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## Enslaved Ship Pilots in the Age of Revolutions: Challenging Notions of Race and Slavery between the Boundaries of Land and Sea

### Abstract

*This article considers how enslaved pilots used the coastal waters of the Anglophone-Americas during the Revolutionary Era as a cultural and political space to invert racial/social valuations and gain uncommon privileges. It examines how captives in discrete societies similarly exchanged environmental and nautical wisdom for lives of privileged exploitation. Most were owned by slaveholding-merchants, who dispatched several pilots in pilot boats to navigate vessels into port. Recognizing their inability to supervise pilots who remained aboard ship for days, sometimes weeks, and return home in pilot boats capable of carrying them beyond their grasp, slaveholders granted these trusted men considerable autonomy and geographic mobility, permitting them to cultivate semi-independent, wage-earning lives that allowed some to obtain freedom. Water was an integral element in pilots' lives. Waterways are often treated as literary backdrops; not regions for cultural creation. Coastal waters afforded pilots with liminality between the regimes of terrestrial and maritime authority, providing shipboard privileges exceeding those received by bondpeople toiling in other capacities. Enslaved pilots became temporary ship captains, permitting them to curse and command white sailors and officers, toast white women, and assault white shipmasters even as their race and status sought to subjugate them. The Revolutionary Period enhanced pilots' opportunities, enabling them to manipulate revolutionary rhetoric, wartime circumstances, and rapidly changing social dynamics to subvert white authority, appropriate privileges, and seize freedom and sometimes rights for themselves and their family members.*

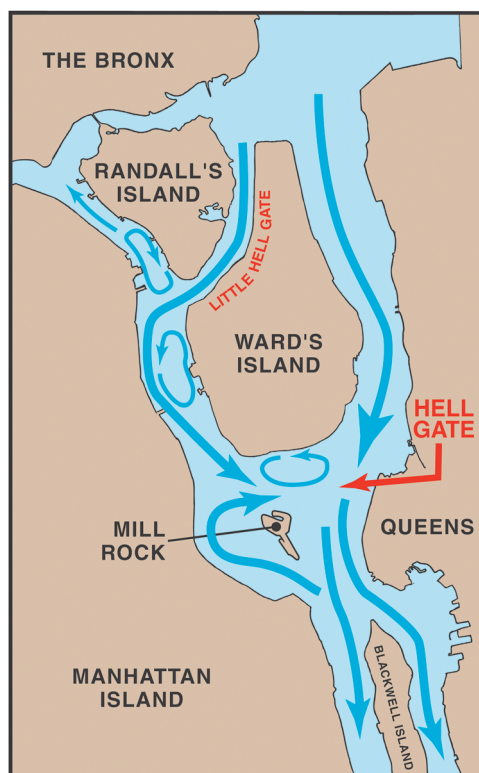
Westerners were world voyagers traversing open oceans. Yet, they relied on local pilots to guide them in-and-out of port and through coastal waterways where most shipwrecks occurred. Newspapers, ship logs, plantation records, and travelogues, indicate that enslaved pilots monopolized the profession in Anglophone slave societies during the Age of Revolutions (1760–1840). In the 1790s, sojourning Yale University professor Josiah Meigs reported that they linked Bermuda to the rest of the world, saying “without skilful pilots who are black fellows educated to the business from childhood it would be impossible to enter our harbours.” They

bound Jamaica, Britain's most prosperous colony, to broader Atlantic economies and dominated the profession in the American south.<sup>1</sup> Pilot's specialized knowledge of coastal hydrography (the marine geography, including the seafloor, and affects of tides, winds, and currents on waterways and navigation) was key to overseas shipping; connecting plantations to overseas markets and colonies to the metropolis, protecting the prosperity of plantation slavery and expansion of national and imperial power. As ships entered coastal waters, enslaved pilots assumed temporary command, controlling the threshold between sea-and-land where they inverted the racial/social hierarchy.

A New York slave demonstrated pilots' ability to overturn racial/social concepts when navigating the fifty-gun British warship *Experiment* through the straits of Hell Gate. On August 23, 1778, in the midst of the American Revolution, "three 74 Gun French Ships" chased the *Experiment* into Long Island Sound, trapping it in the East River. As Captain Sir James Wallace pondered his ship's destruction, the pilot indicated that he could affect their escape by negotiating Hell Gate, which had never been performed by such a large ship. Assuming command, the pilot guided her into the narrows. "At the moment of greatest danger," Wallace determined to reassert his captaincy and "gave some orders" that, in the pilot's opinion, "interfered with the duties of his office." Tapping Wallace on the shoulder the slave said, "you no speak here!" The Captain felt the full force of the brave fellow's remonstrance" and complied.<sup>2</sup>

Hell Gate is a shallow, reef-lined strait on the East River near its confluence with the Harlem River. Conflicting riverine currents and tidal forces from the Atlantic Ocean and Long Island Sound created a perplexity of eddies, ebbs-and-flows, currents, and a giant whirlpool that, together with freakish winds, drove hundreds of vessels per year onto its reefs. This incident highlights how slaves appropriated command, inverting the racial/social stratum. As a nobleman and shipmaster, Wallace wielded considerable authority. If a slave working in any other capacity similarly corrected elite white men they would be deemed insolent and summarily punished. But everyone understood that the pilot controlled the ship's destiny, permitting him to rebuff a nobleman and shipmaster aboard a vessel that projected and symbolized British overseas power. Indeed, so "highly did" Lord Richard Howe, Britain's Commander-in-Chief of North America, "appreciate the skill and adventurous spirit of the Negro pilot, that he settled on him an annuity of £50 for life," legitimizing his authority.<sup>3</sup>

Between horizons of land and sea, pilots traded the belittling terrestrial conditions endured by black people in the white-dominated Atlantic world for personal freedoms alien to plantation and urban slaves. This article considers how enslaved pilots used coastal waters in the Anglophone-Americas during the Revolutionary Era as a cultural and political space to invert racial/social valuations and gain uncommon privileges. It places pilots in an Atlantic context to examine how captives in discrete societies similarly exchanged environmental and nautical wisdom for lives of privileged exploitation.<sup>4</sup> Most were owned by slaveholding-merchants, who dispatched several pilots in pilot boats to intercept and guide vessels into port and often to their wharves and warehouses. Recognizing their inability to supervise pilots who remained aboard ship for days, sometimes weeks, and return home in pilot boats capable of carrying them beyond their grasp, slaveholders granted these trusted men considerable autonomy and geographic mobility, permitting them to cultivate semi-independent, wage-earning lives that



**Figure 1.** Hell Gate. This map illustrates how the currents coming from the Long Island Sound, located to the above right of Ward's Island, and those created by the Harlem River, which entered the East River to the left of Randall's Island created a perplexity of currents. "The Conquest of Hell Gate," U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. No date.

enabled some to obtain freedom. Importantly, water was an integral element in pilots' lives. Waterways are often treated as literary backdrops; not regions for cultural creation. Coastal waters afforded pilots with liminality between the regimes of terrestrial and maritime authority, providing shipboard privileges exceeding those received by bondpeople toiling in other capacities. Enslaved pilots became temporary ship captains, enabling them to curse and command white sailors and officers even though blackness and subservience were synonymous.

The Revolutionary Period afforded pilots with greater opportunities. News of the world passed through ports, including the murmurs of liberty that rippled across the greater Caribbean inspiring corollary slave rebellions. Pilots were not passive observers of transnational struggles for human rights. They channeled revolutionary rhetoric to bonded communities and internalized and sought to appropriate freedom, liberty, and equality, using military circumstances to gain rights for themselves and family members. Importantly, pilots' subversion of authority was not the result of circulating liberalism; it resulted from their ability to exploit military necessities and changing social dynamics.<sup>5</sup>

The color of waterways is frequently used to distinguish marine environments, with hydrography described in the following imprecisely defined regions: brown water refers to navigable rivers; green water to shallow coastal oceans; blue water is the deep ocean; and swamps are black water. Marine geographers assert that we must not assume “the ocean is a single body of water, the so-called world ocean” and instead consider the influences of disparate marine environments. We would be remiss to ignore how geographic features, like fields, mountains, and urban environments, informed human experiences; yet scholars disregard how hydrographic variants shaped the historical process.<sup>6</sup>

We can refine our analysis of maritime history by adopting Africanists’ use of cultural geography to organize Atlantic Africa into cultural spaces with shared traditions and histories. Boubacar Barry introduced the term “Greater Senegambia” to correct what he felt was historiographic fragmentation that parceled Africa into “a historical jigsaw puzzle. Viewed separately the pieces make little sense. Brought together, the bits of shredded data, from vignettes of personalities to social sketches and political snapshots, reveal new meanings.”<sup>7</sup> Contextualizing water as cultural hydrography reveals how green water formed spaces where pilots constructed semi-independent lives upon *liminal* waters.

Greg Dening’s theoretical model of Marquesan cultural interactions with Westerners in *Islands and Beaches* can elucidate pilots’ liminal experiences. The Marquesas Islands provided “cultural worlds,” where “signs that expressed institutions and roles were very particular.” *Beaches* were “cultural boundaries” around both the Marquesas Islands and individuals, affording room for contact and interaction. *Beaches* were structure-less spaces between frontiers providing liminal experiences as people transitioned between stages in their lives. “So when we cross a boundary, say between childhood and adulthood, between the single state and marriage, between life and death, we invent moments in which we are neither on thing nor the other.” Within these thresholds “ordinary rules and circumstances are suspended” as new realities are formed, providing a “step neither inside, nor outside but in-between.” Green water was pilots’ *beach*—their in-between.<sup>8</sup>

Green water was a threshold flanked by shoreside and maritime traditions and institutions, permitting pilots to slip between two of the most oppressive regimes in the Atlantic world—slaveholders and shipmasters. In this ill-defined space landmen and mariners were unsure of their authority, permitting slaves to manipulate white uncertainty. Pilots were a marginalized *amphibious* group, belonging to neither the world ashore or afloat. But this was a world turned upside-down and green water is where most ships sank, permitting the disenfranchised to use their centrality to broader economic activities to gain sway over their immediate circumstances.<sup>9</sup>

As we enhance our understanding of Atlantic history we increasingly consider understudied topics. Maritime themes provide alternatives to more conventional histories, revealing that life and labor afloat was characterized by fluidities and complexities absent ashore. Several historians anticipated or answered W. Jeffrey Bolster’s call to “put the ocean in Atlantic history,” providing thought-provoking studies on how the sea provided alternative circumstances for mariners, saltwater slaves, and waterside communities. Daniel Vickers reminds us that the lives of seaport residents were informed by connections to the ocean and that most men divided their time afloat and ashore, while Lisa Norling considers



women's roles in shoreside communities and how they accepted and defied paternalism while their husbands and fathers were at sea for months or years. Wim Klooster and Kenneth Banks reveal that as virtually everyone benefited from inter-imperial seaborne smuggling it practically lost its illegality, shifting from improvised economies of the poor to democratic, prosperous pursuits for many.<sup>10</sup> Slave ships provided liminality that redefined captives. The in-between of the Middle Passage afforded bondpeople with cramped room for the creation of new cultures and identities, serving as an in-between for saltwater slaves transitioning from African to American lives as they were transformed from humans into property.<sup>11</sup> Maritime studies fill gaps—perhaps *thresholds*—in the historiography, illustrating the liminality created as people functioned between land-and-sea, empires, and gendered roles; revealing that formal social and legal structures do not reflect floating realities and that pervasive societal disorder and disorientation could become the standard.

