

**RANSOMING PRACTICES AND “BARBARY COAST” SLAVERY:
NEGOTIATIONS RELATING TO LIVERPOOL SLAVE TRADERS
IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY¹**

Suzanne Schwarz

The shipwreck and ransom of the officers and crew of two Liverpool slave ships (the *Anna* and the *Solicitor General*) on the “Barbary Coast”² of Morocco in the last two decades of the eighteenth century took place in a context of growing metropolitan debate on the moral and legal justifications for the enslavement of Africans in the transatlantic slave trade.³ Two years before the schooner *Anna* foundered on the shore at Wad Nun south of Agadir in May 1789, the Liverpool abolitionist and former slave trade mariner Edward Rushton published a poem in which he pointed to the hypocrisy of those who cherished their own liberty but were prepared to deny it to others. Using the voice of a fictional slave in the West Indies, he criticized men who “Think ... that liberty is bliss,” but who were motivated by “base av’rice, to make others slaves.” These men had wrenched Africans from their “native shore Which (dreadful thought!)” they “must behold no more.”⁴ Bound to the Gold Coast on his maiden voyage as captain of this newly-constructed vessel designed to carry 83 enslaved Africans,⁵ James Irving appeared to be aware of the broad parameters of abolitionist debate in Britain and attempted in his subsequent correspondence with the Vice-Consul at Essaouira (al-Sawira) to use this borrowed language of liberty to secure his own release.⁶ He urged John Hutchison to “Let that spirit of humanity which at present Manifests itself throughout the realm actuate you to rescue us speedily from the most intollerable [*sic*] Slavery.”⁷

In the same year that Irving was shipwrecked, Gustavus Vassa’s *Interesting Narrative* urged “nominal Christians” to consider how they could reconcile the brutality and suffering imposed on Africans with the biblical injunction to “Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you.”⁸ For Irving, his Christian faith was used in captivity in Morocco not to reconsider the legitimacy of his earlier role in transporting some three

thousand Africans to the Americas but rather as a form of resistance and a clear signifier of his cultural superiority over his Muslim captors whom he repeatedly represented as “infidels,” “barbarians” and “savages.”⁹ In describing his captivity to his intended readers, he set his experiences in a wider biblical context by commenting on how he had “languished and pined in sorrow” for “40 days.” The Bible was also presented as a source of solace, which enabled the mariners to withstand their inhumane treatment at the hands of the “tyrants.” Shortly after the men’s capture on the beach at Wad Nun in May 1789, Irving noted in his journal how “One of us had saved a Bible, from which we selected some Psalms and Chapters, suited to our forlorn situation; and received considerable comfort and benefit [*sic*] from reading them.”¹⁰

Irving considered that his detention represented a reversal of the natural social order, and he was incensed by the notion that “Negroes” could exert control over his crewmen. In a journal entry for 17 June 1789, he reported how some of his crew were required to work in a garden near to Guelmim “under the direction of a Mahomitan negro, who beat them frequently.”¹¹ With no cognisance of Islamic traditions of slavery and contemporary debate in West Africa on the rights of freeborn Muslims,¹² Irving interpreted his captivity narrowly within the framework of metropolitan assumptions on the rights of Britons to freedom.¹³ Cultural assumptions about European entitlement to liberty and African eligibility for enslavement which Liverpool traders would have regarded as normative were at odds with the prevailing climate of opinion in this “ransoming frontier between the worlds of Christianity and Islam.”¹⁴ As Jennifer Lofkrantz has noted, in “Muslim regions of West Africa the slavery debate was centred on religious identity; in other words, on social and cultural categories, rather than on ‘race’ and Enlightenment ideals as in European and European-derived societies.”¹⁵ Irving was aware that his Christianity attracted the ire and disdain of his captors, but seemed not to comprehend fully that his non-Muslim identity made him vulnerable to enslavement and potentially forced conversion.¹⁶ The pattern was more complex still in eighteenth-century Morocco. Chouki El Hamel points to examples of Muslims being enslaved by other Muslims; the “most outstanding Moroccan example being the enslavement of the Muslim Haratin – the so-called free blacks or ex-slaves - during Mawlay Isma‘il’s reign.”¹⁷

The cases of the *Anna* and the *Solicitor General* bring into sharp relief the confrontation between entrenched pro-slavery attitudes and emerging abolitionist ideas which were shaping debate on the transatlantic slave

trade in late eighteenth-century Britain.¹⁸ The rich corpus of surviving documentation relating to the negotiations for the eleven-man crew of the *Anna* also offers a clear insight into the strategies deployed by different interest groups engaged in the process of ransoming, as well as the assumptions which underpinned the responses of captors, captives, relatives and those acting as ransom brokers and mediators. These Liverpool slave traders were among an estimated 20,000 Britons taken captive by Barbary corsairs or captured following shipwreck in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although as Linda Colley points out Irving’s account is one of a relatively small number of surviving narratives written by Britons held in North Africa.¹⁹

This chapter draws on consular correspondence, as well as several journals written by Captain Irving to describe his experiences in captivity for his father, brother-in-law and uncle.²⁰ Irving’s use of language suggests that, not surprisingly for a mariner en route to West Africa, he was aware of the popular genre of Barbary captivity narratives and the “corsair hysteria” surrounding them.²¹ In recounting the circumstances following the shipwreck on 27 May 1789, Irving describes how he “saw the print of a human foot in the Sand” after they waded ashore from the wreck, a phrase which is strikingly similar to one used in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Irving may well have used this as a shorthand device for reminding his readers of the eponymous character’s experience of captivity by the Barbary corsairs and his subsequent escape.²² As Davis points out, “popular broadsheets and simple word of mouth circulated throughout Europe, telling and retelling of Christians taken by the hundreds and by the thousands, on the high seas or during coastal sorties, and hauled off in chains to a life-in-death of hard labor in Morocco, Algiers, Tunis or Tripoli.”²³ The multiple versions which Irving created of his narrative indicate that he was eager to disseminate knowledge of his experiences widely among friends and family, although there is no evidence to indicate that he intended to publish his narrative for a national audience.²⁴ His younger cousin and namesake, surgeon on the *Anna*, also compiled a supplementary narrative entitled “A very short account of what happened to me after the seperation [*sic*] on the 16th of June 1789.”²⁵

Ransom negotiations for the release of mariners from the *Anna* and the *Solicitor General* were successful in the long run, yet the process was faltering, delicate and protracted. Negotiations were delayed not only by the complex political interplay between the imperial court and the dissident southern territories of Morocco, but also by the use of ransom

negotiations by the Sultan to exert diplomatic pressure on the British government to concede to various demands. In the case of the *Anna*, the halting progress of negotiations spanning a period of fourteen months raised the prospect in Captain Irving's mind of inflated ransom demands and a breakdown in communications which would render him vulnerable to permanent enslavement. In West Africa, Lofkrantz and Olatunji Ojo note how protracted negotiations could lead to the failure of the ransoming process and enslavement for captives.²⁶ In his first petition to the Vice-Consul on 24 June 1789, Irving referred to his fear of being "lost forever to ourselves, our Wives and familys, our Country and all we hold dear," and the use of the term "lost" in this context may well have denoted his fear not only of geographical separation but also of being absorbed into an alien Islamic culture and society.²⁷

Negotiations were still more protracted in the case of the *Solicitor General* wrecked "10 leagues to the Northward of Cape Bayodore [Boujdour]...."²⁸ It was reported in *Lloyd's List* on 22 December 1795 that the ship en-route from Liverpool to Africa was "totally lost" on the Barbary Coast on 11 August 1795. A breakdown in communications between the Sultan, consular officials and the southern territories meant that the Consul General was not able to confirm to the British government that the men had been "finally redeemed" until almost two years after their shipwreck in July 1797.²⁹ The Sultan, Mawlay Sulayman, also had other concerns as the political situation in Morocco was disrupted by rebellion and a period of "dynastic crisis."³⁰ Seven months after the shipwreck, Matra was unable to offer any positive news on the redemption of the crew. The delay in commencing ransom negotiations meant that the men had been sold a number of times to "Arab speculators," with the result that their prices had increased markedly. Two months later on 28 May 1796, Matra again expressed regret that he had no further information on the seamen. Reports in British newspapers in July 1796 indicated that the men had been ransomed from "slavery," but they were still detained at Agadir.³¹ Even though Matra reported on 10 September 1796 that the Sultan had sent troops to redeem the men, they were not transferred north to Essaouira until May or June 1797.³²

