# “Now Designed to the Worst”:

# English Captive Labor and Perceptions of Slavery in the Interregnum[1]

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[1] Thomas Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9," in *Diary of Thomas Burton Esq: Volume 4, March - April 1659*, ed. John Towill Rutt, 254-273, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/burton-diaries/vol4/pp254-273

## Abstract

In 1659 Parliament heard a petition alleging that 72 Englishmen arrested for participating in the Salisbury Rising had been enslaved in Barbados. These allegations were made and heard in the context of increased amounts of captive labor flooding into the Caribbean, some of it state sanctioned, and popular rhetorical use of 'slavery' to mean political oppression during the English Civil War. The petition was both shocking to the English nation, and made its claims using language the English would have already been very familiar with. By examining the development of norms of captivity for enslaved people on Barbados, analyzing the 1659 petition, and tracing the further development of norms of captivity after the Interregnum, this thesis will demonstrate how the instability of the Interregnum contributed to an unstable definition of 'slavery' in England in the seventeenth century.

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## Introduction

In March of 1659, the English Parliament heard a petition now known as "Englands Slavery, or Barbados Merchandize". Two English gentlemen, Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle, alleged that they and seventy others had been unjustly transported to and sold into slavery in Barbados.[2] Having been "made miserable, beyond expression or Christian imagination," they pleaded to Parliament to intercede on their behalf, to buy their freedom and offer reparations for what they positioned as an anomalous captivity. Such cruelty, they wrote, was utterly unheard of for Englishmen, particularly when said cruelty was enacted by their fellows.[3] These conditions, their status, their being Englishmen and Christians, and their innocence, were the basis of the petitioners' calls for restitution.

Rivers and Foyle's time in captivity began five years before. In 1654, they and the other petitioners had been arrested for taking part in the Salisbury Rising (also known as the Penruddock Uprising), a royalist revolt in the West of England.[4] Their involvement in the uprising varied, with some never making it to the city; Rivers himself was caught and arrested

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[2] Thomas Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9," in *Diary of Thomas Burton Esq: Volume 4, March - April 1659*, ed. John Towill Rutt, 254-273.; Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle, "Englands Slavery, or Barbados Merchandize: Represented in a Petition to the High Court of Parliament, by Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle Gentlemen, on Behalf of Themselves and Three-Score and Ten More Free-Born Englishmen Sold (Uncondemned) into Slavery: Together with Letters Written to Some Honourable Members of Parliament," (London:1659), pp 1-7.
The petition was published publicly as a pamphlet a couple of months after it was heard in Parliament, in April. It included some anonymous letters ostensibly written by other petitioners.
[3] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 7.
[4] As much as possible, all dates in this prospectus currently take the beginning of the year as 25 of March, as was the custom in England at the time. This may lead to some discrepancy with regards to dates: In the petition and Parliament's response, the Salisbury Uprising is stated as having occurred in 1654, while it is conventionally referred to as having taken place in 1655 (though some, such as Handler and Reilly, and Sheppard, use the 1654 date as well): Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273; Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 3.; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800*, (New York City: Verso, 1997), 248.; Jerome S. Handler and Matthew C. Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery' in the Caribbean: Enslaved Africans and European Indentured Servants in Seventeenth-Century Barbados." *NWIG: New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 91, no. 1/2 (2017): 35. Jill Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados: From Indentured Servants to 'Redlegs.'" *Caribbean Studies* 14, no. 3 (1974): 73.

for attempting to transport pistols to the uprising before he even arrived, according to Sir John Coppleston, who was responsible for the arrest.[5] This early arrest may have helped Rivers avoid a conviction: when indicted in front of a grand jury he was found in *Ignoramus*, due to not having been in Salisbury during the insurrection he was charged with having taken part in.[6] Others who later joined the 1659 petition were also acquitted, or never even indicted at all, as was the case with Foyle.[7] Regardless of whether they were found guilty, the men were kept in custody and subsequently transported to Plymouth, then to Barbados, where they were finally sold.[8]

The petition referred to this sale and captivity as slavery, but this label was contested by Parliament. The word 'sale' itself did not necessarily indicate 'slavery', as was understood at the time. Prisoners of war, like the petitioners, could be and were sold, with contractors as intermediaries, to other nations as soldiers. Servants could be sold as part of an estate.[9] Multiple members of Parliament, including Martin Noell, whom the petitioners allege was a benefactor of their sale, claimed that the petitioners went voluntarily to Barbados, and contrasted them with the (legally) enslaved Africans who labored in the colony at this time.[10] Parliamentary members

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[5] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.
Rivers had previously been in Charles I's army during the first part of the English Civil War, and had previously been a part of a royalist effort in 1648. These involvements likely contributed to the arrest, despite his inability to get to Salisbury: "House of Commons Journal Volume 5: 24 August 1648," in *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 5, 1646-1648*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1802), 681-682. *British History Online*, accessed March 10, 2023, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol5/pp681-682; Ian Gentles, "The Struggle for London in the Second Civil War," *The Historical Journal* 26, no. 2 (1983): 277–305. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2638764 .

[6] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273; Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 3; "State Papers, 1655: April (4 of 6)," in *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Volume 3, December 1654 - August 1655*, ed. Thomas Birch (London: Fletcher Gyles, 1742), 380-395. *British History Online*, accessed April 3, 2023, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/thurloe-papers/vol3/pp380-395.

[7] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", pp 3, 4.

[8] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273. ; Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", pp 3-5.

[9] Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800*, (New York City: Verso, 1997), pp 242-243, 247-248.

[10] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273. ; Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 5.

more sympathetic to the petitioners drew this comparison as well, but where Noell did so to demonstrate how Rivers and Foyle were not actually enslaved, those members who supported the petition did so to frame the captivity as uniquely barbarous, as significantly distinct from and abnormal compared to other forms of captive labor that Englishmen accepted and benefitted from every day.[11] This raises the question: was it? What were the bounds of slavery during the Interregnum, and what can "Barbados Merchandize" tell us about how prisoners of war, such as the petitioners, fit into those bounds?

Reading Rivers and Foyle's petition, and Parliament's subsequent response, as attempts to rhetorically convince fellow Englishmen of the aberrance or normality of the petitioners' captivity can provide valuable insight into what the two groups considered naturalized in their time. Attempting to properly contextualize the language of slavery used in the petition, the additional letters, and Parliament's response, discovering what framing or associations each group retreats from, can help detail attitudes in England toward captive labor, and especially slavery, during the Interregnum. It can also expose where areas of ambiguity or dispute lay. Liberty and captive labor were particularly fraught subjects in the wake of the English Civil War, and the divided politics of the Civil War may have contributed to an unsettled sense of what appropriate captive labor looked like. After years of republicans of varying degrees of extremity discoursing on liberty and oppression under the monarchy, political divisions splitting royalists and republicans during the English Civil War, and with an increased investment in the Caribbean by the Commonwealth, questions of unfreedom and captive labor would have been incredibly relevant to the Interregnum.[12]

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[11] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.

[12] John Donoghue, "Unfree Labor, Imperialism, and Radical Republicanism in the Atlantic World, 1630-1661", *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 1, no. 4 (December 2004): 48, 49, 62.; Two key examples of the Commonwealth's increased interest in the Caribbean being Cromwell's Western Design and the Commonwealth's blockade of and subsequent direct control over Barbados: Carla Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica: Oliver Cromwell's Bid for Empire*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), 5.;

Existing scholarship on the history of slavery in the English-speaking world has often focused on the seventeenth century as a significant period in the development of unfree labor. It was a time when the Americas were beginning to depend more heavily on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, but other forms of unfree labor, some largely White, were still in use, especially in Barbados.[13] Early Modern Europe increasingly developed more and more explicitly racial language to classify enslavement, and, beginning in the late-seventeenth century in Barbados, to legally and rhetorically separate White unfree labor from slavery.[14] Examining this period therefore allows historians to analyze shifts in English thought on slavery and other forms of unfree labor, as political ideas of freedom and protests against the coerced labor of White English people were expressed concurrently to the sudden growth of the English Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and new, explicitly racialized divisions between different forms of captive labor.[15]

Scholarship on the history of slavery in Western Europe and the Atlantic traces philosophical, religious, and legal constructions of slavery from antiquity into the early modern world. By following different lineages of thought, these histories are able to position unfree labor in the seventeenth century as part of an existing history of captive labor first established in the Roman Republic, while also juxtaposing this European tradition with the development of a new,

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Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 32.

[13] Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 32, 33. ; Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados": pp 72, 73.

Following the guide of the Online Chicago Manual of Style, both "White" and "Black" will be capitalized when referring to racial identity, for the sake of consistency: "Black and White: A Matter od Capitalization," Chicago Manual, published June 22, 2020, https://cmosshoptalk.com/2020/06/22/black-and-white-a-matter-of-capitalization/.

[14] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery,* 17.; Edward B. Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race in the Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2013): 429-431. Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 41.

[15] Christopher Hill, "Political Discourse in Early Seventeenth Century England," in *Politics and People in Revolutionary England*, ed. Colin Jones, Malyn Newitt, and Stephen Roberts, (New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986), pp 60-62. ; Maurice Goldsmith, "Levelling by Sword, Spade, and Word: Radical Egalitarianism in the English Revolution," in *Politics and People in Revolutionary England*, pp 65-69.; Carla Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp 220-221. ; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery,* 246. ; Donoghue, "Unfree Labor": 48,49. Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 438-446.

racialized plantation slavery.[16] Scholars such as William D Phillips, Jr, have established that Roman slave laws influenced medieval Europeans' legal constructions of slavery, while Robin Blackburn and David Brion Davis, two well-known scholars of Western slavery, have cited the Justinian Code as the root of conceptions of slavery that were inherited by the early modern period.[17] Davis has specifically noted the importance of the Justinian Code in laying the foundational legal rationale for the ideas of 'master' and 'slave'. He also emphasizes the importance of philosophical and cultural arguments stemming from even earlier in developing later slave societies' conceptions of slavery.[18] Roman law's insistence that enslaved people could be "bought and sold like any other chattel" was foundational to European slavery, but this influence was superseded in later years by other institutions, such as the Catholic Church.[19]

Religion's role, especially the Church's role, in supporting and preserving the existence of slavery into the thirteenth century and after is emphasized by Davis. Many Catholic saints discussed slavery as a form of divine punishment, with St Augustine specifically believing that the roles of 'master' and 'slave' were ordained by God, with slavery being a punishment and cure for sin.[20] Other historians have observed how Christian empires upheld legal doctrines first established by the Romans.[21] Originally, these enslaved populations included Christians enslaved by other Chrisitans.[22] It was only in the fifteenth century that the idea that Christian nations

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[16] William D Phillips Jr, "Continuity and Change in Western Slavery: Ancient to Modern Times", in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. M. L. Bush, (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1996), 71.
[17] Phillips, "Continuity and Change in Western Slavery", 72.; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery,* 35.; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 33, 55, 107.
[18] Davis especially cites Aristotle's idea of "natural slavery" as significant to future slave societies, including those of the early modern period. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, , 32, 33, 69, 70.; Robin Blackburn makes a similar point, see Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery,* 35.
[19] Robin Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," originally published in *William and Mary Quarterly* (3rd Series) LIV, no 1 (Williamsburg, VA, 1997), found in *The Worlds of Unfree Labor: From Indentured Servitude to Slavery, An Expanding World: The European Impact on World History, 1450-1800* Vol 16, ed. Colin A Palmer, (Brookfield, Vermont, 1998), pp 87, 93.
[20] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 94-98, 88.
[21] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 36-37.
[22] Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery", 87.