Likewise, historians increasingly examine shipboard communities and the opportunities denied ashore. Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh argue that the ocean was a liberating space for rootless and oppressed sailors, slaves, and pirates to redefine terrestrial notions of race and status. Scholarship on free and enslaved black mariners documents how the independent character of their labor undercut white dominance, allowing them to use the ocean as a transient sphere of opportunity where they severed terrestrial ties, re-imagined concepts, and gained economic advantages and racial parity deprived ashore.<sup>12</sup> “Enslaved Ship Pilots” follows this developing historiographic trajectory, divulging water's influences on cultural and political processes and how state and imperial authorities promoted a critical aspect of shipping to facilitate commerce and warfare.

White pilots employed notions of status before slaves were employed in this capacity. Shipmasters were generally members of society's upper stratum.<sup>13</sup> Pilots, like sailors, were drawn from the masses. When pilots assumed command they overset the social hierarchy, as illustrated in 1699 by seafaring satirist Ned Ward: “A Vessel, whilst the *Pilot* is on Board, is an Emblem of Feeble *Monarch*, where the *King* has a States-man in his Dominion Greater than himself, That the Prince only bears the Title, but the other the Command.”<sup>14</sup>

If this was true on white-piloted ships in the Thames, it was doubly true in the Americas aboard vessels guided by slaves who extended affronts to hierarchical concepts that assigned everyone a position and role while stressing a patriarchal ethos permitting elite men to demanded obedience, subordinations, and respect from relegates.<sup>15</sup> Ideas of race and slavery reinforced notions of status. Black people's race thrust them to the bottom of the social hierarchy. Slavery made them property, subjugated them to others' authority, and allowed their labor to be seized. Many whites believed slavery was Africans' natural position, claiming they lacked the intellect and virtue necessary for them to benefit from natural rights.<sup>16</sup> Pilotage provided slaves with positions of authority and permitted them to demonstrate their knowledge.

Pilotage was semi-seasonal work as shipping demands were greatest from spring through fall. During lulls, pilots worked as watermen aboard small fishing, shipping, and salvage vessels, providing themselves with more nuanced understandings of shallows than if they toiled high upon ships' decks. Rhys Isaac considered differing interactions slaveholders and slaves had with shared environments. Heading out from home, bondpeople cut through fields, woods, and streams

gaining subtle understandings of their “alternative territorial system.” Planters rode out on horseback “some three feet higher,” following roads as they viewed but did not interact with the landscape. Likewise, watermen and sailors had divergent experiences. Sailors looked down upon seascapes from several feet above, while watermen intimately interacted with the sea, skimming across shallows a few inches above the surface, obtaining detailed views of the hydrospace (area beneath the surface of the water), mentally mapping the ocean’s bottom and watching and feeling how surface waters heaved and plunged as they moved over shoals. Fishermen accrued detailed understandings of seafloors while charting their preys’ movements and retreats. Salvagers possibly had the best understanding of green water, navigating shallows looking for wrecks to salvage and recovering goods from vessels that refused their pilotage services. When diving, they viewed the hydrospace from below and felt currents and tides, providing themselves with acute understandings of the depths. Many pilots were born in Africa, using aquatic understandings cultivated while fishing, canoeing, and swimming in African waters to gain shipboard ascendancy.<sup>17</sup>

Enslaved pilots used this environmental and nautical astuteness to defy notions of black intellectual inferiority while asserting claims for natural rights. Through most of the eighteenth century pilots were advisors without legal shipboard authority. Yet, mariners knew their *advice* was more reliable than maps and charts, treating it like commands. Their erudition challenged assertions that blacks lacked intellect, logic, and reason, and were unworthy of the liberty. True, pilots memorized hydrography; but pilotage was not based on rote. Nature constantly altered watercourses compelling pilots to carefully read the hydrography while expeditiously calculating differences in water depths and ships’ draft (vertical distance between the waterline and the bottom of the hull) to determine if vessels could clear shallows. Furthermore, many were literate, using this skill to advance their work and personal lives.<sup>18</sup>

Pilots’ importance to shipping convinced whites to accept their subversion of racial concepts, as witnessed by English landsman Frederick Bayley. He formed an unfavorable impression of the African-born pilot who boarded his ship as it approached Bridgetown, Barbados. “He was an African of ferocious aspect, and certainly not formed to create a very favorable opinion of his race in the minds of those who saw him.” The pilot regarded himself as whites’ equal taking “possession of the vessel, with as much importance as if he had been a fine, rough, old English seaman bearing up Channel.” After a few cordial remarks he issued orders and cursed sailors. “‘Vell, captain,’ said he, ‘so you have had a fine passage: I hope de ladies below are vell; if you hab no jection I vill drink deir health.’ Accordingly he had a glass of grog given him, and then turned to work:—‘What de debil are you at dere in de fore top?—Come down dere; I vant to put about; don’t you see de wind blow?’ and then turning to the man at the helm; ‘Vy you no [s]teer [s]teady? Got dam you, Sir,—vy you no teer teady, I say?’” Bayley, who was unfamiliar with shipboard relations, marveled that an African’s nautical acumen enabled him to toast white women and curse white men. Mariners appreciated his ability to ensure their ship’s safety, allowing the slave to behave like an “English seaman bearing up Channel.”<sup>19</sup>

Pilots countered white affronts to their authority, as demonstrated by William Nevens’ experiences aboard the New England merchantman *Ceres*. In 1805, a pilot from the British occupied island of French-Martinique boarded the

ship as it approached Trinity Harbor. Shocked by his “cocked hat, red coat, white neckerchief, but no shirt, or hose a pair of yellow breeches, a yellow slipper on one foot, and a red one on the other” Nevens “involuntarily” laughed. Transcending terrestrial racial boundaries, the pilot responded: “Who you laugh at, you bloody bitch? I let you know, I king pilot, Gor bras ye to ’ell.” Ordering Nevens to measure the water depth, which he submissively did, the pilot turned to the helmsman and “roared out” that he better keep a strait course. In an age where black insolence was routinely met with white violence, pilots understood that white-reliance on their knowledge enabled them to correct and berate sailors without retribution, apparently reveling in such opportunities.<sup>20</sup>

Pilots employed more finesse when admonishing contemptuous shipmasters. They could claim conditions were too perilous—the tide too low, currents or winds too strong, visibility too poor—for safe navigation. If captains attempted a passage against pilot’s *advice* they risked inciting mutiny among sailors unwilling to jeopardize their lives.<sup>21</sup> Pilots also conjoined the strategies of enslaved tricksters and disgruntled mariners. When pilots boarded a vessel, shipmasters routinely gave them grog as a sign of deference. In 1808, a British captain refused this decorum to enslaved Jamaican pilots who boarded his ship as it approached Port Royal, proclaiming: “Give me some beef, massa, me can no take ship safe widout grog and beef.” Deeming the slave impertinent, the captain retorted: “D——n you, mind the ship, you black rascal, . . . and when she is safe you shall have what you want.” An assistant pilot used the slave ploy of feigned ignorance to reconstitute their authority. Inquiring on the water depth, the captain asked: “What water have you got?” The slave responded: “Why *salt water*, massa, to be sure.” The furious captain retorted: “You black scoundrel, tell me, again, I say, how *much water*, have you got?” “Lord, massa, how can me tell, me have no pot to measure it wid!” Recognizing the slave’s ability to continue this routine until his ship ran aground, the captain surrendered his authority, grog, and beef.<sup>22</sup>

These Jamaicans demonstrate pilots’ aptitude for quickly restoring pilot-captain relationships by pretending to be too dumb to comprehend simple questions, a common tactic among tricksters.<sup>23</sup> Their labor demonstration was also akin to that of white mariners. White pilots gained rights by striking to halt maritime commerce. Revolutionary-Period Delaware River pilots employed work-disruptions that inhibited shipping between Philadelphia and the Atlantic, forcing elite land- and ship-based authority to concede to their demands.<sup>24</sup> Linked to Atlantic networks of communication pilots drew from the tools of the disenfranchised to extract concessions from the powerful.

Pilots existed outside the spectrum of negotiated authority historians use to describe terrestrial master-slave relations. Extensive scholarly attention examines how slavery, though imposed and perpetuated by violence from above, remained a negotiated relationship with slaveholders and slaves ceaselessly trying to extract concessions from each other. Slaveholders possessed most of the power in these lopsided relationships, using, as Robert Lowell detailed, “public spectacles and cultural metaphors to disguise, symbolize, and enact their rule.” Slaves did not abjectly submit to slaveowners’ awesome power. They countered, leveraging work-related expertise, arduous and skillful labor, control over production, cooperation, and resistance to individually and collectively pry allowances from their owners. Richard Follett delineated how these compromises “ultimately aided productivity

as the enslaved furthered their own interests by accommodating the machine of planters' agenda."<sup>25</sup>

Historians recognize how environmental conditions informed these reciprocal relationships in fields, mountains, and urban areas. The task system developed in response to environmental and labor circumstance unique to Lowcountry South Carolina-Georgia tidal-rice production and permitted slaves to attain more independence and room than other agricultural hands. Task labor replaced gang labor, which dominated plantation production throughout the Americas forcing bondpeople to work from sunup to sundown, with a regime that sharply distinguished planters and slaves' time and space. Instead of directly supervising captives in hot malarial fields, overseers assigned daily tasks that provided slaves with autonomy and encouraged them to efficiently complete assignments by rewarding them with the balance of their day, which slaves used to produce crops on allocated land for their consumption or sale.<sup>26</sup> Marine environments and work conditions similarly influenced white-slave interactions.

