The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Creation of the English Weltanschauung, 1685-1710

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At the turn of the-eighteenth century, the English public was confronted with numerous and conflicting interpretations of Africans, slavery, and the slave trade. On the one hand, there were texts that glorified the institution of slavery. Gabriel de Brémond's The Happy Slave, which was translated and published in London in 1686, tells of a Roman, Count Alexander, who is captured off the coast of Tunis by "barbarians," but is soon enlightened to the positive aspects of slavery, such as, being "lodged in a handsome apartment, where the Baffa's Chyrurgions searched his Wounds: And ... he soon found himself better."58 On the other hand, Bartolomé de las Casas' Popery truly display'd in its bloody colours (written in 1552, but was still being published in London in 1689), displays slavery in the most negative light. De las Casas chastises the Spaniards' "bloody slaughter and destruction of men," condemning how they "violently forced away Women and Children to make them slaves, and ill-treated them, consuming and wasting their Moreover, Thomas Southerne's adaptation of Aphra Behn's food."59 Oroonoko in 1699 displays slavery in a contradictory light. Southerne condemns Oroonoko's capture as a "tragedy," but like Behn's version, Oroonoko's royalty complicates the matter, eventually causing the author to show sympathy for the enslaved African prince.

After 1688, the public sphere expanded to enormous proportions and the English could read about the slave trade through the works of popular scholarship and Royal African Company publications. The works of the Company contained surprisingly detailed accounts of the trade that focused on business, economics, and numbers. And yet, the validity of the information attained by the leaders and stockholders of the Royal African Company, and the rest of England, proved questionable. This information often excluded Critical details about African society and the human aspect of the slave trade. Popular writers and scholars, who created a speculative view of the slave trade, filled this void in the Company's accounts of the slave trade. Moreover, the sources available to the English failed to hold

⁵⁸ Gabriel de Bremond, *The Happy Slave: a Novel in Three Parts Compleat /Translated from the French by a Person of Quality* (London: Gilbert Cownly, 1686), 9.

⁵⁹ Bartolome de las Casas, *Popery truly display'd in its bloody colours, or, A faithful narrative of the horrid and unexampled massacres, butcheries, and all manner of cruelties, that hell and malice could invent, committed by the popish Spanish party on the inhabitants of West-India (London: R. Hewson, 1689), 5. While the reproduction of Casas' work mainly portrays English attitudes toward the Spanish, it represents one facet of the English Weltanschauung which abhorred slavery and the slave-Trade.*

the standards of validity needed to build a complete understanding of race and slavery. Royal African Company (RAC) publications left out the human aspect while popular scholars and authors artificially created a human aspect. This process would have disastrous effects for the collective English *Weltanschauung* (German word, literally translated as "worldview"). Similarly, the conflated the meanings of words like "slave" and "negro" in RAC correspondence and pamphlets created a society that would eventually treat all "negroes" as "slaves," and help delay British abolition.

In order to determine the changes that the English *Weltanschauung* underwent during this period, this essay seeks to investigate the factors contributing to decisions made by the leaders and stockholders of the Royal African Company) and how these decisions may have shaped Englishmen's conceptions of Africans and slaves.⁶⁰ Three separate steps are required, namely, ascertaining who the leaders and stockholders of the RAC were and how they got their information, determining how information was conveyed to the wider society, both through the Company and through popular literature, and analyzing the use of the words "slave," "negro," and "native," and the contexts in which they were used in correspondence and pamphlets. English society at the turn of the eighteenth-century had not yet fully assumed that all Blacks were inherently slaves; it was well on its way.

The need for discussing the English slave trade from such a vantage point emerges from the well-established, but still lacking, historiography of the slave trade. Historians from Philip Curtin, K.G. Davies, Elizabeth Donnan, and Eric Williams to the more recent works of William A. Pettigrew, Susan Amussen, Kenneth Morgan, David Eltis and David Richardson have adequately mapped most areas of the trade.⁶¹ Each of these works touches on important aspects of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but leaves some questions unanswered. Pettigrew's works focus on

⁶⁰ Of the three essential avenues for exploring the English Slave Trade (official internal papers, documents of the Royal African Company, popular scholarship/literature, and pamphlets of the Royal African Company), I have access to the latter two. Because internal documents of the Royal African Company do not deal directly with the transfer of information to the public, they are less important for this study.

⁶¹ William A. Pettigrew, "Free to Enslave: Politics and the Escalation of Britain's Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1688-1714," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (January 2007): 3-38 and William A. Pettigrew "Parliament and the Escalation of the Slave Trade, 1690-1714," *Parliamentary History* 26 (2007): 12-26; Ann M. Carlos and Jamie Brown Kruse, "The Decline of the Royal African Company: Fringe Firms and the Role of the Charter," *Economic History Review* 49, no. 2 (May 1996): 291-313; Stephen D. Behrendt, David Eltis and David Richardson, "The Costs of Coercion: Agency in the Pre-Modern Atlantic World," *The Economic History Review* 54, no.3 (August 2001): 454-476; K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (New York: Atheneum, 1957); Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade, and the British Economy, 1660*-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society: 1640-1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

the political and legal aspects of the changes that occurred in 1688 as they relate to the slave trade, leaving questions about the social environment of England and the West Indies. "The Costs of Coercion,", brings economic factors into the discussion, but likewise leaves social effects of the slave trade unexamined. Davies' *The Royal African Company*, on the other hand, touches upon the issues of communication and efficiency within the Company, but creates effects on the greater society out of the discussion. Finally, Amussen makes powerful connections about the effects of the trade as they relate to the structure of work, gender, and law, but ignores a discussion of the larger society as a whole. With this in mind, the current scholarship fails to make fundamental connections between the slave trade and its influence on the collective English *Weltanschauung*.

