

“To Be Sold:”
*The Commodification of Black Bodies and the Dehumanization of Enslaved
Africans in Jamaican Slave Sale Advertisements, 1780-1800*

by

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For my students, past, present, and future.

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Abstract

The dehumanization and commodification of enslaved Africans was predicated on eighteenth century constructions of Africans as categorically different and naturally inferior. By the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the racialized language developed by natural historians to explain human variation was embedded in, and helped support, the expansion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The success of the slave trade in Africans, and the concomitant development of the British West Indies, was thus explained and justified by those that had a stake in the trade in slaves through characterizations of enslaved Africans as immoral, uncivil and primitive. British abolitionists challenged these justifications for the continuation of the slave trade over the course of the 1780s. The Privy Council's 1788 inquiry into the ramifications of ending the slave trade represents a key moment of change through which to analyse how human differences were constructed and reproduced in the British Empire. In Jamaica, the impacts of explanations of the human differences and hierarchies converged with the rapid development of large integrated plantations dependent on the continuous supply of enslaved African labour. The use of phrases such as "To Be Sold," "Prime," and the use of imagery in slave sale advertisements published in *The Royal Gazette* from 1780-1783, and from 1793-1794, represent the ways in which constructions of human difference, commoditizing language and the dreadful economic success of slave-made goods played a crucial role in the dehumanization and racialization of enslaved Africans.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In September of 1782, the ship *Brooks* docked in Kingston, Jamaica with 620 “Prime Coromantee, Shantee, and Ashantee Negro Slaves.” These slaves were “To Be Sold” on board the ship on Tuesday the 24th of that month.¹ In order to enable the sale of these peoples, the “Noble Commander” of the ship contacted his company’s local Guinea factors, who placed an advertisement in Jamaica’s *Royal Gazette*.² This ad, with the phrases “To Be Sold” and “Negro Slaves” enlarged and capitalized, was accompanied by an image on the left side of the small frame that depicted enslaved Africans.

Advertisements such as these were common in the thriving British West Indian colony; indeed, similar ads can be found in British North America where an internal slave trade flourished throughout the American South.³ These advertisements contributed to the rapidly expanding print and consumer culture throughout the British colonies at the end of the eighteenth-century. In Jamaica, in 1782 alone, 75 ads selling enslaved people were placed in the *Royal Gazette*. These ads not only speak to the shifting understanding of consumption and the development of colonial advertising, but also represent one of the most complex and dehumanizing aspects of slavery – people as products to be sold.

The phrase “To Be Sold” starkly defined African people as commodities, as did the use of the adjective “prime” to indicate the ‘quality’ of the goods for sale. Those who

¹ Kingston, Jamaica, *The Royal Gazette*, September 1782.

² For a discussion of Guinea Factors and the slave trade see Nicholas Radburn “Guinea Factors, Slave Sales, and the Profits of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Late Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: The Case of John Tailyour,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 72 no. 2 (April 2015), pp. 243-286.

³ See Emma Hart, “A British Atlantic World of Advertising?: Colonial American “For Sale” Notices in Comparative Context,” *American Periodicals: A Journal of History and Criticism*, 24, no. 2 (2014): 110-127.

participated in the sales of African slaves employed the contemporary commercial lexicon characteristic of trading in any material commodity. The mechanisms of sale and commercializing language within the advertisements reveal, according to historian Jeremy Prestholdt, the “rationales for and consequences of consumption practices” which in turn provide “insight into shifting social relationships.”⁴ Moreover, the frequency of slave sale ads reveals the scope, scale, and value of consumption practices in the Atlantic world. These records show an interconnected global trade that tied human slave labour to the material goods that supported individuals and nations; the reliance on slave sale advertisements occurred not only in Jamaica, but also throughout Atlantic societies that relied on enslaved labour.⁵ As such, it is necessary to situate the slave trade, and slave sale advertisements, amidst the development of European conceptualizations of race and human difference and their material impact in a more global context.

Within eighteenth-century Britain, shifting understandings of freedom, productivity, humanity, and human difference (in which race became a predominant way of conceptualizing ‘difference’) were negotiated concurrently with the expanding and highly profitable slave trade. To understand the rationales for and consequences of the “consumption” and placement of slave sale ads in Jamaica, it is necessary to orient this analysis in both the contemporary intellectual and cultural context, as well as in the global events located in Europe and its colonies.⁶ While a complete analysis of late eighteenth-century commercialism, print culture, enlightenment science and philosophies,

⁴ Jeremy Prestholdt, “Africa and the Global Lives of Things,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* ed. Frank Trentmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85.

⁵ For a comparative analysis on slave sale advertisements and runaway advertisements in a different Atlantic context, the Maritimes, see Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents* (Peterborough, ONT.: Broadview Press, 2018).

⁶ Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 233.

racism, and Jamaican history is not feasible in one text, an overview of the interconnected events and brief histories will inform an in-depth analysis of how slave sale ads contributed to – and defined – the ways in which enslaved peoples were dehumanized, and how these ads and their consumption by predominantly white societies helped to lay the foundation for nineteenth century theories of racial inferiority. The 362 slave sale advertisements from 511 issues, including Supplements and Post-Scripts, of *The Royal Gazette* in the periods 1780 to 1783 and 1793 to 1794 offer a perspective on the events that shook the Atlantic world, and how advertisements increased and altered in response to these events. From the American Revolution, and the rise of British abolitionism, to the French and Haitian Revolutions, the slave sale advertisements represented the ways in which people were dehumanized and racialized in a period when slavery in the West Indies was under attack in Britain. The sale of slaves over these two periods was consistent, and increased rapidly in the early 1790s; the changes that occurred in America and in France resulted in the increase in the sale, trade, and use of enslaved peoples.

The early 1780s represents a period of growth and profitability, coming on the end of a period decline in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.⁷ The American Revolutionary War disrupted international trade and the socio-political understandings of the rights of the enslaved.⁸ With the Declaration of Independence, which declared, “all men are created equal,” the conversations in Britain and in the British West Indies around slavery

⁷ On the slave trade to the West Indies see David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, David Richardson, “Slave Prices, the African Slave Trade, and the Productivity in the Caribbean, 1674-1800,” 58. No 4 (Nov., 2005): 673-700; see also David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

⁸ Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 105-155.

altered.⁹ In addition to the challenges of affirming equality while retaining slavery, the British had more pragmatic reasons for rethinking the position of the enslaved; in a bid to regain the Thirteen Colonies, the British commanders offered freedom to the enslaved people who fought for them.¹⁰ The American Revolution marked a crisis point in which ideas about liberty and equality translated to action in the form of American independence; these ideas and concepts also had lasting impacts in anti- and pro-slavery arguments in Britain. With the end of the Revolutionary War, the British West Indies entered a period of growth and prosperity as the slave trade increased, and both sugar and slave prices rose.¹¹

This period of economic prosperity in Jamaica, and in the British Empire at large, coincided with the organization and mobilization of the abolitionist movement in Britain. In part, the success of antislavery lobbying in Britain came from denigrating the status and morality of West Indian planters and their society. Abolitionists characterized planters as both physically and morally distant from England, indifferent to respectability, and prone to excess, violence, greed and lust. The economic benefits of the plantation system throughout this period were apparent to vested interests; indeed with the acquisition of British Guiana the sugar and slave trades increased wealth for the empire.¹² However, antislavery lobbyists successfully reframed the consideration of the enslaved by foregrounding ‘freedom’, free labour and morality.¹³

⁹ For a discussion of the impact of the Declaration of Independence concerning rights, see Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 18-29.

¹⁰ Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (Verso: London, 2011), 138.

¹¹ For a discussion of the after-effects of the American Revolution within the British Empire, and Jamaica in particular, see Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 213-216.

¹² Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 125.

¹³ For a discussion of the discussion of slavery and the slave trade during the American, French and Haitian

Antislavery and abolitionism in the Atlantic world have a long history and their sources, successes and deficits continue to be the topics of historical inquiry. Authors such as David Brion Davis and Christopher Leslie Brown, among others, have analyzed the ways in which moral perceptions in Britain after the American Revolution acquired a new and important political currency. They posit that this shift resulted in the abolition of slavery.¹⁴ Abolition, according to Brown, was the “consequence of shifts in moral perception, as if the recognition of a moral duty must have led men and women to act.”¹⁵ Other historians offer an alternative account of what brought slavery to its end. Eric Williams in his classic *Capitalism and Slavery* argued that it was the rise of capitalism and industrialization in Britain that resulted in abolition. Regardless of the efficacy of the antislavery movement, what is crucial for this analysis is that abolitionism in Britain reached a peak in 1787-1788 when popular mobilization and political activism resulted in the Privy Council commissioning an inquiry into the impacts of ending the slave trade. British abolitionists were seemingly successful again in 1791, when the House of Commons voted to pass An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.¹⁶ This success was eclipsed by the escalation of political turmoil in France and the Haitian Revolution in 1791.

While the American Revolution affected a decrease in the slave trade to the British West Indies, the French and Haitian Revolutions caused a dramatic increase in slave shipments arriving in Jamaica. The slave sale advertisements reflect this rise.

Revolutions see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975)

¹⁴ Seymour Drescher takes some issue with this analysis, asserting that the Revolution was not a crisis point as abolitionism was developing outside of revolutionary movements, see Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

¹⁵ Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁶ Drescher, *Abolition*, 222-223

Jamaica became the dominant sugar and slave island in the West Indies in part because of events in Europe and the West Indies.¹⁷ In 1793, Toussant L’ouverture and the Revolutionary Committee in the north of Saint-Domingue both decreed the emancipation of the enslaved in Haiti; in 1794 France abolished slavery. Before the French and Haitian Revolutions, Saint-Domingue was the largest and most profitable sugar colony in the West Indies. In the wake of the end of slavery in France and the devolving socio-political situation in both France and Saint-Domingue, the British abolitionist movement faltered. In 1793, the British became involved in the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars; their involvement lasted until 1804, effectively halting discussions of abolition due to war and granting Jamaican planters another period of economic prosperity. The years 1793 and 1794 therefore mark a period in which antislavery debates were halted by accounts of the horrors coming out of Haiti and by the Revolution in France.¹⁸ This period also marks the continuation of a period of economic growth and expansion in Jamaica.

Jamaica was one of the most productive sugar islands in the West Indies from 1750 until, arguably, emancipation in 1833.¹⁹ The French sugar colony of Saint-Domingue was the only competitor in terms of sugar output in the mid to late eighteenth

¹⁷ Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, 174.; for more in-depth histories of the Haitian Revolution see Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World*. London: Harvard University Press, 2004.; Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti : The Saint Domingue Revolution from below*. 1st ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990.; John D. Garrigus. *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.; for a discussion of the French Revolution and slavery see Blackburn, Robin. “Anti-Slavery and the French Revolution.” *History Today*. 41 no. 11 (1991): 19-25.; Curran, Andrew S. *The Anatomy of Blackness : Science & Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.; Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France the Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Regime*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.; Louis Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the Haitian Revolution, the Terror and the French Empire see C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Random House, Inc. 1963); Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

¹⁹ Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 250.

century.²⁰ Jamaica's plantation economy started in the late seventeenth century, when planters moved their operations from the older West Indian colony of Barbados; they brought with them lessons learned as well as their equipment and enslaved peoples.²¹ Due to its size and diverse landscape, Jamaica was able to support a wider variety of export crops than the older colony.²² Unlike Barbados and other smaller West Indian plantation colonies, Jamaica did not become a sugar monoculture. Landowners grew indigo, cotton, and coffee, all of which necessitated intense manual, enslaved labour, and substantial initial investments in order to clear land, build accommodations, and produce crops on which the enslaved were expected to subsist. As a result, Jamaica was, in part, defined and shaped by much larger plantations than existed in other British West Indian colonies. Another defining characteristic was that up to 80 percent of plantation owners were absentees, providing capital and reaping the profits while residing in England.²³ The large integrated plantations that defined Jamaica in the eighteenth century also necessitated gang labour, a form of labour that was exclusively assigned to enslaved Africans by the early eighteenth century.²⁴

The large integrated plantations that were dependent on intense enslaved labour caused a demographic imbalance that promoted the use of extreme violence as the preferred method to manage the labour force. The ratio of people of African descent to English colonists was 10:1 in 1740 on average, and in some parishes rose to a ratio of

²⁰ Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus have discussed the competition and connections between Jamaica and Saint Domingue in their exhaustive comparative history of Jamaica and Saint-Domingue *The Plantation Machine*.

²¹ Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, (Barbados: Caribbean University Press, 1974), 211.

²² Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 212.

²³ Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 200.

²⁴ Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 55.

20:1.²⁵ The use of violence, as a daily exercise in control and in the use of excessive and cruel punishments, increased as the size of the enslaved labour force grew.²⁶ This growth in the black population of Jamaica did not occur naturally through slave reproduction, as was to occur in the American South, but through the increase in slave shipments from the West African coast. Therefore, as Jamaicans amassed wealth and success, they also amassed enslaved Africans. This resulted in a system in which, according to Trevor Burnard, “notions of white supremacy were always associated with economic prosperity.”²⁷ This economic growth was unprecedented; by the mid-eighteenth century Jamaica was the main source of rum and sugar to Britain and its colonies, and the largest importer of slaves in British America.²⁸ The demand for enslaved labour – supplied from both the transatlantic slave trade and through the internal Jamaican trade – is reflected in the advertisements of shipments, wanted ads, and small-scale slave sales. As such, it is worth discussing the ways in which consumer culture – and specifically the role of print and newspapers – provides insight into the ways in which colonists understood and contested slavery in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

Print culture played a crucial role throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. Within the colonies, newspapers and gazettes imparted relevant imperial announcements, European news, regular updates from British Parliamentary sessions, news from the American colonies, as well as local news, deaths, and the arrivals and departures of ships. These publications were also instruments of propaganda, commodification, and moral education, and were used by pro and anti-slavery advocates

²⁵ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 217.

²⁶ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 58.

²⁷ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 43.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 202.

to wage moral battles, to spread ideologies and to affect moral judgements. The rise of capitalism and the preceding growth of industrialization also contributed to the growth of consumption.²⁹ The boom in consumerism was bolstered by a proliferation of advertisements, so much so that large portions of newspapers were filled with advertisements; there were entire periodicals devoted to advertising.³⁰ Advertisements in this time period offer historians, according to historian John Brewer, “the most public evidence of how businessmen tried to manipulate consumer demand, provide the clearest public evidence of businessman’s persistence, inventiveness and commercial skill.”³¹ Advertisements also enable historians to analyze the ways in which cultural assumptions were reproduced, particularly when the ‘commodities’ for sale were people, as these cultural assumptions had material impacts on the lives of the groups that were commoditized.

The *Royal Gazette*, like other periodicals throughout British colonies, carried advertisements concerning the enslaved. This included runaway advertisements, announcements offering the names of the slaves in Kingston’s jail or in the workhouses, slaves for sale on board ships, in stores, and slaves offered for sale through private transactions. These ads contributed to the growing and ongoing racialization of the enslaved; they reflected the growing cultural conceptualizations of enslaved people as animal-like, slothful, and inferior. Not only did they contribute to contemporary understandings of race, but these ads are representative of the ways in which archives continue to oppress and silence the enslaved. In the majority of the ads, the people to be

²⁹ Ben Fines, *The World of Consumption: The material and cultural revisited*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 5.

³⁰ Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, “Introduction,” *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 11.

³¹ John Brewer, “Commercialization and Politics” *The Birth a Consumer Society*, 148.

sold were figures, some numbering in the hundreds, others advertised in groups of “ten valuable negroes.” The slave sale ads offer the starting point from which we can explore the ways in which print culture contributed to the commodification and racialization of the enslaved.

Slavery in Jamaica, as elsewhere in the Atlantic world, was defined by coercion, forced labour, and violence. Increasingly, towards the end of the eighteenth century as revolts and revolutions in the West Indies and Europe threatened the already precarious stability of “white culture” on the island, slavery was conflated with race. Starting in the 1760s, free people of colour became the target of legislation that barred them from political participation and denied them rights as landowners: “whiteness” became crucial to control on an island where people of colour, both free and enslaved, dwarfed the ‘master’ population.³² Prominent Jamaicans like planter-historian Edward Long contributed to the racialization of the enslaved in his three-volume *History of Jamaica, 1774*. In Volume II Long wrote, “When we [those of European descent] reflect on the nature of these men [people of colour of African descent], and their dissimilarity to the rest of mankind, must we not conclude that they are a different species of the same *genus*?”³³ His rationale for this particular ‘reflection’ was discussed in depth, from anatomy, to mental faculties, to comparisons between people of colour and primates. Long’s prolific diatribe against the subjugated and enslaved was well received by his contemporaries; it was representative of a growing ideology that sought to justify and

³² Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 137-138.

³³ Edward Long, *History of Jamaica, Volume II*, 356.

secure the ongoing oppression and dehumanization of a group of people that literally embodied huge profits for the society that controlled them.³⁴

While it is important to note that modern notions of anti-black racism, based on pseudo-scientific arguments about inheritable natural predispositions and abilities, were not fully established until the nineteenth century, publications like Long's indicate the ways in which the white landed elite in the Atlantic world negotiated ideas of human difference.³⁵ The history of how pseudo-scientific racism developed is complex and connected to the ways in which Africans and their descendants were forced into positions of mass manual labour throughout the New World, the establishment of white male plantocracies, growing antislavery debates and subsequent 'emancipation'.³⁶ In light of the complex nature of how eighteenth-century politicians, planters, clergy and landed elite in the colonies and mainland understood and profited from slavery, an examination of the Parliamentary inquiry into ending slavery offers a window into how the enslaved were conceptualized, depicted, commoditised and "consumed."

Chapter 1 discusses the beginning of enslaved people's dehumanization at their point of entry into the commercial venture that was the transatlantic slave trade, and offers a brief overview of the eighteenth century philosophical justifications for the use of African enslaved labour. The process of the commodification of Africans began at their point of departure from West Africa; they stopped being "Natives" and became slaves or "Negroes." I will explore the ways in which captains, sailors, merchants and doctors

³⁴ Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 20.

³⁵ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 30. I define modern notions of race for the purposes of this analysis as the institutionalized, inherently hierarchical social classification based on physical characteristics that equate to notions of morality, ability, and intelligence.

³⁶ For a more in depth analysis of the "Africanization" of labour and impact of emancipation see Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

discussed their human cargo. It was here, as Burnard aptly observes, that sailors became “jailers of captive Africans in the Middle Passage [and it was these men white men] who exercised violence over Africans, now seen as black people.”³⁷ This shift, from “African” to “Negro,” to use the language of eighteenth-century sources, was the first step in a process that culminated in a sale to a plantation or pen owner and a life of forced and often violently extracted labour. This chapter interrogates volume 69 of the *House of Commons Sessional Papers*, compiled by Sheila Lambert. Between 1788 and 1792 the British Parliament conducted an enquiry into the slave trade in response to antislavery advocacy. The papers contain interviews with captains and merchants, as well as excerpts from traveller’s accounts and prominent planters such as Jamaica’s Edward Long. The language used within the “Report” conducted by the British Parliament contributed to conceptualizations of Africans as inferior; this in turn enabled merchants, planters, and captains to construct the enslaved as sub-human.

Chapter 2 examines the slave sale advertisements that provide the bulk of my primary source base. The mechanisms of sale advertised in the *Gazette*, public auctions of the enslaved with other commodities, auctions on board ships, and private transactions, represented the ways in which enslaved Africans were conflated with other commodity goods such as furniture, land, and livestock. This conflation solidified contemporary notions of the enslaved as valuable through their lack of human identities and traits. I will begin by examining the ways in which *The Royal Gazette* acted as both a reflection of Jamaican consumer culture, and a promoter of various consumer products, not least of which were people. The ads themselves offer an opportunity to compare mass shipments of slaves, small private sales, estate sales, and the role of merchants in these transactions.

³⁷ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 83.

The discussion of the conflation of land and enslaved people, the value of labour, the attribution of tribal and ethnic identities and the animalization of the enslaved will lead to an analysis of the language and imagery that constituted the advertisements.

Chapter 3 offers an in-depth analysis of the language, imagery and symbolism used within the slave sale advertisements. The use of commodifying language such as “Choice,” “Prime,” and “Seasoned” will be interrogated to analyze how white Jamaicans evaluated enslaved bodies. The commercial trends in the advertisements are explored, as there are clear repetitions in language, imagery, and phrasing. The use of imagery or lack thereof, the use of numbers, names and professions included in the ads all contributed to the commodification and dehumanization of the enslaved.

The conclusion discusses the implication of the ads, and their legacy within the British Empire. Slave sale advertisements were not the only form of propaganda used in the eighteenth century to disseminate stereotypes. British abolitionists also relied on visual representations of the enslaved to propagate notions of the primitive, submissive, enslaved African begging for salvation. The construction of Africans, both enslaved and free, as primitive, savage, and in need of either strict labour regimes or Christian conversion converged after emancipation. The dehumanization of the enslaved was translated to theories of the sub-human, scientifically evidenced, status of Africans and peoples of African descent. The development of pseudo-scientific racism owed much to the natural histories of the Enlightenment, and to the commodification, dehumanization, and animalization of the enslaved articulated in weekly periodicals.

This thesis is a discussion of the ways in which cultural assumptions were built and compounded through the dehumanization and commodification of the enslaved. It

does not address the ways in which the enslaved contested, challenged, subverted or, in some cases, were defeated by their status as property and commodity. Just as slavery itself represented an impossible contradiction, the nature of slave historiography has been caught in a discussion about whether slaves were able to contest their status. Beginning with Stanley Elkins' interpretation of 'Sambo' in the late 1950s, which sparked a prolonged rebuttal by prominent slavery historians such as Eugene Genovese, John Blassingame, Michael Mullins and Herbert Gutman, the debate around slave agency and resistance has increasingly become entrenched in debates around identity politics.³⁸ This association between enslaved agency and identity has developed, in part, due to the ongoing oppression and domination experienced by minority groups in the West. In this way, historical interpretations which frame enslaved peoples as actively resisting the institution of slavery have continued to hold significance in modern discourse. However, recent scholarship has also offered an interpretation of slave life – and slave culture, resistance, and revolt – in which slaves resisted by surviving the cruel and all too usual experience of enslavement. In his *Surviving Slavery in the British Caribbean*, Randy Browne articulates this trend in historical interpretation: “[The] enslaved in Berbice and similar societies fought for survival. This shift in perspective challenges some of the unspoken assumptions that continue to shape the study of slavery, including the notion that enslaved people’s primary goal was freedom.”³⁹ Other scholars such as Vincent Browne, Trevor Burnard, Walter Johnson and Anthony Kaye concur with Browne’s

³⁸See Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1959); John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); 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); Michael Mullins, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and British Caribbean, 1736-1831*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

³⁹ Randy Browne, *Surviving Slavery in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 4.

analysis and increasingly have framed their discussions of enslaved agency as triumphs of survival as opposed to a collective willed resistance to the institution of slavery; as Sidney Mintz asserts “only a tiny fraction of daily life consisted of open resistance. Instead, most of life then, like most of life now, was spent living.”⁴⁰

This thesis addresses how race was negotiated through language pertaining to the enslavement of Africans in the form of the “Report” conducted by the Privy Council, and through slave sale advertisements in Jamaica. As such, slave sale advertisements from other British colonies, such as Barbados and British North America, are not addressed here but it is crucial to acknowledge their existence throughout the Atlantic world. Slave sale advertisements were present in both slave societies, such as Jamaica, and societies with slaves, such as Nova Scotia. These advertisements were strikingly similar in their format, language, and in some cases, imagery used in the late eighteenth century. These similarities reveal that the racialized imagery, commercial language, and commodified status of the enslaved was consistent throughout the slave-holding Atlantic world.⁴¹

While it would be a stretch to assert that slave sale advertisements produced the stereotypes and cultural biases which were later co-opted into pseudo-scientific racism, throughout the Atlantic world they did reaffirm and reproduce these stereotypes so as to make nineteenth century theories of racial inferiority readily acceptable by white populations seeking to maintain their economic, social and political hegemony.

⁴⁰ Sidney W. Mintz, “Slave Life on Caribbean Sugar Plantations: Some Unanswered Questions,” in *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery*, ed. Stephan Palmie (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 13.; While my own discussion of slavery will not address the nature of slave agency, or indeed the every day lives of the enslaved, I find it necessary to draw attention to the contentious nature of this field of history in order to address the increased politicization of history and identity. Not only is there an ongoing debate around the history of slavery and the nature freedom, but increasingly there is also a debate about who has the right to speak to the histories of the enslaved.

⁴¹ For an example of a slave sale advertisement from the Maritime provinces, see Whitfield, *Black Maritime Slavery*, 24.

The ways in which race in the Western world has continued to be used as a weapon of oppression, coercion, and the justification for institutionalized violence brought me to the end of the eighteenth century. In an attempt to deconstruct the pervasive and insidious social construct that is race, I am focusing on one small part of a much larger picture in which the enslavement of Africans, the deaths of indigenous peoples both in Africa and the Americas, extreme and appalling violence, rape, the colonization of the African continent, pseudo-scientific justifications for oppression, Jim Crow laws, segregation, and the prison-industrial complex all have a place. Race, and racism, as we understand it today have been negotiated, contested and cemented over the last three centuries. In the twenty-first century we are witnessing a period in which those that have been silenced are claiming space in which to articulate their own histories and renegotiating the understanding of race. The wilful misinterpretation of historical evidence based on deeply entrenched and valued racial ideologies led me to antislavery and proslavery arguments concerning the slave trade and slavery itself; European enlightenment discourses concerning natural histories and categories of human difference; and ultimately to the slave sale ads and the dehumanization of people. I hope to contribute to a growing understanding, and perhaps an increasing ability to accurately contest and challenge, how we construct difference.

Chapter 2. Defining Difference

Discourses on Human Variation and their Impact on Slavery in Britain

In 1788 the Council concerning Trade and Foreign relations of the British House of Commons commissioned a report mandated to address the slave trade by collecting evidence through interviews and testimonials requested from the British Company of Merchants, British colonial agents, governors, and assemblies, as well as British politicians, and abolitionists.¹ The “Report” included testimonies, witness statements and written submissions from captains of vessels involved in the slave trade, governors who served terms along the African coast, doctors and clergymen who worked onboard ships and within West Indian colonies, prominent West Indian planters and antislavery advocates.² The “Report” was conducted in order to assess the impacts of ending the slave trade. To that end, the Committee collected evidence from the Company of Africans, members of Parliament, colonial Assemblies in the West Indies, the Board of Trade and from administrators who had worked along the West African coast.³ Ending the slave trade would have complex and widespread implications in Britain – not least of which would be the reduced material wealth of British elites in and out of the colonies. The meaning of empire was also connected to the debate around the continuation of the slave trade, as slavery had been considered necessary for successful colonial enterprise.⁴

¹ Sheila Lambert (ed.) *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69*, 1789 (Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resource, 1975), 3.

² Within the eight-volume report, Thomas Clarkson was cited as bringing several witnesses forward to submit their ‘testimonies’ before the Committee. See “Testimony of Isham Baggs,” *House of Commons Sessional Papers, Volume 69*, (1789), 58.

³ *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69*, (1789), 3-4.

⁴ For a discussion of empire and slavery, see Sean Hawkins and Philip D. Morgan, “Blacks and the British Empire: An Introduction,” in *Black Experience and the Empire* ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Christopher L. Brown, “From Slaves to Subjects: Envisioning an

The socio-political and economic consequences of ending the slave trade were discussed in the “Report;” these discourses were also connected to contemporary notions about the value of labour, the nature of freedom and the validity of natural hierarchies. The stakes within the “Report” – and wider publications concerning slavery, natural rights, and freedom – were high.⁵

This chapter analyses the language that British merchants, planters, and government officials used to describe the race and humanity of Africans. It argues that the language employed by the agents of the slave trade, and by their opponents, demonstrated a shift in how they understood Africans once they had become enslaved. The transition in language reveals a conceptual change from the idea of an autonomous, if uncivil and debased, African person, to the commodification of that person as a “Negro,” or, a person with a price.⁶ The chapter starts with a brief survey of natural history, the eighteenth-century titles for the study of philosophy, history, anthropology, and early biology. This survey will focus on those natural historians who made definitive claims about the nature of Africans and their place within human hierarchy. Following

Empire without Slavery, 1772-1834,” in *Black Experience and the Empire* ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵ Drescher, *Abolition*, 57; for an overview of the origins of the slave trade see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966); For an examination of how enslaved Africans altered the demographics and social structure of America life see Robert Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991); For an analysis of the beginning of African-based slavery used by Europeans, see Johannes Postma, “The Origin of African Slaves: The Dutch Activities on the Guinea Coast, 1675-1795,” in *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene Genovese, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975);

⁶ The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “Negro” as a “member of a dark-skinned group of peoples originally native to sub-Saharan Africa; a person of black African origin or descent.” The secondary definition offered is: “A slave (or enfranchised slave) of black African origin or descent, esp. in the Southern states of America prior to the Abolition of slavery.” Both of these definitions support an argument that the term “Negro” was used to replace identity when describing peoples of African origin or descent – increasingly, this word also denoted enslavement as is evidenced in both the “Report” and in the slave sale advertisements. “Negro, n. and adj.” OED Online. June 2018. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/Entry/125898?redirectedFrom=Negro> (accessed August 02, 2018).

this survey, I will analyze how Africans along the West African coast were discussed within the *Sessional Papers*; they were framed as lacking civility, a term which encompassed a variety of meanings and human attributes. While free Africans were discussed as human, they were nonetheless framed as inferior to the British. The language used to describe African religion, trade, and the African experience of the Middle Passage was similarly steeped in value-laden language that had its roots in natural histories. At the heart of this chapter is the idea that the racialization of Africans was contingent upon the dehumanization and commodification of both enslaved and free Africans. As Africans transitioned from autonomous to enslaved, the language used to describe them mimicked this physical transition from West Africa to the British West Indies. In an attempt to understand this semantic and conceptual transition, a brief review of the philosophical and historical roots of human difference is essential.

