

The Biopolitics of Life at Sea,
or, Toward a Theory of Maritime Exception

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 2007

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Abstract

The maritime space of ships is more often developed as a metaphor than critically investigated. Abstract fantasies of global flows and fluid motions ignore the material histories of ships, which often involve the capture of individuals and populations within networks of legal and extra-legal power. Standing as an exception to the bounded geographies of nation-states, ocean space lies beyond any single sovereign's power; the passengers of ships are subject to multiple forms of biopower, wielded by diverse actors. I examine three ship-spaces—British slave ships, the migrant ship Komagata Maru, and Disney's cruise ships—to tease out the techniques of biopower at work through them, exposing the ways in which passengers are made to live and rendered dead. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, I argue that the exceptional suspension of law at sea is integral to the rule of law on land.

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Introduction: Life at Sea

*Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that gray vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.
-Derek Walcott, "The Sea is History"*

What does it mean to say that “the sea is history?” For Walcott this involves a vision of the Caribbean’s ocean space that provides an alternative history to the dominant narratives of the colonial West, and embodies a different way of understanding the historical processes and spaces that have shaped its islands. In contrast to a more conventional understanding of history centred on *lands*, and particularly on European lands, Walcott suggests that to examine the multiple histories of the Caribbean we must “strop on [the] goggles” (37) and look to the sea. Only by entering into the gray vault of the ocean will we be able to hear the faint “sound/ like a rumour without any echo/ of History, really beginning” (78-80) in the islands. Although the poem focuses specifically on a single seascape, the insight that the sea is history needs to be thought of in a more wide-ranging way; ocean spaces—composed of routes, islands and ships—should be understood as profoundly historical, invested with concrete and material processes that have shaped (and continue to shape) not only the Caribbean but the Western world as well. The sea is a very real place, rather than an ahistorical void or mirror held up to the supposedly “real” happenings that take place on land; in contrast to the latter position, which implicitly operates according to a binary logic of presence (*terra firma*) and absence (the sea), I want to suggest that the space of the ocean has its own play of presence and absence, and that this play should be understood as supplementing, rather than opposing, the logics of landed Western societies. In the words of maritime historian

Marcus Rediker, the history of oceanic space is a site of important political, social and personal dramas that are “not simply the stor[ies] of landed society gone to sea” (“People’s History,” 198). In this paper I make three central arguments, but they all stem from this underlying premise: as spaces that have historically been highly important for imperialism, colonialism and capitalism, the histories of the oceans are the histories of global modernity.

The contention that the sea contains its own material histories may seem straightforward, but for all its apparent self-evidence it has often been forgotten in the critical debates of the twentieth-century, most strikingly those regarding globalization itself, which tend to focus on telecommunication webs and network technologies. In their turn towards the accelerated flows and “instant” contact of the wired world, such discussions often overlook our reliance on the materiality of maritime transport; the abstract numbers of markets, banks and forecasts depend upon oceanic transportation technologies that, due to limitations of hull design and the physics of fluid dynamics, have remained unchanged since the early twentieth-century (Sekula 50). Discussing the panoramic models of maritime painting developed in the seventeenth century, photographer Alan Sekula tells us that “the sea always exceeds the limits of the frame” (43); to this I want to add, the sea often escapes our critical attempts to capture it, to freeze it, to know it concretely. In response, maritime space has increasingly been abstracted; maritime metaphors are almost *de rigueur* in discussions of globalization, late-capitalist Empire, the global multitude, and so on.

Theorists like Michel de Certeau, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have used such metaphors to describe the possibilities of resisting the strategies and modes of capture used by global capital: for de Certeau, strategic institutions are outcroppings in “a dark sea...a maritime immensity on which socioeconomic and political structures appear as ephemeral islands” (40); for Deleuze and Guattari, “the sea is perhaps principal among smooth spaces” that can be occupied by “the *fleet* in being...with a vector of deterritorialization in perpetual motion” (387). For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the sea is at once a political and economic metaphor for both the reterritorializing captures of global capital and the liberating lines of flight available to the global multitude. On the one hand, the Empire of capital “tends towards a smooth space defined by uncoded flows” (327), becoming “a great sea that only the winds and currents move” (354); on the other, the “plural multitude” composed of “productive, creative subjectivities of globalization” has “learned to sail on this enormous sea” of unstriated flows (60). These are some of the more productive uses of maritime metaphor; too often the world’s oceans are considered in opposition to “a fully historicized land” and represented “as symbol[s] of madness, irrational femininity and unruly or romantic anti-civilization” that work to “consolidate the dualistic structure” of a Western modernity (Klein and Mackenthun 2) that conceives rationality and reason as firmly planted in the earth (Foucault, *Madness*). Ships in particular have been passed over in critical research. While theorists and historians of the Atlantic slave trade have published hundreds of studies on the space of the plantation, for example, only a handful of serious academic inquiries have probed the

equally important space of the slave ship (Rediker, “Floating Dungeon”). The history of ships, perhaps more than any other maritime space, remains to be examined.

Depictions of maritime space in popular culture follow a similar logic, representing islands and ships as spaces of freedom where subjects can escape history and power, rather than overdetermined sites of history.¹ In the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* film the protagonist offers a definition of “what a ship is” that perfectly summarizes this fantasy of oceanic freedom: asked where his ship can go, he replies:

Not just the Spanish Main, love, the entire ocean, the entire world, wherever we want to go. That’s what a ship is, you know...not just a keel and a hull and a deck and sails, that’s what a ship needs. But what a ship is, what it really is, is freedom.

In this evocation of a smooth world easily navigable through the technology of ships, we can hear an echo of neoliberal dreams of freely mobile capital traversing the globe. Each of these stories assumes that the oceans exist as a kind of limbo, an empty space that can be filled, as needed, by the political, legal and social drives and imaginations of nation-states, corporations and individuals. The vision of a free space tells only a part of the sea’s history; perhaps more often than not, ships have been used to restrict and interdict human liberties. My thesis will bring to light the shipboard histories of three maritime

¹ This is particularly true of film and television; the Disney corporation stands out as one of the most notable proponents of such representations, in films such as *The Little Mermaid* (1989), the *Atlantis* films (2000, 2003), *Finding Nemo* (2003) and most recently the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise, with its cruise-ship tie-ins and branded theme-park rides.

spaces² wherein biopower engaged with free and forced passengers in both deterritorializing and reterritorializing ways.

To avoid creating a linear narrative out of distinct histories of biopower, I have decided not to follow a chronological progression in my chapters. My first chapter engages the 1914 interdiction, detainment and denial of the *Komagata Maru*, which carried British subjects from India eager to start new lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. The ship and its passengers were refused landing, and held at sea for two months until the Canadian navy drove the unwanted migrants from the nation's shores. Between their arrival and forced departure, the migrants were caught in a series of biopolitical³ frameworks that placed them in a legal void, denying them their political rights as British subjects, their legal rights as would-be immigrants, and in the name of a "White Canada," stripping them of humanity. The second study examines ships involved in the eighteenth-century British slave trade, in which a host of biopolitical technologies and apparatuses engaged the bodies of Africans. Captains and crews used negative procedures of biopower to dehumanize and control slaves, to render them into inhuman commodities, and simultaneously exercised positive forms of regulation to maintain the biological lives of their captives in the interests of increasing profits. In the conclusion I show how vessels of the Disney Cruise Line reverse the logic of slave ships, functioning

² Although I take my cue from Walcott, I diverge from his focus on non-Western histories. Through my case studies I examine a specifically Western split between the land and the sea, which does not necessarily translate to all cultures. The sea has historically played a much more central role in the daily life of many indigenous groups, such as the First Nations of the Pacific Northwest and the Taino and Carib peoples of the Caribbean, than it has to Western culture.

³ While distinctions can and have been drawn between "biopower" and "biopolitics," the former has no adjective form (the term "biopowerful" fails to capture the meaning of the original); because of this linguistic aporia, and although I prefer biopower, I use the two interchangeably.

as an obscene double of those earlier spaces that reduces passengers to a bare life of bodily consumption.

I develop three arguments regarding these maritime (and, more specifically, ship) spaces and their relations to terrestrial space. First, in each we see that *maritime spaces not only have their own dramas and material histories, but those dramas and histories take highly biopolitical forms: the history of the ocean is a history of biopolitical exceptions*. I draw upon Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben's conceptions of biopower (a power that brings biological life into the political and juridical realm) alongside Agamben and Carl Schmitt's ideas of exceptional spaces (spaces at the limit point between the juridical and the extra or non-juridical, included within the purview of power only through its exclusion). Maritime travel, an originating and limiting condition for globalization, occurs in a boundary space wherein the norms of state-sovereignty can be suspended and the management of populations and bodies becomes unmistakably, and intensely, biopolitical. Foucault exposes this exceptional marine logic in a discussion of the Renaissance *Narrenschiff*, the Ship of Fools through which the mad were cast out from the space of cities: aboard ship the mad

had no *prison* other than the *threshold* itself....[They were] placed on the inside of the outside, or vice versa....[The mad were] prisoner[s] in the midst of ultimate freedom, on the most open road of all, chained solidly to the infinite crossroads...passenger[s] *par excellence*, the prisoner[s] of the passage. (*Madness*

11)

Standing at the threshold between freedom and capture, maritime passengers and crews enter a space that has a liminal relationship with landed society, a space in which they can alternately be captured and abandoned by more normal political and social orders. Ocean spaces exist outside of any single state's control, implying that in ocean geographies the biopolitical relationship between sovereign power and individual subject becomes malleable and even atrophied.

Carl Schmitt demonstrates that, unlike the "firm land," the "free seas" were viewed historically as existing "outside any specific state spatial order...free of any type of state spatial sovereignty" from the period of the sixteenth century onwards (*Nomos of the Earth* 172). Within maritime space "the sharp distinction between state and individual, public and private, even between war and peace, and war and piracy, disappeared" (*Nomos of the Earth* 174). This belief at first stemmed from a classical appeal to the elemental nature of an ocean that, as one sixteenth-century legal theorist held, "can be neither seized nor inclosed; nay, rather possesses the earth than is by it possessed" (Grotius 37); with the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, this elemental freedom became systematic and juridical (*Nomos of the Earth* 181). The freedom of the seas was most recently upheld—with a few modifications regarding territorial waters—by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOCS): Part VII reads that "the high seas are open to all States" ("Article 87") and that "no state may validly purport to subject any part of the high seas to its sovereignty" ("Article 89"). Concurrent with this freedom, ships have historically (as in naval, slave and immigrant vessels) operated as camp-like spaces with a captain-sovereign wielding nearly absolute power over ship,

crew and cargo. Further, as they traverse the globe ships come up against multiple sovereign territories that may seize hold in multiple ways. Understood as exceptional spaces outside of national boundaries, the global seas act as the obverse of landed society, as spaces ripe for the emergence of biopolitical technologies and networks of biopower, rather than as the empty spaces they have been considered.

I want to note here that my focus on biopower and the logic of exception—rather than economics, race, gender, international relations or any of the other processes and modes of power at work within ocean spaces—stands in danger of reducing multiple maritime histories to a single, monolithic logic of biopolitical operations, and rendering complex and historically contingent stories into a single narrative. By bringing together three radically disparate ship spaces under a logic of biopower, I run the risk of occluding the multiple practices of power that are at work in each. While I understand that other ways of viewing these spaces exist, that other narratives could be constructed, I have made biopower the centre of my study because, in these three cases, those other formations of power seem to find expression in biopolitical ways; the control and management of bodies, if not the sole or essential type of power at work in each space, functions as a kind of stain that bleeds into other forms of power: in each of these spaces, but most noticeably in the slave and migrant ships, the control of bodies and populations—whether through economic, imperial, medical or other forms of power—can be understood as a primary goal. I hope that the more nuanced critiques of each space in the following chapters will compensate for any veering into an overly black and white conceptualization in this Introduction.

Second, not only are these spaces biopolitical,⁴ but they are excessively so; *in the exceptional space of ships, the operations of biopower diffuse out of sovereign control, out of the governmental regimes of a single nation, into multinational and non-sovereign domains*. Within the exceptional space of the sea, these ships become less subject to the sovereign power of nation-states, while still subtended by the controlling tendrils of national, international and extra-national forces, implicated in larger networks composed of multiple sovereign powers, transnational movements of labour and capital, and global systems of communication and representation. New forms of sovereign power emerge in this space that serve non-state economic systems more than state-based politics (Schmitt, *Nomos of the Earth* 294). More than anything, the seas act as a contact zone for cultures, histories, nations, economic processes, technologies, private industry and corporate exploration and exploitation. Maritime space is best understood as a plural space, a “geography of *multiple* seas...that do not naturalize a single epic logic” (Easterling 70) but rather create multiple, contentious, logics that bump against each other: the biopolitical space of the seas is a space where friction⁵, rather than smooth efficiency, rules. Even a single ship can be home to multiple, contested spaces, as Foucault points out in his 1976 essay on heterotopias: these “other spaces” juxtapose any number of real places, which in maritime space can include prisons, churches, markets, factories, hospitals, houses, schools, and so on. The ship, Foucault maintains, is “the heterotopia

⁴ My references to “biopolitical spaces” should be understood as a shorthand way of referring to the complex webs of biopolitical techniques and forces brought to bear on those captured therein by human actors and institutions, and not as reifying or naturalizing those forces.

⁵ I borrow this term from Anna Tsing, who uses it to characterize “the awkward, unequal, unstable and creative qualities” of global interconnections that “inflect historical trajectories, enabling, excluding and particularizing” contingent cultures, populations and bodies: friction “refuses the lie that global power operates like a well-oiled machine” (4-6).

par excellence” (“Other Spaces” 27). In the case of the *Komagata Maru*, for example, we have a Japanese-owned ship transporting Indian immigrants to the Dominion of Canada from a number of East-Asian ports; the stakeholders in this incident included at the very least different levels of imperial and national government in Canada, England, the United States of America and India; Indian migrants already in Canada; factory and logging-concession owners hungry for workers; the racist “White Canada” movement; immigration officers and lawyers; and the migrants themselves, as well as thousands of other British subjects eager to migrate. Through the ships that float on these multiple seas we can see a proliferation of biopolitical mechanisms and exceptional states created by a number of invested parties.

Finally, I want to suggest that the sea occupies a necessary and integral position vis-a-vis the landed spaces of nation-states. That is, my study reveals a complicity between land-based, territorializing sovereign powers and the deterritorializing biopolitical practices borne by the oceans: *maritime exceptions function as a hidden supplement of (Western) law and order; the suspension of law at sea is integral to the rule of law on land*. This is most evident in earlier historical moments, when the distinction between *terra firma* and *mare liberum* was more dramatic; after the discovery of the Americas, the whole of the New World was considered part of the maritime space of exception, existing beyond the amity lines delineating where European “treaties, peace and friendship applied” (Schmitt, “The Land” 32-33). The law and order of European nations, and the health of national populations, were supplemented by the abeyance of law in the Americas. As the land appropriation of the colonial process took place, the

order of law was gradually imposed upon these spaces and the free seas again became the major space of exception. Contemporary spaces such as Guantánamo Bay and the islands of Australia's "Pacific Solution" fulfill a similar function as exceptional spaces brought within the juridical system of national and international law only through their legal exclusion, spaces whose existence is supposed to somehow decrease risks to the communal bodies on land.

The liminality of oceans is maximized in various ways to maintain the health of populations and nations on land, providing means to interdict those populations and bodies deemed inferior or harmful, to grant entry to those seen as beneficial, to destroy those viewed as threatening, and to transport the various goods required by national populations. In a very real way, landed society requires the world's seascapes, as sites in which determinations regarding which bodies can and cannot qualify for political rights or social meaning are made.

Biopower's two faces

To develop these arguments in relation to the historical case studies that follow, I draw most heavily upon the theories of biopower offered by Foucault and Agamben.

While the two diverge in several important ways, they share a basic conception of biopower as a process of gathering biological life into the realm of politics, a "technology of power" that "centre[s] on life" (Foucault, *Sexuality* 1:144). In Foucault's work, biopolitics denotes the ability of states to control, manage and maximize the health of their populations: it is a power "to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death" (*Sexuality* 1:138). He distinguishes this from an earlier mode of sovereign power

that relied upon the right to consign its subjects to death so that the sovereign's strength was enhanced. Starting in the seventeenth century, this transitioned into an anatomo-political regime of disciplinary power that identified, detained and trained abnormal bodies and behaviors through various mechanisms of capture: prisons, sanitariums, barracks, workhouses and the like (*Discipline; "Society"*). Power became more often located in governmental institutions than in the sovereign, and by the eighteenth century apparatuses of biopower developed that focussed on husbanding life so as to maximize the health and well-being of populations; a massifying biopower joined with the anatomo-politics of individual bodies (*"Society"*). Foucault makes clear that while different types of power come to the fore at different periods, none of them pass away or disappear completely; instead, we can think of sovereign, disciplinary and governmental power as persisting in the current period, forming a constellation of biopower that seeks to "administer, multiply and optimize" the life and health of bodies and populations (*Sexuality* 137). By the nineteenth century this constellation had resolved into two major poles, the political techniques of sovereign power and governmental institutions, and the technologies of the self, the ways in which individuals were increasingly responsible for their own subjectivization, for maintaining their own health by internalizing certain normative traits and behaviors. In this view, power over life increasingly becomes a soft, coercive power that in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's terms "regulates social life from its interior...[by becoming] an integral, vital function that every individual embraces and reactivates" freely (23). While the threat of death, the power both to kill and to expose to greater risk of death, never completely disappears from the repertoire of

biopower, for Foucault methods of biopolitical control tend to foster life rather than dispense death, and from the eighteenth century on the latter mode plays a less and less prominent role.

