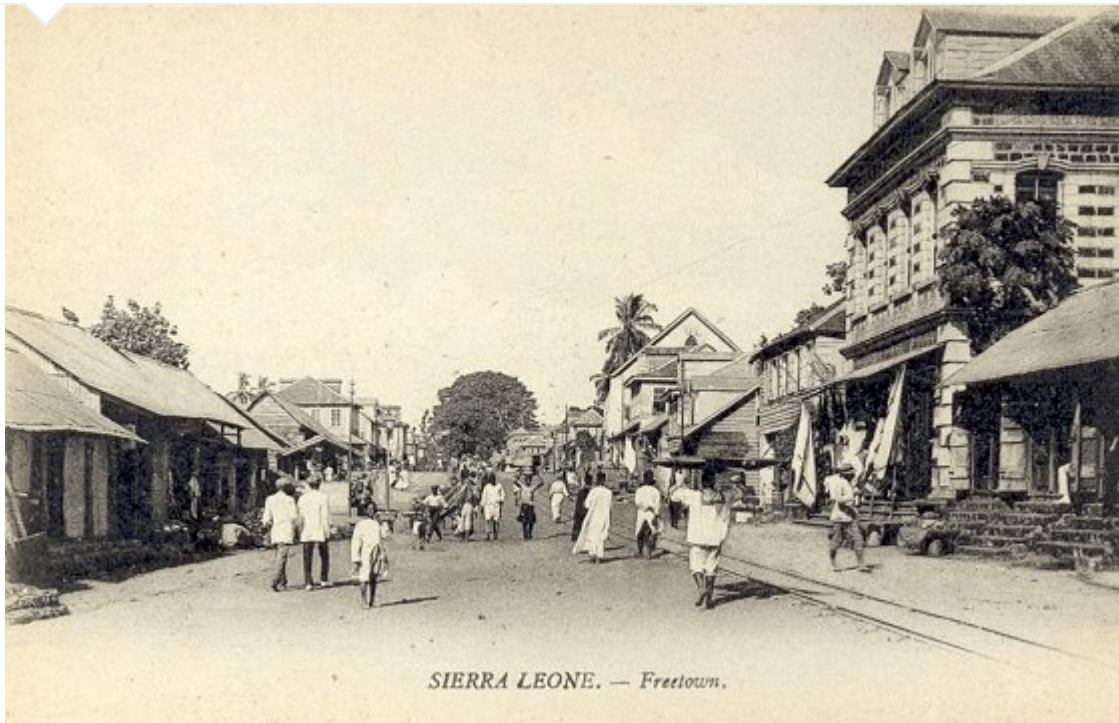


{essays in history}

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"A bloody war or a sickly season": The remains of a middling British imperialist in early colonial Sierra Leone



Padraic Xavier Scanlan

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The last ten minutes of the watch were irritating like a gun that hangs fire; those men did not belong to the world of heroic adventure; they weren't bad chaps though ... The quality of these men did not matter; he rubbed shoulders with them, but they could not touch him; he shared the air they breathed, but he was different.[1]

I. *Lord Jim and other middling imperialists*

Joseph Conrad's 'Lord' Jim is a louche British sailor, serving in the Indian Ocean. While navigating the *Patna* from the Indonesian archipelago to Mecca, Jim and the other European officers become convinced that the ship is about to sink. They abandon the *Patna* for the lifeboats, and leave the passengers—mostly pilgrims on the *Hajj*—to die. But the *Patna* does not sink, and Jim is punished by a colonial court of inquiry. He takes the blame alone, loses his navigation certificate, and retreats to 'Patusan,' an island in the South Seas, where he sacrifices himself in an affair of honor. In the epigraph above, Jim reflects on his position among the officers of the *Patna*. The quotation shows his haughty sense of himself as an upright man in the tropics, standing out from among indolent "natives" and dilapidated Europeans. But Jim's cowardice and public humiliation put the lie to his grandiosity.

