

Resilience, Disaster, Elusion

The Life and Times Below John Adams, Part I,

*Concerning a place Erroneously called 'New England', Its sundry
and divers Peoples, and New Relations imposed and contested, as
well as Its Ties to, among other Bonds, the Peoples of Africa, Europe,
and the Caribbean, including flying Accounts of Puritan Purity and
unspeakable Libertinage, Metacomet & his terrible War, vicious
Servitude & undying Evasion, stifling Plantations & cultivated Ma-
roonage, the unruly Black Sam & his Merry Men, quartered Rebels &
decollated Masters, multifarious & wicked Pétroleuses, and sundry
other Malcontents, Plotters, Long-tails, & Troublemakers,
in the Years 1600 'til 1742, as recounted by*

Leopold Trebitch

No More Presidents' Day

February 15, 2021

Front cover: “The Indian Ambush”
from John S. C. Abbott’s *King Philip*.

For all the disobedient within these pages and beyond.

*And for all my friends who listened to me recount what I found,
shared their thoughts, and encouraged me.*

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What you see before you is an ambitious and more in-depth follow up to an earlier piece, *Escaping Washington for Freedom*. Incensed by the overlap of Black History Month and Presidents' Day, I started an examination of the first few presidents and their relationship to people of color, slavery, black people, and servitude. The findings, built on the hard work of dozens of researchers before me and made possible with the help of CrimethInc., were in turn both disturbing and energizing. If I have given this John Adams essay the respect it deserves, hopefully you will find more of the same.

Few readers likely know much about John Adams, perhaps other than that he was one of the first American presidents. Maybe some readers remember that he was the first vice president and a brain-stormer of the Declaration of Independence,* or that the XYZ affair marred his presidency. Despite being overshadowed by Washington and Jefferson in the popular imagination, Adams was instrumental in establishing the American government and pushing for democracy, which now ensnares the earth. We might even consider Adams an early priest or prophet of democracy, and as such, worthy of our consideration.

* Made famous for older generations by the musical *1776*.

Escaping Washington had hoped to decenter the president as much as possible, shifting the focus instead to Washington's disobedient slaves and servants, as well as the Native Americans who resisted his attacks. Since Great Men never single-handedly make history, we sought to flip that narrative on its head, replacing it with the tradition of histories from below. More often, Great Men use their power and wealth to obtain more power and wealth, forcing people below them to do all the hard work while taking credit for it in the long run. Which isn't to say these figures never make important contributions, but simply that their impact on history is exaggerated and mythologized. In reality, the Great Men of History are nothing more than the stories told by those in power to justify their position and erase our own hard work and agency here and now.

Below John Adams aims to delve even further into this trajectory, so much so that at times our protagonist is completely absent. In Part I, Adams is but a whisper, and in his place stand his ancestors, both biological and cultural. In Part II, as we catch glimpses of Adams coming of age in the explosive mid-1700s, we are more concerned with the Seven Years' War. The massive conflict was fought throughout much of the Western world and involved significant losses and victories for those Indigenous to North America. Despite Britain amassing unbelievable power by the end of it, the mobs of sailors and slaves that pushed back against the new empire will catch our attention even more so. Part III traces Adams' political career, which coincides with the acceleration of the American Revolution. As the 1700s draw to a close, the Revolution will die in the hands of upper class politicians like Adams. Even though their new system cries 'Freedom' at every chance it can get, it delivers slavery, war, and death.

If Adams, albeit briefly, held one of the most powerful positions in America, who was below him? How did he get there and what did he do with that power? Who did he utilize and how were they

repaid? If Adams was born into the middle class of Massachusetts in the 1730s, where did that class come from? What were its roots? And at whose expense was Massachusetts formed? These are the stories I'm more interested in knowing.

Adams was a reluctant or conservative revolutionary. In the 1770s, after a decade of lower class agitation, when Adams and other Founding Fathers saw their chance to remove the British crown and be top dogs themselves, Adams donned the mask of the age-old 'good protester'. Though the rabble attacked British and American authority alike, and Adams initially threw many of them under the cart, he eventually championed a distorted, watered-down version of their dreams. A version that did not threaten the American ruling class, but rather enshrined them as the country's masters.

But before the American colonies could break away from Britain, colonists first needed to establish a solid base of settlements, industries, and relationships. It's this 130+ year span—from the first contact between Native Americans and Europeans in what would later be called New England until around Adams' birth in 1735—that is the focus of Part I. During these precarious years, the most ambitious colonists fought to implement new ways of interacting: new hierarchies, forms of trade, and relationships.

As a result of these efforts, at the base of John Adams we find wars of removal, enslavement, and genocide against Native Americans and Africans. Next to them we see an elaborate and increasingly global web of contact and travel, reaching from Indigenous lands deep within unconquered continents to coastal colonies, and from there to the colonists' homelands and thrones, and then back again. Intertwined with it all is law, trade, race, religion, and social theory, which served to justify the creation of a deadly and exploitative hierarchy. On top of that, there is the expectation for those born into the social pyramid to respect, recreate, and expand its discrepancies. I've tried my best to untangle this knotted mess.

In the way that *Escaping Washington* condemns America via the South, *Below John Adams* swipes at it through the North. Though the North often evades harsher criticisms leveled at the South, New England fought wars of genocide, enslaved some of the first Native Americans and Africans in America, was the first to codify slavery into law, and made its fortunes through enslavement. Even if slavery had not been allowed in New England for the almost two hundred years it was practiced there, its economy and fate would have been irreversibly tied to the slave economy of the South. There could not have been a South without a North, nor a North without a South.

Despite the atrocities that fill these pages, this is not simply the history of cruel wars, vicious customs, and their pathetic victims. It is just as much, if not more so, the story of those who resisted from below what was imposed on them from above. Of the first five Native Americans abducted and enslaved by Europeans in New England in the early 1600s, three made it home from Europe by their own cunning. During Metacomet's War in the 1670s, when colonists tried to push unassimilated Native Americans out of Massachusetts and Rhode Island once and for all, they were met with Native raids against over half of their settlements and suffered casualties in the thousands.

Not only did New England's upper class struggle to control the colonies on the large scale, but even within their own households servants, slaves, children, and spouses mouthed off, worked slowly, attacked, ran away, and stole from those above them. In the 1640s, hoping to curb the unruliness and turn a greater profit, Massachusetts officials wrote the *Massachusetts Body of Liberties*. As one of the first major laws in the American colonies, the ironically named *Body of Liberties* criminalized blasphemy, the worshiping of false idols, witchcraft, stealing, homosexuality, any "subversion of our frame of polity of government", bestiality, and lying—which were

all punishable by death.¹

Yet, within just one year of its publication in Plymouth alone, wickedness did grow and break forth here. . . . especially drunkenness and uncleanness. Not only incontinency between persons unmarried, for which many both men and women have been punished sharply enough, but some married persons also. But that which is worse, even sodomy and buggery* (things fearful to name) have broke forth in this land oftener than once.²

Indeed, the colonial elite's control was neither easy nor inevitable.

As New England merchants expanded into the Atlantic trade, sending ships throughout the colonies, the Caribbean, and coastal Europe and Africa, they slowly gained more power and wealth, yet their problems multiplied just as quickly. In Africa, as European and American merchants tapped into and expanded the centuries-old slave trade, they were met with resistance at all levels. Whole villages migrated to swamps, mountains, and caves to defend against enslavement, while individuals pleaded, negotiated, and physically fought with their captors. Along the coasts a number of revolts, especially in the West African rice plantations in the late 1700s, majorly impacted the profits of slave labor and the slave trade itself, while hundreds of mutinies disrupted the functions of Atlantic slave ships—many of which were based in New England.

When Africans found themselves enslaved throughout New England, they added their refusal to the rebellious acts of other rabble. By the early 1700s alone, the lower class of New England counted among its members the Wôpanâak, British, West African, Narragansett, Irish, Afro-Caribbean, and Miskito to name a few. As the rich and powerful throughout the Atlantic world enslaved, im-

* Used by the officials of Plymouth to refer to homosexuality and bestiality.

pressed,* and ordered those below them across the Atlantic, the under class brought with them their own customs, among them their knowledge of resisting slavery, servitude, and impressment—what Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have dubbed the “cycle of rebellion”.³

As the international and interracial (motley) rabble interacted and compared notes, they began to take on a collective force of their own. By the time Part I comes to a close in the 1730s, we will have seen a number of examples of this, some brief, some thorough: Metacomet’s War, in which a coalition of unassimilated Native Americans defended themselves against colonists; maroons and interracial pirates in the Caribbean; anti-slavery settlements throughout Africa; and the New York Conspiracy of 1741, which involved both African and Irish conspirators. While New England was spared the worst of the 1730s, riots and conspiracies hit in full force the following decades, as Part II will discuss.

At times the text will wander, but even when some episodes take place hundreds or thousands of miles away from New England, in a certain sense they still take place in New England. For America is just as much a series of relationships, a mentality, as it is a point on the globe. In this way, we could also say events that took place in Britain, the Caribbean, or Massachusetts took place in Africa, especially when they involved African actors or directly affected African lives.

Forms of trade and government that took off in America were interconnected to the entire Atlantic world. The expansion of an industry in one part of the world—or successful acts of resistance against that same part—affected the whole. Even before merchants brought Africans to New England, the resistance of Native Amer-

* Impressment is the practice of forcing someone to join a naval or merchant ship. Throughout the 1600-1800s, press-gangs roamed port towns pressing men, generally age 18-55, into maritime slavery.

icans and lower class colonists to colonial projects threatened the future of colonization, without which there would be no need for enslaved Africans. Likewise, attacks against the slave trade in Africa affected the profits and the ability of New England to grow. In this way Maroons in Virginia and Jamaica, pirates in New England, Indigenous peoples throughout Africa and the Americas, and Atlantic conspirators in grog shops and riverside laundries held the power to change the course of history. The luckiest of which, for their sake and ours, did.

John Adams and the rest of the Founding Fathers have gone down in history as those who built America physically and ideologically. *Below John Adams* aims to explore who did the actual building, or who refused to build at all, and what those upper class ideas were actually confronting. As you will soon see, the laws and logic of the colonial elite were not mere happenstance, but rather calculated responses to the rabble demanding power and freedom of their own. Remember, dear reader, America was never inevitable, and this land that now bears its name could just as easily be many times worse . . . or better.

* * *

Ultimately, this first edition is a public draft of sorts. I'm curious what any of you think about these stories: what is missing, what I've focused too much on, what have I not proved, what is working, and so on. I can make no promises as to what I will ultimately augment or change, but any feedback you give me is invaluable.

For a great levelling,
Leopold Trebitch, Summer 2020



*"History wants us to believe that the Indian was a savage, illiterate, uncivilized animal. A history that was written by an organized, disciplined people, to expose us as an unorganized and undisciplined entity. Let us remember, the Indian is and was just as human as the white man. The Indian feels pain, gets hurt, and becomes defensive, has dreams, bears tragedy and failure, suffers from loneliness, needs to cry as well as laugh."*¹

Wamsutta Frank James, 1970,
Suppressed speech on the 350th anniversary of Plymouth

I

The Land Before

Rolling hills and jagged coasts. Forests, marshes, meadows. Mountains and glacier-dulled volcanic rock. Pine, oak, beech, and hickory. Among them chipmunks, turkeys, bears, and fireflies. To the east live clams, lobsters, cod, and eels.

Tilling and nurturing the soil in the spring, as others carve boats to fish and hunt whales. Retreating in the fall to ancient forests that protect against the winter winds. Listening to the wisdom of the old, understanding the fresh eyes of the young. Dreaming, doing, being. *'Bearing tragedy and failure, suffering from loneliness. Crying as well as laughing.'*

* * *

The messy and speculative sciences of anthropology and archaeology conjure a land of tens of thousands of people living in modern-day Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Maine. Some were part of long-established tribes and confederacies, others in newly-formed villages. Some were ruled over by larger, more powerful groups, while others lived autonomously despite their more rigid neighbors.

By the late 1500s and early 1600s, the Pequot and Mohegan, numbering over 16,000, were living in the swamps, woodlands, and coast of eastern Connecticut; the Wangunk (Mattabessett) along the Quinnehtukqut (Connecticut River) in the middle of the state; and the Renape (Quinnipiac) in western Connecticut, eastern New York, New Jersey, and beyond. The Renape's villages included Quinnipiac, Tunxis, Paugusset, and Podunk.

A section of the Lenni Lenape (Delaware People) lived on the western half of Long Island, while the Montaukett and Shinnecock comprised two of the island's thirteen eastern, autonomous villages connected by kinship.

The Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) were in New York and beyond; the Pennacook (Pawtucket/ Merrimack) in Vermont, New Hampshire, Canada, and Massachusetts. The Pocumtuc lived semi-nomadically along the Connecticut River in central and western Massachusetts, while the Nipmuc were spread throughout Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. The Nehântick (Niantic) stayed in Connecticut and Rhode Island; the Narragansett in the tidal swamps and coastlands of Rhode Island; and the Wabanaki (Dawnlanders) throughout Maine and eastern Canada. The latter included the Mi'kmaq, Wo-lastoqiyik (Maliseet), Peskotomuhkat (Passamaquoddy), Alnôbak (Abenaki), and Panawahpskek (Penobscot). The Wabanaki, along with the Wôpanâak (Wampanoag) and Massachuseuk (Massachusetts) Confederacies of eastern Massachusetts, were some of the first to meet Europeans.

A glimpse into the life of the Renape (Quinnipiac) may give us a sense of the region's peoples before European contact. The Renape, who are believed to have numbered around 25,000 in western Connecticut and 25,000 more in New York and New Hampshire,

lived in their fishing camps along the shores during the spring (Sequan) and summer (Nepun). Their horticul-



tural patterns produced corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, fruits, nuts, berries, all in a plantation-style setting. They used a slash-and-burn technique to replenish the soil and rotated their plantation sites regularly. They used horseshoe crabs and menhadden (alewives) as a natural fertilizer. They caught shell- and scalefish and dried them in the sun or on racks over a fire. The Quinnipi-ac were avid falconers, using hawks to keep crows away from the corn. The bean and squash plants were planted in the valleys between rows of corn, so that the beans would curl around the corn stalks and weeding was unnecessary.* Many other plants considered weeds today were used by the Long Water people for food, beverages, medicine, and for making mats.

In the fall (Taquonck) the Long Water people moved inland along their trails to the winter (Pabouks) grounds, and, along the way they hunted fowl, rabbits, beaver, and other small game, until they came to Meriden 'the Pleasant Valley,' where oaks provided shelter against high winds and the acorns were main staples for deer and wild turkey, another winter staple.²

Members of the Wôpanâak, who historians believe had 50,000-100,000 members spread throughout five dozen villages,³ traveled up and down the coast in dugout canoes, collecting shellfish and fishing. The Pequot used hooks and lines to catch tautog and cod, leisters to spear larger fish, and cone-shaped baskets to catch eels. The Pequot could make canoes in a matter of days, the largest of which were seagoing, capable of reaching nearby islands and carrying 30-40 people.⁴

There were likely many advantages to life before European con-

* This technique is known today as the "Three Sisters", while dishes made with corn and beans derive their name, succotash, from the Narragansett *sohqutnahhash*. - L.T.

tact. Subsistence gathering, hunting, and farming; a more balanced relationship with non-human life; and kinship (old and new) are likely some of the attributes most relatable to a modern audience. Others may be completely unknowable to us. But I do not wish to romanticize Native life, despite presenting aspects of it here in rosy terms.* Life was not perfect, and some villages risked abduction, servitude, and removal from gathering and hunting grounds or their homes by more powerful tribes. Even the most vicious Native wars and forms of servitude, though, would be rivaled if not completely surpassed by the approaching Europeans.

* I've struggled with how best to present this first chapter. In many ways it feels strange to write about pre-contact Native life as a white person. Talking too positively can quickly turn into romanticizing and mythologizing real people. Not talking about pre-contact life seems equally, if not more, problematic. I've tried to strike a balance by summarizing general aspects as best and concisely as I can, while simultaneously warning that life was not always perfect.

Another risk with a section like this is presenting one way of life or ideology and in turn lumping very diverse and divergent peoples into a homogenous blob. The opening quote from Wamsutta Frank James, for example, presents a Native view of Indigeneity that not all Native people would agree with. For multiple perspectives on this and other issues, one helpful resource is Aragorn's *The Fight for Turtle Island* from Little Black Cart.

II

Touches of Death

In the late 1590s and early 1600s, European fishermen and the occasional explorer began frequenting the coasts of modern-day Canada, Maine, and Massachusetts. Horrifically, within just one generation of contact, plague conditions killed thousands of the regions' Native people. Between 1617-1619 alone, a smallpox epidemic is believed to have killed upwards of 60-90% of Native Americans of the Northeast.¹

To add insult to injury, European visitors began abducting and enslaving Native Americans, often under the guise of inviting them aboard to trade or explore their ships. In 1605 Captain George Weymouth kidnapped five Alnôbak men—Tahanedo, Amoret,* Manedo, Sellwarroes, and Assacumet—along the coast of Maine. Three were tricked into seeing Weymouth's ship, and two taken by sheer force.²

Upon returning to England, Manedo, Sellwarroes, and a third man were given to Weymouth's investor, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, while Assacumet and the fifth prisoner were given to Sir John

* It seems likely that Amoret died while being taken back to England or shortly after his arrival, either from wounds inflicted during his capture, the voyage itself, or disease.

Popham, Lord Chief Justice of England. The two investors hoped to learn from the Alnôbak about the region's people, languages, customs, and raw materials, but they also wanted to expose the men to British life—casually showing them its technology, military strength, and overwhelming size in the process.

When the enslaved Alnôbak returned to the Northeast as interpreters, Gorges and Popham expected them to preach the futility of resisting British colonization. In addition to coastal knowledge, Gorges and Popham soon found the Alnôbak made marvelous mascots, which they paraded in front of enchanted investors. Though the Alnôbak's popularity managed to win Gorges and Popham royal grants for the Plymouth and London Companies to colonize the Northeast within just two years of their abduction, the investors' dream of colonization would soon dissolve.³

In 1606, Gorges sent Assacumet and Manedo back across the Atlantic as interpreters for Captain Henry Challon. But when disease forced the expedition to land in the Spanish-occupied Caribbean, their ship was seized, and Assacumet and Manedo taken prisoner. At this point Manedo disappears from the historical record, but we know Assacumet was taken back to Spain where he managed to escape to London, possibly with Gorges' help.⁴

Meanwhile, Popham dispatched a party to modern-day Maine, sending Tahanedo and Sellwarroes as guides. Though the two were forced to head back with the expedition, they returned again with a group led by Popham's nephew in 1607. This time as soon as the party disembarked near Sellwarroes home, his loved ones attacked. Only after Popham made Sellwarroes identify himself did the barrage of arrows stop,⁵ and Tahanedo and Sellwarroes quickly rejoined their families.⁶

If Popham, Gorges, and other investors hoped that their captives would spread word of British superiority and the futility of resisting them, the kidnappings only spread resentment. Self-freed,





Native warnings of European cruelty were common in the early decades of exploration and colonization. In 1511, when Diego Velázquez set off from Ayiti (Hispaniola) to capture Caobana (Cuba), 400 Taínos beat him there to warn the local Guanahatabey, Ciboney, and Taíno about the Spanish. When Juan Ponce de León landed in Escampaba (Southwest Florida) in 1513, he was chased from the region by the Calusa, who'd been taking in Caribbean refugees for over a decade. The runaways not only warned of colonization and its accompanying massacres, but they managed to imbue the Calusa with a basic understanding of Spanish as well. This foundation of distrust freed Florida of substantial colonization for over a century.

There are also stories like that of Paquiquino, a Native American boy from Virginia abducted by Jesuits in the 1570s. Paquiquino was forced to live in Europe for years before returning to Virginia as a guide and escaping. Having lived with the Spanish, Paquiquino repeatedly warned the peoples of the East Coast not to trust white visitors, going so far as to lead an attack against a group of missionaries and a Spanish expedition.

Opposite: The Calusa playing hoop ball and practicing with their bows. Between Caribbean warnings and their own tenacity, the Spanish were no match for the Calusa.

former slaves like Tahanedo and Sellwarroes instead told stories of British deceit and cruelty, reminding those around them: do not believe the British.*

This distrust became so pronounced that Sagadahoc Colony, the settlement Popham founded shortly after losing Tahanedo and Sellwarroes, likely failed because of it.⁷ Located at the mouth of the Kennebec River in modern-day Maine, the Alnôbak largely shunned Sagadahoc, letting the colonists there starve and freeze throughout their first winter. What could have been another Jamestown, founded just a few months before in Virginia, was abandoned a year after it began.⁸

* * *

In 1611 three more Alnôbak men, Pechmo, Monopet, and Pekenimne, were taken by Captain Edward Harlow off the coast of Maine. Pechmo, however, managed to jump overboard, untie the ship's boat, and sail it to shore. Before Harlow's men could reach him, Pechmo and friends buried the boat in the beach, never to be seen by Harlow again.⁹ The captain would have quite the time explaining this to investors back home.

As word spread of Monopet and Pekenimne's abduction, the Alnôbak gathered and chased Harlow from the coast. The captain retreated south to Nohono (Nantucket), but the Wôpanâak immediately intercepted and attacked him, likely after receiving word from the Alnôbak of Harlow's intent. In the attack, Harlow's men managed to capture one of the Wôpanâak, Sakaweston.¹⁰ The expedition continued south to Capawak (Martha's Vineyard), where Harlow seized two more Wôpanâak men, Epenow and Coneconam. By the time he returned home to London, Harlow had managed to capture 29 Native Americans.

* See underleaf.

While most of their fates remain unknown, a few of the 29's lives were scantly recorded. First, Harlow tried selling them in Spain, but was quickly stopped. He took them to England next, where they were showcased and displayed to potential investors.¹¹ Sakaweston, the Wôpanâak captured near Nohono, "lived many years in England" and eventually "went a soldier to the wars of Bohemia."¹² Epenow, on the other hand, was turned into a living curiosity, "shewed up and down London for money as a wonder",¹³ in time growing to scowl silently at the spectators. After a few months, Sir Gorges bought him, and Epenow found himself a cellmate of Assacumet, one of the five Alnôbak men taken in 1605.

In the near decade Gorges had enslaved him, Assacumet had come to understand that more than anything else Gorges desired gold, and so the two captives began to hatch a plot. In time, Epenow slowly let slip that Capawak was full of the precious stone, and by 1614 both Epenow and Assacumet were on their way home.¹⁴

When the expedition reached Capawak, they were greeted by dozens of Wôpanâak, including loved ones of Epenow. While Captain Hobson was busy inviting them back to trade the next day, Epenow made plans for his escape. When the Wôpanâak returned the next morning in twenty canoes, Hobson made sure that three guards were holding Epenow and that he was dressed in long, heavy clothing.*¹⁵

When Harlow called for the Wôpanâak to come aboard they stared back at him silently. Frustrated, Harlow beckoned Epenow forward to invite the Wôpanâak aboard in their own language, but when Epenow reached the edge of the ship he began to struggle free of the guards. Under a rain of arrows, Epenow overpowered his

* It would seem that the British had a hard time securing Native Americans while abducting them, and often their hair was the only part they could hold onto. Epenow's long clothing made restraining him much easier.

captors and jumped overboard into the waiting arms of his cousins. Both sides fought desperately for him and suffered heavy injuries. Three Wôpanâak even gave their lives in the successful struggle to return Epenow.

Assacumet managed to escape at some point during this voyage as well, meaning that in the nine years since the five Alnôbak had been abducted, one was dead, another missing, but three had somehow managed to find their way home—*a remarkable feat!*^{*}



We now come to the most famous of Northeastern Native captives, Tisquantum, or Squanto as he became known in American folklore. Likely born in the 1580s, Tisquantum grew up in a Patuxet village along the western shore of Cape Cod Bay. During his youth the Patuxet, a branch of the Wôpanâak, numbered around 2,000 and lived mostly along the coast of eastern Massachusetts. This life was forever disrupted in 1614 when John Smith and Thomas Hunt led a fleet of Gorges' ships up the coasts of Massachusetts and Maine.

Unsuccessful in their attempt to find gold or hunt whales, Smith eventually set sail for Spain to sell their fish. Though Smith left Hunt with instructions to gather more fish and join him in Málaga, Hunt decided instead to enrich their cargo with slaves. So Hunt sailed back south to Cape Cod Bay, invited Tisquantum and nineteen other Patuxet aboard to trade, and promptly locked them below deck. He then sailed to the southern edge of the bay, abducted seven Nauset from their home, and headed for Málaga.

In Spain, Hunt was able to sell only a few of his captives be-

* Can we even begin to image what a similar rate would mean for the millions of Native Americans and Africans abducted during the 1400-1800s? The effects would still be horrific, but the world would be vastly different if 60% had returned home to their cultures and kin.



The Patuxet villages of Tisquantum's youth, drawn here by Samuel de Champlain in 1605. The French called the bay Port St. Louis. The British later called it Plymouth.

fore friars confiscated the bulk of them. The brothers did this, of course, to give the prisoners a proper Christian education, and, incidentally, use their labor. While most versions of Tisquantum's life have vignettes of him in the kind care of the friars, going so far as to teach them about popcorn and other Native treats, Tisquantum likely never lived with them. Instead, he probably labored as a slave in Spain for a couple of years, in time stowing away on a London-bound boat. After another year or two, Tisquantum somehow made his way back to North America, maybe as an enslaved or indentured guide, but possibly as a common laborer bound to one of the many fishing ships going to and from the Northeast.

Regardless of how Tisquantum got back across the Atlantic,

Captain Thomas Dermer met him in Newfoundland in early 1619. It was there that Tisquantum convinced the explorer that riches awaited Dermer in Tisquantum's homeland, and by that summer Tisquantum was on his way home.

Sailing south, Tisquantum found a land in total devastation. The coastal Alnôbak as far north as the Kennebec River were almost gone from disease. Along the two hundred miles of coastline south of the Kennebec to Cape Cod, Dermer remarked, "scarce remained five of a hundred".¹⁶ European plagues had all but destroyed the Agawam, Pennacock, Massachuseuk, Pokanoket, and Wôpanâak. The Nauset of Cape Cod had barely survived, while Tisquantum returned home to an entirely abandoned village, slowly realizing he was one of the last Patuxet.¹⁷

"I passed along the coast where I found some ancient plantations, not long since populous, now utterly void," noted Dermer.

In other places a remnant remains, but not free of sickness. Their disease was the plague, for we might perceive the sores of some that had escaped, who described the spots of such as usually die.¹⁸

With his hometown abandoned, Dermer sent Tisquantum west two days across land to Sowams, home of the Pokanoket people and capital of the Wôpanâak confederacy. There Tisquantum met with Massasoit Ousamequin, head of the Wôpanâak, and after a few days returned with Ousamequin and fifty of his men. Ousamequin treated Dermer indifferently and soon sent him on his way.¹⁹

Next, Dermer visited Epenow's Capawak village, where Epenow laughingly recounted his escape from the British a few years before. The Wôpanâak then promptly told Dermer and his men to get lost. Heading north to Cape Cod Bay, the party was taken hostage by the Nauset, who hadn't forgotten Hunt's kidnappings a few years before. Only after long negotiations and a large ransom did the Nauset release the British.

As Dermer continued to explore the coast, its peoples treated him with more of the same: indifference, aid, and hostility. After wintering in Virginia, Dermer and Tisquantum returned to the Northeast in the summer of 1620. But in the months since Epenow had last hosted him, an unknown European ship had stopped by. After inviting some men aboard to talk, the crew had slaughtered all of their guests for unknown reasons.

So when Tisquantum, Dermer, and his men disembarked at Capawak, the Wôpanâak immediately attacked them. In the struggle, Epenow and his men captured Tisquantum and killed all the British except Dermer and his pilot still waiting aboard their boat. Shot and wounded fourteen times, Dermer barely made it back to Virginia before dying.²⁰ After two decades of kidnappings and plagues, and now the recent massacre, the peoples of the region had lost all patience with white visitors, especially the British.

* * *

Incomprehensible death and resilience characterizes the Northeast of the 1610s. Epenow's home, the Nauset of Cape Cod, and other surviving villages held fast to their identity. Touched first by European plagues and again by that continent's slavery, the Northeast was already forever changed. The bleak reality of 90% mortality rates was beginning to set in as well. It was in these devastated communities, especially those completely abandoned and wiped clean, whose land was perfectly cleared, fertilized, and prepared for cultivation, that the Plymouth Company saw its greatest opportunity.

III

“A Wonderful Plague Amongst the Savages”

Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and the Pequot War

18-year-old Priscilla Mullins and 21-year-old John Alden, John Adams' paternal great-great grandparents, were among the 102 passengers that crossed the Atlantic aboard the *Mayflower*. They arrived in Cape Cod Bay in November 1620 near Nauset, Massachusetts, and Wôpanâak land.