The *Sessional Papers*, in which the “Report” is located, documented the perspectives and experiences of both those who had a stake in the slave trade’s continuation, and those who sought its end; therefore, the testimonials do not simply give an account of the workings of the slave trade, but they lay out the issues at stake for empire and individuals. Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus estimate that from 1758 to 1807 the slave trade alone was valued at £25 million; this does not include the profits garnered from enslaved labour.⁷ The wealth generated from the slave trade, and the connected wealth acquired by white planters and their supporters, resulted in fierce opposition to abolitionists in Parliament.

⁷ Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 58.

The publications that denounced the slave trade as morally reprehensible and the subsequent rise of antislavery sentiment in late eighteenth-century Britain challenged the contemporary view of slavery and the slave trade as, according to slavery specialist Seymour Drescher, being at the “pre-political level of unsavoury and unassailable.”⁸ Beginning in the 1780s, politicized antislavery action began in earnest through the work of Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and Antony Benezet, and others, as well as through the increased involvement of British citizens as they participated in petitions and boycotts.⁹ In the “Report,” moral outrage was tempered with practical advice about emancipation in submissions from the former slave and abolitionist Gustavus Vass, otherwise known as Olaudah Equiano. Antislavery sentiment was countered with graphic descriptions of the extreme violence and constant executions enacted by kings in West Africa offered by former merchant, ship captain and Liverpool delegate Robert Norris.¹⁰ The biases were, therefore, explicit in the papers – particularly within the accounts that depicted West and Central African nations as violent and depraved, as well as those testimonies from men like Captain Hall, a sailor in the Merchants Service who made several voyages to the Windward Coast, who framed the slave trade as “founded in Blood, and perfectly illegal.”¹¹ The testimonies within the “Report”, both pro- and anti-slavery, reveal the ideological process through which African peoples became, in the eyes of their European captors, fixed in their inferior status within a hierarchical system of “humanity.”

⁸ Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 65.

⁹ See Drescher *Abolition* and Christopher Brown *Moral Capital*; For a discussion of the sugar boycotts in England: Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 78-79.

¹⁰ “Letter from Gustavus Vassa,” *Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69*, 98-99; Mr. Norris, 15.

¹¹ Testimony of Captain Hall, *Sessional Papers: Volume 69*, 20.

Embedded within the testimonials and accounts given by British merchants, governors, captains and sailors relating to African government, custom, trade and management there is a perceptible shift in the language these men used to discuss “Africans” between the point at which they were on the African shore and the point at which they became enslaved. The use of the term “Native” when discussing African peoples was not used after the point of departure from the West African coast – instead, the “Natives” were referred to as negroes or slaves. This shift, the first step in the process of commodification, reveals a broader racialization that was coded into the language of the intellectual elite and disseminated throughout the British Empire. This language encompassed discourses about humanitarianism and developing sciences – both of which existed within the natural histories of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In the first section of Volume 69 of the “Report,” Africans were designated as “Natives” in relation to local government and customs. However, the language alters in the accounts of how Africans are enslaved; the first use of the term “Negro” was written in connection to the enslavement of Africans.¹² It is this transition from “Native” to “Negro,” negotiated and reproduced by the merchants, captains, planters, overseers and politicians of the British Empire, that represents what historian David Brion Davis considers the “fundamental contradiction arising from the ultimately impossible attempt to define and treat men as objects.”¹³ The use of the word “Negro” revealed this fundamental contradiction as it was often used synonymously with slave in the eighteenth century; “Negro” was laden with connections to black, African enslavement. Therefore, the men tasked with describing autonomous Africans in the “Report” and the men who

¹² *Sessional Papers, Part I: Government, Religion, Manners and Customs, Vol. 69*, 24.

¹³ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 82.

were tasked with controlling the enslaved during the Middle Passage and in the West Indies constructed Africans as distinctly different – as “Black Traders,” and “Negroes” – in order to conceptualize African peoples as property, in spite of their humanity. One outcome of this negotiation between inferiority constructed by those involved in the slave trade and Africans’ humanity was the use of violence to control and oppress the newly enslaved. In the “Report” this violence was discussed to varying degrees; the “Report” also reveals the many testimonies in which there were denials of African histories, African ‘civility’ through direct and indirect comparisons with animals, and dismissals of African subjecthood in order to silence the humanity of the enslaved.

The eighteenth-century conceptualization of some groups of people as intrinsically physically and morally different from other humans, and the language to ascribe these differences, was developed over time by European men in diverse social and scientific fields. These men used words that are now imbued with violent and oppressive histories; in the early eighteenth century, however, these words were negotiated within a series of social, political, and economic platforms in European controlled societies, most of which profited from slavery. Therefore, these words were “practiced organically with their age” and only from use and subsequent justifications did the language around human classifications become imbued with discriminatory meanings.¹⁴ Much of the language used in the *Sessional Papers*, and in contemporary literature, concerning Africans, humane treatment and trade had its origin in enlightenment era natural histories concerned with the origins of mankind and the

¹⁴ Simon-Aaron, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 178.

hierarchy of the Great Chain of Being.¹⁵ Although theories of racial inferiority were not cemented until the nineteenth century, scientific approaches to explaining human variation were practiced with increasing frequency throughout Europe, with little distinction given between the humanities and natural sciences.¹⁶ Therefore, assertions written as fact were common, such as the claim made by the Jamaican historian-planter Bryan Edwards in the late eighteenth century that “Since the history of mankind, it has been observed as a general rule, that conquerors have come from the north.”¹⁷

Eighteenth-century natural historians’ interest in defining categorically human difference, thereby explaining its occurrence, engaged several influential enlightenment intellectuals. It was these men who, according to philosopher Chukwudi Eze, provided the “identifiable scientific and philosophical vocabulary: “race,” “progress,” “civilization,” “savagery,” “nature,” “bile,” “phlogiston,” ...[and it is these definitions that construct the] objects of scientific, philosophical, or cultural study.”¹⁸

The pursuit of natural histories in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century was instrumental in the development of theories addressing human difference – specifically, of Africans as naturally, by the nineteenth century, racially inferior. Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood assert that this association of inferiority and African origin was the result of “a basic idea, grounded in European thought, that

¹⁵ The Great Chain of Being was conceptualized as a “hierarchical system...in which every being, from humans down to fauna and flora, had a “naturally” assigned position and status.” Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, editor, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, (Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1997), 5

¹⁶ Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood, *The Race Concept*, (London: David and Charles (Holdings) Limited, 1975), 16.

¹⁷ Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies, To which is added An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, (London, 1798), 129.

¹⁸ Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment*, 7.

black was the colour of sin and death.”¹⁹ Philosopher Justin Smith, in tracking the historical ontology of race, suggests that not “every historical occurrence of a description of what would appear to be physical traits in fact has to do with race in any robust sense” as for philosophers in the early modern era such as Baruch Spinoza, blackness was humoral in nature and associated with the overproduction of black bile and melancholy; this association was extended to melancholy as earthy, and in turn there was a connection to corpses and other dark and bleak occurrences.²⁰ In *The Anatomy of Blackness*, historian Andrew Curran offers an in-depth analysis of Enlightenment era scholars who focused on blackness; he posits “Deciphering the black African’s status within the human species nonetheless remained a vexing problem for a number of Enlightenment-era philosophes.”²¹ The conceptualization of Africans as inferior to Europeans was therefore a long and complex process, in which the denigration of blackness was not the sole foundation. Europeans also advanced claims of their intellectual genius and their attainment of higher morality in comparison with Africans, and bolstered these claims by referencing European state-building, the use of written records, and their own perceived technological superiority.

The process of classification and denigration in eighteenth-century natural histories is evident in the construction of a dichotomy between civilization and the ‘other.’ Within this construct, Africa was the “Dark Continent;” savagery and incivility

¹⁹ Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood, *The Race Concept* (London: David and Charles (Holdings) Limited, 1975),14.

²⁰ Justin E. H. Smith, *Nature, Humane Nature, & Human Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 58, 61.

²¹ Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science & Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 118.

were placed outside of enlightened Europe both intellectually and physically.²² George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, was one of the notable eighteenth-century philosophers who propagated theories about the root of human difference; he posited that climate could impact “upon the figure and colour of the human figure,” and that this was the reason for the Africans blackness, as well as for their savage nature.²³ Curran characterizes Buffon’s classification and descriptions of African peoples as “seemingly [to function] as living counterexamples to things civilized or European in his era’s thoughts.”²⁴ As such, Buffon’s explorations of human classifications functioned more to elevate Europeans than to offer an explanation for difference. In doing so, the reality of African peoples as autonomous groups with their own histories was not valued. Buffon dehumanized “Africans” in pursuit of a refined and superior classification of Europeans. Further investigation complicated early classifications of human groups as the hereditary nature of skin colour, the complication of albinism in those of African descent, and conflicting arguments about the origins of human groups continued to hinder the ability of early European scientists, or natural historians, in their attempts to make universal statements about human nature.²⁵

In keeping with Buffon’s attempts to describe human differences, David Hume, the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher and economist, published a series of influential essays and lectures that dealt with ‘national characteristics.’ Hume’s “Of National Characters,” in which he discussed the ways national characters were

²² Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, editor, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, (Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1997), 5.

²³ Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, “Selections from *A Natural History, General and Particular* (1748-1804), in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1997), 17.

²⁴ Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*, 105.

²⁵ There remained an ongoing debate in early Enlightenment dialogue about the monogenesis or polygenesis of the human ‘races’; see Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*.

established, was not atypical in assertions that “all the nations, which live beyond the polar circles or between the tropics, are inferior to the rest of the species, and are incapable of all the higher moral attainments of the human mind.”²⁶ Shortly after making this claim, Hume qualified himself in a footnote in which he stated, “I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation.”²⁷ Hume’s understanding of human hierarchy was based on the belief that there were several races of human – each different in kind and ability, but all inferior to ‘white’; moreover, he asserted that while the “negroe” kind may be able to imitate genius, they had no natural inclination or ability to produce genius of their own. Hume relied on the accounts of travellers, captains, merchants and planters for his empirical evidence, an approach in accord with a developing scientific method that required concrete observable ‘facts’; as such, his arguments about natural traits and natural inferiorities were considered supported by the enlightened science of the eighteenth century. The assertion that “there never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white” is relevant within the present discussion because, despite discussing “National Characters,” Hume is also framing whiteness – not nationality – as the marker of civility. That civility was dependent on whiteness also negated black or African access to civility; Hume’s constructs underpinned future justifications for the disregard of African autonomy and civility. The language employed here is echoed in the “Report’s” privileging of civility, and the connection of humanity to this civility.

²⁶ David Hume, from “Of National Characters,” (1754), in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1997), 32.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

Published twenty years after Hume’s “Of National Characters,” Immanuel Kant in his “On the Different Races of Man” asserted that there were four races of man: Whites, Negroes, Hunnic, and Hindu. Within this essay, Kant also posited that the reason for the “blackness that shines through the superficial skin” was the presence of more iron particles in the blood, which in turn “make all Negroes stink.”²⁸ Kant’s science – his classifications and use of a slowly developing field of physical anthropology – made explicit the inferiority of the “Negro race” in the assertion that all Negroes stank. The impact of this demeaning – and sometimes explicitly derogatory – language was in its offering a foundation and natural “evidence” for referring to Africans as base, uncivil and inferior. Not only were ‘races of men’ characterized based upon Euro-centric concepts of civilization, science, and natural histories (all of which were denied to Africans), but throughout Enlightenment texts there were passages which described “Negroes” in seemingly flippant but deeply negative language.²⁹ The descriptions of Africans as possessing animal features were perhaps the most illustrative example of the use of deeply impactful and negative language. This association was apparent in natural histories concerning mankind, in localized histories of British West Indian colonies and within the *Sessional Papers*.

Smith, in his discussion of the ontology of race, interrogates the association of animal characteristics and African features and posits that to associate African hair to

²⁸ Immanuel Kant, “On the Different Races of Man,” (1775) in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1997), 55.

²⁹ Evidence of this is found in the work of Kant, as cited above, as well as in his assertion of Africans as lazy see Immanuel Kant, “On the Different Races of Man,” (1775) in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1997), 46.; Carl von Linne, in *Mammalia* (1735) classifies Africans as being “craft, indolent, negligent” and “Governed by caprice”; Jamaican planter-historian Bryan Edwards asserts that a “negro would regard a permanent connection of [marriage] as the severest punishment you could inflict” due to their licentiousness in Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies, To which is added An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, (London, 1798), 162.;

“wool” because it can be curly, categorizes the African within the order of animal hierarchies. To extend this, Smith suggests that in the description of woolly hair, Africans became associated with sheep, goats and ibexes in ways that European natural historians would not have done in reference to any of their own physical features.³⁰ Therefore, Jamaican planter-historian Edward Long’s characterization of Africans as covered in “wool, like bestial fleece, instead of hair,” explicitly connected animal to African due to their physiognomy, and reproduced the theory of animal classifications and hierarchy as applying to Africans.³¹ Long took this argument further; he asserted that “Ludicrous as the opinion may seem, I do not think that an oran-outang husband would be any dishonour to an Hottentot female; for what are these Hottentots?”³² Long characterized man’s supremacy and sovereignty over the earth through references to Buffon and Hume as support – the repeated connection between African and primate was used to illustrate the base nature of one race and the superiority of the white European. Writing two decades later, Bryan Edwards tempered Long’s arguments about the African proximity to primates. Edwards asserted that the “Eboes, or Mocoos...confirmation of the face bears a strong resemblance to the baboon,” but contended that “the Eboe may consequently be considered as akin to the intellect, as well as the visage of the baboon, is a conclusion I am not warranted to draw.”³³ Historian David Brion Davis explains how Africans were animalised within the trans-Atlantic slave trade as they were transported and sold like domesticated animals. Not only this, Davis asserts, but enslaved Africans were

³⁰ Smith, *Nature, Human Nature & Human Difference*, 41-42.

³¹ Edward Long, “The Third Book. Chapter I: Negroes,” from *The History of Jamaica, Volume II*, (1774), 352.

³² Long, *History of Jamaica, Vol. II* (1774), 364.

³³ Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 158.

conceptualized by Europeans as having been saved from the savagery, cannibalism, and heresy rampant within Africa.³⁴

The animalization of Africans, and the placement of Africans within a lower race or group of humans within a natural hierarchy, facilitated a remarkable uniformity in the ways in which peoples of African descent were discussed within many of the texts produced during the eighteenth century dealing with human nature and classifications.³⁵ Though the burgeoning sciences could not offer a definitive explanation for human difference (notably, race), the intellectual elites nonetheless framed Africans' capacities and cultures as grossly inferior with such frequency and consistency that the ideology of African inferiority became the basis for a cultural understanding of difference.

Through the animalization of Africans, the dehumanization of enslaved Africans considered necessary for production in the British Empire was reproduced using natural histories as evidence. Davis' definition of dehumanization is crucial in analyzing the master-slave relationship and the animalization and commodification of the enslaved revealed in both the "Report" and the slave sale advertisements. Davis defines dehumanization as the "eradication not of human *identity* but of those elements of humanity that evoke respect and empathy and convey a sense of dignity."³⁶ This definition, and its material impact, will be returned to in chapters 3 and 4. The dehumanized status of the enslaved within the "Report" was revealed through the conflation of livestock and enslaved peoples in accounts of the treatment and living

³⁴ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 26.

³⁵ The connection between slaves and animals had precedents in antiquity; Aristotle conceptualized 'natural slaves' as those people, in his time this would equate to non-Greeks, who were considered to be "closer to the material and nonrational principle of things, further away from the rational." Smith, *Nature, Human Nature & Human Difference*, 74.

³⁶ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, 17.

conditions of both animals and people. Their commodification was also evident in the conflation of the enslaved with other valuable “assets” in the discussion of the slave trade such as land, livestock, and various produce that came out of the West Indies.³⁷

The association of animal and African was reflected in the “Report” through testimonies that described enslaved Africans as “Stock.” This association occurred predominantly in Part III of the “Report,” in which the Committee addressed the “Treatment of Slaves in the West Indies, and all Circumstances relating thereto, digested under certain Heads.”³⁸ The first West Indian colony to be examined in the report was Jamaica; the Committee began by questioning local agents and planters about the treatment of slaves, their legal status both in law and practice, the religious practices of the enslaved and the value of their labour.³⁹ Following this, the inquiry shifted seamlessly to address the produce per acre on plantations, and the management and labour of the cattle, husbandry practices, and land under cultivation. The subheading of this section of the “Report,” quoted above, did not accurately capture this breadth of scope; rather it falsely claimed to delve fully into the treatment of slaves. A more accurate subheading would, perhaps, read “The Treatment of Property in the West Indies” for this was what was, in fact, addressed and interrogated.

Historian Marissa Fuentes in *Dispossessed Lives* articulates how the *Sessional Papers* were representative of the “reification of property relations and economic concerns that were coterminous with humanitarian issues, in turn marking the inherent flaws in humanitarian enterprises.”⁴⁰ In Article No. 53, the Committee asked:

³⁷ *Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69*, 208-

³⁸ *Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69* (1789), 205.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 209-222.

⁴⁰ Marissa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 130.

Upon any Plantation with a given Stock of Negroes, and yielding on an Average a certain annual Quantity of Sugar, what may be supposed to be the net Income to the Owner, if living on the Island, after deducting the Charge of maintaining and clothing his Negroes, the Wear and Tear, and other necessary Expences [sic]? And what the net Income to the Owner living in Great Britain?⁴¹

The response to this question was supplied by Mr. Stephen Fuller, an agent for the island of Jamaica, who enumerated the complexities in offering a clear answer – one being the “Labour required upon the Estate, the knowing how to direct and apply that Labour to the best Effect, and to preserve the Labourers and their Offspring.”⁴² This is crux of this section of the “Report” – it was an assessment of property and values in the West Indies, from the cost-effective treatment of people to the breeding of livestock. The dehumanization and commodity status of the enslaved people was evident in the employment of the phrase “Stock of Negroes,” or alternatively the “Labourers,” a title that could apply to either people or cattle. Ultimately, it was the ‘maintenance’ of this stock in people that impacted the value of the enslaved, alternatively conceptualized here as literal human resources.⁴³

Eighteenth-century theories and arguments about the natural hierarchy of man were crucial to the nation states of Europe for political, economic and social capital. The need to completely debase, dehumanize and dismiss African peoples and their descendants was constructed as an enlightened argument by the men who profited from that debasement. The dehumanization of African and enslaved peoples also facilitated

⁴¹ *Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69* (1789), 229.

⁴² *Ibid*; the Committee of the Council of the Island asserts that the planter made no more than 4 per cent of his capital.

⁴³ For an analysis of slaves and livestock in Jamaica, see Philip D. Morgan, “Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750-1751,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 no. 1 (January 1995): pp. 47-76; The animalization of Africans and their descendants in the British West Indies is also apparent in the structure and use of slave sale advertisements in Jamaica, the analysis of which will be taken up in the following chapters.

their commodification – for if, as was posited by natural historians, Africans did not have claim to the traits that defined “humanity” (such as Reason, government, religion), then the act of commodification on the part of Europeans was not morally abhorrent. The claim to “humanity,” or alternatively moral, civil, and intellectual superiority was bolstered through successful British colonization, advances in military, naval and agricultural technology, the growth of urban areas and the rise of middle classes.⁴⁴ As historian David Eltis discusses at length in *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, particularly with regards to the Dutch and English, the nations that professed to support freedom and morality were also those that built empires through the endemic use of enslaved labour or else the exploitation of labour within various degrees of unfreedom.⁴⁵

One of the most powerful arguments for pro-slavery advocates was to employ language of morality and civility to frame the slave trade as a civilizing network, and to characterize Africans as lacking freedom, adequate government, and morality. This understanding of civilization – and the lack of civilization – was apparent in the testimonials that were used as evidence about the peoples along West African coast. The repeated reliance on a notion of civility – or British emphasis on liberty, nationality, and humanity – was also employed by anti-slavery advocates. The abolitionists participated in the perpetuation of a savage versus civil dichotomy in their arguments that ending the slave trade would allow Britain the opportunity to educate and civilize the formerly enslaved, and the native, African. Therefore, the use of hierarchy and sub-groups of humanity persisted in both pro- and anti-slavery arguments. Smith argues that through

⁴⁴ See James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800*. (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Joel Mokyr, “The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth,” *The Journal of Economic History*, 65, no. 2 (June 2005): pp. 285-351.

⁴⁵ David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2-8.

grouping humans as savage or civil, or within “hierarchalized subtypes” these subtypes were “discursively maintained” and reproduced in contemporary discussions about Africans and enslaved peoples.⁴⁶ I will return to this reliance on hierarchical subtypes when analyzing the testimonials supplied by abolitionist Thomas Clarkson.

In their attempt to understand the material conditions of the slave trade, the Committee began with an examination of the West African states and peoples with whom trade was conducted. In pursuit of gaining insight into the governments along the coast, the Committee asked a former commander of an African trading ship, one-time resident of Africa, and author of “Amazing Grace,” Reverend John Newton, “if the *Natives* have any Civil Government?”⁴⁷ In this question, the people who inhabited the African coast, and who supplied slaves and other trade goods, were referred to through the geographic area they inhabited – not by their race. However, the use of the term *Natives*, while referring to a person’s place of origin, was also imbued with an understanding that being ‘Native’ was also to be without civilization.⁴⁸ The use of ‘Native’, as opposed to ‘African’ or more specifically a native of a specific area or kingdom such as Dahomey, Whydah, Delem, all of which were referenced in the “Report,” speaks to a highly valued conceptualization of civilization that European intellectuals that was advanced throughout the eighteenth-century. The concept of civilization in the eighteenth century was predicated upon a series of increasingly refined requirements, such as a mutually beneficial relationship between state and subject in which the state offered protection in exchange for the allegiance of the subject; a state that would honour individual property

⁴⁶ Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, & Human Difference*, 37.

⁴⁷ My italics; *Sessional Papers, Part I: Government, Religion, Manners and Customs, Vol. 69*, 12; Newton denounced his past as a participant in the slave trade, and became an antislavery advocate.

⁴⁸ “Native – Definition,” *Cambridge Dictionary*, 30 May, 2018, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/native>

rights; and systems of law and the use of data and empirical evidence to support the state's decisions.⁴⁹ All of these necessary attributes of "civilization" would of course have existed within Britain – at least in theory if not practice - as Britain provided the prototype embodiment of civilization, and by these measures the societal structures of Africa failed. When the "Committee of the Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations" inquired whether the "Natives" had civil rights, civil governments, and morals, the assumption – which was often supported by the testimonials – was that the rights, governments and morals of African nations were far from civilized.⁵⁰

The absence of a title other than "Native" ascribed to African peoples and agents who lived in West Africa implied a lack of reason and civility within Africa. Africa was instead defined by primitive social structures – a characterization that was bolstered through testimonies in the "Report" detailing the savagery and despotism of African sovereigns. Part of the evolving British understanding of civility and just government included a conceptualization of individual rights, made secure through productive participation within the state and protected by government institutions.⁵¹ Therefore,

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the relationship, and responsibilities, of state and subject see Christopher L. Brown, "From Slaves to Subjects: Envisioning an Empire without Slavery, 1772-1834," in *Black Experience and the Empire* ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); for a discussion of the use of data and empirical evidence by the British during the abolitionist era see Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

⁵⁰ 'Civilized' is repeatedly capitalized throughout the report; for the purpose of my analysis I will use "Civilized" to denote the early modern European concept of the term.

⁵¹ See Eltis, *The Rise and Fall of African Slavery in the Americas*, 12-55. See also Christopher L. Brown, "Empire without Slaves: British Concepts of Emancipation in the Age of the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 56 no. 2 (April 1999). For a discussion of how concepts of subjecthood and participation were challenged, see 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 (September, 1990): 225-252. For an in-depth analysis of the development of British nationalism, empire and civilization see C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

within Britain an individual could not be both subject and slave – as to be enslaveable in the early British modern liberal state was to be outside the realm of citizen and subject. The distinction between subject and slave represented one of the most challenging concepts to align with the abolitionist movement in Britain. Christopher Brown addresses the divide between subject and slave leading up to the American Revolution and how, in order to consider enslaved Africans as subjects, the state would have to enact “an unprecedented invasion of customary, nearly sacred rights in property.”⁵² Africans were not subjects, and could not be subjects unless property laws were altered, and this barred them from accessing rights and humanity.

When Sir George Yonge, a lieutenant who worked on board several ships employed in trade around Sierra Leone in the late 1760s, stated that “all [African] Sovereigns are absolute...they consider their Subjects as Slaves,” the implication was that not only were African governments primitive, but that they were adverse to the progress and morality so valued in Britain.⁵³ As David Eltis articulates, in the eighteenth-century British mind, slavery “had become a fate worse than death and as such was reserved for non-Europeans.”⁵⁴ This characterization of African states as not only uncivil, but harmful and exploitative to subjects of the state was contrasted in the “Report” by depictions of African states that adopted British notions of freedom, labour and subjecthood. Mr. Penny, an African merchant and “One of the Gentlemen delegated from Liverpool on account of the African and West India Trade,” observed that “the Governments on the Coast appear to be in general more free than in the interior Country,”

⁵² Brown, “Empire without Slaves: British Concepts of Emancipation in the Age of the American Revolution,” 4.

⁵³ *Sessional Papers, Vol. 69*, (1789) 11.

⁵⁴ Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*, 71.

due to contact with Europeans.⁵⁵ The comparison here directly correlated the ability to govern with European concepts of individual freedom – a marker of progress, versus the despotic and violent governments of the interior.

Perhaps one of the most elucidative examples of the ways in which the British considered themselves superior to and civilized in comparison to the primitive “Native” African was in Sir George Yonge’s account of how (African) slaves were obtained by African and British traders.⁵⁶ According to Yonge, the main method by which local slave traders acquired slaves in the Senegambia region was through war and criminal trials; the less common practice, he avowed, was through kidnap or at the King’s behest. Yonge described an encounter in which he rescued an enslaved child:

Sir George [George Yonge] saw a beautiful Child about Five Years old, brought from the Bullam Shore, which is the opposite Shore to Sierra Leone. As the Child was too young to be an Object of Trade, the Persons who had him to sell gave him no Food and threatened to throw him into the River. Sir George, to save his Life, offered a Quarter Cask of Madiera for him, which was accepted, and brought him to England, and made a Present of him to the Marquis of Lansdowne: - He understood this Child had been kidnapped.⁵⁷

Yonge saved the life of a “beautiful child” by buying this child’s life and labour with a cask of wine. The child’s life had a specific value – and this same life was subsequently made into a gift for the use or disposal of the Marquis of Lansdowne. The commodification of the enslaved child was not addressed here, but the humanity of Yonge was emphasized. This story epitomizes the manner in which pro-slavery advocates constructed the enslavement of, and the trade with, Africans. The African traders, unable to sell a child so young, planned on cutting their losses and killing the infant – however,

⁵⁵ *Sessional Papers, Part I: Government, Religion, Manners and Customs, Vol. 69*, 19.

⁵⁶ For a brief summary of Yonge’s expertise as witness, see page 20.

⁵⁷ *Sessional Papers, Part I: Slaves, Vol. 69*, 32.

for an African slavery was framed here by the British as preferable to death. This was in direct contradiction to the rhetoric surrounding slavery within Europe, where slavery – to tyranny, to despotic governments, to unjust laws – was worse than dying. The civilized European in the “Report” was contrasted with Native Africans who, lacking governments that supported human rights and personal freedom, accepted slavery as if not better, at least no worse than the society in which they had been born and raised.

The testimonies of men like Mr. Norris, Mr. Penny, and Sir George Yonge, whose accounts offered images of Africans as savage, primitive and violent, were challenged in testimonies that characterized African peoples as enjoying rights, privileges and as subject to justice. These accounts of Africans as possessing justice systems, elected rulers, and religions nevertheless relied on comparisons to British customs and manners – and therefore accepted and promoted the same underlying dichotomy between civil and primitive.⁵⁸ In response to queries about the Civil Rights of the Natives, William Devaynes, a Director of the East India Company and former Governor at Whydah for eleven years, responded that “They enjoy Civil Rights and Privileges that are of more ancient Date than our Settlement among them. He does not believe that the Natives are much improved in their Morals by their Intercourse with Europeans.”⁵⁹ Devaynes’ statement would presumably have had an impact on the characterization of Africans. This is particularly evident in Devaynes’ seemingly self-conscious effort to illustrate that Africans did not require European intervention to achieve morality. However, Devaynes also suggested that the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Dahomey benefitted from European

⁵⁸ The testimonies of Thomas Eldrid, a man from Rhode Island who had participated in the slave trade in the 1760s in Senegambia, a Lieutenant in the British Navy John Mathews, and the Reverend John Newton all discussed African peoples and states as possessing governmental and cultural structures that were not dissimilar to the British ones. *Sessional Papers, Vol. 69*, (1789) 11-12.

