

“That Odious Name Sold”: Narratives of the Servant Trade

Matthew Pursell

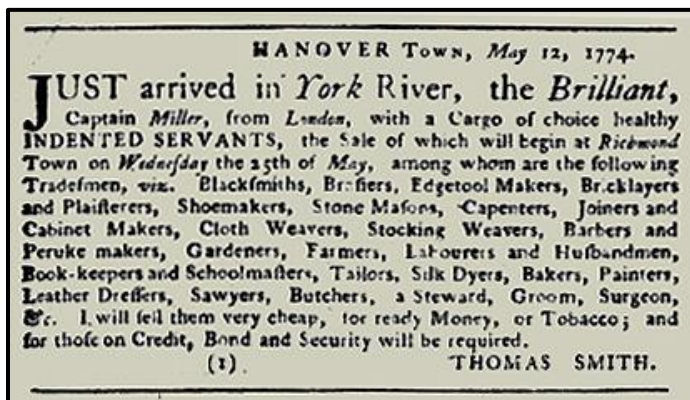


Figure 1 Notice of a servant sale. *Virginia Gazette*. May 19, 1774. Courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg.

In 1716 James Lauder disappeared from the streets of Edinburgh. In time his father William learned the fate of his youngest son and brought a suit against four merchants who had spirited away James across the Atlantic to Boston, Massachusetts, as an indentured servant.¹ In one of a series of letters home, James had asked not just to be redeemed and restored but that his plight be made public to, as he put it, “let the world see.”² Indeed roughly two years later both his letters and an account of the legal process that followed were published in Edinburgh. Significantly, the authors went beyond the immediate legal issues at hand to condemn in the servant trade. In often-sensational language, they described the boy as having been indentured against his will, sold like livestock, and set ashore in a condition and country that rendered redemption all but impossible.

Lauder’s story was representative of the dominant discourse on servitude in the colonial era, one that centered on the servant trade—over and above servants’ lives and labor in American—as immoral and unjust.³

Its central themes—dubious recruitment practices, the reduction of men to merchandise, and servants’ lack of recourse—had resonated for over a century in scores of printed narratives.⁴ That the reputation of servitude was unfavorable is not itself surprising, but the public’s preoccupation with the commerce in servants over servitude as well as the specific dimensions of the practice that most unsettled contemporaries are newly identified here. Understanding the cultural handling of servitude is important in several respects. Most obviously, this institution was of immense importance to peopling of colonies, bringing roughly half of all European migrants to British America.⁵ Comprehending contemporaries’ views is, then, significant in its own right. Moreover, this discourse—which cast both colonials and Englishmen as barbarians—complicates claims that servitude was for contemporaries, like slavery and Indian wars, emblematic of American savagery alone.⁶ Ideas about servitude may also have played a larger role in the rise and fall of colonial labor systems than previously acknowledged. For though the ill repute of servitude never gave rise to an abolitionist movement of much consequence,⁷ some observers at the time deemed it potent enough to have made some think twice about signing indentures. More surprising still is the possibility that the more consequential campaign to end the Atlantic slave trade was informed by this earlier narrative tradition.⁸

Thanks to recent scholarship, we can now locate the public perception of servitude in relation to the institution.⁹ Contingent on the most modern of economies, servitude crystallized as seemingly archaic system of migration, labor, and governance. Sanctioned by the state in the name of domestic order and empire, the traffic in servants was largely an

entrepreneurial pursuit, though a minority became servants as prisoners of the state. Regardless of how they came to be bound, all servants faced essentially the same formal terms and juridical status.¹⁰ Servants were "saleable," a status that allowed planters and others to procure their labor through a shipper or other middleman.¹¹ Performance during their relatively lengthy terms of service was enforced with criminal sanctions, and servants generally had no right to earn wages, get married, enter into contracts, bring suits, serve as jurors, hold office, or vote.¹² Yet indentures and provincial statutes in time sought to guarantee adequate shelter, food and clothing; limit corporal punishment; and see that servants were released with modest freedom dues at the stipulated time.¹³ Moreover, servants themselves strove to limit their bondage through myriad actions, from deferential negotiations to rebellion.

The defining legal terms of the institution remained relatively constant across time and space, yet the experience of servants varied widely, in part due to broad shifts in the geographic and demographic contours of servitude in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁴ Drawn largely by tobacco production, servants first arrived in Virginia and soon thereafter in Barbados and Maryland. In the first century of settlement, it is possible to find servants arriving in all of the mainland and Caribbean colonies, but they were concentrated in the Chesapeake and, secondarily, the West Indies. In the following century, the Caribbean was already a small market for servants, while the largest influx centered to the north in the Delaware Valley. The Chesapeake was the only region that continually imported significant numbers throughout the colonial era. Most servants arriving in the 1600's were English, though there was a large minority of Irish migrants, most of whom arrived in Barbados. But in the 1700's

English servants were outnumbered by an ethnically diverse group, including Irish, Scots, Scots-Irish, and—above all—German-speaking migrants from the Rhine lands. The socio-economic status of servants may have improved slightly with these changes, and with the labor demands of a more diversified and capital-intensive regional economies. Likewise, servants' tasks in the eighteenth century were probably on the whole more varied than those of their predecessors who overwhelmingly labored in the fields. Living conditions for most servants likely improved with the shift to northern climates, more diversified labor, and more mature settlements where food security and material comforts improved. Servants as a percentage of all European migrants to British America declined slightly in the 1700's, as did their proportion of the colonial labor force. But the numbers of servants arriving on the mainland actually increased significantly.