should not enslave other Christians began to be enforced throughout Europe, though the idea had found footing in some places such as the Iberian Peninsula, where Christians came into contact with Islamic rules against enslaving coreligionists, much earlier.[23] The Reformation of the sixteenth century, while leading to some rhetorical shift in the justifications for slavery, offered little challenge to the institution itself.[24]

There was another significant change in the existence of slavery in Western Europe: it decreased.[25] By the sixteenth century, slavery as it had existed previously was practically non-existent in England, though still legally and culturally possible.[26] These histories make clear that 'slavery' impacting Englishmen in the way Rivers and Foyle claim it did them in the seventeenth century is strange. Based on this historical precedent, slavery was acceptable for prisoners who had been captured in just wars, those who had committed a grave offense against the law of their nation, those associated with slavery according to Hamitic myth, and those who were not or had not been Christian.[27] Within these norms, the enslavement of Rivers and Foyle, possibly justifiable due to them having been captured as part of a revolt, would nevertheless have

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[23] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture,* 100, 101. ; Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," 90, 93.
[24] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture,* 106.
[25] The exception to this being the Iberian Peninsula, where the Reconquista motivated a continued investment in slavery, which continued even after the conquest had been completed. By 1500, about one tenth of the population of Lisbon and Seville were enslaved Africans: Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery", 98-101.
[26] Howard Temperley, "New World Slavery, Old World Slavery", in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. M. L. Bush, (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1996), 149; Phillips, "Continuity and Change in Western Slavery", 78, 82; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 56-59, 83.
[27] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 166; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 58, 74-75, 83.
I use the term "Hamitic myth" (sometimes referred to as Noachid myth) to refer to the story of Noah cursing one of Ham's sons, Canaan, to perpetual servitude following a transgression of Ham's. A biblical genealogy that posited Africans as descendents of Ham, and therefore ontologically subject to servitude and slavery, was sometimes used to discuss or justify racialized enslavement in early modern Europe, though the extent to which it was actually popularized and used during the seventeenth century is up for debate, with some scholars arguing that the myth became more frequently used in the 18th and 19th centuries: Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 65-73. One of the more well-known works that used Hamitic myth to justify ontological slavery for specifically Africans is Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus*, published in 1625: Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 22.

been unjustifiable due to their status as Christian gentlemen, even within the newly developing American slavery.

Histories that analyze Western European slavery often ask: how does European slavery differ from the American slavery of the early modern period? This focus on transition from a pre-existing European slavery to the new slavery of the West Indies and Americas provides key insights into the lineage of slavery, but may not always recognize the English Civil War as a disruptive enough event to justify an analysis of its specific impact on the unsettled questions of captivity at the time.[28] Despite the failure to rid England of its monarchy over the long term, the English Civil War and the period of the Interregnum were indeed deeply influential in framing discussions of liberty, freedom, and revealing instabilities and ambiguities in regards to how captive labor was thought of during the early stages of English colonization of the Americas.

The comparison of European slavery to American slavery tends to also entail an analysis of transition from other forms of unfree labor to racialized chattel slavery. Labor was consistently needed in England's Caribbean colonies. Before the sugar revolution of the 1640s, voluntary indentured servitude was the primary source of labor in the English Caribbean, though enslaved people of color also labored there in smaller numbers.[29] Various forms of unfree labor existed on a spectrum alongside what was legally defined as slavery. Convict labor, involuntary indentured servitude, impressment, and the expropriation and subsequent indenture of colonized Irish and Scottish populations were all important sources of labor in England's colonial holdings in the seventeenth century, especially in Barbados.[30] Analysis of these populations, such as Jill

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[28] Simon P. Newman, *Freedom Seekers: Escaping from Slavery in Restoration London*, (London, University of London Press, 2022), xxvi.
[29] Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'", 32, 33; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 235, 241, 242.; Anna Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting: Seventeenth Century English Penal Policy and 'Superfluous' Populations" in *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, Ca. 1500-1914*, by John Donoghue and Evelyn P Jennings, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 159.
[30] Anna Suranyi, "Indenture", 132, 159; Donoghue, "Unfree Labor," 47-68.

Sheppard's examination of the impoverished White population of Barbados, tends to place them within the context of growing racial slavery, tracing the development of racial stratification and the resulting class dynamics within Barbados.[31] Indenture in Barbados is often studied by focusing on Irish or Scottish populations transported to the island.[32] This, though helpful in establishing which populations could be used as unfree labor in the English world, does fall short when analyzing prisoners of the English Civil War (and subsequent insurrections). Because the Irish and Scottish were already commonly indentured due to their ethnicity, studying the indenture of Irish or Scottish prisoners of war does not necessarily help in understanding the indenture of English prisoners of war.

Anna Suranyi's examination of state-sponsored involuntary indentured servitude is significant in its analysis of the indenture of specific ethnicities *alongside* the indenture of prisoners of war while not conflating the two. Her work traces the Commonwealth's engagement in the transport of captive labor alongside its attempts at legislating against certain forms of transport in order to determine the causes of (and practices associated with) state-sponsored programs of involuntary indenture.[33] In doing so, it provides valuable insight into English attitudes toward unfree labor in the Interregnum, and the Commonwealth's specific struggles. John Donoghue's work is even more specific in its analysis of the importance of the question of unfree labor post-English Civil War, and how different republican sects attempted to exert

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[31] Jill Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados: From Indentured Servants to 'Redlegs.'" *Caribbean Studies* 14, no. 3 (1974): 71–94.
[32] Christopher Gerrard, Pam Graves, Andrew Millard, Richard Annis and Anwen Caffell, *Lost Lives New Voices: Unlocking the Stories of the Scottish Soldiers from the Battle of Dunbar*, (Havertown, PA: Oxbow Books, 2018); Sheppard's "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados" also does this, while Handler and Reilly's "Contesting 'White Slavery'" is in part a reaction to Irish-focused analyses of captive labor that conflate White indenture with the slavery experienced by Africans as part of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Their work attempts to combat claims of widespread "white slavery" in the Caribbean by clearly presenting what legal realities differentiated indentured servants from enslaved people, with a specific focus on seventeenth century Barbados: Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 30-55.
[33] Anna Suranyi, "Indenture", pp 132-159.

influence over the Commonwealth's use of unfree labor.[34] The attempts of royalists, such as Rivers and Foyle, are less examined.

Despite this, the "Barbados Merchandize" pamphlet has been a frequent site of analysis. Handler and Reilly, for example, in their article "Contesting White Slavery", consider the petition as a case in which a metaphorical 'slavery' is invoked to assert the legal recourse available to servants and unavailable to the enslaved.[35] They refer to the general 'seventeenth century' as a period that made use of this metaphor, not engaging with the ways in which allusions to slavery and tyranny may have been especially significant in the wake of the English Civil War.[36] Additionally, presenting the 'slavery' of Rivers and Foyle as *purely* metaphorical elides some of the nuance of the seventeenth century use of slavery. Due to the specific temporal context of Rivers and Foyle's petition, and due to the ways in which 'slavery' was invoked in the seventeenth century outside of its meaning of chattel slavery, a more contextualized analysis of the language of enslavement is necessary to fully understand the implications of the language of "Barbados Merchandize", regardless of whether Rivers and Foyle, and their co-petitioners, could arguably be more accurately described as indentured servants.[37]

Some scholars have focused on the Restoration, and especially English literary and cultural production, to describe the development of new forms of racialized slavery. Ramesh Mallipeddi has analyzed the depiction and commodified fetishism of the enslaved Black body of

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[34] Donoghue, "Unfree Labor," 47-68.
[35] Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 30-55.
[36] Donoghue and Blackburn, in contrast, do understand the English Civil War to have been deeply influential on 'languages of liberty': Donoghue, "Unfree Labor", 47-68; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery,* 246; Newman, *Freedom Seekers*, 56; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'", 38.
[37] The actual state of Rivers, Foyle, and the other prisoners is usually taken by historians to be servitude. (See: Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery,* 248; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 35; Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 211.) However, since some members of Parliament seemed to believe the men were actually enslaved, or at least that their petition should be considered as describing a condition that could lead to a similar form of slavery as that faced by people of color, the use of the language of slavery is very important. See: Thomas Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9," in *Diary of Thomas Burton Esq: Volume 4, March - April 1659*, ed. John Towill Rutt, 254-273.

the titular character in prominent seventeenth century author Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*. Contrasting the focus of the original work, as Susan Amussen does, with Thomas Southerne's play adaptation demonstrates the hold White captivity had on the English imagination.[38] Both Mallipeddi and Amussen are able to observe the increased racialization of slavery and detail conceptions of slavery in England during the Restoration.

Simon P Newman's more historical approach explores the lives of enslaved people of color within Restoration England by examining the development and usage of "runaway slave" ads, created as a genre of advertisement for the first time in this period. Despite much of his work taking place during the relative stability of the Restoration, Newman does acknowledge the English Civil War as a time in which the tropes and boundaries of a new racialized slavery were being established not just in the colonies, but in England. His analysis of the developing language of slavery specifically is key to establishing the ways in which 'slavery' was a semantically ambiguous term in the mid- to late seventeenth century.[39] Newman, along with Carla Gardina Pestana, another scholar of captive labor, is the exception in viewing the English Civil War and the Interregnum as an unsettled and unstable period in the development of ideas about captive labor.[40] Some other works do not. This is true even of works about the indentured servitude of rebel prisoners during the Restoration, such as Mark S. Quintanilla's article on prisoners indentured in the wake of the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685, or studies of changes in convict labor policies, such as Abbot Smith's work on the transportation of convicts in the

[38]Ramesh Mallipeddi, "Spectacle, Spectatorship, and Sympathy in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* vol 45, no. 4 (Summer 2012): 475-496; Susan B Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko: Adaptations and Offshoots*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p 3, 20, 29, 30, 34; Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 189; Catherine Ingrassia, "Aphra Behn, Captivity, and *Emperor of the Moon*." *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700* 41, no. 2 (2017): 53–68.
[39] Newman, *Freedom Seekers*, 32, 34, 37, 43, xxvi, 54-56.
[40] Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution,* 183-212.

seventeenth century.[41] Parliament and the English public's response to "Barbados Merchandize" both indicate that the political divisions that came out of the English Civil War were a large part of the debate about whether the captivity of Rivers, Foyle, and the other petitioners was legitimate or not.[42] This would seem to indicate that there was a destabilization of definitions of captivity and slavery, exacerbated by the English Civil War. This destabilization is worthy of analysis and discussion, and is the main focus of this thesis.