Scholars of maritime slavery have been seductively lulled into terrestrial paradigms, using analysis of land-bound master-slave relationships to consider how shipboard realities provided "special opportunities." Nautical slavery is not terrestrial slavery afloat and, generally speaking, landward slaveholder-slave relationships were not transposed aboard ship. Marine traditions and laws, environmental factors, and occupational variables defined the contours of maritime bondage.<sup>27</sup>

Relationships between pilots and white authority differed from terrestrial master-slave circumstances, enabling them to sidestep the thrust-and-parry regimens innate to planter-slave relationships. True, pilots gained privileges by advancing white interests, but their primary interaction with authority was with shipmasters, *not slaveholders*, and centuries of maritime tradition predetermined captain-pilot relationships. White people were unwilling to alter this precedent, regardless of pilots' race or status. While shipboard officers were permitted to flog and even kill sailors, slaveholders and port authorities placed pilots beyond captains' sphere of discipline. This provided pilots with considerable power, leaving shipmasters little room for negotiation. Unlike field slaves, pilots could not be easily replaced, hence port authorities sought to protect them. Additionally, pilots could avenge abuses by *accidentally* sinking vessels and their persuasive powers were enhanced by white people's inability to swim, making the specter of shipwreck more ominous. Hence, pilots underwent metamorphic transformation upon the liminality of green water. Ashore they were mere slaves. When they clambered from pilot boats, up a ship's ladder, swung themselves over the ship's rail, and ascended to the quarterdeck—a symbol of maritime authority—they became shipmasters.<sup>28</sup> Whites recognized that they were symbiotically locked in antagonistic relationships with enslaved pilots, conceding that it was in their best interest to treat their racial inferiors like captains. For ships' safety, pilots needed to issue commands and white officers and sailors had to comply.

Pilots' autonomy differed from that of most enslaved landspeople. Most bondpeople acquired independence by working escaping white observation. Pilots gained autonomy by serving white economic interests while mariners and passengers scrutinized their every move. Barry Higman's analysis of British Caribbean seaports reveals that autonomy was not necessarily based on white absence. "Most urban slaves lived in more intimate contact with their owners than did rural slaves, frequently sharing their houses, eating their leftovers, and

wearing their castoffs." Yet, most enjoyed more freedom than rural bondpeople. The ratio of whites to slaves was higher in towns than rural areas and greater still aboard ship. However, maritime law and planters' sway precluded pilots from ship-board authority while they spent days and weeks away from their owners.<sup>29</sup>

Most whites accepted pilots' upending of the social stratum because they improved their fortunes. Brothers Thomas and John Blount were prominent North Carolina planter-merchants who rewarded black pilots' abilities. In early winter of 1794, their sloop, *Sally*, ran aground. A £60 reward was offered to refloat the vessel, and a succession of white pilots unsuccessfully tried before a black pilot succeed. Thomas was so impressed by the "clever fellow" that he gave "him 20 dollars in addition to the £60 which he is entitled." This pilot's skills motivated the brothers to purchase pilots and prudent merchants, planters, and captains heeded such lessons, deeming black pilots their racial inferiors, while respecting and rewarding their dexterities.<sup>30</sup>

Many watermen used skills obtained as canoemen, fishermen, and coastal and inter-island sailors to graduate into more privileged and less strenuous pilot positions. In 1815, an Antiguan slaveholder offered for sale "a stout negro man, a good sailor and fisherman, capable of taking charge of a vessel, and a good pilot for this and all the neighboring islands."<sup>31</sup> Thomas Jeremiah of Charleston, South Carolina epitomizes the benefits pilots reaped by marrying nautical occupations. An enslaved fisherman in the 1740s, Jeremiah used his knowledge to secure a more lucrative pilotage position, purchasing his freedom with his pilot's income. As a fisherman, he knew the shoals that nearly blockaded the city, yet initially possessed an imperfect understanding of the water-depth necessary to navigate ships in this harbor. In February 1755 the "*Jamaica Man of War*" was run hard aground "by the Carelessness of a Negro Pilot (*Jerry*)." One year later, Jeremiah grounded and sank a merchantman. Through fishing and continued pilotage (as well as firefighting) Jeremiah improved his skills, fame, and fortune by linking the wealthiest colony in British North America to Atlantic ports. By 1771 he was free and his pilotage skills made him influential in one of America's most important and prosperous ports. Governor Sir William Campbell proclaimed him "one of the best pilots in the harbor" and "by his industry acquired property upwards of £1,000 sterling," (\$200,00 in today's currency) including "several slaves," possibly making him the wealthiest black man in North America.<sup>32</sup>

Seaports belonged to neither land nor sea, affording pilots shoreside liminality. These coastal frontiers were thresholds where Europeans encountered Africans in the Americas, cultures coalesced, sojourning seamen challenged dominant social valuations, counter-cultures prevailed, and interracial fraternization was common. Pilots resided in these in-between spaces, where normal terrestrial and maritime top-down social arrangements were suspended. Simultaneously, green water and ports conspired to undermine white authority, affording pilots parallel thresholds between slavery and freedom; colony and empire; land and sea, permitting them to become quasi-free members of multi-racial communities with ties to rural, urban, and maritime workers.<sup>33</sup>

Bondpeople constituted a significant portion, sometimes the majority, of a port's population.<sup>34</sup> Here they enjoyed considerable autonomy while their owners remained on rural estates. Some slaveholders lived in different colonies. Sampson and Mercury, who will be discussed below, lived in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1773 their owner "departed the Province," leaving them to ply their profession.

Like many urban slaves, pilots were entrepreneurs who hired themselves out and lived free of direct white interference; organizing semi-independent lives of privileged exploitation. Industrious slaves generated considerable incomes for themselves, enhancing their material comfort and that of family members.<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Martin recently documented how slaves' ability to find employers provided them with liminality as they "occupied shaky legal ground." Since slaves were not recognized persons, self-hiring arrangements formed with employers were tacit rather than legal contracts and legislatures often outlawed the practice. Hence, pilots, like other hirelings, slid between freedom and slavery; legality and illegality as slaveholders, shipmasters, and port authorities supported, promoted, and benefited these illegal agreements.<sup>36</sup>

Ports contained vibrant multiracial institutions that catered to the desires of maritime workers while obscuring racial margins. Pilots conducted disembarking whites to lodging places, friends' homes, brothels, taverns, and enslaved marketeers' stalls.<sup>37</sup> These "socially marginal" fixtures were probably the most integrated places on earth, affording "comparative privacy" for white and black men and women to socialize and discuss events of the Atlantic world. Alcohol, legitimate and stolen goods, along with the commoditized bodies of white and black women were sold to men of all races and saloonkeepers, prostitutes, and enslaved marketeers served as conduits of information, gleaning news from one patron and disseminating it to others.<sup>38</sup>

Atlantic ports were marketplaces for news and pilots funneled intelligence between mariners, passengers, and shoreside communities, serving as the overseas eyes and ears of urban and rural slave communities. News was passed by word of mouth along maritime routes and, as Julius Scott documented, free black sailors linked black communities from New England to the West Indies into what he called the "greater Caribbean." These sailors permitted black landspeople to monitor international events. As mariners' the first terrestrial contact, pilots were key figures in these networks. Bernard Martin noted that from Jamaican pilots "the captain learns all the news, and retails it to his passengers." While vessels lay at anchor with passengers and crew confined aboard for hours or days waiting to clear customs and quarantine, pilots returned ashore with the news of the world. Entering pulsating waterfront communities comprised of urban, maritime, and rural slaves, they disseminated Atlantic news to bondpeople who rapidly conveyed it inland along the arteries of their informal economies.<sup>39</sup>

Slave pilots developed and exploited important symbiotic relationships with terrestrial and maritime authorities. Governments rarely safeguarded free or enslaved black people from abuse, yet port authorities and slaveholders provided pilots with overlapping protection. Port authorities forced captains to employ pilots and entrusted them with harbor safety by keeping watercourses free of shipwrecks that would obstruct commerce and could damage wharves and vessels. They were also trusted not to usher enemy vessels into port and forced ships suspected of carrying disease to "ride quarantine" with passengers and crew confined aboard. Revolutionary-Era port authorities fundamentally tilted pilot-shipmaster relationships in pilots' favor, transforming traditions into laws to further shield pilots from abuses that would inhibit their ability to retain experts. For most of the eighteenth century pilots were, essentially, independent contractors regulated, protected, but not employed, by port authorities. As warfare compelled governments to closely guard waterways, port authorities expanded pilots' power, making



them government employees and granting them temporary legal command of vessels. In Bermuda they became royally-appointed King's or Queen's pilots (depending on the monarch's gender). United States law stated: "After a pilot is taken on board, the master has no longer any command of the ship till she is safe in harbour." Slaves now possessed legal command of ships; impressing, physically abusing, or refusing to pay them resulted in criminal charges.<sup>40</sup>

Thomas Jeremiah illustrates pilots' ability to manipulate terrestrial connections to protect themselves. In 1771, Jeremiah assailed Thomas Langen, a white captain, while piloting his ship up Charleston's Cooper River. He was convicted of assault and "Sentenced to lie in the stocks One hour & receive ten Lashes." However, Governor Sir William Bull pardoned him. Given Jeremiah's weight among those of authority, he doubtlessly understood the eventual outcome of his actions. Hence, what appears an imprudent act was probably a bold, calculated, risk designed to punctuate and advance his importance and authority. Furthermore, Jeremiah seemingly felt he, like shipmasters, could employ violence against perceived subordinates.<sup>41</sup>

Terrestrial officials agreed with Jeremiah's assessment of himself and his position in Charleston. Bull apparently pardoned Jeremiah to spare him the humiliation that would undermine his position, suggesting authorities valued black pilots more than white captains. There were always far more captains than pilots in port. More importantly, shipmasters were transient replaceable figures; pilots were hard-to-replace fixtures. It was not uncommon for white people to value slaves over certain groups of whites and planters' used white laborers for tasks determined too dangerous for bondpeople. The injury or death of slaves constituted a considerable financial losses; the death of white laborers was of little consequence. Like white laborers, Langen was relatively expendable.<sup>42</sup>

This differed dramatically from planter-slave relationships. Manipulative planters granted privileges, like better food, clothing, and housing, to make bondpeople more dependent. An important privilege was to be placed in a skilled occupation, allowing slaves to evade the monotony of field labor, find dignity in their work, enhance their self-esteem, and sometimes obtain cash payments. While plantation production would have ceased without craftsmen, like carpenters and blacksmiths, bondpeople could be rotated in-and-out of these positions without considerably disrupting output. Pilots, like enslaved underwater divers, could not be easily replaced and Bull valued the convicted black pilot more than the abused white shipmaster, realizing Jeremiah's loss would inhibit shipping.<sup>43</sup>