Lord Jim offers two important lessons in writing the history of the British Empire. First, Jim's decisions are colored by a sense of himself as an imperial hero, and by his notion of imperial heroism—the self-regard of imperial personnel mattered. Second, for every 'great man' of the Empire, there were a thousand Lord Jims. The lives of the working people of the Empire—common sailors, soldiers, and laborers—require imaginative reconstruction. The role of the middle classes in British domestic history is well known, but bureaucrats and career petty officers have been neglected by historians of the British Empire.[2] Middling imperialists, including career administrators, warrant officers, and clerks, left a fecund archive of paperwork and occasional writing. Just as *Lord Jim* cracks open a colonial life to reveal the seedy, wriggling ambiguities at the heart of British colonialism in Southeast Asia, so the lives of middling officials can burrow into the complexities of imperial and colonial history.

This essay reconstructs the life and authorship of one middling imperialist, the Royal Navy surgeon and bureaucrat Peter Leonard. Leonard began his Navy career in the Preventive Squadron, a British military force composed of Royal Navy vessels and Royal Marines, based at the British colony of Sierra Leone. The Squadron's mission was to intercept slaving vessels off the coast of West Africa, cruising off the coast from present-day Senegal as far south as present-day South Africa.

[3] Understaffed, often ineffective, but highly publicized and controversial, the Squadron tacked on the fault-line between Evangelical humanitarianism and colonial economic exploitation. Peter Leonard, like Lord Jim, believed himself to be a man of class and distinction unrecognized among his social inferiors. He served in Africa, among local African people and rough British sailors, but carefully separated himself from them. He wrote two memoirs framing his life and career for readers in London and the mid-Atlantic United States. Although Peter Leonard cannot represent the entire British Empire, his career shows how British imperial officials could disconnect themselves from the people they purported to govern and lead, suggesting how that individual construction of difference shaped British imperialism on the coast of West Africa.

Peter Leonard wrote about his life in Sierra Leone in two volumes. The first, published in the United States, wrote approvingly of slavery, while the second, abolitionist in tone, was published in both Britain and the United States. Leonard left more traces than these two published books—he had a long career in the imperial bureaucracy, and his promotions, degrees, and appearances at parties and conferences are preserved in newspapers, magazines, and ephemera. I have followed Peter Leonard through this diffuse archive, and I have tried to expose how he managed his relationship to his profession, to his physical environment, to the West African coast and its peoples, and to issues of class and nationality in order to separate himself from the station on which he served—to show that he never “went native.”

Reading individual lives to uncover fragments of the wider history of the British Empire can be an effective tool for managing its massive scope and complexity. The history of the British Empire has vexed the search for a grand narrative; it is telling that the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, edited by William Roger Louis, is a compilation of individual

essays written by prominent scholars in more than one hundred and fifty sub-fields.[4] The search for a cohesive account of the Empire has prompted some to flog and rack material into a rigid framework and to ignore exceptions to maintain control of the narrative.[5] John Darwin suggests a more productive and flexible approach. His recent book, *The Empire Project*, proposes that the British Empire spread and operated as a series of "bridgeheads"—that local people and British personnel on the ground shaped the structure and direction of the empire far more than did strategists and politicians in London.[6] Historians of the Empire, following Darwin, can embrace its diversity, and look for interconnections between fields of operation and spheres of influence. In particular, a group of scholars, inspired by the example of historical geography, have used individual lives as a powerful tool for writing imperial history.[7] In this vein, Peter Leonard's life and autobiography can show how local circumstances and institutional forces shaped the life of one colonial official but also how the life of one colonial official can speak to imperial history writ large.