The Organization of the Royal African Company

The RAC's organization remained much like that of other jointstock companies of the eighteenth-century. Its chief officers included a Governor, Sub-Governor, Deputy Governor and twenty-four elected Assistants. The charter required Assistants to hold at least £400 of stock. Moreover, they were elected by shareholders who received one vote for every £100 of stock. The Assistants met twice a week to guide the day-today business of the Company and twice a year-once to elect a Governor, Sub-Governor, and Deputy Governor and once to announce a statement of the Company's stock.⁶² Assistants initially allowed served for only three consecutive years, but after 1691 this rule was dropped. At the same time, the Company decided to raise the minimum stock holdings for Assistants from £400 to £1,000, with no more than £250 being previously-owned stock. Sub and Deputy Governors were limited to one consecutive twoyear term; however, influential people often rotated between the positions of Assistant, Sub-Governor, and Deputy Governor, creating a stable group of decision-makers.63 Whereas the entire Court of Assistants met about once a week, the Company established a number of Sub-Committees to assist in the duties of running the Company. Davies notes that Assistants served on one or more sub-committees.⁶⁴ The Company pushed the entire burden of executive decision-making to the Assistants and their subcommittees.⁶⁵ What emerges from Davies' description is an extremely large company ran by twenty-four of its most wealthy investors, who met multiple times a week, and were responsible for nearly every decision the Company made. Because these twenty-four Assistants met so often, they were London-bound and found little time to travel to the places where the

⁶² Davies, Royal African Company, 153-4.

⁶³ Ibid., 157. In one instance, Sir Benjamin Bathurst was continuously elected from 1677-95 by being rotated between the three positions. He served thirteen times as an Assistant, twice as Deputy Governor, and four times as Sub-Governor.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 157-8.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 154, 159.

Company purchased slaves. Assistants rarely acquired knowledge of the slave trade from firsthand experience.

In addition, those who ran the RAC had several common characteristics. First, most of the influential members of the Company obtained multiple investment interests. Most of the officials of the RAC established interests in the British East India Company. For example, Sir John Banks, a wealthy merchant, financier, and director of the Royal African Company, likewise served as a director of the East India Company and was involved with the Levant Company.⁶⁶ Similarly, George Berkeley, an influential politician and founding member of the RAC, was a member of the East India Company in 1680 and a governor of the Levant Company in 1681.67 Sir Josiah Child represented a "passive investor" whose central interest remained with the East India Company, despite being an early Assistant of the RAC.68 Jeffrey Jeffreys, Assistant of the RAC in the 1680s, participated in the tobacco trade, established business relations with the East India Company in the 1690s, and became a licensed Separate Trader, someone who traded separately from the Company, in the early 1700s.69 Sir John Moore participated in both the Royal African and East India Companies around the time of the revolution, being an Assistant for the former and the second largest shareholder in the latter.⁷⁰ Sir Dudley North served as Assistant, Sub and Deputy Governor of the Royal African Company, Governor of the Russia Company, and involved in the Levant Company.⁷¹ In short, many of the Assistants of the RAC struggled with the demands of multiple different companies.

Similarly, those who ran the RAC tended to be wealthy individuals with deep-rooted political interests. For example, D.W. Hayton's *The House of Commons, 1690-1715* lists twenty-five individuals who were both Members of Parliament and holders of significant offices within the RAC. Many of these, such as Sir Thomas Cooke, Sir Francis and Sir Samuel Dashwood, Nathaniel and Frederick Herne, John and Jeffrey Jeffreys, and Sir William Pritchard, also held significant interests in the East India Company.⁷² Additionally, Davies notes that in the first two decades of its

⁶⁶ D.C. Coleman, "Banks, Sir John," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38265?docPos=2.

⁶⁷ Andrew Warmington, "Berkeley, George," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2209?docPos=2.

⁶⁸ Richard Grassby, "Child, Sir Josiah," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5290.

⁶⁹ Jacob M. Price, "Jeffreys, Jeffrey," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49858.