Taking Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle's 1659 petition as my central primary source allows for a study of the language surrounding the involuntary indenture of a group of people who would not normally be considered acceptable captive labor due to status and circumstance. "Barbados Merchandize" bases its argument for restitution on the idea that this specific captive labor is unacceptable, due to the men being uncondemned in court, and being Englishmen and Christians.[43] The response to this petition indicates the ways in which Parliament and the English public believe this to be true, and the ways in which Parliament is attempting to navigate the divisions caused by the English Civil War and their understanding of what captive labor should be.[44] Both the petitioners and those in Parliament who are against the petition have a clear interest in making their arguments seem as natural as possible. The petition asserts, for example, that many of the petitioners never "bore arms in their lives", and that they were "pickt up, as they travelled upon their lawful occasions", never having been in Salisbury at

[41] Mark S Quintanilla, "Late Seventeenth-Century Indentured Servants in Barbados." *The Journal of Caribbean History* 27, no. 2 (1993): 114; Abbot Smith, "The Transportation of Convicts to the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (1934): 233, 248; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, p 58.
[42] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.; Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 211.
[43] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", pp 3, 4, 5, 7.
[44] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9," and "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 30 March 1658-9," in *Diary of Thomas Burton Esq: Volume 4, March - April 1659*, ed. John Towill Rutt, 254-273, 300-309.

all.[45] These arguments should be regarded skeptically, as should a member of Parliament's argument that when the men left Plymouth for Barbados they had gone mostly cheerfully.[46]

There are clear limitations in trying to use either petition or the remarks of Parliament as recorded by Thomas Burton as accounts of actual, objective historical events. Happily, determining the actual facts of the petitioners' arrests and indenture is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I will examine the petition and Parliament's response as rhetorical arguments, designed to convince an audience of the same cultural background of the relative normalcy or aberrance of the situation of the captive petitioners. How does each group reference captivity? What allusions do they draw on to make their case?

In order to successfully examine these questions, I first establish the history of English indentured labor in the pre-Civil War seventeenth century in Chapter 1, with a special focus on Barbados, the site of Rivers and Foyle's captivity. With context in place, Chapter 2 centers on the petition and Parliament's response. Chapter 2 has two dimensions; first, the alternate title of "Barbados Merchandize", "Englands Slavery", as well as the use of the term 'slavery' throughout the petition and Parliament's response, necessitates a discussion of the semantic ambiguity of the language of slavery in seventeenth century England, and particularly during the English Civil War and Interregnum. Because of the semantic ambiguity of 'slavery' it is also worth examining forms of slavery, most notably Mediterranean slavery, that the Englishmen writing the petition would have been familiar with but that are often overlooked by Atlantic scholars. Chapter 2 also delves into the language of the petition itself, as well as Parliament's response. Chapter 3 of this thesis is dedicated to examining captive labor, especially White captive labor, and the language of slavery after the Interregnum in order to demonstrate that the

[45] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 3.
[46] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.

instability of definitions of ‘slavery’ that came to a head during the Interregnum continued into the Restoration.

The development of new systems of captive labor in the English Caribbean, still fairly new, in the seventeenth century created vague and unstable bounds of captive labor, boundaries that only became more confused through the persistent use of slavery as metaphor throughout the English Civil War. “Barbados Merchandize” and Parliament’s response demonstrate these ambiguities well, as seventy-two Englishmen’s claims of enslavement run up against Parliament’s understandings of what their forced transport policies and Caribbean slavery look like in the Interregnum.

## "Restrain the Wandring"[47]

Barbados was first colonized by the English in 1627.[48] By that time Barbados was uninhabited, with its indigenous population having been killed or otherwise removed from the island by the Spanish.[49] Enslaved Africans and Guianese Araraks, who had traveled to the island with the English, worked the island, though prior to the 1640s the enslaved population was relatively small. Much of the labor was instead supplied by White indentured servants.[50] In Barbados's early colonial years this indentured labor was usually voluntary. Most of the first indentured servants of Barbados came from England, along with a few from Ireland, and all were from the most impoverished parts of the working class.[51] Collected for a few shillings per person and attracted, perhaps, by the seeming availability of land and the promise of a small plot to farm once the terms of their indenture had ended, hundreds of indentured servants traveled to Barbados throughout the 1630s.[52] During this time, Barbados largely attempted to cultivate tobacco, alongside other small crops colonists hoped would be lucrative, but never with much success. Its tobacco was simply too poor in quality compared to that of England's other colonies. Barbados's attempts at tobacco cultivation were further stymied by a 1631 Act by the Privy

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[47] The "Act to restrain the wandring of Servants and Negro's" was a Barbadian law that regulated the movements of servants and enslaved people in the seventeenth century: Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race", 437.
[48] Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 32.
[49] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges,* 24.
[50] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 229; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 33-34; Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados": 72-73.
[51] Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados": 72.
[52] Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados": 72-73; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 32-34; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 229.

Council, limiting the amount of the crop that Barbados could legally export and placing a duty on the rest.[53]

By the 1640s Barbados had found a new, more successful prize crop: sugar. The subsequent sugar boom led to the rise of plantations on the island, with the numbers of small farmers who had owned land there decreasing as wealthy planters consolidated the desirable land on the island into a few hands. Simultaneously, the new process of sugar production created a need for far more laborers.[54] To meet this demand for labor, English flag ships began selling enslaved people to England's Caribbean colonies, including to Barbados. The first slave ship to leave Barbados for the African coast did so in 1645, and for the rest of the seventeenth century, Barbados was a regular receiver of enslaved labor via the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Caribbean colonists also captured Spanish slave ships, taking their human cargo as their own, or bought people from other colonies, such as the Cape Verdes. By 1653, the enslaved population of the island had exploded, increasing by around 100 times what it had been in 1638, before the sugar revolution began. Beginning in the 1650s, enslaved laborers outnumbered indentured servants on Barbados, and by the 1660s the island had a Black majority.[55]

People of color on Barbados were generally considered distinct from the White populations, though this distinction was complicated. 'White' as a unifying group identifier was not heavily adopted in the English Caribbean for much of the early seventeenth century. Instead, other terms, such as 'Christian', were used to attempt to delineate between free colonists and unfree people. By the 1600s, the fifteenth century idea that Christians should not enslave other Christians had, in large part, become firmly embedded in Western European ideas of slavery, and

[53] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 229; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 33-34; Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges,* 28.
[54] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 231; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 32-34.
[55] "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade - Database Results," Slave Voyages, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 26, 46, 223; Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 47; Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 434.

'Christian' became England's term of choice to differentiate itself and other, similar European nations from the non-Christian people of color it encountered and found acceptable to enslave.[56] These terms, like 'Christian' often imperfectly defined free populations, excluding some populations that would later be included by the term 'White', or leaving the status of some populations vague. On Barbados, for example, not all of the un-enslaved people were Christian. There was a Jewish population on Barbados dating from the 1650s, some of whom were slave-holders and some of whom were indentured.[57] Clearly, being Christian was not the sole indicator of free or unfree status. Still, English planters in Barbados were wary of attempts to convert the indigenous groups they encountered or the people they enslaved, as they worried that conversion to Christianity could be used as a route to freedom. The possibility that conversion might be argued to free an enslaved individual, or that the conversion process might allow for communication and cooperation between enslaved people, could not be tolerated.[58] Consequently, enslaved people of color who expressed interest in or attempted to convert to Christianity in Barbados were often directly denied the option or otherwise blocked from conversion.[59]

In the early and mid-seventeenth century, the racialization of slavery, with the automatic assumption of slavery for people of color and freedom for a 'White' group was not in progress, but not complete. Distinctions between Africans who would serve for life and those who would

[56] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture,* 100, 101. ; Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," 90, 93; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 166; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 58, 74-75, 83.
[57] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 31, 136; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 230; Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race", 434, 439-447.
Jewish people's place in paradigms of slavery was often vague. Jewish people were generally forbidden from having Christian slaves, and Christian writing and thought tended to define Jewish people as "perpetual slaves" or "the slaves of all nations" during the medieval period. Despite this religious definition, persecution of Jewish communities in Europe did not tend to take the form of enslavement: Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 46-49.
[58] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 115.
[59] In order to further guard against the possibility of conversion, some colonies, such as Jamaica, wrote into law that conversion would not entail freedom for enslaved people: Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 60, 78, 115.

serve for the length of a contract were made in a 1636 law, though it is unclear whether these contracts were ever made.[60] In a 1652 law, Barbados distinguishes between “White or Black” guests, but also indicates that both White and Black people could be unfree, with the substance of the law legislating against hosting guests who were not free-men.[61] In the same set of laws is an “Act to restrain the wandring of Servants and Negro’s”, in which the term “Negro” is used synonymously with “slave”, and means “African”. Enslaved Africans were still legally enslaved for life, and enslaved Africans who ‘absconded’ from the plantations they were held in were whipped and escorted back to the plantation they had left. Once enslaved, Africans had no legal rights.[62] The racialization of slavery on Barbados throughout the mid-seventeenth century was becoming more real, but, theoretically, legal space existed for free Black people on the island.

Even as Barbadians enslaved large numbers of Africans to support their sugar industry, the rising population of Black people on the island made plantation owners nervous. Plantations’ control over their enslaved laborers was always resisted, and many enslaved people tried to escape. A visitor to Barbados in the 1640s reported to his readers that there were “many hundreds Rebell Negro slaves in the woods” of the island. Through his description it is clear that the escape of enslaved people was of significant concern to Barbadian plantation owners.[63] Maintaining the White population of Barbados was seen as a necessity in order to ensure the safety of the island and to control the enslaved population.[64] However, just as the enslaved population was growing as a result of the sugar boom, the voluntary migration of indentured servants was slowing. As the plantation system reduced the amount of land available to freed

[60] The same law also states that both “Negroes and Indians, that came here to be sold, should serve for Life”. Prior to the complete racialization of slavery in Barbados, references to “Indian” or “Indyene” slavery seems to have been more common: Rugemer, “The Development of Mastery and Race”, 433.
[61] Rugemer, “The Development of Mastery and Race”, 436.
[62] Rugemer, “The Development of Mastery and Race”: 433, 434, 436-437; Handler and Reilly, “Contesting ‘White Slavery’”: 39.
[63] Rugemer, “The Development of Mastery and Race”: 435, 440, 444.
[64] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 88,89.

servants on Barbados, indenture started to be compensated only with sums of money (or the equivalent in sugar), a much less attractive prospect.[65] To address its demographic concerns, then, Barbados turned to involuntarily indentured servants.[66]

In the early seventeenth century, involuntary indentured servants were largely impoverished or otherwise ‘undesirable’ populations, with their indenture meant to serve the triple purpose of moral reform, supplying labor to cash-crop colonies, and addressing England’s fears of overpopulation.[67] Colonization was first proposed as a way for England to export its impoverished population in 1610, with a proposed effort to colonize Ulster. A decade later, proponents of this idea would turn their attention to the Americas, putting forward Virginian plantations as a place for England to send its unwanted impoverished population. Vagrants and convicts made up the bulk of the involuntarily indentured servants England sent to its colonies, but the group also included those who had been kidnapped by people known as ‘spirits’ and subsequently shipped as labor to the colonies in the Caribbean or Americas.[68] The English lower classes were in general vulnerable to spiriting, but beggars and children and children were especially at risk. By 1645 the practice of spiriting children had become such a concern that Parliament was obliged to take action, creating an ordinance against child-stealing and ordering ships in the Thames and Downs to be searched for kidnapped children. The ordinance does not seem to have been effective, as spiriting remained a prevalent concern in legal measures through the 1690s.[69]