Whilst maritime misadventure on a stretch of coastline noted for its treacherous currents was the initial cause of the crewmembers' captivity, they were subsequently drawn into a highly organized and complex ransoming economy which generated profits and political leverage for a number of different interest groups in Morocco. According to Christopher

Robson, a Liverpool slave trade surgeon appealing on Irving’s behalf in September 1790, it was “chance” which had given Irving “an Opportunity to write to the English Consul at Mogodore.”³³ In reality though, routes for trading mariners from the littoral to inland areas were well established as were networks of communication for initiating ransom negotiations with consular officials at Essaouira and Tangier.³⁴ The trading of shipwrecked mariners was coordinated through the commercial networks of the powerful Bayruk family centred on the town of Guelmim.³⁵ This was a carefully regulated enterprise and not the product of chance; as Lofkrantz points out, “the Bayruk operated as regional wholesalers, purchasing shipwrecked sailors from coastal fishermen and Saharan nomads” and then arranging for ransom negotiations with European consuls and the Sultan. Their networks included Jewish traders who played a central role in the bargaining processes for hostages and their purchase, housing and movement in Morocco.³⁶

The frequency of shipwreck, averaging two vessels a year according to James Grey Jackson, provided several sources of profit for fishermen and nomadic peoples who apprehended European and American mariners on shore.³⁷ In a violent struggle on 28 May 1789 with men described as “copper coulered [*sic*] naked savages,” the crewmembers of the *Anna* were stripped of their personal possessions and some of their clothing. In addition to a “loaded Blunderbuss” which Irving had brought ashore for protection, the men carried with them “1000 Dollars ... all of which fell into the hands of the Arabs.”³⁸ Subsequent searches for money were carried out on the following day, and Irving recorded his indignation that his “most secret places and hair underwent the search” by women and some “strange Arabs, who passed that way, on their journey to the wreck.” The stricken vessel was regarded as a prize, and immediately after the crew’s capture on the beach “the men mounted themselves on Camels, and went in quest of the Vessel.” The cargo of the *Anna*, assorted for the purposes of trade in enslaved Africans on the Gold Coast, was comprised of “India, Manchester and Hardware Goods with about 20 tons Salt.” The salt was washed out as the vessel sank, but some of the remaining cargo was retrieved for sale as Irving recorded that on 1 June “the men were by this time returned from the wreck, with several pieces of Cloth etc. of the Cargo.” One of Irving’s “own shirts that had been carried from the wreck” was later “sold at Mogodore to the vice Consul.”³⁹ The value of the wreck’s contents was the focus of questioning by several travellers Irving encountered during his journey to Guelmim on 12 June 1789. His captors

clearly felt they had established a proprietary interest in the vessel, and were pleased that Irving indicated to the travellers they encountered that there were no watches or money in the vessel. The ship's log book seemed to have some value to their captors, as they resisted with "threats and blows" requests by Irving and his crew to retrieve the document; it is conceivable that the ship's log may have been used in subsequent negotiations to verify the identity and relative value of the men in their possession.⁴⁰

The clustering of wrecks in the area around Wad Nun suggests that mechanisms for trading Christian captives inland to Guelmim were well developed. Within two days of their capture, intelligence of the men's captivity was transmitted southwards. The second mate and apprentice were "marched about 20 miles, to the Southward ... where a man wrote something on a piece of paper with a stick, which he sent away with a messenger."⁴¹ During their twelve day detention on shore at Wad Nun, Irving knew that his crew had been separated and allocated to different owners but he had no insight into the strategic decisions which influenced the choice of men and the monetary value placed upon them. Status informed the selection of the men, as the three most senior officers were initially kept together. The importance of appearance and status on the fate of captured mariners was noted by Jackson in his *Account of the Empire of Morocco*. He described how quarrels frequently broke out "among the Arabs, about the possession of the sailors, disputing for the captain or mate because he is better dressed, or discovers himself to them in some other way, and because they expect a larger ransom for him."⁴²

On 8 June 1789 the captain, his chief mate and surgeon were "march'd in 9 Days more thro[ugh] barren parch'd Desarts and Mountaneous Wilds" to the town of Guelmim located some thirty miles to the south-east of the position of their shipwreck.⁴³ Matthew Francis Dawson, the second mate, was probably not considered particularly valuable and had been "marched to the Southward" with the apprentice Samuel Beeley on 28 May 1789. Yet, as the nephew of John Dawson, one of Liverpool's leading slaving merchants, he had the potential to command the highest ransom payment among the crew.⁴⁴ Silvin Buckle, James Drachen and Jack Peters, described as "Portuguese Blacks," were also kept together and this may indicate that their captors were aware of the differential status and value of crew-members.

The mariners were transferred on foot for sale at Guelmim, a market centre and a focal point for caravan routes in the trans-Saharan trade.⁴⁵ On the day before their arrival at the town, Irving and his officers were made more presentable for sale as they were given a "pair of scissars" and the

captain was instructed to cut his beard which "was by this time very long, and troublesome." In a comment, which directly reflected Irving's earlier role as a surgeon in inspecting enslaved Africans gathered together for sale on the coast, he described how, "That action as it too much resembled the practice followed by the Slave traders, gave us much trouble."⁴⁶ Eight of the crew of the *Anna* were purchased by Mawlay 'Abd al-Rahman, the exiled son of Sayyidi Muhammad Ibn Abdallah (Sidi Muhammad), Sultan of Morocco and, according to an account written by the ship's surgeon, they "were conducted to a place belonging to Muly Abdrauchman, about 5 miles from Gulimeme, where we were employed digging the ground ... with things like pick axes, from sun rise till sun set."⁴⁷

Irving, separated from his chief mate and surgeon, was sold for a second time at Guelmim to Shaykh Brahim. This is consistent with Jackson's account, as he noted how after travelling to market the men "at length become objects of commercial speculation...."⁴⁸ Successive ownership by different masters was a common pattern in the experience of ransomed mariners, including Captain Thomas Smith of the *Solicitor General* and the French captives Follie and Saugnier.⁴⁹ Although it is not possible to establish the identity of Irving's owner with any degree of certainty, it is clear that the person who purchased him would have required a degree of status and the approval of "Takna notables (*ayan*)." Mohamed Mohamed notes how, "it would be hard to imagine the existence of a 'commoner' in Wady Nun who could 'buy' or 'sell' shipwrecked Europeans."⁵⁰ Irving also reported in his journal how he was lodged with a Jew at Talaint where "12 families of Jews" were under his "master's protection."⁵¹

After almost a month in Morocco, the formal commencement of ransoming negotiations can be traced to the instructions Irving received at Talaint on 24 June 1789 to write to the British Vice-Consul "informing him of my misfortunate situation." The letter written "with a reed, on course wrapping paper" informed Hutchison that Shaykh Brahim demanded 500 dollars per head for each of the men in his possession, although this figure was the subject of ongoing dispute during Irving's captivity.⁵² Aware of the pivotal role that the consul played in starting and sustaining the ransoming process, Irving's appeal was formal and respectful, yet plaintive and inviting empathy for his men's suffering. He conveyed as much information as possible about his good character, background and current location, but also communicated forcibly his expectation that it was the consul's duty to secure their release as "good and Loyal" Englishmen. A meeting earlier in the day with some French

mariners who had been wrecked five months earlier had impressed upon Irving the potential frailty of the ransoming process and the likely consequences of its failure.⁵³ Criticizing the shortcomings of the French consul and the negation of his duty, Irving urged Hutchison to “Suffer us not any longer like some poor Frenchmen About 10 or 12 Miles from hence to be the Slaves of Negroes, which reflects an unpardonate [*sic*] Negligence on the man who should see them liberated.”⁵⁴

