1789-1801* (London: Macmillan, 1906), p. 425; David Barry Gaspar, "La Guerre Des Bois: Revolution, War, and Slavery in Saint Lucia, 1793-1838," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 102-130.
[257] Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, vol. 4, p. 432.
[258] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, pp. 234-35.
[259] Christopher Taylor, *The Black Carib Wars: Freedom, Survival, and the Making of the Garifuna* (Oxford: The University Press of Mississippi, 2012), see chap. 6.
[260] Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 227; Edward L. Cox, "Fedon's Rebellion 1795-96: Causes and Consequences," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (1982), 7-19.

as David Barry Gaspar asserts, 'the insurgents maintained contact across the narrow waterways that separated their shores'.[261]

The year 1795, according to Geggus, was 'unique' in terms of its number of slave revolts in different places in the Americas. Repercussions were felt in Spanish Florida, New Orleans, and as far as Brazil, although the influence of the French/Saint-Domingue revolutions was more mitigated there.[262] This movement, however, had been instigated not by former African slaves who desired to export *their* revolution, but by French revolutionary agents declaring war to royalist tyranny in the Caribbean. The exportation of black liberation, in other words, was initially encapsulated in the territorial expansion to what we could call a republican-revolutionary form of French imperialism in the Caribbean. In fact, as Pérotin-Dumon pointed out, the ideological limit of this revolutionary movement manifested itself as soon as the Republican corsairs gained control of certain trading ports in the Caribbean in 1796, after which they practically ceased to attempt to raise the slaves to insurrection.[263] Yet what is important here is that buccaneering Jacobinism, in spite of its limits in terms of revolutionary abolitionism, had set a huge mass of former slaves and black sailors in motion across the Atlantic with the resources of a modern state, and there is evidence that some of them were ready to take

[261] Gaspar, "La Guerre des Bois", p. 108.
[262] On Spanish Florida, see Jane Landers, "Rebellion and Royalism in Spanish Florida: The French Revolution on Spain's Northern Colonial Frontier," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 156-177; on New Orleans, see Kimberly S. Hanger, "Conflicting Loyalties: The French Revolution and Free People of Color in Spanish New Orleans," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 178-203; on Brazil, see Joao José Reis and Flavio dos Santos Gomes, "Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Brazil, 1791-1850," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 284-314.
[263] Anne Pérotin-Dumon, "Les Jacobins des Antilles ou l'esprit de la liberté dans les Iles-du-Vent," *Revue D'Histoire Moderne Et Contemporaine* 35, no. 2 (1988), p. 276.

advantage of such deployment and export independently *their* own version of social revolution on the model of Saint-Domingue.

We return to 1795. That year, six black corsair seamen refused to take orders from their French officers and disembarked at St. Christopher with tricolor cockades to distribute to local slaves in order to spark a revolt.[264] An even more salient example comes from the Venezuelan port town of Coro in May, where both the black maritime underground and buccaneering Jacobinism seem to have played a role in a mass insurrection of 300 slaves, free blacks (*Morenos libres*), including some Amerindians from the region.[265] Their goal was to conquer the entire area from Maracaibo to Puerto Cabello, create a multiracial 'República' and apply 'la ley de los Franceses', free of slavery and of aristocratic privileges.[266] The plot was translocal in scope, cutting across French, Dutch, and Spanish imperial boundaries. One ringleader of the insurgents named José Caridad Gonález was a runaway slave from the nearby Dutch entrepôt island of Curaçao. Another one was a free black sharecropper named José Leonardo Chirino. Both were said to have made several visits to Curaçao and Southern Saint-Domingue prior to the uprising, maintaining contacts there 'by means of a shuttling vessel'.[267] These links with revolutionary Saint-Domingue are consistent with the fact that another ringleader in the insurrection, a local slave named Tula, took the nickname of 'Rigaud', while one slave insurgent was called 'Toussaint', and their slogan was 'Nous sommes ici pour

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[264] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, p. 235.

[265] Ramón Aizpurua, "Revolution and Politics in Venezuela and Curaçao, 1795-1800," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795-1800*, eds. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), p. 98.

[266] Federico Brito Figueroa, *Las insurecciones de esclavos en la sociedad colonial venezolana* (Caracas: Cantaclaro, 1961), p. 69, citing a primary source.