Far from being ignorant beneficiaries of the epidemics that had ravaged the region, King James I explicitly referenced Native mortality in Plymouth's charter:

We have been further given certainly to know, that within these late years there hath, by God's visitation, reigned a wonderful plague amongst the savages* there heretofore inhabiting, in a manner to the utter destruction, devastation and depopulation of that whole territory, so as there is not left, for many leagues together, in a manner, any

* For more disturbing quotes about Europeans' divine entitlement to Native lands see *A Chronology of Ipswich History*.

that do claim or challenge any kind of interest therein. Whereby we, in our judgment, are persuaded and satisfied that the appointed time is come in which Almighty God, in his great goodness and bounty towards us and our people, hath thought fit and determined, that these large and goodly territories, deserted as it were by their natural inhabitants, should be possessed and enjoyed by such of our subjects and people as shall, by his mercy and favor, and by his powerful arm, be directed and conducted thither.¹

The *Mayflower* carried 37 religious Separatists from Britain via Holland, and non-religious members they called Strangers. As critics of the Church of England, the Separatists, like other Puritans, hoped to dismantle the Church and implement a web of churches autonomous from king or pope. But as self-righteous Christians—even more extreme than other Puritans—who dubbed themselves Saints, they aimed to enforce their lifestyle on the rest of humanity. That, or arrogantly watch everyone else suffer their just deserts. To them, all blessings and misfortunes suffered by the Saints, Strangers, Native Americans—whatever—was the work of god.

When Henry VIII founded the Church of England in the 1530s, he had left much of Catholicism in tact. Henry had merely transferred the Church's seat of power from Rome to himself in England. The Separatist, however, were part of a wave of Christians engaging the Church theologically, not just politically as Henry VIII had. Particularly repulsive to the Saints was the leftover idolatry of the Catholic Church, sacraments other than baptism and communion, drinking alcohol (especially *gasp* *public intoxication!*), and breaking the Sabbath, often the only day of relaxation for Europe's underclass. Although the Separatists rejected the *Common Book of Prayers*, believing prayer should be spontaneous, not prescribed, they refused to sing songs not found in the Bible. God had decided all of this at the beginning of time, and before the Saints were born

elected them to implement his design.² We can imagine the condescending way the Saints treated other Europeans who fell outside of their morality, much less non-Christian Native Americans and Africans.

As for the *Mayflower* Strangers, at least those with enough economic and political power, they hoped to establish a profitable plantation and trade in the interests of their London backers, perhaps in time growing rich themselves. Others, amongst them the twenty indentured servants, simply hoped to survive.³

Before disembarking some rules needed to be established. The colonists' patent specified they form a settlement in Virginia (which in theory stretched as far north as Manhattan at the time), but the *Mayflower* had landed north of the plantation's boundaries. Some passengers (who exactly and what their status was has been lost to time) pointed out that since they were north of Virginia "when they came a shore they would use their owne libertie; for none had power to comand them." As passengers continued to make "discontented & mutinous speeches" the leading Separatists joined forces with the more powerful Strangers and decided upon a government of free males and majority rule.⁴ They then bound themselves to these ideas by writing them down and signing their names—what we now call the *Mayflower Compact*.

While even this narrative should be viewed with skepticism,* it

* The original copy of the *Mayflower Compact* no longer exists. The closest thing we have is a replica written from memory years later by Plymouth Governor William Bradford. The narrative of mutinous speeches and imposed order also comes to us through Bradford. Since he did not include signatures in his reproduction, the names of those who signed the document have been added in the decades and centuries since based on the future status of *Mayflower* passengers.⁵ The logic seems to be, 'Well so-in-so was later a selectman, large land-owner, or deputy, he must have been important enough fifteen years



A drawing of two Massachuseuk by Samuel de Champlain, 1605. The French called the Massachuseuk "Almouchiquois". The British called them the Massachusett.

has at least gone down in history as one of the earliest examples of American democracy. Tellingly, the Puritan view of government included powerful men while simultaneously excluding women, servants, children, and eventually people of color. The signers also used democracy as a way to control, delegitimize, and curtail the “libertie” of the “discontented & mutinous” amongst them. Clarifying their position a few years later to investors back home, Plymouth Governor William Bradford explained,

You are mistaken if you think we admite weoman and

before to have signed the compact.'

children to have to doe in [our government], for they are excluded, as both reason and nature teacheth they should be.⁶

* * *

Despite their grand designs, come December the colonists had still not picked a place to settle. When a party approached some Nauset fisherman in southern Cape Cod Bay to ask about the area, they were ignored. The Nauset had not forgotten Hunt's kidnappings. When the British continued to follow them, the Nauset turned around and chased them off with arrows. Plymouth was off to a rough start.

A few days later, however, when the colonists happened upon the abandoned Patuxet village of Tisquantum's youth, with its cornfields and freshwater brooks, they were sure they'd found their home. While we may find the idea of moving into a Native village destroyed by European disease utterly unthinkable, according to god and king, it was the rightful land of the Pilgrims.

That winter, 45 of the 102 Mayflower passengers died from starvation, work, and the elements. If not for the Pokanoket, head of the Wôpanâak and some of the only Native Americans friendly to Plymouth, the colonists likely would have perished entirely their second winter. The Pokanoket's motivations for engaging the settlers is unclear, but they may have been interested in courting the colonists as military allies, or, since there were non-combatants amongst the settlers, the Pokanoket may have assumed the colonists were uninterested in conflict.⁷

In the spring of 1621, Massasoit Ousamequin, the paramount sachem of the Wôpanâak, broke ranks and sent Tisquantum to help the settlers. In the months since Epenow had taken Tisquantum prisoner, he had been living with the Pokanoket as an adopted

member or servant of the tribe. In Plymouth Tisquantum became invaluable. He not only taught the colonists to harvest shellfish, hunt local game, and grow squash, beans, and corn their first spring, but in the coming months Tisquantum worked as a guide for Plymouth and mediator between the plantation and local villages.*

Even with Tisquantum's help, Plymouth's relations with their other neighbors worsened as plagues continued to devastate the region. "The bones and skulls upon the several places of their habitations made such a spectacle, after my coming into these parts, that as I travelled in that forest, near the Massachusetts," one British visitor remarked, "it seemed to me a new-found Golgotha†." 8

The Massachuseuk (Massachusetts) north of Plymouth and the Nauset south of them continued to eye the colonists with caution and refused their attempts to meet. But when a five-year-old colonist wandered away from Plymouth, the Nauset took him in and returned him to his family.

In the midst of a plague, we can imagine the Nauset doing this out of compassion and empathy, knowing all too well what losing family, especially children, was like. In fact, before the Nauset returned the boy, they brought a delegation of colonists before a Nauset elder who said she knew the British had taken three of her sons during Hunt's visit six years before. The woman cried and wept passionately throughout her speech, refusing to make eye contact with the colonists. Only with the presence of Tisquantum were tensions soothed.⁹

That fall, according to Native historian Roy Cook, Ousamequin

* Tisquantum succumbed to disease a few years later while working as a guide for the British.

† Golgotha was the Roman site of execution just outside of Jerusalem, believed by Christians to be the place of Jesus' death. Often translated as "Place of the Skull".

“came with 90 Wampanog men and brought five deer, fish, all the food and Wampanog cooks,” to celebrate Nikkomosachmiawene (Grand Sachem’s Council Feast). This celebration, now white-washed and sanctified as one of the First Thanksgivings, was likely “marked by traditional [Wôpanâak] food and games, telling of stories and legends, sacred ceremonies and councils on the affairs of the nation.”¹⁰

Despite some inroads with the Wôpanâak and Nauset, life in Plymouth continued to be harsh and short. Within a year of their arrival, 53 of the original 102 Plymouth settlers were dead, including twelve of the twenty indentured servants. Priscilla Mullins, John Adams’ great-great grandmother, was now one of only four remaining women. Priscilla had lost her parents and brother (her only family) the first winter. If all of this weren’t bad enough, militia commander Myles Standish began taking an arrogant stance against the area’s Native Americans.

By the summer of 1622, even Ousamequin had grown weary of the colonists. According to Edward Winslow, a colonist and future governor, Plymouth’s Native neighbors,

began againe to cast forth many insulting speeches, glorying in our weaknessse, and giving out how easie it would be ere long to cut us off. Now also [Massasoit Ousamequin] seemed to frowne on us, and neither came or sent to us as formerly.¹¹

During this tense summer, the *Sparrow* stopped by Plymouth on its way to fish further north. Arriving from Virginia, the ship carried news of the Second Anglo-Powhatan War. At a breaking point with Virginia colonists, the Powhatan Confederacy had launched a one-day coordinated attack. They raided villages along the James river; burned houses, fields of tobacco, and other crops; and killed a quarter of the 1,400 settlers living in Virginia.*¹² The news mortified

* See overleaf.

the already nervous Plymouth and led to colonists strengthening their fortifications.

To make matters worse, Myles Standish, head of Plymouth's militia, killed Massachuseuk leader Pecksuot during peace talks in 1624.¹⁵ In the years leading up to Pecksuot's death, starving colonists had stolen from Native graves and stores of corn, hoping to find tools and food. Now murder pushed Anglo-Native relations to their breaking point. The Massachuseuk retaliated killing five settlers, then colonists killed more Native Americans. In the end a slain Massachusee's head was put on display in Plymouth as a warning to others.

Around this time, colonists placed another marker in the psychogeography of the Northeast. When Samuel Maverick arrived from England and settled forty miles north of Plymouth in modern-day Boston, he brought with him his family and two enslaved Africans. Their arrival signaled the beginning African slavery for generations to come in Massachusetts.*

* * *

By now, not only was Priscilla Mullins alone and heir to a sizable chunk of shares in the colony, she was also one of only three women eligible for marriage. Priscilla soon caught the eye of John Alden, a simple (though middle class) tradesman cooper and Stranger who had slowly found success in Plymouth. In 1626, after marrying Priscilla and gaining her shares in the colony, John was part of the colonists who bought the plantation from their London investors. In the early 1630s, Priscilla and John helped found the farming community of Duxbury[†] a few miles north of Plymouth, where John was

* For a speculative history of who these slaves might have been, see Wendy Anne Warren's "The Cause of Her Grief": The Rape of a Slave in Early New England".

† The Wôpanâak had lived in the Duxbury area for generations, calling

Life and Death in Virginia . . .

After their massive raid, the Powhatan assumed the British would gather the surviving 3/4 of themselves, pack up, and leave, as local tribes would, and so did not exterminate the colonists entirely. But Virginia settlers weren't Native Americans, and if colonial life had taught them anything it was that they would die young after living miserable lives. A 25% mortality rate was nothing to them.

So the British raided Native villages, burned crops of food, destroyed any canoe or boat they could find, sabotaged the Powhatans' fisheries, and chased them down with mastiffs. Unwilling to fight until they were completely dead like Europeans, the Powhatans called for a truce.

But at the peace talks, the British poisoned the drinks of the Powhatans and slaughtered two hundred of them. Virginia colonists and the Powhatan fought on and off for ten years after these first negotiations followed by twelve years of tense peace.¹³

Interestingly, the Powhatan decided to attack the settlers after the elderly Opechancanough assumed control of the confederacy. It is possible that Opechancanough is the same person as (or close relative to) Paquiquino, the Native American boy abducted from Virginia by Jesuits in the 1570s mentioned on page 25. An old British pronunciation of Opechancanough and a Spanish pronunciation of Paquiquino yield roughly similar names.¹⁴

Opposite: A colonial depiction of the Powhatan.



elected deputy governor for the next 43 years.

Throughout the 1630s John successfully traded in furs, and the Aldens' home served as a place for community gatherings. In addition to his political power as deputy governor, at various times John served as deputy to the General Court of Plymouth,^{*} Treasurer of the Plymouth Colony, surveyor of lands, and was an officer in Standish's militia. Although Duxbury was small and the Massachusetts Bay Colony would later consume Plymouth, locally John Alden held considerable political, economic, judicial, legislative, and martial power.[†]

* * *

As early attempts at colonization floundered, Rev. John White, an England-based theologian and colonial planner, refused to give up on the dream of a Puritan colony. To this end White sent a shipment of colonists to Massachusetts in 1623 under the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The settlement started off, like most European colonies, with little success: high mortality rates from weather, work, and disease, and skeptical, precarious investors. When its first settlement, Cape Ann, fell apart after only two years, remnants moved south to a nearby, decimated Naumkeag village and began to rebuild their plantation. In time, the settlers renamed the village

it Mattakeesett.¹⁶

* In the 1630s “court” was “a term used in corporations . . . to describe the totality of stockholders”. The upper class of New England used it to denote the colonial governing body (ie those who owned shares of the colony and could decide colonial rules for everyone else).¹⁷

† When Massachusetts Bay Colony was hanging Quakers as religious heretics in the 1650s, Alden managed to have two Plymouth Quakers he was feuding with banished, and then whipped upon their illicit return.¹⁸



An Italian-made wheel-lock carbine believed to be the rifle John Alden brought with him from Europe. Alden used the ‘Mayflower gun’, as it is now called, to hunt animals and possibly kill Native Americans. It is currently on display at the NRA National Firearms Museum in Fairfax, Virginia.

Salem, or “god’s peace”.*

Over the next decade, Rev. White shipped roughly 10,000 Puritans from England to Governor John Winthrop[†] in what became known as the Great Migration. Like the Pilgrims before them, White and Winthrop envisioned a proper Christian community and refuge for persecuted Puritans. Yet as powerful theologians and merchants, they hoped as well for a profitable colony defined along lines of gender, class, and race.

In 1630, during the first major shipment of Massachusetts Bay Colony settlers, Winthrop delivered his famous ‘City on a Hill’ sermon. Echoing the self-righteous exceptionalism of the Separatists, Winthrop declared,

men shall say of succeeding plantacions: the lord make

* The silent “bones and skulls upon the several places” of former Native villages attest to their god’s peace.

† Squares in Boston, Brookline, and Cambridge, as well as Winthrop Hall at Bowdoin College and Winthrop House at Harvard University are among the places named after this turd.

it like that of New England: for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us.

Winthrop envisioned their godly mission as creating a society with rich and poor but with checks on wealth and poverty in order “soe that the riche and mighty should not eate upp the poore nor the poore and dispised rise upp against and shake off theire yoake”.¹⁹

Winthrop, a former lord, believed that god had made men rich in order so they may properly disperse god’s wealth.* The governor also preached forms of communal living, charity, love, justice, and mercy—all conveniently based on his own interpretation of scripture. Tellingly, just a few years into colonial life, when colonists tried to expand who could vote and make laws, Winthrop was alarmed and declared, “If we should change from a mixt aristocratie to a mere Democracie, first we should have no warrant in scripture for it: there was no such government in Israel”. He then concluded, “a Democracie is, amongst most civil nations, accounted the meanest and worst of all forms of government.”† ²⁰

During these early decades of New England governance, only white men who had finished their indentured servitude, were approved of by the local courts, and could buy shares of the colony would be deemed freemen. Church membership was often a requirement as well. Freemen status allowed colonists to vote for se-

* Modern-day, pissed-on proles know all too well this sort of trickle-down economics.

† We shouldn’t be too surprised Winthrop didn’t want to expand the vote. A “yoake”, or yoke, is literally a wooden cross piece that binds oxen together in order to pull a plow or heavy load. The fact that Winthrop’s ideal Christian community made it so “the poore and dispised” did not “rise upp against and shake off theire yoake” would seem to imply he was more than okay with a grueling class society, servitude, and slavery.

lectmen (town council members sometimes called assistants) and attend town meetings where some decisions were made collectively. Women, people of color, servants, and any lower class men were denied such agency. According to Eugene Aubrey Stratton,

In fact, the freeman concept appears to have been adopted only after the Plymouth [Colony] leaders had seen how it could be used restrictively [in the nearby] Bay Colony.²¹

Like the Mayflower Compact a decade before, the inclusion of free-men was just as much about the exclusion of everyone else.

Amongst this tidal wave of settlers were Adams' remaining colonial ancestors, including great-great grandparents Edith Squire and Constable Henry Adams Sr.,^{*} Susanna Hawkes and Selectman William Cogswell, and Anne Saville and Deacon Samuel Basse. The latter settled in Braintree and quickly became a freeman. From 1641-1653 Basse was deputy to the General Court of Massachusetts, and from 1642-1673 was elected selectman twelve times. Basse also served as a deacon for fifty years, supporting his family financially as a malster[†] and yeoman farmer.²²

Perhaps most impressive, though, was the arrival of Adams' maternal great-great-great grandfather, John Cogswell.[‡] Born in England in the 1590s, by age 24 John had married Elizabeth Thomp-

* Henry was known in his old age as “the Founder of New England” for having produced 89 grandchildren—with no acknowledgment of *Edith's role in the matter!*

† Malsters take grains like barley and turn them into malt for brewers to make alcohol.

‡ Other famous descendants of John Cogswell include Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Calvin Coolidge, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Julia Ward Howe, Margaret Mead, Bill Saxbe, Tennessee Williams, Erskine Hamilton Childers, Princess Diana, and Thomas Pynchon.

son, daughter of the town vicar, and inherited his father's cloth factories, or "mylls" as they were called at the time.²³ By the end of the 1600s, such factories would come to replace and destroy much of the traditional life of the English peasantry. This new form of waged work forced the peasants into modern towns, which essentially became open-air prisons. Those who refused to leave their traditional homes and ways of subsistence farming were criminalized, and the courts conveniently used them to supply much needed bodies and labor in the colonies as convict servants.*

Despite John's steady finances, he thought he'd fare better socially, politically, and religiously in New England. So in 1635 John sold his mylls and other real estate, and sailed to America aboard the *Angel Gabriel* with Elizabeth, their eight children, and servant Samuel Haines. As fate would have it, their ship crossed paths with one of the worst hurricanes in European or Native memory of the region, and the *Angel Gabriel* ran aground in Pemiquid (Bristol, Maine) on Alnôbak land.[†] Although John lost £5,000 in the crash, within a month he had found a ride to Boston, and acquired 300 acres north of it in Ipswich, Massachusetts—such was his wealth and influence.²⁴

The Cogswells' new home had been founded just two years before by John Winthrop the Younger, son of Gov. Winthrop, in a place called Aggawam.[‡] The following spring, John Cogswell was

* For more on the enclosure of the European commons and its devastating effects, please see Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* and Peter Linebaugh's *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*.

† Up until the early 1700s, neither the French nor the British could successfully settle Maine. Though multiple attempts were made throughout the early 1600s, at best only fishing spots or fur trading posts were able to survive for more than a couple of years.

‡ Aggawam was the Anglicized word for the coastal region of Essex County, Wonnesquamsauke. The people who lived there, dubbed the



made a freeman, and soon after he became deputy for the General Court of Massachusetts.²⁶

* * *

As settlers flooded the coast, remnants of smaller Native villages fled the area or joined larger tribes or colonists, willingly or forcibly. As European migration spread westward, British and Dutch fur traders spilled into the Pequot and Mohegan land of modern-day Connecticut. By the mid-1630s, Dutch merchants were sending home over 16,000 pelts a year supplied almost entirely by Native trappers.²⁷ Connecticut was also home to the region's main produc-

Agawam by the British, were reduced by disease to only a hundred by the 1630s, and are believed to have been assimilated and dissolved within a few generations of contact with the settlers.²⁵

ers of wampum.*

Not only did the British want to take control of the regional fur trade and wampum production, which were incredibly lucrative businesses for the surviving Native Americans, but they eyed the lush Connecticut River Valley for their crops as well. The rocky soil of Massachusetts was proving impossible to farm. Tensions between those indigenous to Connecticut and the colonists mounted until the Pequot War of 1636-1638.

Backed by the British and Dutch, regional tribes skirmished until the Mohegan-British side won out. The British finally broke the Pequot by attacking the fortified village of Siccanemos along the Mystic River in Connecticut. After sealing the village off and lighting it ablaze, colonists slaughtered and burned to death all but fourteen of the 600-700 people trapped inside. In one day, the British inflicted almost half the casualties suffered by the Pequot during the entire war. Of the fourteen villagers who escaped the fiery death, seven were able to flee into the woods, while colonists enslaved the other half.

As militiamen blocked villagers from leaving the inferno, mowing them down with muskets, their Mohegan and Narragansett allies ran to them crying “*mach it, mach it . . .* it is too furious, and slaiess too many men.”²⁸ As Shawn Wiemann has noted about the Mystic Massacre,

For Native peoples, warfare was a test of prowess, skill, and cunning, and captives could be adopted as members of the village and tribe. As the Natives watched the slaughter of their rivals, they were horrified at the brutal-

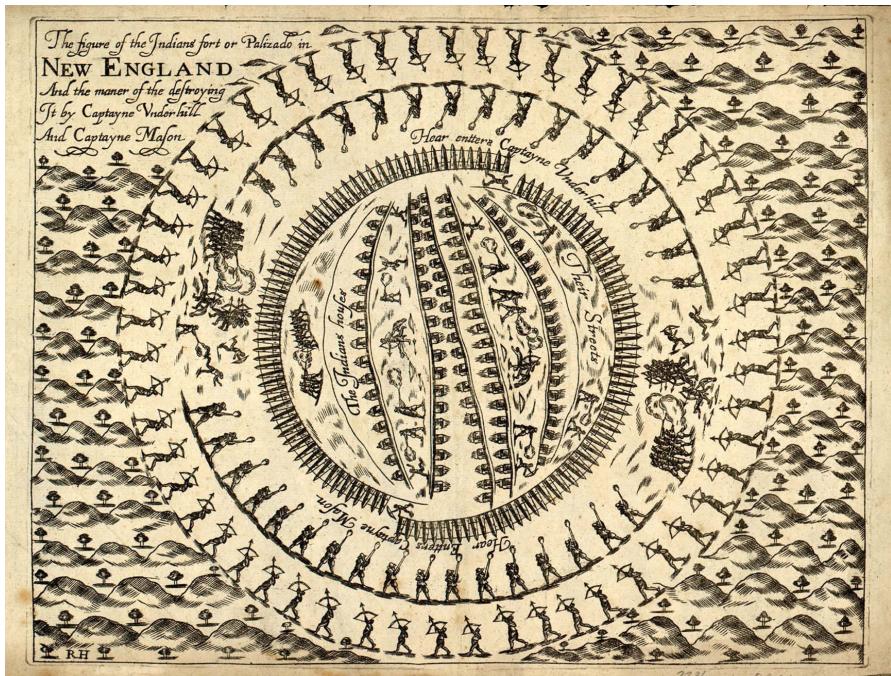
* Prized beaded shells that increasingly mimicked European currency.

Opposite: The fortified Pequot village of Siccanemos, surrounded by militiamen firing upon it.

ity they witnessed.²⁹

Young colonists “that never had beene in Warre” were equally appalled by the killing, “to see so many soules lie gasping on the ground so thicke in some places, that you could hardly passe along.”³⁰ “Why should you be so furious (as some have said),” asked Captain John Underhill, leader of the attack, in his recollections of the massacre. “Should not Christians have more mercy and compassion?” To Underhill the answer was simple: read the Old Testament. The Pequot had sinned “against God and man” and “sometimes the Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents”.³²

Another leader of the assault, Puritan Captain John Mason, agreed, later recalling that



God was above them, who laughed his Enemies and the Enemies of his People to scorn making [the Pequot fort] as a fiery Oven. . . . Thus did the Lord judge among the Heathen, filling the Place with dead Bodies!³³

After the Mystic Massacre the Pequot began to unravel. At a council shortly after the attack, calls for revenge, flight, and surrender pulled the Pequot in all directions. Those who had seen the piles of dead bodies in Siccanemos “stamped and tore the Hair from their Heads” and swore vengeance. But when they caught up with the retreating colonists, their attacks were so chaotic and distraught as to be harmless. Other survivors took refuge to the north and west.³⁴

As victorious colonists returned home to Massachusetts Bay, they were greeted by a colony-wide day of feasting* and “of thanksgiving kept in all churches for the victory obtained against the Pequots, and for other mercies”.³⁵ The act of giving thanks to god was common in 1600s New England. From Catholicism to the Reformed Christianity of the Puritans and Separatists, the most pious Christians built thanksgiving into their day to day lives.

At the Last Supper, according to Christian folklore, Jesus “took the bread, and giving thanks, broke it,” then “took the chalice, and once more giving thanks, he gave it to his disciples.” These acts are the inspiration for the Eucharist, in which the Last Supper is re-enacted and bread and wine communally shared. The Eucharist, from ecclesiastical Greek *eukharistia*, “thanksgiving,” is the backbone of most Christian worship. It is telling what things warranted fasting and official proclamations of thanksgiving in colonial New England: penance for sins and droughts, as well as celebrations for good harvests, the safe arrival of ships across the Atlantic, new set-

* The feasting aspect of this 1637 Thanksgiving is noteworthy, as Puritans generally preferred to party by starving themselves and thinking about what terrible people they were.

tlements, and military victories over heathen insurgents.

* * *

As the Pequot fled, the Mohegan, Narragansett, Kanienkehaka, and other former subjects and rivals of the Pequot, along with British colonists, hunted them down for months. In the wake of the war, colonists and their Native allies enslaved three hundred of the remaining Pequot. Women and children under the age of 12 were divided amongst the Mohegan and British in Connecticut and Massachusetts, while the men, mostly elders and teenagers, were sold to Bermuda. The British then forbid the Pequot from using their own names or living in their own villages and declared them extinct.

When Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop received a group of Pequot slaves after the war, Roger Williams,* the founder of Rhode Island, wrote him saying, “It having pleased the Most High to put into your hands another miserable drone of Adam’s degenerate seed.” Williams then asked if he might have one of the child captives for himself. “I have fixed mine eye on this little one with red about his neck”.³⁸

If all of this weren’t bad enough, the very ship that ripped the Pequot from their homeland, the *Desire*, exchanged them in Bermuda for Africans, returning with Massachusetts’ first proper shipment of African slaves and fueling 140 years of African bondage in

* Roger Williams founded the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations five years earlier, and is remembered today as someone persecuted by the rigid Puritans of Massachusetts, and a champion of religious freedom. Such memories seem to selectively forget his white supremacist attitudes and role in Native genocide. During the Pequot War, Williams advised Winthrop to “deale with them [Native Americans] wisely as with woules [wolves] with mens braines”.³⁷

the Bay State.³⁹ The practice of exporting captured Native Americans in exchange for African slaves was on its way to becoming a New England tradition as well.

“Let the whole Earth be filled with his Glory! Thus the LORD was pleased to smite our Enemies in the hinder Parts, and to give us their Land for an Inheritance,” concluded Captain John Mason, Deputy Governor of Connecticut Colony.⁴⁰

* * *

Enslaving and exporting the Pequot was just the beginning. The lands of the Atlantic were becoming increasingly connected, and Boston, founded less than a decade before, was taking its first steps towards becoming a major hub of international trade, politics, and ideas. Colonists in Virginia, Maryland, and the Caribbean, whose rich land, servants, and slaves could yield a fortune in tobacco and sugar, refused to waste their land and labor growing food. As furs became harder to find and sell throughout New England, wheat, fishing, and meat became the profitable industries of the region. The newly stolen Connecticut River Valley quickly became “New England’s breadbasket”, supplying grain and meat to the wealthier Maryland, Virginia, and Caribbean. In turn, merchants used their profits to buy much needed materials, supplies, tools, and luxuries from Europe. Over time Boston would thrive through its knowledge of the sea and through its roles as merchant and middleman.*⁴¹

While it’s unclear what role Adams’ ancestors played in the Pequot War, some of them certainly participated. Scant biographies of John Alden (of Mayflower fame) mention that he served in militias in “Indian Wars” and sat on multiple Councils of War. John’s

* Just a few years later in 1644, Boston merchants tried their hand at importing African slaves from West Africa to the Caribbean, but were largely unsuccessful due to the monopoly of European merchants.



decades-long best friend and superior Myles Standish was too old to fight himself, but gathered thirty men from Plymouth to fight the Pequot, and later signed the Treaty of Hartford that dissolved the tribe. If not a combatant himself, John might have served a similar administrative role.

Still, regardless of whether or not John directly participated in the war, he, Adams, and many of Adams' other ancestors directly benefited from the destruction of the Pequot, the subjugation of additional tribes in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and the clearing of land for British settlements. By 1640 alone, over 20,000 Europeans had settled in Massachusetts, while yet another bout of epidemic disease further shattered the region's Native Americans—*More of the Lord's work!*, thought the Puritans.

In 1641 Massachusetts Bay officials began to put their moralistic visions and white supremacist dreams to paper, and published the macabre *Massachusetts Body of Liberties*. Among other rules, the act officially codified slavery into law, marking Massachusetts as the first colony to officially do so.

There shall never be any bond slaverie, villinage or captivitie amongst us unless it be lawfull captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly selle themselves or are sold to us. And these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God establisched in Israell concerning such persons doeth morally require. This exempts none from servitude who shall be judged thereto by Authoritie.*⁴³

Note well, the echoes of the Pilgrim's "strangers" (the Other here referring to Native Americans and Africans), as well as the last line giving "Authoritie" the power to enslave as punishment, which still holds legal weight today and is the basis of a prison system that enslaves millions.