⁵⁹ *Sessional Papers, Part I: Government, Religion, Manners and Customs, Vol. 69*, 13.

contact as “Their Manners and Dress are in some Degree improved thereby.”⁶⁰ Thus, despite an endorsement that the peoples of Dahomey had long established systems that supported and protected their Civil Rights and Privileges, Devaynes also asserted that they were lacking in civility in other realms deemed necessary to be considered of equal status to Europeans. Even in testimonies advocating African civility, there was a reification of a binary that facilitated arguments for the ongoing enslavement of Africans.

The questions the Committee asked reflected and reaffirmed British cultural assumptions about the base nature of Africans, and the elevated status of the British. Therefore, there was a reliance on the term “Native” and little use of the word “black” or “Negroe” in the section of the Report dealing with the governments of West Africa – as “native” offered a degenerative understanding of “African” nature. The reliance on language coded with concepts of primitivism was not sufficient when the similarities between African and European were undeniable; thus there was a necessity to classify difference through assigning colour. The Committee asked Mr. Penny, the African merchant and Liverpool delegate, specifically about “Black Christians” and their efforts to convert the local populace.⁶¹ Christianity as indicative of civilization disrupted a characterization of Africans as “native,” and necessitated an alternate ontological approach to establish superiority between the European (civilized) Christian and the African. It was through the insertion of blackness that West African Christians were made separate from their European counterparts. Mr. Penny’s response to this query, was to assert that the “Mahometans [Muslims] make a great many [converts] by force” but that the “Black Christians do not attempt to make any Converts; they are an obscure Sort

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *Sessional Papers, Part I: Government, Religion, Manners and Customs, Vol. 69*, (1789) 12.

of People, and mix paganism with the Christian Religion.”⁶² This was one of the few references to African practices of Christianity – and even this account was undermined by the assertion that Christianity within Africa was practiced by “obscure” people, who blended Christianity with pagan rites, and therefore polluted the claim to civility. Predominantly, the testimonies in the “Report” attested to paganism as the main form of belief and worship along the West African coast. Archibald Dalzell, a sometime resident of West Africa who acted as a surgeon and then Governor at Whydah, described African paganism as the worship of “sensible Objects;” however “it is so unintelligible, that it is extremely difficult to give any Account of it.” Other accounts, such as one offered by Mr. Norris, depicted paganism as “universal” and that the worship was focused on “Those Objects which strike the Senses,” the example offered being a snake. When discussing the religious practices within Africa, the need to classify Africans as Black was lessened by the portrayal of pagan idol worshipping; the constructed distance between the European and the African was evident. While there was one reference to “Black Christians” in the first twenty pages of the “Report,” the shift from “Native” to black or slave occurred as the topic of inquiry shifted from “Government, Religion, Manners, and Customs” to “Slaves;” more specifically, the manner in which Africans became slaves within the continent.

African traders played an active role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and were a necessary component to the success of the British slave trade.⁶³ The integral role Africans played in the slave trade disrupted contemporary arguments about the inferior status of

⁶² *Sessional Papers, Part I: Government, Religion, Manners and Customs, Vol. 69*, 12.

⁶³ For an in-depth account of African participation in the Atlantic World see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 76.

the African within a natural hierarchy, as African merchants occupied similar spaces to their British counterparts. Ascribing blackness to traders along the West African coast indicated the establishment of a racialized difference that was not evident in the previous section of the “Report,” in which African government and religion were investigated. In the testimonials that referenced the role of Black Traders, there were also detailed accounts as to how Africans enslaved one another. Mr. Barnes, a resident of Senegal for eight years and Governor for three, was quoted:

Mr. Barnes has known some Prisoners of War made Slaves, but not very often; he never heard of any who had been kidnapped by the Black Traders; he has not only resided at Senegal, but has been at Gambia, and in the Bite of Benin, and never knew of any Country where *Kidnapping* was practiced, or where the Constitution of the Country would admit of it;⁶⁴

Mr. Barnes referred to the native African traders as “black,” as well as testifying that enslavement through kidnapping was uncommon and dishonorable in Senegambia. Mr. Barnes also informed the Committee that Africans were commonly enslaved through war - a systemic method of enslavement that [educated] Europeans would be familiar with, as throughout the classical period, slaves were created out of a just war, and as such had been relegated to their natural position within society.⁶⁵

The first use of the term “Negro” in the “Report” was in a description of how Africans enslaved one another, and it was used to distinguish African traders from “native” Africans. Mr. Charles Wardstrom, a Swedish traveller who in 1787 was intent on penetrating the interior country near Senegal, submitted a journal entry to the committee in which he related how three French slaving vessels were captured by the “the Natives” on the shore of the River Gambia:

⁶⁴ *Sessional Papers, Part I: Government, Religion, Manners and Customs, Vol. 69, 22.*

⁶⁵ For an in-depth analysis of the history of slavery in the West, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966).

The Reason for such a dreadful Catastrophe was this: It is usual when a Vessel is slaved, and ready to sail, for Free Negroes to come on board and to be treated with Punch and other Things, and to take their Leave. This was the Case on board one of the Vessels alluded to, when a favourable Wind suddenly springing up, the Captain sailed away with those who had come on board in this Manner.⁶⁶

When Mr. Wardstorm wrote about the failed kidnapping – which in the preceding testimony was described as being prohibited in select African groups in and around Senegal and Gambia – he used “Negro” to indicate the race of those traders who had almost become slaves. This connected the use of the term “negro” to enslavement in the “Report,” as was the case in the West Indies where, even those described as “free negroes” were associated with enslavement by virtue of their African descent. The free status of the African traders was disregarded in the attempted kidnap, which illustrated how Africans were perceived as naturally inferior, as well as valuable commodities. The French captain was willing to risk dire ramifications if the attempted kidnapping was unsuccessful – but the value of the “Free Negroes” and cultural assumptions about African inferiority outweighed his considerations of trade relations with the local populace. In the instance related to the Committee by Mr. Waldstrom, the winds changed and the ship carrying the “Free Negroes” was taken by the compatriots of the would-be kidnapped Africans that had remained on the shore – along with two other ships sailing under the French flag. Mr. Waldstorm was not aware how many survived, or whether the Captains were among the survivors. The proximity of the African traders to the status of enslaved African in Mr. Wardstorm’s account was reflected in the use of the term “Negro,” a word nearly synonymous with “slave.”

⁶⁶ *Sessional Papers, Part I: Government, Religion, Manners and Customs, Vol. 69, 24.*

The word “Negro” in English has its root in the Spanish and Portuguese word describing a black person. Simon-Aaron asserts that “With the development of Portuguese slavery the term ‘Negro’ was created as a noun, as a designation, as a name, for those Africans caught by slave traders.”⁶⁷ The history and meaning of the word ‘Negro’ parallels how the words “white” and “black” are laden with historical constructions and implications.⁶⁸ Philosopher David Goldberg asserts that for Englishmen, and Europeans, “color was considered such a property of human beings” and that particularly for John Locke and his adherents “it was taken on the grounds of empirical observation to be correlated with rational capacity.”⁶⁹ Therefore, as colour was connected to the innate nature of a group of beings, and Africans and their descendants in the New World were conceptualized as irrational, primitive, and inferior, their skin colour became a marker of their “natural” status. The use of the term “Negro” as a designation for the enslaved thus denoted inferior status marked by blackness, and the cultural-historical association to the use of their bonded, unfree labour.⁷⁰

In examining the “Government, Religion, Manners and Customs” of the West African groups with which the British traded, and subsequently compiling information about slavery within Africa, the Committee constructed a brief natural history of Africans. The result was a construction of “Native Africans” and their tenuous and incomplete grasp of civilization. Through the “Report,” the value of African civilization was examined – the peoples who inhabited the coast were denigrated, but the value of Africans as a commodity was not disputed in the dismissal of African civilization. The

⁶⁷ Simon-Aaron, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 173.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 181.

⁶⁹ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 28.

⁷⁰ Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812 2nd Edition*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 74.

use of “black” and “Negroe” to describe Africans who were more intimately connected to the slave trade, or else practiced similar customs to the British, in turn reflects the need for British planters, merchants, and officials to disassociate themselves from the humanity of Africans. This semantic dehumanization, and concomitant commodification, of Africans was employed by the captains and merchants who acted as witnesses in the Committee’s inquiry into the reality of the Middle Passage for the enslaved.

The transatlantic slave trade became, over several centuries and through the establishment of Spanish, French, Dutch, Danish and English colonies in the Americas, extremely lucrative for European empires.⁷¹ The slave trade – and the use of slavery – was crucial to the building of empire in the West.⁷² While several nations profited immensely from the slave trade, it is the dreadful success of the British that frames this discussion of the language used surrounding the enslavement of Africans, and the concomitant affirmation of cultural assumptions about the nature of race in the early modern world. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, the British established trading posts along the coast of West Africa and fed British colonies with a seemingly endless supply of slaves. Historian Philip Curtin asserts that by the time the British established dominance over the slave trade in the mid to late eighteenth century, they had organized a system in which each stage of the trade was “supported in it by a body of custom now become traditional.”⁷³ Between 1750 and 1800, nearly one million

⁷¹ Michelle Craig McDonald, “Transatlantic Consumption,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, ed. Frank Trentmann, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115.

⁷² Sean Hawkins and Philip D. Morgan, “Blacks and the British Empire: An Introduction,” in *Black Experience and the Empire*, ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 11-14.

⁷³ Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (London: MacMillan and Company Limited, 1964), 9.

Africans disembarked in the British West Indies alone.⁷⁴ The wealth the slave trade offered those bankrolling the trade from London, Liverpool and Bristol afforded them a measure of distance from the realities of the trade itself – and therefore a measure of plausible deniability about the nature of slavery – arguably until the rise of antislavery discourses in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.⁷⁵ In the “Report” it was this wealth that was at stake, and therefore the testimonials that concerned the middle passage were contradictory in the portrayals of the treatment newly enslaved Africans were subjected to.

Part II of the Report concerned the “Evidence with respect to carrying Slaves to the *West Indies, &c. &c. &c.*”⁷⁶ In essence, this section was an examination of the Middle Passage, which was described in the testimonials of several captains, surgeons and merchants either as a tolerable, if not pleasant, journey for the enslaved, or as a violent and cruel trial for both the enslaved and the sailors.⁷⁷ The dehumanization of the enslaved onboard slaving vessels is apparent to modern historians who chronicle the Middle Passage; the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* provides an estimate of the statistics of

⁷⁴ The number of Africans disembarked is 964,205, data from *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/6bgSOe1W>

⁷⁵ While an accurate account of the net profits garnered from the British West Indian trade in enslaved people is impossible due to the lack of reliable records of sale in large enough quantities and other primary source data, it is possible to estimate the profits for Jamaican merchants in the late eighteenth century using the work of Nicholas Radburn and J. R. Ward. Radburn has estimated that between 1785 and 1796 the top ten merchant firms in Jamaica sold 152,396 enslaved Africans. J. R. Ward has established that the price of an average plantation slave was £55 in the British West Indies between 1799-1807; more updated values are found in Elits, Richardson and Lewis’ article detailing the value of sugar and slaves in the Caribbean. They estimate that between 1780-1795 the average price of a slave was £56.18 based on current prices. Using this data, the top Jamaican merchant firms sold over eight and a half million pounds sterling worth of enslaved Africans in the late eighteenth century. David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, David Richardson, “Slave Prices, the African Slave Trade, and the Productivity in the Caribbean, 1674-1800,” 58. No 4 (Nov., 2005), 676.; J. R. Ward, “The Profitability of Sugar Planting in the British West Indies, 1650-1834,” *The Economic History Review*, 31. no. 2 (May 1978), 7; Nicholas Radburn “Guinea Factors, Slave Sales, and the Profits of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Late Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: The Case of John Tailyour,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 72 no. 2 (April 2015), 245-246.

⁷⁶ *Sessional Papers, Part II: Evidence with respect to carrying Slaves to the West Indies*, 115.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of mortality rates for sailors see Robert Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1989), 118-132.

mortality rates of the slave trade. Between 1750 and 1800, on average 10 percent of the slaves transported to the British West Indies died; that equates to over 100,000 captive Africans dying on board slaving vessels.⁷⁸ However, in the late eighteenth century, the rise of abolitionist sentiment meant that the profitability of the trade was being weighed by the British government against the consideration of Africans as people deserving of humane treatment.⁷⁹ The treatment of newly enslaved Africans on board slaving vessels was intimately connected to the conceptualization of the enslaved as belonging to a lower order of humanity. The physical spaces into which Africans were forced below deck was both a method to maximize profit, as well as an indication that the enslaved could be treated without the humanity afforded whites. The violence that these newly enslaved Africans were subjected to, as well as their transport, result in Burnard's argument that the sailors on slave ships were the "principal agents in the Africans' dehumanization."⁸⁰ The differentiation between humane or dehumanizing experiences of the slave trade was evident when Sir George Young, a Captain in the British Navy, purported to have "observed no inhuman Treatment, except that they were so crowded [sic], particularly on Board of one Ship, that the Stench of the Hatchway was intolerable."⁸¹ The rest of Young's testimony asserted that there was ample medical access available to the enslaved, that the enslaved men were chained "which he conceives is a necessary Precaution," and that the ship had "every Means of giving Air."⁸² However, if the stench

⁷⁸ *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/6bgSOe1W>

⁷⁹ The "Report" is evidence of this consideration; see also Gad Hueman, "From Slavery to Freedom: Blacks in the Nineteenth-Century British West Indies," in *Black Experience and the Empire* ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

⁸⁰ Burnard, *Planters Merchants and Sailors*, 86.

⁸¹ *Sessional Papers, Part II: Evidence with respect to carrying Slaves to the West Indies*, 115.

⁸² *Ibid.*

was intolerable for George Young, it is unclear how the treatment of those within the hold itself was humane.

Young's testimony explicates a European perception of Africans as able to physically tolerate much more than the "civilized," or white, person could bear.⁸³ The European conceptualization of higher tolerance for hardship in Africans and their descendants extended to arguments about the Africans natural ability to work in harsh plantation regimes. The Jamaican planter-historian Edward Long wrote about Africans, and those of African descent, in several different publications – excerpts of his work were included in the "Report." Long wrote at length about his belief, supported by references to Buffon and Hume, that Africans were closely related to monkeys and were able to tolerate more pain than could be expected from a white person as African women "bring forth twins without a shriek, or a scream."⁸⁴ In relation to the ability of African labour, the Committee queried if "it be possible to cultivate to Advantage the West Indian Islands, by the Labour of Europeans, or of Free Negroes?"⁸⁵ The response from Mr. Fuller, the Agent for Jamaica, asserted that it would be impossible for Europeans to do the same labour as Africans as "Exposure to the Sun, which cheers the African, is mortal to the European."⁸⁶ Arguments about the natural abilities of enslaved Africans followed a similar logic to Aristotle's conceptualization of a 'natural slave' – enslaved Africans were therefore not allocated any inherent 'human' abilities. Instead, Africans were afforded abilities that made them ideal for labour, and for a "civilizing" work regime enforced by

⁸³ For eighteenth century anatomical explanations of 'African ability' see Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*, 171.

⁸⁴ Edward Long, "The Third Book. Chapter I: Negroes," from *The History of Jamaica, Volume II*, (1774), 380.

⁸⁵ *Sessional Papers, Part II: Evidence with respect to carrying Slaves to the West Indies*, (1789), 224.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

British overseers as “Free Negroes...are averse to labor...[and] have all the Vices of Slaves, and no Planter could controul [sic] them.”⁸⁷ As such, the experience of the Middle Passage was conceived as less torturous for Africans as, according to natural historians and planters, they were able to tolerate much more adverse conditions than the European.

The stench that so struck George Young would not necessarily have been considered inhumane by those who were convinced by arguments about natural hierarchies, nor by advocates for the continuation of the slave trade. Africans were understood to have existed in savagery and wilderness before being stowed within a ship, and were conceptualized as having natural tendencies that were more closely associated with animals than with Europeans.⁸⁸ The account from George Young was replicated in tone by subsequent accounts of the manner of shipping enslaved Africans. Mr. Penny addressed in detail how he “found himself impelled, both by Humanity and Interest, to pay every possible Attention, both to the Preservation of the Crew and of the Slaves.”⁸⁹ Traders and captains throughout this section of the “Report” attested repeatedly to slaves’ ability to move about the deck daily, weather permitting, to their access to medical treatment and to ample air below deck.

The portrayal of the ease of the journey from West Africa to the West Indies in the “Report” was contrasted by testimonials offered by the British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson. Clarkson supplied testimonies from men connected to the slave trade, that recounted the horror and violence enacted by captains and sailors upon their enslaved

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Bryan Edwards wrote extensively about the natural abilities of various Africans groups in “Chapter II” of his *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies, To which is added An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, (London, 1798)

⁸⁹ *Sessional Papers, Part II: Evidence with respect to carrying Slaves to the West Indies*, 117.

cargo. Both depictions of the Middle Passage, as humane and inhumane, construct the enslaved as inhuman and wretched. The enslaved Africans were portrayed as both compliant and grateful for not being eaten by the traders, or as defeated within their “deplorable situation.”⁹⁰ The lived experiences of the enslaved Africans were far from the one relayed to the committee by George Young and Mr. Norris.⁹¹ The abject inhumanity and degradation that the enslaved were subjected to during the Middle Passage has been chronicled within the “Report” itself, as well as in modern analysis. By the time Africans reached the slave ships, they were no longer “Natives,” nor “Blacks;” they were “Slaves.” This was evident in testimonials attesting both to the humanity and inhumanity of the slave trade. Arguing for the inhumanity and violent treatment of the enslaved, Mr. James Arnold, a surgeon who served in the British Navy and subsequently was a surgeon on board slaving vessels, submitted written testimony through Thomas Clarkson. Arnold conceptualized the enslaved Africans humanity through their experiences as “the poor Man” or “a Woman who was in a very dejected State of Mind.”⁹² It was only through a negative portrayal of the slave trade that a slave was granted humanity; but this humanity was contingent upon their experience of extreme deprivation and violence.⁹³

The testimonials within the “Report” were informed by a converging set of cultural assumptions, scientific rhetoric, as well as economic and political interests. In the “Report”, there was an ontological transition from autonomous African to Slave; there was evidence of how, as Walter Johnson explains, “each step in commodification was

⁹⁰ *Sessional Papers, Part II: Evidence with respect to carrying Slaves to the West Indies*, 125.

⁹¹ See Markus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007)

⁹² *Sessional Papers, Part II: Evidence with respect to carrying Slaves to the West Indies*, 125-127.

⁹³ For a discussion of the establishment of the concept, and legal declarations, of human rights in the west see Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 186-194.

also a step in perception.”⁹⁴ The physical movement of Africans from the West African coast to the West Indies was accompanied by a transition from ‘Native’ to ‘Negro’, a journey that denied African peoples the traits that afforded human subjects access to humanity. The ontological distance necessary to enslave Africans was an ongoing process throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The “Report” was the culmination of what historian Marissa Fuentes frames as the successful “objectification of the enslaved [which] allowed authorities to reduce them to valued objects to be bought and sold.”⁹⁵ The accuracy in these testimonies is suspect as they were relayed by men who had a stake in the trade, either its end or its continuation. The “Report” itself was produced in an era in which pro- and antislavery arguments, advocacy for amelioration and burgeoning scientific treatises were also produced and negotiated. It is not, however, the truth of the testimonies that is at stake here – but the language used within the various portrayals of Africans, slaves, and the Middle Passage that reveals how Africans were dehumanized and commodified. This language, used to explain and justify the continuation of the African slave trade, was reprinted and reimagined in colonial newspapers across the British Atlantic.

⁹⁴ Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 171.

⁹⁵ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 5.

Chapter 3. Mechanisms of Commodification

Marketing Labour, Land, Livestock and Identity

On June 10th, 1780 an advertisement was placed in the Kingston based *Royal Gazette* advertising “475 choice young *Coromantee, Fantee, and Ashantee* Negroes.”¹ The ship that carried the enslaved, the *Rumbold*, left from Liverpool and sailed to Anomabu, along the Gold Coast in modern day Ghana, and there the captain purchased 529 Africans. The ship arrived in Jamaica with 485 slaves, 475 of whom were to be sold by Rainford, Blundell and Rainford on board the *Rumbold* on June 21st.² Slave sale advertisements such as this were not unusual in Kingston; they were among a broader selection of advertisements that filled several pages of each weekly *Gazette* – advertisements selling livestock, land, houses, timber, food stuffs and luxury items such as madeira wine, fabric, and tea. What made the sale that occurred on the *Rumbold* in 1780 unusual was that almost no shipments of enslaved people were advertised in the *Gazette* over the course of that year. According to the *Slave Trade Database*, only ten registered British ships carrying slaves landed in Jamaica, one of which was the *Rumbold*.³ Despite the relative lack of slave vessels coming to Kingston, there were still forty advertisements for enslaved Africans placed in 1780; this reveals the extensive inter-island slave-trading network. The number of slave sales ads in the Jamaican *Royal Gazette* increased following 1780, the highest number of ads in the sample periods was in 1793, with 83 advertisements for the sale of enslaved Africans. The volume of the slave

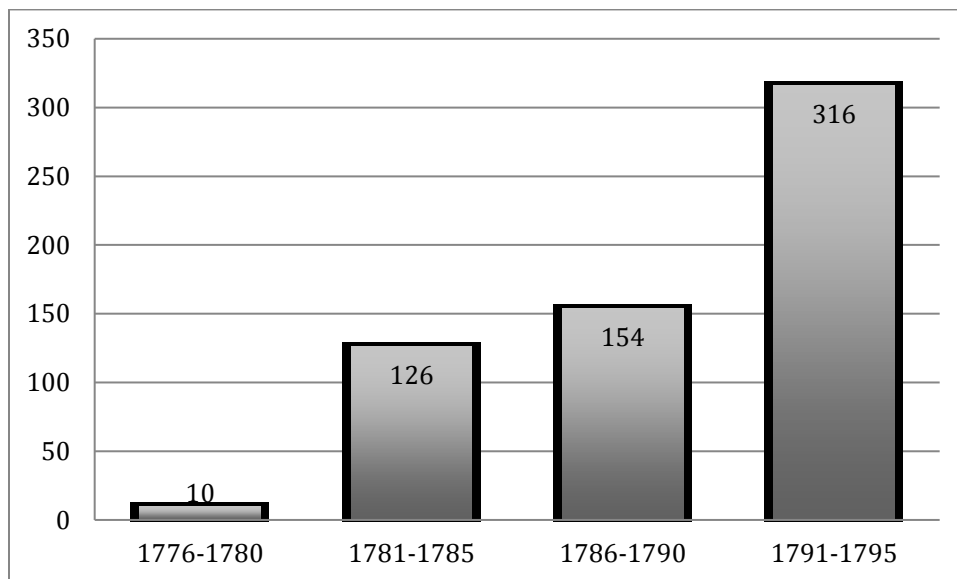
¹ Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, (June 1780)

² *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/pwfxp9MW>

³ *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/M9yzZrtZ>; this number does include those unregistered vessels who landed in Jamaica

trade to Jamaica was reflected in the slave sale advertisements; between 1776-1795, 606 ships arrived in Jamaica that supplied over 100,000 enslaved Africans to the merchants and planters in the West Indian colony (see Table 3.1).⁴ The number advertisements in the *Gazette* for slave sales increased accordingly, rising steadily from one shipment in 1780, to twenty-five in 1794.

Table 3.1: Number of Slave Voyages to Jamaica, 1776-1795



Source: *The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*. <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/vQLmP3Vi>

The consistently high demand for enslaved labour, and the refinement of the slave trade both within and to the island, was evident in the number of slave sale advertisements to market and sell enslaved Africans and their descendants. How were the enslaved marketed to meet this need for labour? And in what ways did this marketing reflect or reify the commodity, or human, status of the enslaved? This chapter analyzes how slave sale advertisements reflected the mechanisms of sale of enslaved labour, acquired through inter-island trade as well as through the purchasing of enslaved Africans via the transatlantic slave trade. The mechanisms of sale advertised in the *Gazette*, such

⁴ *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/PMA4gQCo>

as public auctions, private transactions, and estate sales, articulated the ways in which enslaved peoples were commodified and dehumanized. In addition, land, livestock, and the enslaved were conflated within slave sale advertisements – this conflation worked to make public the animalization and commodity status of the enslaved. In order to understand how these advertisements contributed to broader conceptualizations of racial inferiority, it is necessary to first address the market demand for slaves in Jamaica, the volume of sales, and the methods that were used to sell the enslaved out of, and within, Kingston and the surrounding area. Part of this analysis will also be devoted to analyzing data from within slave sale advertisements in the *Gazette* and how the ads themselves enabled the commercialization of enslaved people.

Not only did the sale strategies employed by merchants and factors represent the structure of Kingston’s slave economy, but they further expound how little humanity enslaved Africans were endowed with at the end of the Middle Passage. Lastly, this chapter addresses how the use of “Coromantee,” “Fantee,” and “Ashantee,” and other tribal identities in the advertisements belied a general understanding of the West African geopolitical landscape as well as an awareness on the part of sellers of which African groups were valued by Jamaicans.⁵ The ascription of a group identity at the point of disembarkation lies in stark contrast to the lack of identity offered West Africans in the *Sessional Papers*, where Africans are described as “Native,” “Black,” or “Negro.” In addition, the reliance of merchants and planters on tribal or ethnic identities complicates

⁵ For a discussion of identity construction and assimilation in an African context, see Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History,” *The American Historical Review*, 99 no. 5 (1995): 1516-1545. For a discussion of identity and transformations within the slave trade see Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007)

Trevor Burnard's understanding of Jamaican planters as men who had "invented, [and] perfected" the large integrated plantation; in Burnard's words, "Great planters were capitalists...always on the look out to increase their private profit."⁶ The use of, fictional and unsubstantiated, "African" identities to promote the sale of the enslaved marked a departure from the rational, capitalist and profit oriented Jamaican planter as the planters, through their acceptance of these identities as valuable, participated in a fiction not based in fact or numbers. The employment of value-laden language about Africans and ascribed tribal identities to Africans by their British captors, dealers, and owners remains crucial to the taxonomical ontology that enabled those benefitting from slavery to maintain a distance from those they commodified. Finally, the demography and geography of Jamaica, and Kingston, will offer grounding for a later analysis of the mechanisms through which enslaved Africans were advertised and sold.

The fluctuations in the volume of slave sale ads were in part indicative of the turbulent era in which the ads were placed.⁷ The need for labour, both overseers and slaves, was a constant in Jamaica due to consistently high mortality rates for both whites and enslaved African. During the 1780s, the American Revolution impacted access to enslaved Africans through disruptions to international trade, and as a result the price of enslaved peoples rose. By the 1790s, slave prices dropped and sugar prices were rising due to the increasingly destabilized political situation in France and the end of sugar production in Saint-Domingue due to the slave revolt that began in 1791.⁸ These events

⁶ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, 97.

⁷ The American Revolution interfered with Atlantic trading routes during the early 1780s; the French and Haitian Revolutions impacted trade in the 1790s.

⁸ For estimates of the real prices of sugar and slaves, see David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, David Richardson, "Slave Prices, the African Slave Trade, and the Productivity in the Caribbean, 1674-1800," 58. No 4 (Nov., 2005), 679.

altered the socio-political environment within Britain, its West Indian holdings, and the Atlantic world.⁹ Growing antislavery sentiment in Britain, throughout the 1780s and 1790s, necessitated organized responses from West Indian interests in Jamaica, such as planter-historian Bryan Edwards' civil and commercial history of Jamaica in which Edwards asserted the morality and civility of the planter class. The development of anti- and pro-slavery arguments occurred as the commodification and dehumanization of the enslaved within Jamaica became increasingly solidified through their repeated iteration within slave sale advertisements.

At the turn of the eighteenth-century, Jamaica was considered the jewel of the British West Indies. Jamaica was the largest, most diverse, and most profitable of the British colonies.¹⁰ While Barbados was the centre of the British West Indies in the seventeenth century, over the course of the late seventeenth century Jamaica adopted some of the agricultural technology and management strategies from the older colony.¹¹ By the 1720s, Jamaica surpassed Barbados as the leading sugar colony in the British West Indies.¹² The increased consumption of sugar and other exotic commodities in England further established Jamaican dominance in the West Indies. As such, Kingston was the wealthiest town in the British Americas by the mid-eighteenth century.¹³ Due to

⁹ For a discussion of conflicts in the British Atlantic and trade see Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, (1974);

¹⁰ For a discussion of the profits of sugar production coming out of Jamaica see J. R. Ward, "The Profitability of Sugar Planting in the British West Indies, 1650-1834," *The Economic History Review*, 31. no. 2 (May 1978), 197-213; For a broader discussion of the economic value within eighteenth-century Jamaica see also Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, "The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655-1788," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 no. 1 (Jan. 2001): 205-228; Philip D. Morgan, "Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750-1751," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 no. 1 (January 1995): pp. 47-76; Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)

¹¹ For a discussion of the sugar-related technological innovations in Barbados, see Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*, 196-204.

¹² Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 18-21.

¹³ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 206.

the islands need for labourers, the demographic imbalance between enslaved Africans and free people of colour and white Europeans increased more rapidly than in Barbados.¹⁴ The harsh and intensive work regime needed to profitably cultivate and process sugar resulted in high mortality rates for the enslaved, as did the work regimes for other cash crops such as coffee.¹⁵ In Jamaica, enslaved Africans and their descendants became the dominant labour force, and the demographic imbalance in the West Indies remained problematic for the duration of the colonial period.