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[65] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 231; Handler and Reilly, “Contesting ‘White Slavery’”: 32-34.
[66] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 88,89.
[67] Suranyi, “Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting”, 133, 134; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 22, 23, 24, 43.
[68] Suranyi, “Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting”, 133, 135, 136, 143.
[69] Timothy J. Shannon, “A ‘Wicked Commerce’: Consent, Coercion, and Kidnapping in Aberdeen’s Servant Trade,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2017): 437–66; https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.74.3.0437., 438; Abbott Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776*, (Virginia: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 71; John Wareing, “Preventive and Punitive Regulation in Seventeenth-Century Social Policy: Conflicts of Interest and the Failure to Make ‘Stealing and Transporting

Barbados was a particularly vivid site of unfree labor in the minds of the English public. People who had been kidnapped or conned by spirits and then sent to the West Indies were referred to as having been 'barbadosed'.[70] Even before the 1640s, accounts of maltreatment of indentured servants on the island had made their way back to England, and Barbados continued to loom large in the English imagination as the century went on. In 1656, two prisoners at Exeter petitioned Parliament to change their assigned destination of indenture from Barbados to Virginia, tactfully arguing that Virginia would hold "better accommodation and supplies" for them.[71]

Barbados's reputation was in large part deserved. Servants on Barbados were subject to harsh restrictions that sought to govern nearly every aspect of their lives. They, alongside enslaved people, could be seized by creditors in order to pay off the debt of the person who owned their contract, and servants could likewise be inherited through wills or sold to other planters for the remainder of their contracts.[72] Contracts could be extended as legal punishment.[73] Servants were not allowed to marry or become pregnant, and those who did faced an extension of their terms of indenture.[74] Irish servants who had ended their terms of indenture could be whipped and re-sentenced to servitude for visiting plantations where their countrymen worked.[75]

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Children, and Other Persons' a Felony, 1645-73," *Social History* 27, no. 3 (2002): 291-293, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4286908.

[70] Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 135, 136, 143.
Interestingly, spiriting created a more modern term as well: 'kidnap' first appeared in the seventeenth century, specifically in reference to carrying off children to American plantations: Shannon, "A 'Wicked Commerce'": 438.

[71] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 60; "America and West Indies: January 1656," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies: Volume 1, 1574-1660*, ed. W. Noel Sainsbury (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1860), 434-436.

[72] Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 437; Quintanilla, "Late Seventeenth-Century Indentured Servants": 119; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 39.

[73] Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 441.

[74] Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 437.
Alternatively, one could provide another indentured servant to the master of the female servant who had been impregnated. Susan Amussen makes the point that this effectively sets a 'price' for sexual interaction with femal servants that only other wealthy men of property could afford to pay. This type of 'pricing' was not the custom in England, and, as Amussen notes, commodified women's sexuality on the island: Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 125

[75] Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 186.

Until 1661, servants and enslaved people on Barbados were governed by the same laws, created from 1649-1652, in the wake of the siege of Barbados by England's revolutionary government. Servants, though, were considered subject to the legal system of enforcement, and thus were entitled to some legal protections, while enslaved people were not.[76]

These conditions led to high degrees of resistance, and despite planters' hopes to defend against Black uprisings with a larger White population, this resistance could, sometimes, manifest as solidarity with the enslaved people they worked alongside. Irish servants were apparently "out in rebellion" alongside some Black enslaved people in 1655, and there are accounts of other alleged servant-slave revolts.[77] Richard Lignon, probably the most prominent chronicler of early modern Barbados, described planters feeling so threatened by the idea of servant rebellion that some had turned their homes into fortifications.[78]

While Barbados's demands for labor and English concerns about a bloated impoverished population drove involuntary indentured servitude in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, the English Civil War created new incentives for forced indenture. From the beginning of the War of the Three Kingdoms to the end of the Interregnum, the seventeenth century was marked by ever increasing demands for soldiers and other men to support England's military efforts. Charles I's need for soldiers in his war against Scotland prompted the largest conscription drive in English history up to that point, for which impoverished Englishmen were consequently

[76] While the siege of Barbados had begun and ended before Rivers and Foyle ever arrived, it is significant to this paper due to the demonstration that the English Civil War was, in fact, heavily present on the island. Barbados underwent its own civil war from 1649-1651, following the regicide of Charles I. Royalists gained power on the island, forcing out many Parliamentarian planters. The island remained incalcitrant and opposed to the Commonwealth through 1650 and a trade embargo, which some of the planters described as an attempt to force them into a "Tedious & slavish life". In 1651, a Commonwealth fleet arrived in Barbados and successfully brought England's most valuable colony back under control. Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 93-108; Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 436.
The exception to this is the law governing servants and enslaved people who left their plantations without permission. While both were punished, very different punishments were allotted for each group: Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 436, 437, 438.
[77] Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 436; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 36.
[78] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 127.

impressed into military service. People in England saw this scale of impressment and coerced labor as aberrant, or at the very least deeply unwelcome. Several pamphlets during this time, including one titled 'Anti-Cavalierism', explicitly linked the king's practice of impressment to a form of "political slavery", associating the literal form of unfreedom found in impressment with a rhetorical form of unfreedom in order to critique the reign of Charles I.[79]

The revolutionary government of the Interregnum would uphold and further this extension of coerced labor. Parliamentary Acts advised transporting the poor out of England even once the Commonwealth had been established and the population had dropped as a result of the English Civil War.[80] Parliament may have been concerned with the relative impoverished population rather than the absolute number of impoverished people; while the overall population of England decreased during this time, the rising cost of living in London during the Interregnum led to increased numbers of 'undesirable' impoverished people and vagrants. These people were subsequently swept into prisons like Bridewell, and were then sent to the colonies as unfree labor. Similarly, the Irish Conquest undertaken in the 1640s led to the expropriation of thousands of Irish people, many of whom were then also transported to the colonies as indentured servants.[81]

Parliament's continued desire to transport 'undesirable' populations to its colonies may have been in part motivated by those who profited from the transport having a high amount of influence in the government. Take, for example, Martin Noell, a sugar planter and the owner of plantations in multiple colonies (and the man alleged to have conducted the sale of the petitioners of "Barbados Merchandize"), as well as a government contractor.[82] Noell served on

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[79] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes,* 88, 112, 115, 116.
[80] Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 134, 136.
[81] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 210, 211.
[82] Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 139; Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 5.

London's Common Council, was on Parliament's committees addressing "poor relief and colonial affairs", and was likely one of the writers of the Navigation Act of 1651, which attempted to limit colonial trade with foreign nations. In doing so, the Act also helped eliminate foreign competition for the slave trade in English colonies and allowed greater English access to the slave trade.[83] After the establishment of the Navigation Act the English surpassed the Dutch as the largest supplier of enslaved people to Barbados. By the late 1650s, Noell was a director of the East India Company, which was itself linked to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.[84] Noell had also helped to fund the Irish Conquest, and was subsequently awarded expropriated Irish land.[85] He directly transported forced labor to the colonies; in addition to the seventy-two petitioners of "Barbados Merchandize", in 1656 he was contracted to ship 1,200 men located in Ireland and Scotland to Jamaica.[86] Noell also involuntarily indentured Scottish prisoners captured at the Battle of Dunbar, with the intention of sending some to Barbados.[87] The transport of captive labor to the English colonies was a wide-reaching industry that made some men extremely rich, even while they reduced the freedom and personhood of thousands.

Interregnum use of unfree labor was also motivated by the same need for military men that had motivated Charles I. The 1649 conscription effort necessary to support the Irish Conquest surpassed the size of Charles I's conscription drive for war in Scotland, and both were

[83] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 214, 220,222; Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 139.
[84] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 215.
[85] John Donoghue, "The Unfree Origins of English Empire-Building in the Seventeenth Century Atlantic", in *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, Ca. 1500-1914*, by John Donoghue and Evelyn P Jennings, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 119.
[86] In this contract, Noell was set to transport these men at a cost of 5*l.* 10*s.* per head. Captain Hatsell, who was present at the transport of the petitioning men of "Barbados Merchandize", claimed that the price to ship those men was about 4*l.* 10*s.* This cost is relatively high, and consistent with the average cost for transport, taken to be about £5 per head: Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 137, 139; Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.
[87] Christopher Gerrard, "Box 6.2: Martin Noel", in Christopher Gerrard, Pam Graves, Andrew Millard, Richard Annis and Anwen Caffell, *Lost Lives New Voices: Unlocking the Stories of the Scottish Soldiers from the Battle of Dunbar*, (Havertown, PA: Oxbow Books, 2018), 166-167.

soon outpaced by the effort necessary to build out the force for Cromwell's Western Design.[88] The Western Design was an attempt to gain land in the Spanish Caribbean, the first time a colonizing effort of this kind was undertaken by the English government rather than a private company or group.[89] It was a massive undertaking which required sailors and soldiers, many of whom were impressed into service by press gangs.[90] Individual and small-scale resistance to press gangs was common in seaside towns, and larger mutinies were not unheard of. In 1654, soldiers set to sail for the West Indies as part of the Design received rumors that they were really to be sold as slaves in a foreign nation. They mutinied. The group cited the "Agreement of the People", stating that the republican document forbade impressment and challenging the new revolutionary government's use of the same unfree labor that had been utilized by the now-dead king.[91] Slave trading would indeed occur as part of the Design, though not in the way the mutineers feared. When the English navy arrived, under-supplied, in the West Indies, it traded enslaved people it had seized from Dutch ships in return for supplies.[92] Later, when the soldiers finally arrived in newly-seized Jamaica, they found themselves not only impressed into military service, but coerced into other forms of labor as well. This led to another revolt.[93]

Following the Civil War, some of those forced into indenture were prisoners of war who had been captured by the Commonwealth. Cromwell's government began to export its rebel prisoners elsewhere in 1648. In 1655, the process of sending prisoners to the West Indies was made more complete: prisoners held in Tynemouth Castle, Plymouth Castle, and Marshalsea

[88] Donoghue, "Unfree Labor," 59.
[89] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 33, 39.
[90] Though impressment forced men into labor, they were, in fact, paid, though less than other seamen: Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, p 246. Donoghue, "Unfree Labor," 59.
[91] Donoghue, "Unfree Labor": 59-60.
[92] Donoghue, "Unfree Labor": 61; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 234.
[93] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 199, 200

prison were to be sent to Barbados if they were not tried for execution.[94] Seen as unfit to remain in England, rebel prisoners may have at one point made up almost half of the White population of Barbados, despite not really being wanted there either.[95] They had already proven to be rebellious and insurrectionist, and were therefore seen as particularly troublesome, perhaps dangerous, servants. Rebel prisoners were given indenture contracts, usually for seven to ten years, once they were already in the process of transport aboard ships destined for the West Indies.[96]

These programs of captive labor faced opposition from the laborers themselves, but also from the English public, and particularly from radical groups within Interregnum England. Many Quakers opposed the expropriation and transportation of the Irish from Ireland, while Fifth Monarchists, another political-religious group, firmly opposed the impressment of seamen. Venner's Revolt, a rebellion against Cromwell's government made up of more than a hundred people, was motivated in part by opposition to the government's policies of expropriation and impressment. Even outside of radical groups, coerced labor policies were unpopular. Crowds in port cities would attack press gangs in order to help the men who were being pressed to escape.[97] This opposition existed in a context of growing captive labor in the English colonies, and a public sense of precarity: the English Caribbean was a site of extreme captivity, and many people were vulnerable to being sent there. The fears of the English public created the ideal environment for "Barbados Merchandize" to generate outcry, and the language of the English Civil War would help to push it there as well.