Irving’s attempts to exert some control over the ransoming process included conveying to Hutchison a clear sense that he was sufficiently well-connected in England to ensure that any ransom money would be reimbursed. He named the merchant John Dawson as his main supporter, and emphasized how “Our Merchants are very Affluent.” Family members who could act as surety were also named, and his uncle’s employment by the East India Company was used to demonstrate his reputable credentials and financial status. Irving indicated initially that his own resources would enable him to cover the ransom costs of his younger cousin the surgeon, but later extended this to include the nephew of John Dawson. In making strategic choices, he also encouraged Hutchison to prioritize the white crewmen over the three Portuguese blacks. The identity he presented to Hutchison was deliberately selective; he made no reference to his employment as a slave trader and presented himself as a loyal Englishman rather than as a Scotsman. This was a tactic used by Irving to persuade diplomatic officials to act swiftly to secure his release, and it was unlikely to have had any impact on the ransom price demanded as Irving was entitled to seek British assistance in any case.⁵⁵ The selective construction of national identity was also characteristic of American mariners held captive in North Africa; they typically claimed to be English in negotiations for their release, as this was perceived by their captors as a more reliable basis for securing ransom payments through the British consular officials stationed in Morocco.⁵⁶

Irving’s expectation that it was responsibility of government to secure the crew’s release was central to his appeal to Hutchison. This was a reasonable assumption, as Ressel notes that by the eighteenth century it was “commonly accepted throughout Western Europe that states had the responsibility to buy back their subjects from captivity among the Muslims.” This entitlement was accepted by Hutchison who urged Irving to write to the Consul-General stating that it is “proper for every British Subject in this Country to apply for Protection to the person, who has His Majesty’s Commission for that purpose.”⁵⁷ These rights, although accepted

in theory, could be difficult to secure in practice.⁵⁸ Irving showed an awareness of other private and charitable means used in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England to secure the release of captives through fundraising by subscription. One option he proposed to Hutchison was that if sufficient funds could be raised for his ransom and that of his cousin, he could return home to England and “redeem” the others “by subscription if Government does not.” Irving was clearly perplexed by the failure of the ship’s Mediterranean Pass (number 7469) to provide protection from captivity. Regarding this as a valuable document, he concealed it for almost a month in the “head-band” of his “drawers” which he noted always escaped the searches for money.⁵⁹ The system of issuing passes reflected efforts by Britain and other European nations to reach agreements through treaties “to protect their shipping, providing their vessels with duly certified passes,” and Lofkrantz notes how arrangements for the “treatment of shipwrecked individuals and prisoners were prominent in treaties with England (1760) and Spain (1767).”⁶⁰ However, the possession of a pass did not guarantee protection from capture. In his correspondence with Hutchison, Irving noted how “We are not on Hostile Terms with the Moors, and I have a pass granted by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty therefore why are we detained my good Sir.”⁶¹

Shaykh Brahim also exerted control over the ransoming process by threatening Irving and his crew with slavery if the sum demanded was not paid, and Irving reported to Hutchison on 25 June 1789 how “the people here tell me if you do not pay for me or get me Released, in Ten days I go out to the fields to work at the Corn.”⁶² Pressure on Irving was also exerted through his crew, as on 2 August Irving reported that “My Master will not allow me to Close [?] the letter till I inform you that the Muley Abdrackman means to send them into the Gum Country if not redeemed soon.”⁶³ This threat to send his crew to the Senegal valley considerably increased Irving’s anxiety, and was a deliberate strategy used by his captors to create a sense of urgency in the minds of captives and consular officials. The ransom price of the men was probably higher than their market value as slaves, but this pressure was also intended to maximize the profit that could be secured from ransoming the men.⁶⁴

Shaykh Brahim and Mawlay ‘Abd al-Rahman, acting independently of the Moroccan government (Makhzan), sought to establish direct negotiations with the consular officials but this was circumvented by the intervention of Sidi Muhammad who prohibited private ransoming initiatives. This was one of the means by which Sidi Muhammad sought to

impose and demonstrate his authority over the dissident southern territories in the area surrounding Wad Nun.⁶⁵ By July 1789, Hutchison apprized Irving of his powerlessness to act without Sidi Muhammad's permission. In response to Irving's increasingly desperate appeals, Hutchison explained how "no money I could offer, and would cheerfully advance, can effect the purpose without the intervention of the Emperor, who will be very soon informed concerning you."⁶⁶ Sidi Muhammad insisted that all ransom negotiations for European and American hostages should be channelled directly through him. Moreover, the ransom of Christian captives as leverage to secure the release of freeborn Muslims held by European powers was a central feature of his reign and was a policy which informed the negotiation of peace treaties with various Christian states.⁶⁷ The consular correspondence makes no reference to any specific requests by Sidi Muhammad for the release of freeborn Muslims in exchange for the crew of the *Anna*, but discussions centred instead on the acquisition of a frigate and armaments.⁶⁸ Sidi Muhammad wrote to George III in August 1789 drawing attention to how the crewmembers of a "Merchantman that was shipwrecked to the southward of our Territories" were in his possession, and that their release depended on the supply of "several pieces of small cannon, mortars etc."⁶⁹

The intervention of Sidi Muhammad, however, generated lengthy delays linked to disputes over the level of ransom payments and tended to inflate the costs of securing a captive's release.⁷⁰ Irving reported that Shaykh Brahim refused to sell the men to the Sultan as he pays only a "trifling sum for Christians," and Hutchison had to reassure him that he would make good the difference "betwixt the Emperor's Allowance and your real ransom."⁷¹ Hutchison was careful not to supply Irving with clothes that would give him "any superior Appearance," as he explained that "would only tend to augment the difficulties of your redemption." In his correspondence, Matra pointed out to William Wyndham Grenville, Vice-President of the Board of Trade and Commissioner of the Board of Control, that they needed to be careful in the bargaining process not to give the impression that the men were of more "consequence" than they actually were as this could lead to a higher ransom price.⁷² Negotiations for the crew of the *Anna* also became embroiled in a dispute between the British and Moroccan government regarding tariffs and terms of trade. Sidi Muhammad considered that the formalities and courtesies of diplomatic exchange had not been observed properly by the British authorities. He pointed out that when he had redeemed men in the past, he did not even

receive a letter thanking him for his assistance.⁷³ Sidi Muhammad insisted that he would not act in the case of the *Anna* until he had received a letter from the Court naming all of the men held in captivity.⁷⁴ Consular officials had to maintain pressure on British government officials to respond to the requests of the Moroccan court, and Matra urged Evan Nepean at the Home Office in December 1789 to send a request for the men so that they could be “restored” to their relatives.⁷⁵

Maintaining Sidi Muhammad’s good offices and interest in the crew of the *Anna* shaped the strategies deployed by consular officials. Matra reported to government that he had “many irons in the fire,” but the most successful involved persuading William Lemprière, a doctor with the garrison in Gibraltar, to travel to Taroudant to provide medical treatment for Mawlay ‘Abd al-Salam, the favorite son of the Sultan who was almost blind.⁷⁶ Matra was convinced that this device was pivotal in securing the release of the men, as without it they would have probably remained with the “Arabs” until they “perished.” He explained how ten Frenchmen who had been shipwrecked some eighteen months earlier were now “so dispersed” that it would be impossible to recover them.⁷⁷ Matra thereby acknowledged that the men’s position could have transformed from hostage to slave if the ransoming negotiations had been unsuccessful. Sidi Muhammad’s personal interest in the crew of the *Anna* is reflected in the audience with Irving once the men had been transferred to Marrakesh. Whilst no doubt one-sided and reflecting his prejudice towards his Muslim captors, Irving’s journal account reflected his chagrin at how the Sultan:

sent for a Chart of the Atlantic Ocean and pointed out the courses I ought to have steered, in order to have avoided shipwreck. This is a Lesson he gives to every one, who has the misfortune to come before him in this light, however he does it in a very ignorant lame manner....⁷⁸

For relatives and friends in England, their role in the ransoming process focused on using any influence or connections at their disposal to keep the cases fresh in the minds of political figures at a local and national level. With little progress in negotiations for the release of the crew of the *Solicitor General* eight months after its shipwreck, Daniel Backhouse, a prominent Liverpool merchant, wrote to John Tarleton M.P. in April 1796 asking him to intervene in the case of Captain Thomas Smith and his crew.⁷⁹ Backhouse was writing on behalf of the captain’s wife, whose situation was “pitiable.” Personal and business contacts informed the content of the letter, as Backhouse pointed out that Smith had been trained by Tarleton’s father and that he had “sail’d Mate & Master in our employ

several Voyages to Old Calabar.”⁸⁰ Smith’s status as a freeman of Liverpool was also used to bolster his case. Backhouse informed Tarleton that he had reassured Mrs. Smith:

that she may depend that you will exert your utmost endeavours to procure her unfortunate Husband’s release & that you probably would step forward in the Service of his unfortunate Crew, who I hope you will agree with me, ought not to be lost to their Country & familys for want of friends to procure their release if possible.⁸¹