Slaveholding-merchants owned and protected most pilots who, in turn, provided them with social, political, and economic benefits. Pilots gave their owners a percentage of their incomes and guided merchantmen to their wharves, making the arrangement profitable.<sup>44</sup> Concurrently, they projected planters' social, political, and economic supremacy onto the water. Slave pilots were paid less than white and free black counterparts and many shipmasters deemed them more skilled than whites, who were frequently described as dishonest drunkards, permitting slaves to dominate pilotage while providing slaveholding-merchants with considerable maritime influence. During the Revolutionary Period white North Carolina pilots tried to break slaves' near-monopoly of the profession by introducing legislation designed to bar them from pilotage. Angered by efforts to restrict the use of their property, planters defeated these bills, consolidated their power ashore and afloat, while devastating white pilots' political influence. Likewise, in



1816, a Jamaican law designed to prohibit slaves from pilotage was repealed. As the eighteenth century progressed, slaveholders throughout the Americas encouraged bondmen to edge whites out of the profession. Consequently, slave owners' desire to expand their power translated into palpable gains for bondmen.<sup>45</sup>

As the property of powerful planters, pilots received protection denied to white pilots. Laws compelled shipmasters to respect slaveholders' property and if they harmed his possessions they could face lawsuits. Additionally, those who injured a slave pilot could incur his owner's unsanctioned wrath.<sup>46</sup>

The American, French, and Haitian revolutions provided pilots with greater opportunities to redefine their lives. Most scholarship on revolutionary slavery examines terrestrial experiences. Pilots did not exist in social vacuums. Revolutionary upheaval created fissures in white domination allowing bondpeople to further destabilize social hierarchies throughout the Atlantic. Whether captured or born into New World bondage, pilots used their positions to expand revolutionary visions of liberty and equality. Surprisingly, white people often responded to pilots' affronts by encouraging, rewarding, and protecting them, allowing many pilots to secure natural rights and function like free white men.<sup>47</sup>

During the American Revolution slaves internalized and sought to appropriate liberty, equality, and freedom, exploiting military necessities and siding with whomever provided them human rights.<sup>48</sup> Most pilots, and many other slaves, believed their best chance for freedom lay with the British, whose imperial system supported slavery, and not colonists, who embraced universal human rights. Pilots knew their skills were valuable to the British and were among the first to join the British who countered revolution by promising freedom to slaves who ran away from and fought against rebellious slaveholders.<sup>49</sup>

The British distributed fugitive pilots "in the men of war destined to cruise where they are acquainted." James Jackson fled Robert Tucker's Norfolk, Virginia plantation to British ships where he "was employed as a pilot." Equally, James Robertson escaped from Portsmouth, Virginia. The Revolution provided both with freedom and military bounties, sending them on circuitous voyages in search of liberty and equality. At war's end, Britain evacuated them to Nova Scotia. From there they sailed to London and, in 1786, Jackson migrated to the British colony in Sierra Leone.<sup>50</sup>

Likewise, Patriots recruited slaves "accustomed to the navigation" of rivers by allowing slaveholders to substitute "a Negro and get an exception from military duty." Impressed slave pilots did not remain pawns and determined to use the conflict to gain liberty. Among them were several African-born slaves seeking to re-secure freedom in a country they now called home. Cuffee, a corruption of Akan day-name Kofi, indicating that he was born on Friday in modern-day Ghana, piloted the *Liberty* through Virginia's Tidewater until being killed in 1781. On April 21, 1776 Minny "voluntarily entered himself on board a vessel dispatched to intercept" a marauding British vessel that ascended the Rappahannock River, "and being used to the water, and a good pilots, bravely and successfully exerted himself against the enemy" boat, which he helped capture. He "was killed by the enemy in attempting to board her."<sup>51</sup> Mark Starlins, also a saltwater bondman, capitalized on his understanding of Virginia's tidewaters. He was deemed "a very singular and meritorious character in the person of an African, who had been brought over to this country when he was young, and soon evinced a remarkable attachment to it; he was brought up a

pilot, and proved a skillful one, and a devoted patriot.” Whites respectfully called him “Captain Starlins,” a title his skills warranted.<sup>52</sup>

As Patriots sought to reserve liberty for themselves, these and other pilots endeavored to seize freedom. Cæsar Tarrant’s dedication to liberty advanced his status and that of his descendants. In 1789 Virginia’s General Assembled passed an act to purchase and free him from his mistress. He subsequently acquired several “Houses & estates.” After his death, his daughter Nancy benefited from his service, claiming his military bounty and taking advantage of a Virginia law providing land to veterans and their heirs to obtain 2,660 acres in Ohio.<sup>53</sup>

Enslaved Bermudian pilots used the Revolutionary Age to redefine their status, as exemplified by James “Jemmy” Darrell. Raised on the sea, his knowledgeable of Bermuda’s reef-encrusted seafloor compelled Lieutenant Thomas Hurd, hydrographer to the Royal Navy’s Admiralty, to employ him, in 1789, in a six-year survey of the archipelago, enabling Darrell to become the colony’s best pilot. The loss of North American colonies during the American Revolution deprived Britain of a naval supply base between Canada and the Caribbean. Simultaneously, French, but not British, warships and privateers were permitted to re-supply in American ports, making it difficult for Britain to protect mid-Atlantic shipping during the French Revolution. Bermuda was ideally located to house the much-needed naval base, for it lay some 650 miles off North Carolina’s coast compelling most vessels sailing between the Caribbean and Europe to pass within fifty miles of it.<sup>54</sup>

Darrell helped shift Bermuda from the backwaters of the British Empire to a colony of strategic importance. On May 15, 1795 Vice-Admiral George Murray, commander-in-chief of the Royal Navy’s North American Squadron, approached Bermuda with a five-ship flotilla to establish a naval base. On May 17<sup>th</sup> Darrell piloted Murray’s flagship, HMS *Resolution*, through a coral-toothed channel called “The Narrows” and into what came to be called “Murray’s Anchorage.” This was the first warship brought into Bermuda, an accomplishment that facilitated the establishment of the Bermuda Naval Base (1795–1796), permitting Bermuda to serve as the needed base, expanding the non-plantation colony’s development.<sup>55</sup>

For Darrell this marked the end of his bondage. Following Murray’s request, Governor James Crauford purchased Darrell for £150, freeing him on March 1, 1796.<sup>56</sup> Like other pilots of the period, it was Darrell’s skills and wartime necessities that set him free; not revolutionary ideals. Darrell became Bermuda’s first King’s pilot, a respectable, royally-appointed position that included a substantial salary, enabling him to purchase an eighteen-foot pilot boat and “a little land” where he built a “small house.” This set the precedent for other Bermudian pilots to gain freedom, rights, and economic opportunity.<sup>57</sup>

Black Bermudian pilots gained and manipulated white support by facilitating the colony’s growing importance. On April 26, 1798 James Darrell informed Sir George Beckwith, Bermuda’s Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Navy’s North American Squadron, that three soldiers stole his “Pilot Boat.” Beckwith expedited the return of the vessel crucial to Darrell’s office. Nor did his support of black pilots end there. In 1806, Darrell and Jacob Pitcam, another recently manumitted pilot, successfully petitioned Beckwith for pay increases and the *right* to will property to their descendants, overturning statutes passed in the 1670s proscribing black people from owning property, a scarce commodity in the



**Figure 2.** This map shows the reef-lined channel called “The Narrows,” through which James Darrell piloted Vice-Admiral Murray’s *HMS Resolution* is shown in the bottom right section of this map. Murray’s Anchorage lies above The Narrows. “British West Indian Possessions, Northern. Bermuda or Somers’ Islands” Archibald Fullarton Map, 1860. Courtesy of the Bermuda Archives.

twenty-one square-mile colony.<sup>58</sup> On June 29, 1800, Beckwith and other whites helped Thomas Cooper, an enslaved pilot probably related to Darrell, secure his freedom on the grounds that his deceased grandmother “was a white woman.” Cooper’s “Yellowish Complexion” testified to his biracial background and since his grandmother was white and a child’s condition followed that of their mother he should be free—a fact ignored into adulthood. It was Cooper’s importance to shipping and relationships with powerful whites that secured his freedom.<sup>59</sup>

Manumitted slaves were not generally granted rights; some pilots were. Bermudians rewarded pilots’ ability to swell their prosperity by awarding them freedom and *rights*. Freeing pilots cost money, but the revenues pilots generated dwarfed these expenditures. Additionally, officials knew freed pilots were bound to the colony, remaining where they could employ their wisdom, their families resided, they owned property, and enjoyed white support. Concurrently, pilots risked illegal enslavement if they left Bermuda. These factors ensured pilots’ fidelity, making them indispensable fixtures.<sup>60</sup>

The Revolutionary Age equipped pilots with discarded military uniforms, which they donned to communicate their authority and embrace of liberty. Believing their positions comparable to that of shipmasters, it made sense to dress the part to the best of their abilities. Since pilots lacked access to full Western

regalia they, like the Martican, pieced together discarded uniforms, creating their own symbols of authority and freedom.<sup>61</sup>

Slaves did not embrace Western fashion. Instead, they channeled personal and group aesthetics into culturally imagined ensembles constructing appearances that blended African and European fashions to create their own styles. Furthermore, wearing the attire of non-laboring whites permitted them to take pride in their appearance while intimating that their lives were not defined by labor. Unlike other bondpeople, pilots did not labor and their idiosyncratic *uniforms*, like gentlemen's formalwear, articulated this reality while commanding respect.<sup>62</sup>

Pilots' culturally imagined attire also reflected their appropriation of revolutionary ideologies. Matt Childs documented how the enslaved leaders of Cuba's 1812 Aponte Rebellion "creatively invoked the military uniforms of the Haitian Revolution," permitting them to link their cause to a successful slave rebellion. Leaders, including Aponte, wore blue Haitian-style uniforms with gold buttons to rally and inspire the masses by associating their cause with that of Saint Dominique. Pilots' *uniforms* conveyed their ascendancy and demands for liberty.<sup>63</sup>

The sea provided pilots with more than rhetoric and abandoned uniforms for defying white authority; it afforded passages to freedom. They possessed the autonomy, skills, and pilot boats necessary to escape. Most were worldly and well-traveled. Many were literate and spoke several European and African languages. All were linked to distant black communities and tuned into the whisperings of the Atlantic world that spoke of revolution, freedom, and opportunity. We might expect large numbers of enslaved pilots to runaway. Yet, family bonds and home-port privileges deterred most from fleeing, choosing another alternative instead.