Rather than solely operating along positive lines, however, biopower should be understood as a Janus-faced form of control, one that accommodates both positive and negative dimensions. While Foucault primarily theorizes the former, Agamben focuses almost exclusively on power's negative declension, that is, on the ability to legally render dead rather than to foster life. Further, where Foucault develops a genealogical approach that traces the development of different forms of power at different junctures in history rather than searching for points of origin, Agamben seeks to follow biopower back to an originating moment in which biological life came under the purview of sovereign law. Drawing on Schmitt's dictum that sovereign power stems from the ability to decide on legal exceptions, to both generate a juridical order and hold it in abeyance, Agamben argues that the sovereign is thus at once inside and external to law. He turns to Aristotle's *Politics* to distinguish between two kinds of life in the classical period: *bios*, "the form or way of living proper to an individual or group," and *zoē*, "the simple fact of living common all living beings" (*Homo Sacer* 1). *Bios* signifies life within the *polis*, a specifically human life within a political community, and from which *zoē* was excluded.

Bringing these definitions of life together with the theory of sovereign exception, Agamben maintains that the original relationship between sovereign power and those subject to it operated through a threat of abandonment from the juridical and political system; to be banned means both to be excluded from and to be free of the law (*Homo*

Sacer 23). The first principal of the law, the principal of the ban, is founded on the law's exception, what Agamben calls the force-of-law or the force of law without law, a condition in which the sovereign places law under erasure rather than creating a situation of total chaos: the law still exists, but only in its exceptional withdrawal (*State*). Through this sovereign ban, as Agamben terms it, the biological life of subjects is paradoxically captured within the juridical order by way of *zoē*'s inclusive exclusion. *Zoē* could be brought into a political space only by way of the law's withdrawal from it; Agamben's term for life thus captured is *nuda vita*, bare or naked life. He uses an archaic figure of Roman law, *homo sacer*, to demonstrate this; *homo sacer* was a figure of "life that may be killed but not sacrificed" (*Homo Sacer* 53), a life which could be killed without sanction or censure, but whose death could have no social meaning.

Importantly, *homo sacer* is not simply another term for biological life, but rather biological life brought into the *polis* only through its exposure to death: bare life is *suffering* life that does nothing but *survive*. *Homo sacer* stands at the threshold between the human and the inhuman in a kind of living death. Agamben finds the paradigmatic examples of this in the *Muselmann* of the Nazi concentration camps, those inmates who had so lost their humanity that they did nothing but live and suffer. He maintains that the process of bringing *zoē* into the political realm acts as a foundational movement for politics as such: "the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power" (*Homo Sacer* 6). For Agamben, the state of legal exception generating this figure has in the modern period become the norm, so that the space of the camp—the exemplary state of exception, existing both within and outside the rule of law—increasingly forms

“the new biopolitical *nomos* of the planet” (*Homo Sacer* 99). That is, the exception has become the norm, and we are all, potentially, reducible to bare life.

Despite their differences, the biopolitical theories of Foucault and Agamben can be productively brought together if we consider each as providing a partial understanding of biopower’s dual approaches. While Foucault focuses almost solely on the positive, generative impetus of biopower, he is fully aware that its negative, destructive facet never disappears. For him, this destructive power becomes subordinated to its opposite, so that the power to kill or expose to death gets used on certain unhealthy or threatening individuals or groups to increase the health of the overall population, usually conceived as a common national body (*Sexuality*; “*Society*”). Likewise, Agamben’s lack of discussion regarding the more positive biopolitical husbandry of populations should not be taken as an outright refusal of its existence; he offers the *Homo Sacer* trilogy—*Homo Sacer*, *State of Exception* and *Remnants of Auschwitz*—as a “corrective” to Foucault’s neglect of sovereign power’s role in contemporary biopolitics rather than as an outright refusal (*Homo Sacer* 12; Mills 59-60). The seeming impasse between Foucault’s concentration on governmental power and Agamben’s on sovereign power indeed proves surmountable if, following Judith Butler, we consider how governmental actors operating in a state of exception arrogate to themselves the sovereign power to render dead as part of a larger project of maximizing life (*Precarious Life*).

Rather than keeping the two at arm’s length, I bring them together as complementary or supplemental ways to understand biopower. As I demonstrated above, maritime space has been and continues to function as exceptional with respect to the land;

I have chosen the historical case studies I have in part because the ships therein show, in exemplary ways, both forms of biopower at work. I draw upon the theorization of positive and negative biopolitics to critique the exceptional spaces of migrant and slave ships, identifying their specific technologies and methods for reducing subjects to bare life. In both cases a negative biopolitics is intimately connected to positive techniques, (re)creating the populations caught within ship space as specific forms of life—in the case of slave ships, inhuman cargo, and with the *Komagata Maru* a threatening part of an inferior population—and fostering the health of communal bodies identified by race and nation. Examining the histories of these ship spaces through the lens of biopower allows me to discuss the different ways that state and non-state actions operated to manage biological and political life in increasingly regularized ways. These include the creation of legal loopholes and exceptions; the collection of data regarding populations; calls for labour; the techniques of racist and nationalist groups; the physical manipulation, control and disciplining of captive bodies; the production and dissemination of propaganda; changing definitions of citizenship, and even what it means to be human; and the threat of social and political, as well as bodily, death. A biopolitical approach lets us see how processes that maximize life are inextricably caught up in their opposite: a thanatopolitics that wields the power to kill in the name of making live.

Thinking about histories of maritime exception biopolitically helps expose the relevance of past events to the current era. Exceptional processes of biopower do not simply fade away, however much some groups would like them to, but instead linger on,

bubbling to the surface to threaten the (post)modern societies that are historically contingent on them.

Raising exceptional histories

In choosing and organizing my case studies, I have borrowed from Foucault's genealogical method rather than Agamben's search for first causes, in order to avoid the problems of grand narrative that a temporally all-encompassing approach risks. That is, while I provide examples from three dramatically distinct moments in time—the eighteenth, early twentieth and twenty-first centuries—I do not want to suggest that the technologies of biopower at work in each are linked in any essentialist way, nor that they proceed according to a linear teleology. The spaces and practices of biopower that I exhume should not be smoothed out within an abstract history, but rather are meant to show how different modes of biopower emerge as more or less prevalent at certain historical moments, in specific political and economic contexts. We should also not assume that the technologies of later times totally replace those preceding them; rather, just as Foucault demonstrates that sovereign power lingers in the current governmental moment, I suggest that the biopolitical modes of earlier eras remain in those that follow. As I discuss below, I have chosen these ship-spaces as exemplary cases for demonstrating specific biopolitical modes that are still very much active in today's world. The dehumanization and commoditization of Africans within slave ships; the immunitary logic of the *Komagata Maru*; and the willing reduction of cruise ship passengers to their consuming bodies may be radically different, yet still obey a similar logic of power that takes life itself as its preeminent object.

The exceptional histories of biopower at sea and the complex ways that they gained representation do not simply belong to the past, but linger on, troubling the contemporary period in complicated ways. In this we can discern a logic of biopolitical management that demonstrates a desire to foreclose or disavow the mistakes of the past, such as the Atlantic plantation system and the “White Canada” movement. One of the ways current governments and organizations seek to manage these returns involves semi-official apologies designed to suture closed the current ruptures caused by past actions, which now threaten the health of political and economic bodies, while also minimizing their culpability. A similar drive to smooth out histories of biopower operates in Caribbean cruise industry, in its whitewashing of the region’s past, the way it covers over multiple histories, including the role played by the slave trade in forming the Caribbean’s island nations. Creating a chain of ‘island paradises’ in which privileged individuals can hedonistically escape relies on deliberately effacing several hundred years of colonial procedures. These representational projects disavow the material conditions of the spaces they engage with. Further, such representations of exceptional spaces stand in peril of repeating and reifying the biopolitical logic of the space itself.

Each chapter engages with one or more representations that grant access to the histories of my case studies, but in a complicated and at times complicit manner. With the *Komagata Maru*, after introducing the problematic apology offered by Harper, I turn to *Continuous Journey* (2004), a documentary by director Ali Kazimi; this film provides a useful counterpoint to Harper’s speech. The *Komagata Maru* was caught in a messy network of imperial, national and colonial powers further exacerbated by the friction

between industries' need for labor and the Dominion of Canada's desire to assert its independence. Besides adopting positive and negative biopolitical modes, governmental forces adopted an immunitary legal paradigm to exclude the migrants through an exceptional inclusion.

I open my second chapter by briefly discussing responses of insurance companies to their in the slave trade, before introducing the *Description of a Slave Ship* that both mobilized the public against the trade and strangely replicated the biopolitical procedures it was designed to end. Slave ship captains and crews concentrated biopower's positive and negative poles on African's bodies, using brutal techniques of bodily punishment to maintain power over their human cargo: the horrific suffering of some slaves was designed to reduce the risk of insurrection and suicide and thus increase the social health of the ship population as a whole. To minimize waste and maximize profit, captains and surgeons developed techniques for husbanding the lives in their charge, regulating meals, exercise and hygiene as much as possible, so that making live and making die became inextricably twined together.

My concluding chapter begins with a description and critique of the Disney Cruise Line's promotional pamphlets, which invite viewers to cast off their landed identities and render themselves into consuming bodies. I explore these ships as obscene doubles of the middle passage's slave ships. In closing, I expose some of the other maritime spaces, contemporary and historic, that a biopolitical approach such as this, careful to nuances of representation and relevance, might productively illuminate. This mode of critique allows us to see that the maritime spaces of ships and islands have their

own biopolitical histories that exceed any single nation-state or sovereign power, that these exceptional spaces work to bolster the order of landed society, and that despite the temporal gaps that may lie between their and our temporal moments such histories have a continued relevance. By excavating the biopolitics of life at sea, diving into that “gray vault” (Walcott 3), we can better understand contemporary operations of biopower and spaces of exception.

Chapter 1: Migrant Ship

The politics of apology

The politics of apologies and reconciliation are increasingly important for nations seeking to heal the wounds of colonial pasts, and these official discourses have increasingly become an object of critical scrutiny. In her 2008 study of contemporary apologies in former British colonies, Melissa Nobles maintains that such semiotic interventions perform a number of political functions; most importantly, they focus on “an often neglected past” to “change the terms and meanings” of political memberships (x-xi). The Canadian government has apologized a number of times for its history of exclusionary immigration and citizenship policies: in June 2006 an apology was offered in recognition of the head tax on Chinese immigrants in place between 1885 and 1923, and two years later an apology was offered to former students of the residential school system. Most recently, on August 3, 2008, Prime Minister Harper spoke at a community celebration held in Surrey, British Columbia to apologize for the *Komagata Maru* incident in 1914, when a ship carrying 376 Indian migrants was detained for two months in Vancouver’s Coal harbour before being refused entry into Canada. This occasion marked the first time Canada turned away a shipload of potential immigrants.

While the earlier apologies also met with ambivalent responses, this one met an immediate and hostile response directly related to its location: Harper had delivered both of the others in front of a sitting Parliament rather than in the more informal setting of a festival. Harper’s brief statement was met by polite, if scattered, applause, but after his departure Sikh leaders took the stage and denounced his apology, stating that “[Sikhs]

were shamed in 1914 by the government, and today the Tory government again has shamed [them]” (“Apology rebuffed”). Jaswinder Singh Toor, president of The Descendants of Komagata Maru Society, called Harper’s appearance “a stunt” and the apology itself “unacceptable” (“Harper apologizes”) in comparison to the head tax and residential schools apologies. In response to the rebuff, Secretary of State Jason Kenney provided a strangely curt statement—“the apology has been given and it won’t be repeated” (“Harper apologizes”)—that rejected any possibility of dialogue. Rather than fostering goodwill among an important electoral demographic, the bungled apology created further negative sentiments among Indo-Canadians, who felt it re-inscribed the second-class status allotted them at the time of the earlier incident. This apology did little to engage with historical injustices, and certainly failed to change the meanings of social and political membership in Canada.

Why did Harper give the apology at a festival instead of in Parliament? Why did his government deviate from the formal strategy used twice before? Why offer a gesture that could only seem, in context, semi-official? Why should this apology so reverse itself, allowing the historical *Komagata Maru* incident to proliferate into uncertainty at the very moment designed to bring narrative and historical closure? What is it about the Komagata Maru incident that echoes over time before returning with such force? What happened then—what flows of power developed, what political and extra-political actions took place, what lines of flight and interdiction operated—that it should have such an ambiguously powerful resonance now, nearly a century after the fact?

While I cannot speak to Harper's motives, the charged ambivalence created by this apology as opposed to the earlier ones, its open-ended and openly contested status, suggests a premise that will implicitly guide this chapter: Canada's racist responses to the *Komagata Maru* and its passengers do not pertain solely to the past, but rather adumbrate biopolitical techniques—for governing, controlling and administering bodies and populations—that are if anything more endemic today than they were in 1914. Further, this incident does not solely involve Canada, but rather reflects a substantial rupture in the framing of the nation-state and the rights of national subjects at a global level. The *Komagata Maru* incident brings to light a racialized crisis within—and central to—the British empire that the empire could never surmount.

Indeed, the euphemism most commonly used to describe the events —“incident”—is etymologically telling, having both the common definition of an “event of accessory or subordinate character,” and the older meaning of an “inciding medicine” (*OED*). This difference stems from the word's Latin root *incidere* (“to fall into”), which comes from *cadere*, “to fall,” and *caedere*, “to cut.” *Cadere* also carries the metaphoric meaning of “to die,” and gives us the suffix “-cide,” as in homicide or suicide (*OED*). The first sense works to diminish the violence of the *Komagata Maru* event, representing it as secondary to “real” historical events (whatever those might be) and thus not worthy of note; the second, however, inadvertently provides an intriguing biological and medical metaphor that implies both curative and harmful effects. Canada's reaction to the *Komagata Maru* momentarily exposed the fractures inherent in the imperial category of the free and equal subjects of the British empire, making explicit the biopolitical cut

within imperialism between differently racialized bodies. For the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*, this racialized cutting precipitated a state of political and legal suspension akin to a kind of living death, or in Agamben's term, bare life. Further, this incident brings the modern nation-state into opposition with global movements of capital and labour, as Canada's exceptional actions severed the flow between an eager pool of labour and an industrial base equally eager for workers; the smooth functioning of this labor movement ran aground, in part, on the racist reaction of white laborers who felt their jobs were threatened. Finally, in its response Canada formally asserted the rights of an independent nation-state, falling further away from an idea of unified Empire. As an *incident* affecting our understanding of empire, citizenship and the globalization of capital, the *Komagata Maru* heralded a falling away, a death, and an incision in the communal body of the British empire.⁶

Contrasting with the uncertainty of Harper's failed apology is the uncertainty generated by director Ali Kazimi's 2004 documentary *Continuous Journey*, which provides a contemporary window through which to examine the historical incident. If the government's apology closed down dialogue about past injustices, Kazimi's film suggests a more open model for discussing historic exclusions, as it traces the events through historical documents from Canada, Britain and India. Kazimi relates how Gurdit Singh, a wealthy Sikh living in Singapore, chartered the ship in the spring of 1914 to provide passage to Indians from Asian ports to Canada. After two months at sea, the *Komagata Maru* and its 376 passengers arrived in Vancouver, where the passengers were refused

⁶ See the *Oxford English Dictionary's* entries for “-cide, *comb. form* 1,” “incident, *a.* 1” and “incident, *a.* 2 and *n.* 2.”

permission to land. The space of the ship, which had first suggested freedom of movement and hopes for new lives, transformed into a space of capture and interdiction: authorities kept the migrants on board for two months, infrequently providing them with basic provisions. A legal challenge to the British Columbia Court of Appeal failed, and the Canadian navy's HMCS *Rainbow* forced the ship to leave. After being refused entry to Hong Kong and Singapore on its return voyage, the *Komagata Maru* was allowed to land in India at Budge Budge, twenty kilometers away from Calcutta, where it was met by British troops. An unwarranted attempt to arrest Gurdit Singh and twenty others as political agitators quickly turned murderous; troops opened fire and killed nineteen passengers, and those who did not escape were detained under village arrest throughout the First World War.

Kazimi's film adapts the scant archival material to illuminate the sixty days during which the *Komagata Maru* languished in the Vancouver harbour, drawing on interviews in Canada and India, newsreel footage, and animating still photographs, official documents and newspaper broadsheets to create what Ayesha Tameed and Tamara Vukov call "a play of presence and absence" (88). His film adopts a palimpsest- and collage-like approach, layering still photographs to give the appearance of depth, movement and presence, and to show how the past persists as a spectre within the present. The apparitions of people, places and things that haunt this film at once give presence to the exclusionary biopolitical techniques brought to bear upon the would-be immigrants of the *Komagata Maru*, and also make clear that the biopolitical spectre of the *Komagata Maru incident* still haunts Canada's immigration policies; as Kazimi puts

it, Vancouver's Coal Harbour is "a crime scene, haunted by its ghosts" (*Continuous Journey*).

While it never explicitly names the techniques of biopower as such, the historic occurrences that *Continuous Journey* relates arguably inaugurate a biopolitical turn in Canadian immigration policy. The film makes clear that the political, medical, legal and extra-legal actions of the Dominion government were far from simple or one-sided; the events took place within a constellation of layered national and international powers, and operated at both the levels of sovereign decision and governmental power, producing techniques that disciplined and controlled the immigrants' bodies. The *Komagata Maru*'s passengers were caught within a net of biopolitical machinations predicated on the dual paradigms of an exceptional interdiction and a racialized immunization, through which the community of Canada's social body—dependent on notions of a pure whiteness—could be maintained. Hostility to racially marked immigrants was strong, and the White Canada movement that advocated for an imagined racial purity was at its peak; a wide swath of the Canadian population, including elected officials and members of the judiciary, firmly believed in its tenets. I will address both of these biopolitical modalities, but for now let me note regarding the latter how strikingly fitting it is that the *Komagata Maru* events would occur in 1914, at the end of Britain's "Imperial century" and just before its colonial government introduced passport laws in India.