In addition, the *Massachusetts Body of Liberties* criminalized blasphemy, worshiping false idols, witchcraft (anyone who "hath or consults with a familiar spirit"), stealing, homosexuality, "any invasion, insurrection, or public rebellion against our commonwealth" or "subversion of our frame of polity of government", bestiality, and lying—which were all punishable by death.⁴⁴ Public whippings and other humiliations awaited most found guilty of these crimes, as

* Strange how almost every law that enables slavery starts off claiming to be against it. "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." The Thirteenth Amendment. Since the beginning of forced labor, slavery has only ever been redefined. We are yet to truly destroy it.

well as those convicted of the lesser crimes of public drunkenness, non-monogamy, breaking the sabbath, and masturbation.*

But it would appear that whippings, and even threats of death, were not enough to deter the sinners of New England. In fact, the year after the *Body of Liberties* was published, Governor William Bradford remarked that in Plymouth alone,

wickedness did grow and break forth here. . . . especially drunkenness and uncleanness. Not only incontinency between persons unmarried, for which many both men and women have been punished sharply enough, but some married persons also. But that which is worse, even sodomy and buggery[†] (things fearful to name) have broke forth in this land oftener than once.⁴⁵

That same year Lydia Hatch, her brother Jonathan, Edward Mitchell, Edward Preston, and John Keene were all punished for various forms of sex. It would seem that Lydia and Jonathan, Lydia and Mitchell, and Preston and Mitchell had been having sex with each other. Preston had, allegedly, asked Keene if he'd like to join him and Mitchell, but Keene declined and watched instead, later confessing to authorities. All five were whipped for "uncleanesse", "abuse", and "sodomitcall practices", including Keene who authorities suspected enjoyed what he saw transpire between Preston and Mitchell. The courts additionally accused Jonathan, who had no master and owned no land, of vagrancy and gave him to Stephen

* As the legal fate of reproductive freedom once again hangs in the balance, America's theocratic past should serve as one of many warnings. While losing even more access to safe, affordable abortions is bad enough, where do the attacks on sexual, personal, and bodily autonomy end? The future is sterile and bleak indeed when we let conservative religions dictate our ethics and imaginations.

† Used by the officials of Plymouth to refer to homosexuality and bestiality.

Hopkins, possibly as an indentured servant.*⁴⁶

Throughout the mid-1600s, scores of colonists, often of the lower class, were convicted of breaking laws written against their interests and subsequently punished by the whip, bilbowes (heavy iron leg shackles), and stocks. In one jaw-dropping episode, Edward Palmer, the man who built Boston's first stocks in 1639, *became the first person placed in them after delivering a bill which Boston officials deemed extortionate in price!*⁴⁸ Though authorities tried to fix Palmer in place, he comes hurling through time, serving as an ironic warning to workers for centuries to come: *we mustn't build the gadgetry that will later crush us!*

Things as mundane as being opinionated and assertive, particularly if committed by a woman, were met with punishments like wearing a cage around one's head known as a gossip's bridle or branks. Even midsize villages could boast of ducking stools used to bind and dip the accused in rivers to sort 'truth' from 'gossip'.†

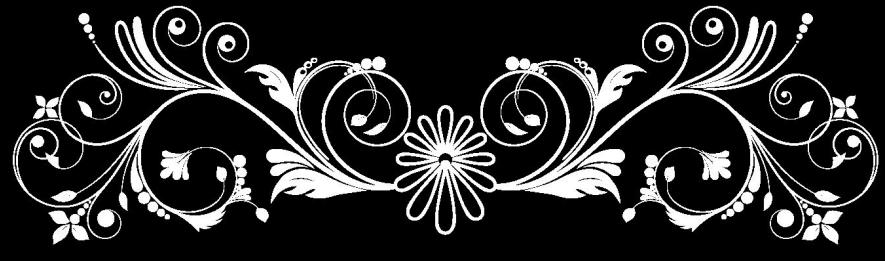
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Outside of the colonies, the colonial elite had to answer to those above them as well, and in 1651 Parliament gave them a taste of their own legalist medicine. One of the greatest hopes of those ruling Britain was that their American colonies would be a steady supply of raw materials sold exclusively to Britain. Industries owned and based in Britain would then process the materials into goods and sell them back to America. As the colonies grew, the British ruling class imagined, Americans would be captive sellers and buyers to Britain, trading with absolutely no one else. Parliament made these expectations explicit in the first Navigation Act.

Like the colonies' own laws, the problem with the Navigation

* See opposite.

† See overleaf.

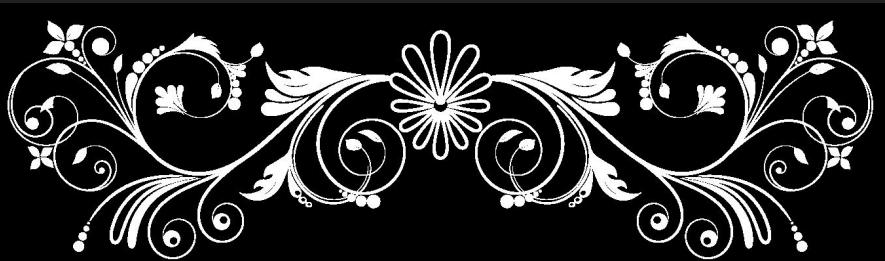


things fearful to name ...

Try as they might, Massachusetts officials could never fully curb colonial desire to fit their Puritan standards. Five years before Mitchell, Preston, Keene, and the Hatches were tried, two servants, John Alexander and Thomas Roberts, were found guilty of “often spendinge their seede upon another”. Alexander, a repeat offender, was whipped, branded on the shoulder, and permanently banished from the colony, while Roberts was whipped and returned to his master. Once his indenture was completed, Roberts was to be awarded no land.

In the late 1640s, the courts charged Mary Hammon and a woman identified only as the wife of Hugh Norman with “leude behavior with each other upon a bed”. It would appear that Hammon was acquitted but the other woman, who had made “divers lasivicous speeches” to Norman, was made to publicly confess and condemn her sin.⁴⁷

Similar acts of sexual freedom, along with their punishments, sprinkle the court records of New England for decades. Certainly countless other ‘deviant’ acts, enjoyed by the lowliest of servants to the most respectable and pious colonists, existed as well.



Gossip vs. the God's Honest Truth . . .

According to the great Silvia Federici,

"Traces of the use of the word are frequent in the literature of the period. Deriving from the Old English terms God and sibb (akin), 'gossip' originally meant 'godparent,' one who stands in a spiritual relation to the child to be baptized. In time, however, the term was used with a broader meaning. In early modern England the word 'gossip' referred to companions in childbirth not limited to the midwife. It also became a term for women friends, with no necessary derogatory connotations. In either case, it had strong emotional connotations. We recognize it when we see the word in action, denoting the ties that bound women in premodern English society."

In the 1400s, "neither in rural nor urban areas were women dependent on men for their survival; they had their own activities and shared much of their lives and work with other women. Women cooperated with each other in every aspect of their life. They sewed, washed their clothes, and gave birth surrounded by other women, with men rigorously excluded from the chamber of the delivering one."





“By the sixteenth century, however, women’s social position had begun to deteriorate, satire giving way to what without exaggeration can be described as a war on women, especially of the lower classes, reflected in the increasing number of attacks on women as ‘scolds’ and domineering wives and of witchcraft accusations. Along with this development, we begin to see a change in the meaning of gossip, increasingly designating a woman engaging in idle talk.”

“But as the [17th] century progressed the word’s negative connotation became the prevalent one. As mentioned, this transformation went hand in hand with the strengthening patriarchal authority in the family and women’s exclusion from the crafts and guilds, which, combined with the process of enclosures, led to a ‘feminization of poverty.’ With the consolidation of the family and male authority within it, representing the power of the state with regard to wives and children, and with the loss of access to former means of livelihood both women’s power and female friendships were undermined.”⁴⁹

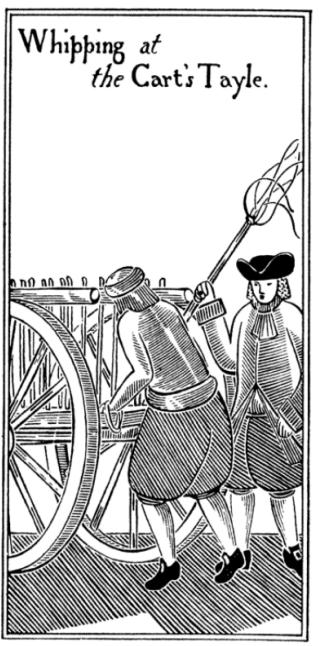


The Drunkards Cloak.

Underleaf: Colonial officials torturing a woman with a ducking stool.

Female care and kinship prior to the war on women.

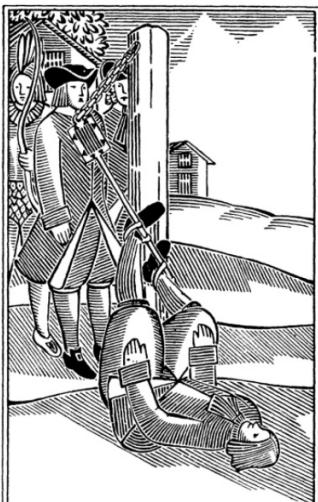
This page and next: Images of mid-1600s New England punishments from Curious Punishments of Bygone Days, 1896.



Whipping at
the Cart's Tayle.



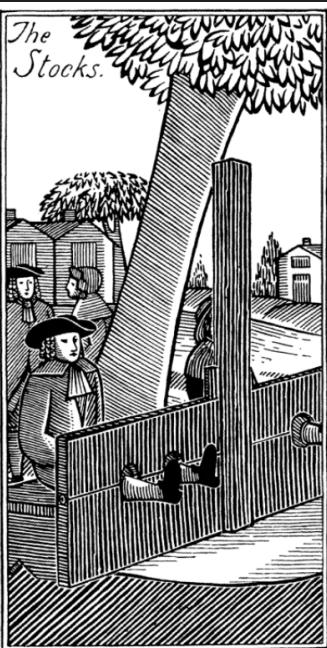
The
Branks.



Laying by
the heels
in the Bilboes.



The Scarlet Letter.



The
Stocks.



Branding.

Acts was that they written by a small percentage of people against the interests of many others. That, and it was virtually impossible to enforce these laws thousands of miles away. For the next hundred years, American merchants traded with whomever they pleased, and bought from whomever would give them the best deals. Parliament, colonial officials, and the king called it smuggling, Americans called it good business.

* * *

With an ever growing level of colonists and dwindling numbers of Native Americans, Massachusetts Bay officials produced another law, the Subjugation Act of 1644, and bullied Narragansett leaders into signing it. Though the Narragansett had sided with the British during the Pequot War, the Mystic Massacre had repulsed them and forced them to withdraw their support. Recent hostilities with the Mohegans had weakened them further. The Act declared all land of the Narragansett's to be that of King Charles I and made the Narragansett "ruled, ordered, and disposed of . . . according to his princely wisdom, counsel, and laws of that honorable state of Old England".⁵⁰ The following decades brought even further laws and harsher treatment for the regions' Native peoples.

Around this time, Gov. Winthrop's brother-in-law, Edward Downing, wrote Winthrop hoping that the heathen-ness of the Narragansett might justify a war of enslavement against them:

A war with the Narragansett is very considerable to this plantation, for I doubt whether it is not sin in us, having power in our hands, to suffer them to maintain the worship of the devil, which their paw-waws often do. Secondly, if upon a just war the Lord should deliver them into our hands, we might easily have men, women, and children enough to exchange for Moors [Africans], which

will be more gainful pillage for us than we can conceive, for I do not see how we can thrive until we get into a stock of slaves sufficient to do all our business, for our children's children will hardly see this great continent filled with people, so that our servants will still desire freedom to plant for themselves, and not stay but for very great wages. And I suppose you know very well how we shall maintain twenty Moors cheaper than one English servant.⁵¹

Like many of the colonial rich and powerful of the 1600s, Downing envisioned an extreme racial hierarchy, where whites would suffer temporary (or less severe) servitude, while people of color would be enslaved for life. Though Downing's war was mere wishful thinking in the 1640s, within thirty years the Massachusetts Bay Colony would have amassed enough settlers to enact it.

IV

“To Give Law to the Indians”
or
“I am determined not to live
till I have no country”

Metacomet’s War and the United Colonies, 1675-1676

By the 1670s, roughly 10,000 Native Americans remained free in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. A thousand Wôpanâak lived between Plymouth and their capital town, Mon-taup (Mt. Hope), in eastern Rhode Island; 2,400 Massachuseuk and Pennacock (Pawtucket/ Merrimack) between the Massachusetts Bay and western Maine; 2,400 Nipmucs in central and western Massachusetts; and 4,000 Narragansett in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Smaller and lesser-known, autonomous villages existed as well with no unifying figure or government holding sway over all 10,000.¹

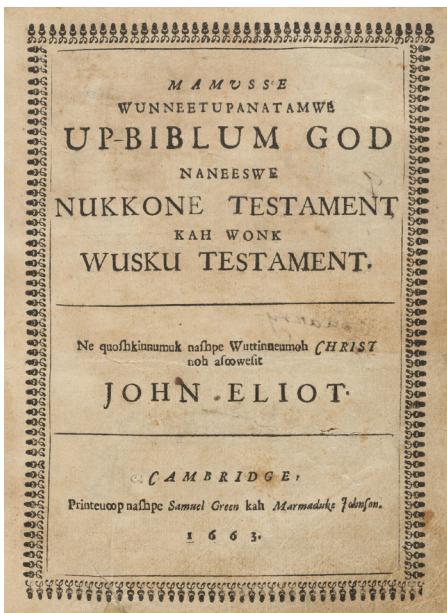
Among the only Native Americans to greet colonists at Plymouth had been the Wôpanâak. Their leader, Massasoit Ousamequin, had sent Tisquantum to help the settlers, and in 1621 had signed a treaty with them in the hopes of preserving their homes against the British and the more powerful Narragansett. Ousamequin had

even managed to keep much of his confederacy out of the Pequot War, giving a much needed advantage to the colonists. Despite fairing better than the Pequot and other regional peoples, by the time Ousamequin died in the early 1660s, Wôpanâak life was deteriorating.

Ousamequin's son, Wamsutta (Alexander), ruled for a year, during which time he began to sever ties with the Massachusetts colonists and started selling Wôpanâak land to other Europeans. Accused of conspiring against Plymouth, colonists marched Wamsutta by musketpoint to their court and imprisoned him for three days. Shortly after his release Wamsutta died, and his brother, Metacomet (King Philip), assumed leadership of the confederacy.

Like Wamsutta, Metacomet understood that if things continued as they were, it could only mean further subjugation for the Wôpanâak. Left unchecked, the British could completely destroy their land, culture, freedom, and lives as they had done to the Pequot. For Metacomet, who always maintained that Plymouth had tortured and poisoned Wamsutta, his brother's death was proof enough. Though their father had aligned himself with the British in hopes of preservation, the Wôpanâak were learning that their military alliance did not protect their homeland or culture. Throughout the late 1660s and early 1670s, Plymouth repeatedly pressured the Wôpanâak to turn over more and more land, which Metacomet refused.

On top of that, Wôpanâak culture was explicitly under attack by ministers like the Puritan John Eliot, who was christening Native Americans of the Northeast as "Praying Indians" and consolidating them into a dozen or more "Praying Towns." Not only were Eliot's converts expected to assimilate into European customs, technologies, and lifestyle, but the Praying Towns functioned as buffer zones between the more established European settlements on the coast and anti-assimilationist Native towns west of them. In 1663, Eliot



Title page of Eliot's Massachusee bible.

even translated and printed the bible into Massachusee (*Mamusse Wunneetupanatamwe Up-Biblum God*), incidentally becoming the first person to print copies of the Christian bible in America.²

Eliot especially tried converting Native leaders, including Metacomet. But seeing Eliot for what he was, another settler out to manipulate, control, and destroy his people, Metacomet refused his advances. In one final, dramatic encounter, “after the Indian mode of joining signs with words”, Metacomet ripped a button from Eliot’s coat and declared, “I care for your gospel just as much as I care for this button.”³

Try as he might, Metacomet was against impossible odds, and the colonies were expanding by other means. By the 1670s, just fifty years after the founding of Plymouth, the coastal centers of New England had taken root: Providence and Newport, Rhode Island; New Haven and Hartford, Connecticut; Portsmouth, New Hamp-

shire; Plymouth, Salem, Boston, Ipswich, and Springfield, Massachusetts; and Kennebunk and Portland, Maine. 80,000 colonists were spread throughout the region in roughly 110 towns, over half of which were in Massachusetts and parts of Maine (then a part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony). Though it's hard to obtain numbers, these settlements likely included dozens of Native slaves, if not hundreds, as well as some enslaved Africans.

In 1673, after the General Court of Massachusetts awarded a settler Wôpanâak land near Montaup against the Wôpanâak's wishes, Metacomet began meeting with Native leaders to discuss a self-defense league. Some sources say Metacomet had been doing this since his brother's death a decade earlier. In 1674 one of Metacomet's advisers, a Praying Indian named John Sassamon (Wussausmon), informed Plymouth Governor Josiah Winslow of Metacomet's intent. Though Metacomet was put on trial for conspiring against the colony, nothing could be definitively proven.

When Sassamon's body was found frozen beneath Assawompset Pond the following January, three Wôpanâak men, Wampapaquan, Mattashunnamo and his son Tobis, were arrested, condemned by a white and Native jury, and hanged in Plymouth in early June.⁴ During the executions, Wampapaquan's noose broke, so he was reprieved for a month, then killed by firing squad.⁵ As a close friend of the accused, Metacomet took the executions personally, as many other Wôpanâak likely did. After their deaths Metacomet would wait no longer.

Fearing the worst, a settler friend of Metacomet's, John Borden, went to Montaup to see if war might be prevented. "The English," Metacomet told him,

who came first to this country were but a handful of people, forlorn, poor and distressed. My father was then sachem. He relieved their distresses in the most kind and hospitable manner. He gave them land to plant and

build upon. He did all in his power to serve them. Others of their own countrymen came and joined them. Their numbers rapidly increased. My father's counselors became uneasy and alarmed, lest, as they were possessed of firearms, which was not the case with the Indians, they should finally undertake to give law to the Indians, and take from them their country. They therefore advised to destroy them before they should become too strong, and it should be too late.

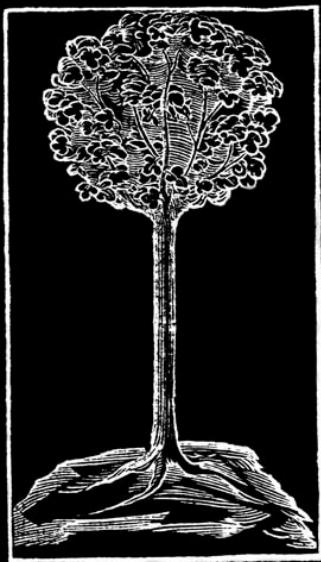
My father was also the father of the English.* He represented to his counselors and warriors that the English knew many sciences which the Indians did not; that they improved and cultivated the earth, and raised cattle and fruits, and that there was sufficient room in the country for both the English and the Indians. His advice prevailed. It was concluded to give victuals to the English. They flourished and increased. Experience taught that the advice of my father's counselors was right.

By various means the English got possessed of a great part of his territory, but he still remained their friend till he died. My elder brother became sachem. They pretended to suspect him of evil designs against them. He was seized and confined, and thereby thrown into sickness and died. Soon after I became sachem they disarmed all my people. They tried my people by their own laws, and assessed damages against them which they could not pay. Their land was taken. At length a line of division was agreed upon between the English and my people, and I myself was to be responsible. Sometimes the cattle of the

* See overleaf.

Opposite: Metacomet (King Philip), as imagined in the 1850s. No contemporary depictions of Metacomet exist.





Father of the English...

Metacomet's statement is quite profound. How often do those deemed less by those in power contribute to and shape the world, for better or worse, only to see their contributions ignored or taken for granted? Without Ousamequin's intervention—teaching the settlers how to plant and grow regional food, navigate local customs, and showing them how to survive their first winters—Plymouth would have certainly perished. While this might have been for the best, Metacomet is right to say the settlers were his father's children—one of many sources, one of many parents. Yet the colonists, like many of their heirs, trace their ancestry selectively, choosing the most patriarchal accounts of the past, the most white-washed versions of their origins.

English would come into the cornfields of my people, for they did not make fences like the English. I must then be seized and confined till I sold another tract of my country for satisfaction of all damages and costs. Thus tract after tract is gone. But a small part of the dominion of my ancestors now remains. *I am determined not to live till I have no country.*⁶

And so the war began.

* * *

Towards the end of June, a Wôpanâak force attacked and destroyed the Plymouth settlement of Swansea. A few days later, a total lunar eclipse affirmed Metacomet’s plan and strengthened the Native coalition. But retribution was swift and severe, and a week after Swansea a colonial force raided and destroyed the abandoned capital of Montaup. A year of horrendous fighting followed throughout Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and beyond that would prove devastating for all parties involved.

During the war, Metacomet’s coalition attacked more than half of New England’s 110 European settlements. Seventeen towns were completely destroyed, some of which were never rebuilt.⁷ Conservative estimates suggest that one tenth of the region’s 16,000 white men eligible for military service died during the war. Others claim that 3,000 of New England’s colonists were killed with countless more injured and traumatized.⁸ Alongside the efforts of the Wabanaki Confederacy in Maine and Acadia, this is likely the closest a Native force came to halting and removing well-established colonies in the American Northeast. In fact, skirmishes and small raids between British colonists and Native Americans backed by French Jesuits in Maine and Acadia escalated during Metacomet’s War and continued as a separate conflict for three years afterward.*

* As I prepare to publish this draft, I’ve begun reading Matthew R.

Needless to say, Metacomet's War profoundly affected the lives of everyone who endured it. All four of John Adams' great-grandfathers served in the war: Selectman Joseph Adams Sr. and John Bass* on his father's side, and Benjamin White and Dr. Thomas Boylston on his mother's. In the late summer of 1675, after Nipmuc, Podunk, and Wôpanâak forces had driven settlers out of the Connecticut River Valley, "New England's Breadbasket", settlers raised an expedition to collect the much needed crops they had abandoned. Without them, colonists feared they wouldn't survive the winter. On the afternoon of September 18, when the hundred militiamen and teamsters transporting the crops stopped to eat roadside grapes, 700 Pocumtuc and Nipmuc warriors ambushed and slaughtered all but ten of them, including Dr. Boylston. Shortly after, a Native attack on the nearby settlement of Deerfield, recently built on Pocumtuc land, completely destroyed the village.

* * *

Bahar's *Storm of the Sea: Indians and Empires in the Atlantic Age of Sail*, in which Bahar argues that the Wabanaki Confederacy managed to maintain control of much of Maine and Acadia, including their waterways and coasts, until the French and Indian War of the 1760s. Since Massachusetts repeatedly tried to establish fishing spots, mills, trading posts, and homes in this region, including during Metacomet's War, I plan on adding details about the Wabanaki to future versions of this text.

* It's possible that the Joseph Adams and John Bass who served in the Braintree militia weren't his great-grandfathers, but his grandfather and great-uncle, Joseph Adams and John Bass. Other ancestors of Adams' (great-great uncles and cousins) served as captains and lieutenants during the war. One of whom, Lt. Henry Adams, was killed when half the town of Medfield was destroyed in 1676. During the raid, Native Americans burned down forty buildings, mostly homes and mills, took livestock, and killed dozens of colonists.



As the war progressed, fear of being enslaved in the Caribbean became a determining factor for many Native Americans. Weetamoo, the sunksqua (female sachem) of the Pocasset and the widow of Metacomet's brother Wamsutta, cited this concern in her decision to join forces with Metacomet. Throughout the war, insurgents pleaded with Praying Indians to not submit to the colonists, saying that the British intended "to destroy them all, or send them out of the country for bond slaves."⁹

Even when groups who had never taken up arms against the British began to surrender to them, as they did throughout the summer and fall, they made sure to specify that they surrendered on condition of not being enslaved and that they would not be sent out of the region. Colonists were quick to ignore such requests, labeling insurgents, Praying Indians, and non-combatants alike "complyers" with Metacomet.¹⁰

In July, Plymouth officials sold 160 self-surrendered Native Americans into slavery. In August, Josiah Winslow and the Plymouth Council of War decided to sell another 112 captives. The resulting profits were desperately needed to fund the war. In September, 57 more were “condemned unto perpetuall servitude”, and at the end of that month, 178 Native captives were sold to Captain Sprague and exported to Cadiz, Spain. This pattern of enslaving and exporting Native Americans regardless of their allegiances continued throughout the war.¹¹

* * *

In November, Plymouth Governor Josiah Winslow led a force of 1,000-1,500 Pequot^{*} and Muh-he-con-neok (Mohican) soldiers and Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Plymouth militiamen against the Narragansett. Though the Narragansett had not yet joined the war, they had harbored and aided other Native combatants, elders, and children, and individual members had participated in raids. It's possible too that Winslow was unaware the Narragansett weren't directly involved in the war, much less the identity of towns he was attacking. When asked to hand over the Wôpanâak, Narragansett leader Canonchet declared, “Neither a Wôpanâak, nor the trimmings from a Wôpanâak's nails, shall I deliver to the English!”¹³

During this time, 76-year-old John Alden, Adams' paternal

* By now, the Pequot had reconstituted themselves, though much more in line with British values than before the Pequot War. For twenty years after the war, the Pequot had been enslaved to the British, Uncas, and other peoples of the Northeast. Colonists eventually let the Pequot resettle in Connecticut, and in 1655 the United Colonies appointed Robin Cassacinaomon their governor. Cassacinaomon was a middle-aged Pequot who had been indentured to John Winthrop Jr. as teenager after the Pequot War. Cassacinaomon would later kill Narragansett war leader Canonchet.¹²

great-great-grandfather of *Mayflower* fame, was serving as a senior adviser to Governor Winslow. In addition to his court membership, Alden also sat on Plymouth’s Council of War.¹⁴ So unless Alden held a minority, dissenting position, he likely helped plan Winslow’s campaign, possibly raised soldiers for it, and may have been involved in Wamsutta’s imprisonment and subsequent death. Other actions by Winslow throughout the war, colonial policy towards ally and enemy Native Americans, and punishments meted out against insurgents during and afterward should be eyed with the likelihood of Alden’s involvement.

As the Narragansett withdrew west into Rhode Island, Winslow’s party pursued them through the bitter cold, destroying a number of their abandoned villages along the way. By December, the Narragansett had hidden themselves deep within the Great Swamp. Their fortified settlement, explains G. Timothy Cranston, “consisted of a natural ring of large trees with the spaces between filled in with wooden logs driven into the ground.” The only way in was across a large felled tree that lay above the swamp’s water.¹⁵ In mid-December, Winslow’s men captured a Narragansett man and tortured him until he revealed the location of his people.¹⁶ At this point, unbeknownst to the colonists, some of their Muh-he-con-neok allies met privately with the Narragansett and “promised to shoote high” over the Narragansetts’ heads.¹⁷

When fighting started the morning of the December 19, the Narragansett spent the first hour picking off militiamen as they tried to make their way across the bottleneck entrance.¹⁸ But once Winslow’s men breached the town, a massacre ensued. As the Narragansett defended themselves as best they could, militiamen and their Native allies mowed them down, setting fire to the Narragansett’s stores of winter corn and hundreds of their wigwams. Though some managed to escape into the frozen swamp, Winslow’s raid killed between 400-1,100 Narragansett, mostly non-combatants.



The colonists and their allies took another 350 men “and above 300 women and children” prisoner. Victory, however, came at a heavy price. When the colonists finally retreated, one officer was relieved that “with so many dead and wounded, [the Narragansett] did not pursue us, which the young men would have done, but the sachems would not consent.” Dozens of colonists died on their way back to camp with over 200 wounded and dead all told.¹⁹

Back in Plymouth, colonial officials auctioned the Narragansett to local households and shipped the others to the Caribbean, where they were likely exchanged for Africans.²⁰ Neutral and ally Native Americans continued to suffer the wrath of colonial officials as well.

During the fall of 1675, 500-1,100 Praying Indians, confined to their homes and denied access to their fields and muskets since the start of the war, were forcibly interned on Long Island, Deer Island in Boston Harbor, and elsewhere. Some Native historians believe these numbers do not include non-Christian Native Americans forcibly interned, who may have numbered in the hundreds.²¹ The General Court of Massachusetts proclaimed “that none of the sayd

indians shall presume to goe off the sayd islands voluntarily, uppon
payne of death”²² and that colonists should “kill and destroy [Native
fugitives] as they best may or can.”²³

When the 95-year-old Tantamous (Jethro), a member of the Nipmuc who had not joined his family in becoming Praying Indians, protested their treatment, the Massachusetts Court had him whipped thirty times. Over the freezing winter of 1675-1676, hundreds starved and froze to death on Deer Island. Though the elderly Tantamous managed to escape the camp with eleven family members, by the time colonists disbanded the Deer Island camp later that winter all but 167 people had perished.²⁴

* * *

Around this time a curious case of colonial treason enters the story. It is that of Joshua Tift, the son of a white couple who’d settled in Rhode Island near the Great Swamp around 1661. In the early 1670s Joshua fell in love with and married Sarah Greene, the illegitimate daughter of a Wôpanâak woman and Major John Greene, a prominent Rhode Islander. From the day Sarah and Joshua met, the two are said to have never attended another church service.²⁵

Tragically, Sarah died in 1671 shortly after the birth of their son Peter.²⁶ Yet, it appears that even after her death Joshua remained loyal to the Wôpanâak and nearby Narragansett. When most colonists fled the area in 1675, Joshua stayed behind, eventually joining the Narragansett in the Great Swamp. Accounts, however, conflict as to why he did and what happened next.