[267] Wim Klooster, "The Rising Expectations of Free and Enslaved Blacks in the Greater Caribbean," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795-1800*, eds. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), p. 66.

vaincre ou mourir'.[268] According to one historian of colonial Venezuela, Saint-Dominguan corsairs, acting on their own, were directly implicated in the organization and execution of the rising, including many Afro-Curaçaoans.[269] Yet, in spite of its level of organization and its revolutionary aim, the revolt was quickly suppressed by the colonial troops. It has been alleged that the black corsairs who attempted, along with local slaves, to spark an island-wide revolution in Curaçao in August 1795, may have been the same who played a role in the failed Coro insurrection three months earlier.[270]

Four years later, a similar conspiracy was discovered in nearby Maracaibo which highlights another such divergence of the Haitian from the French revolution in the transnational spread of black liberation. Direct assistance from Saint-Dominguan rebels was, too, a feature of the plot. In May, two free-coloured corsair captains from Saint-Domingue, the brothers Jean and Augustin Gaspard Boze, along with their black crew, one local black militiaman and a black tailor, plotted to organize a slave rebellion in order to 'introduce in [the city of Maracaibo] the same system of freedom and equality that has reduced to total ruin … the French ports of the island of the Saint-Domingue'.[271] With a force of two hundred men and fully armed corsairs at harbour, the plan was to seize the armouries, kill the governor and occupy the city's main buildings 'for the purpose of

[268] Geggus, "Slave Rebellion in the Age of revolutions", in W. Klooster and G. Oostindie, eds., *Curaçao in the Age of revolutions*, p. 33; Gert Oostindie, "Slave Resistance, Colour Lines, and the Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions in Curaçao," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795-1800*, eds. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), pp. 9-10.

[269] Federico Brito Figueroa, *El problema tierra y esclavos en la historia de Venezuela* (Caracas: Ediciones de la Biblioteca, 1985), pp. 225-35; Klooster, "The Rising Expectations of the Free and Enslaved Blacks in the Greater Caribbean", in W. Klooster and G. Oostindie, eds., *Curaçao in the Age of revolutions*, p. 68.

[270] Linda M. Rupert, "Inter-Colonial Networks and Revolutionary Ferment in Eighteenth-Century Curaçao and Tierra Firme," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795-1800* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 75-96.

[271] Aline Helg, "A Fragmented Majority: Free "of all Colors", Indians, and Slaves in the Caribbean Colombia during the Haitian Revolution," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), p. 159, citing a primary source.

declaring a republic'.[272] In this way, as one Boze brother later testified to the authorities, the rebels were 'to form a revolution like in his land'.[273] The plan aborted when it was denounced by one man whom the militia soldier had tried to win over, leading to sixty-eight arrests with deportation and imprisonment.

More than ever, the emerging black power in Saint-Domingue in the Americas was perceived as a threatening specter to other slave colonies.[274] Thomas Jefferson, the new U.S. president and slaveholder, had projected this development a few years earlier, commenting with a nautical metaphor that '[t]he "murmura venturos nautis prodentia ventos" [the breeze warning the sailors of the coming gale] has already reached us; the revolutionary storm, now sweeping the globe, will be upon us'.[275] This black revolution whose 'first chapter … has begun in St. Domingo' had now a firm footing in the Atlantic from which other 'chapters' elsewhere could be written by the slaves.[276] One of it, as Jefferson predicted, occurred in 1800 in Richmond, Virginia, where an enslaved blacksmith named Gabriel Prosser planned a large slave rebellion encouraged by Saint-Domingue connections and models.[277]

On January 1st 1804, after two years of war with Napoleon's troops, Haiti declared its independence. Louverture had been kidnapped a few months earlier and deported to

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[272] Aizpurua, "Revolution and Politics in Venezuela and Curaçao," in W. Klooster and G. Oostindie , eds., *Curaçao in the Age of revolutions*, p. 107.
[273] Ibid., citing a primary source.
[274] Mimi Sheller, "The "Haytian Fear": Racial Projects and Competing Reactions to the First Black Republic," *Research in Politics and Society* 6 (1999), 285-303.
[275] Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson, Political Writings*, eds. Joyce Oldham Appleby and Terence Ball (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 486.
[276] Ibid., pp. 485-86.
[277] Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, p. 95; Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 278; Robert L. Paquette, "Revolutionary Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 212.; Douglas R. Egerton, "Gabriel's Conspiracy and the Election of 1800," *The Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 2 (May, 1990), pp. 191-214, esp. 211-13.

death in a French dungeon. His heritage was taken up by a new black leader produced by the revolution, Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Having led the masses of black ex-slaves to destroy the wealthiest planter class in the New World and defeat the armies of France, Spain, and Britain, the black leader and self-proclaimed emperor for life situated the revolution in transnational terms as his predecessors, claiming: 'I have avenged America'.[278] This outlook was shared by his close literate entourage, who quickly mastered and exploited the print culture for the purpose of the black revolutionary cause. With a strong black internationalist undercurrent, one of Dessalines' secretaries, the free-coloured, Paris-educated, and author of the declaration of independence, Louis Boisrond-Tonnerre concluded his *Mémoires* (1804) in a way that came one word close to anticipate how the *Communist Manifesto* would end more than four decades later:

> Haitians, freed of the anathema of prejudice by a hero's courage, in reading these memoirs, your eye will measure the abyss from the [Dessalines] rescued you! And you, slaves of all countries, you will learn from this great man, that every man carries liberty in his heart, and that he holds the key to it in his hands.[279]

Here we have a black revolutionary leader urging the 'slaves of all countries' to draw inspiration from the Haitian Revolution and take the key to their own self-liberation. Louverture's call of solidarity with the black insurgents across the border to Saint-Domingue in 1793 had now taken a truly global reach.

Eight months later, whether or not it was directly connected with independent revolutionary Haiti, several hundred young blacks in Philadelphia commemorated the twenty-eighth anniversary of the American independence in their own way, organizing

[278] Beaubrun Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, Vol. 6 (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1856), p. 67.
[279] Boisrond-Tonnerre, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire d'Haïti*, p. 95.

military formations, electing officers, and marching through the streets while 'damning the whites and saying they would shew them St. Domingo'.[280]

No proof exists that Dessalines *officially* attempted to spread slave rebellion across the Caribbean during his tenure as Haitian emperor—a claim that applies as well to both Louverture and Henri Christophe (1806-1820).[281] In fact, one provision of the declaration of independence advised Haitians to 'be on our guard against the spirit of proselytism … and allow our neighbours to breathe in peace. They should be allowed to live peacefully by the laws they themselves established'.[282] Preserving a 'revolution in one country' seems to have had the better over the desire to spread it worldwide. After all, Haitian rulers could not afford challenging another state with a policy of exporting revolution because that would have resulted into a maritime blockade by the British who were in control of the sea lanes and could, therefore, cut off Haiti from international trade. It was because of this *raison d'état* that Louverture betrayed French agitators sent to both Curaçao and Jamaica in 1799 in order to plot what would have probably led to the most spectacular cross-border slave uprising during this period.[283]

Still, as some scholars have pointed out, there are some indications that Dessalines might have participated in behind-the-scene manoeuvres for the stealth expansion of the

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[280] Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 176, citing a primary source.
[281] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 27.
[282] Ardouin, *Écrits sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, vol. 6, p. 28.
[283] I have decided not to include this event in my narrative here for its organization did not involve black ex-slaves but French emissaries acting on their own account, which nonetheless aimed at liberating the slaves in Curaçao and Jamaica. According to James, who had researched it in the archives, the plot should be attributed to either the French commissioner Roume or the *ancien libre* Rigaud. See James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 237. For discussions of this event, see Scott, "Common Wind", p. 298; Philippe R. Girard, "Black Talleyrand: Toussaint Louverture's Diplomacy, 1798-1802," *William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2009), 87-124; and Han Jordaan, "Patriots, Privateers and International Politics: The Myth of the Conspiracy of Jean Baptiste Tierce Cadet," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795-1800*, eds. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 141-169.

black revolution. Deborah Jenson, for instance, has made a case, albeit not entirely conclusive, for the implication of Dessalines in an inter-island slave emancipation plot in St. Thomas and Trinidad between December 1805 and the spring of 1806. Although she does not advance new evidence, she nonetheless establishes a strong relation of plausibility between Dessalines' anti- and postcolonial political positions and the conspiracy, highlighting his repeated wish to emancipate the slaves elsewhere in the region. As she points out, 'the very notion of avenging not Saint-Domingue, but America in a large sense—the Americas—suggests Dessalines's interest in a larger domain of decolonization'.[284]

Moreover, Haitian historian Jean Fouchard has claimed to have consulted unpublished documents in the Archives Nationales in Paris that refer to 'numerous small ships armed by Dessalines to introduce into our islands his doctrine, his apostles, and his principles'.[285] Madiou, in turn, included in his narrative several letters between Dessalines and the British admiral Duckworth who complained that the black emperor had armed several corsairs which 'showed hostile dispositions' at sea and 'troubled harmony'.[286] All in all, it appears improbable that Dessalines was ready to willingly jeopardize the few-months old black state by seeking to stimulate slave uprisings elsewhere in the region. Informally, however, his decision to arm Haitian corsairs—a move that Duckworth qualified as a 'contrary to your promises'—might have been an indirect way for him to be faithful to his anticolonial views and by it at least give a chance for the black revolution to spread beyond Haiti. In any case, as Geggus argues,

[284] Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, p. 166.
[285] Jean Fouchard, *Regards sur l'histoire* (Port-au-Prince: H. Deschamps, 1988), p. 96.
[286] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, Vol. 3: 1803-1807 (Port-au-Prince: H. Deschamps, 1988c), p. 177 and ff.