Along with its importance to Canada's immigration policies, the *Komagata Maru* illustrates a significant shift in the biopolitical fabric of British dominion and the rights and powers of the modern nation-state. At this turning point in modernity boundaries

between communities and their exteriors began to weaken, particularly in the face of long-distance national identities and increasingly transnational flows of capital; at the same time, one of the largest frameworks for global community, Britain's empire, began to show cracks as former colonies agitated for independence and self-government. The idea of community contained in the idea of the nation-state, which challenged the traditional imperial model, was simultaneously troubled from both within and without. In this paper I trace one point of friction—the Komagata Maru—between the national community of Canada, the supranational flows of imperial subjectivity, and a burgeoning Empire of global capital. I intend to excavate the flexible and shifting modes of biopower that entered into play, showing how the Komagata Maru's exceptional legal, spatial and economic status continually shifted, and became a kind of floating exception that was adapted by different parties to fulfill the conflicting goals of exclusion and immigration, immunization and communization.

“White Canada forever”

In tracing the biopolitical forces at work in the Komagata Maru incident, I draw upon a conception of biopolitics subtended by the dual theories of Agamben and Foucault. Rather than reading them in opposition, I adopt the two approaches as complementary, each bringing into focus one of biopower's Janus faces: on the one hand the power to let live and make die, and on the other the power to make live and let die. As Esposito puts it, this is a difference between the creation of death and the creation of subjectivity, between a thanatopolitics and a biopolitics that fold back into one another. Foucault sees the former linked to the power of sovereignty under Medieval and early

Modern regimes, and the latter as a properly biopolitical occurrence developing from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onward under the guise of governmentality, involving the administration of populations to perfect and increase them through various apparatuses: psychological, educational, medical, disciplinary, and so on. Agamben demonstrates that the original sovereign power over life and death remains a central, if no longer an exclusive, paradigm for modernity.⁷ It might be fair to say that in modernity, while the sovereign decree can both create or abrogate law, some type of governmental or bureaucratic apparatus is needed to carry out the sovereign decision. Following Wendy Brown, I see sovereignty and governmentality as two ways of interpreting and analyzing simultaneous modalities of power rather than as chronologically discrete. Sovereign power and governmental power thus operate concurrently upon the same field: the body, both individual and communal. Both strands of biopolitical critique have focused mainly on European modernity; my analysis helps to elaborate the operations of biopower in the interstices of empire, particularly the oceanic spaces that mediated between empire's European and colonial projects.

The biopolitical response to the arrival of the Komagata Maru and its south Asian passengers in Coal Harbour operated on two distinct populations; while directly negative biopolitical forces were brought to bear upon the passengers of the Komagata Maru, the events also participated in a larger, "positive" biopolitical project: the construction and maintenance of a racially naturalized population "suited" to the nation of Canada. The

⁷ Foucault himself oscillates between an insistence on biopower as the sole property of a governmental regime concerned with normalizing society in *The History of Sexuality* (144-5), and the lectures of 1976-77 that keep the sovereign power over life within a sovereignty-discipline-governmentality triangle (107-8).

vessel's arrival in 1914 coincided with a period in which racism and opposition to Asian immigration was rampant. In 1907 the Asiatic Exclusion League started a riot in downtown Vancouver, with a mob of nine thousand specifically targeting the city's Asian members and businesses. This led to the proclamation in 1908 of a new Order in Council amending the Immigration Act to include the legal loophole of the continuous passage clause, which required all immigrants to reach Canada by means of "continuous journey from the country of which he is a native or naturalized citizen" (Immigration Act §38a). The government then applied economic pressure on steamship lines, ending the only commercial routes providing continuous passage from India to Canada.

As *Continuous Journey* makes clear, politicians had explicitly adopted a "White Canada" policy, and couched immigration policies along racist lines. The "unrestrained mixing" of races, as newspapers and politicians proclaimed (Ward 90-1), would lead to a weakening of the economy, ethics and way of life in British Columbia and Canada as a whole.⁸ Reporting on the state of Indian immigration in 1908, Mackenzie King maintained that

the native of India is not a person suited to this country....[A]ccustomed as many of them are to the conditions of a tropical climate and possessing manners and customs so unlike those of our own people [they would be unable] to readily adapt themselves" to life in Canada. (qtd. in Ward 83)⁹

⁸ For a detailed examination of this "White Canada" movement, see W. Peter Ward's *White Canada Forever*, especially chapters 4 and 5.

⁹ Ward cites "Report by W.L. Mackenzie King, on his mission to England to confer with British authorities," *Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada*, no. 36a, A 1908 Edward VII, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1908): 7-8.

The biopolitical division of suitable and unsuitable populations along racial lines carried over into the Immigration Act of 1910,¹⁰ which echoed King's statement by prohibiting the landing in Canada...of immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character. (Immigration Act §38c)

In the lead up to the *Komagata Maru*'s arrival, we thus see a growing production of racialized populations and bodies in the functioning of state biopower and its machineries of citizenship. This proceeds according to the terms outlined by Foucault in his lecture of March 1976, where he argues that by describing some races as "good" and others as inferior, state biopower fragments "the field of the biological," allowing greater ability to identify and separate out bodies unworthy of citizenship ("Society" 254-5). When the *Komagata Maru* and its 376 passengers sailed into Vancouver harbour on May 23, 1914, they entered a space fraught with a racializing biopolitical force developed to maintain a purely white and European population.¹¹ The state adopted a paradigm of biopower that sought to organize subjects according to racial hierarchies, within which some races become identified as exemplary and others as inferior, so that the larger species population is subdivided into races. Sovereign decrees—such as the Orders in Council amending immigration law—as well as the administrative labour of individuals like

¹⁰ This Act also created "Canadian citizen" as a category, in order to differentiate between British subjects "domiciled" in Canada (having resided in the country for at least three years) and all other British subjects, who thereafter required permission to enter the Dominion (Immigration Act, §2d)

¹¹ The most popular beer-parlor song of that summer was "White Canada Forever" (*Continuous Journey*), the lyrics of which bring together prevailing concerns regarding sovereignty and immigration: "Oh, this is the voice of the West/ And it speaks to the world./ We hold by right/ And maintain by might,/ 'Til the foe is backward dri'en./ White Canada forever (4x)/ Our watchword be: God save the King!" The repeated chorus leaves little doubt as to who "the foe" might be.

Malcolm Reid, the Dominion immigration agent for Vancouver, worked to normalize Canada as a white nation by policing, rejecting and expelling those deemed unsuitable to be part of the communal body.

The White Canada movement was complicated by the web of imperial relationships binding together Canada, India and Britain; while each had a different structural position within the empire—England the imperial seat, Canada a self-governing Dominion, and India a non-self-governing colony—they were all populated by British subjects. As Audrey Macklin¹² points out, British concerns over India’s desire for self-government and the growth of an Indian revolutionary movement (the Ghadar or Mutiny party) in North America¹³ played a large part in the development and implementation of Canadian immigration laws: as a British Dominion, “Canada as such [didn’t] control its own foreign policy...it had to look to Britain” (*Continuous Journey*). One of the empire’s central tenets was that of fair play, the equality of all British subjects. These subjects had a (hypothetical) right of free movement throughout the empire; this rested on the assumption that the only movements would be those tacitly approved by Britain, as in the case of semi-indentured laborers from India traveling to other colonies. Maintaining the semblance of equality among all British subjects and the neutral rule of law, regardless of race, was of paramount importance for the British government, especially in regard to rebellious India. Just as the Indian government could not constrain

¹² Associate Professor of Law, University of Toronto.

¹³ William Hopkinson, an imperial agent tracking the Ghadar movement for Britain, Canada and the United States (the movement was headquartered in San Francisco), was certain that this ship and its passengers—especially Gurdit Singh, who he describes as a committed revolutionary—were connected with the Ghadar party (*Continuous Journey*).

the emigration of Indian British subjects, neither could the government of Canada adopt immigration policies that explicitly excluded Indian migrants. Either case would have exposed “that notwithstanding citizenship of empire, different ‘British subjects’ were endowed with differential access to mobility” (Mongia 200). Neither state could overtly limit the movement of Indian subjects without exposing the exceptional status of the empire’s colonial subjects. However, the appearance of a neutral rule of law was supplemented by extra-legal operations and the possibility of the law’s suspension. Hence the wording of the continuous journey Order in Council, which theoretically applied equally to all immigrants but was in practice designed, with the full awareness of the British and Indian governments, to specifically exclude British colonials from India.¹⁴ Further, the only direct passage from India to Canada, provided by Canadian Pacific, was stopped after pressure from the Canadian government. Hugh Johnston¹⁵ makes clear that prohibiting certain races from immigrating was perfectly acceptable, and even encouraged, as long as it remained deniable (*Continuous Journey*). In the fluid ocean geographies separating and connecting British colonies, the empire’s rule of universal citizenship could and would be suspended.

“Riot is needed”

The Komagata Maru had previously carried thousands of European immigrants into Canada between 1898 and 1913 without any being turned away (*Continuous*

¹⁴ Section 38 originally read that “the Governor in Council shall...prohibit”; after the entry of two Europeans was denied on grounds that they had not arrived by continuous journey from their home countries, this was amended to read “the Governor in Council may...prohibit” (Mongia, 202-3), demonstrating that this Act functioned as an exception to the law, as a loophole to be read differently according to the identities of migrants.

¹⁵ Professor Emeritus of History, Simon Fraser University.

Journey), but on this occasion the ship's entry was arrested. Forewarned by frantic telegrams from British governors in India, Hong Kong and Singapore, Malcolm Reid, along with the staunchly anti-immigrant Member of Parliament for Vancouver H.H. Stevens, devised a response to the ship's arrival that both avoided the open use of force and remained deniable: indefinitely delay the processing of passengers. The harbour master mandated that the ship remain anchored off shore; armed skiffs and shore patrols —“for the protection of the men on board” (Reid 11)¹⁶—made sure that the frustrated passengers, who were given no reasons for their confinement, stayed on board. A diabolically clever stratagem, this kept the passengers at once from entering Canada and also from having a right to present their case before a judge. By never actually declaring them excluded; by enacting immigration policies in the mandated manner with the caveat that they proceed at a glacial pace; by keeping all passengers indefinitely confined on the ship, unable to speak to their lawyer, Edward Bird; and by refusing to provide any food or water, Reid and Stevens hoped that the passengers would give up their attempt to enter Canada without the government having to overtly intervene. Their plan was bolstered by the fact that Gurdit Singh had yet to pay for the ship's charter. He had intended to do this with the money received from selling the ship's cargo of coal in Vancouver, but with the ship in a legal no-man's land this was no longer an option. Reid became aware of this, shrewdly using his interminable delays to co-opt international capital as an ally. If the charter was not paid, as Reid expected, the ship would revert to its owners and be forced

¹⁶ Robie Reid, a lawyer and historian of early B.C., bears no relation to Malcolm Reid, but did provide him with legal advice regarding the *Komagata Maru* (Johnston 47).

to return to Hong Kong without the government having to expose the racially differentiated hierarchy of British subjects that his actions sought to enforce.

With its arrival in Vancouver, the *Komagata Maru* entered into an undeclared space of exception, suspended in a kind of legal non-place in which the negative declension of biopower could unfold. Robert Davidson has pointed out that “state-directed interdiction and migrant management practices re-articulate spaces” (4); here, the space of the harbour as well as the ship was re-articulated according to the dislocating logic of the state of exception. Following Agamben and Butler, I see the exception as a space in which “legal protections are withdrawn, and law itself withdraws from the usual domain of its jurisdiction” (Butler 60). However, while the exception is traditionally understood as an aspect of sovereign power, famously articulated in Carl Schmitt’s dictum that “sovereign is he who decides on the exception” (Theology 5), in this case sovereign power—in the form of the Governor General and Prime Minister—could not explicitly declare an exception, since this would have precipitated precisely the kind of political entanglements that the imperial government wanted to avoid.¹⁷ Instead, this power was relegated to the governmental level under the administration of Reid and Stevens. Butler’s suggestion that in the modern period “procedures of governmentality...are invoked to extend and fortify forms of sovereignty” (55) holds true in case of the *Komagata Maru*. Despite the lack of a sovereign decision, a state of exception was nevertheless created around the ship; it floated in a space of indefinite

¹⁷ Prime Minister Borden, after consultation with British officials, left the matter in the hands of Reid and Stevens, giving them authority to deal with the situation as they best saw fit. He was informed of and fully supported their plan to delay implementing the Immigration Act for as long as possible (*Continuous Journey*).

detainment wherein the political and physical lives of the passengers were threatened with erasure.

Denied legal and political recourse along with basic supplies, those on the *Komagata Maru* found themselves rendered non-persons, *homines sacri* who could very well be let to die at the hands of the state and its agents without any repercussions (so long, of course, as deniability was maintained). Their political rights as British subjects were stripped, and their political subjectivity constructed almost entirely through the precariousness of their racially identified, and hence vulnerable, bodies. At the moment they entered Coal Harbour, they were captured within a biopolitical order through an act of governmental indecision and deliberate abandonment, included only negatively as that which must be interdicted, detained and denied so that the vitality of a “white Canada” could preserve its (illusory) purity. The positive biopolitics of Canada’s racist nation-building project, and its thanatopolitical obverse, focused on this non-space in Coal Harbour, a mere one hundred meters long and thirteen meters wide, holding 376 increasingly desperate migrants.

Over the next three weeks, the Immigration department’s medical apparatus became the agent of biopolitical exception, as inspections that would normally take minutes stretched into days (*Continuous Journey*). Eighty-eight Sikhs were finally denied according to section 3b of the Immigration Act, related to infectious disease: “seventy-seven with trachoma and eleven with other disabilities” (Johnston 44). Other than these men, Reid’s Immigration Board of Inquiry reserved judgment as it made its way through the passenger’s applications; no decisions meant no grounds for court challenges. Reid,

supervising the governmental response, drew upon a web of state and non-state discourses and apparatuses (administrative, medical, and disciplinary) that acted on the bodies of *Komagata Maru*'s passengers, primary among them a tactical use of the Immigration Act.¹⁸ Reid avoided those sections that would lead to legal challenges, employed those others—like section 3b—to which no challenge could be made,¹⁹ and ignored completely the Act's assertion that the detention of passengers be "summary," and that examinations take place "forthwith," after which the passenger should "be either immediately landed or...rejected" (Immigration Act §33). In response, however, the passengers, aided by their lawyer and Vancouver's Indian community, adopted legal and financial tactics of their own.

On the ninth of June, after eighteen days in the harbour, twenty-two men were allowed to land. Bird was able to show (and Reid grudgingly admitted) that since these men had lived in Canada before the continuous journey regulation they qualified as Canadian citizens whose entry could not be denied. Public tensions in Vancouver increased. On June twentieth, the shore committee that had formed to aid the *Komagata Maru*'s landing raised sufficient funds to pay off Gurdit Singh's creditors and take over the ship's charter, putting an end to the looming financial pressure. Public tensions rose further, and the Prime Minister, aware that the 1906 and 1907 anti-Asian riots had been fueled in part by a frustrated public's perception that the government was neither listening to nor helping them, began to pay closer attention (*Continuous Journey*). Three

¹⁸ For more on the tactical adoption of law under governmental regimes, see Foucault's lecture of February 1, 1978 at the in *Security, Territory, Population*.

¹⁹ "There shall be no appeal...as to the rejection and deportation of immigrants...when...such immigrants...are afflicted with any loathsome disease" (Immigration Act §27:18)

days later, on June 23, the mayor of Vancouver and Stevens called a public meeting to discuss the problem of the (perceived) incipient landing of 264 Indian migrants; between 2000 (*Continuous Journey*) and 4500 (Ward 91) people attended. Stevens gave the final address, frequently interrupted by applause, in which he outlined his beliefs that Asian immigrants would destroy Canada's civil society:

[W]hat we face in British Columbia and Canada today is this—whether or no the civilization which finds its highest exemplification in Anglo-Saxon British rule shall or shall not prevail in the Dominion of Canada....[W]e cannot allow indiscriminate immigration from the Orient and hope to build up a Nation in Canada on the foundations upon which we have commenced our national life (applause). (qtd. in Ward 91-2)²⁰

Steven's rabble-rousing appeals to an endangered "national life" had their desired effect; the next day the *Vancouver Sun*'s coverage included a section titled "Riot is Needed," which quotes a Vancouver citizen's assertion that "what we need in this case is a riot. No expression of public opinion seems sufficient [to convince the federal government to act]" (*Continuous Journey*). The growing unrest in British Columbia finally moved Prime Minister Borden to action, and on the twenty-fifth of June he instructed Reid to put an end to his delays and bring a case to court. Bird and the shore committee reached an agreement with Reid: one passenger would be chosen as a test case; Reid's Immigration review board would deny his entry; Bird would apply for a writ of habeas corpus, which would be immediately denied; and the case would proceed to the British Columbia Court

²⁰ Ward cites "Minutes of a Public Meeting held in Dominion Hall, Vancouver, British Columbia, on Tuesday Evening, June 23, 1914," *Borden Papers*.

of Appeals. In the guise of Munshi Singh, a twenty-six year old farmer chosen by Bird from the passenger list, *Komagata Maru* officially entered the juridical realm. With this movement, the biopolitical tenor of the incident changed, moving away from the tactics of delay and detainment and toward a paradigm of immunity, which until then had remained immanent, but which now became axiomatic.

Munshi Singh: “A germ of discontent”

The immunization paradigm at work throughout the *Komagata Maru* incident functioned on two levels. The first, involving the test case of Munshi Singh, is the more standard, denoting the medical process of creating a resistance against a pathogen by introducing a small amount of it into the body. In this case, Munshi Singh, a trace of the pathogenic *Komagata Maru* (and, more broadly, the threat posed by all potential Indian migrants), was allowed into the national body at a juridical level precisely so that the social body could fortify its defenses against migration from India. The Canadian (and through them, the British and Indian) government granted this case in order to test and, it hoped, prove the legal underpinnings of the Immigration Act. Indian immigrants were perceived as a disease threatening to infect the racial purity of the nation; the response followed an immunological logic that has been described by Donna Haraway. The case of Munshi Singh was an “action to construct and maintain the boundaries for what may count as self and other in the crucial realms of the normal and the pathological” (Haraway 204), in the defense of “the strategic assemblage called the self” (212) or the nation.