As servitude was crystalizing in America, so too was a coherent public image, one that has been neglected by scholars relative to the attention they have given to other issues—including demographics, legal status, and their place in several regional transitions to slavery.¹⁵ Writers of various stripes—servants, former servants, travelers, chroniclers, promoters, and grub street scribblers—all bore witness to the historical practice of servitude even as they often reworked them in imaginative ways. Printed texts differed in form and included letters, ballads, criminal confessions, novels, and autobiographies. Writers, of course, differed in their circumstances and agendas. Servants, like Lauder, wrote home asking for relief—anything from redemption to food and clothes. Professional writers appealed to a market for diverting fiction. Exiled servants' petitions often had political overtones, and, even on the eve of execution, transported

convicts hoped to redeem their reputations or save their souls. Writings included some works focused squarely on servitude while others touched on servitude in passing. Despite their variations, writings shared assumptions, vocabularies, themes, and reference points that were relatively constant over time and thus usefully considered as a whole.¹⁶

The servant trade was held in poor repute, but it always had vocal supporters. Indeed, the dominant discourse on servitude was at times articulated in response to more sanguine representations. Referencing promotional accounts, a former servant wrote, "You will perhaps be told that you are going to a country flowing with milk and honey." However, he continued, "you will find that you must wade thro' an ocean of labour and fatigue."¹⁷ Some writers, such as promoters, had a material interest in casting servitude as a benign or even profitable venture. The defendants in Lauder's suit, for example, challenged the libel's claims and asserted that James had been recruited "in a fair way" and that he lived better as a servant in Boston than he had in Scotland.¹⁸ But in this respect they were often no different from those who condemned the practice. The defense of servitude, in fact, reflected the real variety of servants' circumstances.¹⁹ Thus among the many thousands of Europeans who agreed to sign indentures were many who made a reasonable calculation that their lot might be improved, if only once their terms expired. Nevertheless, those who defended servitude had to overcome a tidal wave of bad press.

It was the commerce in servants that loomed largest in the public imagination.²⁰ It is true that contemporaries discussed colonial servitude itself. Thus James complained that his term was lengthy and unprofitable,²¹ and others condemned hard labor and cruel masters.²² But it was the various dimensions and implications of the

servant trade—all grounded in historical practice—that emerged as dominant concerns. Three themes were particularly prominent. First, the various ways of entering into servitude were described as entailing both duplicity and coercion. Second, the buying and selling of servants was commonly described as a morally troubling practice whereby unscrupulous merchants stigmatized men as merchandise and subjected them to the perils of unknown masters. Third, and finally, the Atlantic passage was often understood to sever customary and legal channels of recourse for migrants.

No topic seems to have held more fascination for the public than recruitment. Lauder's libel spoke of James's being "enticed" with drink and false promises, held prisoner by avaricious "West Indian Merchants," and "necessitated to sign an indenture"—and in doing so spoke to broader public concerns.²³ Indeed, writers of all kinds dealt with the topic in some depth, with most describing it as entailing coercion, deception, or both. It is particularly striking that despite the various routes into servitude, so many accounts use similar terms and assumptions to cast recruitment as immoral, unjust and, often times, as an infringement of British liberty.

Thousands of men and women from the British Isles were banished by the state to his majesty's plantations, including religious dissenters, political and military prisoners, and common criminals. The role of the state in precipitating their servitude made them unusual, but once in the colonies, their sale and servitude was generally no different from that of the majority of servants. Accounts of their plight—often written by the victims themselves—lingered on the moment of banishment. Their litany of misfortunes often began with the "dreadful fangs of the law,"²⁴ personified by the "hard-hearted

judges so cruel.”²⁵ Not surprisingly, they experienced their passage as a loss of personal liberty, as the exiled rebel who once on board was stripped of all possessions and, “clapp’d under hatches, and cast into iron.”²⁶ Transported Quakers, Covenanters, Monmouth rebels, and Jacobite prisoners often cast their usage as trespasses upon ancient privileges. Quakers testified to their violent persecution, as they were taken from their homes, stripped of their estates, separated from loved ones, then sentenced by “Judges (so called)” as “bond-slaves” in the plantations.²⁷ A Jacobite rebel wrote that his servitude marked, “the end of the so much boasted liberty...of British subjects.”²⁸ For such groups, exile and “slavery” represented another chapter in chronicles of persecution and martyrdom, but even the plight of convicts sometimes cast doubt on the vigor of English liberties. The sensational case of Elizabeth Canning, convicted of libel and sent as a servant to the colonies, was reported in the press and elaborated in broadsides and other fiction. If an English subject, “is to be put in Newgate, pilloried and banished,” she reflected, “upon what ground do we stand?”²⁹ The transportation of convicts and other prisoners was recognized as meeting colonial demands for labor,³⁰ but most contemporaries focused instead on the implications for their homeland.

Themes of an unjust entry into servitude were likewise articulated in stories of kidnapped boys and trepanned heirs.³¹ Such cases did occur, but were magnified in the public imagination. Authors lingered on the taking of victims from tippling houses and alleys to waiting ships where, like convicts, they were kept below deck to prevent escape or rescue.³² The villains of such stories were the agents, factors, or other middlemen who provided merchants with their human cargo. Dubbed crimps, spirits, kidnappers, and, more imaginatively,

“pirate at land,”³³ “cannibals,”³⁴ “Men-stealers,”³⁵ and “Anthropopola or Manseller,”³⁶ they were deemed a class of men whose single-minded pursuit of profit led to the troubling human trade. One ballad condemned the sly kidnapper who “Get your Living by Decoys” and “money make, of little Boys.”³⁷ An eighteenth-century narrative likewise included a captain who traded in kidnapped servants as having one who would, “do anything for money.”³⁸ A German former servant similarly recalled being “exposed to the whims and avarice of ships captains.”³⁹ In Lauder’s libel—itsself a story of spiriting—agents were cast as having, “no other Thing in their View, but their own Profit.”⁴⁰

When these episodes, real and imagined, resulted in the signing of a contract, the voluntary nature of the agreement remained in doubt. James Lauder, for one, described his circumstances as rendering his signing of an indenture in a phrase that nicely captures the ambiguities and limitations of seemingly voluntary contracts. Held on board the *Amity*, he was threatened by sailors, which, he wrote, “made me agree, against my will.”⁴¹ In a fictional narrative, a servant was said to have been taken before a ship’s captain who sat at his desk with an indenture and a brace of pistols.⁴² Spiriting at least occasionally also raised questions about the vigor of English liberty. Thus one kidnapped servant asked rhetorically, how could it be that “in the land of freedom and justice, he should be seized upon by the cruel grasp of lawless power?” Most striking, here, is the fact that those who entered into servitude seemingly voluntarily—not through conviction or kidnapping—were likewise often described as having been tricked or coerced. The ideal of a symmetrical and voluntary contract was judged as undermined by the incompetency of the recruits or, more commonly, by “the baseness and knavery” of the recruiters.⁴³ In