II. *Peter Leonard, Africa, and Africans*

Peter Leonard was born at St. Vigeans, in Arbroath, Scotland in 1801, and was first educated at the Arbroath Academy.[8] On May 15, 1822, the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh announced that "Since Candlemas last, the following Gentlemen have appeared before [the College], and having produced Certificates of their having completed the Course of Study prescribed by the College ... have been found fully qualified to practise the Arts of Anatomy, Surgery and Pharmacy." [9] Peter Leonard, "of Forfarshire," was listed among the graduates.[10] The Licentiate was a relatively new kind of degree. Before it was introduced, in the early nineteenth century, surgeons were professionalized by experience, rather than by the granting of a formal degree. An historian of the Edinburgh Royal College of Surgeons writes, "The chief importance of the [new] diploma was that it defined a new kind of surgeon, based not on what a young man did in practice, but rather on what he had studied ... To students it gave the prestige of a Latin diploma and the psychological assurance of being 'perfectly qualified.'" [11] Peter Leonard's decision to take the Licentiate in Surgery speaks to his ambitions—he wanted to be seen as a gentleman, not as a sawbones. He could have qualified for the naval service by earning the

even cheaper Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries (LSA), which was considerably easier and less expensive to complete than the training and licensing procedures demanded by the Royal College of Surgeons.

[12] But Leonard must have recognized that a more advanced education offered the possibility of greater advancement. And yet, Leonard was not a gentleman-physician, as class divisions existed within the medical community; “between physicians and surgeons; between consultants with MDs and general practitioners with MDs; between Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons and Licentiates; and between all these groups, and practitioners without diplomas of any sort.” [13] Leonard had a degree, but he would need to work to be considered a gentleman.

Leonard was employed by the Navy Medical Service, the less respectable of the two military medical services, themselves less fashionable than private practice. [14] From 1811 to 1824, roughly five percent of Edinburgh medical students graduated into the Army Medical Service. The Army was the first branch of the British military to offer inducements for gentlemen with medical training, or those who wished to be considered to be gentlemen, to enlist; in 1805, the rank of Surgeon’s Mate was replaced with the rank of Assistant Surgeon in the Army. To be an Assistant Surgeon, rather than a “mate,” flattered the pretensions of trained surgeons. [15] The Navy maintained the rank of Surgeon’s Mate, as well as the rank of Assistant Surgeon, for much longer, but it seems as though Leonard’s training paid an early dividend, for in 1823, he was promoted from Surgeon’s Mate to Assistant Surgeon. [16] In 1829, while he was at sea of the African coast, Leonard was promoted again, to the rank of Surgeon. [17] Peter Leonard’s education and literary pretensions made him feel like a gentleman—and in a sense he was, but he remained subordinate both socially and in the chain of command to commissioned officers.

Leonard was also a Scot, common among Britons at work in the Empire, but still something of a barrier to social mobility in England. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly after the final end of the Jacobite insurrection in 1745, were periods of enormous opportunity for Scots willing to gamble on the possibilities of the new British Empire. [18] Christopher Harvie writes, “The success of Scots in imperial administration had a ... combination of boldness, competence and lack of caste.” [19] Ian Donnachie remarks that “enterprising Scots, universally

‘on the make,’ were naturally associated with success.”[20] In his celebration of the Scottish role in the British Empire, Andrew Dewar Gibb reflects that “the Scotsman is less interested than the Englishman in the artificial distinctions between classes and less insistent upon the perfection of his institutions and mode of life.”[21] All of these writers are correct in one respect – the Scots were extremely successful in the Empire. In the East India Company, an enormous proportion of the clerks, merchants, and directors were Scots; one head of the Company referred to his board of directors as his “Scotch guardians.”[22] When France gave up Saint Kitts in 1713, fully half of the land grants went to Scots, and before 1750, Scots had become the dominant landowners in Jamaica and Tobago.[23] But this success—although it might have been motivated by a vigorous egalitarianism and fueled by an astonishingly successful system of higher education—was not intended to export that democracy and entrepreneurial ethos to other countries. Scots wanted status in the Empire, and working in far-flung outposts was a way to earn that status. Peter Leonard gazed at London, even as he fixed his eyes on Africa. He wanted to participate in a sophisticated metropolitan culture, and his service in Africa was a stepping-stone toward that goal. In his first volume of autobiography, Leonard reflected on “home,” noting