The need for an immunological test case resulted from an earlier legal decision. In 1910 the government had inserted a new section into the Immigration Act, which mandated that

[n]o court...shall have jurisdiction to review, quash, reverse, restrain or otherwise interfere with any proceeding, decision or order of...any Board of Inquiry, or officer in charge, had, made or given under...this Act relating to the detention or deportation of any rejected immigrant, passenger or other person, upon any ground whatsoever. (§23)

This effectively stripped those coming under its purview of their *habeas corpus* rights, which applied to Indians as British subjects. The section stood without challenge until November of 1913, when thirty-five Indian immigrants represented by Malcolm Bird were denied access and appealed for a writ of *habeas corpus*. The first judge they applied to refused the writ, citing the above section, but a second judge disagreed, finding that it did not bar him from judgment, and that the other 1910 additions (contained in section 38) were *ultra vires* (“beyond the powers”) “as not strictly complying with the language of the Immigration Act under which they [were] made” (Reid 5). He granted Bird his writ, which led to the immigrants’ release and entry into Canada. The Dominion government rewrote the regulations and in early 1914 they were reintroduced (Ward).

The government thus saw the case of Munshi Singh as a means to confirm the immunological defense system provided by the new wording. At the hearing, Bird made three arguments: first, because Indians were British subjects, they were not “aliens” under the law; second, the Dominion of Canada did not have the right to distinguish between

British subjects along racial lines; and third, that section 23 removed the right of *habeas corpus* of British subjects who had a right to it, going back to the Magna Carta, as subjects of the King (*Continuous Journey*). His arguments failed. On July 6th, 1914, the court released its judgment, ruling that the government had the right to bar immigrants because of race, that the new wording was legally sound, and finally, that due to section 23 they had no power to review the Immigration board's findings or invoke *habeas corpus*. Justice McPhillips, in his final comments, implicitly invoked the spectre of Indians-as-pathogen when he stated that the admission of Indians would

only give rise to disturbances destructive to the well-being of society and against the maintenance of peace, order and good government....[Their entry] would be the germ of discontent....Better that peoples of non-assimilative—and by nature properly non-assimilative—race should not come to Canada, but rather, that they should remain of residence in their country of origin. [in *Re: Munshi Singh* (1914) 20 BCR 243 (CA)]

“Destructive to the well-being” of the social body, a naturally “non-assimilative” and infectious “germ of discontent,” Indian subjects were barred by the immunitary defense mechanism of the Immigration act. McPhillips predicates his judgment on a biopolitical tautology, whereby the non-assimilative status of Indians was naturalized through a legal decision predicated on their non-assimilative nature. Following Haraway, we can thus see *Komagata Maru* occupying a space on the national “immune system...[the] map drawn to guide recognition...of self and other in the dialectics of Western biopolitics” (204). Munshi Singh was written onto this map as an immunological supplement of Canadian

biopower, introduced only so that he and all others like him could be more securely rejected by the common body of the nation.

The idea of the communal national body brings us to the second paradigm of immunity at work, one that can be illuminated by the distinction between community and immunity (*communitas* and *immunitas*) developed by Roberto Esposito. For Esposito, these two terms do not stand in opposition, but rather “each term is inscribed reciprocally in the logic of the other” (Campbell, “*Bios*” 3). He makes this assertion by examining the root of both words, *munus*, which has three meanings: obligation (*onus*), office (*officium*), and gift (*donum*). He sees these meanings blurring together in *munus*, and following Marcel Mauss’ investigation of gift economies, defines *munus* as “the gift that one gives, not the gift that one receives,” “the contractual obligation one has vis-à-vis the other” and “the gratitude that *demand*s new donations” (qtd. in Campbell, “Translator’s Introduction” x).²¹ The *communitas* at stake here was the imperial community of Britain, which included its Dominions and colonies; the rubric of “British subject,” in an attempt to disavow the empire’s racial hierarchy, denoted the common population subject to the King of England, held together by the reciprocal bonds of the *munus*. The *Komagata Maru* incident exposed a desire of one part of this communal body to defend itself from the communal *munus* through the immunitary mechanism of immigration law.

Immunitas, for Esposito, arises when a body receives dispensation from the obligation of reciprocal gift exchange, which (re)introduces and maintains the boundaries between the individual and the common: “immune is the ‘nonbeing’ or the ‘not-having’

²¹ Campbell cites Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: Origine e destino della comunità*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1998): xiv.

anything in common” (Esposito 51). In denying the commonality between British subjects in Canada and British subjects in India, this incident linked citizenship and the nation-state directly to a limited geographical location (“better that [Indians] remain of residence in their country of origin”) rather than the larger geography of empire. The imperial *communitas* was here revealed as fundamentally fractured, individuated into non-continuous parts. The case of *Re: Munshi Singh*, which would allow the exclusion of Indians for the next 34 years, was a powerful immunological response to Indian petitions declaring “as long as we are British subjects any British territory is the land of our citizenship” (qtd. in Mongia 543).²²

As Radhika Viyas Mongia demonstrates, after the *Komagata Maru* events the British government instituted passport laws restricting movement between parts of the empire. The Canadian government had been agitating for stronger checks on Indian immigration for years. In 1907 Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier put before Britain’s Colonial Office and the Indian government a request for passport laws, which they denied on the grounds that it was “inadvisable” in light of the “present state of public feeling” (qtd. in Mongia 537).²³ However, the arrival of the *Komagata Maru* compelled the Indian government to reverse this approach, admitting internally on May 26th of 1914 that

circumstances are now compelling a stricter definition of such phrases

²² Mongia cites “Communication from British Indian Subjects in Canada to Colonial Office, London, 24 April 1910,” Dept. of Commerce and Industry, *Emigration Proceedings A*, (October 1910): no. 47, ser. no. 8, encl. no. 1, annex 1.

²³ Mongia cites “Viceroy of India, Calcutta, to the Secretary of State for India, London, telegram received 22 January 1908,” Dept. of Commerce and Industry, *Emigration Proceedings A* (February 1908): no. 28, ser. no. 16.

as... ‘membership of the British empire.’ It is now conceded that such membership does not carry with it the right of free entry to all parts of the Empire. (qtd. in Mongia 551)²⁴

A widespread acceptance of an immunological differentiation between British subjects (which was always at work in the empire’s organization according to logics of race, geography and nationality) was thus exposed at least in part by the *Komagata Maru* incident. Returning to my earlier examination of “incident,” we can see just how appropriate the term is, designating as it does a moment of crisis that cut into the concept of an undifferentiated empire, leading to the death of the communal idea of “British subject,” and at the same time disavowing the immunological mechanisms that rejected the *Komagata Maru*. The term “British subject” had always been precarious and qualified; the *Komagata Maru* incident brought this precarity to light.

An anonymous citizen in Vancouver summed up the biopolitical and immunity concerns of white Canada succinctly in a letter to the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper:

these men may have fought for the British flag...but we do not want these people here. We have too darned many of them as it is! And if we have to pay the price of keeping India at the expense of Canada, then all we can say is, the quicker we get rid of India, the better it will be for all of us. (*Continuous Journey*)

The differentiation between common and uncommon, friend and enemy, we and they, takes on a biopolitical tone with the verb “to have,” as in “to have” a disease, a foreign pathogen that must be eliminated for the body’s healthy functioning to continue. Not just

²⁴ Mongia cites “S.H. Slater to R.E. Enthoven, 26 May 1914,” Dept. of Commerce and Industry, *Emigration Proceedings A*, no. 18-20.

Indians in Canada, but the source of the pathogen itself must be gotten “rid of.” In addition to erecting an immunological barrier against further infections, the Munshi Singh ruling led to an exodus of those Indians already in Canada (Johnston), as it prohibited them from bringing their families to join them, flushing the Indian pathogen from the Canadian body.

Despite losing their court case, the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* refused to leave, taking control of the ship from the Japanese crew; without the supplies that the government denied them, they would not survive the two month journey back to Hong Kong. Ten days after the judgment, Reid and Stevens, along with one hundred fifty members of the police and militia, attempted to take the ship by force, but were repulsed. Despite concerned telegrams sent by the Viceroy of India insisting that the use of open force would have a detrimental effect in British India, on July 23rd the HMCS *Rainbow* was brought in and positioned with its guns aimed on the *Komagata Maru*. An ultimatum was delivered: the government would provide supplies once the ship, escorted by *Rainbow*, reached international waters three miles from shore. If the ship refused to leave, physical force would be used. After sixty-one days in harbour, the overt threat of direct force impelled the *Komagata Maru* to lift anchor and depart from Canadian waters, accompanied by the *Rainbow* and private crafts carrying citizens eager to witness the *Komagata Maru*'s expulsion.

Mongia accurately describes the *Komagata Maru* incident as provoking “a critical re-making and transformation of the norms or doctrine of state sovereignty with regard to migration” (409). It also helped to establish an attendant idea of Canadian and Indian

citizenship existing outside of, and supplementary to, the larger community of British subjects. Operating according to a racial logic that designated a common population to be defended from an infectious and inassimilable foreign pathogen, the techniques of biopower brought to bear upon the ship created a new idea of national community distinct from the larger body of the British empire. The denial and interdiction of a specific threat—the *Komagata Maru*—thus expanded to encompass all Indians, who would be denied access to Canadian soil for another thirty-four years, maintained the supposed purity of a national body imagined as a “White Canada.”

The space of the *Komagata Maru* brings together two biopolitical modalities—the space of exception and the paradigm of immunization—that have generally been theorized as unconnected. As this incident shows, the two can—and perhaps often do—work in tandem. A space of localized exception such as the *Komagata Maru* functions as an immunizing defense mechanism protecting the larger social body from infection; a larger state of general exception could be conceived as a more radical immunization, one that dissolves the communal *munus* in order to preserve it for a later date, or in a modified form. Indeed, for Esposito the state of exception requires an underlying immunitary logic in order to function, and Agamben’s assertion that the state of exception involves an exclusionary inclusion suggests that this may be the case. I don’t want to privilege the immunitary paradigm to that degree, but considering immunization and exception together as two paradigms at work in biopolitical modes of capture and exclusion does provide a useful theoretical model. This is particularly true in cases where biopower operates at the interstices of Europe and its colonial projects; thinking about

immunization along side exception allows biopolitical critique to analyze more intricate relationships of racialization and discourses of civil society than would be possible if the exception was taken as the sole focus.

Chapter 2: Slave Ship

“The company expressed regret”

Governments are not the only actors implicated in the biopolitical mistakes of the past. The role played by insurance companies in the slave trade has recently become a divisive issue in countries that participated in slavery; throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these organizations, including Lloyd’s of London, Southern Mutual Insurance, and Aetna Inc., insured both slaves and the ships that carried them. Some of the earliest policies issued through Lloyd’s, for example, protected slave ship-owning consortiums against losses resulting from “the perils of the sea” (Williams 104; Rupprecht). Led by the Campaign for Slavery Reparations, in the last two decades researchers and lawyers have used archival research to instigate lawsuits against companies so involved, although none have yet been successful. While most of these companies at first fought against disclosing their past activities, in the last ten years this has changed. Many insurance organizations have begun drawing attention to the act of disclosure itself, refashioning “evidence of corporate complicity into evidence of corporate responsibility” (Rupprecht 11).

At its annual shareholders meeting in 2002, John Rowe, the CEO and President of Aetna, delivered a speech offering “a sincere apology for the actions of [his] company in its earlier years,” and condemning slavery as “morally wrong and reprehensible” (Aetna, “Excerpt”). He spoke of the “deep disappoint[ment] and embarrass[ment]” felt by Aetna’s management, and of how “the company expressed regret for its role” in the slave trade, before lauding “integrity, fairness and...commitment to equal opportunity” as key values

for the company's modern iteration (Aetna, "Excerpt"). An excerpt of his comments is available in the "Slavery Reparations Issue" section of its corporate website, which also links to a press release made one month before Rowe's remarks. The first two lines of this terse document are tellingly at odds with his apology: "We do not believe a court would permit a lawsuit over events which—however regrettable—occurred hundreds of years ago. These issues in no way reflect Aetna" (Aetna, "Statement"). This double-sided approach offers an apology only after refusing to admit culpability. Through public apologies and statements, Aetna has attempted to manage its guilt in order to foreclose its past actions, suturing closed a historical rupture that threatened to disturb its corporate body and profit margin. In this chapter I excavate the material conditions obscured by Aetna's statements, conditions that exceed attempts to cover them and show that "slavery's legacy...remains a social *excess*" (Rupprecht 24). I show how various positive and negative technologies of biopower focussed upon the bodies of captive Africans held within the exceptional spaces of England's eighteenth-century slave ships.

I want to begin by looking at the spaces and bodies that organizations such as Aetna and Lloyd's insured; because our ways of knowing such spaces are limited, I turn to one of the most famous images of the abolition movement, the plan of the *Brookes*. This image encapsulates a number of themes central to my examination of slave ships sailing during the most developed period of the Atlantic trade, the "so-called golden age" of the eighteenth century, in which two-thirds of the estimated twelve-and-a-half million slaves were transported, the majority in British owned ships (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 5-6). My central concern is to show how these ships worked as liminal spaces where millions

of captive human beings were reduced to something less than human, as part of their refashioning into salable commodities.

The middle passage of slave ships from Africa to the Americas should be understood not just as one leg of a triangular trade route, but also as “the structuring link between expropriation in one geographic setting and exploitation in another” (Rediker, Pybus and Christopher 2). The slave ship occupied a middle position in the process of transforming a free human into an object; the slaves were “violently uprooted from [their] milieu[x]” (Patterson 38), bereft of the rights and social relationships that enclosed them in their homelands, but were not yet part of the new social systems that would develop in the New World’s plantations. The floating heterotopia of the slave ship existed as a maritime factory for manufacturing and managing the naked lives of slaves that moved through and to “places where social institutions such as family, church, community and government had little reach” (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 187) . Slavery required that slaves undergo a social death, whereby they were at once removed from familiar societies, cultures and kinship systems, and stripped of their personal honour and most of their agency through disempowering processes of “natal alienation” (Patterson 38-50) and bodily coercion. And, while I focus primarily on the experience of slaves, that of slave ship sailors should not be forgotten: the historical record shows that within the space of the ship, “terror...was the fate of both sailors and slaves” (Linebaugh and Rediker 243).

The image of the *Brookes* brings together the symbolic processes and material practices that made this possible: the various technologies that allowed slave ship captains and their crews to maintain power over their cargos; the racialization and

commodification of suffering bodies; surveillance and disciplinary control; the production of precarious subjectivities stripped of agency; and the inherent barbarity and terror foundational to the Atlantic slave system and its reduction of slaves, within the confines of the ship, to depoliticized bare life. The deathly closeness of the figures captured in the *Brookes* diagram functions as a visual shorthand for the ways in which slaves were rendered inhuman aboard these ships. The image as a whole, particularly in those versions accompanied by text, points to the varied spatial nature of slave ships themselves, their ability to take on multiple purposes during the course of its voyage. It also raises further questions regarding the representation of the suffering of slaves, implicitly demonstrating that the role of representation in seeking to re-humanize slave bodies, to speak for them politically by figuring them abstractly, becomes highly complicated. This mode of representation is at once antithetical and opposed to the dehumanization of the trade, and at the same time strangely entangled in and complicit with it. By drawing upon the rationalized techniques of naval architecture, and hiding the filthy material conditions (for example, the “poo-poo” buckets that contributed greatly to the miasma below decks are effaced from the diagram and relegated to a footnote), does the *Brookes* diagram not manage the materiality of the slave ship, and figuratively strip the depicted slaves of agency, in such a way that visually reduces them once again to a passive cargo poised between the human and the inhuman?

“This hollow place”

In April of 1789 the London chapter of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (SEAST) published what would become one of the most notorious images of

the Atlantic slave trade: the *Description of a Slave Ship*, an outline illustrating the number of slaves that could be packed aboard the Liverpool-built *Brookes* (Image 1). The schematic, designed to “give the spectator an idea of the sufferings of the Africans in the Middle Passage” (Clarkson, *History* 2:111), provides longitudinal, transverse and top-down views of the slave decks. It shows how 482 slaves—four less²⁵ than the maximum permitted under Britain’s 1788 Slave Trade Regulation Act²⁶ (known as “Dolben’s Act” after its proposer, Sir William Dolben), which allowed ships to carry five slaves for every three tons of capacity (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 68)—would be tightly packed together with almost no room for movement, and segregated on the basis of age and sex into four compartments. The figures at first blend into an undifferentiated population, a uniform mass of black figures crowded together against a white background. Looking more closely, the viewer sees that each slave is distinctly drawn, clad only in a loincloth, and differentiated along gender lines. The men are joined together by chains and manacles around their ankles and wrists; the female figures remain unchained, and are depicted in a strangely eroticized manner, the rise of their breasts visible in cross-section (see Images 1 and 2, views I and III) and their hands crossed in front of their genitals (see Images 1 and 2, views V and VI). With its systematic organization, its coffin-like claustrophobia and its erasure of the slaves’ agency, the image captures a central aspect of the Atlantic slave trade: the reduction of individual human beings into an inhuman cargo, bound for the markets in which they would be sold.

²⁵ SEAST “found [the Dolben Act] allowed [the *Brookes*] to carry four more than could be put in [the diagram] without trespassing upon the room allowed to the rest” (Clarkson, *History* 1:114).

²⁶ Before the Act was passed the *Brookes* had carried a significantly larger number of slaves: “666...in 1781-1783; 638 in 1783-84;...740 in 1785-1786; and 609 in 1786-1787” (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 311).