fact, the distinction between spiriting in particular and more voluntary recruitment was often blurred, as narratives detailed the, “Various...arts and stratagems made use of to inveigle.”⁴⁴ Elizabeth Ashbridge was nominally a voluntary recruit, yet her memoir describes herself as signing her contract as a consequence of the recruiters’ deceptions and threats as well as her own, “ignorance of the nature of an indenture.”⁴⁵ Recruiters were cast as seemingly affable and generous, enticing their prey with pleasant company and intoxicating beverages.⁴⁶ Thus Defoe’s Colonel Jaques spoke of an agent as a “Subtil Devil,” who in their first encounter, “Entertaine’d us Cheerfully.”⁴⁷ They were notorious for making false promises—including “a very short Voyage,”⁴⁸ easy labor,⁴⁹ profitable service, liberal governance, and even the “pliant loving natures of the women there”⁵⁰—all intended to get their prey to “swallow their gilded Pills of ruine.”⁵¹ The gap between “Golden promises,” on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the harsh reality of servitude was dramatically rendered in both historical and literary accounts through the moment at which the servant discerned his or her true fate. One former servant recalled how, having just begun the Atlantic passage, naively sat at the ship captain’s table for his first meal, only to be taunted by sailors who asked, “do you think you are to be a Mess-mate with the Captain?”⁵²

Other servants were described as signing indentures in desperation. In his writings, John Harrower described his fruitless search for employment in Britain. Alone, penniless, and desperate in the streets of London did he make a choice—of sorts—to become transported to Virginia as an indentured servant.⁵³ Another servant recalled that it was only when he had sold most of his clothes and reduced to “just one poor sixpence in my pocket” that he “was

obliged to engage to go to Virginia for four years.”⁵⁴ For contemporaries, both the “hooks”⁵⁵ or “bait of promises”⁵⁶ of unscrupulous recruiters and the compulsion of hunger were perceived as fundamentally compromising the assumption that such contracts were chosen by free will and bound “in a fair way.” Having signed indentures, servants were now decidedly bound by its terms.⁵⁷

Some descriptions of recruitment were more accurate and informed than others. But they were all, to varying degrees, rooted in the practice of the servant traffic that seemed particularly unjust to observers of the time. Moreover, all such accounts spoke to broader public anxiety about the involuntary nature of labor relations. European workers were no strangers to coerced labor. In England, for example, the lower sorts were subjected to statutes that compelled vagrants to work, and war-time press gangs operated legally throughout the early nineteenth century.⁵⁸ Moreover, because England experienced the earliest and most thorough transition to wage labor, its people were familiar with the coercive power of the market.⁵⁹ Servitude was, then, an extreme example of the constraints of law and poverty that limited workers’ control over the circumstances and timing of their entry into labor agreements.⁶⁰ While most servants’ signing of indentures was nominally voluntary, it was rarely a condition entered into with enthusiasm. In the literature of the day, it seems, becoming a servant often constituted, “barbarous treatment in England.”⁶¹

William Lauder’s suit turned on the moment of recruitment, yet it discussed the actual buying and selling of James and others at some length and in often lurid language. As with the recruitment preceding it, the buying and selling of servants troubled those unaccustomed to the practice. Most people entered servitude by signing an

indenture, but these contracts bound servants to the holder “or his assigns.” If a servant did not already understand this fact and its implications, they found out soon enough. Most indentures were quickly sold at least once—often to the shipper and nearly always to the colonial master—with servants having little if any say as to when, where, or to whom they would be sold.⁶² Lauder condemned, for example, that James and others would be sold by greedy merchants “as so many Sheep or Horse” and bought by “any that should give the most for them.”⁶³ Thus the libel addressed the public’s view of servants as reduced to “merchandise,” a status with degrading and dangerous implications.

The moment of exchange most highlighted the degree to which servants were a kind of property. One prominent example here is the frequency with which contemporaries likened the selling of servants to that of horses and livestock.⁶⁴ Servants were described, quite accurately, as “bought and sold still from one planter to another, or attached as horses and beasts for the debts of their masters.”⁶⁵ Whether sold like cattle at public markets⁶⁶ or examined like horses for defects,⁶⁷ servants were cast not as beasts of burden but as a species of property. Servants seemed like livestock in constituting commercial property, or in the words of the libel, a “commodity.”⁶⁸ As one servant wrote of his master, “he had purchased me for 12 guineas, and... my body was his for four years.”⁶⁹ As this particular passage makes clear, the stipulation of a particular term of service did not preclude the sense that persons—and not just labor—were being purchased. So too, for much the same reason, were servants often described as slaves, or slave-like.⁷⁰ The frequency with which the expression “sold a slave” appears in servant narratives suggests that the comparison or conflation—real or imagined—was most salient at sale.

⁷¹ Servitude as a status approaching chattel was thus most apparent at the moment of sale.

But criticisms of the servant trade went beyond abstract moral concerns to the concrete perils of an impersonal exchange. In a world in which dependent service was neither uncommon nor necessarily degrading in and of itself, it was the substance of one’s particular place that mattered most.⁷² Moreover, bound as they were for long terms to masters with substantial power over them—masters mattered more in determining the fate of servants as much as any other kind of European laborer.⁷³ At the same time, nearly all servants would only come to know their masters well after they were bound.⁷⁴ In language nearly identical to that of the Libel, one account describes a servant sold “like a Nag at Smithfield, and he that gave most for him had him.”⁷⁵ Former servant Peter Williamson spelled out the implications. “If the devil had come in the shape of a man to purchase us, with money enough in his pockets,” he reasoned, “it would have been as readily accepted as of the honestest and most humane man.”⁷⁶ Such concerns of a master’s temperament applied to nearly all servants. Salisbury rebels made much the same point when they noted of the sale of prisoners, “he that hath a good master too day (for some such there are) may have a tyrant too morrow.”⁷⁷

The risks of impersonal sale went beyond that of a cruel master to the broader condition of service. James, for example, was reduced to more menial if not difficult tasks when his master lost his trade.⁷⁸ Unlike apprentices, servants could be put to any task. Moreover the uncertainty of sale was based on the geographic location of masters. In narrative, a servant recalls that after his sale, “with my new master I went, not knowing who he was, or where I was to go.”⁷⁹ If the “who” raised concerns about a

master's disposition and perhaps prosperity, the "where" mattered too, for serving in town or country, in a trade or the fields, could profoundly shape a servant's subsequent life and labor. James acknowledged that he lived "well enough," but he was also threatened with sale to Virginia where he would "draw the plough." The libel thus noted that it was only by "providence" that James had avoided "the most servile employments."⁸⁰ If comparisons of servants to livestock were exaggerated, they nevertheless registered the distinctive alienability and condition of servants that made the moment of sale most fateful.