In a society in which large plantation complexes based on enslaved African labour were standard, the need for the white populace to maintain control over this enslaved labour was paramount. The negotiation of “whiteness” and white solidarity, despite the extreme imbalance in the distribution of wealth within the white population of Jamaica, has been interrogated at length. Burnard asserts that the establishment of white solidarity was successful in Jamaica because the wealth that large plantations produced was sufficient to ensure the continuation of the system.¹⁶ Bryan Edwards was a Jamaican planter-historian writing in the late eighteenth-century; in his civil and commercial history of Jamaica, Edwards advocated for ameliorationist policies as an alternative to abolishing the slave trade. Edwards argued that “the possessor of the slaves be guiltless of the crimes with which it has been fashionable of late years to load him.”¹⁷ An advocate for the humanity and generosity of slave owners, as well as for those people who had a stake in the treatment of the enslaved, Edwards exemplified how Jamaican men imagined

¹⁴ Dun, *Sugar and Slaves*, 167-237.

¹⁵ In the mid-eighteenth century there were over 100,000 ‘Negroes’ in Jamaica, 99,062 of which were connected to the production and refinement of sugar; Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, (Barbados: Caribbean University Press, 1974), 231. See also Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 70.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 155.

¹⁷ Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies, To which is added An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, (London, 1798), 136.

themselves not as active agents in the enslavement of Africans, but as men guiltless of crimes but nonetheless responsible for the enslaved. Following the American Revolution, West Indian planters began to be portrayed in Britain as immoral, violent, uneducated and greedy.¹⁸ There was, Edwards lamented, some truth to these metropolitan accusations.¹⁹ However, Edwards also asserted that the planter was not to be charged with the enslavement of Africans; the planter's responsibility was to ensure the care of the already enslaved. Burnard and Garrigus in their analysis of Jamaica and the larger French colony of Saint-Domingue argue that both societies developed "hardened racial classifications" based on current socio-political problems each colony faced and not in response to developing concepts of pseudo-scientific racism.²⁰

The oppressive legislation and violence with which white settlers maintained control over enslaved Africans was thus intrinsically connected to understandings of race and hierarchy in the colony. This hierarchy was in turn supported by natural histories and by the rhetoric of natural philosophers such as Hume, Blumenbach and Kant. Over the course of the eighteenth century, as specialists Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus argue, "race was replacing all other ways of determining status and standing within Jamaica."²¹ The construction of race as a marker of status, humanity and equality was the result of the refinement of the high status and egalitarianism whiteness offered. In addition, the solidification of the legal status of whites, free blacks, and enslaved Africans worked to clearly demarcate human classifications. The growing rigidity of racialized

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion see Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 263.

¹⁹ Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial*, 122-124.

²⁰ Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 137. [font size wrong in footnote]

²¹ *Ibid*, 162.

conceptualizations of slavery in Jamaica was developed in tandem with the ever-increasing demand for labour and the refinement of the trade that supplied this labour.

The centre of the slave trade in Jamaica, and indeed all trade in the British West Indies, was Kingston. Merchants were able to build strong networks based on the buying and selling of enslaved Africans that then enabled the trade of sugar and other cash crops.²² Kingston supported a thriving local economy; it was the West Indian centre for trade with Spanish America and a substantial importer of British made goods.²³ The success of the slave trade in Kingston was facilitated by networks that brought not only slaves, but other goods and services to the island colony. Slaves became one ‘product’ among others that merchants were able to capitalize on. Historian Trevor Burnard asserts that by the mid eighteenth-century, most slave buyers in Kingston were merchants – Guinea factors as well as proprietors of commodities - who bought enslaved Africans for retail purposes to supply planters.²⁴ The merchants in Jamaica were connected to trans-Atlantic networks consisting of planters, British merchant companies acting as security, and local factors within the colony.²⁵ Generally, upon landing in Kingston, ship captains notified their local Guinea factor, the contemporary term to denote a local slave trader. The Guinea factor’s job was to ensure that the slaves were sold, to organize return shipments of slave-grown products to the metropole, and to offer credit to planters purchasing slaves.²⁶ Those factors that had networks of planters to cater to, as well as

²² Ibid, 230.

²³ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 161; James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800*. (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 123.

²⁴ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 172.

²⁵ Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, “The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655-1788,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 no. 1 (Jan. 2001), 216.

²⁶ Nicholas Radburn “Guinea Factors, Slave Sales, and the Profits of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Late Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: The Case of John Tailyour,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 72 no. 2 (April 2015), 243.

connections in Liverpool, London or Bristol, were able to establish trading companies and profitable enterprises within Kingston. It was the company names of Guinea factors that appeared in many of the advertisements selling large shipments of slaves. Historian Nicholas Radburn's illuminating work on Jamaican Guinea factors in the late eighteenth century offers insight into the ways these men were able to find success in the trade center of the British Caribbean. Radburn asserts that for merchants who were able to establish themselves, being a Guinea factor was one of the most profitable and secure jobs within slave trading; it brought regular commissions while limiting the potentially destructive losses involved in investing in slave ships.²⁷ It was the local trader's ability to successfully advertise and sell enslaved Africans that enabled him to garner sufficient profits to obtain credit for new slaving ventures. Therefore, the Guinea factor aimed to sell the enslaved through the most advantageous medium available, the medium that offered high and sustainable profits.

Kingston's *Royal Gazette* was a critical means of controlling information and shaping the socio-political landscape of the colony. The *Gazette*, like all news mediums, according to Joad Raymond, was not a vehicle for a "set of events with shared characteristics" nor are news and newspapers "a set of institutions with shared procedures" but they are a "basis for a verbal (and partly visual) exchange."²⁸ Colonial newspapers thus acted as an indicator, and producer, of social norms and morality; and they were contested and negotiated in response to socio-political and economic factors and wider Atlantic movements. The *Gazette* was one of many contemporaneous instances of the evolution of the newspaper – a mix of news and views along with the advertising

²⁷ Radburn, "Guinea Factors," 284.

²⁸ Joad Raymond, "Introduction," in *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1999), 9.

content that both supported the publication and fed the local economy. In addition to advertisements of enslaved Africans, discussed in depth below, the *Gazette* advertised livestock and luxury items, disseminated information from the British Parliament, offered updates on international conflicts, printed relevant articles from the Jamaican Assembly and announced dates for Shakespearean productions or popular operas. According to historian John Brewer, “The newspaper catered to a curiosity that had already grasped that politics, commerce and credit were all part and parcel of the same problem.”²⁹ The announcements for plays and events replicated the structure of British elite society, as did the articles heralding British victories in various overseas conflicts that had an impact on the Jamaican economy.

Historian Emma Hart argues that the growth of periodicals filled with advertisements, not news, were normalized throughout colonial Britain as advertisements became the standard vehicle through which to access the public and offer commodities.³⁰ In addition, historian Kamua Braithwaite suggests that the *Gazette* was the mouthpiece for the Jamaican government and was stilling published as late as 1820.³¹ Braithwaite also asserts that in Jamaica, the press “was a force to be reckoned with in the formation and expression of public opinion,” and that newspapers in general were “great upholders of what was deemed proper conduct between the races.”³² As such, the use of slave sale advertisements in the *Gazette* as the mouthpiece for the local governing Jamaican Assembly, normalized racialized representations of enslaved Africans and relayed to

²⁹ John Brewer, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, 216-217.

³⁰ Emma Hart, “A British Atlantic World of Advertising?: Colonial American “For Sale” Notices in Comparative Context,” *A Journal of History & Criticism*, 24 no. 2 (2014), 110.

³¹ Kamau Braithwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 31.

³² Braithwaite, *Creole Society*, 35-37.

Jamaican colonists the commodity status of the enslaved. The advertisements reflected the desires and needs of Jamaican people as well as clearly articulating how, in eighteenth-century Kingston, anything was up for advertisement.

Each issue of the *Gazette* was seven pages, with the exception of special bulletins and Post Scripts, which were one to two pages in length between 1780-1783, but were incorporated into the *Gazette* in the early 1790s as additional weekly seven page editions. The *Gazette* was structured so that the first page announced the arrivals and departures of ships, and the times and dates of plays or operas. The bulk of the paper was filled with proclamations to the public from Britain or “American Intelligence” in the 1780s, and “Affairs from France” in the 1790s.³³ The remaining spaces throughout the middle pages of the *Gazette* were filled with advertisements – or else announcements such as “All persons who have demand against *DANIEL CLARK* are desired to render in a state of the account to the subscribers and they will be settled and paid.”³⁴ The last two pages of the *Gazette* were devoted to slave runaway advertisements, runaway livestock ads, and repetitions of slave sale advertisements from previous weeks.

In a month long sample period, December 29th- January 26th 1782, advertisements related to slavery made up 37 percent of the 172 advertisements placed in that month.³⁵ On average, 16 advertisements related to enslaved peoples appeared in each weekly edition of the *Gazette*. Of the advertisements that mentioned enslaved people, and this included advertisements selling or requesting slaves as well as advertisements that publicized the names of enslaved peoples in workhouses, 85 percent were runaway slave

³³ Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1793: 160.

³⁴ Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782: 70.


³⁵ This number includes runaway ads for enslaved people and for strayed livestock, as well as “wanted” ads for enslaved peoples.

advertisements. In the same sample period, December 29th-January 5th, all of the slave runaway advertisements repeated a minimum of one time and often, and slave sale advertisements were consistently reprinted twice or more.

The placement of advertisements selling the enslaved changed between 1793 and 1794, as shipments of enslaved Africans constituted the majority of slave sale advertisements. As such, these advertisements repeated once or twice dependent on when the sale date advertised occurred. In addition, the lay out of the paper in the period between 1793 and 1794 altered in response to the mechanism of sale (see Figure 3.1). During this later period, slave sale advertisements dominated the front pages of the *Gazette* as this page was dedicated to announcing the arrivals of ships. During a month long sample of four editions of the *Gazette* between December 29th and January 26th 1793, 39 percent of the 116 advertisements were related to slavery. Of the advertisements connected to slavery, 56 percent were for the sale of enslaved people.

Figure 3.1: Advertisements for shipments of enslaved people, front-page centre column, December 1793.

Kingston, Dec. 20, 1791.
F O R S A L E,
 On THURSDAY, the 2d of JANUARY, 1792.
 538 *Choice Young* **Coromantee, Fantee,**
and Ashantee
S L A V E S,
 Imported in the ship **UNION**, Capt. Thompson, from
 ANAMABOE;
 By **LINDO & LAKE.**



The ship **UNION**,
 Captain THOMPSON,
 Will sail for **LONDON** in all JA-
 NUARY. For Freight or Passage ap-
 ply to the Captain, or to the Subscribers as above.

Kingston, Dec. 22, 1792.
F O R S A L E,
 On FRIDAY the 4th JANUARY, 1793.
 105 *Choice Young*
N E G R O E S,
 Imported in the ship **HEVE**, Capt. Ainsworth, from
 the Windward Coast and Cammaroons.
THOMPSON & JACKSON.

Kingston, Dec. 28, 1792.
F O R S A L E,
 On MONDAY the 7th JANUARY next,
 354 *Choice*
Gold-Coast NEGROES,
 Imported in the ship **MERCURY**, Capt. John Bell,
 from ANAMABOE.
HIBBERT, HALL, & FUHR.

Kingston, Dec. 29, 1792.
F O R S A L E,
 On WEDNESDAY the 9th of JANUARY next,
 300 *Choice Young*
EBOE NEGROES,
 Imported in the ship **PERSISTENCE**, Captain
 HEWITT.
W. DAGGERS & CO.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1793

The growth of advertisement was contingent upon, as well as productive of, demand for Atlantic goods; this, combined with the rise of the middle class throughout the British Empire and New World societies resulted in an expanding “world of

advertising.”³⁶ The volume of advertisements in colonial newspapers, Hart asserts, was connected to the lack of formal, historic spaces through which to buy and sell goods, such as historic local sites for fairs and marketplaces. Advertising became the medium through which vendors and merchants accessed the public in the colonial world, and the ads they placed were unencumbered by Old World societal etiquettes.³⁷ In *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John H. Plumb argue that the rise of consumer culture had its origin in the British Atlantic in the eighteenth century. While this assertion is contested, their analysis of the rise of advertising and material culture is worth addressing here as it relates to the volume of advertisements in late eighteenth-century Jamaica. They argue that commercialization was made possible not just in response to increased marketing and advertising, but because this desire to buy developed in congruence with the ability to purchase.³⁸ Jamaica was defined by new wealth and large land holdings controlled by a rising planter class; this wealth enabled successful planters to return to Britain as wealthy and powerful men.³⁹ Concurrent with the rise of advertising and consumer culture, was the growth in the production of sugar, sugar by-products, and other colonial commercial goods that were valued in the metropole. The sale of enslaved Africans and their descendants, and the exploitation of their labour, was integral to this complex and connected process of increasing material wealth. For the colonial officials, merchants, and planters, however, this process was straightforward:

³⁶ See J. R. Ward, “The Profitability of Sugar Planting in the British West Indies, 1650-1834,” *The Economic History Review*, 31. no. 2 (May 1978), 197-213; Joel Mokyr, “The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth,” *The Journal of Economic History*, 65, no. 2 (June 2005): pp. 285-351

³⁷ Hart, “A British Atlantic World of Advertising?” 115; Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 11.

³⁸ McKendrick et. al *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, 23.

³⁹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slavery*, 200; for a discussion of absentee plantation owners and the issues this engendered, see, Trevor Burnard “Passengers Only,” *Atlantic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2004): 178-95.

slaves were commodified in tandem with the other ‘goods’ desired by the growing planter class that was able to purchase them.

Using the *Royal Gazette*’s slave sale ads and the *Slave Trade Database* it is possible to gauge the frequency with which companies advertised slave shipments arriving in Kingston. The advertisements placed in the *Gazette* speak to a broader trans-Atlantic conceptualization of enslaved Africans as commodities; and the volume of these advertisements is indicative of the normalization of the concept by factors and planters alike. Between 1780 and 1783, 31 of the 225 advertisements selling enslaved Africans in the *Gazette* indicated the arrival of shipments of one hundred or more slaves (see Table 3.2). The table illustrates the number of advertised shipments of slaves by year (not included are smaller sales advertised through merchant firms); each sale was connected to a shipment of enslaved Africans.

Table 3.2: Number of shipments between 1780-1783



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*

Altogether, these advertisements account for the shipment of approximately 14,887 enslaved Africans to Kingston. According to the *Slave Trade Database*, this number was only half of the shipments landing in Jamaica; the total number of slaves to actually disembark between 1780 and 1783 was an estimated 27, 593.⁴⁰ The slave sale advertisements in the *Gazette* between 1780-1783 represented 86 per cent of the 17, 279 slaves who disembarked in Kingston – meaning that the *Gazette* was one of the main platforms through which merchants accessed buyers.⁴¹ The volume of the slave trade to Jamaica between 1780 and 1783 was representative of the number slaves imported to the West Indies at the end of the eighteenth century (see Table 3.3). As staggering as these figures are, the trade in enslaved Africans in the first four years of the 1780s was inconsequential compared to the seventy advertisements of shipments placed nearly a decade later in 1793 and 1794. Between 1790 and 1794, the price of enslaved Africans dropped by an estimated two pounds sterling from 1785-1789.⁴² This was the result of the availability of enslaved peoples following the emancipation of slaves in France, and the Haitian Revolution. In the same period, the price of sugar rose by three pounds sterling; the Revolutions in the Atlantic thus offered Jamaicans another period of economic gain.⁴³

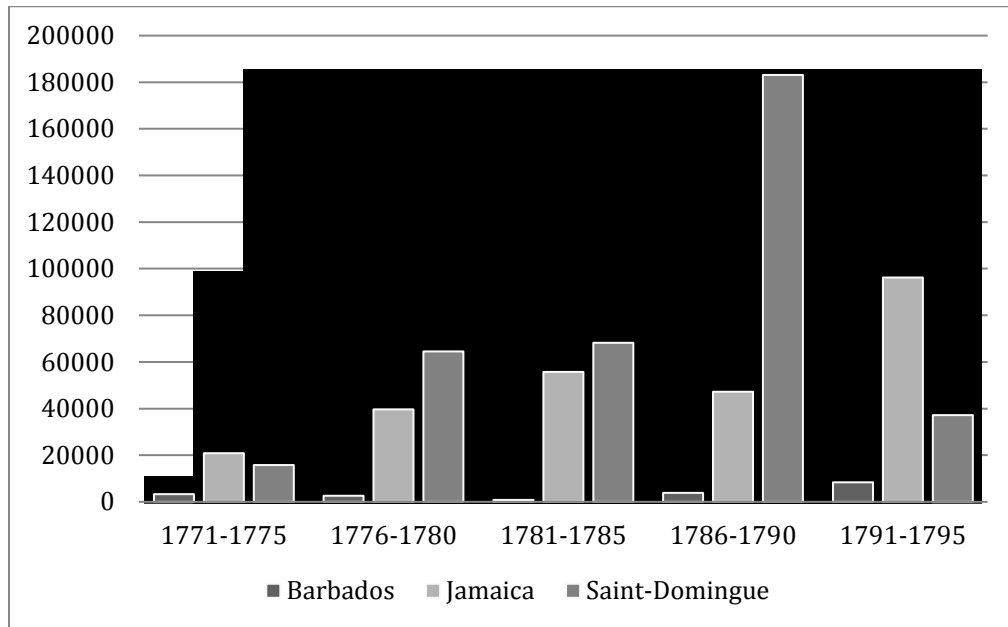
⁴⁰ *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/mgmem06W>

⁴¹ *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/CpMK9LAz>

⁴² Eltis, Lewis and Richardson, “Slave Prices,” 679.

⁴³ Eltis, Lewis and Richardson, “Slave Prices,” 679.

Table 3.3: Comparative Numbers of Enslaved Africans to Barbados, Jamaica and Saint Domingue, 1771-1795.



Source: *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/tzG4lnXQ>

When considering the number of Africans involved, the shipments attain a human cost that a single statistic does not capture. For the Guinea factors who placed the ads and the planters and merchants hoping to purchase the enslaved, this human factor was of little to no consequence. The enslaved represented a number, a series of values, which enabled planters and buyers to acquire profit from enslaved bodies. That slaves were human, and on some level therefore attached to wider contemporary dialogues about freedom, rights and humanity, was an abstraction that played little role in the marketing and purchasing of, as Burnard has chillingly articulated, human resources.⁴⁴ The ability to maintain distance from the enslaved people put up for sale is reproduced in the present analysis of the numbers involved in slave sale advertisements. Marissa Fuentes articulates this distance in a discussion of the violence written of in sources. Fuentes asserts that in

⁴⁴ Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 247.

sources such as these: “The violence is transferred from the enslaved bodies to the documents that count, condemn, assess and evoke them, and we receive them in this condition.”⁴⁵ The violence that was an inherent aspect of the institution of slavery was muted in the slave sale advertisements; instead, the consumer received a perspective of enslaved bodies based on numbers, on constructed tribal origins and on the absence of humanity.

The method of sale, once ships landed and advertisements were placed, varied for large shipments and inter-island trade. One of the methods employed for large slave sales was the scramble; these occurred in shipyards or pens owned by the factors who placed the ad. According to Radburn, factors in Kingston employed the scramble sale only if they were assured that demand for slaves was high, and the sale would draw enough business from the local planters.⁴⁶ Demand had to be at a peak in order to justify this method of sale, as a scramble involved prospective purchasers entering a yard and grabbing however many slaves they could.⁴⁷ However, Burnard and Morgan have asserted that the scramble was not frequent, and that many slave sales were conducted through “careful negotiations between astute, experienced, and knowledgeable buyers and well-informed sellers who studiously evaluated the risks that they had to take in order to gain the profits that had spurred them to enter the trade.”⁴⁸ It was up to the informed factor to gauge current demand, and act accordingly. In 45 per cent of slave sale advertisements, in the combined sample periods, the sale date was announced within the advertisement. This implies that the slaves were sold through auctions, or in the

⁴⁵ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 5.

⁴⁶ Radburn, “Guinea Factors,” 269.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 276.

⁴⁸ Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, “The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655-1788,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 no. 1 (Jan. 2001), 224.

contemporary vernacular through public outcry, although it was not uncommon for factors to hold the best slaves for those planters with whom they had established positive connections.⁴⁹ Advertisements for shipments of slaves dominated the slave related ads in 1793 and 1794 due to the advantageous economic position in Jamaica. Planters had greater purchasing power due to the drop in slave prices; the rise in sugar prices also created an increase in sugar production, which required the use of enslaved Africans. The planters in the French colony of Saint-Domingue were no longer able to buy enslaved Africans or produce sugar for export due to the series of slave revolts and the pursuant military expeditions to suppress them. The advertisements for shipments of enslaved Africans offer an image of late eighteenth century Kingston, one in which slaves were marketed through print mediums such as the *Gazette*, and were regularly visible on the harbour, in slave pens, and in publicly held auctions.⁵⁰

Advertisements for the sale of shipments of enslaved Africans represented 19 percent of 161 slave sale advertisements between 1780 and 1783, and 56 percent of 125 advertisements between 1793 and 1794.⁵¹ The variation of the types of sales advertised in the *Gazette* decreased in the 1790s due to the availability of enslaved Africans. The temporary decline in antislavery advocacy in Britain, and the increased profitability of plantations, also offered planters and pro-slavery advocates the opportunity to frame

⁴⁹ Radburn, "Guinea Factors," 269-270.

⁵⁰ The methods of sale for shipments of enslaved Africans are more explicit between 1780 and 1783; of the 31 shipments advertised, 29 sales were advertised as occurring on board the ship. In the slave sale advertisements in 1793 and 1794, the name of the ship and captain was included in the ads, but the precise where the sales occurred was not explicitly stated.

⁵¹ These numbers do not include the "wanted" or "for hire" advertisements in either period, but reflect the sale of slaves from shipments, estate sale, small scale merchant sales, and individual sales by attorney's.

slavery as necessary to the economic success of empire.⁵² In addition to this, the violence that the formerly enslaved Africans enacted on whites in Haiti offered British planters evidence of the perils of offering freedom to the enslaved.⁵³ However, between 1780 and 1783, there was a variety of slave sale advertisements in the *Gazette* as there was a greater reliance on inter-island slave trading due to the lack of access to export goods and the rise of slave prices. Advertisements for slaves in small groups, associated with skills, or sold with land or household items in estate sales, was indicative of a nuanced and complex system whereby planters, merchants and Jamaican colonists could maintain and reproduce a definitive separation from the enslaved peoples up for sale.

Advertisements for estates were another iteration of how enslaved peoples were dehumanized through the conflation of slave with land and livestock. In Kingston between 1780 and 1783, 22 per cent of the 161 slave sale advertisements in which the type of sale was evident, were for the sale of estates that included land, furniture as well as people. Between 1793-1794, this number dropped to 14 per cent of 125, which reflected the opening up of the slave trade to Jamaica. The high proportion of estate sales in which slaves were marketed was indicative of the high mortality rate for whites on the island, the drop in the Jamaican economy dependent on slave made products, as well as how the enslaved were coopted into the sale of estates. The connection between land and slave was articulated in Bryan Edwards' *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies* at the turn of the century: "let the negro be sold along with

⁵² For a discussion of eighteenth century constructions of empire and enslavement see Brown, "Empire without Slaves," (1999): 237-306.

⁵³ For an overview of the impact of the Haitian Revolution to abolitionism see David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2002), 5-29; for an analysis of the Revolution on British abolitionism see Drescher, *Abolition*, 146-180.

the property to which he is attached, but in no other manner.”⁵⁴ Edwards argued for an ameliorationist policy, as he felt there was an injustice in the laws that allowed slaves to be sold to pay off the debt of planters. In his assessment of the sale of slaves, Edwards defined humane treatment of the enslaved as their remaining tied to the land they were forced to cultivate. Therefore, in Edwards’ construction, the advertisement and sale of enslaved people with land was the humane and moral method of sale.

Estate sales that included the sale of slaves varied in frequency and composition between 1780 and 1783, but in general slaves were embedded within the estate assets. The lack of demarcation between enslaved people and property indicates the clear and unquestioned conceptualization of enslaved peoples as commodity. This assessment of enslaved peoples was supported by the attainment of the enslaved through legitimate commerce, and in their legal definition as property.⁵⁵ This legal and cultural understanding of the enslaved was reflected in advertisements (see Figure 3.1). The attorneys of the *Windsor Forest* sugar estate may have endorsed the ameliorationist position of keeping the “Slaves, Stock &c.” together on the same estate. But the intent may also have been more about profit; ensuring that enslaved Africans remained on the plantation at the time of sale ensured the maintenance of the plantation as a going concern, and thereby increased the value of the estate. Burnard and Garrigus assert that planters in both Jamaica and St. Domingue “almost always chose profit maximization over amelioration.”⁵⁶ The value of enslaved Africans was intrinsically connected to their labour, which in turn was connected to the land. In the estate sale of *Windsor Forest*, the

⁵⁴ Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies, To which is added An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, (London, 1798), 200.

⁵⁵ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 90.

⁵⁶ Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 230.

attorneys' intent was to ensure the best price for the land, stock, and slaves by keeping the enslaved labour and land connected.

Figure 3.2: Advertisement for the slave of an estate with "Slaves, Stock, &c." June, 1782

165— Kingston, 12th June, 1782.
T O B E S O L D,
A SUGAR ESTATE situated in the parish of St. David's, called *WINDSOR FOREST*, with all the Slaves, Stock, &c. belonging to it. There is an excellent Water Work, and many other conveniences, upon the premises, superior to most estates in that neighbourhood.—The whole will be sold upon very reasonable terms, provided the mode of payment is acceptable.
For further particulars apply to
Rob & Tho. Hibbert, }
Attorneys to the Proprietor. }

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

David Brion Davis argues that chattel slavery was modeled on classical laws and customs about property rights, and that this antiquated understanding of property included domestic animals as well as people. Following this model, Davis asserts, slaves and animals could justifiably be “bought, sold, traded, leased, inherited, included in a dowry, gambled, or lost as debt.”⁵⁷ The value of slaves and livestock was only realized through the exploitation of their labour. As such, the ownership of land was almost always associated with the ownership of, or else the exploitation of hired, enslaved peoples.⁵⁸ The value of land and labour went in tandem; this relationship was clearly established in the advertisements that marketed land, livestock and slaves. An advertisement placed in the *Gazette* on February 12, 1782 (see Figure 3.2) was

⁵⁷ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, 11.

⁵⁸ Burnard and Morgan, “The Dynamics of the Slave Market,” 214

illustrative of this packaging of slaves, houses and land. The advertisement was for the sale of several leases on property; this included the advertisement for the sale of “Twenty Men and Women Negro Slaves some of whom are Seamstresses, washerwomen, Cooks &c.” The slaves for sale were qualified as possessing skills; this increased the marketability of the enslaved because skilled labourers attracted higher prices.⁵⁹ The advertisement also included the sale of liquor, horses and furniture. The position of the slaves within the advertisement itself, above the household items but beneath the land and houses, was indicative of a hierarchy of goods within Kingston. In Jamaica in the 1780s arable land was still available –as the trade in sugar and slaves increased, the value of land increased correspondingly.⁶⁰

Figure 3.3: Advertisement for the sale of land, property, and slaves, February 1782

⁵⁹ Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 138.

⁶⁰ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 184.

T O B E S O L D

THE LEASE of the HOUSES and STORES
in *Harbour* and *Port-Royal Streets*, now in possession of the Subscriber, one of which runs into the Sea, and has a convenient Wharf:—*also*,

That well-known and frequented Lodging-House, adjoining to Messrs. YATE & SWAREBECK'S Vendue Store (late BENTLEY'S Tavern), which goes through into *Port-Royal Street*, with or without the Furniture.

A Mountain Plantation in the Parish of *Saint Andrew*, commonly called or known by the name of the BOTANIC GARDEN, on which is a convenient and good Dwelling-house, with suitable Out-offices, a fine River at the bottom, and is exceeding airy and salutary.

A Lot of Land near the Play-House, which is at present leased (on a Building Lease) for 15*l.* per annum.—*Also*,

Twenty Men & Women Negro Slaves, some of whom are Semaresses, Washerwomen, Cooks, &c.

Likewise, a large quantity of Liquors, both in casks and bottles; with several large Butts, and Horses for the same; Silver Plate, Household Furniture, &c.

MARK HOWARD.

Likewise,—Fifty Acres of Land in the Parish of *St. James*, formerly the property of *Thomas Burke*, Esq. and sold by him to Mr. *John Conner*; butting and bounding, north on land the property of the said *Thomas Burke*; easterly, on the road leading to the *Retreat* estate; southerly, part on the road leading from *Green-Pond Estate* to *Montego-Bay*, and part on *Andrew O'Dempseys*, Esq; and westerly, on land belonging to *John Murdoch*.