Some used networks of friends to become "absentees" or "*petit maroons*," which entailed temporary escape and voluntary return. In 1794, John and Thomas Blount rewarded the pilot who dislodged the *Sally*. In 1802, a recently-purchase pilot caused them considerable anxiety. After the man navigated Captain Gilpin's ship, the *Betsy*, out of Washington, North Carolina a wind "freshened up & blew so heavy that it was impossible to" land him. Gilpin took him to Alexandria, Virginia, paying him "Seaman's wages from the day we left the bar until the vessel was discharged," then arranged his return passage, which were customary practices. However, the pilot shipped to Boston as a free sailor. Upon returning to Alexandria, Gilpin's father "saw him on the Wharf & asked him if he did not mean to go back to Carolina to which he answered that he intended to make another trip to the Northward before returning." He seemingly returned to bondage, revealing that the lure of freedom was not necessarily slaves' primary objective, while divulging linkages pilots constructed in distant ports and how they informed decisions on where to find sanctuary. He knew geographic freedom existed in Boston. Yet, homeport-bonds drew him southward. Like other pilots, Blount's bondman chose not to sever his ties with slavery, but rather to move from green water onto another threshold, that between slavery and freedom, through this process of desertion and return in which they negotiated the terms of their repatriation and subsequent treatment.<sup>64</sup>

Some pilots seized freedom, stealing loved ones, themselves, and boats.<sup>65</sup> In 1817, seven Jamaican slaves commandeered their pilot boat, the *Deep Nine*, and revolutionary ideals to secure Haitian freedom and challenge the legitimacy of British slavery. After gaining independence in 1804, the Haitian government

enticed thousands of free and enslaved black sailors from the greater Caribbean to flee there in search of natural rights denied elsewhere. Stories of the Haitian government shielding deserters inspired the *Deep Nine* pilots to follow this floodtide of humanity.<sup>66</sup>

On January 13, 1817 James M'Kewan, owner and captain of the *Deep Nine* from Port Royal, cruised Jamaica's south end with fifteen or sixteen slave pilots, putting several aboard incoming ships supplying ships. When M'Kewan went ashore at "Rocky-Point" to "procure wood and water" the remaining pilots, named Dublin, Kingston, Quashie, Jem, Archy, and Robert, "ran away with the Deep-Nine." Suspecting the "skilful pilots" who "were of great value" departed to Haiti, M'Kewan followed and, by January 28<sup>th</sup>, found the *Deep Nine* at Jérémie. He then petitioned President Alexander Pétion for the return of his vessel and slaves.<sup>67</sup>

Pétion promptly restored "the vessel, and everything appertaining to her." Refusing to return the men, Pétion referenced Chief Justice Lord Mansfield's oft-misquoted ruling in the *Somerset's Case* (1772) that "the air of England has long been too pure for a slave, and every man is free who breathes it," proclaiming: "Each country has its laws, as you must know, sir, and, fortunately for the cause of humanity, Hayti is not the only one where slavery is abolished." Despite M'kewan's appeals and intervention by the British Admiralty the pilots remained free citizens of Haiti who harbored them from the British imperial system that once protected them.<sup>68</sup>

This incident exemplifies the circulation of intelligence along maritime channels and pilots' internalization of revolutionary ideals. Jamaican officials feared that large numbers of Haitian sailors were importing revolutionary ideals and exporting "arms and ammunition" to "Haytian chiefs." M'Kewan believed this is why his slave fled, claiming they had been loyal but were corrupted by a "brown man" from the French colony of Guadalupe who boarded the *Deep Nine* at Rocky Point and "seduced the said slaves to runaway." Their departure was not this spontaneous and reflects an understanding of greater Caribbean dynamics. Knowing the Haitian government protected fugitives from re-enslavement they made no attempt to conceal themselves or their boat, enabling M'Kewan to find them days after their escape. Like numerous black mariners before them, they pitted the Haitian state against shipmasters and government officials eager to re-enslave them. Their story became woven into the tapestry of black resistance to white domination.<sup>69</sup>

Charlestonian pilots similarly used the fluidity of the period to further personal and group interests. As the American Revolution began, Carolinian planters knew Thomas Jeremiah's pilotage skills linked the British Navy to their sometimes-volatile slave majority, which could be armed against them. Jeremiah purportedly accentuated this point proclaiming he "often piloted in [British] men-of-war" and had "no objection to have been employed again in the same service." To eliminate this threat, colonists accused Jeremiah of planning a slave rebellion. As a slaveholder, it is improbable that Jeremiah sought to destroy an institution that afforded him much benefit. More likely, he sought to strengthen his bonds with Britain and enhance his status, which destroyed his worth to Patriots, precipitating his undoing. Jeremiah was, in some ways, a victim of his success. His strategic value permitted him to shed his manacles and retain his position after grounding one ship, sinking another, and assaulting a white



shipmaster, causing him to conclude that British officials would always protect him. As the Revolution unfolded Jeremiah miscalculated how transformative forces redefined his position. He could strike a white man; but could not guide *enemy* ships into port. Pilots were to safeguard seaports against enemy vessels and Patriots regarded his promise to navigate British battleships as a treasonous violation of the tenets governing pilotage and a threat to their freedom. Since Patriots could not charge Jeremiah with treason for piloting *enemy* British ships into a British port, they convicted him on exaggerated claims of planning a slave rebellion and even the new governor, Sir William Campbell, could not save him. On August 18, 1775, Jeremiah was hanged and his body burned in defense of white liberty.<sup>70</sup> His execution is part of a larger pattern in which Charlestonians fabricated claims of slave rebellion to subjugate black residents, in this case to intimidate black pilots.<sup>71</sup>

As Jeremiah lay in jail and shortly after his death, the British prepared to invade Charleston by impressing Sampson, Mercury, and Harry, who were highly skilled slave pilots, along with Shadwell, a schooner captain “well acquainted with all the rivers and inlets to the southward of Charleston,” enabling him to pilot vessels. Sampson and Mercury belonged to Jacob Waldron. Both had been pilots for more than fifteen years and governor Campbell apparently deemed Sampson “the best pilot in this harbour,” arranging for him, and probably Mercury, to be secreted aboard British sloop-of-war *Scorpion* in July 1775. On September 4, 1775, the British seized Harry, “a most Valuable Negroe man pilot.”<sup>72</sup> Shadwell was an African-born bondman who “speaks remarkably good English.” On November 21, 1775, he escaped to the British.<sup>73</sup>

Scholars have portrayed the slave-holding Jeremiah as a would-be liberator while ignoring these other black pilots.<sup>74</sup> These lesser-known mariners were the true revolutionaries. They were undoubtedly acquainted with each other and Jeremiah, knowing the dangers of wartime pilotage. British and American forces knew slave pilots could shape the war’s outcome and sought to safeguard their pilots while capturing or killing opposing ones. Gunners targeted enemy quarter-decks, where captains and pilots stood, while Americans threatened to execute free and enslaved black pilots who abetted the British. These pilots were not blindly assimilated into Britain’s counter-revolutionary cause. They *chose* to leverage their wisdom and command their destinies, appropriating revolutionary ideals and British freedom to destroy American slavery. There were only few pilots in any given port with about ten in Revolutionary-Era Charleston. Yet, these men helped tens-of-thousands of Carolinian and Georgian slaves gain freedom. Indeed, on June 28, 1776, Sampson returned to Charleston aboard Commodore Sir Peter Parker’s flagship, *Bristol*. Now he led an invading fleet that included several other black pilots.<sup>75</sup>

Sampson demonstrates slave pilots’ value and lengths whites went to safeguard them. British estimations were displayed during the invasion of Charleston, known as the Battle of Fort Sullivan (renamed Fort Moultrie). The *Bristol* was nearly sunk and Parker seriously wounded. Sampson, “who is exceedingly caressed,” was ordered below “out of harm’s way.” This spared him from injury or death, permitting him to lead subsequent raids along the Carolina-Georgia coast and, on December 29, 1778, he piloted Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell’s invasion of Savannah—actions that helped thousands of slaves gain freedom.<sup>76</sup> Americans also recognized Sampson’s value. South Carolina’s Privy



**Figure 3.** “The Bar and Harbour of Charleston” illustrates the sandbars that virtually blockaded Charleston Harbor, making passages between it and the Atlantic treacherous. Inset in “An accurate map of North and South Carolina, with their Indian frontier, shewing in a distinct manner all the mountains, rivers, swamps, marshes, bays, creeks, harbours, sandbanks and soundings on the coasts; with the roads and Indian paths; as well as the boundary or provincial lines, the several townships, and other divisions of the land in both the provinces,” Henry Mouzon, 1775 and 1779. Courtesy of the United States Library of Congress.

Council encouraged slaveholders to hire pilots out for military service by maintaining insurance policies that reimbursed them for captured or killed pilots. Waldron was reimbursed £800 (South Carolina currency) for the loss of Sampson (Harry’s owner was compensated £100 *sterling*). Simultaneously, Patriots sought to destroy pilots aiding the British.<sup>77</sup> As Sampson devastated American defenses, John Rutledge, the rebel governor of South Carolina, lamented that he was “one of the best Pilots for our Coast & Harbours who has been several years with the Enemy & been very useful to them & hurtful to us.” Others endeavored to execute him so he would serve as an “Example of Terror” to the black community. When French warship *Sagittaire* captured the *Experiment* off the Georgia coast with Sampson aboard on September 24, 1779, Rutledge unsuccessfully petitioned for him to be “sent hither, in safe Custody, that he may receive the Punishment due to his Crimes.”<sup>78</sup>

We must consider pilots within their Atlantic context. Scholarship on Thomas Jeremiah focuses on events surrounding his execution; stressing that when compared to other black Charlestonians he was exceptional. Compared to other pilots he was not. To understand Jeremiah’s experiences we must assemble pilots’ “historical jigsaw puzzle” on green water. Viewed individually it is difficult



to make sense of pilots' experiences. When placed within an Atlantic paradigm we can better understand their experiences. Jeremiah was probably the wealthiest black pilot in the Americas, however, Bermudian pilots, wielded more social and political influence.<sup>79</sup> Bermudians received white supports and compelled whites to redefine their social system. Furthermore, when enslaved Bermudian pilots Cuff, Tom, and Peter apparently threatened to guide French warships into port during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) they escaped execution and corporeal punishment.<sup>80</sup> Slaveholders in South Carolina's plantation society would not yield such concession to Jeremiah, yet like other pilots, his ability to navigate green water supplied advantages withheld from free and fettered terrestrial blacks.