In one version of events, Canonchet, a Narragansett war leader, raided Joshua’s home in November 1675, and only after begging for his life was Joshua enslaved to Canonchet. Taken to the Great Swamp, Joshua was forced to serve the sachem and fight alongside him. At least, this is what Joshua said when the United Colonies

accused him of High Treason.*²⁷

Another version of events says that Joshua went willingly into the Great Swamp, going so far as bringing the scalp of a British miller with him to prove his loyalty in defending the Narragansett. During Winslow's raid on the swamp, Joshua was seen to wound and kill five or six colonists, including the mortal wounding of Captain Nathaniel Seeley of Connecticut. A kidnapped colonist enslaved in the swamp later testified that when a Narragansett leader fell and warriors began to run in panic, Joshua rallied them to cover the retreat of children and elders.^{† 28}

Wounded while conducting a raid near Providence, Rhode Island a month later and taken prisoner, Joshua was recognized from Winslow's attack and charged with treason by Providence militia captain Roger Williams. Captain Richard Smith and Plymouth Governor Josiah Winslow personally escorted Joshua from Providence to Smith's Garrison in present day North Kingstown, Rhode Island.²⁹

Within two days, Joshua was found guilty, hanged, and quartered—the only white man in the official history of Rhode Island to suffer such a fate.³⁰ While we'll likely never know under what duress Joshua joined the Narragansett and to whom he was truly loyal, the fact that he had married a Native woman and hadn't attended

* The United Colonies of New England was one of the first official attempts to coordinate the colonies of New England, briefly discussed further in the text.

† The testimony that Joshua willingly joined the Narragansett should be viewed with some skepticism too, since in order to be found guilty of High Treason two eye witnesses needed to supply proof of it. In Joshua's case, one eyewitness gave testimony about the scalp he provided the Narragansett, another of his rallying demoralized Narragansett fighters. In theory, these witnesses might have been asked or coerced into falsifying their testimony.



Prisoners being hanged, drawn, and quartered in 1600s England.

church in years was likely enough to seal his fate. The Rhode Island law for High Treason may give us a sense of Joshua's final, horrific moments.

For High Treason (if a man*) he being accused by two lawfull witnesses or accusers, shall be drawn upon a Hurdell unto the place of Execution, and there shall be hanged by the neck, cutt down alive, his entrails and privie members cutt from him and burned in his view; then shall his head be cutt off and his body quartered; his lands and goods all forfeited.^{† 31}

Like countless rebels before and after him, Joshua's body became a physical and psychological testament: Indians may become

* Women convicted of High Treason were to be burnt at the stake.³²

—L.T.

† Brought to you by the freethinkers of colonial Rhode Island.

Christian subjects (though disposable and viewed with skepticism, like the interned Praying Indians) *but colonists may not turn Native!* Indeed, what are the use of borders if we don't fear crossing them?

* * *

With Montaup destroyed, Metacomet wintered in Schaghticoke, a refugee village of mixed tribes in eastern New York. Metacomet retreated there to enlist the help of the Muh-he-con-neok (Mohican), Kanienkehaka (Mohawk), and others.³³ Though the Muh-he-con-neok initially swelled Metacomet's Schaghticoke camp to 2,100 fighters, the Kanienkehaka responded to their long time adversary's request for help by killing hundreds of Metcomet's men and driving the rest of the Wôpanâak from the region.³⁴

While Wôpanâak, Narragansett, and other Native fighters attacked dozens of European settlements that spring, torching Lancaster, Medfield, Groton, Marlborough, Sudbury, and Providence and bringing the trade of New England ports to a halt, their time was running out.³⁵ Some historians have speculated that their defeat was from the lack of Kanienkehaka aid.³⁶ We can only imagine that had the Kanienkehaka, or the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) in general, joined Metacomet's coalition, they might very well have driven the British out of New England. This might have freed the region from European occupation for generations, possibly permanently.

That winter, Massachusetts officials allowed two Praying Indians, James Quannapaquit and Job Kattenanit, to leave their confinement on Deer Island in exchange for meeting with insurgent leaders. While some older fighters were willing to begin peace talks, the younger generations objected, telling Quannapaquit and Kattenanit,

We wil have no peace. Wee are all or most of us alive yet



& the English have kild very few of us last summer. Why shall wee have peace to bee made slaves, & either be kild or sent away to sea to Barbadoes &c. Let us live as long as wee can & die like men, & not live to bee enslaved.³⁷

But with lack of additional support, morale broke and by late spring Metacomet's coalition began fleeing. In April Canonchet, the Narragansett war leader, was captured in a surprise attack. Offered amnesty in exchange for a peace agreement, Canonchet refused. When told he would be executed, Canonchet replied, "I like it well. I shall die before my heart is soft, and before I have spoken a word unworthy of myself."³⁸

By mid-summer 400 insurgents had surrendered. Colonial offi-

cially enslaved them to local households or deported them to the Caribbean and beyond as punishment, if they didn't outright torture and kill them. As the war shifted in the colonists' favor, the governing council of Charlestown, Massachusetts called for "a day of Solemn Thanksgiving and praise to God" on June 20. "It certainly bespeaks our positive Thankfulness," the town proclamation read, "when our Enemies are in any measure disappointed or destroyed."³⁹ Salem minister Increase Mather* agreed, adding,

We are under deep engagement to make his praise glorious; considering how wonderfully he hath restrained and checked the insolency of the Heathen. That Victory which God gave to our Army, December 19. and again May 18.[†] is never to be forgotten.⁴⁰

The United Colonies of New England were beginning to coordinate themselves better too. Founded as a confederation of the colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New Haven, and Plymouth in the 1640s, the UC hoped to guard against Native Americans and the Dutch, preserve a rigid form of Puritanism, and return each others' runaway servants. The Pequot War five years before had made this first point particularly pressing. To make decisions, each colony sent two delegates to an annual convention at which six votes were needed to pass agreements. Unresolved matters were sent back to each colony's legislature to be decided independently. Rhode Island was never allowed into the coalition, even during Metacomet's War, because of its stance on "religious freedom" (as

* Increase Mather was a Puritan minister, Massachusetts Bay Colony official of considerable importance, father of Rev. Cotton Mather, and a President of Harvard.

† December 19 is when colonists massacred 400-1,100 Narragansett in the Great Swamp, and May 18 when colonists killed 100 sleeping Nipmuc in the village of Peskeompscut and drowned 130 more in the nearby Connecticut River. The slaughtered Nipmuc were mostly refugee women, children, and elders.⁴¹

the residents subscribed to a different form of British Puritanism). Throughout the war, the United Colonies managed to raise an inter-colonial force of 1,000 troops. Yet even at its best the UC was ripe with divisions and disbanded soon afterward.⁴²

In time, divide-and-conquer tactics won the day. Benjamin Church, a leader of the forerunner of the U.S. Army Rangers, understood that European-style, frontal attacks would not win the war. Instead, Church recruited Native Americans (mostly Praying Indians) to fight and teach Native tactics and strategy, fielding smaller, more flexible units familiar with the environment and able to blend in with the land. At the start of the war, colonial militiamen didn't trust their Native allies, believing that "they were cowards [who] skulked behind trees in fight," and that they intentionally "shot over the enemies' heads".^{*} ⁴³ Certainly some reports of Native conscripts who after making "shew of going first into the swamp" then "comonly give the Indians noatis how to escape the English" must have been true.⁴⁵ But after a year of combat, Church had whittled his Native troops down into a trusted core. In August 1676 Church led a party into Metacomet's Assowamset stronghold, where Praying Indian John Alderman killed Metacomet.

As Metacomet's body was pulled from the muddy swamp, Church beheld him, remarking how in death he looked like a "doleful, great, naked, dirty beast". Church then declared, "Forasmuch as he has caused many an Englishman's body to be unburied, and to rot above ground, not one of his bones should be buried." As a show of honor, Church awarded Alderman with Metacomet's head and right hand, burned and scarred from firing pistols. Next, Church set aside his left hand for Boston, a trophy for their victory, while the rest of Metacomet was quartered and hung from the trees of

* One of the few white men to ride with Church was none other than Captain John Alden, son of John Alden.⁴⁴

Miry Swamp.*⁴⁶

Returning east, Alderman sold Metacomet's head to Plymouth authorities for 30 shillings, the standard colonial price for Native heads during the war, and for the rest of his life Alderman would display the insurgent's hand, for a fee.⁴⁷ As chance would have it, Metacomet's head arrived in Plymouth the day of a colony-wide Thanksgiving. One can imagine the elation the colonists felt, checked by their religious instructions to restrain excessive merriment. Indeed, some colonists concluded that god had made the proper choice in picking a Native American to kill Metacomet in order so Puritans might not be made too proud.⁴⁸ For the next twenty years, the entrance to Plymouth was decorated with Metacomet's impaled head—another lesson to any who might stand in the colonists' way, but also an unintentional reminder of life outside the colonies.

* * *

If war was horrible for the British, it was catastrophic for Native Americans. Roughly 6,000 died during the war, while hundreds of others were taken captive. Metacomet's wife, Wootonekanuske, and their 9-year-old son,[†] his only immediate family to survive the war, were enslaved and sent to Bermuda.⁴⁹ Disease returned too,

it being no unusual thing for those that traverse the

* For decades to come, visitors to Miery Swamp claimed to see parts of Metacomet still hanging from the trees. While his remains likely didn't stay for very long, such sitings speak to the psychogeography of New England following Metacomet's War.

† Apparently, the clergy of New England debated the fate of this nine year old at great length. After a year of consulting scripture, they decided out of mercy not to hang him, but instead deport him as a slave.⁵⁰

AREA OF MASSACHUSETTS

circa 1677

- Land that was part of Massachusetts
 - Lowell † (Wamesit) Selected Indian praying town
 - Boston • Other selected town
 - Colonial boundary
- 0 20 40 miles
Present-day spellings are shown



The violence of the map.



woods to find dead Indians up and down, whom either Famine, or sickness, hath caused to dy, and there hath been none to bury them.⁵¹

Colonial officials hanged, shot, and decapitated dozens, if not hundreds, of Native prisoners. Hundreds more were indentured or enslaved throughout New England or deported as slaves as far away as Morocco, North Africa. Tantamous and his family were hunted down, and in the summer of 1676 he and other rebel leaders—Sagamore Sam, Netaump (One Eyed John), and Maliompe—were taken to be hanged at Boston Commons. As guards paraded Tantamous through the streets, a noose around his neck, the spark not yet extinguished, the 96-year-old “threatened to burn Boston at his pleasure.”⁵²

The region was in shambles. Those who could flee north and west did, blending into refugee villages or being adopted into formal tribes. Many surviving members of the Wôpanâak joined the Alnôbak (Abenaki) in Quebec, Maine, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, continuing the fight against colonization. Over the next eighty years, the Alnôbak, along with other members of the Wabanaki Confederacy, fought five successful wars against Massachusetts’ attempts to expand into their homeland.

After Metacomet’s War, Native Americans who found themselves enslaved throughout the Western world persevered and resisted in their own way too. Today descendants of the Narragansett, Wôpanâak, Podunks, Nipmucs, and other peoples can still be found throughout New England, Bermuda, the Caribbean, and beyond.

The colonists fared little better, with thousands dead, and the villages and economies of Rhode Island and Massachusetts in ruins. Plymouth and Massachusetts’ frontiers had been pushed back to just twenty miles west of Boston.⁵³ It would take a generation or more to rebuild. Yet if there was a silver lining to Metacomet’s cloud it was this: despite heavy losses the colonists had won the war, and

proven themselves more than a series of floundering, backwater settlements. Britain itself had done little to support the colonies during the war, forcing the colonists to rely on each other on a scale they never had before. Perhaps most importantly, in acting independently, especially through their use of the United Colonies, the colonists had set the foundations for a shared New England—almost American—identity.

Even though taxes remained sky-high the following decade to pay the debts of the war, the settlers continued to advance, slowly turning Native homes and hunting grounds into farmland. Despite New England's war-torn economies, Adams' paternal great-great grandfather, John Alden, continued to amass property. In 1679, he and seventy other Plymouth colonists bought a massive chunk of land near present-day Lakeville, Massachusetts, and he may have purchased more land near Montauk, Rhode Island, the former Wôpanâak capital.⁵⁴ In time, the Puritans even raised a church atop Montauk's ruins.* “Our trust hath been in the name of the Lord our fathers God and Deliverer; and hitherto he hath delivered us,” concluded a colonial survivor of the war. “May we be mindful of his signal benefits!”⁵⁵

In a certain sense, we could say Adams' early American ancestors were just of their time—indeed, we'd be hard pressed to find individuals or whole generations of families that didn't participate in the Pequot and Metacomet's Wars, and hostilities in between and afterward. It would be equally difficult to find colonists who didn't adhere to a strict and conservative moral code. But another way of saying this is that without genocidal wars and hierarchical, rigid Christian morality, the New England and Boston of the 1700s, from which the American Revolution was launched, never would have been. The humble, praying Yeoman farmers of New England (Adams foreparents front and center) never would have come to be

* Today, the former Narragansett capital is owned by Brown University.

without first murderously clearing the land. Cliche to say, yet only because of the ubiquity, the banality of this narrative in American history. Tiring to say, but we must keep saying it: America, founded on genocide, slavery, and stolen land.

A final point. We don't just find militia and church members in Adams' lineage, we find officers, deacons, doctors, and clergy. We don't just find servants or freeman, but selectmen, landowners, and deputies. We find people of undeserved power concocting ways to take more.

From John Alden signing the Mayflower Compact in 1620 to Boston Harbor of the 1700s.







V

New England, New Africa

*The Atlantic Slave Trade and
The Growth of Boston, 1690-1710s*

Over the next generation, New England continued to grow, and the dense Boston of the 1700s began to take shape. By 1690 alone, the town's population had grown to 6,000, and the Puritan families with their plots and gardens were slowly being replaced by sailors, merchants, and tradesmen—along with the waterfront of docks, warehouses, ships, trading houses, and taverns to support them.

By the 1690s, the town's shipping trade involved 1/3 of Bostonians, while Boston-owned ships accounted for 40% of all vessels coming and going from the American colonies.¹ The composition of Boston's town council in 1687 reflects this shift from religious farmers to seafaring merchants: five of the nine selectmen were ship captains with only one clergyman.² By 1700 Boston shipyards were cranking out hundreds of ships a year.³ As trade grew, Boston merchants immersed themselves further in industries soaked in the blood and sweat of slaves, as well as the slave trade itself.

By the late 1600s, Boston merchants were taking lumber, fish, grain, rum, and meat from New England to the Caribbean and ex-





changing them for sugar and molasses made with slave labor or for slaves themselves. ‘Seasoned’ Caribbean slaves were then sold to the Carolinas, Virginia, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts in exchange for goods that could be traded in Boston. Caribbean sugar and molasses was brought home to Massachusetts where the colony’s world famous distilleries turned it into rum, which (after a good dose was kept for local consumption) was exported to the Caribbean and Africa in exchange for more slaves and sugar.⁴ Known now as the Triangle Trade, this web of goods made by exploited labor was really more a reference to trade that depended on multiple sources than an actual, triangular route.

By the time Boston merchants began dabbling in slaves, they were tapping into 250 years of Europeans taking slaves from Africa and a thousand years of Arabs and Africans^{*} enslaving the continent. From the 800s to 1800s, roughly 8,000,000-17,000,000 Africans are believed to have been kidnapped, enslaved, and sent by

* To be clear, my purpose in pointing out the role that Africans played in enslaving other Africans is to show the place of hierarchies, governments, and class within the slave trade. Similar hierarchies and continental tensions were playing out separately and in tandem with those of Africa as well—ones in Europe, the Middle-East, India, Dynastic China, the Americas—in order to make the modern world.

I do not wish to portray Africa as any better or worse than other continents in terms of hierarchical divides. Africa is often depicted as coming apart at the seams, a solid entity (sometimes being almost thought of as a homogenous country), or both, despite the contradictions, while European nations that experience the same political turmoil are seen as complex. As many others have pointed out, if England is at war with France, attempting to colonize Ireland, and dealing with religious and labor unrest at home, England and Europe are viewed as parts of a complex and nuanced civilization. On the other hand, African nations experiencing the same tensions are seen as barbarous and descending into chaos.

Arab merchants throughout the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent, and nearby islands.⁵ Many were forced to work as domestic servants, soldiers, farm laborers, and concubines. This was done with the help of the rich and powerful of Africa, who, like rulers from throughout the world, justified forced labor and slavery along the lines of punishment for crimes; debt slavery as repayment for individual or familial debt; military conscription; and war captives as reimbursement for the costs of war.⁶ The fact that economies and laws were rigged against Africa's under classes, who rarely had a say in what was considered illegal or what would constitute a debt, was likely not lost on the newly enslaved. Likewise, the idea of war captives repaying the costs of war became even more disturbing when wars began to be fought for the sole purpose of acquiring slaves.

Europe took its first steps towards the African slave trade in the early 1400s, when Prince Henrique of Portugal began crafting one of his continent's first modern navies. In doing so he drew on the best thinkers and engineers money could buy. Henrique, according to Afua Cooper*,

assembled a large multiracial and multi-ethnic group of experts[†] that included map-makers, shipbuilders, astronomers, mathematicians, scientists, nautical inventors, sailors, and others versed in naval sciences and nautical technology.⁷

By 1415, Henrique had captured the Moorish port of Cuerta, Mo-

* The following paragraphs are mostly quotes and paraphrasing from Cooper's *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal*, Chapter 2, "Atlantic Origins: The Slave Woman From Portugal". It's hard to beat Cooper's description, so I am merely trying to summarize it.

† Christians, Jews, and Muslims from throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. In terms of empires, Europe was just beginning to reconstitute itself as a global player. —L.T.

rocco, long a hub of ships that raided, enslaved, and depopulated the coastal towns of Portugal and Spain. While this blow against white slavery won Henrique points back home, his motivations were hardly humanitarian. Much of the Ottoman Empire's wealth came from sub-Saharan gold transported on camelback across the desert, and Henrique was hoping to sail south of the Sahara, cutting into the gold trade closer to its source and depriving the Ottomans in the process.⁸

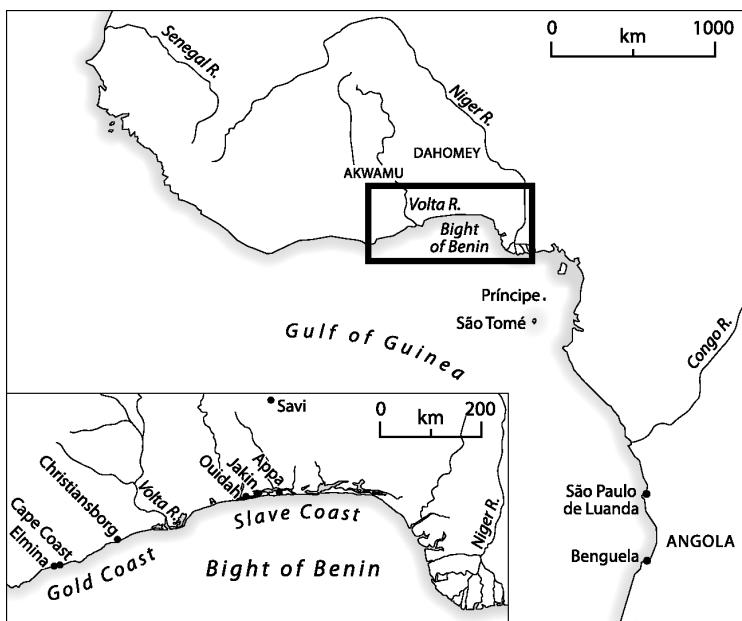
Within a generation or two of starting its naval program, Portugal had occupied Madeira, the Azores, and Canary Islands, round-ed Cape Bojador on the southwestern coast of Morocco, and estab-lished ports and trade along Africa's Bight of Benin. In 1444, Cooper recounts,

Henrique's explorers (who would be more accurately de-scribed as pirates or conquistadors) reached the mouth of the Senegal River, terrorized a local habitation, and kidnapped some 235 Africans who were then taken back to Algarve [Portugal], but not before Prince Henrique collected his 'royal fifth' of the terrified slaves. After 1444, the world would never be the same.⁹

This same year, possibly on the same expedition, the Portuguese raided another village.

They looked towards the settlement and saw that the Moors [Africans], with their women and children, were already coming as quickly as they could out of their dwellings, because they had caught sight of their ene-mies. But [the Portuguese], shouting out 'St. James', 'St. George', 'Portugal', at once attacked them, killing and taking all they could.¹⁰

The villagers were so terrified and panicked that mothers began forsaking their children, and husbands their wives, each striving to escape as best he could. Some drowned them-



selves in the water; others thought to escape by hiding under their huts; others stowed their children among the sea-weed. . . .

And at last our Lord God, who giveth a reward for every good deed, willed that for the toil [the Portuguese] had undergone in his service, they should that day obtain victory over their enemies, as well as a guerdon and a payment for all their labour and expense; for they took captive of those Moors, what with men, women, and children, 165, besides those that perished and were killed.¹¹

Whether he knew it or not, god was playing just as big a role back home as the Portuguese went to great lengths to convince themselves and others that their motivations for enslaving Africans was to save their souls. According to Gomes Eannes de Zurara, the

official chronicler, propagandist, and bald-face liar of Portugal's exploration of Africa, Africans

lived like beasts, without any custom of reasonable beings—for they had no knowledge of bread and wine, and they were without coverings of clothes, or the lodgement of houses; and worse than all, through great ignorance that was in them, in they had no understanding of good, but only knew how to live in bestial sloth.

Even as Africans died from exposure to European conditions, Zurara spun it as positive since they “died, but as Christians.”¹² Despite their religious claims, “in 1466, a Czech traveler noticed that the king of Portugal was making more selling [African] captives to foreigners ‘than from all the taxes leveled on the entire kingdom.’”¹³

Zurara’s observations are disturbing enough on their own, especially in the context of Portuguese colonization, yet they slowly began to form the basis of a new era of white supremacist thought as well. As Ibram X. Kendi has shown, for the next hundred years, Zurara was the go-to for European explorers, rulers, and theologians. As they justified enslavement or disembarked on raids, Europeans did so through Zurara’s lens. Over time, as new social theorists and theologians began to replace Zurara, many of them like New England’s Cotton Mather used Zurara as a cornerstone.¹⁴

* * *

In 1460 the Portuguese arrived in Sierra Leone where they traded for gold and raided for slaves. But, as Afua Cooper has noted, the raids

soon gave way to the more peaceful method of slave trading as the [Portuguese] found willing local traders and rulers from whom to buy captured persons. As time went by, however, war became the chief means of acquiring



slave captives. The slave trade was becoming almost as important as the trade in gold.

Conflicts and slave raids escalated as Europeans traded muskets and other weapons for the newly enslaved.¹⁵

By 1470, the Portuguese had located the gold fields of Ghana and built Elmina, a factory-fort, to regulate the trade in gold and captured persons—but not before the leader of the expedition burnt down a neighbouring village and subdued the chief.

By 1482, the Portuguese had reached Congo, and in 1492, the same year Columbus was stumbling upon the Americas, Bartolomé Dias arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, the southern-most tip of Africa where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans merge.¹⁶

The Portuguese continued on, going up the eastern coast of Africa and on to India. Along the way, Vasco Da Gama

and his crew paused briefly to admire the wealth and splendour of the Swahili cities before they attacked, pillaged, and looted them. The frightened citizens were dragged from their houses and beaten, raped, and murdered.

Da Gama then planted a cross before sailing on—such was European civilization brought to sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁷

Adding to the centuries-long Arab slave trade, the Portuguese began exporting Africans to India, Sri Lanka, and other parts of Asia. In time, the Portuguese even began trading with eastern Asia and slowly imported Japanese, Korean, and Chinese slaves to Europe and eventually the Americas too, beginning an often forgotten Asian diaspora in the process.¹⁸

In addition to establishing forts and fine-tuning their nautical skills, the Portuguese meticulously mapped everywhere they went.

This intimate knowledge of the Atlantic waterways was closely guarded from foreign powers and was one of the main reasons that the Portuguese were able to monopolize the Atlantic trade, and even the Indian Ocean trade, for well over a century.

In turn, this wealth gave Portugal the material and political power to explore and conquer further and further afield, inspiring other European rulers and merchants in the process.¹⁹

The Portuguese weren't just innovating new sea-faring technologies and forms of confinement, they were also fostering and spreading to other Europeans new racist ideas about Africans' inferiority and the supremacy of Christian Europeans.

In their growing networks of ports, agents, ships, crews, and financiers, pioneering Portuguese slave-traders and explorers circulated racist ideas in Zurara's book faster and farther than the text itself had reached. The Portuguese became the primary source of knowledge on

unknown Africa and the African people for the original slave-traders and enslavers from Spain, Holland, France, and England.²⁰

Tragically, by the 1520s, Portuguese merchants had begun sending African slaves across the Atlantic, and by 1600 alone roughly 1,000,000 Africans had been forcibly taken to Western Europe and the Americas, countless others dying en route of disease and squalid conditions or while resisting their enslavement.

But like all great nations, the Portuguese slowly lost their footing, and throughout the 1600-1700s the Spanish, Dutch, French, Danish, and British competed to control coastal Africa and the Atlantic slave trade. By the 1800s, the merchants of these nations would be responsible for transporting 11,000,000-100,000,000 Africans across the Atlantic—1,500,000-17,800,000 dying en route or shortly after their arrival.²¹

As the coasts became depopulated of potential slaves, raiding parties ventured further and further inland, tapping into new cultures and conflicts along the way. By the 1700s, enslaved villagers were being tied together at the neck by wooden yokes and chains and marched or floated hundreds of miles to European fortresses along the coast. In a process that might take weeks or years, the enslaved would often pass through multiple hands and various African cultures as they went.²² 20% or higher mortality rates ravaged these caravans as captives succumbed to disease, hunger, and the grueling trek. As they died their skulls and bones littered the slavers' trails.²³ Survivors who made it to the Ghanaian coast were greeted by dozens of forts facilitating trade between Africa and Europe.

* * *

The Swedes originally built Cape Coast Castle in 1653 to trade in timber and gold, but by 1664 it was in control of the British, who'd

expanded its basement into a vast slave dungeon capable of holding a thousand people at a time.²⁴ Saidiya Hartman describes her visit to the Castle in hauntingly poetic terms.

In the sixteenth century, the British had begun raiding the Gold Coast for slaves and by the end of the seventeenth century they were the foremost slavers in Africa. They alone were responsible for deporting nearly five hundred thousands slaves from the Gold Coast. Half of these captives were shipped from Cape Coast Castle. . . .²⁵

* * *

The lesson imparted to the captives by [the dungeon's] grand design was that slavery was a state of death. Who else but the dead resided in a tomb? But the Royal Africa Company and the Company of Merchants didn't imagine their human cargo as a pile of corpses, nor did they consider these dank rooms a grave. As they saw it, the dungeon was a womb in which the slave was born. The harvest of raw material and the manufacture of goods defined the prison's function. The British didn't call it a womb; they called it a factory, which has its first usage in the trading forts of West Africa. (The very word 'factory' documents the indissoluble link between England's industrial revolution and the birth of human commodities.)²⁶

* * *

Human waste covered the floor of the dungeon. To the naked eye it looked like soot. After the last group of captives had been deported, the holding cells were closed but never cleaned out. For a century and a half after the abolition of the slave trade, the waste remained. . . . In 1972, a team of archaeologists excavated the dungeon

and cleared away eighteen inches of dirt and waste. They identified the topmost layer of the floor as the compressed remains of captives—feces, blood, and exfoliated skin.

I refused this knowledge. I blocked it out and proceeded across the dungeon as if the floor was just that and not the remnants of slaves pressed further into oblivion by the soles of my shoes. I came to this fort searching for ancestors, but in truth only base matter awaited me.²⁷

* * *

From the dungeons, captives were taken aboard ships docked along the coast that waited weeks or months as they slowly crammed full of victims. Sometimes, like in the case of 11-year-old Olaudah Equiano, slaves skipped the forts entirely, and slavers sailed their canoes and boats out directly to waiting ships. “The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast,” Equiano remembered,

was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country.²⁸

PLAN OF LOWER DECK WITH THE STOWAGE OF 292 SLAVES

130 OF THESE BEING STOWED UNDER THE SHELVES AS SHewn IN FIGURE 5.

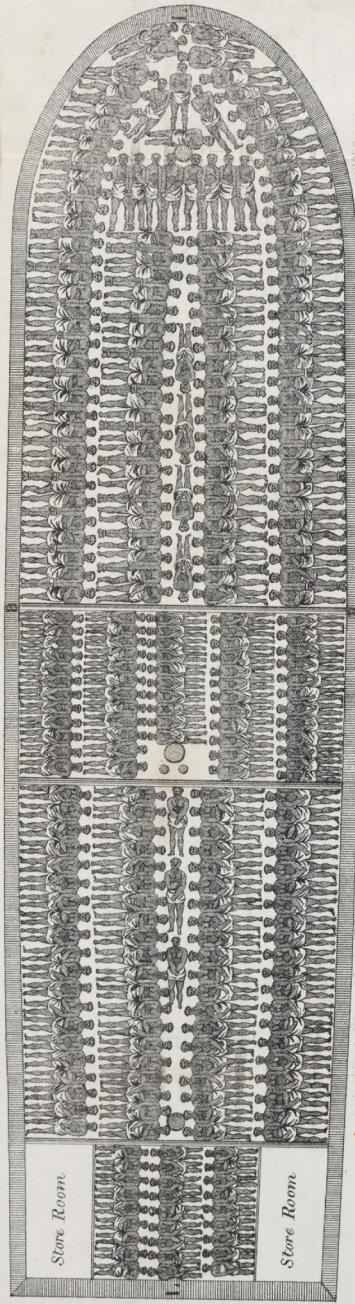


Fig. 2.

PLAN SHewing THE STOWAGE OF 130 ADDITIONAL SLAVES ROUND THE WINGS OR SIDES OF THE LOWER DECK BY MEANS OF PLATFORMS OR SHELVES
(IN THE MANNER OF GALLERIES IN A CHURCH) THE SLAVES STOWED ON THE SHELVES AND BELow THEM HAVE ONLY A HEIGHT OF 2 FEET 7 INCHES
BETWEEN THE BEAMS, AND FAR LESS UNDER THE BEAMS S. See Fig. 1.