For particulars of this Land, apply to Mr. JOHN FOWLER at *Martha-Brace*, or the above Subscriber.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

In order to profit from export commodity goods, enslaved labour and land ownership in Jamaica were necessary; as such the advertisement for “Twenty Men & Women Negro Slaves” appeared along with, and directly beneath, the description of the houses and land for sale. As illustrated in Figures 3.1 and 3.2, the enslaved were marketed with land and it was the connection between labour and land that was the basis for evaluating the value of the enslaved. The conflation of land and enslaved Africans was supported both by custom, as was evidenced in advertisements marketing both land

and the use of enslaved labour, and by law. Enslaved Africans were legally classified as real estate; this defined the enslaved as property not just in practice, but also in law.⁶¹ In practice, enslaved Africans' status enabled slave-owners to secure their enslaved property if there were debts to be paid, or if an owner died without leaving a will. Within their legal status as real estate, enslaved peoples could not be removed from the land on which they laboured, provided the owner of the land also 'owned' the enslaved peoples.⁶² The legal status of the enslaved as real estate, and the cultural understanding of enslaved people as chattel represented a tension in slave holding societies. Enslaved people were, physically, movable "commodities" as they are defined as "a movable possession; any possession or piece of property other than real estate or a freehold."⁶³ However, their legal status as real estate tied them to land as their labour was what was valued, and in their definition as real estate their "owners" were protected from debt collectors. The advertisements for the sale of land and enslaved Africans within the same advertisement(s) were a clear public representation of the legal status of the enslaved; yet in the slave sale advertisements for groups of enslaved people, their chattel-properties were for sale. The placement of advertisements of the enslaved as a commodity by merchants, and not just executors of estates, reaffirmed the commodity status of slaves – in both estate sale advertisements, and advertisements for the sale of peoples in with other commodity goods.

⁶¹ For a discussion of Jamaican legislations concerning slavery see Aaron Graham, "Jamaican Legislation and the Transatlantic Constitution, 1664-1839," *The Historical Journal*, 61 no. 2 (2018): 327-355.

⁶² Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860*, (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 65-74.

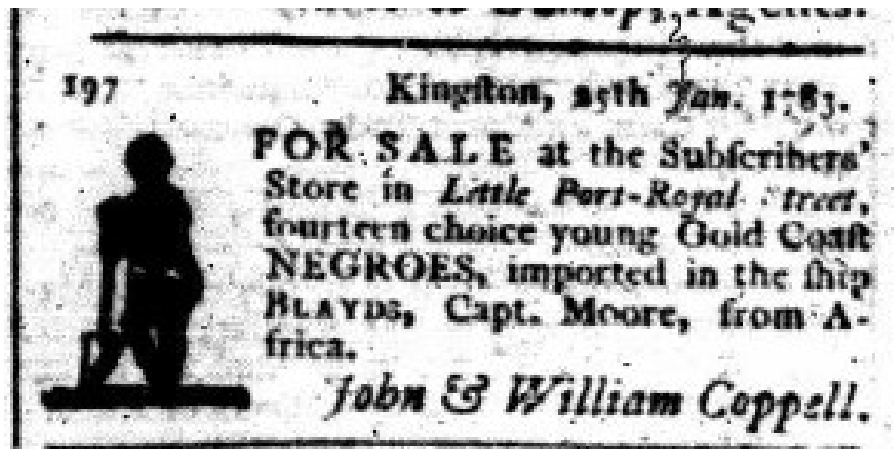
⁶³ "chattel, n.". OED Online. June 2018. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/Entry/30963?redirectedFrom=Chattel> (accessed August 14, 2018).

In *The Royal Gazette* from 1780-1783 and 1793-1794, 20 per cent of the slave sale advertisements (that included an indicator of who was facilitating the sale) were placed by merchants.⁶⁴ If the advertisements indicated the type of sale conducted by merchants accurately, then sales were held in stores, through public auctions, or through private transactions. Between 1780 and 1783, 24 per cent of the advertised sales were conducted via merchants; of the advertisements that included the location of the slave sales, 8 per cent occurred within stores owned by merchants during this period. Comparatively, the small-scale sales of slaves conducted by merchants between 1793 and 1794 dropped to 16 percent; advertisements for sales conducted in stores also fell to 5 percent. This drop reflected the increase in shipments that arrived in Jamaica during the later period – whereas between 1780 and 1783, inter-island trade was the dominant mechanism through which potential buyers purchased enslaved peoples. The sale of enslaved peoples did not commonly occur in stores in either period – but that this did occur is additional evidence that enslaved people were commodified in similar ways as other commodity goods. The same merchants who advertised wares such as wine, sugar and coffee also placed advertisements for the sale of the enslaved, such as the advertisements placed by John and William Coppel in 1781 and 1783 for commodity goods in the former, and for enslaved Africans in the latter (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4).

⁶⁴ This percentage does not include the shipment of slaves orchestrated by merchant firms or Guinea factors; nor does it account for the potential overlaps between attorneys who controlled estates.

Figure 3.4: Advertisement for the sale of a group of enslaved Africans to be held in the store of John and William Coppell, January 1783



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1783

Figure 3.5: Advertisement for the sale of commodity goods by John and William Coppell, July 1781

117— Kingston, July 13. 1781.

JUST IMPORTED in the Ship *ELLEN*,
 J. A. BORROWDALE Master, from LIVERPOOL,
 and in other the last Ships from that place, from
 LONDON and COX, and to be sold by

John & William Coppel,

On the most reasonable terms, for Cash, Produce, good
 Bills of Exchange, or for approved Bonds or Notes,

M ets and Cargo Beef, in bbls & half bbls.	Brown and white Soap
Mets and Cargo Pork, in bbls, half bbls, & firkins	Yellow Paint
New Rufe Butter	Linseed Oil
White and Red Herrings	Sheets of Lead
Newfoundland Salt Fish	Musket and Pistol Shot
Fine English and French Flour. Ship Bread	Sugar Laales
Punchons of Oarmeal	Wood Hoops
Cheese, Yorkshire Hams	A very large assortment of excellent Cordage
Shell'd Barley	4d. 6d, 8d, 10d, and 12d.
Mould Crindles	Nails. Bricks
	FF. & F. Gun-powder, & Gl. S Ware assorted.

AND ALSO THE FOLLOWING.

English and Foreign Can- vas, N ^o 1.—2.	White and blue Kendal Cottons. Negro Hats
Mens, womens, youths, and boys plain & fitch'd heel Shoes and Pumps	Brown Buckram
Rolls and Haddens	livery and Coach Lace
Cumberland Linens	Saddlery. A very general assortment of the best curry'd & tann'd Hides for Harness, Roofs, and Bridles. Skirt Hides
White & brown Osnabrug	Sole Leather and Pump Leather
Osnabrug and stitching Thread. Scotch ditto	Calf Skins and Basils :
Cutteau Knives	A very large assortment, in different boxes, of mens and womens fa- shionable Hats
Negro Caps	Bordered & printed Hand- kerchiefs
White & blue Pennsionets	An assortment of Table- cloths
Foreign white Linens	Copperplates and China blues
$\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, & yd wide Irish linens	Clear and Long Lawne.
$\frac{1}{2}$ & $\frac{3}{4}$ Linen and Cotton Checks	Britannias, Kettings
12 nail, $\frac{1}{2}$, and $\frac{3}{4}$ Check Handkerchiefs	Black Silk Handkerchiefs
Superfine India Jeans	Ditto Ribbons
Dutch, corded, and India Dimity. Drawboys	Some empty Punchons
French Petticoating	
Sheeting. Leggons	
Mens, womens, and boys white thcad Stockings	
Preston Linens	

And four Pair CARRIAGE GUNS, &c. &c.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1781

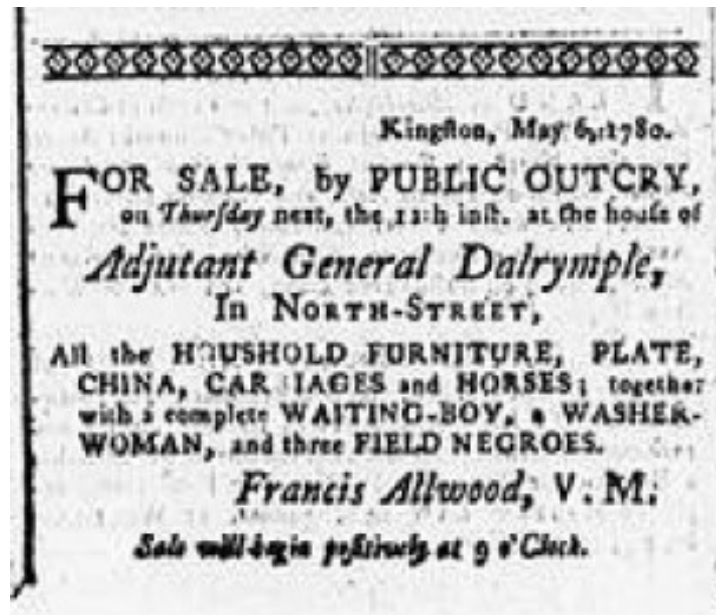
In addition to the advertisements for the sale of enslaved people out of stores, between 1780 and 1783, 20 per cent of the sales occurred through public auction.

Between 1793 and 1794, this number dropped to 13 per cent as the reliance on public

auctions was mitigated by the access to shipments of enslaved Africans. The May 1780 auction advertised in the *Gazette* (see Figure 3.5) illustrated one of the ways merchants in Kingston advertised a public sale. The advertisement offered “Household Furniture, Plate, China...together with a complete Waiting Boy, a Washerwoman, and three Field Negroes.” Here enslaved peoples were conflated with objects - one of the starkest examples of the objectification of the enslaved. In the context of a public auction, the bidders determined the value of the enslaved peoples. Walter Johnson articulates how slaves at auction were “treated as physical manifestations of the categories the traders used to select [them].”⁶⁵ Therefore, the merchant who placed the ad judged that through a public sale the value of field slaves, and domestic slaves, would attract the highest value in 1780, when shipments of slaves were scarce and as a result demand was high. The sale of other commodity goods, and the advertisements for these sales, were limited to the sale of imported goods conducted in the stores of merchants. These ads were placed by merchants who, similar to selling enslaved people, lacked historic market places to promote their wares.

Figure 3.6 Advertisement for the public auction of furniture, horses and enslaved peoples, May 1780

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 118.



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1780

The objectification of the enslaved was intended to make clear the commodity status of the enslaved. This process was enacted through advertisements such as the ones above, the sale and marketing of enslaved bodies, labour and skill. The sale, or lease, of a Pen and mountain property in May of 1783 further explicated this connection.⁶⁶ The sale of “two Sawyers, two Sawyer apprentices, one Mason apprentice, and a few Field Negroes” (see Figure 3.6) within the same advertisements as the *Buenavista* pen connected land and skilled labour. Once again, skill, land and labour were interconnected and valued in the marketing of a private sale. The connection between land and labour, either skilled or unskilled, was made clear not solely through the marketing of the labour of the enslaved, but also in the advertisements for livestock.

Figure 3.7: Advertisement for the sale of land and skilled, enslaved labour, May 1783

⁶⁶ A pen was the term given to livestock farms in eighteenth century Jamaica.

Magua Danhalyne.

214— — Kingston, 22d May, 1783.

FOR LEASE or SALE, Mr. *Harrison's* Mountain and Pen, called *BUE NADVISIA*.—The dwelling-house is large and convenient, and commands an extensive and beautiful prospect of Spanish-Town, Kingston, and Port-Royal. There is a carriage-road to it from Spanish-Town, and it abounds with fire wood, and the materials for the making of lime.—The greater part of the Guinea grass is on the river side, which may be leased separately. There is also Guinea grass around the mansion-house, with a variety of fruit-trees.

For SALE, two Sawyers, two Sawyer apprentices, one Mason apprentice, and a few Field Negroes.—Apply to the Hon. Mr. *Grant*, Mr. *G. C. Ricketts*, or Mr. *Henckell*.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1783

Throughout the *Gazette*, the advertisements for the sale of livestock and enslaved peoples were strikingly similar in both the tone and structure. The animalization of the enslaved capitalized on cultural and scholarly traditions of viewing Africans and their descendants as part of a primitive and degenerate subgroup – or race – of humanity. The comparison of African people to animals had roots in natural histories throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as natural historians attempted to explain human differences and establish seemingly natural hierarchies. The language that was used to assign Africans primitive and animal traits in the *Sessional Papers* “Report” was made manifest in Kingston through slave sale advertisements. These ads sell slaves and livestock together, or else use the same stereotypes in both slave and stock advertisements.

In the *Gazette* there were fewer advertisements for the sale of livestock, which indicates the development of livestock pens and the use of livestock, namely mules and

oxen, for draught versus cultivation purposes.⁶⁷ The conflation of slaves and livestock was also based on the need for, and value of, manual labour that both enslaved people and domestic cattle provided. The association of labour and livestock was exemplified in the term “driver,” the title given to those slaves who were tasked with the discipline of other enslaved peoples in the fields. Philip D. Morgan, in an article addressing slaves and livestock in Jamaica, asserts that the original meaning of the title of ‘driver’ was someone who caught, and subsequently offered to sell, wild horses.⁶⁸ Within the plantations, the term “driver” evolved, though still imbued with concepts of control and productivity, only in the eighteenth century the control exerted was over people and not wild horses. Similar to this shift in meaning, the term “stock” in eighteenth-century Jamaica also came to include slaves as well as cattle. The enslaved and livestock were not only subjected to semantic similarities, but were also physically placed in the same spaces. Morgan asserts that the comingling of animals and enslaved peoples offered planters justifications for treating both in similar ways.⁶⁹ Morgan posits that the eighteenth-century debate about natural classifications and human diversity played a role in the material conditions that planters afforded enslaved peoples.

The material impact of theories around natural classifications was made manifest in the advertisements for livestock and slaves in the *Gazette*, as these ads were grouped together. In 6 percent of all the advertisements from both sample periods, enslaved peoples and livestock were sold together (see Figure 3.7). The association between the enslaved and livestock was represented through lists in which there was no differentiation

⁶⁷ For a discussion of the development of pens and the sugar industry in Jamaica, see Verene A. Shepherd, “Livestock and Sugar: Aspects of Jamaica’s Agricultural Development from the Late Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal*, 34 no. 3 (1991): 627-643.

⁶⁸ Morgan, “Slaves and Livestock,” 47.

⁶⁹ Morgan, “Slaves and Livestock,” 50.

between the two. The advertisement for the “breeding Stock” included “Cattle, Sheep, and Goats; likewise all the house Furniture, Chine, Plates, Carriages and Horses, with a few House Negroes” employed terms associated with animal husbandry (“breeding Stock”) and enslaved peoples. The conceptualization of “stock,” particularly ‘well bred’ stock (see Figure 3.8), was used in advertisements to market the value of healthy, ‘trained’ and strong labour, regardless of whether that labour was human or animal.

Figure 3.8: Advertisement for the “breeding Stock” of a pen, August 1780

67-75 Kingston, 2d August, 1780.

TO BE LEASED,

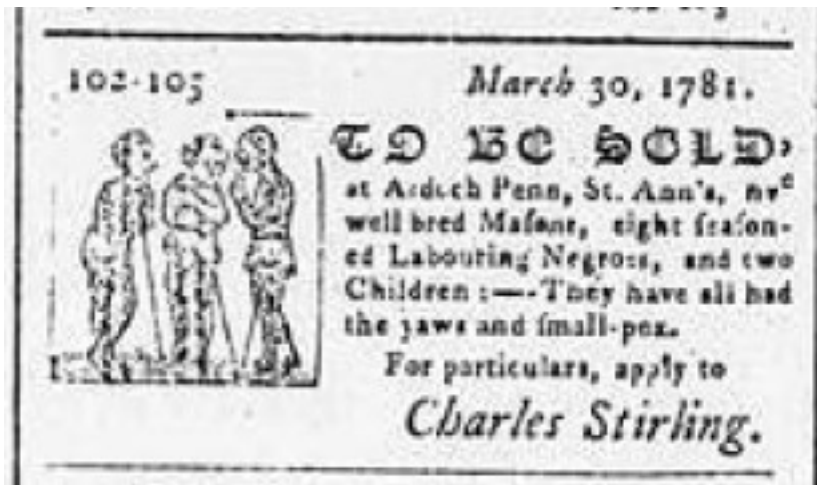
THE PEN in *Liguanea*, half a mile South of *Half-way-tree*, and a 1/2-mile from *Kingston*, whereon Daniel Crockett, Esq; has resided many years. This Pen consists of about ninety acres of land, the whole is in Guinea Grass and clear pasture, together with 15 Negroes who have been long upon this property; has a commodious Dwelling House thereon, with other Offices, in good repair; also a range of brick Negro Houses for the Pen Negroes.

TO BE SOLD;

The breeding Stock on this Pen, say Cattle, Sheep, and Goats; likewise all the Household Furniture, China, Plate, Carriages and Horses, with a few House Negroes. N. B. Timely notice will be given of this Sale, and an Inventory may be seen at the Store of Mr. FRANCIS AULWORTH, where likewise may be seen the particulars of the Deal.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1780

Figure 3.9: Advertisement for “well bred” enslaved Masons and Labourers, March 1781

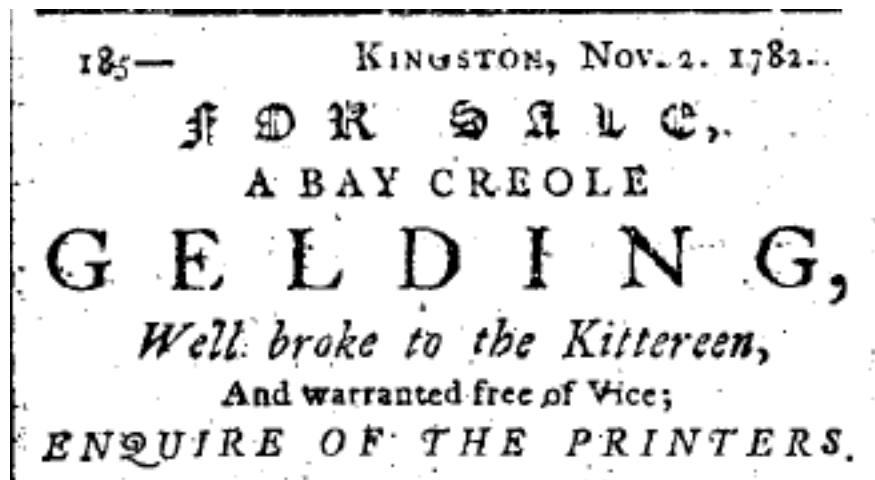


Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1781

In addition to the association between livestock and enslaved Africans within single advertisements, both slave sale advertisements and livestock ads employed similar commodifying and evaluative language. The announcements used in the slave sale advertisements such as “For Sale” and “To Be Sold” were also used in live stock advertisements. Between 1780 and 1783, “For Sale” appeared in 12 percent of the 97 livestock advertisements that were placed during this time period. “To Be Sold” was used in 28 percent of the advertisements; this can be compared with the 39 percent of slave sale advertisements employing the announcement “To Be Sold” between the same sample period. A standard advertisement for a horse in the early 1780s in the *Gazette* (see Figure 3.9) specified that the horse was bred on the island and was “well broke to the Kittereen.” The equivalent assertion of saleability in advertisements for enslaved people was the advertisements that included enslaved skill. This occurred in 36 per cent of the 225 ads for enslaved people; the assertion of a horse having been trained for a specific

job occurred in 9 percent of the advertisements for livestock between 1780 and 1783. However, descriptive language such as “well broke” and “ready for work” occurred in 15 percent of the livestock advertisements. In the advertisement (see Figure 3.9), the animal’s ancestry, indicated by the term “Creole,” as well as its ‘skill’ in its ability to pull the small two-wheeled cart was marketed. The use of term “creole” occurred in 3 percent the advertisements selling both enslaved peoples, or else selling their labour, and in livestock ads between 1780 and 1783. The warranty of the horse being “free of Vice” also attributed seemingly human characteristics to the animal; either that or the word “vice” was used to denote bad behaviour in both animals and enslaved Africans.

Figure 3.10: Advertisement for the sale of a “Bay Creole Gelding” November 1782



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

The arguments that relied on cataloguing similarities between African and animal were developed by natural historians in their attempts to classify and categorize nature. Planters such as Edward Long, who likened the mental facilities of monkeys and Africans, capitalized on these arguments when discussing enslaved Africans in Jamaica, as well as autonomous Africans in West Africa. The similarities in the structure and

language of advertisements that sold enslaved peoples and livestock can be illustrated in a comparison of two advertisements; one selling the “Creole Gelding” and the other selling “3 Stout Negro Men” (see Figure 3.10). Both advertisements included the sex, descriptive attributes in form of “bay creole” and “stout,” and skilled ability. The horse for sale was used to pulling a carriage, which denoted skill and training, and the men for sale were “accustomed to work at a Store and Wharf” (see Figure 3.9 and 3.10).

Figure 3.11: Advertisement for the sale of “3 Stout Negro Men” July 1782.

KINGSTON, J. 21. 1782.

For SALE by Public Outcry,
 On *Wednesday* the 3d of July, at the subscribers'
 Vendue Store; precisely at 11 o'Clock in the
 Forenoon
3 Stout NEGRO MEN,
 With warranted Titles, who have been ac-
 customed to work at a Store and Wharf, be-
 longing to the estate of Mr. Robert Frazer, de-
 ceased.
Burke & Humphreys, v. M.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

The similarity between the mechanisms of sale and the attendant language used to commodify both livestock and enslaved peoples expressed the value placed on physical labour connected to real estate. The value placed on the vitality, resilience and skill of this physical labour was expressed through terms such as “well broke,” in concerns with livestock, or through “seasoned” concerning enslaved labourers. Additionally, enslaved peoples and livestock were more highly valued if they were born in Jamaica, as this indicated their higher chances of survival in the West Indian climate. The term “creole” (see Figure 3.9) was used to denote nativity to Jamaica, and was used in both livestock

advertisements and advertisements for enslaved people. The term “seasoned” was also frequently employed in slave sale advertisements. A slave who survived the seasoning process, a term to denote surviving their first year of labour in Jamaica, could result in a higher price as, according to Burnard and Morgan, “between a quarter and a half of newly landed Africans died in the first three years of arrival.”⁷⁰ The need for field labour was consistent in Jamaica, particularly during planting and harvesting seasons.⁷¹ In the *Gazette*, 15 per cent of the advertisements related to slave sales employed either “Seasoned” or “Field” to promote sales. This is contrasted by the 3 per cent of slave sale advertisements in the *Gazette* that marketed slaves as “New,” all of which occurred between 1793 and 1794 as the arrival of slaving voyages to Kingston doubled between 1781-1785 and 1791-1795.⁷² The use of the term “new” also publicized that the slaves for sale were directly from Africa and as such had a higher chance of dying in the fields. Emphasizing the value of the enslaved for sale within the *Gazette* was crucial for the success of public auctions, both of large shipments and in small batches. Therefore, the marketability of the enslaved was highlighted through terms such as “seasoned;” in order to market newly enslaved Africans, as “new” was not in common use, sellers of enslaved Africans relied on the advertisement of tribal origins in order to assert value.

The commodification of the enslaved altered in response to shifting, and often unsubstantiated, contemporary concepts of which ‘kind’ of African worked better on plantations, or were better suited for enslavement in general. Therefore, the ascription of identities, tribal or regional, to enslaved Africans upon landing in Jamaica reflected an

⁷⁰ Burnard and Morgan, “The Dynamics of the Slave Market,” 221.

⁷¹ For the seasonal work and management of plantations in the West Indies, see Elits, *The Rise of African Slavery*, 193-223; and Roberts, *Slavery and Enlightenment*.

⁷² *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/mejkw5Xa>

understanding of which African groups were considered ‘best.’ In the “Report” Africans were ascribed certain traits based on their cultural or geographical area – an example of which was Mr. Norris’ sweeping generalizations about the violence of the people of Dahomey.⁷³ Comparatively, Thomas Poplett, a one-time resident of Goree and Gambia between 1779-1783, asserted, “The Wollofs are a sensible, hospitable and civil People, but are jealous and vindictive.”⁷⁴ In their books, both Edward Long and Bryan Edwards took great care to catalogue the ‘characteristics’ of certain groups that were common throughout Jamaica. These biases and cultural constructions, communicated back to Kingston, resulted in preferences for specific Africans deemed more suitable for specific jobs.⁷⁵ However, it is crucial to note that the geopolitical titles given African groups did not necessarily correlate to slaves’ ethnicities, nor were these stereotypes grounded in African culture.⁷⁶

The slave sale ads in the *Gazette* reflected a value attached to Africans who originated from specific places or cultures, regardless of whether or not these value judgements could be substantiated. This ascription of identity and value was made simpler by the supply of enslaved Africans coming from four main regions. As such, the evaluations of which ‘kinds’ of Africans were better than others were enabled by the limited regional variety that the enslaved were advertised as originating from. There were four main regions that supplied the slave trade over the course of the eighteenth century:

⁷³ *Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69* (1789), 13.

⁷⁴ *Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69* (1789), 10.

⁷⁵ Historian Paul E. Lovejoy, in his analysis of slavery in Africa, suggests that market forces were not the sole influence on the supply of slaves to the New World. Slaves were acquired by African and European dealers alike in response to customs, wars, and legal systems within states along the West African coast. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 53

⁷⁶ Here I use ethnicity to denote a complex and individual understanding of one's background, heritage, language and familial or cultural group. Therefore, many of the enslaved Africans that arrived in Jamaica would not have been Akan or “Coromantee,” but could have come from the interior and transported by coastal traders.

the Bight of Benin, the Bight of Biafra, the Gold Coast, and the west Central African coast.⁷⁷ British traders described the Bight of Benin as the ‘Slave Coast;’ and it was this region that included Whydah (Ouidah) as this was one of the main ports through which the British traded.⁷⁸ The Slave Coast also encompassed the interior Kingdoms of Dahomey and Oyo – both of which were referenced throughout the “Report,” and described as organized states, but also characterized as despotic and violent.⁷⁹ The Gold Coast was, in the eighteenth century, defined by political upheavals the result of which were wars between the Akan and Asante – these conflicts and the ultimate development of a centralized state fed the slave trade in the form of prisoners of war. For European traders the Gold Coast was, according to historian David Northrup, a more hospitable environment, and the British and other European states were able to establish trading ports.⁸⁰ The Bight of Biafra, which in the *Sessional Papers* and slave sale ads was referred to as ‘Bonny’ as this was the main port used by the British, was predominant at the end of the eighteenth-century. Finally, west-Central Africa encompassed Angola and the Kingdom of Kongo; this area was the most firmly established as it was the first area with which the Portuguese traded, beginning in the early sixteenth century.⁸¹ The predominance of these four regions in the supply of enslaved Africans to Jamaica facilitated the construction of tribal and ethnic identities by the planter class. The ports at which enslaved Africans were bought in West Africa, and the shifting access to these ports by British slave traders, dictated enslaved Africans’ value in Jamaica.

⁷⁷ Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 50.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁹ *Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 69* (1789), 13-17.

⁸⁰ David Northrup, “West Africans and the Atlantic, 1550-1800,” in *Black Experience and the Empire* ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 42.

⁸¹ Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 53.

Between 1750 and 1790, Jamaica imported approximately 80 percent of enslaved peoples acquired by the British traders on the Gold Coast.⁸² The British frequently called these enslaved Africans ‘Coromantee’ or ‘Koromonti’ – a title that referred to the Akan peoples.⁸³ This supply was a result of conflicts between the Asante and Akan, in which the Asante were ultimately the victors. The characterization of “Coromantee” peoples in Jamaica was founded, in part, due to the slave uprising in 1760; Tacky’s Rebellion was a violent uprising of slaves across the island led by a “Coromantee.”⁸⁴ Following this uprising, Jamaicans characterized the Coromantee people as having violent and warrior-like attributes. This characterization of Akan peoples was based on Jamaican events that were precipitated, in part, by the ability of a large proportion of the slaves to communicate with one another in the same language in a society where slaves made up the majority. The “Coromantee negroes” were evaluated by Jamaican planter William Beckford in 1788 as possessing “a more savage appearance and intrepid temper...and [were] indignant at the idea of labour...are not equally docile with those other of other nations, do not easily domesticate, or work with perseverance in their grounds.”⁸⁵ However, their warrior-like and violent natures were not considered entirely negative, as Beckford asserted that their fierceness and temper, and that they were not “equally docile

⁸² Philip D. Morgan, “The Black Experience in the British Empire, 1680-1810,” in *Black Experience and the Empire* ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 99.

⁸³ Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 127.

⁸⁴ Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 122-136.

⁸⁵ William Beckford, *Remarks upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica*, (London: Printed for T. and J. Egerton, Military Library, White Hall, 1788), 11-12.; Bryan Edwards made similar remarks about the “Koromanytn negroes,” he characterized them as being ferocious and intelligent, but violent and vengeful, Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies, To which is added An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, (London, 1798), 152.

with those of other nations” and as such did not “easily domesticate” and as a result were suited for gang labour on plantations.⁸⁶

The characterization of Akan peoples was echoed in descriptions of ‘Eboes,’ ‘Mandingoes,’ ‘Angolans,’ and ‘Pawpaws’ in both Bryan Edwards and Edward Long. Pawpaw’s denoted those slaves from Whydah, ‘Eboes’ or Igbos were those Africans from the Bight of Benin, and Mandingoes refer to people from the Senegambia region.⁸⁷ Each title held either positive or negative attributions, which were consistently contested by planters and merchants. Of the 362 slave sale advertisements from both sample periods that included a place of perceived origin of the enslaved, 31 percent advertised “Coromantee, Ashantee, and Fantee.” This implied that the use of “Coromantee, Ashantee, and Fantee” imbued the enslaved with desirable qualities. The second highest group was “Eboe” at 21 percent, an identity given to those enslaved peoples bought in the Bight of Biafra.⁸⁸ The “Eboes” were described by Beckford as prone to suicide, but he also asserted that they were good mothers and as such should be granted “great tenderness” and “should be bought young; and in the choice of women.”⁸⁹ Bryan Edwards asserted that the Eboe were universally sickly, and less valuable to a master in general.⁹⁰ Both of these characterizations, of Eboes and of “Coromantees” had similar iterations in other colonies in British North America, and were therefore not just localized

⁸⁶ Beckford, *Remarks*, 11-12.