‘[m]any Haitian individuals were no doubt willing to venture into where Haitian governments feared to tread’.[287] It was certainly through such networks that some militiamen of African descent in Rio de Janeiro were seen wearing ‘medallion portraits of the emperor Dessalines’ a few months after his coronation in 1805.[288]

A similar instance of Haitian imagery occurred in Cuba in 1812, though one directly connected to the conspiracy of a mass insurrection that provides ‘the most striking example of Haiti’s influence on slave resistance’.[289] At that time, Cuba was steadily on its way to become the world’s primary producer of sugar, with its slave population exceeding the white for the first time in the colony’s history. From January through March of that year, a series of uprisings were launched by the slaves and free people of colour across the island. However, the revolt was crushed before it could gather momentum. In three of the four locations, the conspiracy was discovered early on, which exposed the planned simultaneity of the uprising. After extensive investigations, thirty-two rebels were put to death while hundreds of others were imprisoned.[290]

One of its main ringleaders was a free-coloured carpenter named José Antonio Aponte. His implication in the plot reveals the organizational importance of the colonial militia and the African-based mutual-aid societies—the *cabildos de nación*—for staging insurrection in Cuba. Aponte was both a militia soldier and the nominal leader of the *Cabildo Shangó Tedum*, a Yoruba *cabildo* with close ties to other *cabildos* representing various African ethnic groups in urban Cuba. It was in and through these two institutional

[287] David Patrick Geggus, "The Slaves and Free Coloreds of Martinique during the Age of the French and Haitian Revolutions," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, eds. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), p. 296.
[288] Geggus, “Preface”, in Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution*, p. x.
[289] Ibid., p. xiii.
[290] Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), chap. 4.

settings—militia and *cabildo*—whose members most often overlapped, that the conspiracy could be organized.[291] But, as Matt Childs has carefully examined, the Haitian Revolution was an important catalyst for the revolt. At the many militia and *cabildo* meetings prior to it, Aponte routinely showed a book of drawings to his co-conspirators, with sketches of Haitian revolutionary leaders, such as Christophe, Louverture, Jean-François, and Dessalines (including one of George Washington). He later told the authorities that he had copied these portraits from images 'owned by a black who worked on the docks'.[292] According to the testimony of another accused rebel, the portrait of Christophe—then elected president of Haiti—was accompanied with these words: 'Execute what is ordered'.[293] Along with these drawings, the portfolio contained maps of Havana's fortifications and images of blacks defeating whites in battle. Although it is difficult to establish how these images and drawings resonated with the rebels' own experience in Cuba, they were doubtless called up to give political inspiration, ideological meaning, and strategic guidance to the black rebels who want revolutionary social change. The conspiracy was also carried out on the rumour that aid from Haitian soldiers would come assisting Cuban rebels in their won revolt. Thus, the Aponte conspiracy provides an illuminative case of 'how the powerful image of the Haitian Revolution served as a point of reference for rebels seeking to transform their own society'.[294]

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[291] See ibid., chap. 3 and Laird W. Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 206-8.
[292] Matt D. Childs, "'A Black French General Arrived to Conquer the Island': Images of the Haitian Revolution in Cuba's 1812 Aponte Rebellion," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), p. 143, citing a primary source.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid., p. 146.

Conclusion

Between 1791 and the first quarter of the eighteenth century, African slaves constructed solidarity ties across the dark Atlantic. Starting in revolutionary Saint-Domingue, this process unfolded through underground maritime channels of communication by which distant slave rebels could articulate and coordinate their hope, symbolism, ideologies, and actions with those of other and unknown insurgent black workers. I have argued that this process created an informal black International in the Atlantic world and for which the emergence of the Haitian state served as more than an anchorage—it became a beacon of black freedom and a circulating model for revolutionary self-emancipation. What made this possible was the work at the waterfront, where radical experiences and ideas circulated, generating connections and solidarities that proved crucial for the revolutionary self-activation of African slaves. The waterfront, as it has been described in Saint-Domingue, was an informal school of insurrection, where the enslaved could learn about distant revolts, recognize similitudes with their own local context, experience, and aspiration, and therefore engage in a common collective action of black self-liberation. As informal as it was, the black International was a spatially-stretched class experience embodied in real people and places in moments of revolt.