The *Brookes* was more than a symbol for the abolition movement; it was also a very real ship, built specifically for the slave trade, that made ten slaving voyages (Rediker, Pybus and Christopher 3). The *Brookes* diagram had its genesis in a report made by the Royal Navy's Captain Parrey, who had been commissioned by the Prime Minister to compile a list showing the tonnage and internal layouts of several slave ships docked in Liverpool in order to refute pro-slavery allegations that "the voyage from Africa to the West Indies 'was one of the happiest periods of a Negro's life'" (Clarkson, *History* 1:535-6). His notation²⁷ was adapted by SEAST, and the *Brookes* was selected as a representative example of a slave ship, chosen because it was the first listed on Parrey's chart and because it was a "ship well known in the trade" (Clarkson, *History* 1:535-6).

The *Description* evolved out of an earlier *Plan of an African Ship's Lower Deck* developed by the Plymouth chapter of SEAST in 1788; the *Plan* was published in a number of editions, with the most widely distributed versions printed in Plymouth and Philadelphia during 1789 (Wood, *Blind Memory* 17-8). A third edition (Image 2) was produced by the London chapter of SEAST, which "improved [the Plymouth *Plan*]" by using the more empirical and scientific schematic of the *Description* and adding to its accompanying text (Clarkson, *History* 1:111). The most widely disseminated of the many re-printings, this was heavily influenced by the conventions of naval architecture drawings, which focussed on "the clean lines" and "beauty of ships" (Rediker, *Slave Ship*; Wood, *Blind Memory* 26). Like the image, the text followed a rational approach to the horrors of life in a slave ship's lower decks. The first half explains how slaves would

²⁷ see "Dimensions of the following Ships in the Port of Liverpool, employed in the African Slave Trade," in *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Sheila Lambert, Session 1798-1799 vol. 67, (Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975).

be stowed, providing the empirical details of Parrey's measurements and explaining that the diagram overestimates the actual space provided. The *Brookes* had carried many more than the 482 slaves depicted and the diagram itself fails to show "the poopoo tubs" or "stanchions to support the platforms and decks," instead imagining the deck "clear of every incumbrance whatever" (*Description* n.2). The remainder of the text uses statistics and eyewitness accounts to outline the daily barbarities found aboard, average mortality rates and types of illness, and the experiences of sailors for whom the trade "was constantly and regularly a grave" (*Description* para. 19). The mastery of technical drawing, statistics and objective accounts distance the image from the actual vessel, while the bodies that clutter the abstracted space connect British naval science and maritime history with the trade's practices. As the art historian Marcus Wood puts it, the "conjunction of technical engraving" with "a mass of black human flesh" functioned as a "superb semiotic shock tactic" for the abolitionist cause ("Imaging" 219).

The many versions of the *Brookes* diagram operate in a similar way, portraying the slaves' arrangement in a disturbingly regimented and carefully ordered fashion that belies the actual disorder and chaos that would have prevailed on a slaver during the eighteenth century. The clean black and white imagery and text provided a fascinated and appalled public with a sanitized abstract representation of the horrific conditions found in the stowage decks of ships making the middle passage. Wood points out that the *Description* was a fiction designed to create specific affective, social and political responses (*Blind Memory*); portraying the rigid figures as passive bodies rather than subjects with agency of their own emphasized the dehumanizing commodification

necessary to the trade. The image needed to present the slave's experience of the middle passage so that it engendered feelings of "guilt and culpability" in an educated English audience without "frightening [them into] fear and disgust" (Wood, *Blind Memory* 23). Throughout its many iterations, the *Brookes* diagram depicted slaves as passive victims, entombed in a giant coffin or mass grave, stripped of their humanity and rendered into "something less than human" (Wood, "Imaging" 217). Olaudah Equiano, author of the first autobiography by a freed slave, could have been describing it when he called the slave ship that brought him to the New World a "hollow place" (76) into which the human cargo would be "so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself" (79).

As they floated between worlds slave ships took on at different times the roles of prisons, factories, warehouses, markets and workplaces (Rediker, "Floating Dungeon"): a host of other spaces mingled within the heterotopic space of the ship. Although they were in practice far from perfect or well arranged, the conception of slave ships was guided by the social, economic and spatial goals of perfect regularization, absolute management and the seamless transformation of persons into objects. The slave ship encapsulated an entire technological apparatus for regulating and ordering life itself. Each of the places and biopolitical techniques developed in its floating space worked to maintain the regime of discipline and terror that permeated every aspect of on-board life, in the service of a rationalized project with two primary aims: to keep power over, and maximize the work of, a heterogenous group of laboring sailors; and to capture, dehumanize and extract maximum value out of a captive human cargo. From their forced entry into the ship-space, through the horrors of the middle passage, to their sale in the New World, slaves

were caught within a heterotopia of biopower that kept them always within the grasp of slaving sailors.

“Heaven is high and Europe far away”

In advance of the purchase and loading of captive Africans, however, the ship first needed to be physically transformed into a space of capture, discipline and control. By the middle half of the eighteenth century, shipwrights had begun building specifically for the slave trade; purpose-built ships like the *Brookes* included features intended to minimize slave merchant's costs while maximizing their profits. As the architectural sketch of the *Brookes* shows, the slave trade was heavily influenced by technological developments in naval engineering, and its ships were often test-beds for new innovations that reduced hull damage and allowed larger numbers of slaves to arrive at market still alive. Additional shelves were added along the outside perimeter of the slave decks, increasing stowage capacity; the ship's sides were flared so that slaves could be held between decks; the ship's ribs were left jutting several feet above the deck as a frame on which nets could be added; airports too small for a body to slip through were cut into the sides; and hulls were sheathed with copper to defend against the tropical worms and mollusks found in the waters of the African coast (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 51-71; Falconbridge 31). Additional modifications were made by sailors while the ship sailed from Britain to Africa and after reaching the African Coast. During the voyage, the ship's carpenters would construct the barricado, a spiked wooden barricade cutting across the width of the ship towards the stern deck, reaching several feet over each of the ship's sides and eight to twelve feet in height (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 297). A single, narrow door

provided access through this defensive wall, which separated male and female slaves, offered the crew protection in case of an insurrection and turned the main deck into “a closely guarded prison” (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 70) when slaves were brought above decks; swivel guns were often mounted on the top, and were manned whenever the slaves were brought above (*Slave Ship*). Strong netting would be strung between the exposed ribs in order to prevent slaves from escaping overboard, and the crew would build a thatched-roof shelter on the main deck to protect against the tropical heat and further limit the possibilities of escape (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 143). These modifications allowed crews to adopt panoptic techniques for controlling the movements and behaviors of slaves brought above. Before any slaves set foot on board, the ship was already prepared to assist the crew in surveilling, imprisoning and rendering them into chattel.

While sailors prepared the ship, the captain and officers would begin assessing potential purchases. Alexander Falconbridge, a slave ship surgeon turned abolitionist, describes how he would inspect the slaves for defects, viewing them as if they were livestock:

If they are afflicted with any infirmity, or are deformed, or have bad eyes or teeth; if they are lame, or weak in the joints or distorted in the back, or of a slender make, or are narrow in the chest; in short, if they have been, or are afflicted in any manner, so as to render them incapable of much labour...they are rejected. (22)

This was often done at gunpoint, with the slaves stripped before being poked, prodded and otherwise humiliated. Those deemed worth buying would be scrubbed with sand

before being taken aboard ship; autobiographical accounts and ship logs indicate that shaving their bodies was also common (Christopher 174). Like the removal of clothing this was ostensibly for hygienic reasons (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 265), but with the stripping of clothes and hair slavers began a more insidious stripping of culture, agency and dignity. Up until the early nineteenth century, the slaves' status as property was often written onto their flesh before they left the African coast, the brand of the purchasing individual or company forever seared into their skin (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 268; Taylor 23). In addition to the physical stripping away of their humanity through forced nudity, inspection, shaving and branding, each was reduced "to the deadened anonymity" of a number by which the captain would refer to them: each slave became simply "a nameless entry in a bookkeeping system" kept by captains and surgeons (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 213, 268). Through these acts the bodies of Africans became markers of their status as commodities forcibly included within a new social order only through the negation of their humanity.

Shaved and branded, the newly numbered slaves would be brought on board the ship in small groups, the men quickly placed in irons and chained together at ankles, wrists or necks (Clarkson, *Substance* 23, 36). Men and women were then secured into separate compartments belowdecks, their new homes for the time needed to fill the ship and make the middle passage. Conditions in the slave decks, horrific from the start, became progressively worse as the captain filled the ship with as many slaves as could fit; during his investigation of slave ships in Liverpool, Captain Parrey found that many kept diagrams showing their ship's dimensions, some with miniature figures drawn in "to

illustrate the most effective method of packing in the cargo” (Mannix 107). These diagrams likely influenced SEAST’s *Description*; even if not, the similarities between the sketches used by slavers and abolitionists suggests an odd entanglement of dehumanizing and re-humanizing projects, as both adopted a rationalized ‘book-keeping’ approach.

In testimony given before a Parliamentary committee on the slave trade, Thomas Trotter (surgeon on several voyages of the *Brookes*) described how he “made the most of the room” available “and wedged [the slaves] in” so that “they had not so much room as a man in his coffin, either in length or breadth” (*Abridgment* 130). John Henry Newton, who made voyages as both sailor and captain, corroborates Trotter’s account, writing that “the great object” with British ships “is to be full [and] take as many [slaves] as possible....the Slaves lie in two rows, one above the other, on each side of the ship, close to each other, like books upon a shelf. I have known them so close, that the shelf would not, easily, contain one more” (*Thoughts* 34); his text itself demonstrates a reifying attitude toward the slaves, who are objects, “books,” to be stored as economically as possible.

With so many bodies confined in such cramped quarters, and with little or no airflow, the heat and stench could become intolerable. Closely packed and chained together, the slaves were often unable to reach the tubs provided as toilets, and “the necessities of nature not to be repelled, ease[d] themselves as they [lay]” (Falconbridge 20), until the hold “became absolutely pestilential” (Equiano 79). The still air, “rendered noxious by the effluvia” produced by the slaves’ bodies, “produced fevers and fluxes, which generally carrie[d] off great number of them”; “blood and mucus” so covered the

deck “that [the hold] resembled a slaughterhouse” (Falconbridge 20, 25); slaves “dr[ew] their breath” with all the “laborious and anxious efforts” of “expiring animals” (*Abridgment* 37). These conditions would prevail until the ship reached its New World port, and while attempts to maintain sanitary conditions were made—the bare minimum required to keep the human cargo alive—the conditions were too confined, the bodies too many and the logistical difficulties and the threat of insurrection too great for sanitary conditions to last for long. The terrible odors and disgusting conditions further dehumanized the slaves, and were often offered justify the trade as (tautological) proof “that the captives were ‘beast-like’” (Christopher 170). Although stowage methods primarily resulted from economic calculations, a pecuniary means rather than an end in themselves, the abattoir conditions of the slave decks fulfilled a secondary, biopolitical purpose, reducing the enslaved to the level of suffering bodies, rendering them bestial and abandoning them beyond the threshold between human and inhuman.

Conditions below were alleviated, or at least temporarily escaped, when the slaves were brought onto the main deck for airing, feeding and exercise at around eight in the morning on clear days; due to the atrocious conditions and punishments, in the morning crew members could find “more instances than one...of the living and dead...fastened together” (Newton, *Thoughts* 35). As armed sailors kept a careful watch, the men would be chained in groups of ten to the deck forward of the barricado, with the women and children kept aft (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 237). The slaves would wash in salt water before being inspected by the ship’s surgeon for disease, severe dehydration and malnutrition, while crew members checked the security of their chains, and re-shaved their bodies as

needed, both to prevent lice and to assert their powerlessness. After being fed the slaves would be forced into menial labour, “scrubbing the decks, preparing the afternoon meal...emptying the toilets” and sometimes scraping out the hold (Taylor 26), forced to help maintain the engine of their subjugation. Physicians, merchants and captains agreeing that regular exercise could reduce mortality rates, the slaves were required to dance and sing after their meals. Dr. Trotter describes how all the enslaved, men still in chains, “were ordered to stand up and make what motions they could...to dance around the deck”; any who refused “were compelled to it by the lash of the cat...to a severe degree” (*Abridgment* 38). Eating was a similarly regulated and potentially violent activity, with monitors sometimes used “to instruct slaves when to dip their fingers or spoons and when to swallow,” so that any slave who refused to eat could be “identified...and severely whipped” (qtd. in Taylor 38).²⁸ Eating and exercising became regulated practices, positive techniques of biopower enforced by their negative, that show how biological life became a site of power. This ordered regime, with which captains attempted to manage and control every activity, space and body on board, continued until the vessel reached port in the Americas; through their crews, captains maintained as absolute a discipline as possible, acting as absolute sovereigns in a space where, according to the motto of the coastal traders, “heaven [was] high, and Europe far away” (Mannix 69).

Shortly before arriving at the ship’s destination, the treatment of slaves would change slightly. They would receive more and better rations, if the ship’s stores

²⁸ Taylor cites Theophilus Conneau, *A Slaver’s Log Book; or, 20 Years’ Residence in Africa* [1853] (London: Hale, 1977): 82.

permitted, and be thoroughly cleaned. Surgeons stepped up their efforts, treating the many minor injuries they had until then passed over, taking off shackles to encourage chafing wounds to heal, and applying “lunar caustic” (silver nitrate) to hide and disinfect open sores (Falconbridge 29). Various subterfuges were employed to give more sickly or injured slaves the veneer of health: a mixture of “gun-powder, lime-juice and oil” would be applied to make the cargo look “sleek and fine” and to mask any scars (Christopher 199); grey hairs would be “picked out or dyed black”; and the male slaves were shaved and buffed to give the appearance of youth (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 239). Despite these attempts, at the time of sale many slaves still bore the marks of their hardship and maltreatment: a mercenary officer for the Dutch who witnessed a parade of slaves bound for market described the group as “a set of scarcely animated automatons...a resurrection of skin and bones...risen from the grave” (Stedman 200). In cases where the slaves would be sold directly from the ship’s deck, slaves and crew labored to scrape and clean it. They removed wherever possible any material signs of the conditions experienced during the middle passage, so that buyers could distance themselves from the realities of the trade and more easily consider their purchases as “ready-made slaves...already reduced to the status of chattels” (Christopher 164). These interactions between slaves and sailors were the final steps of a dehumanizing process begun on the African coast. After their production as inhuman cargo during a middle passage where life and death were “fastened together” (Newton, *Thoughts* 35), where “imprisonment became enslavement” and their “liminality increased with each nautical mile” (Christopher 165, 167), the

African captives disembarked at New World ports as strangely animated automatons: an enslaved population of labor ready for sale.

Making live and rendering dead

In addition to producing a labor force by rendering free Africans into slaves, in their travels to and from Africa slave ships helped to construct racial categories and hierarchies. Before the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the term “race” was commonly used as a general term to designate kin groups, families or kind (Foucault, *Society*; OED, “race *n.6*”), but by the early eighteenth century a more specific sense of human races, and the inherent superiority of white European Christendom, had become foundational to the Atlantic slave and plantation systems (Blackburn 25). Slave ships traveling from Europe to Africa provided a major impetus for ideas of racial hierarchy, in part because slave merchants and their sailors perpetuated views of Africans as “living outside culture and morality” in a Hobbesian state of nature (Blackburn 15). More importantly, however, slave ships played an important role in manufacturing categories of racial difference. In a lecture delivered at Vanderbilt Law School, the maritime historian Marcus Rediker describes how a homogenizing procedure took place on board the ships, whereby their heterogeneous and “motley crew[s]” became known as “white men” once they reached Africa; likewise, individuals from different African tribal and cultural groups, people unlikely to identify as “African,” became in Western ports “Africans,” “black people” or members of an inferior “negro race” (“Floating Dungeon”). We can see this process at work in the *Brookes* diagram’s stereotypical depiction of the sexes: the chains implicitly speak to the (perceived) inherent violence and barbarity of African men,

and the figures of the women recall racist beliefs that African women were sexually wanton and licentious.

While this racial production differs slightly from the state racism that Foucault identifies as the “basic mechanism of [State] power” from the nineteenth century onwards (*Society* 254)—inasmuch as the trade existed largely outside of state regulation until Dolben’s Act was enacted in 1788—we should read it as homologous in its two central operations; on the one hand the fragmentation of a population through the introduction of “a biological-type caesura”; and on the other a hierarchization of different races, so that killing the “bad” or “inferior” race makes the life of the “good” race “healthier and purer” (Foucault, *Society* 255). In this sense, killing includes modes of indirect as well as direct murder, the various ways of increasing the risk of death for one group, of abandoning them from the social and political order, of rendering them inhuman and hence inherently killable (Foucault, *Society* 256). Slaves were considered a separate population within the larger social body of the British New World, thought of “as an inferior species, and treated as beasts of burden to be driven and inventoried like cattle” (Blackburn 12). In an address to the Jamaican Parliament in 1789, the British politician and slave trade supporter Brian Edwards used precisely this argument to justify Africans’ social deaths as slaves, maintaining that “the whole, or greatest part, of that immense continent [Africa] is a field of warfare and desolation; a wilderness, in which the inhabitants are wolves towards each other” (10). This racialization was at once created by and constitutive of the Atlantic slave system, which both disciplined the individual bodies of slaves, first through the technology of the slave ship and then

through that of the plantation, and regularized the population of an inferior “negro” race rendered socially dead, whose labor increased the economic, political and social health of white plantations and nation-states.