Servants, like other dependents and laborers, had multiple means by which they might escape, evade, or ameliorate their service—from delinquency to legal suits. But the Atlantic passage seemed to contemporaries to greatly narrow such traditional avenues of recourse. Like all migrants, servants were often cut off from kith and kin who might aid them in a variety of ways, but a servant's particular condition made separation especially consequential. Masters had significantly more powers in law and custom to enforce "performance" of their servants than did other employers. When James Lauder threatened to write letters to his home revealing his plight, his captor claimed to not care for "he would deny it."⁸¹ James' mail was opened on two occasions, and when news of his case was eventually made public, the implicated ship captain "threatened to cut out James's Ears."⁸² Ideas about the servant trade often pointed to the complicity of Britain, but the difficulty of gaining redress in the colonies, real and imagined, at times led to more favorable comparisons of Britain with the colonies. In James Lauder's words, "it is not here as in England, for as soon as you are once here, there is no getting away again."⁸³

Lauder described being prevented from "acquainting his father" even before

embarking for America, but in the public imagination the problem of recourse was most associated with the distance from home that bound migrants experience. Williamson noted the kidnapped were carried to the "remotest parts of the globe, where they can have no redress for the injuries done them," but such complaints were not limited to the spirited.⁸⁴ One servant was described as far from home, so that "the wild Woods and Fields wherein he worked were the only Witnesses of his Complaints."⁸⁵ More concretely, writers identified the absence of family as consequential. One author claiming to have been a convict wrote in verse that he had been, "Fore'd from your friends and country" and that he then lived "in distant countries void of all relief."⁸⁶ One miserable servant in Virginia spelled out more clearly the implications when he wrote, "I never felt the want of father and mother till now" and goes on to plead for food, clothing, and redemption.⁸⁷ Indeed Lauder was far from alone in writing letters home for redemption and aid. Servants and others perceived the possibility that people back home might intervene directly by sending aid or paying off time or indirectly by pursuing legal challenges; however, contacting kith and kin was itself fraught, if only because one's master might not view it favorably. In the West Indies, one other composed letters to friends in England protesting his treatment and asking for intervention. As a result, he recounted, "our Master perceived that we were uneasie," and, "grew more and more unkind unto us."⁸⁸

In the popular imagination, servants were much less likely to receive justice in the colonies, and not just because they lacked advocates. As one noted, "Laws here are not the same as in England." In an apparent reference to provincial statutes that governed servants, he went on to explain, "they have introduced so many By-

ones...that in some cases destroys the liberty of the subject.”⁸⁹ The results of such laws meant that the contractual guarantees spelled out in indentures signed across the Atlantic might not always be strictly enforced. A political prisoner in Barbados claimed that he and his friends had been disappointed in their attempts at redemption, “Having no assurance of performing Articles at such a distance.”⁹⁰ Moreover, traditional avenues of seeking justice were now imagined as ineffective. As one wrote, “Now having no redress, remedy, or hope, from Master, Magistrates, nor Ministers.”⁹¹

Narratives often described this legal difference in terms of a distressing contrast between justice in England and American. Thus, a kidnapped boy was later borne out by his frustrated efforts to obtain a hearing from justices in Maryland. “Wrongly, I supposed I should meet redress as in England.”⁹² Not surprising, then, that many longed for home. As a servant woman assured another in the novel *The Life of Charlotta Du Pont*, that “if I live to see England again, I will see justice done.”⁹³

If the poor reputation of the servant trade was rooted in real practice, the reputation may have, in turn, had real effects on the trade. Despite the public interest in kidnapped heirs and transported convicts, most servants were not physically forced into servitude, either by kidnappers or the courts, raising the possibility that the public perception of servitude might have informed potential recruits’ choices of whether or not enter into indentures. Galenson has suggested potential migrants’ decisions helped determine the inelastic supply of servants, which in turn precipitated transitions to other labor systems, both wage labor and slavery. If he is right, stories about servitude may have shaped colonial development.

There are reasons to doubt the power of ideas about servitude to shape the

behavior.⁹⁴ After all, thousands of migrants from the British Isles and Rhinelands continued to enter into indentures. Moreover, if perceptions of the servant trade in many ways resembled those of the slave trade, only the latter helped engender a crusade to ameliorate or abolish an institution. Of course in some cases printed material was produced as fiction and understood as such by those who consumed it. Thus William Lauder’s son Francis most likely gave more credence to the cautionary tale of his brother James than he would to many broadsides that similarly warned young men to beware spirits. Just as importantly, public concern was in part blunted by the assumption that primarily the lesser sort were subjected to it. This is borne out by the ways in which social rank was addressed in many servant accounts, and by fact that the most discussed cases were those in which the lowly servant was well born.⁹⁵ Lauder’s libel cast itself as concerned of those “both high and low.”⁹⁶ But it also went to great lengths to establish the Lauders’ status as propertied and respectable, thus proving servitude had frustrated his prospects. In fact, condemnations of the servant trade were particularistic in a variety of ways, limiting the degree to which servitude as a whole was imagined as immoral and unjust.

There is, nevertheless, evidence that the literature on the servant trade not only expressed but also heightened public anxieties about the practice and thus perhaps curbed migration. Some writers, in fact, suggested that this was their intention and spelled out the moral of their stories to readers, just as promoters of colonial ventures explicitly sought to entice migrants.⁹⁷ James Lauder wrote in letters home that he wished he “had never come away” and cautioned his brother Francis to be more prudent.⁹⁸ Many other printed narratives sought to instruct potential

migrants, as the anonymous ballad that concludes bluntly: "Then let Maids beware, all by my ill-fare,/ in the Land of Virginny, O;/ Be sure to stay at home."⁹⁹

The power of the servitude's reputation is likewise revealed in the strong reactions of merchants, promoters and their allies. Letters critical of servitude were derided as false and occasionally suppressed or censored, just as favorable letters were solicited, fabricated, referenced, printed, and circulated.¹⁰⁰ One former servant was thrown in jail, and his books burned, by the merchants and magistrates of Aberdeen whom he had purportedly libeled in his published narrative.¹⁰¹ John Norris found it necessary to structure his promotional tract as a rebuttal to a series of rather damning imagined queries, such as: "But do not English People, and others, when they come first into the Country, become Slaves there, as it is generally said?"¹⁰²