After the failed Aponte conspiracy in Cuba, the black revolutionary model moved both northward and southward. In 1822, it inspired slaves to plot an insurrection in Charleston. The plan reportedly included between 6,000 and 9,000 slaves divided into six ethnicity-based regiments. Among them was a 'French band', composed of about 300 slaves who

had fled Saint-Domingue with their masters in the wage of 1791 uprising.[295] The objective is revealing of Haiti's power as a symbol of emancipation of freedom. The rebels did not want to overthrow slavery in South Carolina, but to capture the Charleston's weapons store, burn the town, and commandeer ships on which to flee to the black republic where they hoped to receive asylum. One of their leaders was Denmark Vesey, a former (and briefly) plantation-slave in Saint-Domingue who spent most of his adulthood as slave sailor in the South Carolina-Caribbean trade, before settling down in Charleston as free black carpenter. Vesey and his co-conspirators were reportedly in communications with blacks in Saint-Domingue who would have provided assistance had the conspiracy not been pre-emptively discovered and put down.[296]

At the same time in Ecuador, the revolutionary wars of independence were in their midst. Venezuela and Colombia had been liberated from Spanish control in 1816 and 1819 respectively. The plan for this South American republican crusade had been elaborated in Haiti, where Simón Bolívar received assistance from president Pétion on the condition that he would undertake to free the slaves in the liberated colonies, to which he agreed. The expedition of seven ships, 250 men, arms and ammunitions for 6,000 soldiers had left Haiti on 22 March 1815. Among them was an unknown number of Haitian sailors and soldiers, probably corsairs, who had taken part in the previous' year siege of Cartagena.[297] It is true that the need to respect planter property rights in South

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[295] Rucker, *The River Flows On*, p. 169.

[296] Ibid., p. 170. See also James O'Neil Spady, "Power and Confession: On the Credibility of the Earliest Reports of the Denmark Vesey Slave Conspiracy," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (April, 2011), p. 292 and ff. For a historical monograph of the conspiracy, see Douglas R. Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey*, Rev. and updated ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

[297] Marixa Lasso, "Haiti as an Image of Popular Republicanism in Caribbean Colombia: Cartagena Province (1811-1828)," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David Patrick Geggus (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), p. 177.

America led Bolívar to tread very cautiously with respect to his promise, freeing the slaves owned by people in social and political sectors opposed to him, while adopting gradual emancipation policies in other cases. But the wars of independence had shaken up the pillars of slavery, and the slaves were ready to seize the momentum and increased their revolutionary militancy, which as Genovese as put it, 'helped push the wavering Bolívar into his famous alliance with Haiti's Pétion and into bolder efforts toward emancipation'. He continues:

> Developments in Venezuela, in turn, generated the first great black conspiracy in Puerto Rican history. Despite the vicissitudes of abolition politics during the next few decades in South America, the widespread enlistment of black troops, the slave risings, and the developing self-confidence of the black communities helped put one new republic after another on the road to emancipation.[298]

In and through the wars of independence, South American slaves were self-activated as a class, putting forth their own vision of revolution, republicanism, and human liberty. They were the 'true sons of freedom', as Garibaldi called them. And it was along with them that he fought for liberty and justice in Brazil and Uruguay, where the movement of independence undertook another round in the 1830s and 1840s. It was from there that Garibaldi went back to Europe in 1848 and continued the revolutionary siege, hence bridging profound hemispheric traditions of resistance and struggle with the nascent workers' movement that would initiate the march toward the creation of the First International in 1864.

[298] Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, p. 120.

Conclusion: 'The Siege Continues'

The International has no founders; it came into existence, with a bright future, out of the social necessities of our epoch and out of the growing sufferings of the working class.[1]

For more than two centuries before the creation of the First International in London in 1864, the Atlantic-world economy was already the theatre of movements of proletarian resistance and rebellion played out across parochial, insular, colonial, imperial, and oceanic borders. This dissertation has sought to recover and investigate these movements as forerunner moments of nineteenth-century working-class internationalism. Such an endeavor has involved illuminating the role of early proletarian workers of the age of manufacture whose freedom struggles were conceived and acted out on a truly Atlantic-world stage, but who had long been excluded from the prevailing narrative because of tenacious Eurocentric and nation-centred assumptions that have shaped conceptions of working-class internationalism since the nineteenth century. In bringing their experiences and traditions more firmly to the epicenter of the early Atlantic beginnings of an International-in-the-making, I have demonstrated the significance of diverse forms of proletarian agency producing their own geo- and hydrography of solidarity, cutting across the plantation, the waterfront, and the sailing ship. The counter-narrative developed in this study has emerged through two main episodes of struggle, with intersecting ideas, practices, and hopes about freedom.