The appeal that George Dalston Tunstall, brother-in-law of Captain Irving, sent to Matra in November 1789 drew attention to the suffering experienced by his “unhappy only sister who labours under the greatest anxiety of mind for her Dear husbands liberty.” The letter also placed emphasis on the family’s tradition of service in the Royal Navy and the loss of his father in active service at Madras in 1771 to encourage the Consul General to respond favorably to his appeal.⁸² A petition written by William Sherwood, a leading captain in the Liverpool slave trade, emphasized Irving’s good character as a “Carefull, Sober and Industrious” man, but did not include any reference to personal connections.⁸³ Other than lobbying influential contacts and raising money, family and friends in Britain were relatively powerless in the ransoming process. Their distance from the site of captivity precluded any direct intervention by individual family members to redeem hostages in the event of the failure of ransom negotiations, and they were dependent on state action and military intervention.⁸⁴

The status and national origin of mariners had a direct bearing on the response of consular officials to the process of ransoming.⁸⁵ Although two of the three “Portuguese Blacks” who sailed as crew on the *Anna* were released from captivity, it was clear that the British consul treated their release as a far lower priority than the other crewmen. In his correspondence with Grenville, Matra stated that he would “have them thrown into the bargain, or left over for after consideration,” which reflects their perceived inferiority.⁸⁶ On 19 December 1789, Matra informed Grenville that he was attempting to get the men to make an application to the Portuguese agent, as this would be a means of reducing the expenses of the British consulate. Reflecting a wider debate about whether consuls were obliged to redeem foreign seamen serving on vessels carrying their national flag,⁸⁷ Matra emphasized that he thought it was the responsibility of a Portuguese agent to treat for the release of Silvin Buckle, James Drachen and Jack Peters.⁸⁸ In 1807, this issue was debated by the Ironmongers’

Company of London, which deployed charitable funds for the ransoming of captives in North Africa. They questioned whether their funds should be used to redeem only British-born captives or people of all nationalities serving on British vessels, other than those nations at war with Britain. After consulting with James Grey Jackson, they reached the conclusion that “any person employed fairly in the British service, and falling into slavery may properly be redeemed by the Company without reference to the Birth place of the captive.”⁸⁹

Irving’s deliberate construction of his identity as a heroic figure resisting the tyranny of his Muslim captors was central to the way in which he recounted his experiences of captivity in several journals written on his return to England.⁹⁰ He emphasized how he was subject to, but resisted, an “intollerable” form of slavery using the strength derived from his Bible and his Christian faith. Yet, despite this use of language he was aware throughout his captivity that his value lay principally in his ransom price and that it was the failure of negotiations which would mark his transition from hostage to slave. This awareness is reflected in his first appeal to Hutchison on 24 June 1789, in which he asked him to satisfy “me with respect to future Expectations, and whether we are or are not to be slaves.” Irving was clearly unsure about their status, as he asked again on the following day for the consul to “Send me a Note relative to the Nature of our state.”⁹¹ When Matra wrote to Grenville from Tangier on 21 July 1789 to inform him about the loss of the *Anna*, he did not employ the term slavery to describe the men’s condition but outlined the political devices he could use to secure their release. In a letter to Irving dated 27 September 1789, Matra explained that he had authorized the “sums demanded for your Ransom” and that their “redemption” would be secured through every means possible. Similarly, the Vice-Consul used the term “captivity” rather than “slavery” to characterize the captain’s situation.⁹²

Yet, Irving repeatedly used the terms slave and slavery in his correspondence. It was not until he was transferred to Marrakesh in January 1790 that he acknowledged directly that he was a hostage rather than a slave. He urged his wife Mary to “bear up under your sufferings with the fortitude of a good Christian, and to encourage you let me assure you that I am no longer a Slave but enjoy my liberty in every respect (that of leaving the country excepted).” He restated this in a letter from Essaouira two months later, saying that he had “little reason to call myself a Slave, but rather a prisoner at large.”⁹³ For Irving, the point of transition from slave to hostage was when he was transferred from the ownership of

his captors in the southern Saharan provinces to the control of the Sultan and the Vice-Consul. He defined himself as a slave throughout the period from June 1789 to January 1790 based principally on his fear that he was out of reach of redemption and thereby vulnerable to enslavement. A meeting with some Frenchmen who had been shipwrecked earlier in 1789 emphasized the possibility that he might be left to languish in slavery. He recorded in his journal how the realization that the French consul was unable to redeem the men “almost petrified me:”

Could have died rather than devote my life to be spent in so abject a state, bereft of all Christian Society, a slave to a savage race, who despised [*sic*] and hated me, on account of my beleif [*sic*].⁹⁴

Irving’s use of the term “slave” was also a device that he used deliberately to make his appeals for liberty more powerful, such as when he wrote to Matra craving “with the Humility of a poor slave your Assistance and protection.” In this doleful petition, he pointed out that he was suffering in slavery “with people who are Scarsely a degree better than Savages, Strangers to [...] better affection of the Heart...” In attempting to convey the depth of his suffering, he claimed that “a Sensible heart may in some degree feel that no pen or the Tongue of a Cicerco ~~could not~~ can express, first a dreadfull shipwreck then siezed [*sic*] by a party of naked savages with drawn knives expecting every moment to be deprived of a painfull existence.”⁹⁵ Describing himself as a “slave” to his friends and family also added to the dramatic impact of his tale and was a means of placing himself in the longer tradition of Barbary captivity narratives. Although Irving and the other crewmembers were required to undertake a variety of menial tasks, it was in the interests of their captors to ensure they remained in reasonably good condition and that their labor was not as arduous as that imposed on other captives in North Africa.⁹⁶ Clarence-Smith and Eltis suggest that the treatment of captives “probably improved slightly in the eighteenth century. As ransoming became more significant, the asset value of captives increased, providing an incentive for better treatment.”⁹⁷ Irving was not required to undertake fieldwork, unlike other members of his crew, which points to the higher value placed on him by his captors. There is no doubt that Irving was sold on a number of occasions and required to undertake coerced labor in a domestic context, but his frequent reference to his slavery obscures the clear intention of his captors to facilitate his return to his previous status through the ransoming process.⁹⁸

Despite the complaints by Irving and his cousin about their suffering at the hands of the “unfeeling moors,” the cases of the *Anna* and *Solicitor*

General provide examples of successful ransom negotiations. Of the nineteen mariners on the *Solicitor General*, eighteen were ransomed.⁹⁹ Ten of the eleven crewmembers of the *Anna* returned home, although James Drachen, one of the “Portuguese blacks,” died in captivity.¹⁰⁰ Not all negotiations were as successful, and James Grey Jackson attempted to identify the key obstacles which prevented the positive completion of the ransoming process in other cases.¹⁰¹ Based on knowledge built up from “observations made during a residence of sixteen years in different parts of the Empire of Marocco,” he pointed out that forty English seamen shipwrecked between 1790 and 1806 were “dispersed in various parts of the Desert, after a lapse of time, in consequence of the Consul making no offers sufficiently advantageous to induce the Arabs to bring them to Mogador [Essaouira].” Jackson stressed the importance of acting swiftly, and that the transfer of captives north to Essaouira “should always be done as soon as possible after the wreck.”¹⁰² Other seamen were held for far longer periods than the mariners on the *Anna* and the *Solicitor General*. Jackson estimated that some eighty seamen on English vessels were “redeemed after a tedious existence among the Arabs of from one to five years, or more, originating from various causes, such as a want of application being made through the proper channel, want of remitting money for their purchase, or want of a competent agent settled on the coast.” In Jackson’s opinion, the process of ransoming would have been speeded up by the employment of a specialist negotiator or agent who had access to a fund of money specifically for ransom payments. He argued that:

by allowing a sum rather above the price of a black slave, the Arabs would immediately bring them to Mogodor, knowing they could depend on an adequate price; by this means they might be procured for half what they now cost; and it would be an infinitely better plan than that of soliciting the Emperor to procure them through the Bashaw of Suse; for, besides the delay, and consequent protracted sufferings of the captives, the favour is undoubtedly considered by the Emperor as incalculably more than the cost and charges of their purchase.¹⁰³

Implicit in Jackson’s comments is a criticism of the amateurish and uncoordinated efforts of consular officials to secure the release of seamen. If such improvements had been put in place, Jackson questioned, “how many an unfortunate Englishman would have been delivered from bondage?”¹⁰⁴