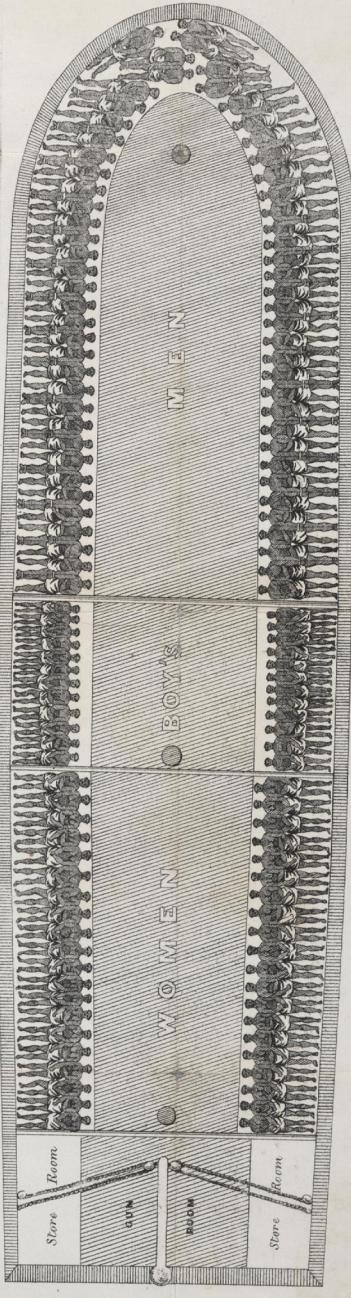


Fig. 3.

Equiano soon fainted, and then was severely beaten when he refused his first meal.

At last, when the ship we were in had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs*, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.²⁹

To mitigate tensions, many captains placed African overseers amongst their cargo. According to Eric Robert Taylor in *If We Must Die*,

captains chose a select group from among the slaves on board to be watchdogs over the others. These slaves perform such duties as settling quarrels among the captives,

* Buckets for the shackled captives to relieve themselves and vomit.

organizing the Africans into groups for eating, supervising the work parties that cleaned and scrubbed the ship, and most importantly, informing the crew of any plots or conspiracies that they may have detected. As Captain Phillips reported, ‘We have some 30 or 40 gold coast negroes, which we buy . . . to make guardians and overseers of the [others], and sleep among them to keep them from quarreling; and in order, as well as to give us notice, if they can discover any caballing or plotting among them. . . . When we constitute a guardian, we give him a cat of nine tails as a badge of his office, which he is not a little proud of, and will exercise with great authority.’ Lured by promises of small benefits and advantages over their fellow captives, these men and women who were recruited to act as spies were encouraged to betray any plans of their shipmates and surely foiled many insurrectionary plots throughout the history of the slave trade. In other cases, sailors did not have to manipulate their captives but instead could rely upon the diversity and differences among the African population below deck.³⁰

As Equiano’s ship made its way through the Middle Passage, his spirits and health sank further and further.

I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself. I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with served only to render my state more painful, and heighten my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites.

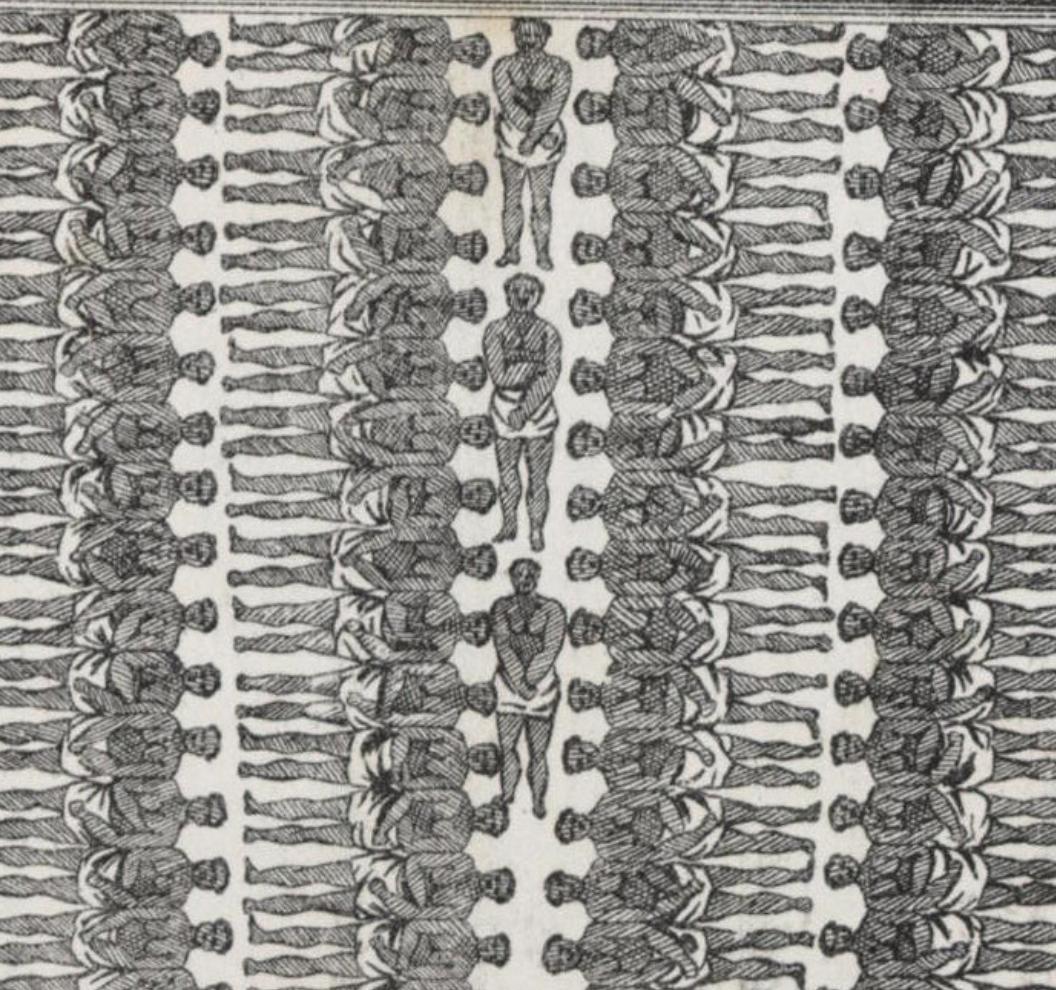
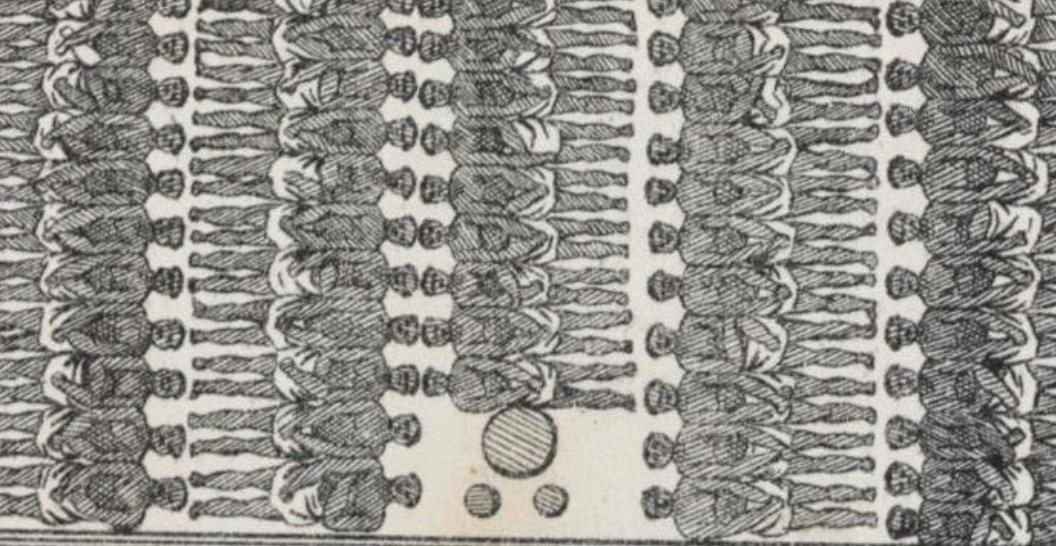
One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when

they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on the deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings.

One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings* and jumped into the sea: immediately another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed.

Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to

* Netting along the sides of slave ships to prevent desperate slaves from jumping to their deaths. Such netting serves a similar purpose today in factory-cities like China's infamous Foxconn City, where nearly half a million employees work and live in miserable conditions in order to cheaply produce profitable technology like Apple's iPhones.³¹ Why treat the disease when treating the symptom makes more money?



slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade. Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many.”³²

Most who survived the Atlantic voyage ended up in the Caribbean, but some, like Equiano, found himself enslaved in the American colonies.

This trade, deadly and unimaginably cruel at every step of its dealings, is what Boston merchants could not wait to join. While the more well-established London-based slavers continued to dominate the trade out of West Africa, Boston merchants pioneered the slave trade to Madagascar and by 1678 were selling kidnapped Africans to Virginia planters.³³ In time they developed the practice of taking slaves from Africa and trading them with more ‘seasoned’ slaves from the Caribbean, then selling the Afro-Caribbean slaves to masters in Massachusetts, Connecticut as early as 1686, and Rhode Island by 1696.³⁴ By 1690, one out of every nine white Boston families owned an African slave, bringing the town’s black population to 150.³⁵

* * *

The people of New England directly and indirectly played their part in the web of the slave trade, and while the degree to which we may condemn various New England players varies, the point remains that New England’s economy was integral to the Atlantic slave economy, and vice versa. Without the slave trade, without the horrors we’ve just seen but a drop of, there would be no New England, there would be no America. Undeniably, the slave trade

gave work to sail makers, rope makers, tanners (leather

workers), and coopers (barrel makers). Many lawyers, insurers, clerks, and scriveners (secretaries), handled the paperwork for slave merchants. Slave brokers and retail merchants brought together buyers and sellers of slaves. Colonial newspapers received money from advertisements for slaves. All over New England, loggers, livestock farmers, and fishermen provided the goods that were shipped to the West Indies and traded for slaves.³⁶

Favorable winds and sea currents gave Boston a natural advantage for sailing to England and West Africa, while winds and currents from West Africa made traveling to the Caribbean easier than heading straight home to New England. Ships might make the same run over and over or alternate between different regions and ports as opportunities presented themselves. Cornelius Waldo, one of Boston's wealthiest merchants, landowners, distillers, ship owners, and slavers, sold ropes from London, rum from Massachusetts, Spanish iron, "Hollands Duck" (linen), gunpowder, wine from Madeira and the Canary Islands via St. Kitts, "Choice Irish Duck, fine Florence wine, negro slaves and Irish butter." While some of his goods had been imported by other merchants and acquired by Waldo, his own ships imported goods directly to him as well. His ship *Africa* made trips to its namesake, holding as many as 200 people at a time crammed below deck in horrific conditions, presumably stopping off in the Caribbean before returning home.³⁷ Such was the wealth of the Olde Towne built.

While most of Boston merchants' human cargo was left in the Caribbean or southern colonies, hundreds of African slaves were slowly imported to Massachusetts as well. As the 1700s approached, African servitude and slavery slowly found its place alongside Native and white bondage with 1,000 of New England's 90,000 colonists being African indentured servants and slaves, over half of which lived in Massachusetts. These numbers say nothing of the hundreds, if not thousands, of African and mixed sailors, slaves,

servants, and maids coming and going with ships through Boston's ports.

These new arrivals, mixed with previous generations of Africans, Native Americans, and poor whites, proved to be an unruly lot, and officials' fears of an interracial under class were not unfounded. Ripped from their homes and kin, deprived free movement, personal and communal autonomy, the choice to live where and with whom they pleased, and subjected to vicious humiliations, work, and punishments, New England's growing rabble fought back by working slow, hiding out, malingering, setting fires, piracy, running away, sharing stories of life beyond servitude (real or imagined), attacking, robbing, sabotaging, and killing their masters, and aiding and plotting with other proles.

Truly, for as long as the rich and powerful have been confining life, people have been finding ways to wriggle free.



VI

Incarceration, Excarceration*

At every step of the enslaving process, and on almost every scale imaginable, slavery was contested.[†] When slave raiders attacked African villages, people hid from and fought their abductors. If taken alone while grazing livestock, one might yell for loved ones. Once shackled in a coffle, the enslaved plotted, attacked their captors, negotiated, or stopped eating and moving. When people found themselves along the coasts of Africa, whether on plantations or in the fortresses, dungeons, and ships of slave traders, similar tactics were applied, along with outright mutinies by the enslaved and uprisings from nearby, sympathetic populations. Once at sea, plots, mutinies, and suicides were not uncommon.[‡]

* This wonderful bit of word play comes from Peter Linebaugh's *The London Hanged: Crime And Civil Society In The Eighteenth Century*.

† Which isn't to say it was contested one hundred percent of the time.

‡ This section on African slave resistance is massively indebted to *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, edited by Sylviane A. Diouf.

As the slave trade exploded in the 1500-1700s, many Africans found themselves constituted into states, often Islamic*, or retreating to positions more defensible on their periphery. While the states served to protect only those at the top from enslavement—saving themselves at the expense of their enemies, neighbors, and own people—the fate of those in smaller, decentralized villages varied.

All around Lake Chad in west-central Africa, villagers hid amongst its plains, marshes, and mountains. Depending on the season, tall grass could be hidden in, and once the fields flooded, the marshes were impassable for the enslaving cavalries of Islamic Sudan. In time, many villages moved permanently to the mountains, with their sheer cliffs and elaborate caverns, though the marshes were still used for generations. Well placed walls, thorn bushes, and poisonous plants made the mountains even harder to raid. In the best of conditions, miles and miles of caves made for ample food and cattle storage, as well as travel, which safeguarded against long sieges.⁴

Enslavement and evasion shaped the west-central African region for years. Throughout the 1500-1800s, the Mofou retreated to the hills of Mikiri; the Tupuri to the Tekem Mountains, “where they resisted by throwing stones at the enemy”; the Duru to the Mbang Mountains and the cliffs of Adamawa; the Ni-Zoo (Nyem-Nyem) to Mount Jim; and the Wandala Kingdom to the Mandara Mountains, declaring the area, “a secure refuge, with rivers that never dry up.” The Ni-Zoo even used a system of gongs and look out points to co-ordinate defense amongst their villages. These mountains not only protected those who resisted slavery within them but transformed them as well, and to this day many of the mountains are still worshiped for their protective role.⁵

Further south, people who lived in the plains of the modern-day Central African Republic, temporarily fled to surrounding wood-

* See page 116..



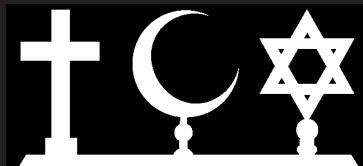
Above: A Kapsiki home in northern Cameroon. For generations the mountainous terrain helped the Kapsiki defend themselves against slave raids.

Underleaf: A section of the Mandara Mountains.

lands and caves. They returned to their homes days or weeks later after the slavers' caravans had passed on. But evasion wasn't the only tool of resistance in the region. Some villages consolidated themselves into walled-off towns. Others stopped growing millet and sorghum—crops that could be easily spotted from far away, expose their position, and strengthen slave raiders should they take the time to harvest them—and instead reverted back to gathering, hunting, and growing root vegetables like manioc.⁶

According to Dennis D. Cordell, one such location, the village of Joungorou,

lay very near a dense gallery forest and could only be reached by crawling through tunnels in the dense surrounding brambles. There were no visible paths nearby



The rights of god and men . . .

Like their Judeo-Christian cousins, Muslims were advised not to enslave their own kind. Meaning, like Christian kingdoms and states, the Muslim elite needed to find non-Muslims to enslave (often outside or on the periphery of their own territories) as well as ways to control and subjugate their own people. Like Christian masters, Muslim slave owners were advised by their religion to put limits on slavery and show slaves mercy, while at the same time still allowing for the practice.¹

As Dennis D. Cordell explains, “Muslim slave owners were called upon to encourage their slaves to convert to Islam, grant them freedom in their wills, and consider the children of slaves who converted to Islam as free individuals.” The degree to which this was followed and enforced, however, varied greatly.² But “as the Imam of Futa Jallon [in Guinea] put it in a letter to the governors of Sierra Leone in 1810:

They are the Kafirs,^{} and they are like ass [sic] or like cattle; they know not the rights of God, and still less the rights of men. And in our parts you are not sold any man who knows the God of truth. . . . The people whom men used to sell into your hands do not acknowledge the religion of Moses (peace be upon him) nor the religion of Mohammed nor is one of the prophets (May God send blessings on him and peace).³*

* *Kafir* is an Arab slur against black Africans, literally meaning “non-believer”.

to give away the presence of the village. Moreover, the people had no fields because they feared that these signs of habitation would also betray them. They survived by hunting, gathering wild honey, and trading dried meat from hunting for grain with the people of the neighboring village of Mouvou.*⁴¹

To the west, in the coastal swamps of present day Benin, the Tofinu built homes and whole villages on stilts to avoid the slave raids that devastated the region. Starting in the 1600s, they fled to the Sô River, but after successfully repelling a slave raid (the site of which is still considered a sacred spot), they fled further south to Lake Nokoué, eventually building the “Venice of Africa”. The area was impassable without canoes, which along with lances for fishing and self-defense, the Tofinu mastered. Indeed, the Tofinu’s identity appears to be so transformed and intertwined with their historical self-defense that their name translates to “the men on water”, and Ganvié, their principle town, means “safe at last”. Today, Tofinu descendants number around 75,000 and still live above the wetlands.⁸

* * *

Although some peoples migrated and fortified their homes in order to have nothing to do with the cruel practice of slavery, others did so in order to contend in the trade. In most cases participation in the slave trade was decided on a village by village basis. Most Africans did not go on raids, and village elders and chiefs chose sparingly to send captives or those who had severely broken local social custom into slavery. As odd as this might seem, this is the nuanced picture passed down by oral tradition and sifted through by anthro-

* Though the Atlantic slave trade slowly dried up in the 1800s, these Central African tactics of evasion and defense against enslavement continued well into the 1900s against the Arab trade.

pologists.⁹

Even some of the Tofinu, who had built elevated homes to flee enslavement, occasionally raided other villages for captives and the traditional practice of taking wives. It would seem though, that Tofinu servants were rarely if ever sold out of the region.¹⁰

By far, the biggest contenders in the slave trade were the states within North and West Africa. Like the under class of Europe, to live within these states or near them meant never knowing how safe from law, invasion, and servitude one was. By the early 1700s, the coasts of West Africa were reaching slave populations of 70% or higher. As states like Futa Jallon rose to power, segregated plantation towns of slaves—called *rundes*—began to develop as well.¹¹

At a breaking point in 1720, an under class alliance rose up against European and African slave traders along the Guinea coast. Led by Tamba, an influential figure from the Tinguiinta River (Rio Nuñez), the insurrection was moderately successful. For a moment, the revolt disrupted trade and managed to kill a number of merchants. Even after Tamba was caught and enslaved, he launched, along with a female captive, a shipboard revolt. With difficulty the crew put down the mutiny, executed Tamba, and forced his co-conspirators to eat his heart and liver before killing them as well.¹²

As the Guinea coast continued to fill with plantations, trading posts, and a dense slave population, tensions mounted. According to Boubacar Barry in *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, by the mid-1700s,

the entire countryside from Sierra Leone to Cape Mount was rife with slave rebellions. Apparently, not a single year passed without groups of slaves, in permanent rebellion, attacking some slaving vessel. Furthermore, rebel slaves succeeded in establishing free zones on the coast by attracting runaway slaves from all over the area. These liberated slaves, having gained their freedom in the face

of their former masters' attacks, defended it by settling in areas that were often inaccessible. The development of such maroon communities amplified the general trend toward slave rebellions on the coast during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.¹³

Some of the maroon communities grew large enough to slave raid themselves or be courted as military allies by the enemies of their former masters.¹⁴

In 1756,

the enslaved population of Futa Jallon rose against the slave-owning class, declared themselves free, and migrated northwest toward Futa Bundu. They built a well-fortified settlement called Kondeah, which was repeatedly attacked by the Fula and their allies.¹⁵

But these rebellions, as impressive as they were, paled in comparison to that of 1785, when slaves beheaded their masters, burned down rice plantations, and left their masters en masse. In the years leading to the revolt, the Mandingo slave-owning, ruling class, like their counterparts all throughout the Guinea coast and hinterlands, had done little to ease tensions. During this time, debt, adultery, and witchcraft were all used by the courts of West Africa to enslave or sell away their subjects and own populations.¹⁶

The slave-producing witch-hunts reached their peak in late 1700s, known as the “red drink” era. To sort guilt from innocence, the courts gave the accused a poisonous red tea. If the accused showed no signs of poisoning, they were innocent. But if they began to react, they were immediately administered an antidote of palm oil, then condemned to one of the *runde* plantations or sold out of Africa.¹⁷ As horrific as this practice was, we can imagine at least some percentage of the accused as the disobedient of West Africa, those with fiery spirits and subversive knowledge now cast throughout West African plantations and the Americas. Certainly,

countless others were merely swept up by callous bureaucracies of greed.

Another pressure point for the 1785 rebellion was the expansion of the Moriah state into the northern river region along the Upper Guinea coast. As the Mandingo upper class of Moriah spread, they connected waterways in the hinterland to coastal trade, gathering massive fortunes and slaves as they went.¹⁸

One ruler, Fenda Modu Dumbuya, owned up to nine villages reportedly producing about a hundred tons of rice and a hundred tons of salt annually. The slaveholders usually worked new captives on their rice plantations before selling off some of them to the Europeans on the coast.¹⁹

John Matthews, a British naval officer, observed the witch trials and subsequent uprising:

The Mandingoese, who are extremely cruel in the treatment of their slaves, had carried this practice [of witch hunting] to such an excess, that, in 1785, there was a general insurrection. The slaves took an opportunity, when the principal part of their fighting men were out upon an expedition, to attack their masters; several of whom they put to death, and had their heads carried before them on poles, as ensigns of victory and liberty; they then set fire to the rice which was ready to be cut, which reduced the Mandingoese to the utmost distress, who afterwards retreated to their towns, which they fortified in such a manner, and so effectually stopped every avenue that led into the country from whence the Mandingoese could receive assistance, that their late haughty masters were under the necessity of suing for peace.²⁰

“The rebels,” reports Ismail Rashid,

had a number of leaders but only two, Mambee and Dan-



Above: Mandigo slave traders with a coffle of slaves.

Below: The foothills of the Futa Jallon Highlands where maroons built the towns of Yangiakuri, Kani, and Funkoo.



sage, are identified in available sources. The rebellion, which affected the entire northern river region, involved from six to eight hundred people residing in the slave villages. They torched the rice fields, the state's economic mainstay. Many rebels took refuge at Yangiakuri, Kani, and Funkoo, in Soso country. Located on the foothills of the mountain ranges from where the Kolenten (Great Scarcies) River rises, Yangiakuri was easily defensible. The insurgents further fortified the town with twelve-foot-high mud walls and three large security towers. They increased their numbers by recruiting and providing refuge for other enslaved men and women and also attracted Soso freemen. These were most likely commoners whose socioeconomic condition would not have been radically different from that of the rebels. Within a decade, additional smaller settlements had sprung up around Yangiakuri, Kani, and Funkoo.²¹

After a decade, when a sizable chunk of the Mandingo and Soso under classes had run off to these maroon villages, the Mandingo and Soso rulers set aside their differences and, with the help of European ships and artillery, began attacking the maroons. The coalition ruthlessly destroyed the smaller villages, "killed most of their inhabitants, and sold the rest into slavery."²² But after heavy losses trying to take the maroon capital of Yangiakuri, the Soso and Mandingo elite turned instead to starving out the rebels, sniping at them, and burning their homes with flaming arrows. In time Yangiakuri was reduced from 900 to 500 people, but casualties ran high on both sides, and the maroons are believed to have killed upwards of 1,000 of their 2,500 assailants.²³

Over time the maroons slowly starved, and after five months their walls were breached, countless killed and thrown from the cliffs or re-enslaved. One band of maroons, however, managed to flee, founding a new village in Bena along the Kolenten River.²⁴

* * *

Let us consider one more threat to the slave trade in Africa: the Bubi People of Otcho (Bioko/ Fernando Pô). According to some traditions, the Bubi slowly conglomerated over hundreds of years as various peoples fled slave raids on the mainland, eventually settling on Otcho, a tiny 800 sq mile island off the coast of Cameroon. The arrival of European slave ships bent on doing business in the 1600–1700s threatened life there as well. Not only did the Bubi successfully evade capture for generations, but they repeatedly attacked the slavers and freed their cargo.²⁵ The Bubi,

in spite [of being armed] with wooden spears, were nevertheless too dangerous for them, because the Bubi knew the terrain and [because] the whites would be easily overpowered in the thick vegetation.²⁶

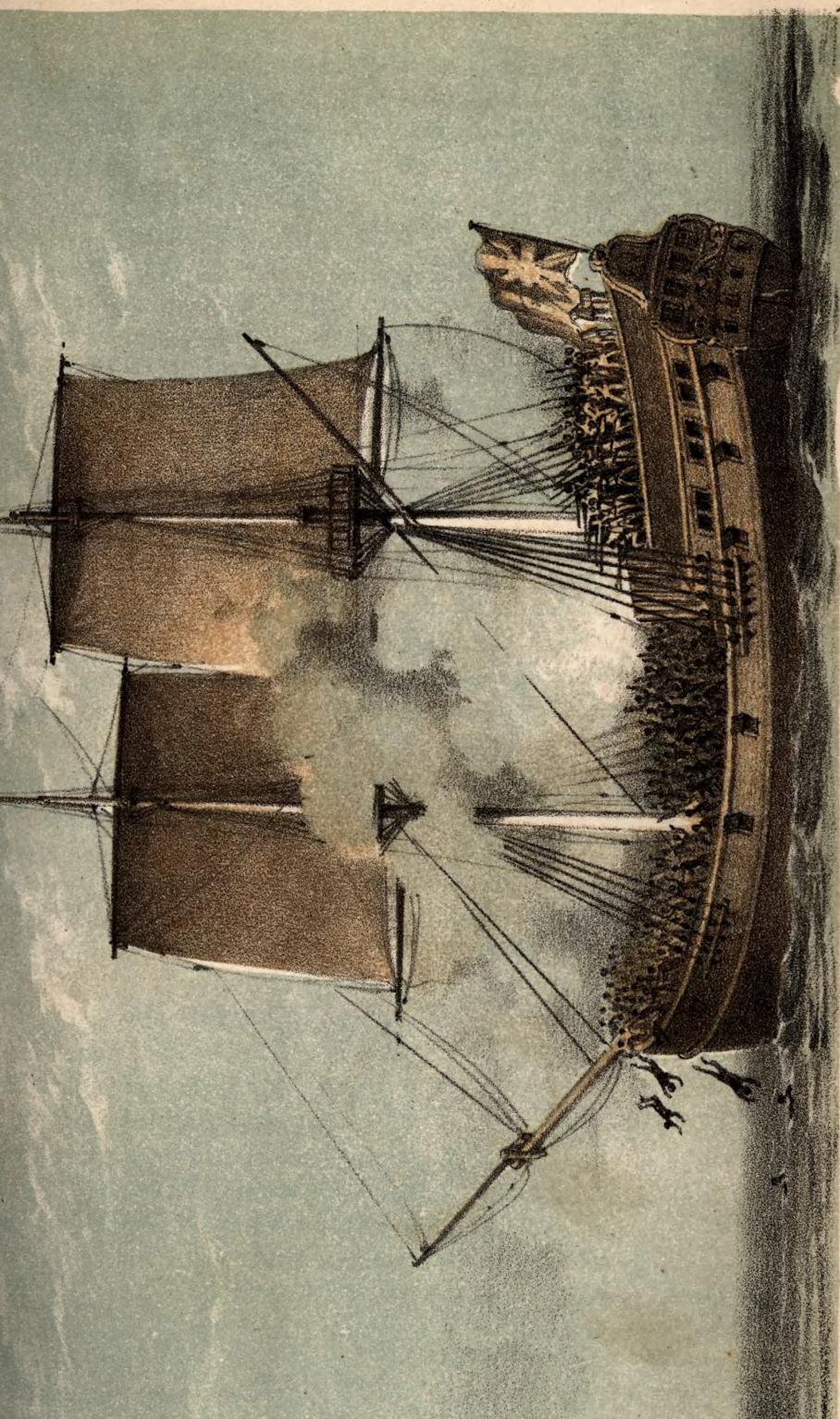
Even when slave ships merely tried to dock along the island to resupply, the Bubi attacked them. Slowly, a new maroon culture distinct from the Bubi developed. “In the early 1780s a Spaniard observed:

It is known that the southern part of Fernando Po [Otcho] is inhabited by a great number of [former] slaves, refugees from Príncipe and São Tomé.* These miserable creatures, whom the Portuguese used to treat with excessive rigor, today enjoy complete liberty and live in a kind of republic that is governed by its own laws and without any dependency on the part of [the Bubi].”²⁷

* Two incredibly small islands 250 miles southwest of Otcho. The islands were uninhabited until the 1500s, when the Portuguese implemented a plantation economy dependent on enslaved Africans. For hundreds of years, the Portuguese grew rich off of their sugar plantations, followed by coffee and cocoa plantations in the 1800s.²⁸—L.T.