The management of slave populations, as well as the manipulation of specific bodies, grew more important to the trade in the later half of the eighteenth century. Slave merchants and insurance agents increasingly required that captains and surgeons keep detailed records of conditions on board, the health of slaves and the rates and manners of their deaths (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 57). The production of statistics allowed merchants to better estimate their profit margins, to plan for a certain percentage of deaths and to take measures aimed at reducing death rates, demonstrating statistical techniques for “rationalizing and strictly economizing” power over both “man-as-body” and “man-as-species,” a turn from power over individuals to power over populations (Foucault, “*Society*” 242). They began providing their captains with more detailed instructions regarding the care of slaves, further normalizing the treatment of slaves as a group, and focussing their requirements on controlling the biological life of the population as a whole. In a 1785 letter to an unnamed ship captain, the anonymous owners stressed the importance of managing its cargos health, stating that “on the health of the slaves, almost your whole voyage depends” (“Instructions” 79). In their study of the reduction in slave mortality during the eighteenth century, two maritime historians stress that “cleanliness was not only next to godliness, it was the handmaiden of [British] commerce” (Haines and Schlomowitz 275). Captains and crews would translate the strategic biopolitical measures of merchants and insurers into the daily tactics of biopower that they enacted on

the bodies of individuals. These measures engaged primarily with the health and hygiene of slaves and ships, leading to higher standards of cleanliness, the Dolben Act's requirement that British ships carry a surgeon, and the regularization of meals and exercise. This helped increase the number of still living slaves unloaded in New World ports, as mortality rates, above twenty percent in the early years of the eighteenth century, fell to between ten and fifteen by its end (Taylor 36).

We should not assume, however, that a reduction in the daily terrors and brutalities experienced by slaves accompanied any decrease in their morbidity and death. The positive biopolitical practices that managed the lives of slaves—as individuals and as a population—went hand-in-hand with techniques of a negative biopower: making slaves live depended upon the power of captains and crews to make their captives die in the most horrific, dehumanizing ways imaginable. Despite the hygienic turn aboard slave ships, they still partook more of prisons and dungeons than hospitals and health retreats. Barbarity was not “an unfortunate consequence” of the trade but “one of its founding principles” (Christopher 175). No aspect of daily life on board such ships could be considered free; even those activities required to stay alive were coerced, so that eating, drinking, exercising, bathing and taking medication were all perpetually shadowed by the threat of punitive actions, and indeed, often became sites of resistance. Due to their market value, self-harm became a tool of rebellion; the biological life of slaves was a battlefield in which the biopower of slavers warred with slaves' desires for escape, even if that escape came only through death.

The slave ship was a moving island in what Foucault has called “the carceral archipelago,” the set of institutions responsible for regularizing, disciplining and punishing any bodies that threatened the health of national populations (*Discipline* 295). An important difference lies in how the Atlantic slave system shifted the focus of its carceral machine outside of Western societies. Panoptic control was brought to bear by ship owners, captains and crews upon an external, rather than internal, population. Further, where the carceral network, from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, gradually decreased the severity of punishment and the use of physical punishment as spectacle (Foucault, *Discipline*), in the space of the slave ship the brutal and public nature of punishment remained fundamental.

If anything, the technologies of punishment became more terrible and more refined over time, as part of what we might consider the immunitary function of slave ship violence and terror. Captains adopted, and ship owners condoned, the use of terror tactics in order to maintain power over the ships’ cargoes and crews, and to forestall what they saw as the more terrible violence of insurrection. This was a supremely biopolitical violence; the exemplary punishment of a few resistive slaves was intended to increase the obedience of the larger whole, and to punish attempts at self-harm so severely that no other slaves would dare engage in such activities. In a space where violence was commonplace, self-inflicted acts of violence were the activities most vigorously disallowed. Hunger strikes threatening the profits of captains and merchants were particularly commonplace tactics of slave resistance, and captains developed a number of

tools to forestall them. Chief of these was the whip, but if a slave still refused to eat other methods would be employed.

Falconbridge reports seeing “coals of fire, glowing hot...placed so near [the] lips, as to scorch and burn them....a certain captain...poured melted lead on such of the negroes as obstinately refused their food” (23). In other cases slaves would be force-fed using funnels, or have a specially-designed torture device, the *speculum oris* (Image 3), hammered between their teeth to “wrench open the mouth” (Clarkson, *Substance 2* :11) and allow sailors to stuff food inside. Attempted suicides who were rescued from drowning were often severely beaten and thrown back overboard to die, showing that the fact of a slave’s death was not as important as the way in which he or she died; to use Agamben’s term, slaves became *homines sacri*, naked beings whose lives could not be permitted to have social meaning as acts of resistance, only as object lessons that strengthened captains’ power over the rest. Better, in the slavers estimation, that slaves be publicly murdered than die of their own volition.

Many slaves from West Africa believed that after they died they would “go home to Guinea” and return to their native countries (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 310); this belief was so strong that many actively sought out death rather than live as slaves. In addition to their implements of forced feeding and the netting designed to prevent drowning, slavers developed ways to deal with those deaths that could not be prevented, co-opting death in the service of power. Since slaves believed that they would return home in their own bodies, captains would desecrate their corpses in front of the remaining captives, cutting off heads, methodically severing arms and legs, and even feeding them piecemeal to

sharks (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 303). In his 1774 “Natural History of the Shark” the zoologist Oliver Goldsmith notes how one captain,

finding a rage for suicide among his slaves, from a notion...that after death they would be restored again to their families...immediately ordered one of their dead bodies to be tied to a rope, and so let down into the sea; and, though it was drawn up again with great swiftness...in that short space, the sharks had bit off all but the feet. (qtd. in Rediker, *Slave Ship* 40)²⁹

The use of sharks as an instrument of biopolitical terror to create social discipline was common. Occasionally still living captives would be thrown to them as examples to the rest, and some captains towed bodies behind their ships to attract an underwater guard of marine predators; two species, Tiger and Bull sharks, were even known to follow ships across the Atlantic (Rediker, “Sharks”). The bodies of dead slaves were always consigned to the ocean, as the surveyor William Smith discovered in 1744: “whenever the dead are committed to the Sea, which happens almost every Day...the Sharks give such due attendance that the Corps [sic] can no sooner touch the Water, than it is immediately torn to pieces” (239). Even when not intended as punishment, throwing the bodies of slaves overboard was always “a public spectacle” and “part of the degradation” involved in manufacturing human beings into things (Rediker, “Sharks” 291). The disposal of corpses by sailors, whether simply callous or deliberately offensive, violated “almost all West African cultural precepts” regarding dying, death and grieving (Rediker, *Slave Ship* 276), and further marked the slaves as living dead, outside their customary social orders and

²⁰ Rediker cites “Natural History of the Shark, from Dr. Goldsmith and other eminent Writers,” *Universal Magazine* 43 (November 1778): 231-233.

reduced to the status of living cargo: outside of the slave trade's economic calculus their lives could not matter, and their deaths could not be granted significance, except as a reminder to those still alive that their captors held the power of life and death. Even in death the physical bodies of African captives remained caught by the biopolitical terror techniques of captains and crews.

Neither the lives nor the deaths of those contained as cargo within slave ships counted as "real"; to borrow from Judith Butler's examination of contemporary mourning and violence, these captive were not "normatively human": they did not live "livable live[s]," nor could they die "grievable deaths" (xv). From the perspective of those engaged in the trade, the precarious existence of human cargos forced to the limit between human and inhuman counted only according to the ledger books of merchants, the statistics of underwriters, and the pocketbooks of investors, captains and crews. The slaves were unreal, living lives that were already negated by virtue of their capture within the space of the ship; however, as shown by their bodily acts of resistance—their hunger strikes, drowning attempts, and insurrections—these lives had "a strange way of remaining animated," of refusing negation, and so needed "to be negated again (and again)" (Butler 33). The slave ship was a technology of biopower and a factory of dehumanized subjects that functioned by perpetually negating the precarious humanity of African men, women and children, reducing them to naked, suffering bodies that were forced to survive the traumas inflicted upon them, existing at the threshold between life and death.

Some slaves succumbed totally to this condition; unable to maintain their humanity, they simply faded away, entering a state of living death before physically dying. British slavers termed this condition “lethargick [sic] disorder” or “fixed melancholy,” and its symptoms included “lowness of spirits and despondency; refusing nourishment;...the stomach gets weak; fluxes ensue, and...soon carry them off” (*Abridgment* 224). George Howe, an American medical student who shipped aboard an illegal slave ship in the nineteenth century describes how

notwithstanding their apparent good health, each morning three or four dead would be found...it was known that if a Negro was not amused and kept in motion, he would mope, squat down with his chin on his knees and arms clasped about his legs and in a very short time die. (Howe 112)

While Howe believed that such slaves held their breath until they died, it is more likely that fixed melancholy resulted from malnutrition and dehydration, along with extreme shock from being removed from one’s milieu and placed in the brutally inhospitable space of the ship (Mannix 121; Taylor 33). As an extreme result of the dehumanizing processes of biopower, these melancholic slaves became akin to the limit figure of life in twentieth century concentration camps: the *Muselmänner*. In his work on the ethics of witness, Agamben refers to Primo Levi’s description of these individuals as particularly apt: “one hesitates to call [the *Muselmänner*] living; one hesitates to call their death death” (qtd. in Agamben, *Remnants* 44).³⁰ The *Muselmann*, like the “lethargick” slave, was reduced to a state of simple survival, a life without any purpose, meaning or

³⁰ Agamben cites Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz and the Reawakening: Two Memoirs*, trans. Stuart Woolf, (New York: Summit Books, 1986): 90.

sensation, a situation of physical and psychic decrepitude; rather than simply falling into the status of nonhuman, however, both cases point to the precariousness of human lives pushed into the space between humanity and inhumanity (Agamben, *Remnants*).

Not every individual interned in these spaces had his or her humanity stripped away to this extent, but the possibility of becoming “melancholic” threatened the entire population, and this transformation was arguably one of the desired outcomes that the ships were intended to produce: the rendering of human beings into laboring automata. Although Hannah Arendt has argued that slaves should not be compared to concentration-camp inmates, because unlike such inmates they were not “withdrawn from the sight and hence the protection of their fellow-men; [and because] as instruments of labor they had a definite price and as property a definite value” (444), she ignores the condition of slaves before they entered the plantation system. Aboard a slave ship, they emphatically were withdrawn from the sight and protection of others; this was one of the ship’s functions. Further, although they did have a value, according to the biopolitical calculations of merchants and captains maintaining the economic value of the whole often depended on brutally sacrificing the value of individuals as examples to the rest.

The transition of human to chattel was not simply an economic matter, but was also embedded in the legal codes of slave-trading nations. In “Slavery in Law Codes” the political philosopher Lluís Sala-Molins argues that these nations, including Britain, “erected strong...legal frameworks to ‘domesticate’ slaves and keep them outside the law” as objects rather than subjects, “consigned to the world of animals, tools [and] things” (209, 212), entering into law only through their purchase and domestication as

private property. The historian Robin Blackburn points out that while African slavery recognized the “basic humanity of slaves,” in “the emergent capitalist societies of seventeenth century Europe” only “the humanity of someone who had something to sell” could be legally recognized, that of “the African merchant or monarch, but not the African captive” (16). A slave gained legal status, and a relationship to the sovereign that granted that status, only through the mediating presence of his or her citizen-owner, coming “within the purview of the law...at the very point at which the law declare[d] that the slave [was] *not* a human being, [since] the law deals with relations between persons as owners” rather than property (Sala-Molins 209).

This relationship corresponds to the condition in which Agamben identifies *homo sacer*, the figure of biological life placed under the threat of violence and death, a human body included in the legal order only through its exclusion. As *homines sacri*, slaves who had not yet fully entered the economic system through sale were abandoned to the whims of sailors and captains, who might terrorize, torture, rape and murder them with legal impunity. Within the space of the ship we can thus identify positive and negative forms of biopower; both of these aspects had an individual and a mass form, capturing individual bodies through disciplinary mechanisms, and producing populations through techniques of regularization. On the one hand, a positive exercise of power took control of biological life, not just by maintaining the health of specific human commodities, but also by making the group as a whole live in a specific way, disciplining them into a new kind of social life, the liminal life of chattel goods. On the other hand, a negative mode of power threatened the lives of slaves, reducing individuals to the status of *homo sacer*; this was a

power to horrifically rend, abuse and destroy the physical bodies of slaves, to force them into a condition of bare survival, and also a power to sever the social, cultural and political relationships essential to their communal lives. The slave ship thus marks a historical space where two approaches of biopower need to be thought simultaneously.

Insurance and sacrifice

Perhaps no example demonstrates this reduction to bare life and commodity better than the case of the slave ship *Zong*. In 1781 this Dutch vessel was captured by an unknown Bristol slaver off the West African coast, and sold to another ship, the *William*, whose surgeon was given seventeen crewmen to command the *Zong* and the four hundred seventy slaves aboard (Christopher 178-9; Rediker, *Slave Ship* 240). Collingswood was by all accounts a total failure as captain, prone to sickness and angry outbursts, and by the time the ship reached the Caribbean illness was widespread, with sixty slaves and seven sailors dead (Lewis 361-63). Little is known of what transpired at this point, the ship's logbook having disappeared shortly after the *Zong* returned to England; having reached its destination, the ship should have unloaded in Jamaica, but for some reason it sailed past the island and back out to sea. The testimony of the surviving sailors recounts how Collingswood, fearing that sickness would lead to loss of his profits, determined to jettison those most likely to die in order to save the lives of the rest. Part of this decision, as determined by a 1783 trial of the event, stemmed from his knowledge of insurance policies, which held that "if the slaves died a natural death, it would be the loss of the owners...; but if they were thrown alive into the sea, it would be the loss of the

underwriters” (in Rediker, *Slave Ship* 240).³¹ During the next few days the crew separated out the unhealthy slaves and methodically condemned one hundred thirty-four still-fettered slaves to death by drowning (Webster 291): in court, one of the sailors described how, although he did not participate, he did “amuse himself with seeing them out of the Cabin Windows plunging into the Sea” (in Christopher 180), as atrocity became entertainment. When the ship returned to England—Collingswood himself dying nine days into the journey—its owners took legal action against their underwriters to recover damages brought about by “general average loss, a sacrifice of parts of a cargo for the benefit of the whole” (Armstrong 173).

While a first court found in favor of the owners, on appeal the decision was reversed because the slaves were endangered by the captain’s own mistake, which could not be considered an insurable “Peril of the Sea” (Lobban 327). Despite the efforts of abolitionists to have the crew tried for murder, the presiding judge, Lord Mansfield, made very clear that this was not legally possible, since “the Matter left to the Jury was, whether [Collingswood’s decision] was from necessity; for they had no doubt...the Case of Slaves was the same as if Horses had been thrown over board” (in Webster 295).³² The appeals court found that the jettison of slaves did not count as a “sacrifice,” a term used in maritime insurance law to indicate a “loss of goods under duress at sea” made in a deliberate effort “for the preservation of the ship and cargo” (Armstrong 173). The King’s Bench—until 1875 the highest common-law court in England—found unequivocally that

³¹ Rediker cites “A Copy of the Proceedings [sic] in the Court of K.B,” REC/19: Voucher no.2, Manuscripts Department, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

³² Webster cites P. Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp, Esq.*, (London: 1829): 328.

the deliberate killing of slaves by throwing them overboard was not murder, and their deaths did not qualify as a sacrifice. In the *Zong* incident and its trials we can clearly see the slave trade engaged in two modes of biopolitical control simultaneously: the management of an unhealthy population was brought about through the abandonment of certain individuals to deaths which were neither illicit nor sacrificial.

As it floated between worlds, the slave ship represented, contested and inverted various other spaces and material practices of space and culture. *What did they represent?* The spaces of exception necessary for the development of a capitalist modernity and systems of colonization and racial hierarchy. These ships were engines of global capital, often prefiguring the current subsumption of life into a capitalist calculus, as in Olaudah Equiano's fears that he would "be eaten by those white men with horrible looks" (72). They were also machines of colonization, an essential technology for producing the plantation system, European colonies and categories of race. *What did they contest?* The power and order inherent to the very projects that they represented. Those who struggled in the burgeoning system of global labour, slaves and sailors alike, contested their mistreatment, their dehumanization and the theft of their labour, becoming a "many-headed hydra" of disorder and resistance (Linebaugh and Rediker 2-3). Slaves took their own lives and rose in insurrection; sailors deserted and mutinied, staged riots and robbed the homes of merchants, or raised the black flag and turned pirate. Further, the motley transnational crews of slave ships contested parochial desires to avoid the mixing of nations, races and classes. *What did they invert?* Conceptions of natural human rights, personal freedoms and human equality. We see here a historical event pointed to by

Foucault, the coextensive (and perhaps codependent) rise of biopolitics and human rights (*Sexuality*). At a time when ideas of liberty, fraternity and other inalienable rights flourished and circulated, from the English Bill of Rights in 1689 to the American and French declarations of rights in 1789, the slave ship was a space of barbarity, enslavement and commoditization that strove to strip slaves of their freedom, their dignity and their humanity.