The crewmembers of the *Anna* and the *Solicitor General*, particularly the captains and officers, were well practised in categorizing individuals according to their financial value. Thomas Smith, captain of the *Solicitor General*, had experience of trading at Old Calabar, an area characterized by face to face trade with African suppliers.¹⁰⁵ When the *Solicitor General* was wrecked in August 1795, Smith was en route to Bonny in the Bight of Biafra “for Negroes.”¹⁰⁶ In their roles as surgeon and surgeon’s mate on slaving voyages to the Bight of Biafra between 1787 and 1788, Irving and his younger cousin would have gone on shore with the captain and participated in direct negotiations with African merchants for the supply of enslaved Africans.¹⁰⁷ By inspecting the medical condition of the Africans gathered for sale, they played a direct role in assessing the economic value of individuals destined for export in the transatlantic slave trade as well as the profits that would accrue to the officers through payments based on the survival rates of the slaves in the Middle Passage. This capacity appears not to have been diminished by their period in captivity and their own treatment as commodities. After casting off his “Arabic Rags,” on his return to England in November 1791, Irving returned to sea in command of the *Ellen* just two months later.¹⁰⁸ When James Irving junior, the younger cousin and namesake of the captain, accepted the position of surgeon on the *Ellen*, he calculated the profits he expected to receive from the purchase and sale of 253 enslaved Africans.¹⁰⁹ As the ship sailed from port, he informed his “Honoured Parents” in Langholm in Scotland that “My wages is £4 Sterling per month besides if it please God we make a good voyage, I ~~expect to~~ get head Money, and if we only bury 6 slaves my Couzin will receive £100 and I £50 Bounty.” Showing his awareness of the terms of the Dolben Act of 1788, which rewarded captains and surgeons for keeping slave mortality at 3% or lower, the surgeon explained how the death of “not more than nine slaves” would result in the payment of bonuses of £25 for him and £50 for his older cousin. In stark contrast to his financial calculations, the death of 47 of the 253 African men, women and children (18.6%) embarked on the *Ellen* in 1791 points to the devastating human impact of the trade.¹¹⁰

In pleading for his own release from captivity in Morocco, Captain Irving referred to the “sordid avarice” of his captors and how he had been “consigned over to a Slavery more detestable than Death.”¹¹¹ Yet, he drew no parallels with the financial rewards he had accrued during his slave-trading career, which had generated sufficient capital to purchase property in his home town in Scotland following his first slaving venture on the

Vulture in 1784.¹¹² His correspondence with his wife Mary is punctuated frequently with his concern that their wealth and future plans had been severely undermined by his period in captivity. The first letter sent home following his capture in Morocco lamented how the shipwreck had shattered their “hopes and prospects,” and that he would need with “Gods Assistance” to undertake another slaving voyage “to retrieve what I’ve lost.”¹¹³

As a result of his period in captivity, Irving travelled to a number of urban and rural settlements and developed some awareness of the economy, society and culture of Morocco. His journals include reference to the wealth and splendour of the royal court at Taroudant, the appearance and productivity of the Moroccan landscape, as well as the religious devotion shown by Muslims with whom he came into contact. In some respects, Irving emerged from his period in Morocco with some factual understanding of local peoples and societies, and he exhibited a clear awareness of social gradations in Morocco. Yet, his cultural conceit was such that he dismissed any evidence which challenged his worldview of European superiority. When he visited the court of Mawlay ‘Abd-al-Salam at Taroudant, for example, he recorded his surprize at the appearance of the Prince and struggled to reconcile the evidence of wealth and cultural advance with his preconceived ideas of European civilization and African savagery:

In the afternoon I was taken before the Prince where I was much surprised to find the defferance and respect that was shown him. I expected to find him only one degree removed from a Savage, as all the other moors or Arabs are ... His dress was rich and graceful. His menial servants stood at the door, and the chief scribe with other Grandees sat at some distance from him on a Carpet. He was served with a cup of coffee poured from a Golden Pot, and the rest of the service was of plate. The chamber was large and spacious. The wall was hung round with a kind of Tapestry, and the floor tiled with various coulered [*sic*] Tiles, arranged in differant [*sic*] figures, and covered with a rich Turkey carpet.¹¹⁴

In order to counter such evidence of civilization, Irving provided frequent examples of the backwardness of the people. After recounting details of the court at Taroudant, for example, he followed this swiftly with an entry in which he ridiculed the “ignorance” of the “uncivilized moors” who asked him to diagnose and cure their illnesses by examining their pulses. His disparaging comments on the women he encountered in Morocco also

added to his general depiction of an uncivilized society. The women at Wad Nun were described as a “disgrace to humanity, possessing nothing human, but shape,” and he highlighted their lack of feminine qualities by referring to how they spat on him, “severely tormented” him, stripped him of his clothing and conducted intimate searches for money.¹¹⁵

Other than recording the occasional phrase to support his narration of events, Irving made no attempt to learn any Arabic. His comments on the Muslim faith were also sparse and typically supported the dramatic purposes of his narrative. Although he remarked on the presence of a school held in one of the tents on the beach, his main purpose was to point out how the teacher was an “inhospitable pedant” who would not allow them to shelter there. On those occasions where he commented on the Muslim faith, it was typically used to illustrate their captors’ lack of humanity and compassion.¹¹⁶ In an entry for 8 June 1789, for example, Irving described how their captors spat in their faces when they begged for water and then “obliged us to drink out of our hats as the dish would have been polluted [*sic*], had any of us touched it with our lips.”¹¹⁷ A few days earlier, Captain Irving described how they were forced at knifepoint to “sing, and say part of their prayers which we did not then understand.”¹¹⁸ Rather than challenging his cultural prejudices, Irving’s period in Morocco reinforced his sense of identity as a Briton caught up in the long-running conflict between the Christian and Islamic worlds.¹¹⁹ As such, his journals exhibit similar characteristics to those written by other British captives in the early modern period. As Vitkus points out, these captivity narratives viewed Moroccan culture and society through “an anti-Islamic lens....”¹²⁰ This is reflected in his choice of language for the final entries in his journal in which he recorded the crew’s departure on several English vessels from the harbour at Essaouira on 24 September 1789. Although his men were “bare and penniless,” he anticipated that returning to England would lead to “better days.” He drew on his Christian faith through his “cordial prayer, that we might never again visit those Barbarious regions in a similar predicament.”¹²¹

NOTES

¹ I would like to thank Robin Law, Jennifer Lofkrantz, Olatunji Ojo and David Pope for their helpful comments on a draft of this article. I am also grateful to Paul Lovejoy and Mohamed Mohamed for their valuable advice on a number of issues.

² The term “Barbary Coast,” used by European commentators in the early modern period to refer to a large coastal area of North Africa, reflected limited contemporary understanding

of the diversity of local societies and cultures. Until the nineteenth century, the term was also closely associated with corsair attacks on shipping. In a letter written to the Consul General at Tangier, George Dalston Tunstall referred to “that barbarous coast which from all accounts is so deserving of its title.” Lancashire Record Office [hereafter LRO], DDX 1126/1/22, George Dalston Tunstall to J.M. Matra, Consul General at Tangier, 9 November 1789. Transcript in Suzanne Schwarz, ed., *Slave Captain. The Career of James Irving in the Liverpool Slave Trade*, 2nd ed. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 106-107.

³ James Walvin, “The Public Campaign in England against Slavery, 1787-1834,” in David Eltis and James Walvin, eds., *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 63-68; Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital. Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1-9, 17-19, 23-24.

⁴ Edward Rushton, *West-Indian Eclogues* (London: W. Lowndes and J. Philips, 1787), 3. *The English Review* noted that, “These eclogues are four in number, viz. Morning, Evening, Noon, and Midnight. The persons introduced are unfortunate negroes, who, having been carried away forcibly from their native shores, are dragging on their miserable lives in all the horrors of slavery. They are represented as either bewailing their wretched state, or planning the destruction of their tyrants.” *English Review, or, An Abstract of English and Foreign Literature, 1783-1795*, 10 (October 1787), 315.

⁵ The *Anna* was a schooner of fifty tons burthen owned by John Dawson, which set sail from Liverpool on 2 May 1789. Under the terms of the Dolben Act, the vessel was entitled to carry 83 enslaved Africans. David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, www.slavevoyages.org, voyage identification number 80295; F.E. Sanderson, “The Liverpool Delegates and Sir William Dolben’s Bill,” *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 124 (1972), 75.