INSURRECTION ON BOARD A SLAVE SHIP.

Printed by A. L. Bancroft & C. Lithograph.



In time, as some of the Bubi began to succumb to the ships, they developed a distinct style of scarification—a series of lines along the forehead, scalp, upper chest, and stomach—in order to retain their identity when lost in the whirlwind of the Middle Passage.²⁹ These scars might have also served as a deterrent to the gaze of Western investors.

* * *

When the peoples of Africa couldn't keep themselves and loved ones from hemorrhaging out of the continent, the horrific Middle Passage (documented above by Olaudah Equiano) itself saw many acts of defiance. Indeed, 2-10% of transatlantic slave voyages are believed to have experienced some level of resistance. With nearly 500 documented cases, 120 of which ended with the enslaved gaining some degree of freedom, this contestation was significant.³⁰ These acts of resistance, and the repressive shipboard measures taken in their wake, are believed to have made the Atlantic slave trade approximately 9% less efficient, meaning thousands if not millions of Africans may have been spared enslavement in the Americas as a result.*³¹

Once across the Atlantic, many of the enslaved did not give up. Despite serious threats of physical harm and death, Africans continued to speak their own languages, practice their spiritualities and medicines, pass on practical and abstract African wisdom, refuse commands, plot, and physically resist. In New England, Af-

* While quantifying resistance to slavery into a concrete percentage of affected business may seem silly, it illustrates the point that even when the enslaved didn't gain their own freedom, their disobedience helped others. For more on slave ship mutinies, please see Eric Robert Taylor's *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*.

rikan knowledge of escape, evasion, and self-defense blended with traditions from the Wôpanâak, Irish, Afro-Caribbean, French, Narragansett, and British, to name a few.

* * *

As African workers increased in New England, so too did Europeans, though the later were generally preferred. One anonymous letter to a Boston newspaper in 1706 plainly stated this preference, since white men could fight against Native Americans “for Negroes do not carry Arms to defend the Country as Whites do”. The author hoped that for every 100 white men who finished their indenture it would equate to “100 that goes out into the Woods, and settles a 100 Families to strengthen and Baracade us from the Indians”.³² Though many white immigrants would answer this call, others would not.

Throughout the early 1700s, shipments of skilled and unskilled laborers began arriving in Massachusetts. Captains sold indentured children from England and Ireland for £8-12 a piece, while skilled laborers like “hatters, Carpenters, Sawers, Smiths, Taylors, Shoe-makers and Weavers” fetched a higher price. Their contracts were generally 4-8 years long.³³ Most costly of all were Africans enslaved for life, who were sold for £30-120. *³⁴

As the rabble of New England began to balloon, one of the most common complaints of Massachusetts masters against the under class was that they were miserable “eye servants”—an Old Testament term meaning those who work only when watched by a superior. Runaway ads amongst the pages of *The Boston News-Letter*, New England’s first continuous newspaper first published in 1704, show an unwilling, interracial, and mobile working class. As some of the first documents that could give us proof of a rejected servi-

* In 1699, ten shillings worth of European goods was enough to buy a slave in Madagascar.³⁵

tude, *The Boston New-Letter* delivers just that.*

In August 1703, 19-year-old John Logen, a white tailor's apprentice, ran away from Boston. Still missing the following summer, his master placed an ad describing John as "of middle Stature, black hair . . . he's said to be gone to Long-Island, thence to Pennsylvania."³⁶

In June 1704, 35-year-old Penelope ran away from Boston as well. Her owner, Captain Nathaniel Cary, described her as "a well set middle sized Madagascar Negro Woman . . . With several sorts of Apparel; one whereof is a flowered damask Gown: She speaks English well." That same month, while leased to Capt John Aldin of Boston,[†] 19-year-old Harry ran away. His master in Kingston, Rhode Island immediately placed an ad describing Harry as "a tall lusty Indian . . . with a black Hat, brown Ozenbridge Breeches and Jacket".³⁷

The following month watchmen in Boston arrested a black man on suspicion of running away—the presence of a person of color alone in public was enough to arouse suspicion. At first he said he was a free man from Bristol, Rhode Island, but then later said his name was George and that he'd run from his master in Seaconnet, Massachusetts five weeks before. If no owner came forward to claim him, George was likely auctioned off to pay his keep at the jail. That October, another black man was arrested in Boston and accused of running away. He gave his name as Sambo, a possible alias, while the jailer described him as "small boned, middle stature, small beard, gray jacket, grey homespun kersey breeches, a Souldier's cap, no stockings, an old pair of shoes".³⁸

In November, 14-year-old Prince ran away from Boston. His master described him as

* The following anecdotes and descriptions of runaways come from Lyman Horace Weeks and Edmin M. Bacon's *An Historical Digest of the Provincial Press*, pp. 86-440.

† An ancestor of, you guessed it, John Adams.

a Sirranam Indian Manslave . . . black short hair, markt upon his breast with the Letters AP[,] joyned at the foot: has on a black broad Cloath Jacket, under that a frize Jacket and Breeches, a Crocus Apron, gray yarn Stockings and Mittens, and a speckled Neckcloth: Speaks little or no English.³⁹

One wonders what resources were available to young Prince to aid in his escape. Hopefully, other, caring servants or slaves genuinely interested in the boy's well being took him in, and he didn't fall prey to adults like his master that knew they could take advantage of the lonely, imported youth.

Within just four months of advertisements we have a white tailor's apprentice who runs from Boston to Long Island, then Pennsylvania; a woman kidnapped and brought all the way from Madagascar, who strikes out for freedom, perhaps hiding in town or heading out of New England or the colonies all together; a Native man from Rhode Island who runs off while docked in Boston; two black men accused of running away; and an adolescent ripped from his homeland thousands of miles away in Suriname. And this is just what we have documentation of. Certainly other servants and slaves before and during this period refused their role of subjugation. In fact, the pattern continues of a mixed under class taking advantage of an ever growing and interconnected Atlantic life.

In early June of 1705, 22-year-old Joseph Ingerson ran away while docked in Boston. His master, a captain from Barbados, described (the presumably white) Joseph as "a well-set young man, dark complexion, pritty full fac'd, short dark hair".⁴⁰

In September, three black servants, 29-year-old Shippio, 17-year-old Jack, and 13-year-old Jacob, ran away together from South Carolina. When the three were still missing in January, their master, Captain Richard Peterson, a representative to the Assembly of South Carolina, took out an ad in *The Boston News-Letter* saying he

Advertisements.

R An-away from his Master William Pepperil Esqr. at Kittery, in the Province of Maine, a Negro Man-Slave named Peter, aged about 20, speaks good English, of a pretty brown Complexion, middle Stature, has on a mixt gray home-spun Coat, white home-spun Jacket and breeches, French fall Shoes, fad coloured Stockings, or a mixt worsted pair, and a black Hat. Whosoever shall take up said Negro, and bring or convey him safe to his said Master, or secure him and send notice of him either to his Master, or to Andrew Belcher Esqr. at Boston, shall be well rewarded for his pains, and all reasonable charges paid besides.

Runaway notice for Peter, The Boston News-Letter, April 24, 1704.

suspected they were hiding in Boston or nearby—over a thousand miles away!⁴¹

Towards the end of September 1705, an unnamed Native man escaped his master, Samuel Niles of Kingston, Rhode Island. Niles described him as

aged about 26 Years, he is a short and indifferent thick fellow, with a broad flatt Nose, he has had the Small Pox: He has on a grayish Coat, a Castor Hat, Russet coloured Stockings, and old Shoes.⁴²

During the fall of 1705, two soldiers, David Thomas and Isaac Purnmatick, deserted the Royal military while stationed in Kittery, Maine. David was “a Welsh-man, aged about 30 years, pretty short and thick stature, dark brown coloured hair”, while Isaac was a Native man, “a short Fellow not very thick, speaks very good English” who formerly lived in Hingham, Massachusetts.⁴³

Isaac was spotted that fall in Newbury, Massachusetts in the company of 20-year-old Peter, a black servant who'd run away from Kittery early that year. Peter's master described him as speaking

good English, of a pretty brown Complexion, middle Stature, has on a mixt gray home-spun Coat, white home-spun Jacket and Breeches, French fall Shoes, sad coloured Stockings, of a mixt worsted pair, and a black Hat.⁴⁴

In November, *The Boston News-Letter* printed a series of articles about the harrowing plight of Henry Burch, a young Quaker man. Burch's troubles began nine years before when he was indentured to his uncle, a shipboard doctor. Over the years Burch managed to survive an attack by French privateers, a horrible shipwreck that killed all but four of his crewmates, and imprisonment in Amsterdam, only to be sold in Virginia against his will by his swindling uncle. Burch eventually escaped, arriving in Boston penniless. Moved by his story, some of the wealthiest Quakers in town took him in and sent word of Burch's plight to his father in London. *The Boston News-Letter* even ran a lengthy article about his unbelievable misfortunes. But after two days of wining and dining the young man, Burch stole money, jewelry, and a new set of clothes from the Quakers and disappeared. Shortly after, a letter from Samuel Carpenter arrived in Boston saying the entire story was made up. Instead of his misadventures throughout the Atlantic, Burch had been indentured to Carpenter the past seven years in Philadelphia and robbed him of 40 shillings before running off. Beyond November, there is no word at to Burch's fate—*nor his real name!*⁴⁵

Runaways brought 1705 to a close with 25-year-old Samuel Downs leaving on December 26.* The white servant had been sent from Boston to work in Sea-brook (Old Saybrook), Connecticut the previous May, and ran away either while there or when he returned

* In Britain, December 26 has historically been a day for masters to give their servants Christmas gifts, known in modern times as Boxing Day. It would appear that Downs took the liberty of gifting himself his freedom without bothering to ask his master.

to Boston.⁴⁶

In February, an unnamed 20-year-old black man ran away from Boston. In April Peter and Isaac, the runaways from Kittery, Maine, were caught in South Carolina, a thousand miles from the start of their escape.⁴⁷

That summer, an unnamed black woman ran away from Kingston, Rhode Island with her four children, the oldest of whom was only 11 years old, the youngest still nursing. While anyone running away took great risks, the ability of a black woman to run away, whose presence would immediately be noted with suspicion, especially one with four dependent children, was a remarkable feat of courage and tenacity. Interestingly, her master, Nathaniel Niles, is the brother of Samuel Niles, whose Native servant ran away the previous summer. One wonders what relationship the first runaway had to the mother and children, if any, but the fact that the Native servant ran off again two months after the woman and her children ran away makes a connection likely. It would appear that at least the mother and her youngest child were caught sometime after October. We know this only because they made another break for freedom the following spring—*let's hope for good!*⁴⁸

In July 1706, 32-year-old Jo, a black servant, ran from Boston. His master described him as “of a middle Stature, well set, Speaks good English . . . has on a sad coloured Jacket, white Shirt, and Leather Breeches.” In September, 17-year-old Grace took off from New York City. When she was still missing in January, her master, Nicholas Jamain, desperately placed an ad in *The Boston News-Letter* describing her as

a short thick Indian Girl . . . her face is full of Pock holes, very few hairs on her Eye-brows, a very flat Nose, and a broad mouth; She speak English, Dutch and French, the last best.

Jamain then listed agents willing to receive Grace, should she be

captured, in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New York, and the Carolinas—such was the potential reach of her escape. Jamain's list says nothing of areas north or west of New York, which as a Native American Grace might have fled.⁴⁹

That November, a 19-year-old Scotsman named James Furdize escaped Bristol, Rhode Island in a canoe. His master described him as speaking

good English, of a middle Stature, fair Complexion,
light brown Hair, hath with him a good black felt Hat,
two Jackets, the undermost of Searge lyned, the upper-
most of Home-spun Kersey dyed of a pretty sad Colour,
and lyned with brown linen called western Tow-cloth, a
Flanel Shirt, and leather breeches.

Two months later, Daniel Hump, an 18-year-old Native man, ran off from his master in Boston as well.⁵⁰ Over the coming decades, the ebbs and flows of runaways continued as the middle and upper classes of New England tried to confine those below them.

* * *

By 1720, Massachusetts slave owners held over 2,000 Africans in bondage, along side thousands of white servants and Native slaves. As Boston grew denser, the rabble grew increasingly able to take care itself—whether hiding runaways, fencing goods, or helping fugitives escape through its ports. Tales like those listed above proceeded to multiply as the under class proved untamable, as it has since its inception.*

But as Native, white, and black servants began to fill the col-

* For hundreds of examples of other New England runaways, please see Antonio T. Bly's *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-Century New England, 1700–1789*.

ony, officials knew they needed to find ways of controlling them, and turned to laws, social theory, and the Bible to implement their design. If modern life was uprooting Puritanism from Boston and placing it in the countryside, its exceptionalism was going to linger as justification for New England's horrendous hierarchy.



VII

“Servants, your Tongues, your Hands,
your Feet, are your Masters”

or

“A man hath so many Mischiefs,
as he hath Servants”

As early as the 1690s, Rev. Cotton Mather, the colonies’ most prolific, published, and circulated writer, began to try his hand at social theory. As Ibram X. Kendi has observed,

In *A Good Master Well Served* (1696), [Rev. Cotton Mather] presumed that nature had created a ‘conjugal society’ between husband and wife; a ‘Parental Society’ between parent and child; and, ‘lowest of all’, a ‘herile society’ between master and servant. Society, he said, became destabilized when children, women, and servants refused to accept their station.*²

Mather whole-heartedly believed “that Christianity will Teach

* Unless otherwise cited, the following quotes by Mather come from *A good master well served. A brief discourse on the necessary properties & practices of a good servant in every-kind of servitude: and of the methods that should be taken by the heads of a family, to obtain such a servant.*

persons to be better Masters, and better Servants, than ever they were before." Mather continued this argument in *A Good Master Well Served*, "Masters indeed should be Fathers unto their Servants. It was a most suitable word, which a Celebrated Master once had from those that were under him." In exchange for the servitude and loyalty of his servants, a good master owed his underlings work, so they may not be idle and turn to wickedness; food and clothing, so they may not turn to stealing or taking from the better off; and a proper Christian education, which is to say, a morality that would ensure their servitude.³

Mather insisted that servants who disobeyed their masters should be lectured, and when that didn't work, they must be whipped.⁴ Addressing the servants themselves, Mather declared

Oh! That you would become the Sincere, and Hearty Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ! Then we shall hope to see you, Dutiful Servants unto those Masters and Mistresses, under whom our Common Lord hath Stationed you.⁵

Mather reminded servants that they may not like their earthly servitude, but it was better than eternal servitude in hell for disobeying the Lord who made them servants—such was the circular logic of the Puritan elite.⁶

The Devil is the Driver of those Unfaithful Servants, who Unlawfully Defeit the Service, wherein the Good Hand of God has fixed them. . . . Wherefore, As when a Servant . . . was Running away, an Angel of the Lord appeared unto that Servant, and said, in Gen 169. Return to thy Mistress, and submit thy self unto her Hands; thus, if any of you are Designing or Desiring to Run away from your Masters, I do bring you a Prohibition from our Great LORD this Day, Stay with thy Master, & submit thy self unto him; if thou wouldest not have the plagues of God, pursue thee, wheresoever thou [go.]⁷

Metacomet revisted...



Cotton Mather was the culmination of two previous generations of New England ideologists (the Cottons and Mathers), a terrifying Puritan prodigy accepted to Harvard as an adolescent. He moved like a wrecking ball through all manner of New England classes, races, genders, sexualities, and spiritualities. Mather was, however, eventually recognized as an out of control religious fanatic and denied the presidency of Harvard, which his father Increase Mather had previously held and Cotton desperately wanted.

In his youth, reports Jill Lepore, Cotton Mather

made a pilgrimage to Plymouth to visit the head [of Metacomet]. There, with an outstretched arm, he reached up and ‘took off the Jaw from the Blasphemous exposed Skull of the Leviathan.’ . . . But if he was motivated only by vengeance, however belated, why not simply spit at the skull, or smash it to dust? Perhaps Cotton had a more metaphorical motive: to shut Philip up. By stealing Philip’s jawbone, his mouth, he put an end to Philip’s blasphemy (literally, his evil utterances).¹

Mather then issued seven demands to all New England servants:

I.

Whatsoever Service you do for your Masters (or Mistresses) do it as a Service unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

II.

Yield unto your Masters (and Mistresses) that Reverence, which is due from a Servant unto a Master. Since by the Ordination of God, you are made Servants, don't think much of that Inferiority, which is to be confess'd by you, as long as you are Servants.

III.

Let your Obedience to your Masters (and Mistresses) while you are Servants be such, as will manifest that you are the Obedient Children of God. You are the Animate, Separate, Active Instruments of other men. Servants, your Tongues, your Hands, your Feet, are your Masters, and they should move according to the Will of your Masters.

IV.

Let your Diligence in the Service of our Masters (and Mistresses) be such as to render you Profitable and Acceptable Servants. There are many slothful Servants; and Servants, that would willingly Sleep away, or Talk away, if not Play away, all their Time: Will you now set the Brand of such a Servant?

V.

Let your faithfulness to all the Interests of your Masters (and Mistresses) be such, that you may be, the Faithful Servants who shall a found with Blessings.

VI.

Let it be your Study to be Serviceable unto your Masters

(and Mistresses) Really, Thoroughly, Universally Serviceable. There has been an old saying sometimes used . . . A man hath so many Mischiefs, as he hath Servants.

VII.

Those things which may have a Tendency to make you Ill Servants. Avoid them Carefully, Religiously, Eternally. Wherefore that you may not be Bad Servants, Abandon all Bad Courses whatsoever.⁸

Mather concluded, echoing Gomes Eannes de Zurara and countless other defenders of slavery, by addressing New England's black servants.

And will not the Scores of Slaves, the poor Blacks, now also in this Assembly, Give Earnest Heed, unto these words of God? Give Ear, ye pittied Blacks, Give Ear! It is allowed in the Scriptures, to the Gentiles, That they May keep Slaves; although the Law of Charity requires your Owners to Use you, as those that have Reasonable Souls within you. . . . You are better Fed & better Clothed, & better Managed by far, than you would be, if you were your Own men. All that now remains for you, is to become first the Good Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, & then, of those that have purchased you. There was a Countrey of Swarthy People, of whom 'twas foretold in Psal. 68. 31. Ethiopia, [or, more truly, Arabia] shall soon stretch out her Hands unto God. Well then, poor Ethiopians, do you now Stretch out your Hands unto the Lord; even those poor Black Hands of yours, the Lord calleth for them.⁹

We can see the same rigid, condescending, exceptional, racist thinking that had slaughtered and killed Native Americans used here to justify the bondage of women, children, the poor, Africans, and all the places they overlapped and interacted. To further racialize good and evil, Mather believed that all of humanity, includ-

ing Africans, had white souls, and that Africans had been turned black out of their rejection and ignorance of the Christian god.*¹⁰ Upon seeing black people on the street, Mather would quietly pray to himself, “Lord, wash that poor soul white in the Blood of thy Son.”¹¹ According to Mather, only under proper white Christian care (ie servitude and white paternalism) could black people be made whole again.

“Alwayes Keep your Hand from doing any Evil” Mather continued,

do not by Fornication, by Stealing, by Lying, by Running away make your selves infinitely Black [other] than you are already. . . . So, though your Skins are of the colour of the Night, yet your Souls will be washed White in the Blood of the Lamb: and be Entitled unto an Inheritance in Light: Though you are in Slavery to men, yet you shall be the Free men of the Lord, the Children of God: Though you are Fed among the Dogs, with the Orts of our Tables, yet you shall at length, Ly down unto a Feast with Abraham himself, in the Heaven of the Blessed. Been’t you Discouraged; it will be but a Little, a Little, a Little While, and all your pains will End in Everlasting Joyes.¹²

“But if you will not be such Orderly Servants,” Mathers concluded,

‘tis a terrible thing that I have to say unto you. All the Sorrows that you see in this World, are but the Beginnings of Sorrows, and Little Emblems of the Sorrows that

* As Ibram X. Kendi has observed, Mather declared the human soul white at the same time John Locke declared the unblemished mind to be the same color.

Opposite: Slavery above, slavery below. According to Mather, when the devil enslaves it is bad, when Mather enslaves it is good.



remain for you in another. Do you meet with Hunger here? You shall there be Hungry and hardly be stead for ever. Does the Heat Oppress you here? You shall there be Tormented in a Flame hotter than that of Brimstone for ever. Does the Cold afflict you here? You shall there have Gnashing of Teeth for ever? Do you here sometimes want your Sleep? There you shall not Rest, neither Day nor Night, for ever? Are you Beaten here? Why, the Devil will be your Overseer; and you'll be Weltring under intolerable Blows and Wounds, World without End.¹³

* * *

In 1693, a group of enslaved Bostonians formed the Religious Society of Negroes, one of the first formal organizations of African-Americans. Rev. Mather soon stepped in and wrote the organization's guidelines. The 'chosen' Mather declared, as the self-appointed voice of the slaves, that

WE the Miserable Children of Adam, and of Noah, thankfully Admiring and Accepting the Free-Grace of GOD, that Offers to Save us from our Miseries, by the Lord Jesus Christ, freely Resolve, with His Help, to become the Servants of that Glorious LORD.¹⁴

The Rules For the Society of Negroes stated that each meeting should begin and end with prayer. The meetings may only take place between 7-9 pm on Sundays, and only with the express permission of members' masters. A white man from the neighborhood was to check in on the meetings to make sure they were being used for proper, religious instruction, and not plotting ways to lessen their misery. Only those that Mather personally approved could attend the meetings. Any members caught drinking, swearing, lying, stealing, or disobeying their master would be chastised by the group, suspended for two weeks, and only after sincere contrition

be allowed back. Anyone caught having extramarital sex would be suspended for a year.¹⁵

Not only were members to scold each other, but they were expected to monitor black people outside of meetings as well. Slaves and servants absent from work, hiding out, or running away were to be immediately reported to the authorities. Under no circumstances were members to harbor runaways, and anyone caught doing so would be permanently expelled from the Society.¹⁶ It is telling that one of the first official organizations of black people in New England was allowed to exist only so long as it enforced slavery.

* * *

All throughout New England, authorities were grappling with a growing under class. In 1690 the General Assembly of Connecticut declared that any black people found walking the streets or highways of the colony needed to carry with them written permission from their masters or proof of their own freedom. Black people would otherwise be considered runaways and their fellow colonists were expected to seize them and deliver them to jail.¹⁷ These laws built on ones from the Caribbean, Virginia, and other places that had already tried to address growing numbers of enslaved black people.

As Boston’s population of color increased, town officials needed to find more ways to regulate it, and around 1705 issued *An Act to Prevent Disorders in the Night*.

Whereas great disorders, insolencies, and burglaries are ofttimes raised and committed in the night time by Indian, negro and mulatto servants and slaves . . . no Indian, negro or mulatto servant or slave may presume to be absent from the families where they respectively belong, or be found abroad in the night time after nine o’clock;



A BRACE of PUBLIC GUARDIANS.

London July 10 July 1800 by R. Ackermann at the Repository of Art 161 Strand

I S28 A6 JUNE 15 1796 BURNT M.A. HAS HAD 12.1785 AND REPRODUCED FROM A COPY IN THE BOSTON LIBRARY

59.538-156

The courts and the nightwatch—as revered in the 1700s as they are now.

unless it be upon errand for their respective masters.*¹⁸

As part of the beginnings of a Boston police force, the act called for “several Constables and Tything men” to “frequently walk the Streets of [Boston] after 9 at Night”, and especially on Holidays, “to see if after that time, any Indian, Negro or Mulatto Servant or Slave is found abroad.”¹⁹

If out after curfew and not running an errand for their master, the accused would be arrested. The Act also authorized the constables and tything men to search any property they thought might house people of color breaking the curfew. These acts added to laws

* I cannot find more than a few quotes from the Boston version of the law, but I assume this 1714 New Hampshire *An Act to Prevent Disorders in the Night* is an exact duplicate of the original, or else very similar in wording, content, and purpose.

already forbidding servants and slaves from drinking alcohol, starting fires, or assembling publicly or privately—behavior that masters and colonial authorities were able to curb but not entirely stop.²⁰

That same year Boston officials issued *An Act for the Better Preventing of Spurious and Mixt Issue*. The law forbid black and white people from marrying or having sex with each other. If a black man and a white woman were caught fornicating, both would be severely whipped, the man banished and sold from Massachusetts within six months (and confined to jail in the mean time), and the woman indentured at the discretion of the courts. If a black woman and a white man were caught fornicating, both would be severely whipped, the woman banished and sold, and the man forced to pay a fine of £5. If their union resulted in a child, the white member of the couple was to raise the child.²¹ The Act joined older laws forbidding homosexuality, non-monogamy, extra-marital sex, and masturbation that could serve as additional charges against interracial lovers.

The Act also made the penalty for black people hitting whites explicitly more severe than if a white person struck another white.²² The law at no point addressed the habitual beatings and rapes endured by black people at the hands of their white masters and overseers.

This same year, New York adopted some of Virginia’s strict racial laws, including the killing of slaves trying to escape to Canada, and the stripping of property from free people of color. As Ibram X. Kendi has pointed out, the New York law then “denigrated the free negroes of the colony’ as an ‘idle, slothful people’ who weighed on the ‘public charge.’”²³

* * *

The following year in 1706, the North Church of Boston’s congregation gave an African slave to their minister, Rev. Cotton Mather. He

soon renamed the slave Onesimus, meaning “servicable” or “useful”, after a slave in the New Testament that St. Paul returned to his master. According to Mather’s diary, the Mathers received the slave as “a mighty smile of Heaven upon my family”.²⁴ The arrival of Onesimus prompted Mather to write another treatise, this time on the proper religious instruction of African slaves. Among other rules, masters were to bring their slaves into their household completely, meaning the salvation of the household was linked to the moral behavior of the enslaved. Failure to instruct, or force, slaves into rigid Christian morality could mean eternal damnation for all members.²⁵

Onesimus was a skeptical convert. He didn’t always do what he was told and reluctantly listened to Mather’s religious instruction. More than once Mather returned home to find Onesimus and his other slaves relaxing with drink. The final straw for Onesimus came when both of his sons died during infancy—what sort of a loving god would do this to him? he wondered. No, Onesimus concluded, he wanted nothing more to do with Mather’s god.²⁶

Able to obtain wages with his extra time, Onesimus even went so far as to offer to buy a replacement slave for himself. It’s unclear whether this worked, but shortly after renouncing the Christian god, Onesimus was emancipated from Mather—but! on the condition that Onesimus serve the family daily for the rest of his life, fetch water for cooking and cleaning, carry corn to the mill, and shovel snow come winter.²⁷

As Cedrick May has pointed out, ever the theologian and philosopher, Mather emancipated Onesimus in order that he might be removed from their spiritual household. The tenacious and unruly Onesimus had managed to reject Christianity and force Mather to adopt a loophole in his own teachings. Through this technical emancipation, the Mathers’ eternal souls were no longer linked to the wayward Onesimus. Without contradicting his own teachings,

African wisdom...



Onesimus is remarkable for at least one other reason. Like most New England slaves, when given to Mather he was asked if he'd had smallpox. "Yes, and no", he curiously replied. Onesimus then told Mather how as a young man a drop of smallpox pus was taken from an infected neighbor and placed within a scratch on his own arm, successfully inoculating Onesimus against the disease.

Dumbfounded, Mather proceeded to question other African Bostonians, only to find the practice common in parts of Africa. When the smallpox epidemic of 1721 hit Boston, killing 14% of the 5,889 people in town, Mather tried advertising this African treatment. At first Boston authorities were receptive, but when it was discovered that African medicine was at play, the practice, either from fear of witchcraft or bruised white pride, was denounced.

Curiously, Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, John Adams' great uncle, was the only Massachusetts physician willing to treat patients with the African inoculation technique. Both Mather and Boylston received threats of lynchings, Mather had a bomb thrown into his home, and the town council forbade Boylston from conducting further inoculations. In the end, Boylston managed to save 97.5% of his patients with this African wisdom.³¹

Mather certainly thought to himself, he was still able benefit from Onesimus' labor as a perpetual servant.²⁸

Again, according to Ibram X. Kendi,

Mather's writings on slavery spread throughout the colonies, influencing enslavers from Boston to Virginia. By the eighteenth century, he had published more books than any other American, and his native Boston had become colonial America's booming intellectual center.²⁹

But despite his influence and prestige, Mather was only ever able to convert one of his African slaves, Ezer. Another bondman, Obadiah, followed Onesimus in his rejection of Mather's cruel and rigid god.³⁰

* * *

As we have seen, the Atlantic cycle worked two ways: repressive ideas and relationships founded along religion, social theory, race, gender, and law circulated the ocean from above, while those on the receiving end circulated ideas, methods, and tactics about how to circumvent, challenge, and break those repressive conditions from below.* Equally important, the rabble passed on to each other experiments and wisdom in how to live beyond and heal from such oppressive roles.

In time, not just the patriarchs of small households were feeling the strain of an unwilling under class—all over Boston, New England, and nigh the entire Atlantic world, class tensions were reaching a breaking point.

* Leopold Trebitch is unfathomably grateful—as a writer, historian, and person—for Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker placing this concept of the Cycle of Rebellion in his head, exemplified best in their amazing work, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*.