⁸⁷ Edwards, *The History of Civil and Commercial*, (1798), 140-160; Long, *History of Jamaica, Vol II.*, (1774), 372- 378; Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 48-68.

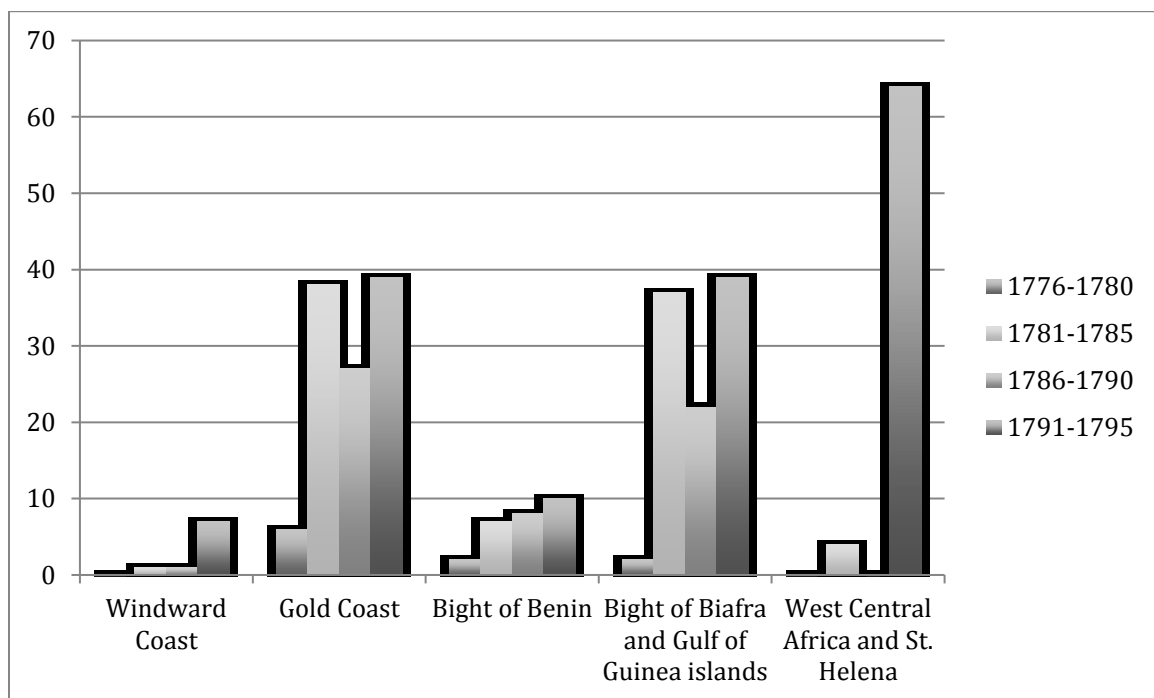
⁸⁸ For an explanation of the late eighteenth century dominance of the Bight Biafra in the slave trade see Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 54-55.

⁸⁹ Beckford, *Remarks*, 23.

⁹⁰ Edwards, *History Civil and Commercial*, 159.

fictions within Jamaica.⁹¹ The *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* confirms that the advertisements for enslaved Africans reflect the trends in voyages supplying Kingston (see Table 3.4). West Central Africa included the Congo, and while enslaved Africans from the Congo were not advertised between 1780-1783, they represented 20 percent of the advertisements between 1793 and 1794. The ascription of identity to enslaved peoples served a purpose in Jamaica; it advertised the enslaved as having a value dependent on what planters believed they knew about the enslaved they already owned or due to common cultural understandings.

Table 3.4: Slaving Voyages from Regions of West African to Kingston, 1776-1795.



Source: *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/sNJah56H>

In advertisements placed by Guinea factors and merchants, the enslaved were marketed through the ascription of imagined regional or ethnic identities - no

⁹¹ On the construction of “African” identities in British colonies, see David Northrup, “Igbo and Myth Igbo: Culture and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Wrld, 1600-1850,” *Slavery and Abolition*, 21 no. 3 (2000): 1-20.

advertisements for shipments failed to ascribe an ethnic identity to the enslaved. This indicates that of the factors that could impact the marketability of newly enslaved Africans, and enslaved peoples born in Jamaica, ascribed tribal or regional identity was paramount. The nature of identity in this case is of particular importance, as the merchants, governors and captains denied native Africans along the coast a cultural or political identity in the Privy Councils “Report.” The ascription of identity in slave sale advertisements also reveals how planters, and other potential buyers, adopted unsubstantiated constructions about African identities and dispositions. This complicates Burnard’s, and others, arguments that characterize planters as astute businessmen and adept capitalists in an Atlantic economy. That no advertisement for a shipment of enslaved Africans failed to qualify the supposed tribal or ethnic origins of the enslaved for sale substantiates the argument that planters bought into a delusion in which the advertised ethnicity related to physical or moral ability.

The *Royal Gazette* was a platform through which merchants, planters, factors and attorneys could market, sell and request labour in the form of enslaved people. For the enslaved, the *Gazette* was the vehicle through which their status as commodity was most explicitly publicized and exploited. The strategies employed in slave sale advertisements to market people varied in the *Gazette* in response to market demand, the frequency of shipments of enslaved Africans, and concepts of property. In small-scale sale ads in which slaves were part of an estate, the conflation of enslaved labour with land is evident. In the structure and placement of slave sale and livestock advertisements, the enslaved are equated to animals and valued for their chattel properties as moveable, in addition to their labour. Equating resources, cattle and human labour, offered planters and merchants

a justification to consider the two as equivalent. The mechanisms through sellers marketed and sold enslaved peoples reveals how enslaved peoples were denied access to the aspects of humanity that would have classified them as of the same 'category' as their prospective owners. The enslaved were sold at public auctions, through careful negotiations, and through estate sales that tied their sale with that of the land; they were not portrayed as possessing civility, reason, agency or individual needs. This lack of human attributes allowed the men who bought and sold them to craft and market the desirable attributes of enslaved people. In so doing they commodified the human ability to learn, labour and survive.

Chapter 4. Representing Race

The Dehumanization and Saleability of the Enslaved

The advertisements for the sale of people reflected the consistently high demand for enslaved labour in Jamaica, and Kingston in particular.¹ Slave sale advertisements were part of the tapestry of daily life, just as the use of enslaved Africans, discrimination against free blacks, and the profitable export of slave-made commodities were also part of the British colonial experience in Kingston. What was built from these weekly publications and the regular consumption of slave sale advertisements, was a growing conceptualization of race and a solidification of cultural biases that facilitated the development of pseudo-scientific racism. Scientific justifications for the oppression of, and discrimination against, Africans and their descendants were not firmly established until the mid-nineteenth century.² By the early nineteenth century, “science” based on knowledge derived from empirical observation was used to support, as Philip Curtin argues, “the proposition that race was one of the principle determinants of attitudes, endowments, capabilities and inherent tendencies” among different groups of people.³ Moreover, these scientific arguments were not “pseudo” in their conception, and therefore these theories attained a level of solidity that has taken centuries to destabilize.⁴ The scientific theories of racial inferiority, particularly black African inferiority, were built upon the coercion and commodification on which the slave trade was founded and

¹ Kingston-based transactions accounted for 58 per cent of slave purchases; See Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, “The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patters in Jamaica, 1655-1788,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 no. 1 (Jan. 2001): 220.

² Banton and Hardwood, *The Race Concept*, 16.

³ Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 28.

⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

through the use of enslaved labour. The conflation of slaves and property, and the cultural and legal practices that supported this association, were intrinsically connected to the development of ideas about who had the right to access equality and humanity, ideas in which human differences (and increasingly race) had a distinct place.⁵ The advertisements in the Jamaican *Royal Gazette* were one piece of a process by which Africans, enslaved Africans and their descendants, and free blacks came to be “scientifically” classified as inferior. The advertisements articulated the enslaved person’s, and by association the Africans, place within the colonial hierarchy; they were sub-human, a commodity valued for their ability to learn and adaptable labour.

The slave sale advertisements reveal the objectification of enslaved people through the conflation of livestock and land and through the evaluative language selling enslaved labour and people. The process of dehumanization evident in the slave sale advertisements between 1780 and 1783, and 1793 and 1794, was articulated not only through the announcements for shipments of newly enslaved or public auctions. The enslaved were commodified and dehumanized through the use of visual representations that capitalized on stereotypes of Africans and enslaved Africans, as well as through the use of language that clearly defined the enslaved as a commodity. This chapter analyses the imagery, symbolism, typography and the inclusion of names of the enslaved in the slave sale advertisements in the *Royal Gazette* in both sample periods. It offers an opportunity to engage in how these ads, in the specific phrases, names and images used, facilitated the construction of race, in which Africans were configured as primitive, animal-like and inferior.

⁵ Malik, *The Meaning of Race*, 69.

Slave sale advertisements were printed regularly in the *Gazette*, and other colonial periodicals; the positioning of these advertisements within the layout of the paper reveals how the viewer consumed these ads. The advertisement's placement within the paper, their repetitions, and their associations with other advertisements such as runaway and livestock ads contributed to the cultural production of stereotypes of enslaved Africans and their descendants. Moreover, the reliance on advertisements to facilitate sales in colonial marketplaces resulted in certain commodities, or images associated with commodities, attaining symbolic meaning and significance.⁶ Slave sale advertisements were thus connected to wealth in people and labour, but also carried symbolic weight through their association with animals, racialized slavery in the use of "Negro" and through representations of the primitive nature of enslaved Africans.

The use of imagery in advertisements beginning in the late eighteenth century, and continuing today, can be attributed to what Roberta Sassatelli constructs as the development of commodities as spectacle. These spectacles had to access, and convince, the anonymous consumers of newspapers and periodicals to purchase various wares.⁷ Images were commonly used throughout the *Gazette*; announcements for the arrival or departures of ships used prints of ships, advertisements with images for livestock, and advertisements for lost livestock or runaway slaves, were present throughout the periodical. The use of imagery in slave sale advertisements, as well as advertisements for runaway slaves and livestock, was popular in the early 1780s, but disappeared by the 1793. This could be explained through the paper changing management between the two

⁶ Brooke N. Newman, "Contesting 'Black' Liberty and Subjecthood in the Anglophone Caribbean, 1730s-1780s," *Slavery and Abolition*, no. 2 (June 2011), 174.

⁷ Roberta Sassatelli, *Consumer Culture: History, Theory and Politics*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007), 27.

periods. D. Douglas and William Aikman printed the *Gazette* between 1780 and 1783, but by 1793 the paper was produced solely by Alexander Aikman, who had been the printer for Douglas and William Aikman.⁸ Alexander Aikman followed his brother, William Aikman, to Jamaica after the American Revolution; Aikman brought with him a printing press and set up a print shop at which the *Gazette* was first published.⁹ By 1793, the paper was both printed and produced at Alexander Aikman's shop; the change in enterprise could explain the lack of images used not only in slave sale advertisements, but in slave runaway advertisements and advertisements for other goods.¹⁰ Therefore, the discussion about imagery and commodification will focus on the sample period of 1780-1783.

Between the 1780s-1790s, the slave trade to Jamaica peaked after a period of depressed trade due to the American Revolution.¹¹ The slave sale ads reflected this economic boom, as advertisements for large slave sales rose steadily between 1780 and 1783. Between 1780 and 1781, advertisements for shipments rose by 6 percent, and by 57 percent the following year. The images in slave sale ads built on cultural assumptions about Africa, as well as economic associations of enslaved Africans at work; both of these capitalized on biases about enslaved Africans.¹² Historian Charmaine Nelson, asserts that “through slavery and its colonial logic of race” enslaved Africans, and black people in the west, could be “perceived as “primitive,” a sub-human

⁸ Frank Cundall, “The Press and Printers of Jamaica Prior to 1820,” *American Antiquarian Society*, (Oct. 1916): 312.

⁹ On the movement of printers and printing presses, see Gwendolyn Davies, *Studies in Maritime Literary History, 1760-1930* (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis, 1991)

¹⁰ Cundall, “The Press and Printers of Jamaica,” 312-314.

¹¹ Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 233.; Burnard and Garrigus also argue that between 1785 and 1789, real sugar and slave prices reached their highest in seventy years (242).

¹² Charmaine A. Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.

category...a group who were actively imagined and represented within ever more entrenched stereotypes of visual racial difference.”¹³ White artists, Nelson continues, had depicted Africans for multiple, and occasionally conflicting, purposes; as primitive, exotic, and as a foil for Europeans as well as objects of luxury and decoration.¹⁴ The need for white Europeans to construct themselves as the epitome of civilization was in the slave sale ads translated to visual representations of the enslaved that capitalized on derogatory, dehumanizing, and animalizing cultural conceptions of (enslaved) Africans.¹⁵

Between 1780 and 1783, 33 per cent of the 225 slave sale advertisements included images of enslaved Africans. Due to the processing ability in the colonies, the images did not vary widely. There were five stereotypes used to sell enslaved Africans in the *Gazette* between 1780-1783, and they were not particularly refined in their composition, though the age of the source itself could account for some of the lack of detail.¹⁶ These images constructed Africans as tribal or bestial through their dress, which aligned enslaved Africans with British cultural understandings of the primitiveness within the African continent. The images also connected enslaved Africans to symbols that represented labour and contemporary conceptualizations of African culture. Moreover, the use of visual representations of the enslaved in advertisements had the potential to access and influence a wider range of Kingston’s public; the illiterate populace could consume these

¹³ Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 4.

¹⁴ Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject*, 7.

¹⁵ For a discussion of representations of Africans in British culture see Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa*; and David Dabydeen, *Hogarth’s Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

¹⁶ For a detailed examination of print mechanisms in the seventeenth century see P.C. Floud, “The English Contribution to the Development of Copper-plate Printing,” *Victoria and Albert Museum*, (July 1960); for a discussion of print culture in the eighteenth century see Elizabeth Eisenstien, “Gods, Devils, and Gutenberg: The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Printing Press,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 27., (1998) pp. 1-24; for a discussion of British colonial advertising see Carl Keyes, “History Prints, Newspaper Advertisements, and Cultivating Citizen Consumers: Patriotism and Partisanship in Marketing Campaigns in the Era of the Revolution,” *American Periodicals*, 24., no. 2 (2014) pp. 145-185.

advertisements and understand their content and symbolic connections. The advertisement (see Figure 4.1), from July of 1780, displayed three enslaved Africans leaning on what we can presume to be hoes, as this was the standard farming tool used by the enslaved on plantations.¹⁷ The three enslaved people stand seemingly at ease, two conversing with one another, and the third looking at the viewer. The written portion of the ad offered the viewer the specifics of the sale, which occurred on July 11th, and began at nine in the morning at the store of Mark Howard, a Kingston-based merchant who dealt in a variety of commodities, including enslaved Africans. The public sale of “80 young *Coromantee*, *Fantee*, and *Ashantee* Negroes” was typed out using larger print, to emphasize the advertised area and tribe from which the “Negroes” came from. The image does not correspond with either the type of sale or the quantity to be sold; the cultural capital of the image was used to stand-in for accuracy.

Figure 4.1: Advertisement for the sale of 80 “*Coromantee*, *Fantee*, and *Ashantee* Negroes” via public auction, July 1780.



¹⁷ For a discussion of the hoe, its use and significance, in the West Indies see Chris Evans, “The Plantation Hoe: The Rise and Fall of an Atlantic Commodity, 1650-1850,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 69 no. 1 (2012): 71-100.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1780

In slave sale advertisements that included prints, or stereotypes, of enslaved Africans, there were several symbols that were recognizable to the eighteenth-century consumers of the *Gazette*. The hoe was emphasized as two of the enslaved were depicted leaning on them (see Figure 4.2); their leisurely stance could be indicative of British conceptualizations of enslaved, and free, Africans as lazy. The lazy African or slave was a common trope in eighteenth and nineteenth century discussions about “natural” African dispositions, as well as in treatises and correspondence about slave management.¹⁸ In his booklet detailing ameliorationist policies and better practices for the “Management of Negroes,” the “Professional Planter” Dr. Collins asserted that “Labour is another, and the most frequent cause of the mortality of new negroes, some of whom have never experienced any considerable portion of it in their own country.”¹⁹ This quotation illustrates two late eighteenth-century discourses: the first assertion Collins made was that Africans were not used to labour, however the following argument he made was that in “seasoning” newly arrived enslaved Africans, the work load should be limited in order to maintain their health.

This tension between the visual representations of Africans as lazy and the association with labour through the inclusion of a hoe in slave sale advertisements was indicative of wider cultural stereotypes of African peoples. The images were intended to

¹⁸ For a discussion of Anglo-American cultural beliefs about free blacks inability to be productive members of society, see Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, (1971), 1-6.; Seymour Drescher cites growing conceptualizations of African as lazy due to their refusal to adopt European commercial and farming practices, Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*, 74.; Edward Long also discusses the “slothful” nature of specific groups of Africans from the coast, Long *The History of Jamaica, Volume II*, (1774), 373.

¹⁹ Dr. Collins, *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves, in the Sugar Colonies*, (London: Printed by J Barfield, 1803), 60.

attract the attention of prospective buyers; in doing so, the sellers capitalized on the use of stereotypes that were at once recognizable while also reaffirming the inferior status of the enslaved. The images of Africans in positions of leisure played into the notion that enslaved Africans, similar to livestock, required management in order to work efficiently. The lazy African was thus a recognizable stereotype; not only this, but understandings of the industrious European supporting the weaker and inept African appeared in publications from men like Bryan Edwards, Dr. Collins and William Beckford. Indeed, Beckford in the closing statements in his *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica* stated that “I could wish that no difference but that of colour (which nature has made) should contrast the feelings of the African dependent and that of the European master: I could wish that the national weakness of the first should be supported by the power of the last.”²⁰ Therefore, while the depictions of Africans in positions of leisure seemed to contradict the marketability of their labour, the images capitalized on the stereotypes that would have been at once familiar to planters and reaffirmed the planters’ superior status.

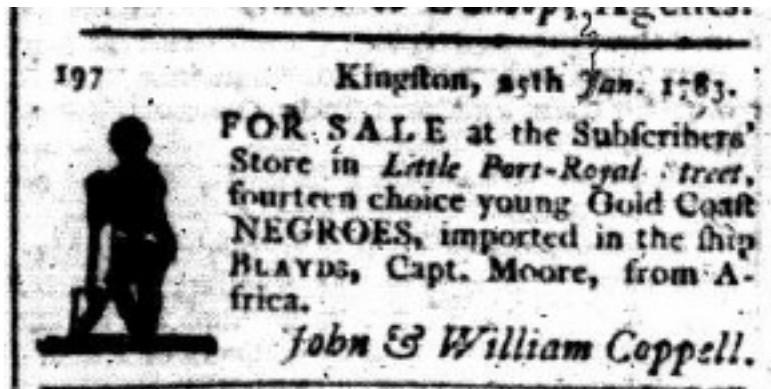
The association of enslaved African and tools of labour was used in several images within advertisements (see Figure 4.2); this is evident in an advertisement for the sale of fourteen enslaved Africans, advertised as being from the Gold Coast, which occurred in the store of John & William Coppel.²¹ The image within the ad was that of an enslaved person leaning against what is presumably a shovel; another association with fieldwork. The images in advertisements for the enslaved associated them with field-

²⁰ Beckford, *Remarks*, 99.

²¹ The name Coppel appears in Nicholas Radburn’s article on Guinea factors, and is associated with Thomas Aspinall in a table that indicates the top ten Guinea factor firms from 1785-1789. Radburn, “Guinea Factors,” 245.

labour through the inclusion of farming tools such as the hoe and shovel. In the advertisements slavery is thus connected to plantation work, despite enslaved Africans used in a variety of skilled sugar-related, non-plantation work and domestic labour in addition to field-labour.²² The association of field labour and Africans spoke to a local demand for enslaved Africans to work in the fields, and the advertisers' awareness of this demand.

Figure 4.2: Advertisement for the sale of enslaved, with image of an enslaved person holding a shovel January 1783



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1783

The associations of leisure and labour in the depiction of two enslaved Africans leaning against their tools, presumably in conversation (see Figure 4.3) was a common image, in addition to representing a conception of enslaved work ethic, or the need for astute plantation management. The public auction of the enslaved, who were part of the estate of Samuel Hancock, along with land, livestock and a gold watch, was typical of estate sales in the *Gazette*.²³ The inclusion of the image of enslaved Africans here not only emphasized the value of slaves in Kingston, but again represented enslaved Africans

²² For a discussion of the various work done by enslaved peoples see Verene A. Shepherd, "Livestock and Sugar," 627-643.; see also Marissa Fuentes *Dispossessed Lives* for a discussion of urban slavery in the West Indies.

²³ See chapter 2 for a more detailed analysis of estate sales.

in poses of relaxation and conversation, while holding tools. Within an early modern Atlantic capitalist society, as the British plantation colony of Jamaica was, civility, morality and industry were connected.²⁴ Therefore productive and technologically innovative labour was intrinsically woven into the colonial elite ethos; African slothfulness therefore represented the antithesis to the moral, civilized, and productive British colonists. The representation of the enslaved African's unwillingness to work, or else their slothful nature was manifested not only through postures of ease, but also through the portrayal of enslaved Africans holding pipes.

Figure 4.3: Advertisement for the sale of "38 Negro Slaves" depicted in conversation, Feb. 1782.

St. Thomas in th. Vale, {
21st Februar, 182. }

149-51



TO BE SOLD, on Thursday
the 14th day of *March* next, to
the highest and best Bidder, at
the Coffee-house in *Spanish Town*,
by virtue of the last will and tes-
tament of Mr. SAMUEL HAN-
cock, late of the parish of *Saint*
Thomas in the Vale, deceased, all
his Property; consisting of

38 NEGRO SLAVES,
One of which is a complete Coppersmith, one Car-
penter, two Washerwomen, 30 Field Negroes, and
four Children:—One piece or parcel of LAND,
containing by estimation 170 acres, more or less, si-
tuate, lying, and being in that part of said parish cal-
led *ABOVE ROCKS*, butting and bounding, west on
Mr *Alexander King*, north on *Miss Susanna's* *Con.*, east
on *Glen Goff*, and south on Mr. *Thomas Pennalls*:—
Also, two Mules, a Gold Watch, &c. &c.

RICH. PALMER } *only acting*
HENRY PALMER } *Executors.*

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

²⁴ For a discussion of how morality and societal advancement became increasingly interconnected, see Banton and Hardwood *The Race Concept*, 26.

The association of Africans and pipe smoking was imbedded in cultural understandings of enslaved and free Africans by the late eighteenth century. Pipes and tobacco were one of the principal articles of trade between Europeans and Africans – often used by Europeans to trade for slaves.²⁵ Dr. Collins, in his *Management of Negroes*, asserted that Africans, “are almost universally fond of tobacco, either in snuff or for smoking, the pipe being familiar to them from infancy... This luxury, however well it may be dispensed with in the sequel, should not be denied them in the beginning.”²⁶ The relationship between tobacco and Africans was illustrated in the stereotype used for slave sales in the *Gazette*. The image used in the advertisement for 475 “choice young” enslaved Africans from the Gold Coast (see Figure 4.4) depicted four people – two are seated, the other two are standing. They are centred on the middle person, who is holding a pipe, and around him there is a person leaning on a hoe, while the other to the right is also holding a pipe. The pipe here is symbolic of African and enslaved habits, both through the depiction of the pipe, and in the conversational pose in which the four people are positioned. The depiction of enslaved peoples conversing played on another stereotype of African; Jamaican planter-historian Bryan Edwards articulated this (British) stereotype, “The fondness which the negro discovers to be distinguished as an orator, is a remarkable propensity in his character. They delight in set speeches, which have usually very fatiguing prefaces; and if you grant them a hearing, they will amuse you at great length on their own merits, hardships, and circumstances.”²⁷ This commentary on the “fondness” of the “negro” in discussing at length their lived experiences was disparaging

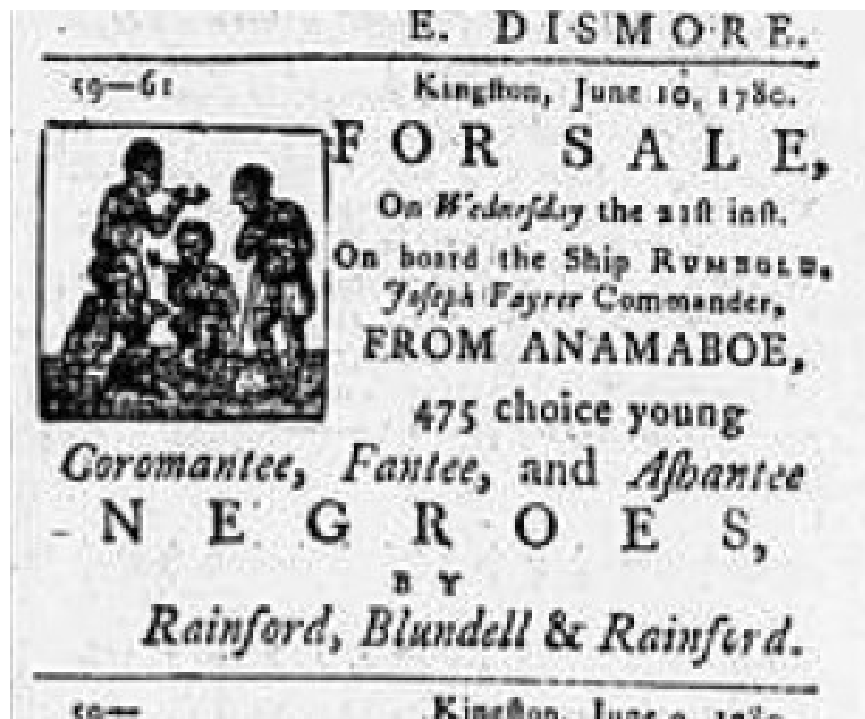
²⁵ Jerome S. Handler, “Aspects of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Smoking Pipes, Tobacco, and the Middle Passage,” *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* 11. No. 2., (2008), 2.

²⁶ Collins, *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves*, (1803), 69.

²⁷ Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, (London, 1798), 163.

and condescending in tone. Edwards described his interactions with his slaves in this case as an encounter in which slaves were amusingly entertaining, but their hardships and circumstances did not merit any reflection. The image of Africans smoking and conversing thus reveals conceptualizations of the oratory and indulgent “negro” through the association of tobacco and postures of leisure.

Figure 4.4: Sale of 475 enslaved Africans onboard the *Rumbold*, July 1780.



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1780

In all five images used to sell enslaved Africans, none of the enslaved people depicted are fully clothed; all of the images detailed the enslaved wearing only shorts or skirts. This was consistent with a variety of visual representations of Africans and enslaved people during the eighteenth century.²⁸ However, Philip D. Morgan in his discussion of slave dress in the Chesapeake during the eighteenth century asserts that

²⁸ For a discussion of artistic representations of plantations and sugar-related images, see John Crowley, “Sugar Machines: Picturing Industrialized Slavery,” *American Historical Association*, (2016), 403-436

enslaved people were provided with annual allowances of cloth, mainly durable and rough fabrics such as linen and cheap wools.²⁹ Morgan also asserts that while according to law enslaved peoples had to be provided with cloth, these laws were not always followed. As such, descriptions of semi-nude enslaved field labourers from travellers' accounts were common in the Lowcountry; though this was less common in the Chesapeake due to the colder temperature.³⁰ The regional variations of the descriptions of enslaved dress indicate that the clothing, or lack thereof, of the enslaved was not consistent. As such, the representations of Africans and the enslaved in various states of undress relied more on cultural biases than on known fact.

The relative lack of clothing in the images used for advertising the enslaved could have been reflective of African practices and self-fashioning, or else an assumption about how Africans dressed within West Africa. Alternatively, supplies of clothes and fabric for the enslaved were generally limited, and the use of shirts when labouring in fields or working in boiling houses could have been considered unnecessary.³¹ Access to fabric and clothing was limited in the colony, as fabric had to be imported; in addition, fabric and clothing for “negroes” was imported separately (see Figure 4.5). The 1794 advertisement marketed “Negro hats of a superior quality,” an indication that the enslaved Africans were clothed separately and distinctly from white Jamaican colonists.³² However, the depictions of semi-nude Africans were also laden with symbolic meaning.³³

²⁹ Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*, (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 125-126.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 133.

³¹ For a discussion about slave dress in the eighteenth century see Shane White and Graham White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Past and Present*, no. 148 (1995), pp.149-186.

³² Morgan discusses that particular items such as shoes and finer cloth were rarely provided for the enslaved, except in cases of particular acts of service or to denote the higher status of an enslaved person

Figure 4.5: Imported commodities for sale in Kingston, including “Negro hats” October, 1794



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1794

British, and European, visual representations of Africans throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relied on tribal or sexual tropes, both of which displayed Africans in various states of exposure.³⁴ The slave sale advertisements in the *Gazette* built on British traditions that portrayed exotic, different, and demeaning constructs of “African.”³⁵ The half-naked enslaved Africans shown in the advertisements symbolized an ongoing effort by the British to construct Africans, including the enslaved Africans and their island-born descendants, as primitive and inferior. The clothing, or lack of it, in the advertisements connected these images to other representations of Africans as tribal, primitive, or savage. The use of images in the *Gazette* to sell enslaved

within the plantation. However. Morgan finds that most enslaved people wore head coverings or hats. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 129.