⁶ For a discussion of Captain Irving’s career, see Schwarz, *Slave Captain*. Information on the second slave ship commanded by James Irving (the *Ellen*) is available in Eltis et al., *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, voyage identification number 81242.

⁷ The National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA], FO 52/9, Morocco Series, Various 1772-1792. Captain Irving at “Telling” to John Hutchison, Vice-Consul at Mogador [Essaouira] in Morocco, 24 June 1789, ff. 115-16. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 92-94.

⁸ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, Vincent Carretta, ed., 2003), 61. *The Interesting Narrative* was first published in March 1789, two months after the motion to abolish the slave trade. Paul E. Lovejoy, “Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African,” *Slavery and Abolition* 27:3 (December 2006), 317.

⁹ Irving made frequent use of these terms in journals written on his return to England, but he was careful not to employ this language in correspondence written during his captivity in Morocco. In his first petition for help to John Hutchison, Vice-Consul at Essaouira, he describes how they were being held by “Arabs and Moors in a condition miserable beyond Conception.” Irving at “Telling” to Hutchinson, 24 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 92. In a letter to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Mary Tunstall, he described his captors as “Natives.” LRO, DDX 1126/1/13, James Irving to Mrs. Tunstall, 1 August 1789. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 97-98.

¹⁰ Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Osborn Shelves c. 399, "A Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*, Capt[ai]n Irving." Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 127-48 (131, 143).

¹¹ TNA, FO 52/9, Morocco Series, Various 1772-1792, James Irving at "Telling" in Morocco to Mr. Hutchison, Vice-Consul at Mogador, 2 August 1789, fol. 117. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 99-100; "Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*," in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 139. El Hamel identifies the presence of black slaves and free blacks in Morocco, and their important contribution to Moroccan society. Irving's reference to "Negroes" in close proximity to Guelmim is not surprising, as the town was closely linked to the trans-Saharan trade; the "usual route was Timbuktu, Arawan, Taghaza and Tafilalt." Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco. A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4-5, 7-9, 109, 154, 233. The late seventeenth-century captivity narrative written by Francis Brooks includes reference to "*Black-a-moors*" set over European captives "as Task-masters...." Cited in Adam R. Beach, "African Slaves, English Slave Narratives, and Early Modern Morocco," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46:3 (Spring 2013), 336.

¹² Definitions of legal and illegal enslavement had been the subject of debate by "Muslim scholars in the western and central Sudan regions of West Africa ... from at least the fifteenth century." Jennifer Lofkrantz, "Protecting Freeborn Muslims: The Sokoto Caliphate's Attempts to Prevent Illegal Enslavement and its Acceptance of the Strategy of Ransoming," *Slavery and Abolition* 32:1 (March 2011), 111; Jennifer Lofkrantz and Olatunji Ojo, "Slavery, Freedom, and Failed Ransom Negotiations in West Africa, 1730-1900," *Journal of African History* 53 (2012), 26-28; Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), 86-87. In the 1820s, the Sokoto Caliphate withdrew from "participation in the Atlantic slave trade" on "its own initiative." Paul E. Lovejoy, "Diplomacy in the Heart of Africa. British-Sokoto Negotiations over the Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade," draft paper, supplied in email correspondence; Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa. Records of the Second Expedition, 1825-1827* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 56-61.

¹³ David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-18.

¹⁴ Call for papers, "Perspectives on Historical and Contemporary Ransoming Practices," 25-26 April 2014.

¹⁵ Lofkrantz, "Protecting Freeborn Muslims," 111.

¹⁶ Jennifer Lofkrantz, "Scholars, Captives and Slaves: Ransoming Prisoners in Muslim West Africa," Draft chapter supplied in email correspondence, 5; Jennifer Lofkrantz, "Muslim Intellectual Reactions to Illegal Enslavement and the Strategy of Ransoming," Paper presented at conference on "Perspectives on Historical and Contemporary Ransoming Practices," York University, 25-26 April 2014. In his narrative, Robert Adams referred to the harsh treatment of Christians and attempts to convert captives to Islam. *The Narrative of Robert Adams, a Sailor, who was wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa, in the Year 1810* (London: Printed for John Murray by William Bulmer and Co., 1816), 73, 146. For a discussion of the reliability and significance of Adams's account, see Charles Hansford Adams, ed., *The Narrative of Robert Adams, A Barbary Captive* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ix-lv. James Grey Jackson considered that the young males among a ship's crew were particularly vulnerable. He described how, "the young lads, of which there are generally two or three in every ship's crew, are generally seduced by the Arabs to become

Mohammedans; in this case, the Sheick or chief of the duar adopts him, and initiates him in the Koran, by sending him to the (Mdursa) seminary, where he learns to read the sacred volume, and is instructed in the pronunciation of the Arabic language....” James Grey Jackson, *An Account of the Empire of Morocco*, 3rd ed. (London: Frank Cass 1968 [1814]), 277.

¹⁷ El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 9.

¹⁸ Seymour Drescher, “The Slaving Capital of the World: Liverpool and National Opinion in the Age of Abolition,” *Slavery and Abolition* 9:2 (1988), 128-29.

¹⁹ It is estimated that fifteen “substantial narratives” survive for this period. Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), 88-89. Vitkus indicates that 23 captivity narratives were written by British captives between 1577 and 1704. Daniel J. Vitkus and Nabil Matar, eds., *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption. Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 3. A consensus has yet to be reached on the total number of people who were held in captivity in North Africa. Robert C. Davis estimates that in the period between 1530 and 1780, there were “almost certainly a million and quite possibly as many as a million and a quarter white, European Christians enslaved by the Muslims of the Barbary Coast.” Robert C. Davis, “Counting European Slaves on the Barbary Coast,” *Past and Present* 172 (August 2001), 118.

²⁰ The “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*” held at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library was purchased from a dealer in London in 1954. Another eighteenth-century version of Irving’s journal has recently come to light in the North Yorkshire County Council Record Office [hereafter NYCC]. This account is “written on 29 pages” and the “paper is watermarked 1794.” The first page of the journal includes reference to “Mr. Irving’s journal wrote in Barbary.” The journal is held in the collection of Tot Lord of Settle, NYCC, ZXF 34/5. I am grateful to Keith Sweetmore for this information contained in email correspondence, 10 March 2011. A twentieth-century copy of Irving’s journal is held at the Lancashire Record Office, and a nineteenth-century copy is held at The Beacon, Whitehaven.

²¹ Davis, “Counting European Slaves,” 89.

²² “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 129. In *Robinson Crusoe*, reference is made to how Crusoe was “exceedingly surprised with the print of a man’s naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand.” Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1995 [London, 1719]), 117-18.

²³ Davis, “Counting European Slaves,” 89.

²⁴ In the early modern period, captives who were ransomed successfully and returned home told their stories numerous times. Vitkus and Matar, *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption*, 2-3.

²⁵ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 149-51.

²⁶ Lofkrantz and Ojo, “Slavery, Freedom, and Failed Ransom Negotiations in West Africa,” 26.

²⁷ Irving at “Telling” to Hutchison, 24 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 92.

²⁸ TNA, FO 95/1/3, Barbary States, 1766-1801, Letter from John Foxcroft to Messrs. Forbes & Co., Liverpool, fol. 203; TNA, FO 52/11, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1795-1810, James Matra to the Duke of Portland, 31 October 1795, fol. 48; James M. Matra to the Duke of Portland, 18 November 1795, fol. 51.

²⁹ TNA, FO 52/11, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 24 July 1797, fol. 118.

³⁰ Mohamed El Mansour, *Morocco in the Reign of Mawlay Sulayman* (Wisbech: Middle East and North African Studies Press, 1990), 88-98.

³¹ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, July 19, 1796-July 21, 1796, Issue 6019, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, Gale reference number Z2001330268 (accessed 30 January 2015); *Lloyd's Evening Post (London, England)*, July 20, 1796 – July 22, 1796, Issue 6070, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, Gale reference number Z2000538431 (accessed 30 January 2015).

³² TNA, FO 52/11, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 24 March, 28 May and 10 September 1796, ff. 59, 64, 112.

³³ LRO, DDX 1126/1/29, Letter from Christopher Robson to William Graham, 22 September 1790. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 115-16.