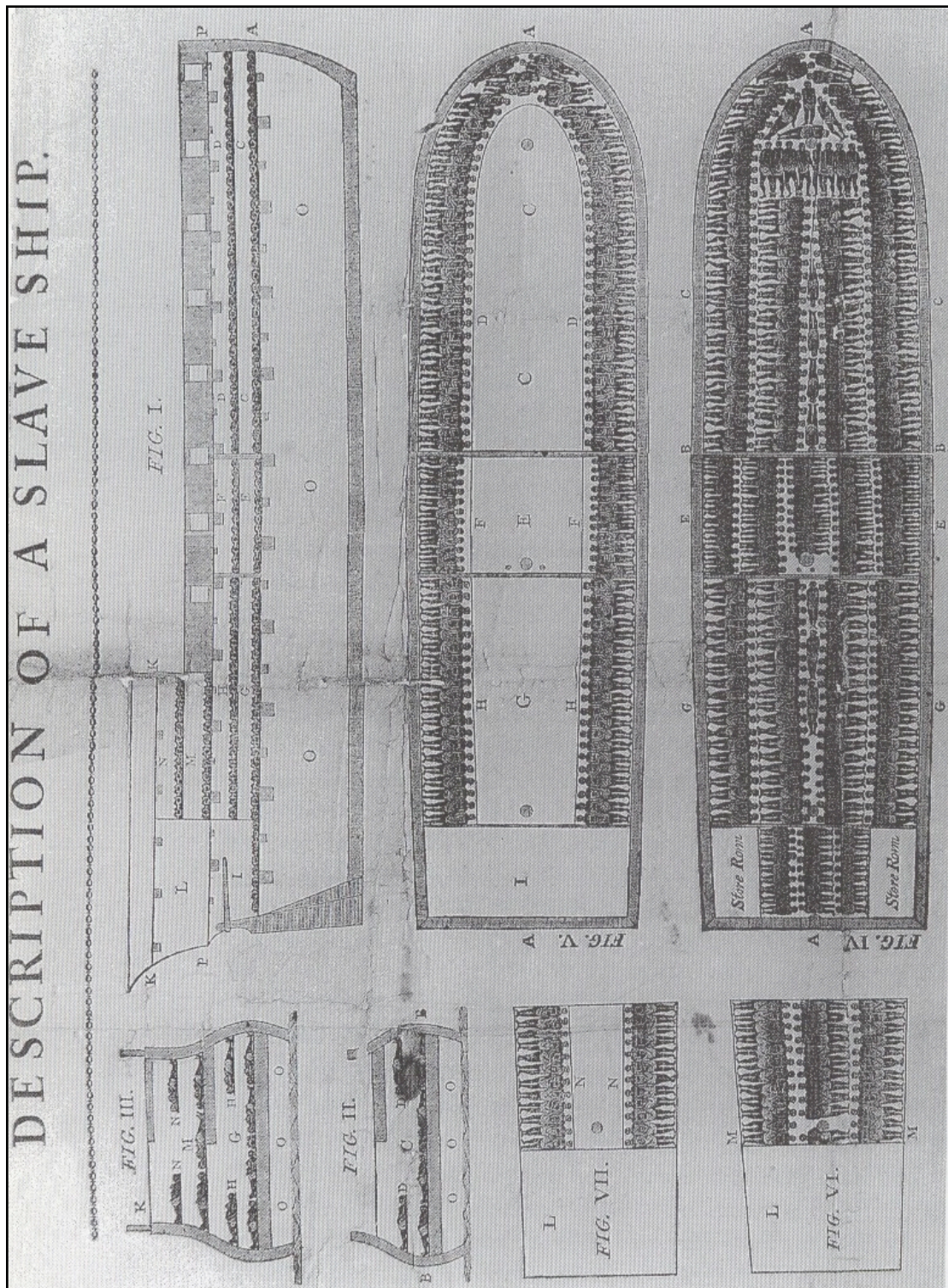


Image 1: *Description of a Slave Ship*, SEAST (London 1789). Reprinted in Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by British Parliament*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia 1808). Fold-out between pages 90-91.

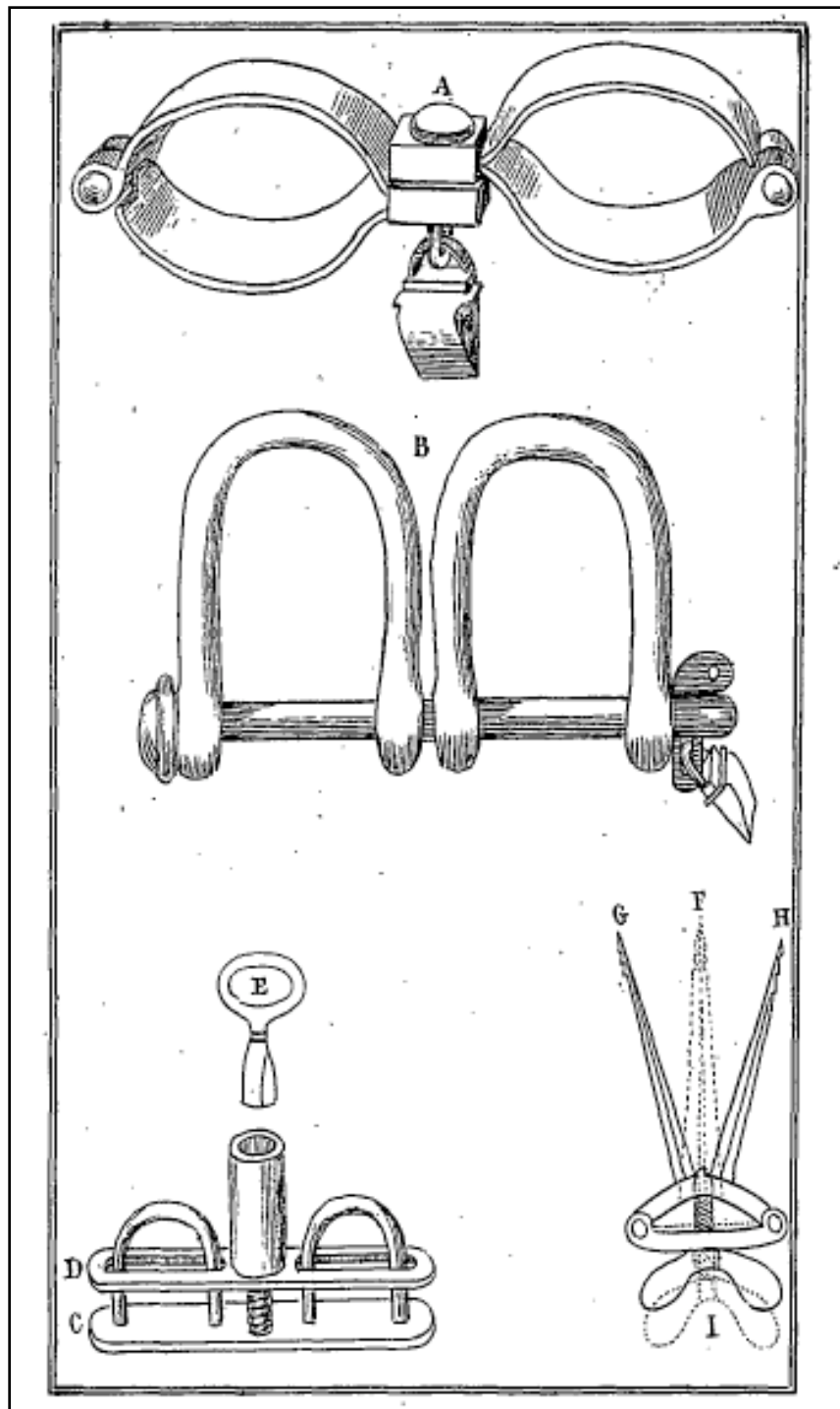


Image 3. "Different iron instruments," in Thomas Clarkson, *The history of the rise, progress, and accomplishment of the abolition of the African slave-trade by the British Parliament*, vol. 2 (London: 1836), between pages 10-11. Image A shows wrist manacles; B shackles; C-E a thumbscrews; and F-I the operation of a speculum oris.

Conclusion: Cruise Ship

Destined for paradise

In this concluding chapter I want to return to the contentions with which my introduction began, by way of a third, more contemporary, maritime space: the ships of the Disney cruise line. To gain access to these spaces, I examine the Disney Cruise line's promotional material, designed as mock passports for the ships' fantastical itineraries (Image 4). While it may appear incongruous to place cruise ships alongside slave and migrant vessels, the super-sized pleasure domes of the modern cruise address the bodies of their passengers in highly biopolitical ways. In saying this, I do not want to efface the fundamental differences between the practices of biopower exposed in my earlier two case studies and the techniques at work on a Disney cruise; importantly, the negative side of biopower so central to the former disappears to large extent in the latter: cruise ship passengers are emphatically not placed under the same threats of violence and negation. Rather, in our late capitalist society, as the procedures of negative biopower lessen for certain privileged individuals, positive techniques increase in potency and ubiquity. Various exceptional spaces, however, continue to proliferate. Aboard a cruise ship members of a global bourgeoisie enter into a kind of exception from a (more pervasive) state of exception; within the familiar enclosures of the Disney line, they are exempted from the threat of death, of becoming *homo sacer*, that Agamben identifies as the new normative relation to power (*Homo Sacer* 37-38). However, this escape leads to a different, perhaps more insidious, biopolitical capture through the bodily consumptions of passengers living out a fantasy of sovereignty, the exceptional double of *homo sacer*. In

Foucauldian terms, they are captured into networks of biopower at the precise moment of their apparent liberation from those networks. This section, then, turns from examining suffering individuals and populations forced from their milieu, to consuming bodies that voluntarily abandon their normal modes of life: from bodies exposed to death, condemned to bare survival, to bodies commanded “to Enjoy!” (Žižek “You May!”).

The Disney Cruise line’s brochures repeatedly stress the freedom available on board: “every Disney Cruise sets sail for the same destination: a paradise filled with dreams come true. What paradise? What dreams? That’s up to you” (*Vacations 2007-2008* 5). In the “Welcome Aboard” section of its brochure (Image 5), Disney, like the majority of contemporary cruise lines, bills the space of its ships as “the first port of paradise”; the carefully designed brochures, with its embossed covers, faded place-name stamps (Image 6) and blank spaces reserved for passenger photographs (Image 7), presents itself as an imaginary passport. This mock documentation metaphorically grants its holder access to “the Magic and Wonder of *Disney Cruise Line*” (*Vacations 2007-2008* 6) before she or he sets foot on either of Disney’s two ships: the appropriately named *Magic* and the *Wonder*. Through its exhortations that its readers interact with it by using it as a trip planner (it provides checklists and spaces in which to record “your plans for paradise” [*Vacations 2007-2008* 7]), and its form of direct address (the imperative second person abounds: you will, you can, your cruise, your dreams, your plans), the brochure interpellates readers as hedonistic subjects on their way to escaping the rationalized world of every day life: the static material object both enacts and commands the customer’s experience of excessive enjoyment.

Once aboard, Disney promises to provide a liberating experience of bodily pleasures and relaxation, the freedom to enjoy “your own kind of paradise,” whether this involves “do[ing] everything you’ve dreamed” or “do[ing] nothing at all” (*Vacations 2007-2008* 6). And what “dreams” does Disney suggest you realize? Watching Disney films, sportscasts and live musical productions; performing poolside karaoke; entering on-ship game shows; enjoying late-night dance parties; “get[ting] fit with Goofy right on deck”; and of course, eating to excess at any hour of the day (*Vacations 2007-2008* 6). In a telling example of the excessive behaviors encouraged and produced by the Disney Cruise line, “get[ting] roped into an all-you-can-eat contest with your cousin” is “not a problem”; “fabulous food and sumptuous snacks are available throughout the day,” and included in the ticket price, “so, eat up!” (*Vacations 2007-2008* 13). Even simply relaxing, the pamphlet suggests, should be an excessive activity; in Image 7, which faces a photograph of two passengers receiving massages, the text reads:

Take a moment and just think about you. Inhale. Exhale. Nice deep breaths.

Repeat as necessary. It’s been a while since pampering yourself has been on the top of any list. So let’s sail away into a world of some well-deserved indulgences. Aboard your Disney dream cruise, adults find endless delights in exclusive areas of every kind. (*Vacations 2007-2008* 20)

On Disney’s cruise ships passengers are divested of social agency (beyond processes of consumption and, with Disney in particular, identification with a global brand) and the need to labor, as they strip themselves down to a bare, narcissistic kernel of enjoyment (*Žižek Ticklish*). The architect and urbanist Keller Easterling describes how the space of

the cruise ship provides “an amnesty from the politics and responsibilities of domestic life [and] recentres life around the needs and desires of the body: sunning, eating, drinking, spa treatments, and romance” (24). Cruising space turns around a narcissistic fantasy of entering an exceptional space outside of normal political life and offering up one’s physical body to the obedient pursuit of hedonistic excess; instead of becoming *homo sacer*, however, within the space of the cruise ship passengers enter a fantasy of becoming *sovereign*, willing themselves outside the regular order of normal life into a space where (nearly) any form of enjoyment is permissible.

On board cruise ships, and in their promotional materials, we can thus discern the “superego...injunction to enjoyment” (*They Know Not*, 237) that Žižek identifies as the functional logic behind both totalitarian regimes and neoliberal-capitalist consumer society. Žižek points out that, through this demand on the subject “to Enjoy!,” pleasure becomes coercive as the logics of totalitarianism and a “permissive” society overlap: the “command to *enjoy doing your duty* [the totalitarian command] coincides with the *duty to enjoy yourself* [the postmodern command]” (*Fragile* 132-35). Therefore, in such systems the offer of a free choice—“Would you like to enjoy X or not? Only do so if you will enjoy it!”—is of course illusory (Žižek, “You May!”); the choices presented in postmodern spaces like Disney’s pamphlet and cruise ships are rather structured as “*How* would you like to enjoy? Do what you like, but whatever you do you must enjoy.” The commandment “to Enjoy!” is, as Žižek repeatedly makes clear, incredibly anxiety-producing, which is precisely the nature of the superego. Anxiety, self-doubt and guilt—“Am I enjoying? Did I enjoy *enough*? Am I simply faking my pleasure? If I am faking,

does anyone see?”—propel further obedience to the superego injunction, a greater (self-)administration of social life according to the “perverse mode” of postmodern consumer societies (Žižek, *Ticklish* 248). This anxiety, the sense of perhaps not having enjoyed properly or sufficiently and the resulting need to properly fulfill one’s duty to enjoy in the future, may help explain why sixty-five percent of cruise-takers are repeat customers (Dickinson and Vladimir 61). In the case of Disney we can see the logic of required enjoyment at work in the “Personal Navigator” program. Every morning crew members provide each passenger with a “full list of all the activities, events and programs” available that day, inundating them with the opportunity to “pick and choose [their] favorite things and plan [their] days just the way [they] like” (*Vacations 2007-2008* 14); as in the pamphlet’s checklists and planning pages, the act of choosing is presented as both a duty and an enjoyable act in and of itself. David Foster Wallace, writing about his first Caribbean cruise, characterizes this as the “queerly authoritarian twist” of cruises, their vaguely threatening promise “not that you *can* experience great pleasure but that you *will*....Your pleasure will [for the length of your stay] be wisely and efficiently managed” (37). Or, as Disney puts it, on their ships “you’re *destined* to find your own kind of paradise” (*Vacations 2007-2008* 6; emp. added). In late capitalism, the techniques of biopower, which historically tended to manage or put to death biological life, overlap the superego injunction to enjoy, so that on a cruise ship the passengers’ reduction to naked lives of pure enjoyment becomes the governing fantasy. In tourist camps, spaces of consumption such as Disney cruise ships, inclusive resorts and the party zones of islands like Ibiza, “the only prohibition is the prohibition to prohibit” (Diken and

Laustsen 109); in his essay Wallace recounts his many (failed) attempts to have a crew person say the word “No” to him. In these spaces the tourist voluntarily detaches the mantle of civilization, and comes to occupy a threshold position that throws into confusion the distinction between public and private, *polis* and *oikos*, *bios* and *zoē*. The cruise taker enters, from the opposite direction, an exceptional and biopolitical space, the liminal space of the slave ship or irregular migrant vessel. Like Marc Augé’s airline passenger, the passenger of the cruise ship, free of all duties except the injunction “to Enjoy!,” is “relieved of his usual determinants [and] becomes no more than what he does or experiences” (103). The identities of cruise tourists are stripped of social and political connotations, as they escape their ‘civilized’ lives and reflexively produce themselves as sovereign bare lives through bodily consumption, whether of food, exercise or simply relaxation. On board the Disney *Magic* and *Wonder*, cruise takers thus enter into a space of biopower, a space permeated with inextricable networks of biopolitical production, albeit a production of (mandated) enjoyment and illusory sovereignty rather than suffering and bare survival.

The above quotation from Wallace exposes a further biopolitical function of cruise ships, one more easily identified with the preceding case studies: the need for efficient management. Although Disney presents its “paradise” as spontaneous and natural, a context in which enjoyment becomes destiny does not magically create itself. Within the spaces of the ship, and through the communications networks connecting them to the databases, policies and committees of the corporation, cruising becomes “an elastic assemblage of programs and services styled, scheduled, and accessorized” so that

“management can reliably forecast” the needs of almost every guest (Easterling 24).

Through passenger lists, databases of personal information and activity sign-up sheets the ship’s crew can plan the operation of a cruise in advance, maximizing the passenger’s pleasure by

get[ting] to know your favorite foods. Your likes. Your dislikes. Your nickname (if you tell [us]). [The crew] will make sure your experience...is as magical as possible....[T]here’s always a friend waiting...who’ll probably have some great suggestions of what you’ll like. (*Vacations 2007-2008* 12)

The aggregate data on each individual is used according to a familial logic to tailor the cruise to the passenger; like other contemporary institutions (Žižek, *Ticklish*), the cruise ship functions as a kind of surrogate family, producing an infantilized subject under the care of a “maternal superego” that imposes enjoyment (Žižek, *Awry* 103), as opposed to the harsh paternal Law that imposed statistically determined discipline and punishment on board slave ships.

Further, through passenger surveys, market research and focus groups, the corporate parent “renders [potential passengers] calculable,” so that (as in the case Disney’s promotional pamphlet) “[passenger’s] desires are...‘written into the texts’ of consumption-based environments” like cruise ships (Weaver, “McDonaldization” 350).