⁷⁰ Richard Grassby, "Moore, Sir John," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19125?docPos=1.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² David W. Hayton, *The House of Commons, 1690-1715*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 736; Jacob M. Price, "Jeffreys, Sir Jeffrey," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49858,; and Gary S. DeKrey, "Pritchard, Sir

existence, the Company listed nearly fifteen peers or associates of the Company.⁷³ Once again, many of the most influential members of the RAC displayed significant interests elsewhere.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the most influential members of the Company were passive investors who had little real world experience in Africa, the West Indies, or anywhere else in the Atlantic world. For example, Sir Dudley North, at the time of his investments with the Royal African Company, was a passive investor.74 Likewise, Sir Josiah Child, founding member and Assistant of the RAC, was a passive investor who believed that trade should be controlled from a central location, London.⁷⁵ Only a select few, such as Sir William Hedges, Charles Hayes, and Sir Dudley North had any significant experience away from England. Sir William Hedges owned one of the first shares of the Company and was a multiple-term Assistant in the 1690s. He was heavily interested in the East India Company and traveled to the Bay of Bengal, where he acquired knowledge about Islamic languages and customs.⁷⁶ Sir Dudley North was sent abroad to Russia, Smyrna, Italy, and Constantinople, which certainly made him a more informed controller of his interests in the Russian and Levant Companies, but probably added little benefit for his interests in the Royal African Company.77 Charles Hayes, a widely known mathematician and geographer, traveled to Africa before his days as Sub and Deputy Governors of the Royal African Company.⁷⁸ In short, it appears that some portion of the most influential members of the Company possessed little experience in the Atlantic world.79

William," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,

http://proxy.library.eiu.edu:2971/view/article/22825.

⁷³ Davies, *Royal African Company*, 64-5; Other prominent men in English society, such as King James, Sir Edmund Andros, and Sir George Carteret had associations with the Company. John Locke was also loosely associated with the Company. It is also important to note that the Royal African Company was not entirely made up of politicians; in fact, the majority of the Company's investors were businessmen. rather than members of Parliament.

⁷⁴ Richard Grassby, "North, Sir Dudley," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20297?docPos=1.

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⁷⁶ Gary S. DeKrey, "Hedges, Sir William," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://proxy.library.eiu.edu:2971/view/article/12860.

⁷⁷ Richard Grassby, "North, Sir Dudley," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20297?docPos=1.

⁷⁸ R.E. Anderson, "Hayes, Charles," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://proxy.library.eiu.edu:2971/view/article/12755.

⁷⁹ I have access to records for approximately 40 individuals involved with the Company from 1685-1710. Given the fact that there are 24 Assistants and 3 elected governorships, and that most of the people that held these positions were rotated frequently in order to keep them involved in the company, I have access to somewhere around 5% of the total number of people involved with the company. Given the frequency of characteristics in each of the stories I examined, I surmise that, as far as my data allows me to, the majority of influential people in the Company had little personal experience in the Atlantic World.

The Transfer of Information Concerning the Slave Trade

With some of its major investors being passive, holding investments in multiple companies, and having political obligations, RAC investors relied heavily on outside forces to bring them information about what was happening in the Atlantic World. With reliance this in mind, information was acquired through three avenues. First, the members gained information through the frequent meetings of the Royal African Company. While they took copious notes of these meetings, these documents represent the transfer of information within the Company and tell us little about the proliferation of information to the greater society. Next, Englishmen gained information through published works of the Company and through records of the Privy Council and House of Commons. This avenue is, in some sense, more important because it remained accessible to the wider society; the pamphlet wars between the Company and the separate traders were directed towards wider groups of Englishmen as the ability for commoners to influence government expanded. Finally, they received information from popular literature. This avenue also affected the rest of society.

Popular literature and scholarship helped frame the most basic assumptions about slavery and the slave trade for all Englishmen. Aphra Behn's Oroonoko, published in 1688 lies at the heart of these assumptions. Behn noted the tale of the African prince who is forced from his homeland into slavery in Surinam, where he reunites with his love, Imoinda, and battles the assumptions of slavery, arguing that he cannot possibly be a slave because of his royalty. The idea that Oroonoko, a slave, should be glorified rather than chastised, presents an interesting idea for this time. The author claims that, "The whole proportion and air of [Oroonoko's] face was so noble...that, bating [except for] his colour, there cou'd be nothing in nature more beautiful."80 Moreover, John Trefry, manager of Lord Willoughby's estate, upon hearing Oroonoko claim to be, "above the rank of common slaves," exclaims, "[Oroonoko] was yet something greater than he confess'd."81 This idea—that there are distinctions between various types of slaves-is contrasted by the idea that Africans represented an inferior race. For example, the owner of the plantation holds Oroonoko as a slave, after which he is attacked by Whites. Similarly, the leaders eventually decide to hang Oroonoko as a warning to the other slaves. Thomas Southerne's adaptation of *Oroonoko*, which premiered in November, 1695, projected the dual views of slavery. Additionally, one of Southerne's modifications involved Oroonoko's suicide rather than enduring the struggle, indicating that he may have tried to represents Africans as cowards.

⁸⁰ Aphra Behn, Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave, in Catherine Gallagher, and Simon Stern, eds., Aphra Behn: Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 44.
⁸¹ Ibid., 67.

Oroonoko fits into the larger group of Atlantic Creoles, who were able to capitalize on their ability to speak African and European languages to, in some cases, gain small measures of freedom. Atlantic Creoles were often African traders or their sons, who held high positions in African society.⁸² In 1767, European slave traders captured members of one ruling family in Old Calabar, which facilitated a seven year journey wrought with disappointment and disaster. As a result, the two young African Creoles attempted to return home. Cases like this were complemented by Africans being sent to England to receive an education and Atlantic Creoles securing freedom and property in America. These situations, which occurred with some frequency in the early days of the slave trade, became less common as time wore on. By the 1730s and 1740s, Atlantic Creoles in America began to lose their socioeconomic standing at the hands of increasingly strict legal codes.⁸³ These codes, which shrank the ranks of the Atlantic Creole, reflected the English Weltanschauung, which increasingly focused on reducing the African to sub-human levels.