[1] Malon, *L'Internationale*, p. 7.

The first episode was mostly played out at sea. I have showed how, from the sixteenth century onward, the labour process on board deep-sea merchant ships underwent major changes. The concentration of capital in shipowning and victualling transformed the organization of shipboard labour by separating ownership from naval management and labour, and therefore subordinating the latter to the profit exigencies of the former. As a result, the crew began to be more hierarchically divided, each sailor attached to specific tasks, and submitted to a tight rotating watch-schedule, making it possible to extract surplus-labour. A nautical mechanism of manufacturing production was therefore established on board, through which labour processes inherited from the medieval period were subsumed under capital, turning the ship into a floating factory.

Primitive accumulation was central to this process of transformation. With bigger vessels and greater distance to cover, sailors were deprived from taking part in the communal custom of estorement, which separated them from the tools, equipment, and means of subsistence on board. In order to enforce the exclusivity of the money-wage, they were dispossessed from their customary right to portage. As a result, independent mariners gradually became 'free' wage labourers, and their labour, value-producing labour. Free market compulsions and demographic forces, however, did not suffice to provide crews with sailors. Violence, or the application of extra-economic force, was therefore essential to meet the challenges of the Atlantic deployment of capitalism. Sailors were kidnapped or crimped on board and forced to stay there—sometimes chained up—while at harbour. Seafaring free wage-labour, I have argued, was imposed and maintained through force in the early modern era.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, sailors were subjected to harsher (in many cases, lethal) work discipline on board and forced to undertake longer voyages under poorer conditions. Crews grew increasingly militant and rebellious, leading to waves of mutinies, peaking after the Treaty of Utrecht. Drawing upon the communal traditions of the brethren of the coast, with deep ideological roots in early modern peasant revolts, many mutinous sailors turned to piracy and organized an Atlantic-wide, sea-going proletarian rebellion, launching the piracy of the golden age. Captains were elected by the majority, and booty was distributed equally among the crew.

At the heart of the revolt lay ideas about popular justice and mutual-aid, framed in class terms. Pirates avenged sailors by 'distributing' justice to violent ship captains, whom they viewed as the oceanic representatives or, as Charles Bellamy put it, the 'puppies' of the landed capitalists, the 'pack of crafty rascals'. Their crews were multi-ethnic and multi-racial, most of them including a significant proportion of African-descended pirates, who found under the black flag a less oppressive existence than life under the black code. As a floating republic, then, the pirate ship challenged state power. As a communal egalitarian self-organization of workers in revolt, the pirate ship challenged private property.[2] As a fraternal motley social order, the pirate ship challenged emerging categories of racism and ethnic-based oppression.

I have argued that golden age pirates were engaged in a forerunner maritime form of proletarian internationalism in the age of manufacture in the Atlantic world. Their ships were understood both by themselves and imperial rulers as micro-states or 'little commonwealths'. This view has illuminated the pirate ship as a bounded political unit

[2] Of course, as I have emphasized, this degree of egalitarianism was not equal among all members of the crew, and varied across them as well.

with its own of kind of borders, not only protecting the dry from the wet, but also a set of self-created emancipatory regulations from imperial sovereignty on the seas. Conversely, when pirate crews met among themselves on the Atlantic and established multiship associations, they engaged in 'joint piracies' by which they *trans-borded* shipboard cultures of solidarity beyond the wooded boundaries of their floating commonwealths and articulated them into a broader collective action of revolt and defense at sea. For this purpose, pirates resorted and employed the institution of the naval war council, which they enlarged and democratized, transforming it into a deliberative direct-democratic forum capable to giving institutional expression and relative durability to a desire of federating different crews together in consortship.

While those floating Internationals in miniature had mostly been created after accidental meetings at sea, I have emphasized the inherently internationalist symbolism embodied in the pirate flag, the Jolly Roger, which not only sought to dissuade merchant ships from engaging in battle, but also to express figuratively an internationally-oriented call of solidarity with those sailing under the same colours. The black flag, therefore, displayed a class-based sense of fraternal unity, and was, as such, a key rallying point from which pirate crews could engage in rudimentary and approximate experiments of transboundary proletarian solidarity. Although they were crushed in 1726, their traditions of maritime radicalism profoundly outlived them.