Some contemporaries explicitly addressed the hostile recruiting environment as a direct product of servitude's reputation. In an early picaresque narrative, Mary Frith suggested that she was nearly kidnapped to Virginia, because at such an early date, "There was then no noyse or talk of Spirits."¹⁰³ As such, she attests to the genesis of the public's reputation of at least one dimension of servitude. By the mid-seventeenth century, John Hammond suggested that though many in England were destitute, "it were dangerous to advise these wretches to better their conditions by travaile, for fear of the cry of, a spirit, a spirit."¹⁰⁴ That this cry of *spirit* could indeed result in violence is corroborated elsewhere.¹⁰⁵ As Hammond suggested, the reputation of spirits might curb lawful recruitment. If such public concerns occasionally flared into hysteria, the reputation of servitude probably kept some individuals from voluntarily signing indentures throughout the era. Thus one

agent wrote in 1669 from Ireland regarding servants that he, "could not obtayne any...they have beene so terrified with the ill practice of them."¹⁰⁶ Letters, petitions, and print were part and parcel of the "noyse" that occasionally spurred crowd actions and more often tended to discouraged potential recruits. If the reputation of servitude did not create a widespread social movement to abolish it, there is evidence that it helped create a hostile climate for those who would recruit at particular times and places.

That the histories of servitude and slavery were intertwined has long been recognized by scholars. At least since the publication of Edmund S. Morgan's classic account of early Virginia, they have given close attention to the "transition" to slavery.¹⁰⁷ This literature has tended to privilege slavery over servitude, both in the institution of more significance and in identifying a more decisive moment of transition than was the case. Moreover, for those who consider the cultural dimension of this history, most have followed Morgan's lead in suggesting that white bondage both justified and then gave way to a newly imagined racialized status of slave.¹⁰⁸ The extent to which contemporary ideas about servitude conjoined with the emerging opposition to the slave trade is, however, largely ignored.¹⁰⁹ Right up to the American Revolution, new narratives appeared condemning the servant traffic as an inhuman merchandise that made a mockery of Briton's self-conceit as the freest of nations. The discourse on servants--present as it was at the birth of the antislavery movement--could not but have informed this monumental development.

From its inception, servitude generated interest and anxiety among the public, only in part based on the novel and exploitative practice itself. American servitude was often regarded as subjecting migrants to a distinctive and barbarous

planter culture, but contemporaries also pointed to the seemingly unrestrained commerce in men as a breach in British liberties. If the prevalence of such ideas in print is any indication, the traffic in servants may have constituted the Achilles heel of servitude, eliciting widespread interest and censure, and perhaps even curtailing emigration. The extent to which such ideas shaped emerging antislavery thinking has yet to be explored.

Notes:

¹ James was among the “13 servants” who sailed aboard the snow *Amity* from Glasgow to Boston in 1716. *New World Immigrants: A Consolidation of Ship Passenger Lists*, Vol. 1, ed. Michael Tepper (Genealogical Publishing Com., 1979), 459.

² William Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process at the instance of William Lauder of Wine-Park...n.p.*, [1718?].

³ This explains why the libel and letters went well beyond immediate legal issues at hand—most notably the boy’s tender age and the consequent violation of parental authority—to condemn the servant trade more generally. James and William were confident that they would receive a sympathetic hearing from the public and the justices, informed as they were by this reputation.

⁴ Many of the works discussed here are based on readings of original imprints found among the rare book collections of the John Carter Brown Library, the British Library, the Bodleian Libraries, and the American Antiquarian Society. Many of these works were dealt with at greater length in my broader survey of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century servant narratives. Matthew Pursell, “Changing Conceptions of Servitude in the British Atlantic, 1640 to 1780” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2005).

⁵ Estimates of the numbers of servants migrating to the mainland British colonies have recently been refined by Christopher Tomlins. He

suggests that servants constituted 60 percent of European migrants in the 1600’s. Tomlins’ estimate of 50 percent for the 1700’s includes the influx of transported convicts into the Chesapeake mostly after 1718. “Reconsidering Indentured Servitude: European Migration and the Early American Labor Force,” *Labor History* 42:1 (2001); 10-11, 38, 39. West Indies estimates are imprecise with some scholars suggesting that they constituted roughly half of European migrants in the seventeenth century. Hillary Beckles, “The ‘Hub of Empire’: The Caribbean and Britain in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 1, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 223. Servant migration to the Caribbean in the eighteenth century was marginal.

⁶ Servitude plays an important part in Bernard Bailyn’s work on the peopling of British North America, including in his assertion that barbarism was central to the colonial experience and to its perception by contemporaries. America was a marchland of English civilization where, he writes, “restraint on brutal exploitation could be abandoned.” *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1986), 114. See, also, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Random House, 2012).

⁷ Concern over the plight of migrants—particularly the redemptioners and other servants—did lead to the formation of four German associations that sought to aid immigrants, ameliorate their hardships, and even end the servant trade. On the first of these organizations, see, Birte Pfleger, *Ethnicity Matters: A History of the German Society of Pennsylvania* (Washington D.C.: German Historical Institute).

⁸ This thesis on the link between ideas about servitude and opposition to slavery is part of an article in progress and is provided here only in a suggestive way.

⁹ Abbot Emerson Smith’s account of servitude throughout the colonies remains the best starting point for thinking about the practice as a whole. *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and*

Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947). Kenneth Morgan's more recent survey of the literature on mainland slaves and servants is a useful, though brief, guide to modern scholarship. *Slavery and Servitude in Colonial North America: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). David W. Galenson's quantitative analysis of registry lists of outbound servants remains the best guide to the demographics of the trade. *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). The demographics of redemptioners and other servants in the mid-Atlantic colonies have been thoroughly parsed by Farely Grubb, whose quantitative work is now available as a single volume. *German Immigration and Servitude in America, 1709-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2011). On this group, see also, Marianne S. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987). Studies of particular colonies written in the first half of the twentieth century have now been supplanted by several more recent regional studies of servitude in its various settings. James Horn, *Adapting to a New World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Sharon Salinger, "To Serve Well and Faithfully": *Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Hilary Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989). Since the publication of Edmund S. Morgan's work, the seventeenth-century Chesapeake has attracted the most attention. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975).