Compared to Oroonoko, Gabriel de Brémond's The Happy Slave, translated from French in 1686, presents a decidedly more pleasant view of slavery. The novel tells of a young Roman, Count Alexander, captured near Tunis. While in captivity, Alexander realizes the lighter side of slavery. In fact, the author declares that Alexander, "having happily fallen into the hands of so good and generous a patron, began to recover."84 Brémond's work emphasizes the "benevolent master" concept, which may have impacted how Englishmen chose to see themselves in relation to African slaves. The essence of Brémond's stance on slavery is evident from the very beginning, when he exclaims, "Africk...where the people were no less cruel than the lions and tigers that fill the desarts of the countrey: But since the discovery of Love there, it hath appear'd, that as love grows in all Countreys, so barbary itself hath nothing of barbarous but the name."85 In short, the translation and publication of Brémond presents Englishmen with an overwhelmingly positive view of slavery and the slave trade in which the slave trade appears as a civilizing process.

On the other hand, publication of the works of Bartholomew de las Casas at this time emphasized slavery as a barbarous institution. De las Casas presents a systematic description of the various cruelties committed in the new world in *Popery Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colours*. In this

⁸² Randy J Sparks, "Two Princes of Calabar: An Atlantic Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (July, 2002): 559, 562. Sparks indicates that as the slave trade grew, wealth replaced age as the determiner of rulers in Efik communities. Sons of wealthy African traders, therefore, were often considered royalty.

⁸³ Ibid., 555-84; Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (April, 1996): 277, 279. Berlin highlights the case of Anthony Johnson, an Atlantic Creole who was able to amass a 550 acre estate in the 1650s.

⁸⁴ Brémond, The Happy Slave, 9.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1.

work, slaves and natives are shown as, "being oppressed by such evil usage," and "afflicted with such great torments and violent entertainments"⁸⁶ by their Spanish masters. De las Casas argues that the slave trade not only abuses the slaves, but Native Americans as well. Again, the publication of de las Casas' work also reflects English competition with Spain; however, the anti-slavery message of *Popery Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colours*, distributed at a time when the English were so engulfed in their own slave trade, further illustrates the diversity regarding English attitudes toward the slave trade. Moreover, when combined with *Oroonoko* and *The Happy Slave*, three distinctly separate views of the slave trade emerge in English popular literature.

Like popular literature, popular scholarship, most importantly the voluminous works of Nathaniel Crouch, help convey information about the slave trade to the English. Crouch was a bookseller and writer who published a number of pocket-sized, informational books written under the pseudonym of Robert Burton (often abbreviated R.B.). Between 1666 and 1725, Crouch published some seventy-five books, which were written in simple English and sold for one shilling. Although he published many novels that dealt with religion, he is best known for his historical works, which he himself wrote. After his death in 1725, Crouch's works continued to sell well for the remainder of the century.87 In English Acquisitions in Guinea and East-India, Crouch displays an overview of the customs, religions, wildlife, trade patterns, and marriages of the natives near each English fort or settlement in Africa. Nowhere does Crouch explain how he received such information, and it is unlikely that he observed these things himself, especially considering the number and frequency of his publications. In addition, Crouch conveys some degree of disdain for the natives, questioning the viability of their religion, calling them treacherous. and describing their feeding habits like those of swine.88 Crouch declares that the people of Guinea "are handsome and well proportioned, having nothing disagreeable in their Countenances, but the blackness of their Complexion."89 In describing the natives around James Fort, Crouch claims that they "are Envious, curiously Neat, Thieves."90 Unreliable information conveyed in popular literature, such as Crouch's works, shaped Englishmen's conceptions of the slave trade.

Equally important were the pamphlets and publications of the RAC and the separate traders, which had considerable implications for the transfer of information on the slave trade and the shaping of slavery in the

⁸⁶ Casas, Popery Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colours, 5.

⁸⁷ Jason McElligott, "Crouch, Nathaniel," in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://proxy.library.eiu.edu:2971/view/article/52645.

⁸⁸ Nathaniel Crouch, *English Acquisitions in Guinea and East-India*, (London: Nath. Crouch, 1700), 8, 9, 12.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 9.

minds of many Englishmen. During the pamphlet wars between free traders and monopolists in the 1690s, which continued in the public sphere until the 1720s, a number of publications attempted to convince Englishmen to support either side. Reflections of the East India Company and the Royal African Company, authored by Roger Coke in 1696, chastises the Company for being a monopoly and yet allowing foreign protestants to trade within its limits.⁹¹ Similarly, Considerations Concerning the African Companies Petitions (1698) and Considerations Humbly Offered to the House of Commons by the Planters (1698) argue against the Company's monopoly for imposing on Englishmen's liberty and failing to provide enough slaves to the West Indian plantations.⁹² Reasons Humbly Offer'd to the Honourable the Commons of England, written sometime in the 1690s, argued that Jamaica needed more "negroes" to work the plantations.⁹³ In Considerations Relating to the African Bill (1698), separate traders argue that a continuation of the monopoly would further endanger relationships with Africans and other Europeans, which would be detrimental to the trade.94