They say that Englishmen have not a love of country—ask one of her exiled children, whom years and tender ties may have fixed in a foreign land, where is his home! and he will tell you ‘England’: that he loves no other country or people; that it would embitter the last moments of his existence to think that his bones should whiten in any but his native soil. No, it is the well-fed, discontented resident, who, never having been in a foreign land, fancies that England is not the home of his affections; but, from necessity, or as a punishment, compel him to leave it, and then he like all her children, sighs for his isle “his native isle,” and says ‘England, with all thy faults, I love thee still.’[24]

At least in *print*, Leonard considered “England” his home – like many Scots who sought their fortune in the Empire, Leonard blurs the line between English, Scottish, and British. And yet, there is an element of Scottish identity at play in Leonard’s work, despite his identification with England. Among the African peoples of the West African coast, Leonard most admired the “Kroomen” (Kru): “These men,” he wrote, “are an emigrant and industrious race ... They are, in fact, the Scotsmen of

Africa. They are a remarkably strong, active, hardy, and intelligent race of men.”[25] Taken together with the previous passage, Leonard seems to suggest here that Scots—and convicts and economic migrants and exiles—are *more* English than the English, because they have experienced distance from the mother country and all of the desolation that attends it. Moreover, and typically, Africans are a point of comparison, a foil used by Leonard to express his own pride at being a Scot.

Leonard published his two volume memoir, *The Western coast of Africa* and *Records of a Voyage to the Western Coast of Africa*, in 1833. The memoirs are not records of his service; there are no case histories in the books, and very few reminders of Leonard’s status as a medical officer. Rather than defining himself by his profession, Leonard defined himself against the exotic backdrop of equatorial Africa. In 1832, Leonard resided on shore in Sierra Leone for several weeks while his ship was refitted. While on leave in the colony, he occasionally visited the local racetrack to bet on the horses. Leonard was glad to have found a British pastime on the sweltering coast of western Africa. But horses in Sierra Leone were different than in Britain; the comforts of home were made strange by the experience. “The horses,” Leonard reported, “most of which are brought from the Gambia, are very small, and generally in bad condition—something of the same breed as Don Quixote’s mare.” But, he reminded his readers, they ought not to judge West African horses by British standards—on the coast of West Africa, racehorses “are all kept for the common purposes of riding or driving, and none exclusively for the turf ... we know that all things—horses as well as men—are measured by comparison.”[26] Self-awareness and introspection were not Peter Leonard’s strong suits; the surgeon said more than he meant when he chastised his readers for judging African horses by European standards. When Leonard praised or condemned an aspect of African society, the contrast reveals a complex and conflicted self, anxious about professional advancement, about class, and about the future of British imperial adventures on the western coast of Africa.

British Sierra Leone (as opposed to the African societies that surrounded the colony) was a contradictory marriage of vulgar capitalism and Evangelical piety. The colony was founded to anchor British interests in West Africa and as a place to repatriate both emancipated Africans and North Americans of African descent who had remained loyal to Britain

during the American Revolution. Sierra Leone, then, was an expression of both the good intentions and monstrous arrogance of British abolitionism—an experiment in state-building as strange as the penal colonies of Australia and one far less studied by historians of the British Empire.[27] Historians of Africa have made various and important contributions to the history of the societies in the vicinity of the colony. Many of these historians emphasize how adaptive and resilient West African societies were in response to British colonialism and to British anti-slavery.[28] These two bodies of literatures have rarely been brought into conversation with one another. Peter Leonard does not bridge the gap, but his career shows how deliberate and heedless Britons could be about the lives and cultures of the people whom they proposed to govern. In this sense, Peter Leonard may suggest *why* imperial and colonial histories of West Africa have been so mutually exclusive.