¹⁰ Galenson makes this point and introduces all routes into servitude but that for convicts. *White Servitude in Colonial America*, 11-15. On convicts, see, Roger A. Ekirch has made the same argument. Ekirch, *Bound for America: The Transportation of British Convicts to the Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Forms of entry are generally parsed into those who signed indentures in Britain; those

who arrived without contracts and served by local statutes (or "custom of the country"); those eighteenth-century redemptioners, who often paid a portion of the passage costs in advance and were allotted some time to arrange their own indentures; and the over fifty thousand convicts sent to the colonies.

¹¹ For a recent monograph on the Chesapeake that illuminates the alienable status of servants, see John Rushton Pagan's *Anne Orthwood's Bastard: Sex and Law in Early Virginia* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹² For a brief summary of servants' status, see Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude*, 18-22. Tomlins has greatly advanced our understanding of servant the legal culture of work as it pertained to servants in various regions. *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). See, also, Richard B. Morris' study of the governance of labor has much relevant material on servants. *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1946).

¹³ Christine Daniels has argued that servants' right to petition substantially qualified masters' power. "Liberty to Complain': Servant Petitions in Maryland, 1652-1797," in *The Many Legalities of Early America*, ed. Christopher L. Tomlins and Bruce H. Mann (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 219-249. Tomlins, who examined a larger and more geographically varied sample of proceedings and outcomes on a wider variety of cases found similar results outcomes but does not make such sweeping claims about their implications for servants' status. "Early British America, 1585-1830," in *Masters, Servants and Magistrates in Britain & the Empire, 1562-1955*, eds. Hay and Paul Craven (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), Morris finds both servants' favorable outcomes but also cases of flagrant, repeated abuse that went unpunished by the courts. *Government and Labor in Early America*.

¹⁴ The following summary is based largely on the work of Galenson, Tomlins and Grubb. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America*; Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*; Grubb, *German Immigration and Servitude in America*.

¹⁵ Several scholars have commented on this neglect. See, for example, Horn, *Adapting to a New World*, 427-8.

¹⁶ Both contemporaries and modern scholars have tried to sort out fact from fiction, sensibly enough. Thus some contemporaries dismissed the false claims about servants in the Chesapeake as the work of "blackmouthed babblers" and "preposterous brains," while one modern scholar dismissed a servant ballad as "full of exaggeration and poetic license" and, thus, "of no real historical value." John Hammond, *Leah and Rachel, or the Two Fruitfull Sisters, Virginia and Mary-Land* (London, 1655), 299. Also, *A Character of the Province of Maryland*, 55.

¹⁷ Moraley, William, *The infortunate: or, the voyage and adventures of William Moraley* (London, 1743), 139.

¹⁸ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 8.

¹⁹ Historians have not been entirely in agreement as to just how free or unfree servants were, with some comparing them to slaves and others apprentices. Regardless, experiences were differed depending on a wide array of factors—such as the servants' skills, masters' disposition, disease environment, and crop regimes. Matthew Pursell, "Colonial Servitude and the 'Unfree' Origins of America," *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South* (Spring/Summer 2014), 55-86.

²⁰ Some scholarship on British attitudes towards the slave trade suggests why stories of the commerce in servants might have often upstaged those of servitude as a labor system. Teresa Michals has demonstrated that both popular expectations and the common law sanctioned various forms of dependent labor but censured the treatment of workers as commercial property. "Britons Never Will be Slaves': National Myth, Conservatism, and the Beginnings of British Antislavery," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34:4 (2001): 559-576. Similarly, Nicholas Hudson has demonstrated that a critique of slavery as an unbridled commerce had widespread appeal among both plebeians and elites. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that critical renderings of servitude generally privileged commerce over production. Essentially new and exploitative practices were

felt to transgress, not particular craft privileges, but widely held expectations about the licit forms of labor and authority. "That sole and Despotical Dominion": Slaves, Wives, and Game in Blackstone's Commentaries," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, (Winter, 1993-1994), 195-216.

²¹ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 3, 4.

²² For numerous examples of contemporaries' criticisms of various aspects of indentured servitude as practiced in the British colonies, see Pursell, "Changing Conceptions of Servitude."

²³ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 1, 4, 2.

²⁴ *Virtue Triumphant, or, Elizabeth Canning in America; Being A circumstantial Narrative of her Adventures, from her setting sail for Transportation, to the present Time; in whose miraculous Preservation the hand of Providence is visible* (Boston, 1757), 35.

²⁵ *Lads of Virginia n.d., An American Garland being a Collection of Ballads Relating to America, 1563-1759*, eds., C.H. Frith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1915), 72.

²⁶ *The substance of a letter from one of the prisoners who were transported from Liverpool to the West-Indies. Being a short account of their miserable circumstances, and the (hitherto) unheard of severities they undergo* (London, 1716), 2.

²⁷ Joseph Besse, *An Abstract of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers* (London, 1733).

²⁸ *The substance of a letter from one of the prisoners*, 2.

²⁹ *Virtue Triumphant, or, Elizabeth Canning in America*, 33.

³⁰ At least one contemporary questioned the degree to which sentence of transportation was driven by labor demand. "Whether, at that period of time, mankind were more profligate than usual; or, whether there was a more than ordinary demand for men in his majesty's colonies, cannot by us be determined, Carew, *The Life and Adventures of Bamfylde-Moore Carew*, (London, 1745), 72.

³¹ The best introduction to "spiriting" is still Smith, *Colonists in Bondage*, 67-86. See, also, Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 307-312.

³² See, for example, *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 19. Richard Head, *The English*

Rogue Described in the Life of Meriton Latroon (London, 1665), 137.

³³ *Dialogue between the ghost of Captain Kidd, and the napper in the Strand* (London, 1702).

³⁴ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith. Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse. Exactly Collected and now Published for the Delight and Recreation of all merry disposed Persons* (London, 1662)., 18., 19.

³⁵ *The Vain Prodigal Life, and Tragical Penitent Death of Thomas Hellier...Who for Murdering his Master, Mistress, and a maid, was Executed according to Law* (London, 1680), 30.