The narcissistic fantasies of sovereign freedom that drive the cruise ship experience are in fact made possible through processes of control and regularization that capture and manage passenger’s bodies and affects to a greater extent than those of normal life. In these “spaces of containment and revenue capture” (Weaver, “Containment” 168),

passengers are wrapped in an illusory paradise that masks the artifice and the level of precision required to maintain it. The greatest example of this is also the one of the most touted aspect of Disney cruises: Castaway Cay. Described as both “a Never Land” and “a Shangri-la,” all Disney cruises stop for a day at the company’s “private island paradise” in the Bahamas; passengers are “officially...carefree castaway[s]” from “the moment [they] touch the winding white sands” of this Robinson Crusoe-themed day resort (*Vacations 2007-2008* 28). While Disney bills the island paradise of Castaway Cay as an authentic and natural slice of the Caribbean, the island stands as a monument to Disney’s careful planning: the “islanders” seeing to your every need are found by casting companies from as far away as Australia, with the few actual Bahamians employed as sanitation workers, and the winding white sand was “dredged from the bay and ground” before it properly conformed to Disney’s standards of island perfection (R. Wood 362). To succeed in the biopolitical capture of tourist bodies, the libidinous spaces created by Disney require constant behind-the-scenes control, and management of employees, geographies, bodies and psyches; through the careful regulation of almost every aspect of daily experience, techniques of positive biopower enlist tourists in their own coercion through the unceasing management of the superego’s command “to Enjoy!”

Representing expurgated histories

The production of Castaway Cay required the erasure of another island, Gorda Cay; when Disney purchased Gorda Cay in the late nineteen-nineties the cruise line’s first actions were to remove a small village, a number of farms, and an airstrip and warehouse (Antoni), before dredging the bay and expanding the beach, building a modern resort in

the style of *Gilligan's Island* and rechristening it Castaway Cay. In doing this, Disney expunged the material history of the island, which had been a home to pirates in the seventeenth century, a refuge for eccentric Bahamian farmers during the nineteen-fifties, -sixties and -seventies, and a refueling station for armed drug-smugglers in the nineteen-seventies, -eighties and -nineties (Antoni). Just as the brochure's triumphant celebration of a magical paradise customized for each passenger effaces the material practices of biopower—the forecasting, regularization and surveillance that makes the experience seem so effortless, and which interpellate guests into regimes of control—so do Disney's material practices efface the historic role of oceanic biopower in the Caribbean. The company disavows both histories of and its own imbrication within the biopolitics of exceptional maritime spaces. This effacement is particularly striking in the case of the Caribbean cruise industry, considering the region's importance in the earlier biopolitical operations of the Atlantic slave system. If we consider the world's oceans as a kind of palimpsest, a space onto which the operations of maritime biopower are continually written and rewritten, then the Disney Cruise Line engages in a kind of whitewashing process, obliterating as much of that layered picture as possible in its re-imagining of the Caribbean as an untarnished Edenic bubble outside of history, politics and power.

We can see how Disney cruises, and the industry as a whole, demonstrate an ideology of maritime space that obeys the logic of my initial assumption: oceanic space is most commonly perceived, in corporate and popular culture as well as the abstractions of cultural critics and theorists, as a smooth space, an unmarked and somewhat unreal space existing outside of history. The political, historical and social importance of the material

processes onboard ships has remained under-thought. In Rediker's phrase, this demonstrates an unconscious "terracentrism," the idea that maritime history is the "history of landed society gone to sea" ("People's History 198). As I have endeavored to show throughout the preceding case studies, maritime space, the space of ships and islands, should not be thought of as either a void between the "real," grounded spaces of nations and lands, or a simple extension of those spaces, but rather as a space in which important historical events and process have occurred and still occur. Ship space has been integral to the rise and development of international capital and globalization; such disparate thinkers as Adam Smith and Karl Marx agreed that "a new phase of human history—world history, global history—began with discovery of the sea-routes from Europe to Asia and the Americas" (Rediker, "People's History" 199). The paucity of scholarly work specific to the spaces of slave ships, of the *Komagata Maru* and of ships in general demonstrates this fully as much as Disney's expurgation of Caribbean history, made material by its refashioning of Gorda Cay. Oceanic spaces are spaces in which important historical and contemporary dramas take place; the palimpsestic layers of such spaces need to be uncovered.

Not only are these spaces filled with drama, but those dramas operate in highly biopolitical ways. In the social and political landscapes of the sea, away from the grounded territories of nation-states, the movement and capture of bodies and populations through de- and re-humanizing legal and extra-legal processes becomes particularly fraught. Within maritime space bodies are constructed and managed in both negative and positive ways: once outside and out of sight of their milieux, individuals can be more

easily stripped of social and political determinants, divested of legal rights, and rendered into bare lives and captive populations. As we have seen with the *Komagata Maru* and the British ships involved in the eighteenth-century slave trade, ship-space is also permeated with processes for making live, for controlling the health of the individuals and populations aboard and those within landed society. Within the exceptional space of the sea, these ships are excluded from the sovereign power of nation-states and yet still subtended by the controlling tendrils of national, international and extra-national forces, implicated in larger networks comprised of multiple sovereign powers, transnational movements of labour and capital, and global systems of communication and representation.

In the case of slave ships, we can discern a confluence of biopolitical actions that still resonate today. On board the ships of the eighteenth-century trade a disciplinary power over individual bodies was increasingly subtended by a massifying capture and creation of slave populations, as terroristic violence towards individual bodies was brought into the service of a larger biopolitical project that measured success through statistics and demographics. Attendant to this convergence of the anatomo-politics of bodies and the biopolitics of populations was the production of racial categories, as well as a rationalized project for managing racial populations separated into the fit and the inferior. Rather than operating according to the logic of nation-state sovereignty, during the eighteenth century these operations were directed by private citizens, trading consortiums and insurers; biopolitical considerations became another aspect of the

economic calculations made by merchants, captains and insurance underwriters in their efforts to maximize the survival rates of (and profits from) human commodities.

With the *Komagata Maru* incident we see a similar multiplicity of biopolitical mechanisms, from sovereign legal power to economic pressure and physical violence, and actors. At work in the complex of events surrounding the *Komagata Maru* were various levels of British imperial governance in Britain, Canada and India; the governmental power of bureaucrats like Malcolm Reid; Canadian industry, with its demand for cheap labour; Vancouver's Indo-Canadian community; and private citizens, some supportive and others opposed to the migration of the *Komagata Maru's* passengers. Due to their exceptional status in relation to sovereign power, maritime spaces demonstrate the ways in which biopolitical practices, generally thought of as belonging solely to sovereigns and governmental agents, have historically exceeded the control of nation-states and become adopted by a host of other actors.

The Disney brochure returns us to questions of biopower and exceptional spaces, but also to the ways in which these spaces can be represented. In investigating each space I have brought in a form of representation specific to it: the *Brookes* diagram, the apology offered by the Harper government, and the Disney Cruise Line's promotional brochure. These function at once as cultural portholes allowing provisional entry into the exceptional spaces they describe, and as objects of critique. In both its senses—as political representation and as textual or visual depiction—representation is particularly important for such spaces: one the one hand, how can we represent those individuals excluded from the law, such as slaves or irregular migrants, within the law? And on the

other, how can we adequately depict the singular experiences of such individuals? To what extent do such representations of biopower themselves operate within a biopolitical domain? With the *Brookes* diagram, for example, we see the abolitionist movement adopting the very techniques developed by the slave captains who kept similar diagrams as stowage guides; in the case of Harper's apology, we see a governmental speech-act, designed to suture a gap in the communal body of Canadian citizens, failing due to its oddly exceptional status outside the official spaces of the federal Parliament. Finally, the Disney pamphlet's representation of a hedonistic space, in which tourists willingly participate in their own reduction to biological lives outside of everyday political and culture norms, itself becomes a carrier of that excessive and exceptional space, its wording and design intended to interpellate readers through a command "to Enjoy!" All three representational modes adopt a logic of regularization that mirrors the biopolitical rationalization within the spaces they represent, so that processes of dehumanization and re-humanization, ways of fostering life and rendering dead, become strangely imbricated. Each confronts the viewer with the problem of representation; these sites of biopower continually exceed attempts to fully recuperate them, so that efforts to figure the exceptional space of these ships run aground at the limits of politics and aesthetics.

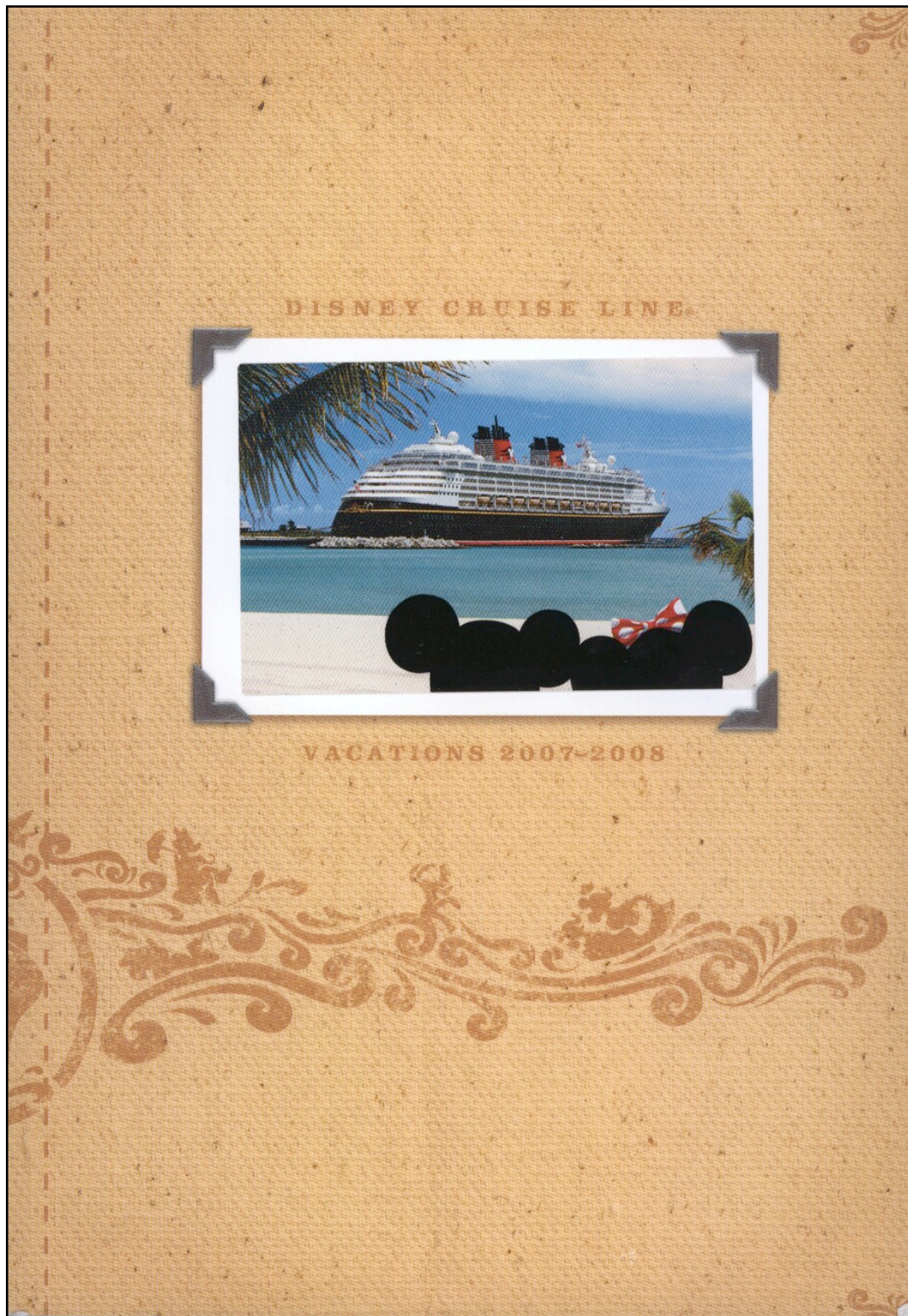




Image 4: Front Cover, *Disney Cruise Line Vacations 2007-2008*. Author's copy.



from shore to ship

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WELCOME ABOARD

The Magic & Wonder of *Disney Cruise Line*®

It starts the moment you step aboard. There's music in the air and magic all around. Before you know it, your toes are tapping at the incredible Sailaway Celebration and you've just set course for a carefree state of mind. You've entered the first port of paradise: your Disney ship. This is where wishes come true.

Entertainment unlike anything else at sea is yours to enjoy at your whim. Breathtaking productions in the grand *Walt Disney Theatre*. Live music by the pool and in the clubs. Fresh flicks on the silver screen. Family-time fun from karaoke and dance parties to all-out game shows and more. You can get fit with Goofy right on deck. Or grab a chair, soak in the sun, and groove to tunes by the pool. Do everything you've dreamed. Or do nothing at all. On board a Disney cruise, you're destined to find your own kind of paradise.

6

Image 5: "Welcome Aboard." *Disney Cruise Line Vacations 2007-2008*. p. 6. Author's copy.

catch a few rays

DISNEY'S 7-NIGHT CARIBBEAN CRUISES

Set sail on a fairytale. *Disney's 7-Night Eastern and Western Caribbean Cruises* give you more time to enjoy even more Disney magic. More exotic ports of call. More incredible dining. More fabulous entertainment. And more tropical adventures. Not to mention special programs for kids, teens and adults, plus original Disney stage shows created just for these cruises. It's more Disney, more fun, more magic.

7-NIGHT WESTERN CARIBBEAN CRUISE

SATURDAY – Board the ship in Port Canaveral
SUNDAY – Arrive in Key West
MONDAY – A fun-filled day at sea
TUESDAY – Arrive at Grand Cayman
WEDNESDAY – Arrive in Cozumel
THURSDAY – Relax for a day at sea
FRIDAY – Arrive at *Castaway Cay*
SATURDAY – Return to Port Canaveral

7-NIGHT EASTERN CARIBBEAN CRUISE

SATURDAY – Board the ship in Port Canaveral
SUNDAY AND MONDAY – Relaxation and fun at sea
TUESDAY – Arrive in St. Maarten
WEDNESDAY – Arrive in St. Thomas
 (This day you can choose to enjoy excursions to St. John as well)
THURSDAY – The magic of a day at sea
FRIDAY – Arrive at *Castaway Cay*
SATURDAY – Return to Port Canaveral

Image 6: Passport stamps. *Disney Cruise Line Vacation 2005-2006*. n.p. Author's copy.

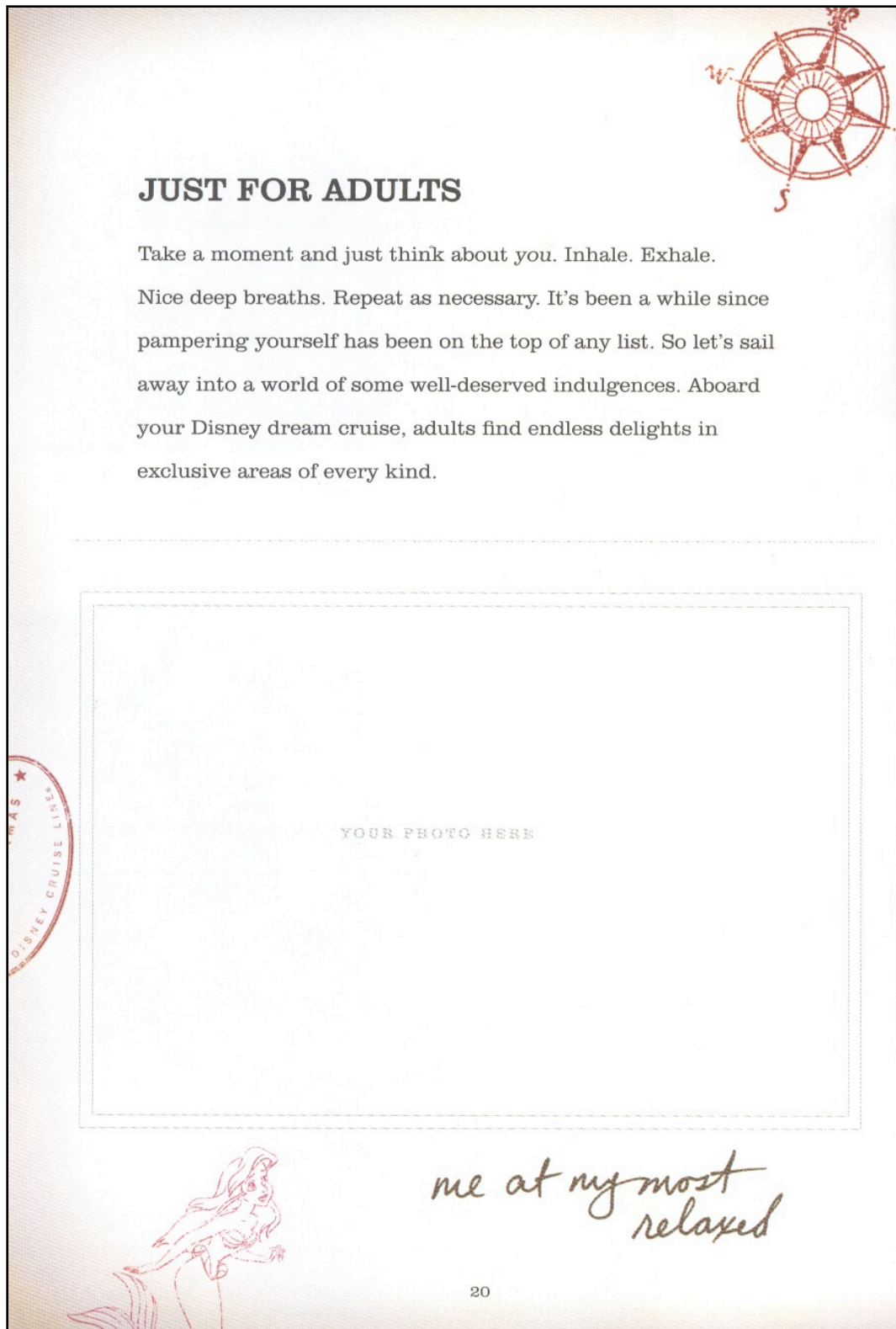


Image 7: "Just for adults." *Disney Cruise Line Vacations 2007-2008*. p. 20. Author's copy.

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