A generation ago, Paul Gilroy challenged scholars to transcend "nationalist or ethnically absolute approaches" by treating the "Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis" to "produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective" to evocatively consider the black Atlantic. Yet, we must, as Daniel Vickers cautioned, avoid the "tendency" to "treat seafaring in general as a single species of activity best illustrated by its most extreme varieties." By remembering that maritime experiences were unique to their occupations and ecosystems we can extend Gilroy's framework, while being mindful of Vicker's caveat. Green water created similar conditions in disparate societies permitting enslaved pilots to demonstrate cultural creation in thresholds devoid of land or fixed boundaries.<sup>81</sup>

The history of maritime slavery requires new thinking—a new approach willing to draw from but not rely upon land-based models. Scholars examine how cultural ecology shaped *cultural landscapes* while remaining reluctant to deliberate how marine ecosystems informed the historical process through the creation of *cultural waterscapes*. Hydrography defined the contours of maritime bondage more than shoreside circumstances. Studying slavery within specific aquatic environments exposes striking similarities that transcended borders and prevailed irrespective of land-bound institutions of slavery. Slavery differed radically throughout the Anglophone-Americas. Jamaica, Barbados, and Martinique possessed brutal plantation systems that dwarfed those of the American south in forms of size and violence. Bermuda was a maritime society lacking plantation slavery.<sup>82</sup> Enslaved pilots' obtained similar privileges in societies with different forms of land-based bondage.

Black peoples' lives on green and blue water were profoundly different. Maritime environments, their condition as slave or free, types of work performed, and connections to terrestrial institutions defined their experiences. Blue water provided free black sailors with transient social and economic opportunities denied ashore. However, tradition barred most free black hands on blue seas from becoming officers. Green water formed spaces where enslaved pilots obtained more shipboard authority than most sailors of any status or race ever received.<sup>83</sup>

Slaved pilots were in-between boundaries where shoreside and deep-water rituals and rules were suspended. Here they forwent the daily routines and gestures demarcating land-oriented master-slave relationships while maritime traditions and laws predetermined pilot-captain relationships and slaveholders and port authorities prevented their mistreatment. Concurrently, white people rewarded their ability to prevent shipwrecks, link Atlantic economies, and protect ports from diseases and invaders. These circumstances converged to permit enslaved pilots to invert racial/social hierarchies and obtain unusual privileges.

During the Age of Revolutions, pilots extended these gains while pursuing personal freedom, rights, and the abolition of slavery. Most terrestrial slaves who obtained freedom secured nothing else. Conversely, many pilots secured rights that narrowed the racial divide and enhanced their socioeconomic positions while threatening slavery's existence.

Bermudians acquired the most rights—rights that overturned centuries-old laws. Seventeenth-century Bermudians, like English colonist elsewhere, created a society that subjugated Africans. Now they transformed their society to appease pilots. Laws passed during the 1670s transformed manumission into exile and allowed free blacks to lease, but not own, land. Revolutionary-Era Bermudians overturned these statutes, encouraged pilots to obtain freedom and purchase vessels and land.<sup>84</sup>

Many pilots who served Britain or America during the American Revolution acquired freedom. Despite laws and traditions intended to keep slaves illiterate, most pilots were literate, using this skill to acquire social, legal, and economic opportunities. They also taught their children this skill, as demonstrated when Cæsar Tarrant's daughter Nancy used her literacy to collect her father's military bounty and land owed to veterans.<sup>85</sup>

Freedom and natural rights, however, were based on white capriciousness. Most abandoned these principles. After the American Revolution Britain betrayed the aspirations of many pilots, abandoning thousands of recently freed slaves as Patriots seized British strongholds. Some were evacuated only to be sold into Bahamian slavery. Neither military service nor rhetoric liberated most of those who helped free Americans from British "slavery" as post-war Americans contained revolutionary semantics in their slave society. Many were killed in battle and their families derived no benefit from their service. Even when freed, liberty and equality eluded most, sending some to Nova Scotia, England, Sierra Leone, and Haiti in search of these ideals.<sup>86</sup>

In the silence after revolution, whites restored the equilibrium of bondage while re-extending control over recently freed black people. After the American Revolution few areas of the United States regarded blacks as citizens with legal rights. The Constitution reversed the course of black liberty, binding America to bondage and permitting slaveholders to track down fugitives, while the invention of the cotton gin facilitated slavery's rapid expansion.<sup>87</sup> In Bermuda, the successes of black pilots strengthened slavery by opening new avenues of exploitation. As black pilots advanced Bermuda's fortunes whites steadily regarded free blacks as an "increasing Evil" and "burden to the Community, becoming every day more intolerable." On August 9, 1806, with the uncertainties of the French and Haitian revolutions fading and Napoleonic forces contained in Europe, the legislature passed "An Act for imposing duties upon Free Negroes," designed to induce them to "leave these Islands."<sup>88</sup>

The privileges enslaved pilots received only held currency in the liminality of green water. Their authority dissipated as they climbed back over the ship's rail, descended the ship's ladder, and set foot in awaiting pilot boats. As they neared land, their ability to invert social/racial valuations shattered against breakwaters erected around universal rights. Ashore most held little more influence than other urban slaves.

Pilots' lives refuted the tenets of slavery and the sea. More than any other group of bondpeople, enslaved pilots successfully challenged the cultures of power

propagated by planters and shipmasters. Shifting through thresholds of green water and seaports, they navigated conflicting social currents to find privileged exploitation in liminal spaces. They behaved like white shipmasters, toasting white women, cursing sailors and officers, and assaulting subordinates, while remembering the cruel realities of slavery as they unselfishly facilitated the freedom of countless captives. As scholarship on maritime bondage expands our historical understanding it can be easy to romanticize the sea's liberating influences. True, the ocean provided opportunities denied ashore, but maritime slavery was a cruel master. Some enslaved pilots used their profession to secure freedom; most died as they had lived—enslaved—permitting slaveholders to reap the majority of benefits from their specialized wisdom.

### Endnotes

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8. Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774–1880* (Honolulu, 1980), esp. 3, 20, 31–32, 151, 157–158.

9. Simon Finger, “‘A Flag of Defiance at the Masthead’: The Delaware River Pilots and the Sinews of Philadelphia’s Atlantic World in Eighteenth Century,” *Early American Studies* (Spring, 2010): 387–93; Robert C. Leslie, *Old Sea Wings, Ways, and Words, in the Days of Oak and Hemp* (London, 1890), 247–52.

10. W. Jeffery Bolster, “Putting the Ocean in Atlantic History: Maritime Communities and Marine Ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500–1800,” *American Historical Review* 113 (Feb., 2008): 19–47; Daniel Vickers with Vince Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail* (New Haven, 2005); Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women & the Whalefishery, 1720–1870* (Chapel Hill, 2000); Wim Klooster, “Inter-Imperial Smuggling in the Americas, 1600–1800,” in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830*, eds. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (London, 2009), 141–80; Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (Leiden, 1998); Kenneth J. Banks, “Official Duplicity: The Illicit Slave Trade of Martinique,” in *The Atlantic Economy During The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia: 2005), 229–52. For broader historiography see: Bailyn and Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History*, Jack P. Green and Phillip D. Morgan, *Atlantic History: A*

*Critical Appraisal* (Oxford, 2009); Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept And Contours* (Cambridge, 2005).

11. Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, 2007); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York, 2007); Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge, 2008), 32–57.

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13. Matthew Bishop, *The Life and Adventures of Matthew Bishop* (London, 1744), 78; Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*, 205–53, esp. 208–9; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1962), 131–32; Herbert Compton, ed., *A Master Mariner. Being the Life and Adventures of Captain Robert William Eastwick* (London, 1891), 25.

14. Edward Ward, *A Trip to New England* (London, 1699), 4, 9; Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*, 293, 295–96.

15. For example: Gordon J. Schochet, *The Authoritarian Family and Political Attitudes in 17th-Century England: Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (Oxford, 1988); Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York, 1993); David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York, 1999), 25–108; Jay Fliegman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority* (New York, 1982); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 131–38; Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, 1998), 257–317; Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subject: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740–1790* (Ithaca, 1998); Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (1979; Cambridge, 1986), esp. 2–14; Jarvis, “Anxious Mariner,” esp. 98n26.

16. For example: David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000); Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (Oxford, 2009); Bruce R. Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, 2002); Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race And Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge, 2006); George William Van Cleve, *A Slaveholders Union: Slavery, Politics, and the Constitution in the Early American Republic* (Chicago, 2010); Matthew Mason, *Slavery And Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill, 2008).

17. Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 52–57; esp. 53. Author’s observations during decades of surfing, sailing, and free-diving.

18. Leslie, *Old Sea Wings*, 249. By the mid-eighteenth century most New World waters were charted, but nature quickly altered hydrospace and ripped buoys from their markers. Consequently, navigational guidebooks were typically inaccurate and most recommended hiring a pilot. William Tatham, *Copy of Manuscript Report by William Tatham on Survey of the Coast of North Carolina from Cape Hatteras to Cape Fear* (1806), 50, North Carolina



Collections, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina. For literacy see: Jarvis, *Eye of All Trade*, 281, 283; William R. Ryan, *The World of Thomas Jeremiah: Charleston on the Eve of the American Revolution* (Oxford, 2010), 190–93; “Petition of the Pilots at Bermuda to Commissioners of the Navy,” The Fay and Geoffrey Elliott Collection, Bermuda Archives; Tarrant, Caesar, Military Certificate Number LO 7325, Library of Virginia, Virginia Land Office, Military Certificates, Reel 33. As will be discussed below pilots often determined what vessels were carrying and if ships were from areas of recent epidemic, requiring them to read shipping papers.

19. Frederic William Naylor Bayley, *Four Years’ Residence in the West Indies: During the Years 1826, 7, 8, and 9* (London, 1833), 25–26; Jarvis, “Anxious Mariner,” 89–90; Anonymous, *Antigua and the Antiguan: A Full Account of the Colony and its Inhabitants from the Time of the Carib to the Present Day*, 2 Volumes, (London, 1844), I, 154–59.

20. William Nevens, *Forty Years at Sea: Or a Narrative of the Adventures of William Nevens* (Portland, 1846), 65–66; Frank T. Bullen, *The Log of a Sea-Waif* (New York, 1899), 29–31.