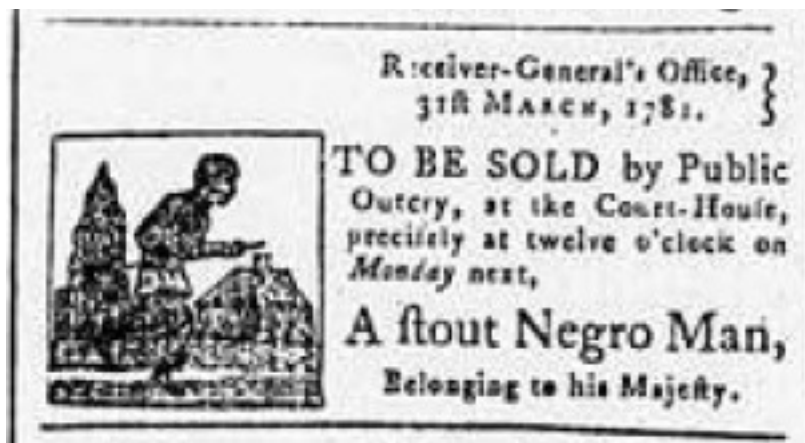
³³ Cultural concepts of nudity and what constitutes sexually evocative is also subjective; here the use of ‘semi-nude’ denotes what the British would have understood as improper and naked for a British person to wear in public.

³⁴ For a discussion how Africans were imagined and represented in British culture, see Curtin, *The Image of Africa*; for a discussion of the sexualization of African bodies in imperial art, see Nelson *Representing the Black Female Subject*

³⁵ For a discussion of how the west developed, imagined and represented a concept of ‘Africa’ see V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994)

Africans, propagated contemporary biases about African, and enslaved, inability to partake in civilized society, while also associating the enslaved with productive labour. The lack of clothing in all five prints and the three stereotypes that portrayed Africans in conversation or else at ease, reproduced constructs of African primitivism for the public of Kingston to consume (see Figure 4.6). The addition of the hoe or shovel in all five stereotypes connected the enslaved to their commodity value as labourers. The repetitive use of these images in the advertisements for the enslaved embedded the saleability of enslaved Africans into consumer consciousness. This commoditization contributed to what Anne McClintock defines as “commodity racism” as through this platform the non-elite, non-academic public accessed racialized representations of enslaved Africans.³⁶

Figure 4.6 Advertisement for enslaved man, with image, March 1781.



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1781³⁷

The variety of images used in the *Gazette* was limited to five; however, these images were used in over one third of the slave sale advertisements. The rest were advertised with no images. The inclusion of images in advertisements for livestock,

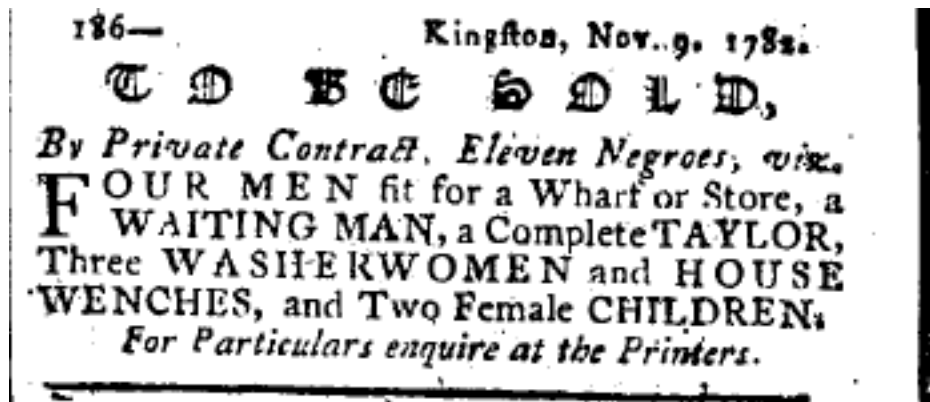
³⁶ Anne McClintock, “Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity racism and imperial advertising,” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd Edition, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (New York: Routledge, 1998), 508.

³⁷ The advertisement, from March 1781, was the only other stereotype used for the sale of an enslaved African, and it was only used here. This image was more commonly used in runaway ads between 1780 and 1783.

runaway slaves and in announcements for the arrivals and departures of ships indicates that the use of visuals to attract potential consumers was common between 1780-1783. The employment of visually stimulating elements within slave sale advertisements extended to the use of elaborate fonts and enlarged, bolded words to emphasize important, or valuable, elements of the advertisement (see Figure 4.7). The phrases and words that held places of dominance in slave sale advertisements, between the two data points of 1780-1783 and 1793-1794, represented the contemporary language of the slave market, but also revealed the language used to commodify and dehumanize enslaved Africans and their descendants. The use of elaborate fonts occurred in 1780-1783, but was not used in 1793 and 1794; this reflects the same shift from the use of images in slave sale ads to the complete lack of it in the sample period of the 1790s. Again, this indicates the change in ownership of the paper after 1783; Alexander Aikman adjusted the paper to suit his own preferences, or else a change in print culture in the early 1790s. The use of elaborate and complicated fonts in the first years of the 1780s was common (see Figure 4.7). Between 1780 and 1783, the phrases “For Sale,” “To Be Sold,” and “Wanted for Hire” were emphasized through the use of elaborate lettering in 21 percent of 225 slave sale advertisements. The phrases that were emboldened and made to attract attention were uniform in their meaning; they were designed to sell or buy enslaved people. In livestock advertisements of the same period, these phrases printed in elaborate font occurred in 20 percent of the 97 advertisements between 1780 and 1783. While these phrases were still in use in 1793 and 1794, the font used was more simplistic. The explicit announcements for the sale of people and livestock, printed in larger, elaborate or bolded

typesets, also announced that people were commodities; their identity as individuals and their humanity became irrelevant in pursuit of capturing the attention of the consumer.

Figure 4.7: Advertisement for the sale of "Eleven Negroes" with elaborate font emphasizing ad, Nov. 1782



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

Similar to the lack of variety in the imagery used in slave sale advertisements, the variation of announcements was limited (see Table 4.1). Between 1780-1783 and 1793-1794 the two most common sale announcements were "To Be Sold" and "For Sale" – together the two made up 83 per cent of slave sale advertisements with announcements from both sample periods. The placement of the phrase "To Be Sold" in slave sale advertisements constituted 31 per cent of the advertisements that included an announcement. The most popular announcement used was "For Sale," which remains popular today, and constituted 52 per cent of slave sale advertisements with announcements. The other commonly used announcements in slave sale advertisements were in "Wanted" ads. "Wanted for Hire" or "For Hire" advertisements comprised 9 per cent of the advertisements with announcements; "Wanted" ads comprised 7 per cent. The distinction between "Wanted For Hire" and "Wanted" advertisements reveals that subscribers to the *Gazette* desired seasonal or term labour without needing to purchase, and supply for, enslaved peoples. The "Wanted for Hire" advertisements were

predominantly employed by subscribers seeking jobbing gangs, or else groups of enslaved workers to perform specific jobs – such as the advertisement for “4 Negro Men and 12 Women as Attendants and Nurses to this Hospital” (see Figure 4.8). The advertisements that publicized a desire for the hire of enslaved field labourers made up 59 percent of the “wanted for hire” advertisements between 1780-1783, and 1793-1794. The “wanted” ads reflected a similar demand for field labour – 80 per cent of the advertisements were for the purchase of seasoned or field enslaved labourers in various quantities.³⁸ The use of specific phrases and announcements in the advertisements related to enslaved Africans reflected their commoditization as well as the market demand for enslaved labour in the form of “Wanted” ads. The language of commoditization was not confined to the announcements headlining the advertisements; descriptions of the enslaved for sale reflected the attempts by purveyors to commoditize their ‘wares.’

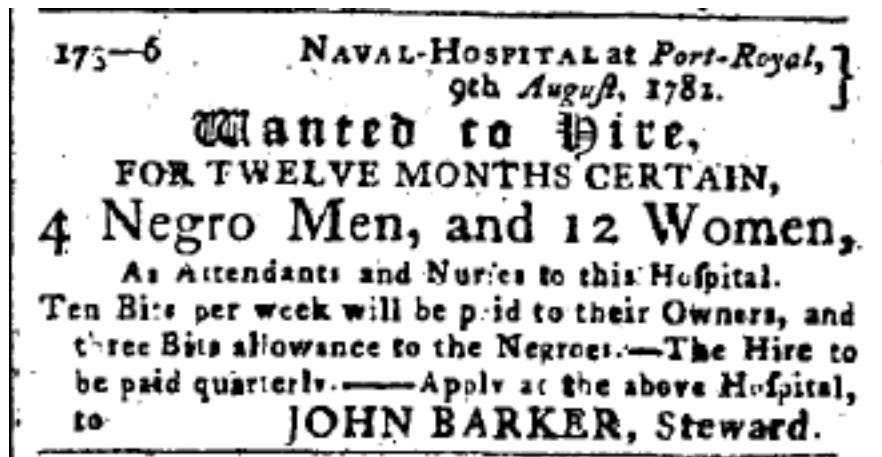
³⁸ The remaining 20 per cent of the “Wanted” ads were for domestic slaves such as a 1782 ad for a “Complete Waiting Boy” or for seamstresses; the only variant to this was two ads from 1793 that advertised a request for slaves for exportation.

Table 4.1 Variations of the use of the top four announcements used in slave sale advertisements



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1780-1783; 1793-1794

Figure 4.8: Wanted to Hire Advertisement for the Naval-Hospital, August 1782



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

In order to appeal to buyers, the enslaved Africans were advertised as valuable through the use of words such as “choice,” “prime,” and “seasoned.” Purveyors of the enslaved within the island also relied on the marketability of specific skills that certain slaves possessed, and the insertion of slave names along with their skill. The inclusion of

a word to elucidate the value of the enslaved connected the enslaved to other commodity goods for sale in the *Gazette*, as words such as “choice” and “prime” were printed connected to livestock, wine, and tea to name a few (see Figure 4.9). The use of “choice” or “prime” as an articulation of higher value occurred in 42 per cent of the advertisements which included qualifying language in relation to the enslaved for sale.³⁹ The terms “choice” and “prime” were less common in livestock advertisements between 1780 and 1783, they were used in 5 percent of advertisements (versus the 21 percent of advertisements for enslaved people). However, the use of qualifying language such as “strong” or the advertisement of animals that had received training occurred in 24 percent of the 97 livestock ads. The similarities in language between livestock and slave advertisements made public the association between the two labour forces.

Figure 4.9 Advertisement for “Choice Madeira Wine” October, 1782

129— Kingston, October 5 h, 1782.
T O B E S O L D,
 By BOGLE & JOPP, at their STORE,
 (Late Mr. ALLARDYCE'S).
CHOICE MADEIRA WINE.
 By the Pips, Hoghead, or Quarter Cask;
A L S O
 A small quantity of Irish and Scotch linens
 Silk and thread stockings
 Women's calimanco and leather shoes
 Men's plain, and stitched and bound shoes
 Military shoes
A N D
 A few bushels rock salt

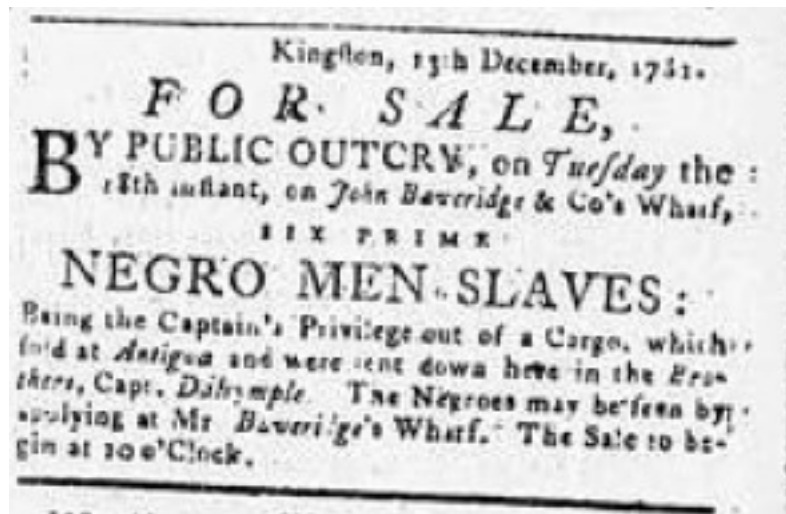
Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

The use of qualifying language such as “Choice,” or “Prime” was employed in the advertisements for shipments of enslaved Africans, or for the sale of smaller groups of

³⁹ This data is calculated using both sample periods.

the enslaved (see Figure 4.10). In this ad, “Six Prime Negro Men Slaves” were for sale – these men were part of the “Captain’s Privilege,” in other words, the enslaved men for sale were part of the payment in people made to the captain. This illustrates not only the way in which enslaved Africans and their descendants in the West Indies were advertised as commodities, but how they were also used as currency with which to pay captains – the captain selling these men also understood how to capitalize on the Kingston market, and what language to use to do so. The use of the terms “choice” and “prime” illustrated how enslaved bodies were marketed as ‘superior;’ advertisers attempted to advocate for their commodities, and within this process the humanity of the enslaved peoples was lost.

Figure 4.10: Advertisement for “Six Prime Negroe Slaves” December, 1781

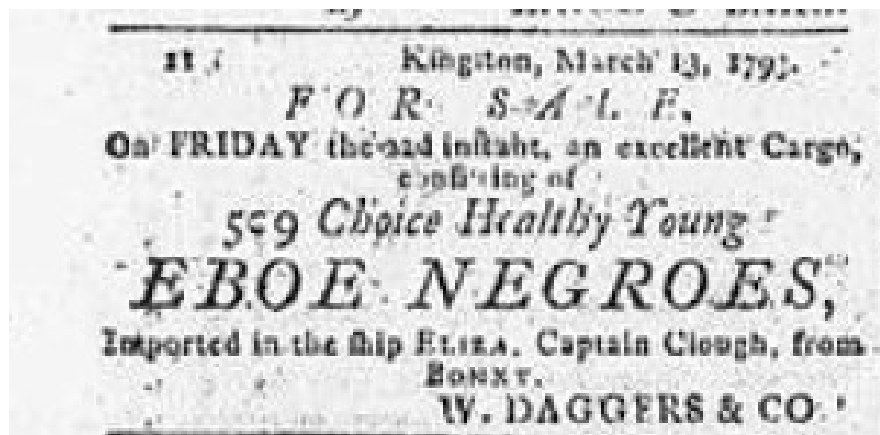


Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1781

The reliance on the words “choice” and “prime” between 1780-1783 was also consistent between 1793-1794 in their popular use. However, in the 1790s there was an additional set of qualifications in the advertisements for shipments of enslaved Africans (see Figure 4.11). The words “young” and “healthy” were used in conjunction with “choice” thereby asserting not only the slaves’ ‘choiceness’ in terms of ethnicity, or

gender, but also their chances of survival in Jamaica and their potential life span. The shift in language in 1793 and 1794, versus the early 1780s, could be the result of the influx of shipments of enslaved Africans to Kingston. While in the 1780s, enslaved peoples were advertised using their names, skills, and in connection with estates as shipments were less frequent, the advertisements in the 1790s were full of the sales of shipments. Therefore, in using the words “healthy” and “young,” versus skills, genders or names, advertisers were still able to assert the value of the enslaved peoples for sale by marketing their youth and vigour. The word “Healthy” was used in conjunction with either “young” or “choice” in 16 per cent of the advertisements with qualifying statements between 1793-1794; the word “young” was more popular, at 65 per cent. The health and youth of the enslaved was advertised not out of concern for the people who were in the hold of the slaving vessel, or sold with estates, but because the advertisement of youth implied more years of labour for a potential buyer, and health articulated a reassurance that the enslaved people for sale were sure to survive sale and pursuant labour.

Figure 4.11: Advertisement for “Choice Healthy Young Eboe Negroes,” March 1793.



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1793

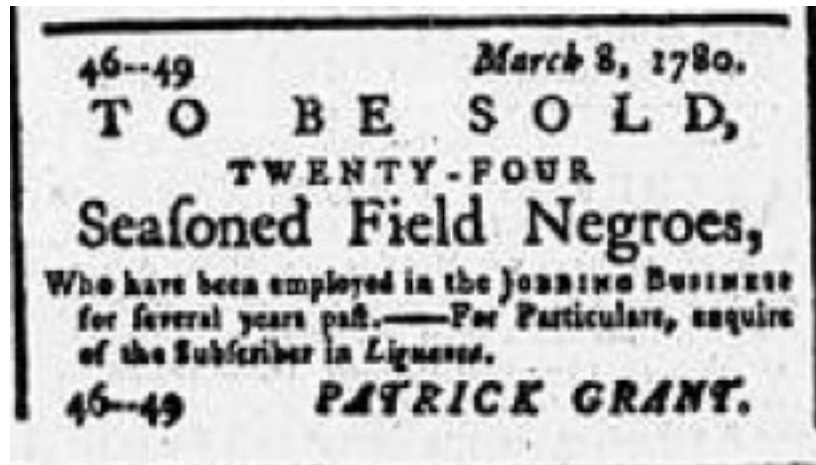
Apart from being “choice” and “prime,” enslaved Africans were also advertised through a capitalization on experiences connected to labour. The use of the term “seasoned” or “field” in slave sale advertisements indicated value as mortality rates for newly enslaved Africans were high; therefore slaves who survived the first year were, according to Eltis, Richardson and Lewis, priced approximately 15 per cent above newly arrived African slaves.⁴⁰ Enslaved African mortality rates were highest in the first three years after their arrival in the West Indies, J. R. Ward estimates that between 15-20 per cent Africans did not survive the ‘seasoning’ process; Eltis et. al. argue that the majority of these deaths occurred during the first year.⁴¹ As such, the terms “seasoned” and “field,” which also implied that the enslaved for sale had survived seasoning or had survived long enough to become acclimatized to field labour, equated to real price value on the Kingston market; 15 per cent of the 362 advertisements in the combined sample periods contain the words “seasoned” or “field” (see Figure 4.12). Accordingly, the appearance of the term “new” in slave sale advertisements is relatively low at 3 per cent, as this announced the arrival of a shipment of enslaved Africans, but reminded prospective buyers that the Africans had not been “seasoned” for survival in the West Indies. The use of the term “new” occurred twice in 1782 – this was the only appearance of this word in slave sale advertisements between 1780 and 1783 and occurred six times between 1793 and 1794. That a larger percentage of enslaved peoples were marketed through the advertisement of their names or skills than their status as newly shipped from the African coast reveals the mobility of enslaved people within the inter-island slave

⁴⁰ David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis and David Richardson, “Slave Prices, the African Slave Trade, and Productivity in the Caribbean, 1674-1807,” *Economic History Review*, 58 no. 4., (2005), 677.

⁴¹ J. R. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery, 1750-1834: The Process of Amelioration*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988),127.

trade. The use of qualifying language to add value to the enslaved in advertisements was extended to the inclusion of the skills of the enslaved where applicable, and in some cases there was also the addition of the names and family groups of the enslaved advertised for sale.

Figure 4.12: Advertisement for “Seasoned Field Negroes” March 1780



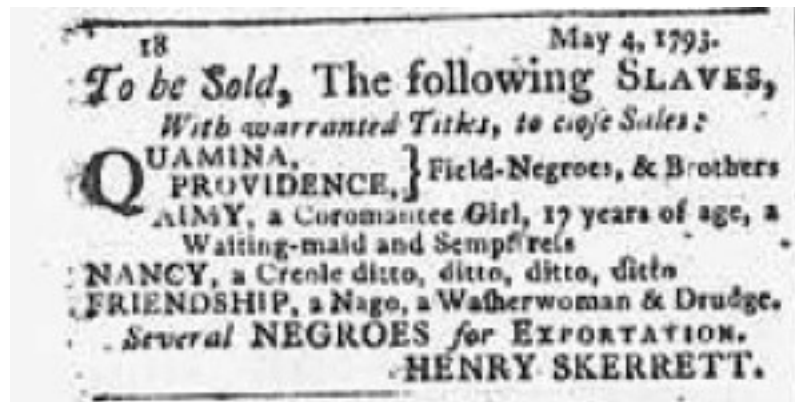
Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1780

Skilled slaves were of higher value to buyers as their (advertised) skill implied either that they were born in Jamaica, or else they had survived the seasoning process and had become adept at a specific job. The skills advertised ranged from caulkers, masons, seamstresses, cooks, to sailors (or “wharf negroes”), boilers and waiting boys (see Figure 4.13). The cataloguing of the enslaved according to their skill, gender, and approximate age reflected not a focus on their individual identities, but as with other commodities, reflected their saleability.⁴² As such, advertisements that included skills or professions constituted 42 per cent of the 237 advertisements with qualifying language, and 25 percent of the 362 advertisements in the combined sample periods. The inclusion of an enslaved person’s place of birth, either tribal or creole, was used to indicate the character

⁴² Michelle Craig McDonald, “Transatlantic Consumption,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* edited by Frank Trentmann, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 116.

and strength of the slave for sale (see Figure 4.13). In Jamaica, Africans advertised as Coromantee appealed to men like Bryan Edwards as he considered them to be “not averse to employment” and as having a “firmness of body and mind.”⁴³ Therefore, despite the lower value derived from being born in Africa, the inclusion of a tribal identity re-introduced a different value scheme based on concepts of ‘African’ dispositions and work ethic. A similar dynamic of constructed value schemes was evident in how men and women were advertised; the inclusion of gender, either through names or in explicit statements, also reveals the labour associated with African men and women in Jamaica.

Figure 4.13: Advertisement for slaves with enslaved names and professions included, May 1793.



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1793⁴⁴

The inclusion of gender in slave sale advertisements indicated to prospective buyers what form of labour they could purchase; in 38 per cent of advertisements for the sale of, or request for, enslaved Africans the gender was included. Both enslaved men and women were used in field labour, whereas women were solely used for domestic

⁴³ Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, (London, 1798), 152.; opinions about various African ethnicities varied within Jamaica, and within plantation societies at large.

⁴⁴ The “several Negroes for Exportation” at the bottom of the advertisement referred to enslaved peoples who were sold off island as a form of punishment or out of a fear of rebellion on the part of the planter.

work and men were used to work in a variety of skilled jobs.⁴⁵ Enslaved African women were employed in field labour in equal proportion to men largely due to the availability of female slaves for sale in Africa.⁴⁶ Therefore, when advertising “Field Negroes,” the addition of gender did not add value as both men and women were used in gang-labour (see Figure 4.14). Enslaved labour for work on plantations was in consistently high demand, which resulted in advertisements emphasizing this ‘type’ of enslaved person – their gender, age, and sex was less relevant than their survival through seasoning. However, British constructs of gender roles did dictate preferences, and of the ads that requested labour or sold enslaved Africans. Of the 193 advertisements in which the gender of the enslaved for sale was evident, through the inclusion of specific skills, names, as well as specific genders, 59 percent were for the sale, or request, of men.⁴⁷

Figure 4.14: Advertisement for "Field Negroes" November 1780

⁴⁵ Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 100-102.

⁴⁶ Ibid; Data is taken from both sample groups, and does not include shipments of enslaved Africans as gender was not the dominant marketable factor for the newly enslaved.

⁴⁷ For a full discussion of gender and slavery, see Eltis *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 85-113. See also Maureen G. Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999); Richard S. Dunn, “Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica,” in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA.: 1993).

St 88 Morant-Bay, November 9, 1780.

FOR SALE, at the Tavern at *Morant-Bay*, on the 2d and 3d of January 1781,

30 able Field Negroes,

A L S O,

A PROVISION MOUNTAIN,

Pleasantly situated, about two miles from Morant-Bay, with Dwelling-House and Out-Office, all in good repair, together with the Household Furniture, &c. belonging to the estate of Dr. Alex. Murdoch, deceased.

For further particulars, please apply to the subscribers, at *Lysford's* and *Mount Pelier* estates, St. Thomas in the East; who request all those having any demands against the estate of said Dr. Murdoch, to render in a state of them, that they may be settled and paid; and those indebted to said estate, to be speedy in discharging the same, to prevent further trouble.

ROB. PATERSON } Acting
JOHN CAMPBELL } Exors.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1780

While there was little distinction between enslaved men and women in the advertisements concerning field or gang labour, and skilled labour was valued in both genders, men and women were evaluated differently by the end of the eighteenth century due to the value planters and slave owners placed on enslaved women's ability to reproduce. Before the late eighteenth-century, Burnard argues, Jamaican planters differed from their North American counterparts in that they did nothing to encourage enslaved women to have and raise children.⁴⁸ This consideration, of enslaved women for purposes of procreation, was not explicit in the slave sale advertisements, but it does warrant a brief analysis as it attests to the dehumanization of enslaved bodies in the colony. In Jamaica, the enslaved population was not self-sustaining due to high mortality rates and

⁴⁸ Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, 195.

low fertility; as such, towards the end of the eighteenth century when antislavery action began to precipitate the end of slave trade, Jamaican planters began to address the problem of child-bearing among their enslaved populations.⁴⁹ This was, perhaps, most explicit in Dr. Collins' chapter "On the Breeding of Negroes" in which he advised his contemporaries that "it is much cheaper to breed than to purchase; the price of new negroes being three times as great as it was forty years ago, and a possibility existing, that we may be finally excluded from that source of supply."⁵⁰ Enslaved women's status, as both productive and reproductive labourers resulted in a differentiated evaluation of their value, and their identities as enslaved, black, and female resulted in their place in the lowest category of colonial hierarchies.⁵¹ While there is little evidence of this differentiation based on the possibility of reproduction in the slave sale advertisements, enslaved women in Jamaica were evaluated by men like Collins, Beckford and Long not only for their ability to labour, but also for their ability to reproduce; neither status afforded enslaved women human identities.⁵²

However, the addition of skills, as an occasional placeholder for gender as specific jobs were connected to gendered roles, in advertisements did contribute to the perceived value of the enslaved for sale – a "Complete Cook" attracted more interest than an enslaved woman as the skill was for sale, not the individual person. The human ability to learn and adapt was valued as the promotion of skills clearly indicated. This was one

⁴⁹ The role of gender and enslaved people has been studied at length elsewhere; here it is also important to note that the extreme violence enacted on both enslaved men and women, harsh labour regimes, and the West Indian climate all resulted in high mortality rates for both enslaved adults and children. See Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*, 84-112.

⁵⁰ Collins, *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves*, (1803), 153.

⁵¹ Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, 44-45.

⁵² Punishment and gender was, however, increasingly contested in the late eighteenth century as abolitionists sought to expound the violence of slave-owners. In response, ameliorationist policies were enacted which banned the flogging of women in the West Indies; Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, 7.

of the distinctive aspects of advertisements that included skills, gender, very occasionally specific ages, and names. It was the inclusion of these human traits, particularly names, that rather than offering humanity to the enslaved, added to their commodification.


The inclusion of the names of the enslaved occurred in 10 per cent of the 362 slave sale advertisements in the *Gazette* from both sample periods; all of the names were attached to a specified form of labour. The names of enslaved were in advertisements for small groups of slaves, or for estate sales in which various other forms of property were also for sale. The inclusion of names in slave sale ads connected their commodity value to their humanity in that they were individuals, with skills and family connections. The advertisements that included family dynamics (see Figure 4.15) also indicated the human nature of the enslaved. However, in consideration of what impacted the saleability of the enslaved, then the inclusion of names and family dynamics worked to inform prospective buyers of potential methods to exert control over the enslaved. If a buyer purchased Toby, Venus, Amy, Molly, Cocoa, Dick, Leah, Venus and Leah together, then the likelihood of attempted escapes by the enslaved would be mitigated through their connections to one another. In addition, ameliorative and paternalistic notions of slave holding were capitalized on in advertisements that included family relations and names, as the buyers could construct themselves as generous and caring in their knowledge of names and familial ties – and could subsequently construct the enslaved as grateful.⁵³ The names themselves are of note, as they advertised the enslaved as distinct from the free white populace in the pretentious or mundane nature of the name, or else associated the

⁵³ For a discussion of European constructs of the ‘grateful slave’ see George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth Century British and American Culture*,” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); for a discussion of paternalism and amelioration see Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*;

enslaved with livestock as slave-naming patterns often overlapped with those of livestock.⁵⁴

Figure 4.15: Advertisement for the sale of enslaved family and others, with names and professions, 1781

119—22 Kingston, July 27, 1781.



TO BE SOLD, on Thursday the 27th day of August next, between the hours of 10 and 12 in the forenoon, at the Store of WILLIAM DAWSON in King Street, the following Negroes, being part of *them* contained in the schedule given in to the clerk of the Supreme Court by JOHN MOWATT of the parish of Clarendon, an insolvent Debtor.

ONE FAMILY.

T O M, —a Wheelwright.
 T O B Y, —a Carpenter.
 V E N U S, —an Old Woman.
 A M Y, —a Field Negro, with her children, *Jack, Relia, and Isaac.*
 M O L L Y, —a House Wench, and her child *Abba.*
 C O C O A, —a Field Negro Woman.
 D I C K, —a Field Negro.
 L E A H,
 V E N U S, } Girls.
 R A C H E L, }
 R O B E R T, —a Waiting-Man.
 M A R I A, —a Field Negro.