Like the separate traders, the Royal African Company chose pamphlets as the main medium of transferring information to the general public. *True Account of the Forts and Castles Belonging to the Royal African Company* (1698) presents valuable information concerning the status of the Company's installments in Africa. The pamphlet provides the public with concrete numbers of men and guns, as well as comments on the state of each of the Company's forts. This pamphlet concludes that the forts and castles were "sufficiently provided with small arms, powder, and other necessaries of war…built of Stone and Lime," and that an adjoining factory was, "covered with lead, and in very good repair." ⁹⁵ Additionally, the pamphlet claims that the data was "taken from Sundry Persons," which implies that the Company had multiple sources to acquire information.⁹⁶ In short, this pamphlet shows that the English public was being given fairly detailed accounts of the slave trade.

Further accounts of the forts, relationships with Africans, and the ability of the separate traders to supply slaves to West Indian plantations are found in *Some Observations on Extracts Taken out of the Report from the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations*, authored by the Royal

⁹¹ Roger Coke, Reflections upon the East-Indy and Royal African Companies with

animadversions, concerning the naturalizing of foreigners, (London: [s.n.], 1695).

⁹² Anon., Considerations Concerning the African Companies Petitions, (London: [s.n.], 1698); and Anon., Considerations Humbly Offered to the House of Commons by the Planters, (London: [s.n.], 1698).

⁹³ Anon., Reasons Humbly Offer'd to the Honourable the Commons of England, (London: [s.n.], 1698-?).

⁹⁴ Anon., Considerations Relating to the African Bill Humbly Submitted to the Honourable House of Commons, (London: [s.n.], 1698).

⁹⁵ Anon., A True Account of the Forts and Castles belonging to the Royal African Company, (London: [s.n.], 1698).

⁹⁶ Anon., A True Account of the Forts and Castles; "Sundry," in the Oxford English Dictionary.

African Company in 1708. This document contains information from the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations and includes the number of slaves brought to the West Indies by the separate traders and a list of the RAC's forts in Africa. Additionally, the document argues that the forts and castles are the best foundation for continued friendship, justice, humanity, and honesty in English relationships with Africans.⁹⁷

Moreover, The case of the Royal African Company (1709) provides readers with a complete summary of the free trade debate as it applied to the RAC through 1709. The Case provides details of the RAC's trade with Africa, but leaves out human or social aspects. For example, The Case describes the forts and settlements in Africa as a place to, "stipulate the price of the merchandize with the natives," rather than hold prisoner hundreds of slaves until the next slave ship appeared.98 Furthermore, The Anatomy of the African Company's Scheme for Carrying on that Trade in a Joint-Stock Exclusive (1710) provides a balance of the Company's books along with a claim that the benefits of the African trade are due solely to the efforts of the RAC, the overall goal being to get their subscribers to loan the Company ten percent of their payment. Additionally, the Anatomy provides the number of forts ("14") and the amount of land they take up ("100 miles space on the Gold Coast"), but fails to describe any nonbusiness related aspect of the trade.⁹⁹ In other words, the content of such pamphlets tended to focus on the business aspect, rather than the human, or emotional aspects of the slave trade. These gaps would be filled by popular literature and speculation.

In addition to the publications of the separate traders and the Royal African Company, political writers such as Daniel Defoe and Charles Davenant frequently issued pamphlets articulating a particular stance on the slave trade. In *Reflections upon the Constitution and Management of the Trade to Africa* (1709), Davenant sets forth the position of the RAC by examining memoirs, declarations, accounts, and other official papers. Like most other pro-Royal African Company texts, *Reflections* claims that the Company was extremely successful before 1698 (before the separate traders were allowed to trade with the payment of a 10% duty). Similarly, it uses numbers from the Navy Office of Barbados to disprove many of the separate traders' claims. Likewise, the article provides information about Africa and the Company's holdings in Africa.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, *A Clear Demonstration, from Points of Fact, that the Recovery, Preservation and Improvement of Britain's Share of the Trade to Africa, is Wholly Owing to the Industry, Care and*

⁹⁷ Royal African Company, Some Observations on Extracts Taken out of the Report from the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, (London, 1708).

⁹⁸ Royal African Company, The Case of the Royal African Company, (London, 1709).

⁹⁹ Royal African Company, *The Anatomy of the African Company's scheme for carrying on that trade in a joint-stock exclusive*, (London, 1710).

¹⁰⁰ Charles Davenant, *Reflections upon the constitution and management of the trade to Africa*, (London, 1709).

Application of the Royal African Company (1709), as the title might suggest, claims that the benefits of the slave trade are due to the efforts of the RAC and that a monopoly is better suited to fit the needs of England and its subjects than free trade. Once again, Davenant uses RAC records to both prove his assumptions and discredit the separate traders.¹⁰¹ These works provide critical insight into the information that was conveyed between the RAC and ordinary Englishmen because they were designed solely for the purpose of galvanizing the support of the people in England. They show that Englishmen had a wealth of detailed information about the business aspect of the slave trade at their disposal, however, pamphlets often left out information about the social aspects of the slave trade.