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[94] Seemingly, it did not much matter *where* these people were transported to, as long as it was outside England. Some were conscripted into service in the English navy in the Caribbean, while others were, strangely, sold to Spain or France: Gerrard et. al., *Lost Lives New Voices,* 164; Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados": 73; Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 151; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 247.
[95] Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 35.
[96] Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 141, 151.
[97] Donoghue, "Unfree Labor": 47, 48, 59, 60, 64.

# ENGLANDS SLAVERY, OR BARBADOS MERCHANDIZE;

Reprefented In a Petition to the High and Honourable Court of Parliament, by *Marcellus Rivers* and *Oxenbridge Foyle* Gentlemen, on the behalf of themfelves and threefcore and ten more Free-born *Englifh*-men fold (uncondemned) into flavery:

*Together with Letters written to fome Honourable Members of Parliament.*

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Exodus 26. 1. 21. 16.

*And, God fpake all thefe words, faying, He that ftealeth a man and felleth him, Or if he be found in his hand, He fhall furely be put to death.*

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LONDON,

Printed in the Eleventh year of *Englands* Liberty. 1659.

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## “Barbados Merchandize” and Rhetorical Slavery

Rivers and Foyle’s petition was heard by Parliament in March of 1659. Soon later, in April, “Englands Slavery, or Barbados Merchandize”, a pamphlet form of the petition, began circulating.[99] The petition as printed in the pamphlet was largely identical to the one heard in Parliament, though the pamphlet did include several additional anonymous letters, allegedly from other petitioners.[100]

The petition begins by disclosing how the petitioners became captive: they were all captured due to them allegedly having taken part in the Salisbury Rising of 1654. Some of them were charged and acquitted, and others were never charged at all. Regardless, all of them found themselves in prison, and subsequently Plymouth, where they boarded a ship that was destined for Barbados. They singled out Sheriff Copleston and Captain John Cole as having been involved in this stage of their transport. Their destination was apparently kept from them, as Rivers and Foyle write that they were “lockt under decks (and guards) amongst horses…and never till they came to the Island, knew, whether [sic] they were going.”[101]

Having arrived in Barbados, the petitioners then claim they were sold “to the most inhumane and barbarous persons” for 1,550 pound-weight of sugar per person, as the “goods and chattels of *Martin Noel* [sic], and Major *Thomas Alderne of London*, and Captain *Henry Hatsell* of Plymouth.”[102] While the term “chattel” could have been appropriately used to refer to servants

[98] Rivers and Foyle, “Barbados Merchandize”, p1. Image reproduced by courtesy of British Library.
[99] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9”, 254-273; Rivers and Foyle, “Barbados Merchandize”, p 1; Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, p 211.
[100] The differences between the petition and the pamphlet are largely grammatical, though the pamphlet states that the petitioners were taken from their prisons “without the least preparation” and the version read in Parliament says they were taken “without the least provocation”. All the language regarding ‘slavery’ is the same between the two versions: Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9”, 254-273; Rivers and Foyle, “Barbados Merchandize”, p 4.
[101] Rivers and Foyle, “Barbados Merchandize”, p 4.
[102] *Ibid.*, p 5.

during the terms of their indenture, it carries with it greater connotations of slavery, and, significantly, the petitioners seem unaware of their period of indenture. One of the letters accompanying the pamphlet "Barbados Merchandize" states this explicitly, claiming that the petitioners were kept unaware of the terms of their captivity.[103] Terms of captivity for indentured rebel prisoners were, ostensibly, limited by the terms of their contract of indenture. However, after Oliver Cromwell wrote to the governor of Barbados in 1655, complaining that returned prisoners of war were causing trouble in Scotland and reprimanding him for letting indentured prisoners of war go free once the limits of their contract were up, some prisoners of war were held for longer.[104] Though this was outside the scope of the normal system of indenture, it seems possible within this context that some prisoners of war would not have been able to know when they would be freed.

The petitioners then describe life in Barbados, alleging that they were made to work in mills, tend furnaces, and plant, all while being traded between different plantation owners and threatened with whippings, terrible living conditions, and being used to pay off the debts of the men who had bought them.[105] These living conditions were not outside the realm of possibility for an indentured servant on Barbados, though the petitioners seem to believe they represent a special case.

The basis of the petitioners' plea for 'redemption and reparation' is that this treatment is "to *English*-men unparallel'd," which is to say, aberrant and horrific for them in a way it is not for others, that the power that sent them to Barbados was "arbitrary", and that the entire ordeal is a breach upon *English* freedom.[106] The petitioners extend their specific circumstance into a threat

[103] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 15; Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 151.
[104] Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 208.
[105] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 1-5.
[106] *Ibid*., p 5-6.

to all English liberty. Simultaneously, they reference English institutions meant to maintain civic freedom: the right to a trial, and the Commonwealth Parliament, beholden to the English people, dependent on the English people. In some ways, the 'Englishness' of the whole situation seems to be the most disagreeable part of the petitioners' circumstance. They end their petition by saying that their captivity and treatment is a "thing not known amongst the cruell *Turks*, to Sell and enslave these of their own Country and Religion, much lesse the Innocent."[107] The petitioners allege that their circumstance is not just cruel, is not just maltreatment, but is slavery.

The anonymous letters published in the pamphlet are even more direct with their usage of the term 'slavery'. One letter writer refers to himself as a 'slave' and the petition as a 'Slave's petition'. He also makes use of the metaphorical phrase "Slaves of hope". The letter connects the specific captivity of the petitioners to a broader torment and oppression faced by all of England under Cromwell's rule. Another anonymous writer similarly makes the case that the petition of these men has metaphorical dimensions, being not just about the captivity of seventy-two men in Barbados, but about the threat the Commonwealth government posed to all free English men.[108] Both letter writers also display an awareness of the precarity of power in Interregnum England: they allude to the possibility of members of Parliament finding themselves similarly exiled, should Parliament be dissolved. One letter states that Parliament will "not be Spared by these *West Indian* Spirits" should the tables ever turn.[109] From the petition's description it does seem as if the men themselves were victims of government-endorsed spiriting, with no criminal charge and no terms of indenture accompanying them to the Caribbean. The specter of spiriting and fear

[107] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 6, 7.
[108] *Ibid.*, p 8-12.
[109] These are prescient observations, given that 1660 and the arrival of Charles II in London was, at this point, right around the corner: Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 9, 11,1.

of being forced into labor in the Caribbean surround "Barbados Merchandize", and lend it much of its rhetorical power.

Yet enslaved Africans are conspicuously absent from the petition. They are never referred to directly by the petition itself, even though there had been a joint servant-slave uprising in Barbados just years before.[110] Considering Barbados's demographics in the 1650s, it would be nigh impossible for the petitioners not to have witnessed the fact of African slavery.[111] Unlike some White labor on Barbados, it seems that Rivers and Foyle did not consider it expedient to declare solidarity with enslaved people, to identify themselves with a racial other, or to reference the growing racialization of Caribbean slavery.[112]

In the 1600s, 'slavery' was an intelligible and coherent legal categorization, often enforced through the use of Slave Codes. The first of these Slave Codes in the English Caribbean was made in Barbados, in 1661, two years after the petition was heard, and explicitly applied to Black people. This is made clear by the fact that many of these codes, including the Barbadian laws of 1661, used the term 'Negro' to refer to any enslaved person. The beginnings of the legal conflation and enslaved status and race dates back to 1636 on Barbados, though during the Interregnum there was still space for the existence of free or indentured Black people on Barbados within its laws.[113] Because the substitution of racial epithets for 'slave' was occurring in Barbados at the time of Rivers and Foyle's captivity, and legal racialization of slavery in Barbados was on the horizon, one might expect them to use racialized language in addition to the

[110] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 5, 17, 22,23; Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 436.
[111] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 26, 46, 223; Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 47; Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 434.
[112] Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 436.
[113] Handler and Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery'": 38-45; Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 433, 438, 441.

term ‘slave’ if they were intentionally drawing comparisons to African slavery.[114] They do not. Rather, they ignore the presence of enslaved Africans on Barbados all together.

In addition to being a literal category of unfree labor, ‘slavery’ was also a term deployed during the seventeenth century in order to evoke ideas of political oppression. Existing analyses of “Barbados Merchandize” tend to focus on this usage of the term, and there is ample justification for this focus. ‘Slavery’ as metaphor was especially prevalent during the English Civil War, as Parliamentarian propagandists attempted to characterize Charles I and his reign as despotic and tyrannical. This characterization could include the idea of Charles I as the last in a long line of Norman oppressors, as in “Saint Edward’s Ghost, or Anti-Normanisme”. This critique, published in 1647, concludes with the idea that Englishmen under Charles I’s rule are no more than ‘slaves’.[115] “England’s Complaint,” a similar pamphlet, accused Charles I of attempting “to transform England in the image of ‘the Turk’”, and in doing so, of making England a society of slaves. “Case of Shipmoney,” by Henry Parker, similarly argued that Charles I’s policies metaphorically ‘enslaved’ the English nation.[116] Writings by Levellers, too, referred to monarchy as an institution that “[made] men slaves.”[117] The power of slavery as metaphor, as indicative of the antithesis of freedom, was clearly apparent to pamphlet writers during the English Civil War.

That this power would have also been apparent to Rivers and Foyle has often been noted by scholars. Mary Nyquist has noted that “Barbados Merchandize” draws on the rhetoric of Leveller pamphlets, such as John Lilburne’s assertion in “Regal Tyranny Discovered” that “it is not lawfull for any man to subject himself to be a slave,” while Handler and Reilly state that the

[114] This is, in fact, what is done by some members of Parliament when discussing the petition: Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9”, 254-273.
[115] Mary Nyquist, “The Liberty of Naming” in *Revisiting Slavery and Antislavery,* ed. Laura Brace and Julia O’Connell Davidson, (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018), p 74.
[116] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, p 112, 117.
[117] Goldsmith, “Levelling by Sword, Spade, and Word”, p 69.

pamphlet's use of the word 'slavery' fits into a seventeenth century context where the term 'slavery' was often used to critique "illegitimate use of power". A criticism of "illegitimate use of power" is clearly relevant to the petition's criticism of "arbitrary" power and the complaint that the petitioners were transported without a conviction or even in some cases a trial.[118] Susan Amussen states in her own discussion of Rivers and Foyle's petition that the secondary title of the pamphlet, "Englands Slavery," in this case "included the rule of Cromwell and the Major-Generals as well as their masters in Barbados," emphasizing the petition's attempts at tying the captivity of the men to a more metaphorical, political warning.[119] By using the word 'slavery', the petitioners are using loaded language that implies political tyranny has taken place, even while they ask for redemption from the members of Parliament who would be implicated in said tyranny. However, focusing on the symbolic and metaphorical use of the term 'slavery' within the petition risks overlooking other important contexts that would have informed the writings of Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle.