21. For shipmasters risking mutinying by endangering vessels see: Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*, 98–99; Finger, “Flag of Defiance,” 378; Robert Baker, *The Unfortunate Shipwright: Or, Cruel Captain* (London, 1758), 5; Frederick Pease Harlow, *The Making of a Sailor; or Sea Life Aboard a Yankee Square-Rigger* (Salem, 1928), 65–67. White pilots claimed conditions prevented them from refloating the *Sally*. Thomas Blount to John Gray Blount, December 21, 1794.

22. John Lambert, *Travels Through Canada, and the United States of North America*, 2 Volumes, (London, 1814), II, 293–94; Foulks, *Jamaica*, 24; Leslie, *Old Sea Wings*, 247–48, 252.

23. Babacar M’Baye, *The Trickster Comes West: Pan-African Influence in Early Black Diasporan Narratives* (Jackson, 2009).

24. Finger, “Flag of Defiance,” 387, 399–408, esp. 387, 402. Scholars have posited that the term “strike” derived from the collective work stoppage of London seamen in May 1768 who struck work in the same manner they would strike, or lower, sails to halt a ship’s progress. C. R. Dobson, *Masters and Journeymen: A Prehistory of Industrial Relations, 1717–1800* (London, 1980), 19, 25–26, 154–70; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 87–88; Rediker, *Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 110; 205–6.

25. Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subject*, esp. 7; Richard Follett, *Planter-Slave Relationships: The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana’s Cane World, 1820–1860* (Baton Rouge, 2009), esp. 5; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (London, 1998), esp. 2–6, 66, 142–76; William Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps* (Oxford, 1996), 179–210; 302–49; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 257–300; 377–437; Kevin Dawson, “Enslaved Swimmers and Divers in the Atlantic World,” *The Journal of American History*, XCII, no. 4 (March, 2006): esp. 1347–48; 1352–54; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1972), 3–112.

26. For example: Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2001), 82, 98–101; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 179–203; Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, passim, esp. 180–87.

27. For example: Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*, esp. 7; Scott, “Afro-America Sailors;” Cecelski, *Waterman’s Song*; Philips, *Slave Counterpoint*, 236–44. Michael Jarvis explained that Bermudian master-slave relationships were “transferred intact aboard ship” while recognizing the uniqueness of Bermuda’s maritime society. Jarvis, “Maritime Masters,” 602, 606–8; Jarvis, “Anxious Mariner,” 90, 92.

28. Jarvis, "Maritime Masters," 606; Jarvis, "Anxious Mariner," 92; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 72, 131–44; Dawson, "Enslaved Swimmers;" Kevin Dawson, "Swimming, Surfing, and Underwater Diving in Early Modern Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora," in *Navigating African Maritime History*, eds. Carina E. Ray and Jeremy Rich (St. John's, 2009), esp. 87.

29. B.W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807–1834* (Kingston, 1995), 257–58; Pedro L.V. Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados, 1680–1834* (Kingston, 2003), 197; Cyril Outbridge Packwood, *Chained to the Rock: Slavery in Bermuda* (Bermuda, 1975), 22–23.

30. Thomas Blount to John Gray Blount, December 21, 1794, in John Gray Blount Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina; Alexander, *Transatlantic Sketches*, I, 11–12.

31. *The Weekly Register* (Antigua), May 20, 1815, in Higman, *Slave Populations*, 175; G. Melvin Herndon, ed., *William Tatham and the Culture of Tobacco: Including a facsimile reprint of An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco* (Coral Gables, 1969), 211; Stiles, *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 535, 537; Williams, Mr. Penrose, 79; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 16, 23, 133; Jarvis, "Maritime Masters," 606.

32. *South-Carolina Gazette*, February 6–13, 1755, October 6–13, 1766, June 20, 1768; *South Carolina Gazette*, Extraordinary, May 6, 1756; K.G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770–1783*; Colonial Office Series, 21 Volumes (Dublin, 1976) XI, 95; Ryan, *World of Thomas Jeremiah*, esp. x; 7; J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty* (New Haven, 2009), 2–3, 9–10, 77, 93–95. Emma Hart provides a good study of Charleston. Emma Hart, *Building Charleston: Town and Society in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic* (Charlottesville, 2010).

33. Paul A. Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2004); Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 179–184; Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820–1860* (Oxford, 1964), 3; Nash, *The Urban Crucible*; Scott, "Afro-American Sailors," 38; Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, esp. xiv; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 174–75, 226; Robert S. Shelton, "Slavery in a Texas Seaport: The Peculiar Institution Galveston," *Slavery and Abolition* XXVIII, no. 1 (Aug 2007): 155–56; Robert Lowell, "'Loose, Idle and Disorderly': Slave Women in the Eighteenth-Century Charleston Marketplace," David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington, 1996), 97–110.

34. Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 95; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 87; 226; Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 16–19; 243–244; Philip D. Morgan, "Black Life in Eighteenth-Century Charleston," *Perspectives in American History* (Cambridge, 1984), I, 188.

35. *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, November 3, 1772; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 175, 226–25, 235–36, 245–46, 258; Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 48–49; Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 18; Shelton, "Texas Port," 155–56; Bayley, *Four Year's Residence*, 26.

36. Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. 161–87.

37. October 21, 1830, entry, personal diary, 1830–1836, Moses Ashley Curtis Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 92; Waller, *Voyage to the West Indies*, 6, 20–21, 94; Bayley, *Residence in the West Indies*, 27–28; George Pinckard, *Note on the West Indies: Written during the Expedition Under the Command of General Sir Ralph Abercromby*, 3 Volumes (London, 1806), I, 245–46, 393, Lowell, "'Loose, Idle and Disorderly.'"



38. Shelton, "Texas Seaport," 155–68, esp. 159; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974), 265; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 174–210; Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 88–93, 218; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 231–32; 242; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 23; Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*, 59–60; 133; Charles Campbell, *Memoirs of Charles Campbell, at Present Prisoner in the Jail of Glasgow: Including his Adventures as a Seaman, and as an Overseer in the West Indies* (Glasgow, 1828), 10–11; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 412–14.

39. Scott, "Afro-American Sailors," 41–42; Bernard Martin, *Jamaica, as it Was, as it Is, and as it May Be* (London, 1835), 14, 21; Anonymous, *Antigua and the Antiguan*, I, 156; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 17, 40–41, 62; Shelton, "Texas Port," 155–56; Virginia Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda, 1616–1782* (Columbia, 1999), 219; Great Britain Parliament Papers (Commons), "Report of the Select Committee on the Extension of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions" (no. 721), 1831–1832, Evidence of Vice Admiral Sir Charles Fleming, XX, 199–200; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 71.

40. Joseph Blunt, *The Merchant's and Shipmaster's Assistant: Containing Information useful to the American Merchants, Owners, and Masters of Ships* (New York, 1832), 172–73, 200–38; Finger, "Flag of Defiance," 387–4, 407; Wilkinson, *Bermuda*, I, 384; Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina*, 26 Volumes (Goldsboro, 1905), IX, 803–4; XXIV; 502–3; Jarvis, "Maritime Masters," 606.

41. Secretary of State Miscellaneous Records, book OO, part 2, 624, South Carolina Department of Archives.

42. Ryan, *World of Thomas Jeremiah*, 11; James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (Berkeley, 1981), 174; David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815–1877* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 33, 37–38, 139.

43. Dawson, "Enslaved Swimmers," 1347; 1353; Dusiinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 179–210, 319–49.

44. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 29–54; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 246; Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 197.

45. James Howard Brewer, "Legislation Designed to Control Slavery in Wilmington and Fayetteville," *North Carolina Historical Review* 30 (Apr. 1953): 163–64; Cecelski, *Waterman's Song*, 49–50; Franklin, Clark, Saunders, Beauregard, eds., *Records of North Carolina*, XXIV, 15; William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 Volumes (Goldsboro, 1905), IX, 803–4; John Hope Franklin, "The Free Negro in the Economic Life of Ante-bellum North Carolina, Part 1," *North Carolina Historical Review* 19 (July, 1942): 253–54; Jeffrey J. Crow, "Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict in North Carolina, 1775–1802," *William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series, 37 (Jan. 1980): 85n18; Edward Brathwaite, *The Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820*, (Oxford, 1971), 173; Jarvis, "Maritime Masters," 606; Jarvis, *Eye of All Trade*, 109. For opinions on black and white pilots see: Thomas Blount to John Gray Blount, December 21, 1794; Williams, Mr. Penrose, 79; Lewis, *West Indian Proprietor*, 34–35; Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, eds., *Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey, 1793–1798* (New York, 1947), 31–33; Louisa Susanna Wells, *The Journal of a Voyage from Charlestown, S. C., to London: Undertaken During the American Revolution by a Daughter of an Eminent American Loyalist* (New York, 1906), 2, 4; Bullen, *Log of a Sea-Waif*, 29–31; William Gifford Palgrave, *Dutch Guiana* (London, 1876), 6–7; J. E. Alexander, *Transatlantic Sketches: Comprising Visits to the most Interesting Scenes in North and South America, and the West Indies* (Philadelphia, 1833), 3–5; Robert C. Leslie, *Old Wings, Ways, and Words, in the Days of Oak and Hemp* (London, 1890), 247–48; James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pilot: A Tale of the Sea* (New York, 1898), 21; Finger, "Flag of Defiance," 386, 392–93.

46. For abuse of others' slaves see: Jarvis, "Anxious Mariner," 92; Morris, *Southern Slavery*, 165–81; 196–208; Judith Kelleher Schafer, "'Details Are of a Most Revolting Character': Cruelty to Slaves as Seen in Appeals to the Supreme Court of Louisiana," in *Slavery and the Law*, ed. Paul Finkelman (Madison, 1997), 247–50; Brathwaite, *Creole Society*, 292, 292n10; Campbell, *Memoirs*, 11–12.

47. Blackburn, *American Crucible*, 121–29, 171–219; Edgerton, *Death or Liberty*, esp. 110–11; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 32, 72; David J. McCord, ed. *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia, 1840), VII, 419–20.

48. Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (New York, 1961), esp. vii; Frey, *Water from the Rock*, Nash, *Forgotten Fifth*, Edgerton, *Death or Liberty*, Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 15–54; Countryman, *Enjoy the Same Liberty*.

49. Ryan, *World of Thomas Jeremiah*, 20; David Geggus, "The Caribbean in the Age of Revolution," in Armitage and Subrahmanyam, eds. *Age of Revolutions*, 84; Crow, "Slave Rebelliousness," 85n18. For how Britain supported and benefited from slavery see Blackburn, *American Crucible*, esp. 99–120.