³⁴ Essaouira was founded by Sidi Muhammad in 1764 as a focus for European trade. Other European consuls were based in the port, including those of France, Denmark and Portugal. El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 222, 225.

³⁵ Mohamed Hassan Mohamed, *Between Caravan and Sultan: The Bayruk of Southern Morocco. A Study in History and Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1-3, 278-335.

³⁶ Lofkrantz, "Scholars, Captives and Slaves," 12-13. For a discussion of Jews in Morocco, see El Mansour, *Morocco in the Reign of Mawlay Sulayman*, 14-16, 42, 44-46.

³⁷ Jackson described how, "... soon after a ship strikes, some wandering Arabs strolling from their respective duars in the Desert, perceive the masts from the sand hills; and without coming to the shore, repair to their hordes perhaps 30 or 40 miles off, to apprise them of the wreck; when they immediately assemble, arming themselves with daggers, guns, and cudgels." Jackson, *Account of the Empire of Morocco*, 270.

³⁸ Irving at "Telling" to Hutchison, 24 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 92-94.

³⁹ "Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*," in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 131, 147.

⁴⁰ "Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*," in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 133.

⁴¹ "Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*," in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 133.

⁴² Jackson, *Account of the Empire of Morocco*, 270.

⁴³ This explanation was set out in a letter written by Captain Irving to J.M. Matra. LRO, DDX 1126/1/16, Draft of a letter from James Irving to J.M. Matra, undated.

⁴⁴ Between 1772 and 1795, John Dawson "probably invested in 129 voyages." Information supplied by David Pope in email correspondence, 28 January 2015. This includes an additional thirteen voyages to those indicated in David Pope, "The Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool's Slave Merchants of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles, eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 197.

⁴⁵ El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 233; El Mansour, *Morocco in the Reign of Mawlay Sulayman*, 57-58.

⁴⁶ "Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*," in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 138. The shaving of their beards and heads was regarded as the "highest indignity" by two Africans enslaved on the Gambia in the early 1730s. Lofkrantz and Ojo, "Slavery, Freedom, and Failed Ransom Negotiations in West Africa," 29.

⁴⁷ “A very short account of what happened to me after the seperation [sic] on the 16th of June 1789,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 149. Mohamed Mohamed notes how Mawlay ‘Abd al-Rahman was “arguably, the maternal cousin of Ubaydallah Ibn Salim, Bayruk’s father.” He had taken “refuge in al-Sus but was there only from 1779 to 1789....” Information supplied in email correspondence, 12 January 2015.

⁴⁸ Jackson, *Account of the Empire of Morocco*, 272.

⁴⁹ Lofkrantz, “Scholars, Captives and Slaves,” 18-19; *Voyages to the Coast of Africa, by Mess. Saugnier and Brisson; Containing an Account of their Shipwreck on Board Different Vessels, and Subsequent Slavery* (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1792), 10, 17. In a letter from Daniel Backhouse to John Tarleton, it was noted how Captain Thomas Smith “has been sold three times & is now Slave to a Jew.” TNA, CO 267/10, Daniel Backhouse to John Tarleton, 19 April 1796.

⁵⁰ I am grateful for this information supplied in email correspondence by Mohamed Mohamed, 14 August 2014; Mohamed, *Between Caravan and Sultan*, 1-2, 278-335.

⁵¹ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 141.

⁵² “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 141.

⁵³ A number of French mariners who were shipwrecked on the coast of North Africa were slave traders. Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs. France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 131, 134, 139; William G. Clarence-Smith and David Eltis, “White Servitude,” in David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *The Cambridge World History of Slavery, Volume 3, AD 1420-AD 1804* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 152.

⁵⁴ Irving at “Telling” to Hutchison, 24 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 92.

⁵⁵ Irving at “Telling” to Hutchison, 24 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 92-94.

⁵⁶ Christine Sears, “‘Arab Speculators:’ Arab-African Masters and Slave Ransoming in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,” Paper presented at conference on “Perspectives on Historical and Contemporary Ransoming Practices,” 25-26 April 2014.

⁵⁷ LRO, DDX 1126/1/15, John Hutchison, Vice-Consul, to James Irving at “Telling” in Morocco, [28] August 1789. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 101-102.

⁵⁸ Marcus Ressel, “Conflicts Between Early Modern European States about Rescuing their Own Subjects from Barbary Captivity,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36:1 (February 2011), 2-3.

⁵⁹ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 133; Irving at “Telling” to Hutchison, 24 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 93.

⁶⁰ Clarence-Smith and Eltis, “White Servitude,” 152; Lofkrantz, “Scholars, Captives and Slaves,” 10.

⁶¹ Irving at “Telling” to Hutchison, 24 June and 25 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 93-94.

⁶² TNA, FO 52/9, Morocco Series, Various 1772-1792, Captain Irving in Morocco to either John Hutchison, Vice-Consul at Mogador, or James M. Matra, Consul General at Tangier, 25 June 1789, fol. 116, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 94.

⁶³ James Irving at “Telling” in Morocco to Mr. Hutchison, Vice-Consul at Mogador, 2 August 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 100; TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James

M. Matra, 1789-1790, James Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 12 September 1789, fol. 130.

⁶⁴ In West Africa, the “ransom prices were usually at least twice the price the captive would fetch on the slave market and often more.” Lofkrantz and Ojo, “Slavery, Freedom, and Failed Ransom Negotiations in West Africa,” 33.

⁶⁵ Lofkrantz, “Scholars, Captives and Slaves,” 10-11, 13-14.

⁶⁶ LRO, DDX 1126/1/11, John Hutchison, Vice-Consul, to James Irving at “Telling,” Morocco, 10 July 1789. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 95.

⁶⁷ Lofkrantz, “Scholars, Captives and Slaves,” 2, 5, 9-10.

⁶⁸ There is reference to a request from the Sultan for Matra to supply information demonstrating how he had reimbursed the “losses of the three Moors wrecked on our coast,” but the circumstances are unclear. TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1789-1790, James Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 11 March 1790, fol. 194.

⁶⁹ TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, Matra to Evan Nepean, 22 October 1789, ff. 152-54, 160-62.

⁷⁰ Hershenzon notes that royal intervention in ransoming negotiations could inflate prices. Daniel Hershenzon, “Ransoming Muslims: North African Captives and their Ransom in the Early Modern Period,” Paper presented at conference on “Perspectives on Historical and Contemporary Ransoming Practices,” York University, 25-26 April 2014.

⁷¹ LRO, DDX 1126/1/17, John Hutchison, Vice-Consul, to James Irving at “Telling” in Morocco, 13 August 1789. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 100-101.

⁷² P. J. Jupp, “Grenville, William Wyndham, Baron Grenville (1759-1834),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11501?docPos=1> (accessed 30 January 2015); LRO, DDX 1126/1/12, John Hutchison, Vice-Consul, to James Irving at “Telling,” Morocco, 21[?] July 1789. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 96-97; TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1789-1790, James Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 7 August 1789, fol. 108.

⁷³ TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1789-1790, James Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 22 October 1789, ff. 150-52; James Matra to Evan Nepean, 22 October 1789, ff. 152-54, 160.

⁷⁴ TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1789-1790, enclosed with a letter from James Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 19 December 1789, fol. 180; Matra to Evan Nepean, 27 December 1789, fol. 184; Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 14 February 1790, fol. 190.

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Sparrow, “Nepean, Sir Evan, first baronet (1752-1822),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19894?docPos=1> (accessed 30 January 2015); TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1789-1790, James Matra to Evan Nepean, 20 December 1789, ff. 181-82.

⁷⁶ TNA, FO 52/9, Morocco Series, Various 1772-1792. Extracts of Letters from Consul Matra dated Tangiers [*sic*] the 9th Aug[us]t and 5th Sept[embe]r 1789, ff. 113-14. The surgeon subsequently wrote an account of his experiences in Morocco. William Lemprière, *A Tour from Gibraltar to Tangier, Sallee, Mogodore, Santa Cruz, Tarudant, and Thence over Mount Atlas to Morocco*, 3rd ed. (London, 1804).

⁷⁷ TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, James Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 26 January 1790, fol. 188.

⁷⁸ The Beacon, Whitehaven. “Journal of Voyage and Shipwreck,” 98-99.