'Slavery' was not merely a rhetorical flourish to Englishmen residing in England. As said by Handler and Reilly, by the time Rivers and Foyle's petition was heard in Parliament, "Englishmen had long been acquainted with slavery in its many forms throughout the Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds."[120] This slavery was not just the racialized chattel slavery of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade that was developing in the English colonies. Slavery as punishment for White English populations, referred to as 'slavery', was proposed in both sixteenth and seventeenth century England. Protector Somerset attempted, in his 1547 Vagrancy Act, to introduce slavery for vagrants who refused offers of employment. These enslaved

[118] Nyquist, "The Liberty of Naming", 80-81; Goldsmith, "Levelling by Sword, Spade, and Word", p 67; Handler and Reilly, "Contesting White Slavery", 38; Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", pp 3-5.
[119] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 127,128.
[120] Handler and Reilly, "Contesting White Slavery", 38.

vagrants would be forced to work, wear identifiable clothing, and be unable to move freely. The Act was abandoned after two years, as it proved singularly unpopular.[121] Slavery for other Englishmen, it seems, was an uncomfortable idea for the English public, though not so uncomfortable that other visions for society stopped including it.

Thomas More's *Utopia*, first published in 1516, and first published in English in 1551, also includes ideas of slave labor derived from one's own country, with More stating explicitly that the slaves he described in his text are not enslaved under any of the normal, accepted processes: "By the way, the slaves I've occasionally referred to are not, as you might imagine, non-combatant prisoners-of-war, slaves by birth, or purchases from foreign slave markets. They're either Utopian convicts or, much more often, condemned criminals from other countries...The normal penalty for any major crime is slavery."[122] Given that in England at the time, the punishment for felonies was generally death, this may have seemed like a more humane form of justice.[123]

In the seventeenth century, William Petty, while assessing Ireland's profitability in the Downs Survey, suggested that "insolent thieves be punished with slavery rather than death…and thereby become as two men added to the commonwealth, and not as one taken away from it."[124] Like with More's idea of slavery in Utopia, Petty's suggestion of the enslavement of Irish thieves was clearly meant in part to be a commutation of English death sentences for felonies. The suggestion also recognizes a form of slavery that was understood as distinct from racial chattel slavery while still being recognizably defined as 'slavery'.

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[121] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 56-57.
[122] Thomas More, *Utopia*, (1516), via Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 58, 59.
[123] During the seventeenth and sixteenth century about 300 crimes were felonies in England, including types of theft, with no option for a lighter sentence: Abbot Smith, "The Transportation of Convicts to the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (1934): 233, 248; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, p 58.
[124] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 260. Petty was later knighted by Charles II.

While the Vagrancy Act, Petty, and *Utopia* all refer to a form of slavery that is distinct from the slavery that would develop in the Atlantic as part of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, they demonstrate that 'slavery' was a term that could be and was a term used to describe the forced labor of White individuals, and was not always meant metaphorically. It is worth noting that the petitioners of "Barbados Merchandize" would not be able to be acceptably enslaved under Somerset, More, or Petty's ideas of acceptable slavery. The petitioners were not vagrants, nor, in their account, duly condemned convicts, nor Irish, but English gentlemen who claimed that they were acquitted or never tried. Their enslavement would be aberrant in any of these proposed systems. This does not mean that the enslavement of Englishmen was unheard of in Interregnum England.

Englishmen, and English gentlemen, were sometimes enslaved, just not by the English. Carla Gardina Pestana has noted that the references to "cruell Turks" within "Barbados Merchandize" were in line with comparisons to Turkish tyranny that were increasingly deployed against the English government in the seventeenth century, and they also seem congruent with the capture and enslavement of Englishmen by Barbary corsairs. This slavery is something that Rivers, Foyle, and their English audience would be very familiar with.[125]

The British were very active in the Mediterranean in the mid-seventeenth century due to trade interests in the region.[126] North African corsairs, largely from the Ottoman Empire and Morocco, attacked English trading ships and shorelines, taking around 12,000 English captives between the years 1600 and 1640. This captivity led to enslavement.[127] The English rarely

[125] Rivers and Foyle, "Barbados Merchandize", p 7; Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 211.
Indeed, the Ottoman Empire as a site of slavery could be key to why references to Turkish despotism were so powerful to the English public in the first place: Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, p 112.
[126] Linda Colley, *Captives*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 34.
[127] *Ibid.*, 35, 36, 44.
North African powers were not the only powers involved in enslaving projects in the Mediterranean. France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Holland, Britain, and American colonies all captured ships and people in the Mediterranean who were subsequently enslaved. However, due to norms about not enslaving coreligionists during this period, Muslim

differentiated between the different North African groups that attacked their ships, rather, the many different groups were all lumped together under the terms 'Barbary' or 'Turkish'.[128] The 'cruell Turks' of "Barbados Merchandize", in this context, could likely refer to the general idea of Islamic slavery, a form of slavery that in this period, targeted European Christians and forbade enslaving coreligionists. Similarly, "England's Complaint" referring to Charles I as a "Turk" evokes not just the image of a slave society, but the image of a society in which White Englishmen are the ones enslaved.

North African slavery was very well known in England during the seventeenth century. Between the 1610s and 1630s, two English shipping counties lost about a fifth of their shipping to Barbary corsairs, and some ports could lose 1000 sailors in a single year.[129] Some of those taken captive were captured on the English or Irish coast.[130] The amount of people lost and the proximity of these attacks to English people's homes and livelihoods would have led them to be very aware of the danger of enslavement in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. Those enslaved by Barbary corsairs could be ransomed, and subsequently returned to their home country. Their stories would also aid in increasing awareness of Mediterranean slavery in England.[131]

The people and stories that made it back to England painted a grim picture. Families petitioning the English government to provide ransom for their family members held in captivity alleged that enslaved people were raped and tortured. Captives writing to the House of Commons on their own behalf stated that they were forced into 'UnChristian-like labours', described

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North African corsairs were the only ones to consistently target Christian English ships, beginning in 1600. *Ibid*., 46, 47.

[128] *Ibid.*, 44.

[129] *Ibid.* 49.

[130] *Ibid.* 50. Colley suggests that these attacks could have also contributed to growing unease and dissatisfaction in England, in that way contributing to the Civil War.

[131] Those redeemed never really amounted to close to the number of those captured. Before the English Civil War, only about a quarter of those who had been captured were redeemed: *Ibid.*, 52.

working in galleys (almost a guarantee of a short life) and being beaten.[132] While in reality not all Englishmen captured were enslaved, and the ransom system ensured that many of those who were enslaved were still given enough aid and support to at least survive, these horror stories of Barbary captivity still deeply affected English perceptions of slavery, and English perceptions of their vulnerability.[133] Those who were redeemed were able to spread their stories in court, or through travel accounts, sermons, or ballads.[134] To the petitioners of "Barbados Merchandize", English enslavement may well have been something forced upon Englishmen by Muslim countries, something that their own Christian Commonwealth was not supposed to do. When "Barbados Merchandize" refers to the condition of the men as 'slavery', the reference it was drawing on may not have solely been the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, or an imagined historical slavery. The petitioners may also have been drawing on their knowledge and impressions of a form of slavery that *did* affect White Europeans at the time, that being Mediterranean slavery.

All of these contexts surrounded Rivers and Foyle as they drafted their petition. While the petition itself makes it clear that the petitioners' captivity affects the liberty of all of England, in many ways their petition may have seemed less significant than it became. The petition seems generally in line with other pleas from enslaved or indentured Englishmen, and it recycled language from other political tracts that the men in Parliament would have been familiar with. At its most basic, the petition argued that the normal course of law was not followed, and in the absence of a trial and a contract, indenture became slavery. Yet "Barbados Merchandize" caused severe debate in Parliament about the state of the Commonwealth and the liberty of all Englishmen.[135]

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[132] *Ibid*., 57, 60.
[133] *Ibid.* 60.
[134] *Ibid.,* 75
[135] Linda Colley, *Captives*, 57, 60; Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.

When discussing “Barbados Merchandize”, scholars have a tendency to portray Parliament as largely unified in their reaction to the petition. Both Blackburn and Pestana, for example, claim that Parliament was nearly united in calling for the end of the men’s captivity, and condemning their ‘slavery’. Pestana in particular describes Martin Noell as being outraged by the men’s captivity, reading his declaration of “I abhor the thought of setting 100£ upon any man’s person” in response to a different petition as being a condemnation of the supposed sale. As in his next sentence he states the allegation is “false and scandalous,” I believe that reading his declaration as a defense against the allegation by the petitioner that he did just that is also a reasonable interpretation.[136] The allegations made against Noell were serious enough that they needed to be defended against.

Parliament was divided in its response to Rivers and Foyle’s petition, with some other members joining Noell in his dismissal of it. Political division played a large role in the reception of the petition, and where Noell attempted to counter its accusations, some members of Parliament questioned the wisdom of hearing the petition at all, due to its Cavalier origins. One member warned, “Encouraging petitions of this nature, in complaint of oppressions, is to set you at division. It comes in by a combination with the King’s party. It has almost set the nation in a flame.”[137] Sir Henry Vane, meanwhile, challenged the idea that the petitioners’ captivity was solely of concern to Cavaliers. Vane also cautioned other members that they could not depend upon their freedom from imprisonment, echoing the arguments of the anonymous letter writers of “Barbados Merchandize”. Whenever Parliament lost power, he argued, “the same will be imposed upon your best men, that is now designed to the worst. There is a fallacy and subtilty on

[136] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 243-256, 274; Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 211; Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9”, 254-273.
[137] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9”, 254-273.

both hands," and the members of Parliament could soon find themselves prisoners.[138] This sentiment is certainly something Vane would be sensitive to: he had been imprisoned some years earlier for his criticism of Cromwell, despite being a Parliamentarian and the two men having been friends, and had only recently been released.[139] Still, some argued that the petitioners had become distinct from the Englishmen, whose jeopardized liberty would be worrisome. Having become distinct from Englishmen, their petition is not worth considering. Major-General Kelsey demonstrated this perspective plainly when he said there should be "distinction between persons that have been led aside through dissatisfaction in some cases, and those who have been our notorious enemies." Though the petitioners rest their case on their Englishness, Kelsey believes that their royalism, their having been enemies of the government, means that they should no longer be entitled to the restitution or redemption available to some other Englishmen in captivity. The petitioners' Englishness is less of a solid foundation to claim rights than they might have hoped. The precarity of Englishness in the wake of the English Civil War did not just affect the petitioners. Those members of Parliament who support the petitioners are compelled to reaffirm their own Englishness and loyalty as they do so.[140]

That the prisoners were captive labor was not up for debate, and would not have been extraordinary in any case, but what kind of captive labor they were was. Noell, implicated by the petition, soundly rejects any idea of enslavement. He claims that he creates contracts of indenture with all the people he sends to Barbados, and outlines some of the limits of what that contract might be: they work for five years, and then "have the yearly salary of the island".[141] He also claims that those indentured in Barbados do not work as hard as a "common husbandman" in

[138] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.
[139] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 226, 257; Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 211.
[140] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.
[141] *Ibid.*
It is worth noting that this length of indenture would be shorter than the norm, which was usually for seven to ten years for former rebels: Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting", 151.