Information was transferred between the RAC and its smaller shareholders through a series of meetings that occurred in the first years of the new century. Ultimately, these meetings were the result of the everworsening fortunes of the Company at the hands of the separate traders. As the separate traders began to infringe upon the RAC's market, especially after 1698, the Company found its finances increasingly in danger. In order to keep afloat, the Company repeatedly asked its shareholders for loans in the first years of the new century. In March 1701, the Company sent out a request of £4 per share from its shareholders. Similarly, in 1702 the request increased to £6 per share, in 1704, £7 per share, and in 1706, another £4 per share.¹⁰² Similarly, in September, 1706, the Company sent out a public request for an increase in subscription.¹⁰³ These public requests show that the Royal African Company's smaller shareholders were frequently called upon by the RAC during the "pamphlet wars" with the separate traders. Additionally, they suggest that smaller shareholders were given frequent meetings where information concerning the Company was passed along. The information being passed along related solely to business and economics.

K.G. Davies' *Royal African Company* provides a few hints about the Company's official correspondence. Sir Dalby Thomas, Agent-General of the RAC from 1703-1711 and Assistant for four years prior to that¹⁰⁴,

¹⁰² Royal African Company, African-House. At a General Court of the Adventurers of the Royal African Company of England, held the 27th. day of March, 1701, (London, 1701); Royal African Company, At a General Court of the Adventurers of the Royal African-Company of England, held at their house ... the 15th day of December, 1702, (London, 1702); Royal African Company, At a General Court of the Adventurers of the Royal African Company of England, held at their house ... the 15th day of June, 1704, (London, 1704); and Royal African Company, African House At a General Court of the Adventurers of the Royal African Company of England, held at their house ... the 1st day of June, 1704, (London, 1704); and Royal African Company, African House At a General Court of the Adventurers of the Royal African Company of England, held the 26th. day of June, 1706, (London, 1706).

¹⁰³ Royal African Company, *At a General Court of the Adventurers of the Royal African Company of England, held the 18th day of September, 1706*, (London, 1706).

¹⁰¹ Charles Davenant, A clear demonstration, from points of fact, that the recovery, preservation and improvement of Britain's share of the trade to Africa, is wholly owing to the industry, care and application of the Royal African Company, (London, 1709).

¹⁰⁴ Perry Gauci, "Thomas, Sir Dalby," in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

corresponded frequently with the RAC. For example, Sir Thomas corresponded with the RAC concerning prices of gold, deaths, "coast charges," relations with the French, Portuguese, and Dutch, and tax systems with the natives.¹⁰⁵ The RAC corresponded frequently with its other agents. Like the correspondence with Sir Thomas, correspondence with other agents spanned any number of topics. Those topics included shipping, sloop trade, and, as most often was the case, the productivity of a particular area.¹⁰⁶

From these observations, we can construct a number of assertions concerning the operation of the Royal African Company at the turn of the Eighteenth Century. First, by wealthy, prominent investors who often held multiple business and political interests controlled the RAC. There were minimum amounts of shares that a person needed to hold in order to be elected to an official position within the Company.¹⁰⁷ Many of the investors were passive; they had not been actively involved in the trading of slaves, opting instead to remain in London.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the frequency of the Company's meetings ensured that its leaders had little time to travel the world or become active in the trade.¹⁰⁹ *Observations on a Guinea Voyage*, written nearly a century later by James Field Stanfield, asserts that a true understanding of the Slave Trade could not be achieved without a personal experience on a slave ship, thus inferring that many RAC decision-makers of had little understanding of the human aspect of the trade.¹¹⁰

Much of the information that was circulating within the Royal African Company and in the wider society left out a crucial humanitarian perspective that represented the foundation of future abolitionist writings. Popular literature and scholarship, in an attempt to fill the void left by pamphlets and official papers, often portrayed Blacks and the slave trade in less than accurate ways. For example, *The Happy Slave* suggests that the slave trade could be a civilizing process aided by benevolent slave masters. Similarly, both Behn's *Oroonoko* and Southerne's adaptation question the sub-human nature of non-royal blacks. Moreover, writers of popular history, such as Nathaniel Crouch, surely did not possess an unbiased, objective and factual basis for their assertions. Crouch, for example, published nearly seventy-five books in just over half a century, a fact that calls into question where he obtained information on such **a** short notice.

¹⁰⁵ Davies, Royal African Company, 216, 226, 257, 259, 269, 274, 280.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 217, 219, 223, 227-8.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 153-4, 157.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 154, 157-9.

¹¹⁰ James Field Stanfield, *Observations on a Guinea Voyage, in a Series of Letters Addressed to the Rev. Thomas Clarkson* (London: James Phillips, 1788), 30, in Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007), 156.

addressed the economic and business aspects of the slave trade, leaving out critical issues such as the living conditions on board slave ships, an issue that would make Thomas Clarkson famous in the last two decades of the eighteenth century.