The Creditors are requested to attend the Sale. Nothing but CASH will be accepted in Payment.

JOHN THOMSON, Assignee.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1781

The names of enslaved Africans that appeared in the *Gazette* indicated the difference between the prospective buyer and the enslaved for sale, not the individual human qualities and identities of the enslaved. The commodifying and dehumanizing nature of slave sale advertisements was not mitigated through the inclusion of the names of the enslaved for sale. Enslaved people in Jamaica did not have the right to name

⁵⁴ For a discussion of naming patterns between slaves and livestock see Philip D. Morgan, “Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750-1751,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 no. 1 (January 1995): pp. 47-76; Judith Kelleher Schafer, “New Orleans Slavery in 1850 as Seen in Advertisements,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 47 no. 1 (Feb. 1981), 52.

themselves – their names were another marker of their dehumanized and inferior status, enforced by the white Jamaican slave-owning elite.⁵⁵ The control over names, and the complete dominance this implied, is what was implicit in the advertisements; not only this, but names such as “Venus,” “Cato” and “Prince” (see Figure 4.16) were ironic in their use as the classical figures of antiquity or associations to royalty were far from the realities of enslavement.⁵⁶ Another irony was how the use of African names such as “Cuffee,” and “Benniba” did not necessarily imply African-origin, as Burnard has shown that “fewer than 13 per cent of Africans had African names.”⁵⁷ African names were not associated with African-origin; however, there was an association between animal and slave names that would have been understood by consumers of the advertisements. Philip D. Morgan connects the naming practices of horses and cattle to naming practices of the enslaved in an eighteenth-century Jamaican pen; he finds that “ten of twenty-four males slaves and sixteen of the eighteen female slaves shared a name with the pen’s livestock.”⁵⁸ The association between enslaved and animal in naming practices was accentuated by how the connection between enslaved and white names was, in Burnard’s understanding, “unbridgeable.”⁵⁹ The enslaved were assigned names by their masters, and as such denied the opportunity to maintain family names and lineages or assert their own humanity in naming themselves or their children. The advertisements relay the dehumanization implicit in these naming practices; they are evidence not of enslaved

⁵⁵ Trevor Burnard, “Slave Naming Patterns: Onomastics and the Taxonomy of Race in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31 no. 3 (2001), 326

⁵⁶ For an updated analysis of slave naming in Jamaica, see Margaret Williamson, “Africa or old Rome? Jamaican slave naming revisited,” *Slavery and Abolition*, 38 no. 1 (2017): 117-134.

⁵⁷ Burnard, “Slave-Naming Practices,” 331.

⁵⁸ Morgan, “Slaves and Livestock,” 53.; In Jamaica, “pen” was the term for a livestock farm.

⁵⁹ Burnard, “Slave-Naming Practices,” 334.

agency, African identity, or humanity but of the denial of humanity and the animalization of the enslaved.

Figure 4.16: Advertisement for sale of enslaved, with enslaved names listed, August 1781.

St. Thomas in the East, August 20, 1781.

TO BE SOLD at *Merant-Day*, to the highest and best Bidder, on WEDNESDAY the 2d day of *October* next, the following NEGROES, belonging to the Estate of WILLIAM HARWARD, Esq. deceased; for which twelve months Credit will be given, on granting good Security.

POLLYDRE	} Malons.
CATO	
HAMPTON-COURT	
JULIUS,— <i>old</i>	} Sawyers.
KINGSTON	
GUILFORD	} Carpenters.
PRINCE	
BAMFSHIRE, a Stable Man.	
CUFFEE, a Gardener,— <i>old</i> .	
STREPHON, a Waiting-Boy.	
MARTILLA, a Seamstress and House-Wench, with her Son, a young Boy.	
SILVIA, a Seamstress.	
MARY, Ditto,—with her Child NANCY.	
PEGGY, a House Wench.	
DIANA, a Washerwoman.	
PRESENT, ditto,— <i>old</i> .	
BENNIBA, a Field Negro.	
LUCY, a Stockhouse Woman,— <i>old</i> .	
CHLOE, a Washerwoman, with her three Children, <i>Quaco, Betty, and Amy</i> .	

☞ All those indebted to said Estate, are requested to be speedy in their Payments, to prevent further Trouble; and all those having any Demands, are desired to tender them in immediately to the Subscriber, that they may be paid.

123—23 CHARLES IRVINE.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1781

The value of enslaved labour lay in a human ability to learn, adapt and survive; the saleability, use, and capitalization of that labour relied on the complete dehumanization and commodification of the Africans and their descendants who were forced to perform it. In slave sale advertisements, there is evidence of this effort to

commoditize and dehumanize; the ads reveal the ways in which the enslaved were valued and evaluated based on their ability to labour and their position as inferior by the white colonists of Jamaica. The employment of social representations in the form of images of enslaved Africans worked to solidify British conceptualizations of the enslaved as immoral and primitive; a stereotype which would find scientific justifications in the nineteenth century.⁶⁰ The language used to market and sell the enslaved also reflected the emphasis on the productive and non-human aspects of the enslaved; their ‘prime-ness’ was constructed to indicate their age and vigour and their ‘seasoned’ status indicated their resilience within the plantation machine. The association between animal and enslaved was persistent throughout the slave sale ads – in the use of announcements, qualifications, and to a more subtle degree the inclusion of the names of the enslaved.

The consumption of the *Gazette* by a public beyond that of the elite planter class in Kingston contributed to the establishment of conceptualizations of Africans and their descendants as primitive, inferior and naturally subordinate. All of these constructs, articulated through the slave sale ads, were attached to slavery and, by the eighteenth century, blackness. The use of the word “Negro” in 85 per cent of the advertisements facilitated the transition from the oppression of enslaved Africans and their descendants, to the anti-black racism that was used to justify the colonization of the African continent and the ongoing oppression and coercion of blacks within Jamaica and the British Empire.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Peiterson, *White on Black*, 11.

⁶¹ For a discussion of the development of anti-black racism and colonialism, see Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812 2nd Edition*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1993).

Chapter 5. Conclusion

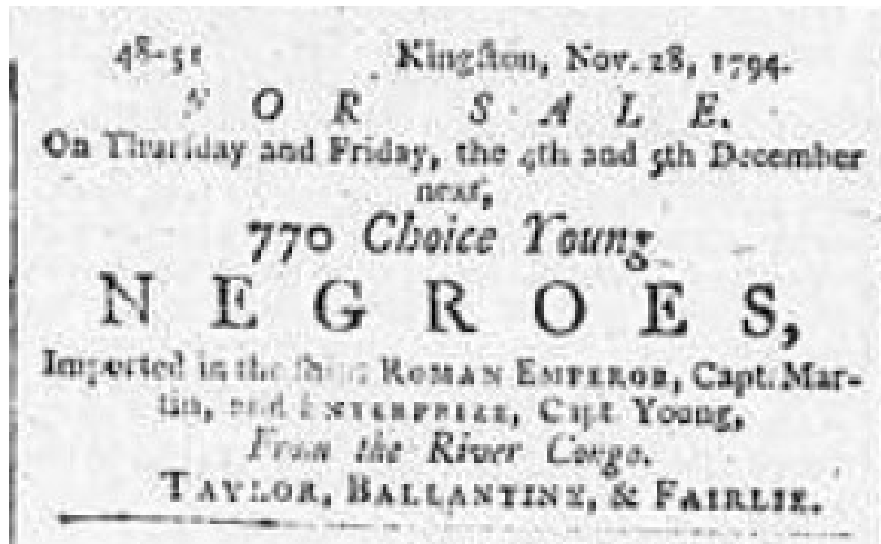
On November 28th, 1794 the Guinea factor company of Taylor, Ballantine & Fairlie placed an advertisement for the sale of “770 Choice Young Negroes...From the River Congo.” The sale occurred on the 4th and 5th of December, presumably on the wharf owned by the company (see Figure 5.1). The enslaved Africans for sale were from two ships: the *Enterprize* carried 360 enslaved peoples from Africa, and the *Roman Emperor* supplied the remaining 410.¹ The firm of Taylor, Ballantine, & Fairlie, run and operated by John Tailyour with various partners, sold over 17,000 enslaved Africans between 1785-1796.² This made John Taylor Jamaica’s second-largest slave trader. John Taylor was, in part, successful due to the timing of his establishment in Kingston; the slave trade to Jamaica began to increase in 1782 after a prolonged period of decline due to the American Revolutionary war. Between 1785 and 1789 real sugar and slave prices rose dramatically, and the eruption of a slave revolt in the French colony of Saint Domingue in 1791 all converged to offer men like Taylor lucrative opportunities to establish themselves through the buying and selling of enslaved bodies.³

Figure 5.1: Advertisement for the sale of “770 Choice Young Negroes” by Taylor, Ballantine & Fairlie, November 1794.

¹ *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/a0polq58>

² Radburn, “Guinea Factors,” 244.

³ For a history of the plantation societies of Jamaica and Saint Domingue, see Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.



Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1794.

Merchants such as John Taylor, who bought enslaved Africans for resale, were also successful due to their astute use of newspapers and print advertising to attract consumer interest. Though successful Guinea factors generally had networks of planters to whom they supplied enslaved peoples, the lack of customary sites for sales and markets was remedied through the use of papers like the *Gazette*. The advertisements also capitalized on contemporary notions of “Negroes,” and descriptive language through which advertisers such as Taylor could assert value. That the enslaved Africans for sale were advertised as “Choice” and “Young” appealed to prospective buyers; their youth equated to the potential for more years of labour if the enslaved Africans survived, and their being “Choice” implied their health, stature, and general saleability. In addition to this, merchants relied on contemporary conceptualizations of African tribal origins; in advertising a shipment of slaves from the Congo, or the Gold Coast Coast, sellers capitalized on biases held by planters about which area of Africa supplied the ‘best’ (strongest, smartest, least rebellious, most industrious) labourers. Alternatively, merchants, and the attorney’s for estates, also employed smaller scale mechanisms for

sales of the enslaved – such as private transactions negotiated between seller and buyer, or estate auctions – and relied on different strategies to market the enslaved such as advertisements detailing the sex, skill, or age of the enslaved.

The advertisements for the sales of enslaved Africans and their descendants that were not attached to a newly arrived shipment of enslaved peoples differed in the language and mechanisms of sale. Private transactions and small-scale public auctions, which often included the sale of land, livestock or furniture, were common from 1780-1783; 46 per cent of the 225 ads for the enslaved were either estate sales or sales conducted by merchants. This percentage reflected the depression in the trans-Atlantic trade during the American Revolution, the increase in prices for imported enslaved Africans, and the drop in sugar prices. Conversely, the percentage of estate sales and small scale sales conducted by merchants altered dramatically between 1793 and 1794, at 29 per cent, as shipments of enslaved Africans quickly became the dominant method acquiring new enslaved labour. The language within the slave sale advertisements for smaller scale, local sales reflected the seller's ability to market the skills, gender, nativity, and in some cases the names of the enslaved. The value of the enslaved rose if they had acquired a skill; just as there was a "prime" age for labour, and a preferred gender for specific tasks. The commodification of enslaved bodies was blatant in the slave sale advertisements of the *Gazette* – sellers used a variety of strategies to appeal to buyers, and buyers formed their own preferences for which ethnicity, gender, and skill in response. What was constant throughout the slave sale advertisements from both periods was their lack of human identity. To borrow from Davis' assessment of dehumanization,

the enslaved peoples advertised for sale were reduced to a composition of animal-like traits that made explicit their sub-human, and dehumanized, status.⁴

The language of the commodification and dehumanization of enslaved Africans and their descendants was predicated on the construction of Africans, and enslaved Africans, as inherently and naturally inferior to Europeans. European philosophers and early scientists, understood as natural historians, developed these constructions over the course of the eighteenth century. Men such as Buffon, Hume, and Kant contributed to the development of a new vocabulary with which to articulate visible human differences as indicative of morality, intelligence or civility. This vocabulary denoted a development in constructions of human hierarchy, as well as human difference; through the pursuit of definitive, or scientific, explanations for natural differences European philosophers also contributed to the establishment of racially dictated notions of human hierarchies. The conceptualizations of human difference, inherited from natural historians, were employed by the men who had a vested interest in the slave trade and the use of enslaved labour. The language in the “Report” is evidence of how these ideas were translated to cultural biases about Africans. The slave sale advertisements reveal the extent to which the enslaved were constructed as inferior; they were commodified and dehumanized to facilitate profit.

In all of the slave sale advertisements in the *Gazette* there was a reproduction of British biases and increasingly racialized symbolism that dehumanized, animalized, and commodified enslaved Africans and their descendants. The implicit association of Africans to livestock in the use of the term “Stock” in the Privy Council’s “Report,” in Bryan Edwards’ discussions of the management of “Stock” and in the use of the same

⁴ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, 76.

language and mechanisms of sale for Africans and animals worked to reproduce conceptualizations of Africans as holding an equivalent taxonomical space to livestock. The value of manual labour also implicitly tied enslaved Africans to livestock in Jamaica; in a wider cultural context, this connection was supported by enlightenment classifications that placed Africans and primates in the same, or similar, categories.⁵ Edward Long articulated the stereotype of Africans as connected to monkeys – and went so far as to assert that an African woman would have intercourse with an ape without qualms. While some natural historians and late eighteenth century philosophers such as Hegel, as well as ameliorationist planters such as Bryan Edwards, challenged Long’s construct of African peoples, the connection between animal and African was already firmly established in British cultural perceptions of Africans and slaves.

The animalization of the enslaved worked to facilitate their placement in a sub-human category; this was also enabled through enslaved peoples conflation with land and other imported commodities, as is evidenced in advertisements selling land, goods and people (see Figure 5.2). The commoditization of enslaved Africans, along with other “sundry goods,” promoted the use of impersonal and dehumanizing language in reference to enslaved people. Goldberg posits that if language is the “primary vehicle of conception” then “discourse is the mode of communicative practice that enables its effectivity.”⁶ The language used in slave sale advertisements shaped the conceptions of the British about Africans, as well as the cultural, political and social discourses around the sale and exploitation of enslaved Africans. However language was not the only vehicle through which enslaved peoples were dehumanized and constructed as inferior.

⁵ Morgan, “Slaves and Livestock,” 75.

⁶ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 9.

Figure 5.2: Advertisement for the sale of enslaved people and “sundry dry goods” February 1782.

Kingston, 22d February, 1782.

For Peremptory Sale,

ON WEDNESDAY Morning next, the 27th instant, by the Subscribers, in Mr. THOMAS BALL'S Piazza, precisely at Eleven o'Clock,

A complete Creole Negro Waiting Man, about twenty years of age.
A complete D^o—D^o, and understands the Care of Horses.
A complete D^o Washerwoman, and can take care of a House.

☞ Good Bills of Exchange will be taken in Payment for the above.

After which will be sold, for Cash only,

Three prime NEW NEGROES,
Eight Coils new CORDAGE assorted,—and
Sundry DRY GOODS and PROVISIONS.

Thomas Leigh & Co. V. M.

N. B. The Negroes may be seen any day before the sale, by applying at the above subscriber's store, adjoining Messrs. LEIGH, COOK & C^o. in Water Lane.

Source: Kingston, *The Royal Gazette*, 1782

The use of images of enslaved Africans in slave sale advertisements opened up the consumption of stereotypes of Africans to a wider audience; and in so doing implemented the reproduction of cultural biases against both enslaved and free Africans.⁷ In colonial and travel literature, such as Edward Long's *History of Jamaica*, enslaved and free Africans were already associated with primates, savagery, and hedonism.⁸ The images of enslaved Africans in the *Gazette's* slave sale advertisements reproduced these associations, manifesting them within a framework in which the enslaved were already implicitly lacking humanity due to their saleability. The enslaved were represented in the

⁷ Smith, *Nature, Human Nature & Human Difference*, 25.

⁸ Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, 15.

ads in positions of leisure; leaning against hoes or shovels or conversing with pipes. This capitalized on cultural understandings of Africans as slothful and primitive in their work ethic; the pipe referenced the importance of tobacco within the slave trade, and the groups conversing also played on stereotypes of enslaved peoples, supposed, love of conversation and oration. The production of images to sell enslaved Africans in newspapers such as the *Gazette* indicated the development of consumer societies, as well as revealing the cultural biases and stereotypes already deeply established within Jamaican society.

The two sample periods used here (1780-1783 and 1793-1794) to track and analyze the development of the language of dehumanization and commodification in British Parliamentary records and slave sale advertisements represent two flashpoints in history; both within Jamaica itself, and within the wider context of the Atlantic world. The rise in frequency of advertisements for shipments of enslaved Africans that arrived in Kingston from 1780-1783 marked the beginning of a period of economic boom in Jamaica.⁹ This period also witnessed the advent of an organized, national, political abolitionist movement within Britain.¹⁰ By 1788, popular opinion and public petitioning resulted in the commission of the “Report” by the Privy Council.¹¹ By the early 1790s, abolitionists were seemingly on the brink of ending the slave trade with a series of petitions and a successful vote for the passing of the Abolition Act in the House of Commons.¹² However, by 1793 this moment passed as England became involved in the French Revolutionary war, and as the violence enacted by the formerly enslaved in the

⁹ Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 233.

¹⁰ Seymour Drescher cites the advent of this movement to be 1787; Drescher, *Abolition*, 209.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 216.

¹² Drescher, *Abolition*, 222-223.

Saint-Domingue slave revolt, which exploded in 1791, came to light. As such, the period between 1793-1794 offers a window into another lucrative period for Jamaica, as well as a period in which revolutionary ideals were tested in France and Haiti. Despite the institution of slavery, the slave trade, and the morality of West Indian society being called into question in the metropole – slavery as an institution and the slave trade continued to flourish throughout the 1780s and 1790s and into the early nineteenth century. Following the end of the Haitian Revolution and the Napoleonic wars in 1804, the end of the slave trade was once again on the political agenda. The slave sales, with heavy reliance on imports, that had sustained Jamaica's enslaved population ended amid abolitionist calls for humanity, autonomy and economic freedom for Africans and their descendants within the West Indian colonies.

In 1807, the British Parliament outlawed the slave trade in the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act; twenty-six years later, the British government ordered the emancipation of 780,000 slaves within the Empire, and paid upward of 20 million pounds compensation to the men who had considered those slaves their legal property.¹³ However, before 1807, the slave trade and sugar production experienced new economic heights within Jamaica; an indication that the abolitionists victory was far from predictable or certain.¹⁴ The volume and success of the slave trade in Jamaica during the rise of abolitionism in Britain, and the subsequent economic boom during the 1790s, is visible in *The Royal Gazette*. The normalized commodification of the enslaved evident in

¹³ David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 108.

¹⁴ Early historiography argued that the end of the slave trade and slavery was inevitable as the productivity and viable economic state of slavery was in decline; otherwise known as the Decline Theory see, Eric Eustace Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*, (London: Deutsch, 1964); more recent scholarship has argued the opposite see David Eltis, *The Rise of American Slavery*; David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984; Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*;

slave sale advertisements helped to make divisions within colonial society appear natural – the enslaved were positioned as animal, as commodity. Their lack of humanity thus acquired a sense of permanence. The legacy of the slave trade and the concomitant commodification, dehumanization, and animalization of the enslaved remains apparent today, not just in the breadth of the African diaspora in the New World, but in the socio-political and economic status of former British (and European) colonies as well and in stereotypes about Africa, Africans and the descendants of enslaved Africans.

The impact of the end of the slave trade to Jamaica signalled the beginning of the decline of West Indian productivity and importance in the Atlantic world. Once the jewel of the British Empire, Jamaica became a peripheral Caribbean colony. In efforts to maintain sugar production through the use of enslaved labour, following the end of the slave trade, Jamaican planters embarked on a series of ameliorative programmes, enforced by the metropole and advised by men in the colonies like Dr. Collins and Bryan Edwards. However, the ability to maintain enslaved populations within plantation societies was unsuccessful in the West Indies, with the notable exception of Barbados.¹⁵ For the majority of planters in the British West Indies, restrictions on inter-island slave trading, rising slave prices, fluctuating sugar prices and the subsequent drops in land values all resulted in the decline of West Indian economies following the end of the slave trade.¹⁶ After emancipation, the former slave societies of the West Indies began to rely on imported, indentured, labour from the Indian continent. In this way, the white-planter

¹⁵ Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750-1807*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 14.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the losses to planters, and the cost of emancipation, see Stanley Engerman, "Pricing Freedom: Evaluating the costs of emancipation and of manumission," in *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora* ed. Verene Shepherd (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 273-302.

class in the West Indies attempted to maintain their social, political and economic hegemony through the continuation of imported labour and through post-emancipation apprenticeships of formerly enslaved Africans.¹⁷ The result of the efforts by planters and politicians to maintain economic productivity and socio-political dominance resulted, in part, in the growth and development of anti-black racial arguments that built on enlightenment natural histories and philosophies. Instead of representations of Africans and their descendants as savage, primitive, and uncivilized declining, the end of the slave trade marked their increase.

The “Report” compiled by the Privy Council in 1788 was an important step towards the end of the slave trade, as it marked a turning point in which antislavery became politicized.¹⁸ The propaganda campaign conducted by British abolitionists ultimately succeeded in ending the slave trade and slavery – however it also normalized and popularized biased representations of Africans in British culture.¹⁹ Whereas representations of Africans and enslaved Africans were present in contemporary works of art, their placement was generally peripheral to the main subject of the piece.²⁰ The exception to this was slave sale advertisements, runaway slave advertisements, and abolitionist’s pamphlets. Enslaved Africans became the central focus of visual representations in the pursuit of their sale, and in the attempts to assert their humanity.

¹⁷ See Verene A. Shepherd, “The ‘Other Middle Passage?’ Nineteenth century bonded labour migration and the legacy of the slavery debate in the British colonized Caribbean,” in *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora* ed. Verene Shepherd (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 343-376, for a discussion of nineteenth century systems of labour that attempted to replace slavery.

¹⁸ Drescher, *Abolition*, 216.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the use of propaganda and images within the British abolitionist movement, see Pieterse, *White on Black*; for a discussion of difference and representation in British Culture see Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

²⁰ Pieterse, *White on Black*, 53.

One of the most famous icons of abolitionism in Britain was a representation of an enslaved African, imprinted on a medallion, designed and produced by Josiah Wedgwood as a seal for the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: The Wedgwood slave medallion, 1787



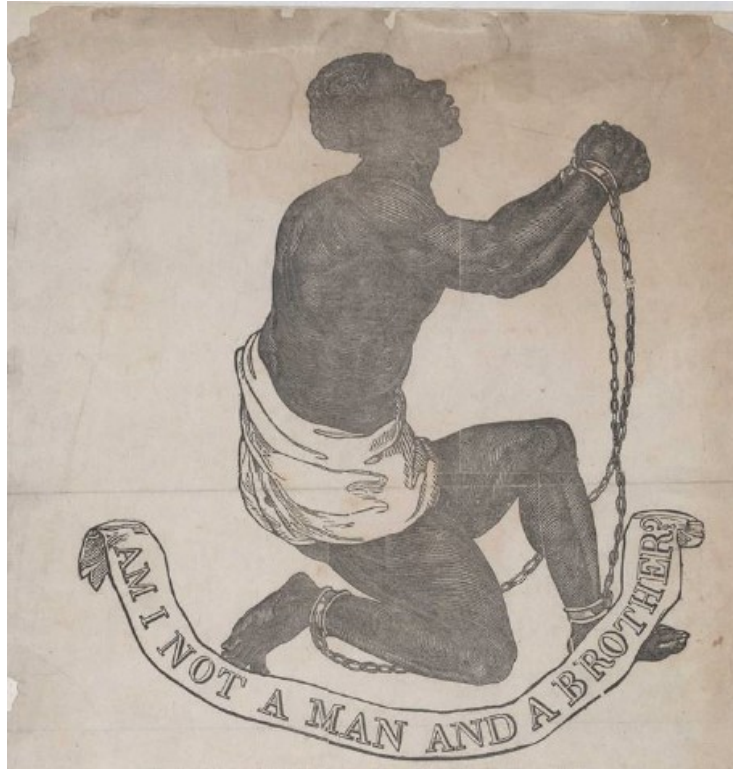
Source: Guyatt, “The Wedgwood Medallion,” 94.

The seal was submitted to the Society in 1787, and was the personal contribution to the abolitionist campaign of businessman and potter Josiah Wedgwood.²¹ The seal was adopted by the Society, and became emblematic of the abolitionist movement; it was turned into stamps, used in pamphlets, and reprinted in newspapers (see Figure 5.4). This

²¹ For a discussion of Wedgwood’s contribution to the abolitionist movement and the politics this involved, see Mary Guyatt, “The Wedgwood Slave Medallion: Values in Eighteenth-Century Design,” *Journal of Design History*, 13 no. 2 (2000), pp. 93-105.

representation of an enslaved African, in a pose of supplication, shackled on his hands and feet, and depicted wearing a rag, was intended to elicit empathy and outrage. However, it also reproduced British power hierarchies and the image of subjugated Africans. The kneeling position of the enslaved man indicated his appeal to Heaven, but also to British (white) society – a clear indication of the submissive position of the enslaved African. The enslaved man in the print is not attempting to break his chains, he is asking to be released – this also played into efforts to construct Africans as in need of aid, as opposed to Africans as vengeful and fierce. Similar to the slave sale advertisements, the enslaved man is represented wearing cloth that only covers his sex; this absence of clothing could indicate impoverishment and need, but it also connected the medallion to representations of Africans as savage in manner and dress. That this representation of slavery, and of an enslaved African, achieved such widespread reproduction indicated not only the success of abolitionist propaganda, but also the reification of the Africans inferior position within British society.

Figure 5.4: “Am I not a Man and a Brother?” Josiah Wedgwood print used in “The Negro’s Complaint” an anti-slavery poem



Source: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New York Public Library

The process of dehumanization and commodification of the enslaved in advertisements for their sale were apparent in the *Gazette*; indeed, this process was necessary for the sale and exploitation of enslaved labour. The dehumanization of the enslaved in abolitionist prints was more subtle – representations of the enslaved did not represent their commodity value, they represented their status as victim in need of salvation.²² This salvation, constructed by abolitionists, would be delivered not just through the abolition of the slave trade, or emancipation, but would be extended to mean the ‘salvation’ of Africans in West Africa. The supplicating enslaved African was therefore not only begging for his freedom, but was increasingly conceptualized as also asking to be civilized, Christianized, and moralized by the British. In this way, the

²² Guyatt, “The Wedgwood Slave Medallion,” 99.

discourses detailed in the Privy Council's "Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade" about the impact of ending the slave trade took new forms in the era following the end of the trade and emancipation. What had been abstract, cultural conceptualizations of Africans rooted in Eurocentric notions of civilization, humanity, property, freedom and equality were hardened along racial lines following emancipation. In response to the end of legal slavery, race – as it was understood in the nineteenth century - became the defining human property that constituted access to equality, human rights, and citizenship in the post-Revolutionary, and post-slavery, Atlantic world.²³

The exploitation of stereotypes of enslaved Africans, and increasingly of black people in general, within abolitionist propaganda was evident in slave sale advertisements. Though the intent of the representations differed dramatically, the result was, according to Jan Nederveen Pieterse, the "promotion of new stereotypes of blacks."²⁴ British conceptualizations of Africans were intrinsically connected to their enslavement. This was articulated in the "Report" in references to African's primitive understanding of civilization, religion and government as well as in publications by men like Edward Long and Bryan Edwards, who discussed African tribes and the value of these origins. The language within slave sale advertisements articulated enlightenment concepts of human hierarchies within a platform that was accessible to colonists; the commodification of the enslaved, their lack of humanity, and their animalization was predicated on arguments about natural inferiority, natural subjugation, and inherent alien human difference. The result of these cultural biases was the growth and rapid establishment of scientific racism throughout the Atlantic world. Once the legal institutions that had supported coercive and

²³ For a discussion of human rights, and the necessity of empathy in order to secure these rights, see Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 27.

²⁴ Pieterse, *White on Black*, 60.

violent slave based labour regimes were altered, the customs of dominance and oppression of black people, Africans and other minorities had to be supported using “science” and alternative institutions to slavery such as work houses and penitentiaries.²⁵ Representations of Africans continued to cast Africans as animal-like; discourses about the formerly enslaved throughout the New World perpetuated stereotypes of slothfulness, violence and depravity; and finally, the supplicating enslaved African man was rapidly transformed into a concept of the African continent requiring “salvation” in the form of British intervention.²⁶

The people advertised for sale in the *Gazette* represent a small fraction of the volume of the trade in African people and their descendants. Their humanity was not valued in their initial purchase in West Africa, in their shipment, or their sale in Jamaica. The dehumanization and the commodification of enslaved Africans was a necessary part of the horrifying success of the institution of slavery in the New World. The ability of British men, whether planters, merchants or ship captains, to establish and maintain an ontological distance between themselves and the people they were exploiting, selling and shipping facilitated the normalization of viewing Africans, and black people generally, as naturally inferior. While slave sale advertisements were not the only platform that enabled the development and solidification of racism in the west, they played a crucial part in the daily denigration of Africans, and their descendants.

²⁵ On the use of workhouses and jails to ensure social control over black populations in Jamaica, see Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780-1870* (London: Duke University Press, 2004).

²⁶ For a discussion of the Africans and the British Empire during and after slavery, see Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, *Black Experience and the Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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