The second episode of the counter-narrative developed in this dissertation was played out mostly, though not exclusively, on land, especially on plantations. At roughly the same time as the deep-sea ship, cash-crop plantations were, too, undergoing a significant transformation of their labour process and mode of organization. In mid-seventeenth-

century Barbados, for instance, capital investment in the sugar boom inaugurated a transition from a system of time-limited unfree labour based on white indentured servitude to a permanent and hereditary one based on black racial slavery which developed as a hardened institutional variant of the first. I have shed light on the extent to which that shift was rooted in significant ways in matters of labour control, that is to say, in the requirements of tying down unfree workers on plantations through social-legal and physical forms of repression and control.

Embodying features of primitive accumulation, this coercive process was key to transforming black racial slavery into a form of value-producing unfree labour *sui generis* to the Atlantic world, but nonetheless integrated in global value relations. Concomitantly, moreover, the development of intensive cane-holing agriculture resulted in the rise of a specific mechanism of manufacture on sugar plantations in the form of gang slave-labour, integrating production into one continuous system of cane growing, milling, and processing. This allowed planters and capitalist investors to formally subsume plantation unfree labour under capital. I have also pointed out how the extraction of production on slave-plantations hinged on practices of race/ethnic-management as a strategy of rule featuring concealed wage-relations.

The Barbadian model of slave-plantation circulated across the Americas, and, as elsewhere, came to inform capitalist developments in the French colony of Saint-Domingue. There, slave plantations rose to an unseen level of production and integration, including on-site refining facilities and slave-labour gangs among the largest in plantation Americas. Of particular significance to my arguments was the fact the most large-scale plantations in Saint-Domingue were owned and managed *directly* by the French merchant

houses, banks, and slaving companies of Bordeaux, Nantes, and Paris. I have emphasized how these developments transformed dynamics of class struggle in the French colony, where, as a result of the geographical expansion of plantation agriculture, petit marronage as well as other short-term practices of mobility succeeded to grand marronage as an alternative form of slave resistance.

One important point of my arguments was to highlight the extent to which, in the immediate decades prior to their 1791 uprising, slaves had already developed profound agentic practices through which they could alter their experience of capitalist exploitation and oppression, and therefore regain some control over their lives. In this sense, I have pointed out the role of religious secret societies as well as more militant instances enacted in the form of collective work-stoppage or what has been called strike-marronage. Supporting these practices were cross-plantation networks of sociability and militancy, which proved crucial in staging the slave uprising. Such emphasis has brought into view the already-ongoing self-activation of Saint-Dominguan slaves as a class before the outbreak of the French Revolution, an opportunity which they seized in order to make further advances based on what they were already engaged in.

My account of the slave revolt in Saint-Domingue—which began as a revolt before mutating into a full-fledge revolution—emphasized symbolic and ideological connections with the French Revolution. I have pointed out the crucial role of the waterfronts in this respect. There, revolutionary enthusiast sailors and slaves met on a quotidian basis, as they worked side-by-side in loading and unloading ships. News, tracts, pamphlets, material symbols, and experiences about the developments in France were transmitted to the slaves, making the waterfront, as one contemporary put it, a genuine school of

insurrection. This underground narrative made its way to the plantation quarters, where slaves could see that a broader social and political struggle was taking place across the Atlantic, and that they could claim their own place in it. Taking advantage of inter-plantation networks, meetings were held among slave conspirators of the North Province about when to rise up. A rumour of reform was discussed, according to which the white colonial authorities were withholding improving measures for the enslaved coming from the king and the National Assembly in Paris. For the slave conspirators, as I have stressed, the rumour was interpreted as an informal testimony of transatlantic solidarity by the metropolitan powers. It produced a galvanizing effect among them and framed their revolt in truly Atlantic terms.

The uprising was launched on the night of August 22th after the Bois Caïman ceremony, where collective solidarities were substantiated with spiritual meanings and secured through blood-oaths ceremonies. Rising up in the North Province in the name of the king of France, war bands of insurgent slaves destroyed plantation after plantation, and gained full military possession of the northern plain after less than a week of revolt. I have highlighted the extent to which the revolt was as much *proletarian*—made by unfree proletarian workers whose labour was integrated in global value relations—as it was *African*. The majority of the rank-and-file were African-born, most of them Kongolese, who carried with them military ideas and experiences which proved critical to the early success of the revolt. This standpoint has also allowed me to shed light on the democratic elements that the revolt embodied, as leaders of militarily-controlled districts were elected or popularly acclaimed as 'kings' by the rebels, thus illuminating how

'African' backgrounds of self-rule could mediate and ground practical experiments in self-emancipation.