Implications for the Collective English Weltanschauung

With this in mind, the complex, yet haphazard, transfers of information concerning Africa, Africans, slaves and the slave trade during this time affected English society in a very profound way. This change can be seen by a consideration of the various meanings of the three most common words used to describe Africans: "native," "slave," and "negro." Two of the Oxford English Dictionary's definitions of the word "negro," states that "a person of black African origin or descent."¹¹¹ The use of the word "negro," as either the former or latter meaning, provides a clue into the degree in which English society equated the words "negro" and "slave" during this period. Moreover, the convergence of the two words shows one effect of the lack of cultural and societal information concerning the slave trade, despite the relatively detailed economic accounts of the trade.

In some cases, the English used the word "negro" to describe Africans before their enslavement in the West Indies, either in Africa or in the process of being sold into slavery (the middle passage). In Considerations Concerning the African Companies Petitions (1698), the author claims that "no good negroes" reside in the most remote areas of Africa.¹¹² Similarly, Considerations Humbly Offered to the House of Commons by the Planters (1698) refers to a lack of "negroes" supplied to the West Indies.¹¹³ Reasons Humbly Offer'd to the Honourable the Commons of England (1690-1699), too, claims that Jamaica needs more "negroes," thus using the word to describe pre-West Indian Africans. Finally, on December 26, 1695, the Calendar of State Papers notes that, "the factors of the Royal African Company picked out the best negroes."114 In 1698, the Privy Council gave the RAC the authority to export beans as a means to feed "negroes" on board their ships. In 1693, they requested that the Company send more "negroes" and goods in order to help furnish the West Indian plantations.¹¹⁵ In each of these cases, the documents used the word "negro" to describe Africans in the process of being sold into slavery.

On the other hand, the English sometimes referred to Blacks in Africa as "natives." *Considerations Relating to the African Bill* (1698) refers

- ¹¹⁴ J. W. Fortescue, ed., Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series, America and West Indies, January, 1693-May, 1696 (Burlington: TannerRitchie, 2004), 249, 343-4.
- ¹¹⁵ W. L. Grant, James Munro, & Almeric L. Fitzroy, eds., *Acts of the Privy Council of England: Colonial Series Volume 2: A.D. 1680-1720* (Burlington: TannerRitchie, 2005), 134, 187.

¹¹¹ "Negro, n. and adj.," in the Oxford English Dictionary.

¹¹² Anon., Considerations Concerning the African-Companies Petition.

¹¹³ Anon., Considerations Humbly Offered to the House of Commons by the Planters.

provides one such instance. Similarly, in Some Observations on Extracts Taken out of the Report from the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations (1708), the Royal African Company discusses friendly relationships with "natives" through permanent forts and settlements.¹¹⁶ One year later, the Company explained how separate traders gave the "natives" more leverage in their relationship with Europeans.¹¹⁷ In a letter to the Royal African Company from Captain Bernard Ladman in 1701, Ladman refers to "blacks being afraid to come aboard English ships," that were docked off the coast of Africa.118 In this case, "blacks" instead of "negroes" was used to refer to Africans who the British traded with. Interestingly, Ladman later refers to his coming away from the site with "24 Negroes," thus referring to Blacks on board trans-Atlantic ships as "negroes." In each of these cases, the word "native" is used when referring to African trading partners of the English. In other words, the British still expressed some distinctions between African trading partners, captured Africans, and slaves; however, they considered the majority of Africans "negroes," rather than "natives."

On the contrary, some writings blurred the line between "negroes" and "slaves," in which case a document might use the word "slave" to describe an African in Africa or the word "negro" to describe a slave in the West Indies. Some of these, however, provide a clear distinction between the words "negro" and "slave." On June 10, 1693, for example, the Calendar notes a slave uprising in the West Indies and refers to the aftermath in which soldiers, "fell upon all the negroes, free as well as slaves."¹¹⁹ In this instance, although the author refers to slaves as "negroes," he notes that the existence of a difference between free and enslaved Negroes. Moreover, on September 14, 1693, a Committee discussed rewarding "freedmen and slaves who behave well against the enemy."¹²⁰ Once again, the document notes a clear difference between emancipated Negroes and enslaved Negroes.

Moreover, using the word "negro" to mean the word "slave" represents one effect of the comparative lack of cultural and societal information about Africans. The Calendar of State Papers notes one instance in which a ship, "shipped 700 slaves at Guinea," and a disagreement between the Company's agents and a planter over how much the planter owed the agent for "negroes."¹²¹ In a letter from Sir Dalby Thomas to the Royal African Company in 1704, Thomas referred to

¹¹⁶ Royal African Company, Some Observations on Extracts taken out of the report from the lords commissioners for trade and plantations.

¹¹⁷ Royal African Company, *The Case of the Royal African Company*.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America:* Volume II: The Eighteenth Century, (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), 1.

¹¹⁹ Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers*, 82-3.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 105.