VIII

John Julian, the *Whydah Gally*, and the Anti-Nation

John Julian was born in the Miskito Coast of Nicaragua and Honduras around 1701, the mixed son of Miskito and African parents. Indigenous to the region, the Miskito had successfully fended off Spanish attempts to take the Coast by force in the second half of the 1500s. They had likewise repelled Spanish missionary efforts to gain footholds throughout most of the 1600s.¹

By the 1680s, British and Dutch privateers and pirates were using the Miskito Coast as a refuge between their Caribbean raids. To have Miskito crew members, whether by choice or force, was considered incredibly valuable, as they were excellent lancers of all variety of fish, turtle, and manatee. William Dampier, observing the Miskito in 1687, noted that “one or two of them in a Ship will maintain 100 men”. The Miskito were also prized guides, always managing to find hidden harbors to disappear into. In this vein, possibly as early as 1716 at the age of 15, John Julian joined Samuel “Black Sam” Bellamy as a fisherman working one of the canoes attached to his fleet of pirate ships.²

Sam had sailed to Florida from Massachusetts two years before hoping to salvage treasure from sunken ships. After little success,



Sam joined the privateer ship of Benjamin Hornigold and Edward “Blackbeard” Teach. But when Hornigold repeatedly refused to attack British ships of his own nation, “by a majority vote of the crew, Hornigold was deposed as captain of the *Marianne* and left the vessel with his loyal followers, including Teach.”³ By rejecting nationhood, and instead identifying along lines of class, the *Marianne* was now a proper pirate ship to be run by popular will.

In contrast, merchant and naval ships of this era, which produced many a pirate, had some of the most horrendous working conditions—on par with chattel slavery in the future United States. Sailors endured grueling work, vicious corporal punishments, and were often bound to ships in cycles of debt slavery.⁴ Privately owned ships commissioned by governments to plunder vessels of other nations, called privateers, had similar dynamics.⁴ Since both raided and robbed, pirates and privateers are easily lumped together, yet pirates stand out as uninterested in national allegiances.

We might even consider certain captains like John Martel, Captain Kidd, and Jean Lafitte, who sold slaves they captured, to be cultural or racial privateers. Though they may have questioned their own position in the social pyramid and refused the lowly life of normal sailors, they were loyal to the logic of white supremacy and capital—a service that came at the expense of the Atlantic under class. If we’re going to romanticize the lives of pirates, let’s at least pick ones that were against slavery.

At their best, pirate ships became floating collectives, and in an age that was increasingly being defined by nation, race, and religion, interracial crews treated each other as equals and flew the black flag. They were the anti-nation. Where they would sail, who would be their officers, what kind of ships they would engage, and what would happen to prisoners was all decided by popular vote.*

* Though, as anyone who’s spent any decent amount of time in anarchist or other circles striving for equal relationships, all manner of

Loot was shared equally, with extra shares given to those who led assaults (and risked greatest injury) and those injured in combat or while working the ship.⁵ Members of royal navies and merchant ships were offered no such liberties, and crew members could be whipped and hanged for suggesting them.⁶

With Hornigold gone, the remaining ninety members of the *Marianne* elected Sam its captain. Over the next year, they would take 53 ships and amass an incomprehensible fortune of £100,000,000, possibly the most any crew did during the Golden Age of Piracy. Like many pirate ships of the day, the crew was motley, or interracial. By the time Black Sam ran aground in Massachusetts in the spring of 1717, his fleet was over 150 members strong and made up of displaced Englishmen and other European outcasts, Native Americans, and fifty Africans, mostly freed slaves. Sam himself was white, yet dubbed ‘Black’ for his rejection of Christianity and the European work ethic, possibly for what colonial officials viewed as racial treason as well. Known for their leniency and mercy towards ships they seized, as well as their commitment to horizontalism, the crew became known as “Robin Hood’s men.”⁷

Within a year of joining Sam, Julian had helped take dozens of ships, including the *Whydah*. The massive, three-masted, 110 foot long galley had been commissioned in 1715 by Sir Humphrey Morcie, a member of parliament and the foremost London slave merchant of the day. Finished in 1716, the *Whydah* managed to make only one trip to Africa. After ripping 500 people from their homeland and selling them in the Caribbean, the *Whydah* was spotted by the *Marianne* on its way back to London. After a chase of three days, the *Whydah* surrendered without incident.⁸

interpersonal dynamics, including things as simple as popularity and social capital, can hide and thrive under the banners of Equality and Consensus. Not to mention that even with our best intentions we can replicate and expand the worst dynamics.



Having boarded the *Whydah*, Black Sam addressed its crew,

Ye miserable victims of the earth, ye cowardly poltroons who serve kings, princes and lords for a miserly pittance scarce big enough to keep body and soul together. Ye are yellow-livered swine, numskulls and craven cowards to serve those who trample on ye with laws they make to protect their ill gotten powers and wealth. They make their laws to rob thee as they wish and enforce these foul laws with sword and musket. They banquet in the fine halls of their castles and mansions and leave ye to feed on the few crumbs and the gristle they cannot eat. To ye I say I am no slave and as a free man I have the right to make war on them as they do me. To all of ye I say, make one with me against these vultures who look on us as swine and cattle.⁹

As a thank you for not firing on them, the pirates gave its captain and any crew that did not wish to join them the smallest ship in their fleet, the *Sultana*, and £20 to find safe harbor. But a number of the *Whydah*'s crew joined the pirates, wanting nothing more to do with merchant ships, especially the despised slavers.¹⁰ It speaks to

the generosity and compassion of the interracial pirates (as well as the common plight of sailors, often bound to ships) that they would forgive and accept the former slave crew as brothers and equals.

The top deck of the *Whydah*, along with its captain's quarters and barricado used to keep slaves below deck should they mutiny, was removed, and 150 people moved in to staff the galley. Sam made the *Whydah* the flagship of the fleet, and young Julian became its pilot.¹¹

For the next two months, the fleet sailed up the eastern coast, taking ships along the Carolinas and near Nantucket Sound in New England. During this time the *Whydah* overtook a sloop near Rhode Island, and though Sam wanted to plunder it and leave it be, the crew voted to burn it. In this moment, Black Sam has gone down in folklore as saying to the sloop's captain,

'Damn my Blood! I am sorry they won't let you have your sloop again, for I scorn to do any one a mischief, when it is not to my Advantage; damn the Sloop, we must sink her, and she might be of Use to you. Tho', damn ye, you are a sneaking Puppy, and so are all those who will submit to be governed by Laws which rich Men have made for their own Security; for the cowardly Whelps have not the Courage otherwise to defend what they get by Knavery; but damn ye altogether: Damn them for a Pack of crafty Rascals, and you, who serve them, for a Parcel of hen-hearted Numskulls. They vilify us, the Scoundrels do, when there is only this Difference, they rob the Poor under the cover of Law, forsooth, and we plunder the Rich under the Protection of our own Courage; had you not better make One of us, than sneak after the Ass of these Villains for Employment?'

Capt. Beer told him, his Conscience would not allow him to break thro' the laws of God and Man.

'You are a devilish Conscience Rascal, damn ye! I am a free Prince, and I have as much Authority to make War on the whole World, as he who has a hundred Sail of Ships at Sea, and an Army of 100,000 Men in the field; and this my Conscience tells me; but there is no arguing with such sniveling Puppies, who allow Superiors to kick them about Deck at Pleasure; and pin their Faith upon a Pimp of a Parsons; a Squab, who neither practices nor believes what he puts upon the chuckle-headed Fools he preaches.'¹²

Such was the ire of the pirates against the ruling class, and the tide of officers and priests who forced the rabble to do the rich's bidding.

In late April, under the cover of a thick fog, the *Whydah* seized the *Mary-Anne*, "a pink with more than 7,000 gallons of Madeira wine on board . . . and the *Fisher*—a small sloop with a cargo of deer hides and tobacco".¹³ The pirates' merriment, though, was soon cut short as the seas began to grow rough with signs of an approaching, violent storm.

As fate would have it, a nor'easter seized the *Whydah* off of Cape Cod, snapped its masts, and capsized the galley. In a matter of moments, all but two aboard the *Whydah* drowned. The *Mary-Anne* was sunk as well, but not before the five pirates stationed on it managed to make it ashore. All seven surviving shipmates—including, miraculously, John Julian, who'd been piloting the *Whydah*—were taken to Boston, and charged with piracy. Simon Vanvoorst of New York; John Brown of Jamaica; Thomas Baker of Flushing, Holland; Henrick Quinter of Amsterdam; Peter Cornelius Hooff of Sweden; and John Shaun of Nants, France were all found guilty and hanged under the eye of Rev. Cotton Mather. Perhaps because of his age, the 16-year-old Julian was spared the gallows and instead auctioned as a slave to John Quincy.¹⁴

IX

Life and Death in the Countryside

The Quincies and Adamses of Braintree

Julian soon found himself in the stifling, near countryside of Braintree, Massachusetts, in the home of the settlement's most powerful man. John Quincy's great-grandfather had founded Braintree in the 1630s atop the smoldering ruins of Merry Mount.* In the eighty years since its rechristening, the Quincies, like John Adams' ancestors of Basses and Adamses, had held every position of power in Braintree. John Quincy was now an officer in the local militia and representative to the Massachusetts General Court. In the coming decades, Quincy would be Speaker of the Massachusetts House for twelve years, while his granddaughter, Abigail Smith, would marry John Adams and mother John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States.²

If life in Boston was becoming overrun with wayward servants and sailors, settlers in the countryside were doubling down on the

* A bizarre, utopian, pagan community of former indentured servants run by royalist Thomas Morton that Plymouth colonists burned to the ground under the command of Myles Standish and possibly John Alden.¹



A rural Massachusetts homestead built in 1643.

sterile vision of their Puritan ancestors. The farming community of Braintree was no exception, and it would appear that the village's patriarchs succeeded, in a sense, in that power struggles manifested themselves within households rather than as collective, public forces. John Adams himself would later be torn between living up to his family's impossible Puritanism and fighting against it.

For the most part, Massachusetts soil is rocky and hard to grow on, so those who eked out a living by planting knew hard, undependable, and often miserable work. Adams' grandfather and father, Selectman Joseph Adams Jr. and Deacon John Adams Sr., were both farmers in Braintree who supplemented their income with additional work. Joseph was a malster like his father and during the winters Deacon John was a shoemaker. Lucky for them, as Puritans, they knew their hard work and suffering would some day be rewarded.³

In addition to farming and cobbling, John Sr. attended Harvard and for decades served as a deacon in the local Congregationalist

(Puritan) church. More than that, for twenty years Deacon John was a selectman for Braintree, as well as tax collector, lieutenant in the local militia, and overseer of local roads, schools, and the Braintree poor house. As a small boy, John Adams attended town meetings with his father, getting a taste for law and politics in the process.⁴ We can imagine the bit of clout Deacon John held locally.

People like John Julian, though, refused to accept the myth of white supremacy and the divinity of the law, even on the small scale of Braintree. In fact, Julian repeatedly defied John Quincy's orders and ran off until Quincy sold him away to Bridgewater, Massachusetts.⁵ Like Cotton Mather and countless other masters before him, we can imagine the fine-tuning of Massachusetts law and household custom enacted by Quincy after dealing with the unruly pirate. Fortunately for us, Julian was but a taste of things to come.

X

“Like a Hurricane”

Class War, 1730s Style

According to Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker in *The Many-Headed Hydra*,

The overturning of several colonies by insurrection seemed a real possibility in the 1730s and 1740s. During these years a furious barrage of plots, revolts, and war ripped through colonial Atlantic societies like a hurricane. No respecter of national or imperial boundaries, this cycle of rebellion slashed through British, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Danish territories, which stretched from the northern reaches of South America through the West Indies to the southern colonies and then the port cities of North America. Most of these events took place in plantation regions and were led by African Americans, but other areas (such as New York) and other actors (such as the Irish) were also involved. The magnitude of the upheaval was, in comparative terms, extraordinary, encompassing more than eighty separate cases of conspiracy, revolt, mutiny, and arson—a figure probably six

or seven times greater than the number of similar events that occurred in either the dozen years before 1730 or the dozen after 1742. . . .*

Major conspiracies unfolded in Virginia, South Carolina, Bermuda, and Louisiana (New Orleans) in the year 1730 alone.[†] The last of these featured a man named Samba, who had already led an unsuccessful revolt against a French slave-trading fort on the coast of Africa and a mutiny aboard a slave ship before the authorities of New Orleans broke his body on the wheel. The slaves of New Orleans were not intimidated by the terror, however, for they rose again in 1732.[‡]

Slave mutinies like Samba Bambara's were indeed an important dimension to this era's cycle of rebellion, not fully explored in this section of *The Many-Headed Hydra*. If sailors during the first half of the 1700s were fighting their enslavement at the point of captivity by resisting press gangs (as shown in Part II), so too were Africans along the coasts of Africa and in the Middle Passage. From 1729–1732, five New England-based slave ships alone had mutinies—not to mention the dozens of mutinies aboard Dutch, French, British, Danish, and Carolina slavers throughout the 1730s.

In 1729, the slaves aboard Boston's *Katherine* unsuccessfully tried to escape while docked along the Guinea Coast.[‡] A year later in May, Captain Peter Jump and eight crew members of the *William* were “murther'd by the Negro's they had on Board” near Anomabu, Ghana.[§] The mutineers forced the surviving crew to turn the ship around and head towards home. But after giving the Africans “Opi-

* I suspect if given omniscient powers we might just as easily find as many examples before and after this period, which shouldn't diminish the importance of the 1730s. —L.T.

† The Natchez Uprising of 1729 almost certainly influenced the New Orleans plot a year later.—L.T.

um in Wine and Water", the crew signal to a passing ship, which overtook the insurgents and executed the most rebellious.⁴

The next year in June, slaves battled for control of a Newport sloop. Lorenzo J. Greene recounts,

Captain George Scott in the sloop, *Little George*, sailed from the Guinea Coast with a cargo of ninety-six slaves, thirty-five of whom were men. Six days later, the slaves slipped out of their shackles, and at four-thirty in the morning, attacked the ship. Breaking through the bulkhead, they gained the deck, where they were confronted by the watch of three men. These the slaves quickly dispatched and pitched overboard. Terrified, the Captain, three men, and a boy sought refuge in the cabin below, where the slaves promptly imprisoned them. One of the sailors attempted to fashion a bomb by filling two bottles with gunpowder to be thrown among the slaves. This strategem was thwarted by a Negro, who dropped an axe on the bottle just as the sailor lighted the fuse. The explosion set fire to a keg of powder, blew open the cabin door, raised the deck, discharged all except one musket, and seriously injured both the captain and bombmaker. Determined to wipe out the crew, the slaves loaded one of the carriage guns and fired it down the scuttle where the sailors were imprisoned. According to the captain, the blast 'blew the Scuttle all to pieces' but no one was injured. For several days the slaves controlled the ship, while the captain and the remainder of the crew, armed with muskets, defended themselves below. Sometime later, the cabin boy, impelled by hunger, ventured upon deck, whereupon the slaves promptly clapped him in irons. Finally, the Negroes guided the ship into the Sierra Leone River and ran it aground on a bar. After removing all the women and children, they abandoned the ship. Later they returned with other natives in an attempt to

kill the crew, but the latter successfully defended themselves with firearms. At the first favorable opportunity the captain and the rest of the crew came upon deck, lowered a boat and started down the river.⁵

In 1732, attacks disrupted three more New England slavers.* In April, the people of Cassan, a fortified village along the Gambia River, killed Captain John Major while negotiating the sale of a slave. Major was part of a trading expedition led by Captain Samuel Moore of Boston, who was waiting for Major on the coast. The town later explained that they were insulted by Major's cheap prices, but also years of merchants "carrying away several of our Friends and Relations by Force, without any Provocation," including the nephew of the village slattee,[†] and "many Injuries we had received from other separate Traders". After taking over Major's schooner, the people of Cassan decided to free his enslaved cargo and send the crew down river in canoes to the coast.⁶

Later that year, reports Nick Douglas,

Four 'Negro Traders' who boarded a [Newport-based] vessel off the coast of Guinea were assumed to have instigated and assisted an uprising in which about 20 slaves escaped in boats and canoes with the traders.[‡] Later, more Africans came back in canoes and attempted to

* The pinpointing of 'home' for a number of Atlantic vessels is not so straightforward. The voyage of Captains Major and Moore, for example, is reported by various sources to have been based out of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, or New Hampshire, seemingly because investors were spread throughout New England and their ship stopped at multiple ports before crossing the Atlantic.

† Slattee is the term used by Francis Moore in his *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa* to refer to leaders of small towns and villages along the Gambia River. I can find this term absolutely nowhere else. I hope it is as accurate and respectful as possible.

‡ It's possible that this is the same episode as the one in Cassan.

re-board the ship to free the remaining slaves but were ‘beat-off.’ At the same time on a nearby [Bristol-based] ship, slaves rose up and destroyed the whole crew, including Captain Perkins, whose head, legs and arms were cut off.⁷

The following spring, Captain Moore returned to Gambia from Boston bent on doing business, avenging the death of Captain Major, and showing the peoples of the Gambia River their place. For miles up and down the river, villages and traders were pleased to have another go at Moore—they had not forgotten his aggressive tactics from the year before, nor his passing off of pewter and other cheap metals as silver. To them, Moore represented the worst of European trade, particularly the kidnapping of “Friends and Relations by Force, without any Provocation.”⁸

During his two months on the river, villages “several times endeavour’d to take or kill the said Captain Moore”, causing him to “seldom ventured ashore, and when he did, took care to be well arm’d”. Finally on the night of June 17, a party one hundred strong ambushed Moore’s sloop, chased him downstream, and ran him aground. Fighting ensued lasting till daybreak, when the attackers withdrew and Moore retreated to the coast.⁹

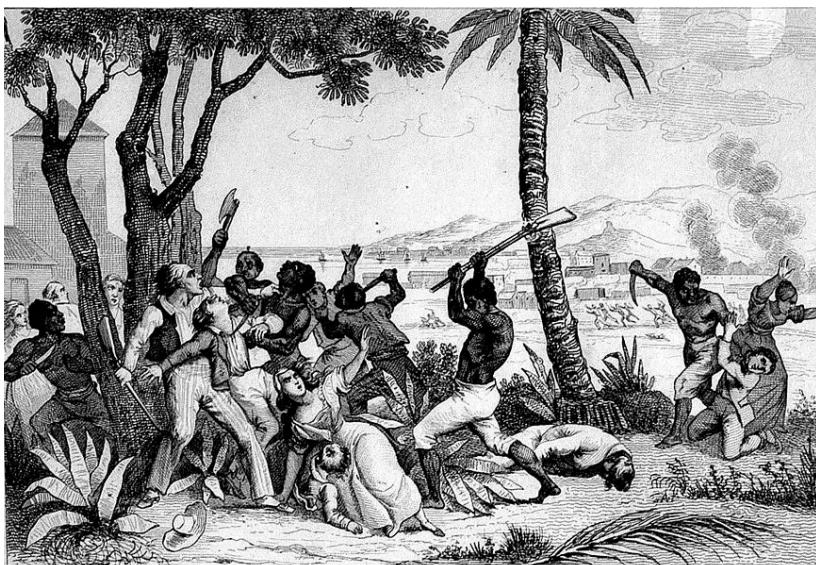
Africans hit the New England slave trade again in 1742, unwittingly targeting Peter Fanueil and his brother-in-law John Jones, two of Boston’s biggest investors. Villagers attacked their ship, the *Jolly Bachelor*, while it was taking slaves along the Sierra Leone River in March. “In the fight Captain Cutler and two of his men were killed. The Negroes stripped the vessel of its rigging and sails, freed the slaves in the hold, then abandoned the ship.”¹⁰ If only the former captives had had the luxury and forethought to light the *Jolly Bachelor* on fire, for it was soon recommissioned a slave ship and not long after it arrived in Newport, Rhode Island with a cargo of twenty slaves.¹¹

Despite the potential payoff, the attempts of New England merchants to enslave Africans was neither easy nor safe. From the hinterlands to the coasts to the Middle Passage, Africans were resisting enslavement by New Englanders with the same intensity they'd been resisting enslavement for generations. This added dimension of African self-defense and shipboard mutinies throughout the Atlantic expands our understanding of this era's cycle of rebellion.

* * *

The year 1733, continue Rediker and Linebaugh,

witnessed rebellions in South Carolina, Jamaica, St. John (Danish Virgin Islands), and Dutch Guyana. In 1734 came plots and actions in the Bahama Islands, St. Kitts, South Carolina again, and New Jersey, the latter two inspired by the rising at St. John. In 1735–36 a vast slave conspiracy was uncovered in Antigua, and other rebellions soon followed on the smaller islands of St. Bartholomew, St. Martin's, Anguilla, and Guadeloupe. In 1737 and again in 1738, Charleston experienced new upheavals. In the spring of 1738, meanwhile, 'several slaves broke out of a jail in Prince George's County, Maryland, united themselves with a group of outlying Negroes and proceeded to wage a small-scale guerilla war.' The following year, a considerable number of slaves plotted to raid a storehouse of arms and munitions in Annapolis, Maryland, to 'destroy his Majestys Subjects within this Province, and to possess themselves of the whole country.' Failing that, they planned 'to settle back in the Woods.' Later in 1739, the Stono Rebellion convulsed South Carolina. Here the slaves burned houses as they fought their way toward freedom in Spanish Florida. Yet another rebellion broke out in Charleston in June 1740, involving 150 to 200



A Caribbean slave revolt in the 1700s. Note the master’s tools being used to dismantle the master.

slaves, fifty of whom were hanged for their daring.¹²

Two small conspiracies hit Boston in 1741. Towards the end of summer, “five Boston Negroes stole a boat belonging to a Mr. Salmon and tried to escape to St. Augustine, Florida”, over a thousand miles away. Unfortunately, the group made it only as far as Barnstable in southern Cape Cod Bay before being caught.¹³ Around the same time, the authorities of Charlestown, Massachusetts accused an enslaved black woman named Kate and an unnamed black boatswain of setting fire to the home of a Mrs. Snowden “with a malicious and evil intent of burning down the town”.¹⁴ Kate may have been spared the gallows for testifying against her accomplice, but the boatswain, reports Lorenzo J. Greene,

made no further confession but died, it was said, ‘like an impudent hardened wretch.’ Slavery had so hardened the

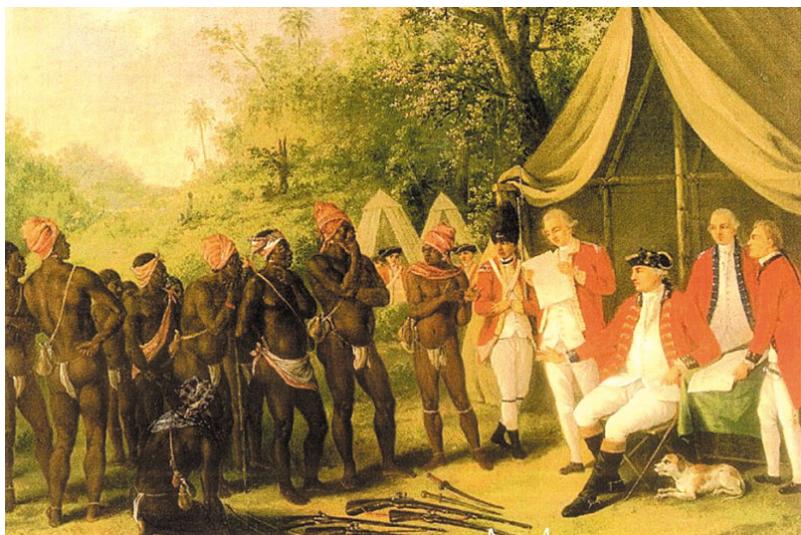
boatswain against white persons that he is said to have 'looked upon every white man as his declared enemy.'¹⁵

As with any plot whose details come to us through the courts and interrogations, this narrative is hardly certain, yet the public terror it created was quite real.

Linebaugh and Rediker continue,

Intensifying these events—and holding aloft a beacon of possibility—was the decade-long Maroon War of Jamaica. Beginning in the late 1720s, slaves escaped to the interior of Jamaica in swelling numbers, returned to the plantations in nocturnal raids, and seized livestock, tools, and sometimes other slaves to take back to their secluded and inaccessible maroon communities in the mountains. Over the next ten years the maroons created a major crisis in the plantation system, especially in the northern and northeastern regions of the island, where they repeatedly forced small, marginal planters to abandon their estates and sell off their slaves, some to New York. . . .

A similar long-term struggle was taking place deep in the rain forests of Suriname, where maroons battled Dutch settlers who, according to Governor Mauricius, struggled to slay the hydra of resistance. A rising tide of rebellion in the Dutch colonies expressed itself in what another official called, in 1740, the intolerable 'insolence of the Coloreds and Blacks, freedmen as well as slaves,' and in the subversive gatherings of soldiers, sailors, and slaves in waterfront taverns to smoke, drink, gamble, trade, and plot who knew what other dreaded cooperative ventures. Indeed, Dutch authorities were complaining about this explosive combination of workers in the spring of 1741, precisely when the same kinds of people were making trouble in New York.



The Jamaican Maroon Wars, which eventually forced the British to negotiate a truce.

The famines of 1728-29 and 1740-41 and their respective diasporas added an Irish dimension to the cycle of rebellion. Of special importance was the ‘Red String Conspiracy,’ which took place in Savannah, Georgia, in March 1736 and foreshadowed the events in New York five years later. A gang of forty to fifty transported Irish felons met in a low tippling house, where they traded in stolen goods and formed ‘plots and treasonable Designs against the Colony,’ even as the elites worried about ‘the Spaniards or French Instigations.’ Eventually they designed to burn the town, kill the white men, save their women, and then meet up with a band of nomadic Indians with whom they would make their escape, perhaps to join the German-Cherokee Christian Gottlieb Priber, who was building a ‘City of Refuge,’ a communist society

for runaway African slaves and European indentured servants as well as Native Americans. The rebels in Savannah would know each other by a ‘Red string about the Right Wrist.’ The plot was foiled but nonetheless threw the young colony into ‘great confusion.’ Such events were not uncommon, as noted by Kerby A. Miller:

‘On numerous occasions in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, colonial officials in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New York and the West Indies feared that Irish “papists” were plotting insurrection with negro slaves or foreign enemies.’

Arson was a common instrument of destruction within the cycle of rebellion, not least because fire was the most accessible of weapons among the dispossessed, especially for those who worked with it in the normal course of their daily life.¹⁶

Massachusetts officials took arson quite seriously, especially when committed by the enslaved. In 1723 a series of fires and attempted arsons ripped through Boston, causing considerably damage and sending the upper class into a panic.* The trouble started around 4 in the morning on March 30 when a fire broke out on King Street near Long Wharf in a tenement house owned by Eli-sha Cooke. Though the fire was substantial and quickly spread to nearby tenements,[†] arson was not suspected until three days later when the home of John Powell went up in flames. Both men were well-connected: Cooke was a member of the Massachusetts House and Powell a powerful merchant and personal secretary to and

* This section on the 1723 fires is massively indebted to Jared Hardesty and his *Slavery, Freedom, and Dependence in Pre-Revolutionary Boston, 1700-1775*. Previous to stumbling upon Hardesty’s dissertation I could only find a sentence or two about the fires.