England, and are given “four times of refreshing daily”. Captain Hatsell, too, paints a fairly nice, and voluntary, picture of captivity in Barbados. He claims that when the men were shipped from Plymouth, he had “never [seen] any go with more cheerfulness.” He also claims that when some men approached him and told him they did not wish to go to Barbados, they were allowed to return to their homes. Both of these accounts paint the captivity of the men as easy and normal. They also paint a much lighter picture of indenture than would be accurate. Despite sending massive amounts of prisoners to England’s colonies in collaboration with England’s government, the men shrink from describing the reality of indenture. They instead claim the petitioners were indentured, and the work was not hard, and they went cheerfully, and the petition is the work of a troubled prisoner who Hatsell claims “feigned himself mad” when initially departing for Barbados.[142] What allows this easy indenture described by Noell is enslaved Africans, who do most of the work on Barbados.

Martin Noell is not the only member of Parliament to bring African slavery into the discussion of the petition. Mr. Boscawen, much more sympathetic to the petition, states, “We are miserable slaves, if we may not have this liberty secured to us…our lives will be as cheap as those negroes. They look upon them as their goods, horses, &c., and rack them only to make their time out of them, and cherish them to perform their work.”[143] In Parliament’s response, then, rather than the petition itself, slavery is racialized. Noell argues that the petitioners were not enslaved, and that the actual hard labor on Barbados is “carried on by the Negroes”, where he substitutes a word for Africans for the term ‘slaves’. Mr Boscawen, too, assumes a naturalized and accepted state of slavery for Black people. He believes the petitioners were enslaved, but that this is a breach that cheapens English lives and should not be carried out against them. The

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[142] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9”, 254-273.
[143] The “men” in this statement clearly do not include those Black enslaved people Boscawen had earlier referenced.

concern is that acceptable forms of captive labor, the enslavement of Africans, the forced indenture of thousands of prisoners of war, convicts, vagrants, and other inconvenient populations, have become mixed and therefore unacceptable, with the alleged slavery of White English gentlemen. This concern combined with the political problems of the English Civil War, as worries about absolute power illegitimately punishing people and concern over the status of liberty in the Commonwealth also affected Parliament's response to the petition.[144]

Parliament's reaction to the allegation of enslavement was somewhat confused. Some members argued that what the men had really experienced was indenture, but refused to acknowledge their description of captivity as an accurate depiction of their indenture. If the men were enslaved, then Parliament retreated from the idea that White Englishmen, even Cavaliers, were subject to this treatment on any scale. Those who disapproved of the petition denied slavery occurred, and those who sided with the petition wanted redemption for the petitioners, but not a reassessment of forced transport.[145]

The English public, on the other hand, was primed for "Barbados Merchandize" by stories of English slavery published during the Western Design. Two different pamphlets published during Cromwell's Western Design, just years before the publication of "Barbados Merchandize", alleged that English people were kept as slaves in the French West Indies.[146] Perhaps in part due to an awareness of the real threat of enslavement from the Mediterranean,

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[144] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.
[145] The exception to this may have been Mr Boscawen, who, in his response, said to his fellow members, "I would have you consider the trade of buying and selling men." This seems to imply a trade that definitely exists, and for Englishmen at the time, that trade would be in the forced transport of involuntarily indentured individuals. Other members of Parliament, when reacting to the alleged slavery of the petitioners, seem to assert that there is no trade taking place, such as with Sir John Lenthall's response, where he states, "I hope it is not the effect of our war to make merchandize of men…we are the freest people in the world." In Lenthall's response, there is no current trade in Englishmen, only the sorry scandal of these petitioners: Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.
[146] Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 210. It's worth noting, perhaps, that there is a measure of religious difference between these proposed Catholic enslavers and the Protestant English enslaved, though less so than there was between the Protestant Christian English and the Muslim Barbary Corsairs.

and English sense of the West Indies and Barbados especially as sites of violently maintained unfree labor, the idea that the English could be enslaved in the West Indies as well seemed like a possibility.[147] Still, even in the case of these two pamphlets, the threat of slavery came from an outside force. France might be imagined to hold English slaves, but the English shouldn't.

The story of Rivers and Foyle, gentlemen, being transported to Barbados by the Interregnum government without a fair trial was shocking.[148] Rivers's offenses did not matter, nor did his history of rebellion, or that one of his companions had confessed they had intended to take part in the Salisbury Rising.[149] "Barbados Merchandize" was yet more confirmation to the English public that the English Caribbean, and Barbados specifically, were sites of English captivity and enslavement. Most of the public outcry was directed at Cromwell, dead by the time the petition was heard, and the Commonwealth government.[150] Members of Parliament did not accept the enslavement of Englishmen in the Caribbean as normal or acceptable; those implicated in the accusations of the petition rejected the idea that the petitioners experienced slavery, and those members of Parliament sympathetic to the petition wanted the redemption of the petitioners. Both parties were aware of the incendiary nature of the petition, its ability to give more confidence to the Cavaliers still in England, and its ability to "put the nation into such a flame as you will hardly quench."[151] The danger of the petition's rhetoric was clear in the unstable environment of Interregnum England. Members of Parliament read a warning into the petition too. Henry Vane may have been the first to recognize that the tables could turn on

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[147] By unfree labor I mean enslaved people, standardly involuntarily indentured labor, and those who had been 'barbadosed'. In some ways, the Caribbean in the seventeenth century was already perceived as a site of potential English captivity, especially via 'spiriting'.
[148] Pestana, *The English Atlantic,* 211.
[149] "House of Commons Journal 5: 24 August 1648," in *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 5, 1646-1648*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1802), 681-682, *British History Online*, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol5/pp681-682 ; Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.
[150] Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 212.
[151] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9", 254-273.

Parliament, but Sir Arthur Haslerigge is the one to sum it up, saying, “That which is the Cavalier’s case, to-day, may be the Roundhead’s a year hence…If we have fought our sons into slavery, we are of all men most miserable.”[152]

[152] Burton, "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 25 March 1658-9”, 254-273.

## The Restoration and After

"Barbados Merchandize" was heard in Parliament in March of 1659. By 1660, Charles II rode into London, ending the Interregnum and the revolutionary government.[153] Even as Charles II reclaimed England for the Stuarts, he embraced and carried on many of the expansions of unfree labor that had developed under the government that had overthrown the monarchy.

The slave trade had expanded drastically during the Interregnum, and Charles II invested in this newly grown trade by placing his brother, the Duke of York, in charge of it. While in the early 1660s Charles II's government did pay for the return of some royalists who had been transported to the colonies, this did not speak to a halt in Interregnum forced transportation policies. Such policies were instead revised, taken over by the Crown as if they had not begun under Cromwell. During the Restoration, servants and other coerced labor would sometimes be painted as "Oliverian" when they protested their circumstances, in order to express the danger and rebellion of their protest, despite Oliver Cromwell himself instituting some of the practices of captive labor that Charles II then embraced.[154] The Navigation Act of 1660 would function as a continuation of the Interregnum Navigation Act of 1651, further allowing the development of the English slave trade. Interestingly, Martin Noell, a likely writer of the 1651 Navigation Act and an active participant in the transport of enslaved and indentured labor, was knighted by Charles II. By the time he was knighted, Noell was involved in the Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, which possessed a near monopoly on the English slave trade.[155] Petty, the author of the

[153] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 278.
[154] Pestana, *The English Atlantic,* 221.
[155] Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 224; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 286.

Downs Survey, was also knighted by Charles II.[156] Participation in imperial and captive labor policies during the Interregnum clearly did not remove one from the new king's favor. Indeed, Charles sought to maintain the Interregnum's more directly imperialist policies as well. Barbados fell under the direct control of London after Charles I had been killed. During the Restoration, Charles II reasserted this direct control.[157]

Charles II also expanded the pool of who could be transported to the colonies as punishment to include felons, as two laws passed during the Restoration, the first in 1666 and the second in 1670, allowed thieves to be transported to the colonies instead of receiving the death sentence.[158] Charles II also continued Cromwell's practice of using conditional pardons to send some convicts who would otherwise be ineligible for transport to the colonies. This practice was continued only after the government found a way to do so explicitly under the king's authority, perhaps to provide a little distance from Cromwell's government, and to once again erase the legacy of the Interregnum. By the end of the century these policies were once again protested, this time because colonial governments did not want to take on convict populations. Both Virginia and Maryland passed laws "forbidding the importation of convicts", and Jamaica refused some offers of indentured people due to their 'bad character'. Even Barbados, the only colony still desperate enough to accept these involuntarily indentured servants, did not do so without complaining about their "villainy", and their apparent tendency to steal from their masters and run away.[159] Barbados's desperation derived from its continuous demand for White servants, as its Black enslaved population continued to grow and its indentured servant

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[156] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 260.
[157] He did appoint a governor, Lord Willoughby, who had been the royalist governor of Barbados during the island's civil war: Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 108; Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 96-108.
[158] Smith, "The Transportation of Convicts": 232, 233.
[159] Smith, "The Transportation of Convicts": 239, 242; Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 69-70.
Getting convicts from England *to* the Caribbean was sometimes difficult. Like many colonies, it seems ship captains and merchants did not want to deal with large numbers of convicts: Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados": pp 74; Smith, "The Transportation of Convicts": 242.

population was continually at risk of decreasing due to death and emigration once the term of indenture was finished.[160]

By the 1670s, the Irish made up a large part of the immigration to the Barbados, though this was not welcome either.[161] While the English Crown forcibly transported a few thousand Irish prisoners to plantations during the Restoration, fears of Irish Catholic collaboration with the French prevented the Crown from continuing the Interregnum's mass transport of Irish people. Irish servants were also thought to be possible collaborators with enslaved Black people, and in the 1690s Irish servants and freemen were imprisoned under suspicion of having supported the French and enslaved Africans.[162] Irish Catholics were also generally excluded from the Barbadian militia.[163] Their inability to serve in the militia made their immigration even more unwelcome, as White indentured servants were in demand in part due to their ability to serve as the island's defense.

Much more welcome was the shipment of 339 Monmouth rebels to Barbados by the Crown in the 1680s. In order to ensure the rebels usefulness, the Barbados Assembly quickly passed an act indenturing the rebels for ten years and prohibiting them from purchasing their freedom before the end of those ten years. During the late seventeenth century, buying servants was still cheaper in the short term than purchasing enslaved laborers, even as slavery became more prevalent on Barbados. In addition to working as both skilled and unskilled laborers, the Monmouth Rebels were valuable for another reason: they could, and did, serve in the island's militia.[164] Despite the Barbados Assembly's best efforts, some of the rebels did still try to gain

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[160] Sheppard, "A Historical Sketch of the Poor Whites of Barbados": pp 74-75; Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 69.
[161] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 89.
[162] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 317.
When enslaved people were caught making plans for rebellion or revolt, they were killed, not imprisoned: Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 161.
[163] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 317.
[164] Quintanilla, "Late Seventeenth-Century Indentured Servants in Barbados": 115, 116, 117.

their freedom.[165] Like the petitioners of "Barbados Merchandize", some of the Monmouth rebels would claim that they had not been sentenced to servitude in Barbados, but had rather been victim to a form of spiriting. Where this created public outcry in 1659, by the 1680s, such cases were quietly referred to the Lords of Trade and Plantations.[166]

During the Restoration, as the Caribbean continued to receive unfree labor from the English government, Jamaica, captured during the Western Design, had a minor dispute with the Lords of Trade, who disliked the associations that came with the word "servitude", used in Jamaica's laws on servants. "Servitude", apparently, was a "mark of bondage and slavery", inappropriate to describe the White Christian servants on the island.[167] Instead, the Lords requested Jamaica use the word "service".[168] This dislike for the term "servitude" is in line with other Restoration attempts by the English government to distance itself from any intimations of 'slavery'. A 1664 report to the Council of Foreign Plantations chose to refer to enslaved Black people purchased in Africa as "perpetual servants", avoiding the word "slave" entirely.[169] In England, enslaved people of color were rarely referred to as 'slaves', despite indicators that they were captive labor not under any contract.[170] Service and servitude was a spectrum, including

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[165] *Ibid*., 118.