50. *Gazette, of the State of South-Carolina*, July 14, 1777; Graham Russell Hodges, ed., *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile After the American Revolution* (New York, 1996), xi–xxix, 20, 231, 233, 240; Edgerton, *Death or Liberty*, 65–92, 194–221.

51. Wm. P. Palmer, ed. *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and other Manuscripts*, 11 Volumes (Richmond, 1881), II, 362; *The Proceedings of the Convention of Delegates held at the Capital, in the City of Williamsburg in the Colony of Virginia, on Monday, the 6th of May, 1776* (Richmond, 1816), 49; 77; Luther Porter Jackson, *Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seamen in the Revolutionary War*, (Norfolk, 1944), 33–34; *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), May 3, 1776; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 15, 1776. Also see: *The Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), May 9 and 16, 1777; *Virginia Gazette* [Dixon & Hunter], January 31, 1777; *Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), December 23, 1775.

52. J.B. "The Schooner Patriot," in *The Virginia Historical Register, and Literary Advertiser*, I, No. 1 (Jan., 1848), 129–31; Charles Campbell, *History of the Colony and Ancient Dominion of Virginia* (Philadelphia, 1860), 738–40; Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 120.

53. Tarrant, Carter, Elizabeth City County Wills and Administrations, 387–88, September 1797; Tarrant, Caesar, Military Certificate Number LO 7325, Library of Virginia, Virginia Land Office, Military Certificates, Reel 33; "The Virginia Navy of the Revolution," *The Southern Literary Messenger; Devoted to Every Department of Literature and the Fine Arts*, XXIV, new series, III, (Jan.–July, 1857), 146–47; Jackson, *Virginia Negro Soldiers*, 20–23.

54. Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam, 1784 to 1901*, 2 Volumes (London, 1973), I, 99; Malcolm Lester, "Vice-Admiral George Murray and the origins of the Bermuda naval base, 1794–96," *Mariner's Mirror* 94, no. 3 (2008): 285–97; Jarvis, "Maritime Masters," 587.

55. *Bermuda Gazette, And Weekly Advertiser*, May 16; 23, 1795; Wilkinson, *Bermuda*, I, 99–101, Lester, "Vice-Admiral George Murray," 290–91.

56. October 8, 1795, *Minutes of Council and Assembly of Bermuda, 1788–1796*, 143; 146–47, Bermuda Archives; *Book of Miscellanies*, III, 214–15, 307–8, 319–20, Bermuda Archives.

57. "Pilot Darrell's Will," *Book of Wills*, XV, 59, 17 March 1815, Bermuda Archives; "Petition of the Pilots;" "Pilot's Memorial at Bermuda to Hon. Geo. Berkeley, Vice Admiral of the White," December 11, 1806, Fay & Geoffrey Elliot Collection, Bermuda Archives; "Report Darrell Boat Theft," April 1789 26, *Book of Miscellanies*, 167, Bermuda Archives; Wilkinson, *Bermuda*, I, 101, 384; "A King's Pilot," *Sailor's Magazine and Nautical*

*Intelligencer* (London, 1840), II, 207; Richard Cotter, *Sketches of Bermuda: Or Somers' Island* (London, 1828), 15–18.

58. "Report Darrell Boat Theft," April 26, 1789, *Book of Miscellanies*, 167, Bermuda Archives; "Pilot's Memorial at Bermuda to Hon. Geo. Berkeley, Vice Admiral of the White," December 11, 1806, Fay & Geoffrey Elliot Collection, Bermuda Archives; "Petition of the Pilots at Bermuda to Commissioners of the Navy, London 1 c.1806 [n.d.]."

59. "Certificate of Freedom: Thomas Cooper," January 29, 1800, *Book of Miscellanies*, 214–15, Bermuda Archives.

60. Jarvis, *Eye of All Trade*, 30–31, 149–50; Jarvis, "Maritime Masters," 608; Jarvis, "Anxious Mariner," 86; Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders*, 50–52, 123.

61. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), November 3, 1768.

62. Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Past & Present* No. 148 (Aug., 1995): esp. 164–65, 174; William D. Pierson, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Amherst, 1988), 11, 120–21, 154–55; Betty Wood, *Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia* (Athens, 1995), 60–61, 174; Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville, 1997), 187–88.

63. Childs, *Aponte Rebellion*, 166–69; esp. 167.

64. J. Gilpin to John Gray Blount, August 18, 1802, in John Gray Blount Papers. Likewise, in 1782 enslaved Bermudian sailors aboard the captured privateer *Regulator* refused freedom in Massachusetts, instead they asked to be exchanged as prisoners-of-war, choosing their families and owners over uncertain freedom in a strange land. Jarvis, *Eye of All Trade*, 445–46. For absenteeism see: Higman, *Slave Populations*, 35–36; Hilary McD. Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick, 1989), 164–65; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 205; John Hope Franklin and Loren Schwening, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York, 1999), 98–109.

65. *Virginia Gazette*, (Purdie and Dixon), November 3, 1768; *Edenton Gazette*, and *North Carolina Advertiser*, April 27, 1808.

66. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 144–53.

67. *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, XIII, 148, 164–65, 185–86.

68. *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, XIII, 165–66; 185–89. The press apparently put these words in Mansfield's mouth. Steven M. Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall: The Landmark Trial That Led to the End of Human Slavery* (Cambridge, 2006), 190–91; David Brion Davis, *In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values, and Our Heritage of Slavery* (New York, 2001), 197.

69. *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, XIII, 77, 164–65, 185.

70. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution*, XI, 95, Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, esp. 2, 67, 69, 162–63; Peter H. Wood, "'Taking Care of Business' in Revolutionary South Carolina: Republicanism and the Slave Society," in *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution*, eds. Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise (Chapel Hill, 1978), 283–86; Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, 162–64; Ryan, *World of Thomas Jeremiah*, 7, 18–20.

71. For Charlestonians' accusations of slave conspiracies see: Michael P. Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, LVIII,

no. 4 (Oct., 2001): 915–76; Kevin Dawson, “Primus Plot,” in *The South Carolina Encyclopedia*, ed. Walter Edgar (Columbia, 2006), 755–756.

72. *Gazette of the State of South-Carolina*, June 14, 1777, quoted in Ryan, *World of Thomas Jeremiah*, 83–84, 89–91, 93, esp. 56; Claims of William Stone, Accounts Audited of Claims Growing out of the Revolution, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 430–58. Isaac Waldron owned Sampson and Mercury who were inherited by his brother Jacob in 1762. *South-Carolina Gazette*, December 4, 1762, January 1, 1763, July 28, 1767; *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, May 31, 1768, November 3, 1772. Records do not state the name of the pilot taken by the *Scorpion*, but it was probably Sampson. William Bell Clark, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, 11 Volumes (Washington, D.C., 1968), III, 539. Ryan speculated that “the best pilot” was either a runaway slave named Shadwell or Scipio Handley, a free black mariner. Yet, Shadwell was apparently aboard the *Tamar*, another British vessel, and records state he was a “mariner” and small-boat “patron” (meaning captain), while Handley was a fisherman. *South Carolina Gazette*, November 7, 1775, *South Carolina Gazette and American General Gazette*, December 8; 15 1775, Ryan, *World of Thomas Jeremiah*, 83, 89–93, 149, 219n14, 233n16.

73. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, December 8; 15, 1775. Another pilot named Bluff also served the British. Wells, *Journal of a Voyage*, 2; 4.

74. For previous interpretations of Jeremiah see: Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, 162–63; Ryan, *World of Thomas Jeremiah*, esp. 7, 18–20.

75. Terry W. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary War Battles 1: The Carolina Lowcountry April 1775-June 1776 and the Battle of Fort Moultrie* (Columbia, 1994), 27–28.

76. *Virginia Gazette*, Supplement (Purdie), June 12, 1776; Jim Picuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775–1782* (Columbia, 2008), 169.

77. A.S. Salley, Jr., *Journal of the Commissioners of the Navy of South Carolina*, October 1776-March 1, 1799, 2 Volumes (Columbia, 1912), I, 96–97; May 22, 1777, South Carolina Treasury Cash Book, 1775–1777, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; Claims of William Stone, 430–58.

78. Peter Timothy to Benjamin Lincoln, September 25, 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers; John Rutledge to Benjamin Lincoln, September 26, 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers; Picuch, *Three People's One King*, 168–69; Franklin Benjamin Hough, *The Siege of Savannah, by the Combined American and French Forces* (Albany, 1886), 103–4. Sampson was probably not the pilot that guided the *Experiment* through Hell Gate. Patriots sought to make an example of Scipio Handley, a free black Charlestonian fisherman, who they captured and sentenced to death for aiding the British. Handley escaped from jail and participated in the invasion of Savannah. Ryan, *World of Thomas Jeremiah*, 115; 117–18, 233n16.

79. Barry, *Senegambia*, xi; Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, 162–63; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 495.

80. Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders*, 231.

81. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, 1993), esp. 15; “Roundtable: Reviews of Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes, 1730–1800*,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 19, no. 1 (June, 2007): 325–26.

82. Jarvis, *Eye of All Trade*, 149; Jarvis, “Maritime Masters,” 596–99.

83. Some free and enslaved black mariners became boatswains or petty officers (noncommissioned officers), most remained sailors that were only able to rise from ordinary seamen to able seamen. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 95–96; Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*. The British navy permitted some English-born mulattoes to become officers and surgeons, inverting Caribbean racial valuations. Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 92–93.
84. Jarvis, *Eye of All Trade*, 57; Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders*, 192; Packwood, *Chained to the Rock*, 22–24, 119–20, 168.
85. Jarvis, *Eye of All Trade*, 281, 283; Tarrant, Carter, Elizabeth City County Wills and Administrations, 387–88, Morris, *Southern Slavery*, 347–49.
86. Gary B. Nash, “Sparks from the Altar of ’76: International Repercussions and Reconsiderations of the American Revolution,” in Armitage and Subrahmanyam, eds. *Age of Revolutions*, 4; Hodges, *Black Loyalists*, xv. For colonists’ unwillingness to free slaves see: Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York & East Jersey* (Chapel Hill, 1999), 143–44; Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, esp. 13–14; 78–84; Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers*, 125–53, 177–243.
87. Geggus, “Caribbean in the Age of Revolution,” 85–86; Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 13–14; 194–281.
88. “An Act for Imposing Duties upon Free Negroes,” August 9, 1806, Bermuda Archives.