† As far as I can tell these fires had no fatalities.

brother-in-law of Lt.-Gov. William Dummer. On top of that, an enslaved black man named Diego was caught near Powell’s house and accused of lighting it on fire. Under torture, Diego said he’d burned Powell’s home in revenge for mistreatment from Powell. Diego also gave the names of five other enslaved accomplices, snowballing colonists’ fears into the specter of a general conspiracy.¹⁷

As Jared Hardesty recounts in *Slavery, Freedom, and Dependence in Pre-Revolutionary Boston, 1700-1775*, “On the night of April 6, the Goat Tavern had ‘some Coals of Fire . . . laid’ on one of its walls, but the fire ‘happily went out before Morning.’” By now, all five people named by Diego had been arrested, yet the fires persisted.¹⁸ On Friday morning, continues Hardesty,

an outbuilding belonging to merchant Benjamin Bridge caught fire and townspeople discovered coals near a stable on Pudding Lane and on the former site of the Bunch of Grapes tavern. That night another fire broke out, this time in Boston’s South End. A barn belonging to a Mr. Deming burned to the ground. When a ‘Bundle of Faggots’ appeared near another house in the South End, about ‘20 men’ formed a posse to walk about the town Friday night in order to ‘make what Discovery they could of the Authors of this repeated Villany, who are supposed to be Negro Servants.’ Although unsuccessful in apprehending arsonists, they discovered a ‘Fellow with a dark Lanthorn,’ but he managed to escape.¹⁹

With their interrogations yielding no new suspects, Boston officials commissioned fifty militiamen to arrive armed at any fires in case “Negros should make an Attempt upon the Lives of People who go to Extinguish it,”²⁰ as conspirators had done in New York in 1712. Yet, as Hardesty reports,

Even after the militia had been mobilized, the fires continued. On Sunday, April 14, fire damaged a barn at Bridgham’s Tannery, resulting in the arrest of two more

slaves, and provoking an even stronger response from both town and provincial authorities.²¹

Blaming “some villainous and desperate Negroes, or other dissolute people” that “have entered into a combination to burn and destroy the town”,²² Lt.-Gov. Dummer issued a £50 reward for the arsonists and promised immunity to any conspirators willing to turn in their fellow plotters. But not all Bostonians agreed and upon public reading of Dummer’s proclamation, “a Negro, who stood to hear it’ cried out ‘A Bite, a Bite,’ meaning ‘a hoax, a hoax,’ and Suffolk County Justice of the Peace John Clark promptly ordered the man ‘seiz’d and committed’ to jail.” Despite Dummer’s offer, the following nights saw two more attempted arsons.²³

The town council went into action next, using the fires to further restrict Boston’s people of color. The council outlawed free people of color from owning weapons, buying from or selling to servants and slaves, or hosting servants and slaves at their homes. Free people of color were also expected to indenture their children to “English” (white) masters by the age of four or risk the town doing it for them. Any people of color, free or enslaved, convicted of theft would “be Transported beyond Sea”. No “Indian Negro or Molatto Slave or Servant” was allowed out after dark, nor could they gather in groups of more than two. No person of color was allowed to work as a porter unless approved of by the town council and able to pay a £50 bond “for his fidelity”. When fires occurred, people of color were to stay indoors. Finally, the council expanded the town watch, giving them five stations with five officers each to patrol the streets at night and prevent “fires, Breaking into Houses, Thefts or any Disturbance that may arise”²⁴

Other than two fires in early May, these added measures successfully curbed the arsons. First, Benjamin Bridge was targeted again—this time his actual home was lit it on fire. Soon after John Mantol, a white indentured servant, was arrested and charged with

Plan of Boston's Business Section in 1722



the fire. Then, what remained of Elisa Cooke's tenement house was once again set ablaze.²⁵

It's hard to know whether these fires were a coordinated effort, a diffuse attack from rabble inspiring one another, or random fires (some intentionally set by Boston's underclass, others accidental). It would seem that at least Diego acted out of vengeance and another accused slave, Cato, "wanted to burn his master's house for threatening to sell him to Virginia".²⁶ Regardless, the upper class of Boston treated the fires as a concerted effort from the city's lower sorts, and by the end of May they had arrested eight black slaves and one white servant. In late May one of the accused, Lisbon, died while in custody, then in June Diego was executed. Somehow, five of the accused, Tom, Hercules, Chambers, Cato, and John Mantol, were all acquitted—no word as to the fate of the remaining two defendants.²⁷

* * *

Fears of underclass arson reemerged in August of 1730 when Tom, an enslaved black man, returned to his former master's home in Malden, Massachusetts, and proceeded to rob and burn it to the ground. Shortly before, Tom had been sold fifteen miles away to an owner in Marblehead—into worse conditions and possibly away from loved ones. The bondman intentionally chose a Sunday when he knew his former master's family would be at church. With the fires of 1723 still haunting Massachusetts, officials went after Tom with everything they had. Sadly, Tom made it only seven miles from Malden before being caught, and was hanged in Boston at Cambridge Commons the following February.²⁸

Around this time, John Julian, the infamous Black Sam pirate of mixed ancestry, returns to our story. Julian had proved to be an unruly slave, who refused to submit to his Massachusetts masters and repeatedly ran away. As pirates continued to make use of New

England’s waters, Julian continued the struggle on land, and in 1730 was arrested in Bridgewater after burning his master’s barn. In 1732 Julian made another run for it making it a few dozen miles before the bounty hunter John Rogers caught up with him.²⁹

On their way back to Julian’s master in Bridgewater, the two stopped for lunch in Braintree, Julian’s previously place of confinement with the Quincies. Not allowed to enter the tavern because of either his race, slave, or criminal status, Julian was left outside, presumably shackled. Seeing his chance to escape, Julian ran into a nearby cornfield but was quickly found by Rogers. Unwilling to continue the life of a slave, Julian stabbed Rogers to death, only to be recaptured soon after. Charged with murder, Julian was hanged in Boston the following spring. As extra humiliation, surgeons took Julian’s corpse and turned it into a skeleton for observation.³⁰

Born thousands of miles away in the Miskito Coast, Julian dodged the role of Caribbean slave as he piloted a pirate ship, helping others escape servitude in the process. As Julian welcomed them into a life of equality, he simultaneously helped sabotage the attempts of slavers and masters to expand their wealth and influence. Captured in Massachusetts, Julian refused to submit and dodged work, ran away, burned his master’s barn, and killed a slave catcher. Turned into a skeleton—to be ‘dis-covered’ and stripped and brought under the gaze of strangers and scientists—doctors finally fixed Julian in place, bringing an end to his libertine wanderings. By retelling his story, we hopefully help Julian roam free again.* Like any of these antagonists, who we catch but a glimpse of, Julian was part of a complex, shifting, international world, and just one of countless, invaluable fragments of the rebellious 1730s.

* *Attention rascals, rabble, and ne’er-do-wells! We must find Julian’s skeleton and take it from the hands of a science and medicine built on the backs of the rebellious under class!*

* * *

As the pattern of proletarian arsons continued throughout the Atlantic, slaves on the island of Danish St. John, entered Fort Christiansvaern in 1733,

killed several soldiers, and set fires to signal a general rising. In Somerset, New Jersey, in 1734, slaves conspired to kill their masters, torch their houses and barns, saddle their horses, and fly ‘towards the Indians in the French Interest.’³¹

On a cold night in April 1734, Marie Joseph Angélique, a 34-year old Madeira woman enslaved in Montréal, and Claude Thibault, her white lover indentured to the same household, lit their master’s home ablaze as cover for their escape. Over night, the fire consumed 46 buildings, a sizable chunk of Montréal, and lead to looting by the town’s under class. While Thibault was never seen again, Angélique was viciously tortured then executed across the street from the church her flames had gutted. If John Julian was fixed in place as eternal punishment, Angélique suffered an opposite fate: Montréal officials threw her ashes to the winds in the hopes that she would never find peace.³²

Four years later in Boston, recounts Lorenzo Greene, a group of black men

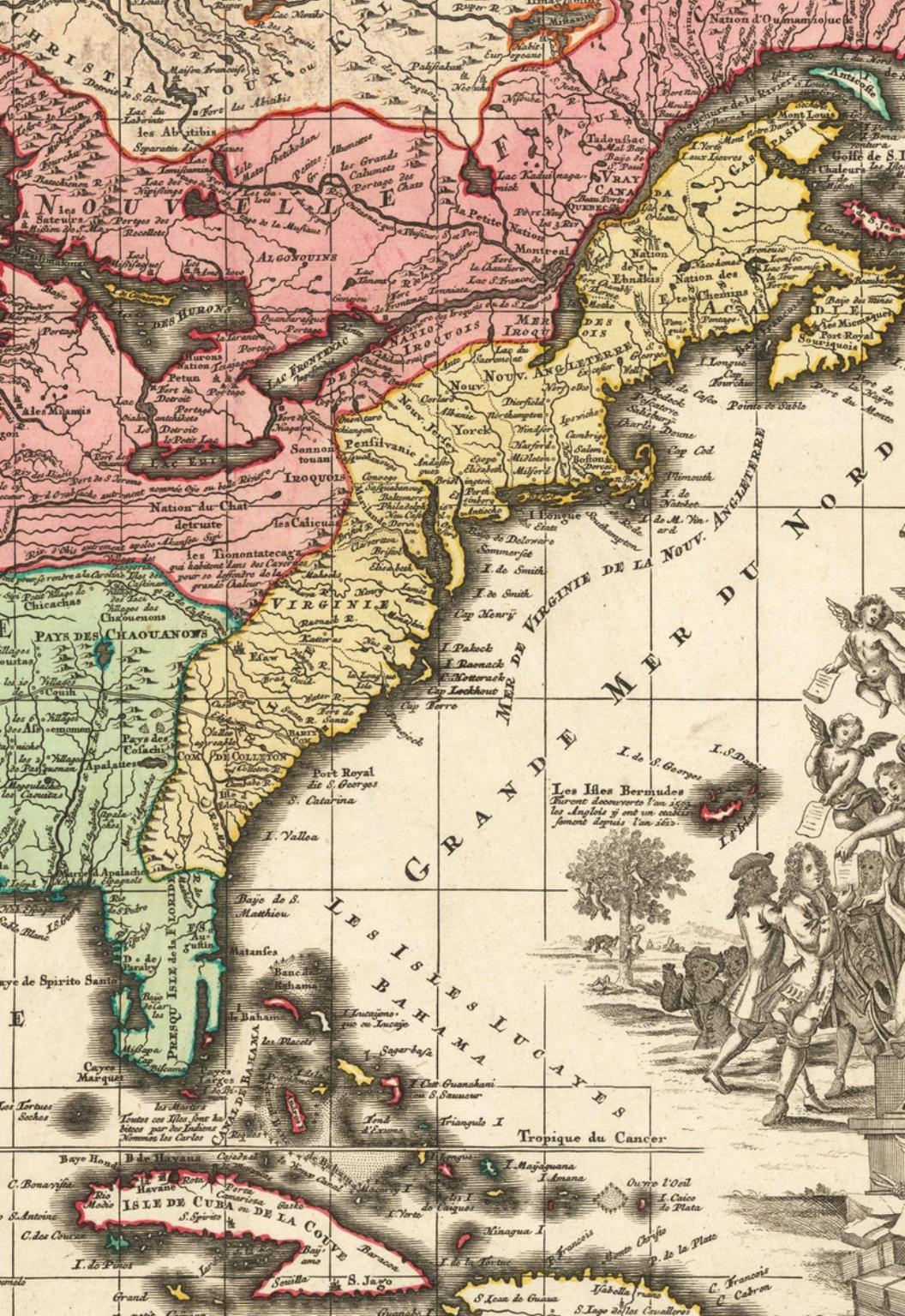
accidentally set fire to a warehouse during a night frolic. Seeing the building ablaze, they threw away their food and fled. Only by dint of hard work were the flames prevented from destroying an entire row of warehouses.³³

Fires continued to haunt the Atlantic ruling class. Once again, according to Linebaugh and Rediker,

In the Red String Conspiracy, as we have noted, Irish workers planned to burn Savannah and escape to freedom. It was reported in October 1738 that a group of

[Wôpanâak], some of whom were whalers, had plotted in Nantucket ‘to set Fire to the Houses of the English Inhabitants in the night, and then to fall upon them Arm’d, and kill as many as they could.’ The slaves who led the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739 burned several houses as they made their way toward St. Augustine and freedom among the Spanish. More ominously still, a suspicious fire devastated Charleston on November 18, 1740, consuming more than three hundred buildings and doing, in all, several hundred thousand pounds’ worth of damage. Flames continued throughout 1740 to haunt the ports and towns of New York, Boston, Charleston, and Hackensack, New Jersey.³⁴

While Boston was spared the worst of the decade’s trouble, as a major international port word of various conspiracies, arsons, and uprisings would soon reach the Olde Towne, as well as the actors themselves as they were transported, sold, and pressed into service aboard ships that frequented Boston. As the last stop on the trading route of slave ships, Boston was also becoming the dumping grounds for rebellious slaves from further south, whose masters wanted nothing more to do with them and traded them away as reliable, ‘seasoned’ workers. It was only a matter of time until the cycle of rebellion hit Boston in full force.



Leviathan americanus

Few Victories, Many Defeats

By the time our protagonist was born in the 1730s, the thirteen original colonies had slowly taken shape. Though many attempts at settlements had burned out in the late 1500s and early 1600s, sheer numbers, trade agreements, and brute force had finally won out. What started off as colonial possibilities had slowly trudged and clawed their way into reality. Up and down the East Coast, settlers had enslaved, killed, deported, assimilated, and driven west Native peoples. While pockets of Native Americans remained along the coast, and individuals and families endured in their own way, from Massachusetts down to Georgia, the Anglo-American colonial project was firmly planted. America was on its way.

Georgia, the youngest colony, had recently been chartered as a dystopic, egalitarian attempt to relieve Britain of its poor. Sir James Oglethorpe, M.P., hoped that by creating a colony without indentured servants, African slavery (or any black people for that matter), and alcohol, white British debtors might be resettled as productive colonial subjects. Georgia was to be, essentially, a giant

open-air debtor's prison.* Within just a generation though, African slavery, white servitude, and alcohol flooded the colony. In time, Georgia functioned better as a buffer between the more well-established colonies north of it and Spanish Florida to the south, still mostly populated by Native Americans and a common retreat for the colonies' runaway servants and slaves.¹

In the South, Charleston dominated trade. As early as the 1680s, the town was exporting huge amounts of lumber and pitch for ship building and thousands of Native slaves and deer hides. Native Americans connected to webs of trade spanning the American Southeast supplied most of the hides and slaves. By the early 1700s, merchants had imported thousands of Africans through Charleston's docks, giving Southern industries much needed labor and creating a majority black population for the port town.[†] By the mid-1700s, tobacco, rice, and indigo—the later two grown with African knowledge and all three with slave labor—were its major exports.³

Further north, in the Chesapeake Bay region of the Upper South, Virginia was king. As one of the oldest colonies, an entrenched social hierarchy of plantation gentry, European servants, and African slaves had taken root and spread. If Charleston merchants and Carolina planters were making fortunes off of tobacco, it was nothing compared to that of the Old Dominion. By the early 1700s, Africans enslaved for life had replaced Virginia's first few generations of white and Native servants. Slavery had become so widespread in Virginia that no where else in the thirteen colonies had as many

* Georgia would later serve as a model for exporting Britain's criminalized poor to places like Australia.

† By the Civil War, roughly 40% of imported African slaves had passed through Charleston's cruel and humiliating port, including the infamous Sullivan's Island, where the enslaved were quarantined in a 16 foot by 30 foot 'pest-house' for at least ten days. Approximately 99% of modern-day African-Americans have ancestors that passed through Sullivan's Island.²



Map of New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina with parts of Long Island, Pennsylvania, and Florida, c. 1730.

slaves as the plantations along the James River. As hogshead after hogshead of tobacco was shipped out, thousands and thousands of Africans were forced in, for tobacco production in the 1700s was dictated more by labor than land.⁴

From 1700-1774, merchants imported roughly 80,000-100,000 enslaved Africans to Virginia, the trade reaching its peak in the 1730s and '40s.⁵ This same period saw exports of 34,000,000 pounds of tobacco a year.⁶ If Boston ships accounted for 40% of vessels coming and going from the colonies, this was in part because Vir-

ginia exports required fewer ships and still turned greater profits. Tobacco was simply worth more and cost less to ship than New England's meat or lumber. By the mid-1700s, over 100,000 of the 230,000 colonists living in Virginia were enslaved Africans, roughly 44% of the population.⁷

The jewels of the middle colonies were New York and Philadelphia. Dutch fur traders had founded New York on Lenni Lenape (Delaware People) land in 1626, but by the mid-1660s the British had taken control.⁸ Over the century from its founding, New York expanded and contracted under the usual strain of wars with Native Americans, trade, an unwilling underclass, disease, and climate. But like the older colonies of Massachusetts and Virginia, by the 1730s New York was a colonial contender. Its fur trade had exploded under British rule, enriching Dutch and British traders alike.⁹

In the 1690s, New York was the largest importer of African slaves, increasing the colony's black population as well as its wealth and racial hierarchy. In the early 1700s, as Dutch, German, and British farmers slowly spread out of Manhattan into the near countryside, they found relative stability. But rural New York was to remain decidedly Native until properly broken and conquered during the American Revolution. By the time Adams was born, colonial New York was home to a first rate port increasingly full of workers and artisans of many nations. Of the 50,000 colonial subjects in New York in the 1730s, 7,000 were enslaved Africans, along side unknown numbers of Native and white servants.¹⁰

Pennsylvania had somewhat similar origins as New York, being scarcely settled in the 1630s by the Dutch and Swedish, who came for furs and farming. In 1681, following a series of wars and the restoration of Charles II to the throne of England, William Penn found himself the largest non-royal landowner in the world. Penn's father, a staunch monarchist, had remained loyal to the Stuarts, and had used his own money to rebuild Britain's navy, giving Charles

PART



Manhattan, c. 1730.

a much needed advantage. Penn used this royal debt as an opportunity to gain land and put his Quaker social theories to practice.¹¹

Despite Penn's Christian ideals, Philadelphia was soon the largest slave port in the region, while Penn himself owned at least twelve people.* In a similar vein, historians have praised Penn for negotiating with Native leaders and buying land from them, rather than taking land by force, despite both strategies having relatively similar outcomes.¹³

It would be another generation or two before Europeans settled in the western reaches of Pennsylvania, but by the early 1700s, the towns back east were thriving. Philadelphia ballooned into the thousands and was a proper city by mid-century. As Pennsylvania lumber, flax, and other grains made their way throughout the colonies and across the Atlantic, Caribbean sugar and all manner of European products returned with Philadelphia ships.¹⁴

Driven west across the Atlantic by economic and political turmoil, many European immigrants—Welsh, Irish, German, Swiss, Finnish, Dutch, and British—moved to Philadelphia, hoping its claim of religious tolerance was true. The colony's black population was growing as well, and by the time Adams was born in the 1730s, 1,200 of Pennsylvania's 52,000 colonists were black slaves.¹⁵

Along with Boston, Providence and Newport, Rhode Island were the major ports of New England. Rhode Island had suffered greatly during Metacomet's War, including a Native raid which burned

* It would seem that at least some Quakers tried to genuinely weigh the practice of slavery, deciding it was completely sinful and no one who practiced it should consider themselves a Quaker. Other Pennsylvanians at the time courted the idea of abolitionism, but only out of the fear of living with black people. Despite their motivations, the Pennsylvania legislature did ban the importation of slavery and outlawed it entirely in the 1710s, but in both instances Queen Anne overruled it, citing the need to maintain equal business opportunities.¹²

Providence to the ground. But in the years afterward, Rhode Island had slowly built itself back up, and with neighboring Native Americans gone or subdued, the colony steadily prospered. Like Massachusetts, Rhode Island's biggest resources were fish and timber, and once its ports got going, the colony was soon importing cacao, sugarcane, molasses, and slaves from the Caribbean. The former were transformed and exported as sugars, sweets, chocolates, and rum, while Rhode Island merchants sold slaves all throughout the Atlantic. By 1807, Rhode Island slavers had forcibly taken over 100,000 people from Africa and sold them throughout the Americas. In time, anything and everything was coming and going from the colonies on Rhode Island ships. Of the 18,000 colonial subjects in Rhode Island in 1730, 1,500 were enslaved Africans, along side roughly a thousand Native Americans.¹⁶

As Massachusetts continued its trend towards conservative, Christian farmers in the countryside and profitable, secular port towns involved in trade, Puritan values lingered. By the 1720s, shipments of white servants had overwhelmed Boston. Like the other American colonies, as trade increased, so too had a rowdy and sinful under class. In 1724, the *New England Courant* warned against

an endless Swarm of Refugees, Tag-rag and Long-tails, the Lord knows who, that thrust themselves in among us, and are ready to devour us, and to eat up one another. Particularly, let us guard against Riff-raff Foreigners, who come among us to pick our Pockets. In this Respect it may be said, Strangers have devoured our Strength; I wish we could see it, and be so wise as to hinder them.¹⁷

In public and in private, the motley lower class was corrupting Boston. The rabble drank, cursed, and flaunted authority.

One lady of pleasure used to hang out of her window and converse on questionable subjects with her customers 'on the Lord's Day in the Time of Divine Service, in the

Hearing if not in the Sight of the Minister.¹⁸

Even within households, one 1723 letter to the editor complained, servants “seldom fail of ruining most of the Children in the Families where they live”.¹⁹

Boston’s underclass had grown so large by the 1720s that ships stopped coming as frequently with white servants, and those that came sat at port for weeks or months trying to find buyers. In time, “servants, weary of long confinement in the stinking ships at the wharves, ran away and desperate dealers were forced to sell on the installment plan.”²⁰

By the 1730s, the colony had grown to 13,000, with roughly 2,000-3,000 African slaves and thousands more white and Native servants. Throughout the year, Boston’s under class ebbed and flowed as thousands of workers from all around the Atlantic frequented Boston’s wharves and taverns. If Puritans had slowly ceded control of Massachusetts’ major towns to merchants and captains, their views around race, gender, and servitude were being modified and preserved.

With growing trade, law, and severe punishments for anyone not in agreement with colonial officials, America was finally coming of age. Yet, despite all of these repressive advances, the future of America was still unknown.

* * *

In his seminal work, *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*, Fredy Perlman* traces civilization from the ancient Middle East to the late 1900s. By then, exploitative, hierarchical relationships, which Perlman dubbed “Leviathan”, had ensnared the globe, destroying

* Fredy Perlman is another great influence on my life for whom I am eternally grateful.

generations of life on earth and threatening the planet with nuclear annihilation.

To speak in tremendous generalizations, these relationships have often taken two forms: physical force and trade. Perlman describes the warlike Leviathan as a giant worm that roams from land to land. As it claws and consumes free people and other Leviathans, the worm stratifies life in order to feed its insatiable appetite:

a giant worm, not a living worm but a carcass of a worm, a monstrous cadaver, its body consisting of numerous segments, its skin pimpled with spears and wheels and other technological implements.²¹

Once inside the worm, people are forced to toil away their lives in order to turn plants, animals, and the earth itself into resources. Humans are transformed into laborers (servants, artisans, workers, zeks, soldiers, and slaves), while their creativity and time are turned



into dead labor and capital.

Trade functions in a similar way as the militarized worm, but relies much more on manipulation and coercion than outright violence. Think of the Phoenicians in the third millennium BCE or modern-day Switzerland versus the more authoritarian Roman Empire or the crusading Christians of the Middle Ages. Fredy calls this commercial Leviathan an octopus, envisioning its tentacles as pack animals, carts, and ships. These octopuses are much better at reaching far away lands than the sluggish, armored worms. From near and far, their tentacles bring back goods to enrich themselves at the expense of those with whom they trade.

Leviathans compete with one another but can also work in tandem. They kill, eat, and merge with one another if they see it to their own advantage. Sometimes they represent very small, hierarchical groups, other times they are the size of nations, industries, and empires. By the 1700s, the most powerful Leviathans were a blend of violence and trade. This is the stage set for the American Revolution.

The Quing Dynasty ruled in China, the Mughal Empire in India, and the Ottomans throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe. To the west were European monarchs and merchants, who jockeyed with one another and fought to control lands throughout the Americas. Thousands of miles away, on the East Coast of North America, new Leviathans were coming of age. But away from the coasts in rural New York, Pennsylvania, Georgia, New Hampshire, Maine, and particularly Florida, as well as west of the Appalachia Mountains in the Ohio River Valley, villages, towns, and elaborate constellations of Native Americans connected by kin and trade still existed. Within just an other generation, tensions between these powers would explode into a global conflict, the Seven Years' War*, and seal the fate of many North Americans.

* Alternately known as the French-Indian War in America, and the War

* * *

By Adams' birth in the 1730s, tentacles of trade had slowly snaked their way from the ports of America's eastern seaboard into the hinterlands: expanding, shriveling, occasionally being severed, then regenerating. Furs and grain and alcohol; tobacco, indigo, and rice; sugar, rum, and slaves had slowly been sucked from the land and exchanged for one another. These networks, which turned life into dead matter, trampled, maimed, and burned those that would not trade with or serve them. They ripped families and regions apart. For what America's tentacles cannot have, its claws of conquest take.

Pan back further, until the whole Atlantic is in view, and we see more of these creatures. They span the entire ocean from London to West Africa, the Caribbean to Virginia, Boston to Madagascar, and further still from Holland to India, and so on. Parts of the earth are so full of them, it's almost impossible to see where one Leviathan ends and another begins. In their wake, they leave all manner of devastation—hills of muck where forests once stood, people broken by war and work, an ever-present void once filled by animal and human kin—but money is the only excrement that matters to them.

Up and down the Americas and throughout Africa, Europe, and Asia, people ran from and fought these relationships. The Arawak of Ayiti that first resisted Columbus and his men; the Wandala of the Mandara Mountains in Cameroon; Tahanedo, Sellwarroes, and Assacumet, who found their way home; the rioters of England, who tore down the hedges that enclosed the ancestral commons; the maroons of Jamaica; the Wabanaki in Maine and Acadia, who beat back the British; the West African town of Yangiakuri, built from

the smoldering ruins of rice plantations; Black Sam and his merry men; Angélique and the arsonists of the 1730s; and Tantamous, Canonchet, and Metacomet all did their part.

Yet the rich and powerful throughout the Atlantic still vied to control these systems, devising ways to nurture them or beat them into submission—but can they really be controlled? As the elite anointed their Leviathans in oils and wrote thousand-page-long love letters to them,²² generations perished in pursuit of these nightmares.

By the mid-1700s, the leviathans of world held millions of people within their limbs: coureur des bois and Native Americans slowly paddling through the American wilderness; slavers slinking coffles of slaves through West Africa; ports on every continent loading and unloading; caravans of horses and camels throughout Asia and the Sahara; and finally the great, crammed ships that learned to criss-cross the globe. When we zoom in close we see the vast legions of maids, sailors, cooks, and slaves who toiled their lives away in order to keep capital pumping through the veins of these exchanges.

Equally terrific were the claws of eighteenth century Leviathans, which chased down heretics and free peoples. As they did the mercenaries and conscripts working their pincers dreamed of one day controlling them, or at least amassing enough influence to be left alone. While the worms gouged people and the wilderness, razing villages and scattering the ashes, the octopuses ripped ore from the earth and flayed animals of their skin to the point of extinction.

As colossal and terrifying as these hierarchies were, they were also quite weak. For if the same people who animated these relationships had stopped feeding them, had stopped giving life to their limbs and words to their hunger, these creatures might have disappeared over night.







* * *

Braintree, Massachusetts, the hometown of John Adams, was at once connected to all of this—only a few degrees removed from Boston, Charleston, Philadelphia, Saint-Domingue, Cork, Java, Surat, Bight of Benin, Rio de Janeiro, London, Hong Kong, or Montréal—but also isolated enough that one could ignore it all, seeing instead the hard world of farming and church ordained by god. This isolation felt by many villages throughout North America and beyond was shattered in the mid-1700s by three major conflicts that rocked this global web of relationships. These tensions are the focus of Part II.

First there was another round of under class contestation throughout the 1740s, involving individual acts of running away, theft, and sabotage, and collective acts of rioting, slave revolts, and maroonage. During this time, the rabble condemned forced labor in the form of slavery and impressment. Mob action against the latter gripped Boston, fueling anger against British authority, solidifying rioting as a collective form of protest, and expanding ideas around freedom in the process.

Following this phase of collective revolt, came one of near nationalist unity: the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). In North America, Anglo-American colonists fought French Canadians over the vast tracts of Native land between their colonies. Though history has sidelined Native Americans to mere allies of the French and British during the War of Conquest,* Native peoples from Newfoundland on down the Appalachian Mountains to Georgia and up to the northern shores of the Great Lakes fought desperately to preserve their homes. Some villages managed to push back the frontier by dozens of miles for generations, while others succumbed to it.

* Alternately known as the French-Indian War, and globally as the Seven Years' War.

It was during this time that the American colonies began to coordinate themselves as a whole. New England merchants and Virginia planters were finally beginning to see their fates as interconnected. The War of Conquest also gave a generation of Americans their first taste of combat, which would prove valuable fifteen years later during the Revolutionary War. Likewise, the War of Conquest gave Native Americans a sense of what unchecked American expansion could mean, and when the French surrendered, many fought on in Pontiac's Native coalition.

Finally, the third conflict: the American Revolution. The Seven Years' War was global, and after centuries of conflict, politicking, and inconceivable violence, Britain emerged as one of the largest empires to ever exist. In the following years, however, even as its navy grew ever stronger and its coffers overflowed, Britain's victory was not so clear cut. Like all Leviathans, Britain was in a constant state of war—externally and internally, and, like all great powers, in a constant state of decomposition, hurried repairs, and expansion.

Next, the unimaginable: one of Britain's limbs, its American colonies, broke free and grew a body of its own. Shockingly, this new creature did not seize Britain's throne as its rightful heirs, nor did it rearrange its church as the true voice of god, as European powers had done for generations. Instead, America took law and reason—tools used for millennia to support kingdoms, churches, and empires—and turned them into sovereign itself. America's ruling class did this, of course, knowing that they would forever hold its reigns. Indeed, what began as an under class rejection of both British and American authority ended in a nightmare of solidified upper class power.

Along the way, many small and large disruptions altered the course of these events, and had some gained enough momentum, this land we call America might be drastically different. Part II of *Below John Adams* discusses a number of these internal and exter-

nal threats to both British and American authority. But instead of nurturing a truly egalitarian way of life, this new system stamped west, crying ‘freedom!’ while it consumed all it could. As America filled with millions of new people, those trapped inside were forced to work their lives away. What could have died after only a few generations has lived for centuries. In truth, this creature, like hierarchies before and after it, is quite good at rearranging and repairing itself.

While people throughout America, both left and right, top and bottom, have debated how best to control this nation, offering ways to consolidate or ration power within it, we are ultimately faced with the task of those who came before us: to break this nightmare once and for all. Remember, America is but one of the interconnected Leviathans, and they’ve all got to go. The discrepancies that reign throughout much of the world can get worse, stay the same, or we can at long last level them.



* * *

Recently the rabble of Minneapolis drove police from their precinct and danced around its shell. Embers from the uprising drifted all throughout the continent, lighting police cars on fire and reminding the under class that the necessities and luxuries of life will be shared by everyone or none at all. The tears and laughter of the Midwest, known for its years of mostly quiet suffering within the bowels of America, echoed around world and back. As of this writing, parts of the revolt still live.

Were we so loud as to be heard by the rebels of yesteryear? Maybe. If so, we must ask ourselves, are the revolts of tomorrow so furious, so joyous that if we listen carefully right now we can hear them calling us today?

Leopold Trebitch, Summer 2020















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