³⁶ *The English Rogue Described in the Life of Meriton Latroon A Witty Extravagant, Being a Complete History of the Most Eminent Cheats of Both Sexes* (London, 1668), 128.

³⁷ *Minor Burlesque*, n.p., 2.

³⁸ Penelope Aubin, *The Life of Charlotte DuPont, an English Lady; taken from her own memoirs. Giving an account how she was trepan'd by her stepmother to Virginia.* (London, 1723), 5.

³⁹ Johann Carl Buettner, *Narrative of Johann Carl Buettner in the American Revolution*, 27.

⁴⁰ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 24.

⁴¹ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 3.

⁴² Towers Bell, *A concise account of the sufferings of Towers Bell, late of Beverley, which he experienced in America...([York?]*, 1784), 7-8.

⁴³ *The Vain Prodigal Life, and Tragical Penitent Death of Thomas Hellier...Who for Murdering his Master, Mistress, and a maid, was Executed according to Law* (London, 1680), 30.

⁴⁴ Peter Williamson, *French and Indian cruelty; exemplified in the life...of P. W...*(York, 1757), 108, 131.

⁴⁵ Ashbridge, *Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*, ed. Daniel B. Shea in *Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women's Narratives*, ed. William L. Andrews (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

⁴⁶ For an example of the use of "good wine and good ale," see the shipboard conversation between an Irish servant and Edward Ward. *A Trip to Jamaica: with a true Character of the people and island* (London, 1700).

⁴⁷ Daniel Defoe, *The History and Remarkable Life of the Truly Honourable Col. Jacque...*(London, 1722).

⁴⁸ Reed, *The Registry Office*, 21-2.

⁴⁹ *The Vain Prodigal Life, and Tragical Penitent Death.*

⁵⁰ Williamson, *French and Indian cruelty*, 134.

⁵¹ *The English Rogue Described in the Life of Meriton Latroon A Witty Extravagant, Being a Complete History of the Most Eminent Cheats of Both Sexes* (London, 1668). This formulation appears at several points in Lauder's libel, where agents are said to have promised that gold was in the colonies, "as plenty as Stones in the Streets of Edinburgh." Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 1.

⁵² James Annesley, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman, Return'd from a Thirteen Years Slavery in America Where he had been sent by the Wicked Contrivances of his Cruel Uncle. A Story founded on Truth, and address'd equally to the head and Heart* (London, 1743), 58.

⁵³ *The Journal of John Harrower: An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773-1776*, ed. Edward Miles Riley (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg, 1963), 16-17.

⁵⁴ *The Vain Prodigal Life, and Tragical Penitent Death*, 11-12. Later in his dying confession this same servant called on masters to treat their servants with more kindness in part because it was only through their poverty that they had come to this condition.

⁵⁵ Defoe, *The History and Remarkable Life*, 137.

⁵⁶ Peter Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty* (York, 1757).

⁵⁷ Hay, "England, 1562-1875: The Law and its Uses."

⁵⁸ On pauper apprenticeship, see Horn, *Adapting to a New World*. On the prevalence of debtor's courts and criminal sanctions as applied to the poor and laboring classes, see, Hay, "England, 1562-1875: The Law and its Uses."

⁵⁹ In England, wage labor was growing rapidly by 1600, though these workers were still subject to criminal discipline. J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Hay, "England, 1562-1875: The Law and its

Uses,” in *Masters, Servants and Magistrates*. For a concise summary of the the English economy that includes attention to wage work and dependency, see Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: the Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 30-35, 102-113. Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁶⁰ If impressment and pauper apprenticeship were not entirely dissimilar from servitude in entailing coerced recruitment, entry into the servant trade was new in scale.

⁶¹ *Virtue Triumphant*, 12.

⁶² Before a servant’s term was up, they might be sold or otherwise transferred again, perhaps liquidated to pay debts, willed at death, or even lost at a card table.

⁶³ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 24.

⁶⁴ See, also, in which servants are compared to cattle at market and “brute beasts.” *The Vain Prodigal Life*, 135. See similar use of metaphor in *Englands slavery, or Barbados merchandize; represented in a petition to the high court of Parliament, by Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle gentlemen...* (London, 1659), 22-23. This pamphlet has been widely written on it, but none have also examined the appended letters. See, also, *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*, vol. 1, 1542-1688, ed. Leo Francis Stock (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution), 247. The significance of this printed petition has been commented on by a number of scholars. For the only discussion of this document that includes the sometimes appended letters, see, Pursell, “Changing Conceptions of Servitude,” 42-66.

⁶⁵ Stock, *Proceedings and Debates*, 249. See, also, the well known account by Gottlieb Mittelberger, in which servants are bartered and sold “as if they were cattle.” *Journey to Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1898), 18.

⁶⁶ Peter Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty* (York, 1757).

⁶⁷ See, for example, James Revel, *The Poor Unhappy Felon’s Sorrowful Account of his*

Fourteen Years Transportation, at Virginia... (York, n.d.).

⁶⁸ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 8.

⁶⁹ Bell, *A concise account of the sufferings of Towers Bell*, 9. When the sailors informed the servants that they “should have the choice of three masters when they sold us,” the protagonist reflected, “we all knew too well that if we refused the first that offered, a rope’s end would be our punishment.”

⁷⁰ It was also in the context of the sale of servants that they were most often described as slaves, or slave-like. Beckles has suggested servants were described as slaves due to their labor. *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989). This was certainly sometimes the case, but at least as often the comparison seems to invoke the sense of being reduced to property, particularly in the context of the buying and selling of men. See, for example, the frequency with which the expression “sold a slave” is in servant narratives.

⁷¹ Edward Kimber, *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Anderson. Containing his Strange Varieties of fortune in Europe and America. Compiled from his own papers* (London, 1800 [1754]), 42. Here the protagonist is reduced to, “a purchased slave!”

⁷² Carole Shammas’ argues that dependents constituted most of the thirteen colonies’ population—or more than in Britain. The proportion of dependents in the West Indian colonies presumably surpassed that of the mainland. *A History of Household Government in America*, 32, 37.

⁷³ This was only more true for slaves, whose service was longer and governance less mediated.

⁷⁴ This point is illustrated nicely in one conversation that took place on board a ship bound for Jamaica. An Irish servant expressed confusion and dismay at his circumstances. In his search for a “good master” in England he had been recruited by a “Gentleman.” Once on board, “I have not seen him since.” Here the new recruit did not bemoan his condition as servant to master but the fact that he had evidently been at who this master would be. Ward, *A Trip to Jamaica*.