As the uprising unfolded, and as slave insurgents increasingly appropriated and interpreted for themselves the republican language of rights associated with the French Revolution, grievances evolved and expanded from demands about labour organization and leadership on plantations to general emancipation. This was achieved in February 1794, after three years of sustained revolt. It was at that very moment that concrete features of an emerging black International began to emerge *out* of revolutionary Saint-Domingue.

Breaking off from the conventional course of narrating the revolution, my account set out to sea and emphasized the agency of a black maritime underground as a crucial transmission belt for connecting other slave revolts elsewhere in the dark Atlantic with the black self-emancipatory project in Saint-Domingue. I have showed how, at first, this process was initiated by buccaneering Jacobinism. Although this revolutionary war at sea primarily served France's imperial ambition against Britain in the Caribbean (which was nonetheless intertwined with abolitionism), it set in motion many freed slaves who took with them their own version of revolution and emancipation, and who were willing to employ the resources of a modern state to undertake independent initiative to re-enact it elsewhere.

I have shed light on a black hydrographic network of connections and solidarity, stretching from St. Christopher to Coro to Curaçao in 1795, to Maracaibo in 1799, to Virginia in 1800, to Philadelphia in 1804, to St. Thomas and Trinidad to Rio de Janeiro in 1805, and, finally, to Cuba in 1812. This last instance was the clearest—because it is the

best documented—example of how African slaves could shape their own process of transboundary proletarian solidarity in the age of revolutions. There, images and drawings of Haiti and its leaders had been passed on by black dockworkers to slaves at the waterfront, which were used and interpreted afterwards to give local revolutionary meaning to a conspiracy seeking out to overthrow the white plantocracy in Cuba.

Thus, the main contribution of this dissertation was to demonstrate that the historical development of working-class internationalism can no longer be explained solely by the emergence of urban factory industry and permanent institutional proletarian politics. Its history was far older, going at least as far back as to the seventeenth century. Its geography was far larger, extending beyond Europe to the entire the Atlantic world. Its politics were more complex, including informal and secret organizations of workers, some of them elaborated on the decks of self-appropriated ships, others at religious meetings in the vicinities of plantations. Its subject was motley, an Atlantic proletarian class involving African slaves from Senegal to Dahomey to Kongo, as well as white servants, sailors, and other poor workers from Ireland to England to Holland to France and so on. As I have tried to illustrate, this Atlantic proletariat, to echo E. P. Thompson, was actively present at its own making in the manufacturing period of Atlantic capitalism. Sympathies were expressed, connections were established, and solidarities were constituted across the bordered world of the dark Atlantic, highlighting that class is as much a social and historical relation, as it is a geographical one embodied in real people and real places. This relation so painfully and fragilely created had dramatic moments of rupture and uncertainty, but also extraordinary moments of hope, freedom, and inspiring continuation.

When he left the port of Montevideo in mid-April of 1848, for instance, Garibaldi was not ending a revolt in South America to begin a new one in Europe. For him, the popular uprisings that had begun across the ocean were extensions of the South American wars of independence. In a strong sense of transatlantic unity of struggle, he wrote to a friend before departure: 'The siege continues'.[3] The influence and contribution of the red-shirted Garibaldian legionnaires—who had then risen to about one thousand—in the proclamation of the short-lived Roman Republic in 1849 led one historian to say that Italy at that time was somewhat of 'a Latin America in Europe'.[4]

Likewise, one month after Garibaldi and his legionnaires had arrived in Italy, Frederick Douglass gave an important speech in Rochester, New York, in which he summoned his audience to pay closer attention to 'the great movements now progressing throughout Europe'.[5] These movements, he said, initiated a 'grand conflict of the angel Liberty with the monster Slavery … The globe shakes with the contest'.[6] He then called upon the crowd of black and white abolitionists 'to participate humbly in this struggle', reminding them that '[w]e are more than spectators of the scenes that pass before us. Our interests, sympathies and destiny compel us to be parties to what is passing around us. Whether the immediate struggle be baptized by the Eastern or Western wave of the waters between us, the water is one, and the cause one, and we are parties to it'.[7]

This dissertation began with the words of a white sailor who escaped royalist persecution in Europe and who decided to fight for the cause of freedom that included

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[3] Garibaldi, *Autobiography*, vol. 3, p. 71.
[4] Max Gallo, *Garibaldi: La Force D'Un Destin* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), p. 114.
[5] Frederick Douglass, *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, eds. Philp S. Foner and Yuval Taylor (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), p. 105.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

African slaves in South America. It now ends with a former slave who escaped the persecution of bondage disguised as a sailor and who decided to fight for the cause of freedom that included white workers in Europe. The Atlantic was and is, indeed, one.

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