⁷⁹ Daniel Backhouse organized an estimated one hundred slaving ventures between 1773 and 1799, and also participated in the direct trade to the West Indies. Pope, “The Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool’s Slave Merchants,” 185, 194. For a discussion of the career of John Tarleton MP, see “Tarleton, John (1755-1841), of Finch House, nr. Liverpool, Lancs,” Published in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1790-1820*, ed. R. Thorne, 1986, available on the website: *The History of Parliament. British Political, Social & Local History*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/tarleton-john-1755-1841> (accessed 29 January 2015).

⁸⁰ This firm included Thomas Tarleton, John Tarleton and Daniel Backhouse. The partnership was dissolved in 1794, although the business was carried on by John Tarleton and John Backhouse until 16 July 1802. I am grateful to David Pope for this information contained in email correspondence, 28 January 2015.

⁸¹ TNA, CO 267/10, Daniel Backhouse to John Tarleton, 19 April 1796, ff. 132-34.

⁸² LRO, DDX 1126/1/22, George Dalston Tunstall to J.M. Matra, Consul General at Tangier, 9 November 1789. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 106-107.

⁸³ Liverpool Record Office, 387 MD 54, William Sherwood to an unnamed individual, 2 May 1790. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 113.

⁸⁴ Lofkrantz and Ojo, “Slavery, Freedom, and Failed Ransom Negotiations in West Africa,” 26-27, 29, 33, 35-37.

⁸⁵ The impact of social inequalities on ransoming policy can be traced in West Africa. Lofkrantz and Ojo, “Slavery, Freedom, and Failed Ransom Negotiations in West Africa,” 26.

⁸⁶ TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1789-1790, James Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 7 August 1789, fol. 108.

⁸⁷ Given the diverse international origins of mariners on ships in the eighteenth century, this lack of clarity about responsibility was “an important legalistic gap.” Ressel, “Conflicts Between Early Modern European States,” 3.

⁸⁸ TNA, FO 52/8, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1789-1790, James Matra to William Wyndham Grenville, 19 December 1789, fol. 177.

⁸⁹ TNA, FO 174/14, Letters from the Ironmongers’ Company of London Regarding the Redemption of British Slaves and Shipwrecked Mariners in Morocco, 7 July 1807.

⁹⁰ This was typical of a number of captivity narratives written by British subjects in the early modern period. Vitkus and Matar, *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption*, 4, 37, 359.

⁹¹ Irving at “Telling” to Hutchinson, 24 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 92-93; Irving in Morocco to either Hutchison or Matra, 25 June 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 94.

⁹² LRO, DDX 1126/1/19, James M. Matra to Captain James Irving, 27 September 1789. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 104; Matra to Grenville, 21 July 1789, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 95-96.

⁹³ LRO, DDX 1126/1/25, James Irving to Mary Irving, 31 January 1790, LRO, DDX 1126/1/26, James Irving to Mary Irving, 26 March 1790, in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 109-113.

⁹⁴ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 140.

⁹⁵ LRO, DDX 1126/1/16, Draft of a letter from James Irving to J.M. Matra, undated.

⁹⁶ Ellen G. Friedman, “Christian Captives at ‘Hard Labour’ in Algiers, 16th-18th Centuries,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13:4 (1980), 618-28.

⁹⁷ Clarence-Smith and Eltis, “White Servitude,” 155.

⁹⁸ Ransoming is defined as “the release of a captive prior to enslavement in exchange for payment.” This process involves “the ransomed captive returning to their previous status in their own society.” Lofkrantz and Ojo, “Slavery, Freedom, and Failed Ransom Negotiations in West Africa,” 25-26, 29; Jennifer Lofkrantz, “Intellectual Discourse in the Sokoto Caliphate: The Triumvirate’s Opinions on the Issue of Ransoming, ca. 1810,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45:3 (2012), 386; Lofkrantz, “Protecting Freeborn Muslims,” 109-110.

⁹⁹ TNA, FO 52/11, Morocco Series, Consul James M. Matra, 1795-1810, James Matra to the Duke of Portland, ff. 48, 51, 112, 118.

¹⁰⁰ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 143, 148.

¹⁰¹ In West Africa, the failure of ransom negotiations could be caused by “time constraints, disputes over price or with brokers, captor disinterest, or the prohibition of ransoming by the state.” Lofkrantz and Ojo, “Slavery, Freedom, and Failed Ransom Negotiations in West Africa,” 26.

¹⁰² Jackson, *Account of the Empire of Morocco*, v, 279-80.

¹⁰³ Jackson, *Account of the Empire of Morocco*, 280.

¹⁰⁴ Jackson, *Account of the Empire of Morocco*, 274, 279-81.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, CO 267/10, Daniel Backhouse to John Tarleton, 19 April 1795, ff. 132-34.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, FO 95/1/3, John Foxcroft to Messrs. Forbes & Co., 16 October 1795. The *Solicitor General* was a brig of 186 tons owned by William Forbes, Thomas Rigmaiden, William Gregson junior, Joseph Ward and William Begg. The ship sailed from Liverpool on 17 July 1795 bound to the Bight of Biafra to purchase 310 enslaved Africans. Eltis et al., *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, voyage identification number 83572.

¹⁰⁷ Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, “African Agency and the Liverpool Slave Trade,” in Richardson, Schwarz and Tibbles, *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, 43-65.

¹⁰⁸ LRO, DDX 1126/1/32, James Irving in London to Mary Irving, 12 November 1790. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 118-19.

¹⁰⁹ The *Ellen*, a ship of 152 tons burthen owned by John Dawson, sailed from Liverpool on 3 January 1791. After purchasing enslaved Africans at Cape Coast Castle and Anomabu, Captain Irving sailed from West Africa bound for Trinidad on 16 September 1791. Of the 253 enslaved Africans carried on board the *Ellen*, just over one half of those transported were adult males (50.2%). Eltis et al., *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, voyage identification number 81242. In contrast to the *Anna*, it is unlikely that the *Ellen* was purpose-built for the slave trade. The Certificate of British Registry dated 14 December 1790 indicates that the *Ellen* was a “prize captured from the Americans,” which had been “legally condemned in the High Court of Admiralty” in July 1782. This “square sterned ship” had three masts, and two decks with a height of four feet between the decks. The ship was “pierced for sixteen guns” and also had a figurehead. In contrast, the *Anna* was a British built “square sterned schooner” with one deck, two masts and no figurehead. Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives,

Certificate of British Registry, C/EX/L/4, vol. 8, no. 133, 14 December 1790; Certificate of British Registry, C/EX/L/4, vol. 7, no. 20, 16 April 1789.

¹¹⁰ Letter in private ownership, James Irving junior to his parents in Scotland, 2 January 1791. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 119-20; Stephen D. Behrendt, “The British Slave Trade, 1785-1807: Volume, Profitability, and Mortality,” Ph.D thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993, 161-63; Sanderson, “The Liverpool Delegates,” 75-76.

¹¹¹ LRO, DDX 1126/1/16, Draft of a letter from James Irving to J.M. Matra, undated.

¹¹² Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 35, 78.

¹¹³ LRO, DDX 1126/1/14, James Irving at “Telling” in Morocco to Mary Irving in Liverpool, 1 August 1789. Transcript in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 98-99.

¹¹⁴ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 144.

¹¹⁵ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 131, 133-34.

¹¹⁶ This approach is also characteristic of the narrative of Robert Adams. Charles Hansford Adams, *Narrative of Robert Adams*, xv.

¹¹⁷ In an entry for September 1789, Captain Irving’s younger cousin urged his readers to “Judge of my situation now, amongst unfeeling moors who would spit in my face, and call me an infidel or unbeliever when I spoke.” “A very short account of what happened to me after the seperation on the 16th of June 1789,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 151.

¹¹⁸ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 134-35.

¹¹⁹ Muslim captives were held in Spain and other European countries, and were sometimes exchanged for Christian captives. Friedman, “Christian Captives,” 616-18, 631-32.

¹²⁰ Vitkus and Matar, *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption*, 4, 16, 37; Colley, *Captives*, 116-17; Lofkrantz, “Scholars, Captives and Slaves,” 2; Russell Hopley, “The Ransoming of Prisoners in Medieval North Africa and Andalusia: An Analysis of the Legal Framework,” *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009), 337-38; Friedman, “Christian Captives,” 617-18; Charles Hansford Adams, *Narrative of Robert Adams*, xv, xlviii-xlix.

¹²¹ “Narrative of the Shipwreck of the *Ann*,” in Schwarz, *Slave Captain*, 148.