¹²¹ Ibid., 223, 288-9.

purchasing of both "slaves" and "negroes."¹²² A treaty between the Royal African and French Senegal Companies claims that both companies would assist each other, "against the Negros," using the term in a very general manner. Moreover, the "Project of the Assiento for Negroes Made between England and Spain, 1707" provides a great example of the development of the words by the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century. To begin, the document is described as a "Contract for Blacks or Negroes," thus leaving ambiguity in the meaning of both terms. Next, it attaches the two words, declaring that it is an "Agreement to import Negro slaves," showing some convergence in the meanings of both words.¹²³ A Report on the Trade to Africa in 1709 presents a similar pattern. At one point, the document comments, "the Charges of their working Negroes, employed in carrying the Goods of the Company and other Matters relating to their Trade, and in looking after their Slaves."¹²⁴ In this example, the document used both "negro" and "slave" in the same sentence to mean the same thing.

The Calendar of State Papers presents the words "negro" and "slave" as having similar meanings. In the minutes for November 14, 1693, it refers to the "negro trade," when referring to the slave trade. Moreover, the same entry uses the word "slaves" when talking about blacks in the West Indies. On November 9th, they once again referred to the trans-Atlantic slave trade as the "negro trade." In all, the writings of the Calendar of State Papers, letters between factors and the Company, and pamphlets portray Africans as slaves, whether they use the word "negro" or "slave;" they represent a converging of the words "negro" and "slave" and are emblematic of a lack of cultural information concerning Africans.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the convergence of the words "negro" and "slave" coupled with pamphlets and literary works which viewed the slave trade from an exclusively economic standpoint suggest that the English *Weltanschauung* underwent a significant change at the turn of the eighteenth century; however, any study concerning the British slave trade would be incomplete without a connection to British abolition. Put another way, the developments occurring in the British *Weltanschauung* in the decades enveloping the year 1700—in which the concept of race was being solidified so that Africans were viewed primarily as slaves—may have clouded the vision of Englishmen, helping delay a widespread moral inquiry until the end of the eighteenth century.

One way historians have explained this "delayed abolition" holds that the profits of the slave trade during previous years overshadowed the moral questions that surrounded it, an assertion that historian Eric

¹²² Donnan, Documents Illustrative: The Eighteenth Century, 6.

¹²³ Ibid., 16-21.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 53.

Williams championed.¹²⁵ In other words: willful ignorance. While the correspondence concerning the slave trade available in Donnan's Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America falls short of explicitly stating willful ignorance, such sentiments can be inferred from their writings. In "The Slave Trade at Calabar, 1700-1705," the author describes the "brutish creatures" that occupy the slave ships, as "cruel and bloody in their temper, always quarrelling, biting and fighting, and sometimes...murdering one another." Moreover, the author declares that slave captains "need pray for quick passage," in order to avoid losing too many slaves, and thus, "turn'd to a very bad market."126 In this case, the author hints that the health and well-being of slaves should be considered only in relation to the economic health and well-being of the captain and merchant. Numerous petitions to the House of Commons cite professions in England, Gun-makers, Cutlers, Powder-makers, Dyers, Packers, Setters, Drawers, Shipwrights, and Sail-makers, just to name a few, whose livelihoods have been "supported by Sale of their Goods, usually exported by the Royal African Company."127 In this case, Gun-makers, Cutlers, Powder-makers, etc. failed to question the morality of the slave trade because of its economic benefits.

Philip Gould hints at another possible aspect of delayed abolition in *Barbaric Traffic*, the enlightenment. Those few criticisms of the slave trade that did exist in the early eighteenth century focused on the literal inconsistency of the trade with biblical law. In the latter part of the century, this idea "gives away to the contemporary standards of enlightened civilization."¹²⁸ In other words, the ideas of an enlightened civilization implied just commerce, which was used instead of biblical law to combat the slave trade.

When integrating the content revealed in this study, it becomes apparent that another explanation is possible. In other words, the changes occurring in the collective English *Weltanschauung* at the turn of the eighteenth-century clouded the English mindset, which may have delayed an inquiry into the slave trade. As we have seen, many accounts of the slave trade tended to emphasize the economic aspect of the trade. The origins of this can be found in RAC correspondence with Sir Dalby Thomas, which reveals discussions that focused almost entirely on international competition and prices of gold and slaves.¹²⁹ Sir Thomas'

¹²⁵ Williams, Eric, *Capitalism and Slavery*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

¹²⁶ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 14-15.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 96-99.

¹²⁸ Philip Gould, *Barbaric Traffic: Commerce and Antislavery in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 19. Gould includes a further discussion of early inquiries into the slave trade during the period I focus on on pages 14-15. ¹²⁹ Davies, *Royal African Company*, 216, 226, 257, 259, 269, 274, 280.

Weltanschauung, therefore, clearly viewed the slave trade through an economic lens. Moreover, those who read pamphlets based on information conveyed by Sir Thomas and his counterparts would have experienced the slave trade through an economic lens. To add, pamphlets reflected correspondence in that they began to confuse the meanings of the words "negro" and "slave." When this happened on a grand scale, as it did during the pamphlet wars of the 1690s-1720s, the collective English Weltanschauung underwent a critical change. The end result was a generation of Englishmen who's first experience with the slave trade was through a businessman's rather than a humanitarian's perspective; Africans were slaves first and humans second, rather than the reverse. Consequently, when the British slave trade expanded exponentially in the first decades of the eighteenth century, the English were well prepared to accept the institution, instead of question it. That would be left for the women and men of a later generation.