[166] Daniel Manning's case was then referred to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, then overseeing colonial affairs such as this during Charles II's reign. Manning's complaint provides some continuity with Rivers and Foyle's petition, while his subsequent referral perhaps demonstrates that by the 1680s, such complaints were no longer seen as fundamental threats to the liberty of Englishmen.
Political prisoners such as the Monmouth rebels did experience more opportunities for escape than other convicts. They could escape illegally, through their connections, or, in the instability of seventeenth century England, through a lucky change in government. The last is what happened with many of the Monmouth rebels, whose ten year sentences were halted by the Glorious Revolution: Quintanilla, "Late Seventeenth-Century Indentured Servants in Barbados": 118, 120, 124.

[167] Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 445.

[168] "America and West Indies: May 1676," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies: Volume 9, 1675-1676 and Addenda 1574-1674*, ed. W Noel Sainsbury (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893), 389-399. *British History Online*, accessed April 3, 2023, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol9/pp389-399 .

[169] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 69.

[170] Newman, *Freedom Seekers*, 54.
Indicators that these people were enslaved include them wearing decorative metal collars reminiscent of shackles and the fact that many of these people were considered slaves in the Caribbean, where they had lived before being brought to England by the people who owned them: Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 191, 217.

relatively free labor, indenture, and bound labor, and during the Restoration the word 'servant' was used imprecisely in England to refer to both White servants and African and South Asian enslaved people.[171]

The legal status of 'slaves' in England was often ambiguous, and it was not always clear whether enslaved people who had been brought to England after their initial enslavement were free.[172] Black enslaved people, and free Black communities, were fairly common in parts of England, especially ports and London, but their legal status was often vague and ambiguous.[173] Captives originating in England, such as indentured servants, and captives originating elsewhere, such as enslaved people, shared the language of captivity, where similar terms were applied to both forms of captivity.[174] The same was not true in the English Caribbean, where, after 1661, Barbados established the first Slave Code, and attempted to much more clearly apply different laws to indentured servants and enslaved people.[175] Increasingly, the Caribbean drew clear distinctions between service and slavery.

Cultural and literary works made in England about the Caribbean did not exhibit the same clarity. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave: A True History*, published in 1688, was a significant critique of some aspects of the slave-holding West Indies, and reiterated some of the traditional rules of enslavement, and their justifiability.[176] Oroonoko, the titular character, is an African prince, tricked into slavery rather than captured in a just war. Due to his status and how he was stolen, his slavery is an injustice, as the character states directly in the novella.[177] Thomas

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[171] Newman, *Freedom Seekers*, 56.
[172] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 219.
[173] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, p 217, 218; Ingrassia, "Aphra Behn, Captivity, and *Emperor of the Moon*": 54; Newman, *Freedom Seekers*, 43-46.
[174] Ingrassia, "Aphra Behn, Captivity, and *Emperor of the Moon*": 56
[175] Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race": 445
[176] Susan B Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko: Adaptations and Offshoots*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p xi; Ramesh Mallipedi, "Spectacle, Spectatorship, and Sympathy in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*", 486.
[177] Ramesh Mallipeddi, "Spectacle, Spectatorship, and Sympathy in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*", 486.

Southerne's stage adaptation *Oroonoko: A Tragedy* (1696) disregards the majority of the critique and sympathy offered by Behn's original in favor of sexual farce. When he does choose to address captivity and slavery within England's colonies, Southerne explores the same norms of enslavement as Behn's work, as characters express disbelief that Oroonoko was cruelly tricked and kidnapped into slavery, and raise Oroonoko's royal blood as a reason he should not be enslaved.[178] However, there are key differences. Southerne introduces the idea of White enslaved labor to the *Oroonoko*. Southerne references "White Slaves", probably meaning involuntarily indentured servants, working on plantations in Surinam. He also, significantly, changes the race of Oroonoko's enslaved love interest. Imoinda is Black in Behn's work, and White in Southerne's. Despite this change, Imoinda's captivity, the idea that she is sold into slavery by Oroonoko's jealous father, is not questioned within the play. Her slavery is unquestioned, and she is subject to the same threat of sexual violence enslaved women of color often were, though her whiteness seems to afford her some protection.[179]Through these changes, Southerne portrays the English West Indies as a place of White slavery and captivity, in addition to Black slavery and captivity. His *Oroonoko* becomes in some ways a display of the cultural anxiety the English felt in regards to White captivity. He also demonstrates a semantic ambiguity between 'servitude' and 'slavery' that would have been common in late seventeenth century England. Southerne's adaptation was a huge success in seventeenth century England, and likely reached a wider audience than Behn's novella.[180] His adaptation of *Oroonoko*, and its popularity, speaks to the

[178] Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko: Adaptations and Offshoots*, p 20-28.
[179] The Governor's desire for Imoinda saves her from being used the same way as some of the other enslaved people on the plantation, and he is, for a time at least, insistent that he requires her consent to have sex with her. He attempts to rape her once Oroonoko is captured and chained after an attempt at rebellion: Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko: Adaptations and Offshoots*, p 31-32, 68.
[180]Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko: Adaptations and Offshoots*, p 3, 20, 29, 30, 34; Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 189.

continued significance of the fear of White captivity in the Caribbean in the minds of the English public.

The Restoration featured a continuation of policies of forced transport and an expansion of the people that could be affected by said policies with new laws for the transport of convicts. Barbados in particular, afraid of uprisings by an enslaved Black population, continued to demand large numbers of White laborers, many of whom were involuntarily indentured. Simultaneously, the English Caribbean colonies began to create clearer distinctions between servitude and slavery, creating specific laws for enslaved people, even as England retreated from open acknowledgement of slavery, and Restoration cultural products demonstrated that for many Englishmen, the distinctions being drawn between servitude and slavery in the Caribbean were not being drawn at home. In this environment, fears of White captivity, and the association of White captivity with the Caribbean, continued throughout the Restoration and the period after.

## Conclusion

"Barbados Merchandize" was published when the use of captive labor was increasing throughout the Caribbean. It was also published during a time in which the populations that made up that captive labor force were changing. Throughout the Interregnum, the English government expanded its policies of involuntary transport, moving greater numbers of people to its colonies and adding to the populations that were able to be involuntarily indentured and transported. This increase in, largely White, indentured labor in the English Caribbean occurred at the same time as increased English involvement in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, as the Navigation Acts made it easier for English ships to make money off the trade. Some of the men who made profits off of the traffic in enslaved people, such as Martin Noell, were also heavily involved in the transport of involuntarily indentured servants to the Caribbean. The forced transport of 'undesirable' White populations and the mass enslavement of Africans were, in this period, connected by the destinations of these labor forces, the people involved in their transport, and the laws that governed them.

"Barbados Merchandize" was certainly not the first published work during this time to use the language of slavery to describe the political and physical disenfranchisement of White Englishmen. Indeed, it followed in a tradition of rhetorical writing that many members of Parliament would have been familiar with from the republican pamphlets of the English Civil War. It was also not the first work to allege slavery could be a possibility for Englishmen in the seventeenth century. As Mediterranean attacks by Barbary corsairs proved, slavery could very much affect Englishmen, though a different form of slavery than that which affected Africans in the English Caribbean. Instead, "Barbados Merchandize" is significant in the ways it reveals the instability of the language of slavery during the seventeenth century, and the ways in which the

English government attempted to deal with this instability. Parliament's discomfort with the idea of English slavery, in their denial of it and their attempt at redemption for the petitioners, reveals the way in which definitions of slavery were shifting at the time such that English slavery was racialized. Slavery as rhetoric was normal, and acceptable. The idea of literal slavery affecting Englishmen was discomfiting.

English governments attempted to reject the idea of the enslavement of Englishmen in the Caribbean, creating new slave codes and servant laws that more clearly delineated the differences between servants and enslaved people. The Lords of Trade rejected even the implication of 'bondage' for White servants with their request that Jamaica remove the word 'servitude' from its servant laws. Where before, indentured servants and enslaved people in the Caribbean had been governed by the same laws and had sometimes worked in similar positions in the earlier days of colonization, now the English government was invested in including indentured servants in a history of 'service' that enslaved people were excluded from.[181] This delineation was accompanied by an increasing idea of racial division and 'White' as a coherent, legally distinct group in the Caribbean. By the 1670s, working alongside African enslaved people became a punishment for disobedient White servants, and the word "white" began to be more frequently used to discuss groups of non-Black indentured servants, where before the common term had been 'Christian'.[182] Slavery was becoming increasingly racialized in the Caribbean, even as the English government shrank from the word 'slave'. Through all of this, the English West Indies remained a place of potential White enslavement in the imagination of the English public.

[181] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 250.
[182] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges,* 86; Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race", 446-448.

This was true during the tail end of the Interregnum, as public response to "Barbados Merchandize" accepted the petition's premise of the enslavement of the petitioners, and it was true after. In the later years of the seventeenth century, Thomas Southerne was able to plausibly imagine Imoinda as a White slave in Surinam, owned and persistently threatened by the possibility of sexual violence at the hands of powerful White men, in much the same way enslaved women of color actually were.[183] Without an English conception of White slavery in the Caribbean, Imoinda and her existence as an enslaved White woman who lives among other enslaved people, would be strange. Yet Southerne's *Oroonoko* accepts Imoinda without hesitation. Despite the English government's attempts to retreat from the idea of English slavery, the public in England was able to accept an imagined Caribbean where White slavery existed.

Even with the English government's attempts to clearly define slavery, its attempts to distance itself and its policies of transport from slavery, and the long history of 'slavery' as a political metaphor in England, the public imagination conceived of the term 'slavery' very literally, and applied it to White English men and women in the Caribbean. The disconnect between the attempts to legally define slavery as a racialized category and popular understanding that many different forms of captivity were capable of being named 'slavery' highlights the degree to which captive labor and unfree labor were important to England. They supported its most valuable colony, its military achievements, and its functioning back home.[184] Captivity was, in some sense, an ever-present component of seventeenth century English life, made only more so by the increase in captive labor that occurred during the Interregnum.

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[183] Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges,* 234; Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko: Adaptations and Offshoots*, p 30-31.
[184] Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, 93-108.

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