⁷⁵ Croke, *Fortune's Uncertainty, or Youth's Unconstancy* (London, 1667), 47.

⁷⁶ Williamson, *French and Indian cruelty*, 135

⁷⁷ *Englands slavery, or Barbados merchandize* (London, 1659), 17. This passage reminds us that this precarious state was not limited to initial sale, though this moment was of particularly importance.

⁷⁸ Indeed James found out that even a relatively benign master could change his assignments and usage due to a change in his own position or disposition first complains about carrying mail as unprofitable but later bemoans cleaning and dishes when master loses his postal position.

⁷⁹ Revel, *The Poor Unhappy Felon's Sorrowful Account*, 193.

⁸⁰ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 3, 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁴ Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, 130.

⁸⁵ Annesley, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman*, 72.

⁸⁶ Revel, *The Poor Unhappy Felon's Sorrowful Account*, 194.

⁸⁷ Richard Frethorne, Letter (March 20, April 2-3 1623), *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, ed. Susan Myra Kingsbury (Library of Congress, 1905).

⁸⁸ Henry Pitman, *A relation of the great sufferings, and strange adventures of Henry Pitman* (London, 1689).

⁸⁹ Moraley, *The infortunate*, 103-104

⁹⁰ Pitman, *A relation of the great sufferings*, 5

⁹¹ Moraley, *The infortunate*.

⁹² Bell, *A concise account of the sufferings of Towers Bell*, 802.

⁹³ Aubin, *The Life of Charlotte DuPont, an English Lady*, 46. The protagonist vows to her stepsister who was likewise sent to the plantations, "if I live to see England again, I will see justice done both to you and our dear father."

⁹⁴ As many scholars have noted, it is ultimately impossible to measure their impact on migrants. See, for example, Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude*, 16; Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness; Envisioning America*, ed. Peter C. Mancall; Lefler, "Promotional Literature of the Southern Colonies." Howard Mumford Jones, "The Colonial Impulse: An Analysis of the

'Promotion' Literature of Colonization," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 90 (1946): 146; and Hugh T. Lefler, "Promotional Literature of the Southern Colonies," *Journal of Southern History*, 33 (1967)

⁹⁵ See, for example, A. Roger Ekirch, *Birthright: The True Story that Inspired Kidnapped* (New York: WW Norton, 2010). For an earlier reading of this same case as well as others, see, Pursell, "Changing Conceptions of Servitude." Such victims were often able to secure relatively favorable terms and conditions or even their freedom. Such selective public interest and sympathy.

⁹⁶ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 5.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Richard Eburne who in 1624 addressed his pamphlet to the "meaner sort." Richard Eburne, *A Plain Pathway to Plantations*, ed. Louis B. Wright (Cornell, Ithaca, 1962).

⁹⁸ Lauder, *Memorial or state of the process*, 4

⁹⁹ *The Trappan'd Maiden: Or, The Distressed Damsel* (London, n.d.) in *An American Garland*.

¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, even in eighteenth-century Britain, after the removal of formal pre-print censorship from all print save dramas, post-print constraints remained. See, for example, Annabel Patterson, "Censorship," in *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, eds., Martin Coyle, et al. (London: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁰¹ Williamson, *French and Indian cruelty*,

¹⁰² John Norris, *Profitable Advice for Rich and Poor in a Dialogue, or Discourse Between James Freeman, a Carolina Planter and Simon question, a West-Country Farmer. Containing A Description, or true Relation of South Carolina an English Plantation, or Colony, in America*. (London, 1712), 89.

¹⁰³ *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, 18.

¹⁰⁴ John Hammond noted in his 1656 publication that though many in England were destitute, "it were dangerous to advise these wretches to better their conditions by travaile, for fear of the cry of, a spirit, a spirit." Quoted in Smith, *Colonists in Bondage*, 61.

¹⁰⁵ Middlesex court records, for example, documented such cases as the "assaulting and pumping of Margaret Emmerson upon the false report of a spirit or an inticer or inveagler of children."

Quoted in Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage*, 70.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Southwell, Letter (August 31, 1669), in *Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society*, Vol. 1 (South Carolina Historical Society, 1897), 152.

¹⁰⁷ Classic introductions to the subject include, Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 236-244. Edward Countryman recently edited a useful synthesis. *How did American Slavery Begin?* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1999). Other overviews include, Farley Grubb, "From Slaves, Convicts, and Servants to Free Passengers: The Transformation of Immigration in the Era of the American Revolution," *Journal of American History* 85 (1988); Fogleman, "From Slaves, Convicts, and Servants to Free Passengers: The Transformation of Immigration in the Era of the American Revolution," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (June, 1998), 43-76; Russell Menard, "Transitions to African Slavery in British America, 1630-1730: Barbados, Virginia and South Carolina," in his *Migrants, Servants and Slaves: Unfree Labor in Colonial America* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001). For a recent refinement on the transition in Virginia, see John C. Coombs, "The Phases of Conversion: A New Chronology for the Rise of Slavery in Early Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 68, no. 3 (July 2011). For similar advances in the study of Barbados, see "McCusker and Menard, "Sugar Industry in Seventeenth-Century Barbados Sugar Revolution," in *Tropical Babylon: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁸ Several scholars have considered the ideological relationship between servitude and slavery through the parliamentary debate over political prisoners exiled to Barbados in the 1650's as recorded in the pamphlet, *Englands slavery, or Barbados merchandize*. The significance of this episode has been considered by a several scholars, beginning with Abbot Emerson Smith. *Colonists in Bondage*, 160-2. Beckles provides the most thorough analysis in "English Parliamentary Debate on 'White

Slavery' in Barbados, 1659," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 36 (1982). More recently Linebaugh and Rediker interpreted this document. *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 132-4. These three historians all argue that this debate marked a decisive break from white servitude and an embrace of racial slavery, a thesis that privileges the West Indies.

¹⁰⁹ John Donaghue has begun this task, but overlooks the much longer discourse on servitude outlined in this study. "'Out of the Land of Bondage': The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition," *American Historical Review* (October 2010), 943-974. See, Pursell, "Changing Conceptions of Servitude," 360. For an example of an impressive study of abolition that makes almost no mention of the opposition to servitude, see Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (New York: Verso, 1998), 41-43.