Aloofness toward Africans came easily to British colonial officials. Although there was a consistent British presence on the Freetown peninsula from the 1780s, the British government struggled to control the colony's hinterland – the colonial authorities were understaffed and were rotated in and out too often to gain much understanding or appreciation of the complex politics of local peoples. Megan Vaughan argues that for many colonial medical practitioners, “there was a strong strand of thinking which held that Africans were, by definition, hardly capable of being individuals at all.”[29] The closed, transient British settlement at Sierra Leone seems to have fostered this dehumanizing logic. Few settlers ever met an African who was not a migrant laborer, resident in the colony for a few seasons, and colonial leaders generally met with local rulers as formalized “palavers,” communicating through an interpreter.[30] In the British press, Sierra Leone was either a foothold for “civilizing” the West Coast of Africa or else a sinister “white man’s grave.”[31] The colony was understood either as a triumph of British cultural superiority or as a function of its effects on European bodies. Peter Leonard shared this bone-deep racism: to his eyes, Africa appears as a backdrop, and Africans as stock characters. Abolitionism and humanitarianism, needless to say, did not require a nuanced or even a patronizing understanding of African cultures.

III. *Peter Leonard, imperialist.*

Peter Leonard published his memoirs in two different editions, both in 1833. The American version includes a swashbuckling account of the voyage from the Mozambique Channel around the Cape of Good Hope and north to Sierra Leone. This volume, based on contemporary reviews, seems to have never been published in Britain. It includes a strikingly different account of the slave trade than the second. In the first volume, Leonard was cavalier about the impact of the slave trade on Africans. He even offered a kind of apology:

As this is probably the last occasion I shall have of referring to the sorrows and cruelties of slavery, I may, perhaps, be allowed to make a few observations upon that much-agitated question. It is not my intention to enter upon the subject of slavery with regard to its political importance, but briefly to state *the probable moral benefit conferred upon mankind by its establishment in Africa*. Another reason for my entering more fully into its particulars is, to make it clearly understood, that the passages in my journal which allude to the miseries and barbarities endured by the slave, apply *only* to the disgraceful manner in which the trade is carried on upon the western coast of Africa, and not in any respect to the *domestic labourer* employed in our West Indian Colonies under the same name.[32]

Leonard, in the first sentence, recognized and regretted the decline of colonial slavery. Slavery, Leonard argued, put a stop to barbaric rituals of cannibalism and human sacrifice that he suggested had prevailed in West Africa before the arrival of Europeans. Leonard gave a classical account of the origins of slavery; he looked back to Justinian to justify human bondage. "Justinian says," Leonard began, "slaves are so called (*servi*), because conquerors, instead of putting their prisoners to death, are accustomed to sell them, and thus save their lives (*conservare*)."[33] When Leonard exculpated the West Indian Colonies, he made a distinction between the "virtuous" British system and the perfidious Portuguese and Spanish versions of the slave trade. The British were enlightened enough to brutally kidnap slaves (or purchase them from brutal kidnapers) and transport them to a better life in the New World—and doubly enlightened, presumably, because they had the perspicacity to abolish the trade before it got too out of hand. In summary, although

The intercourse between Africa and Europe was first stimulated by cupidity: that Africa has derived benefit from this intercourse, cannot be doubted. The inactive character of the negroes would never have led them to improvement in either their laws or customs, and centuries elapsed without producing any apparent change, or advancement towards civilisation. 'Their rude ignorance,' says Gibbon, 'has never invented effectual weapons of defence or destruction; they appear incapable of forming any extensive plans of government or conquest, and the obvious inferiority of their mental faculties has been discovered and abused by the nations of the Temperate Zone.'^[34]

This apology for the slave trade is depressingly familiar and not unsurprising, but it *is* surprising when compared to the much more widely-read second volume of Leonard's autobiography.

In 1833, the year of his memoir's publication—both of its parts in America, only its second volume in Britain—Parliament abolished slavery in the British Empire. That fact may account for the suppression of the first volume in Britain; old West India families would not have liked to be reminded of the loss of their slaves, and abolitionists would be furious at the republication of offensive arguments in favor of human traffic. At any rate, by the time Peter Leonard served in the Preventive Squadron, his view of Africa and Africans had changed. He wrote, "That the intellectual capacity and the moral feeling of the liberated African black is in all respects equal to the civilized and educated individual with a skin of a different colour ... I have, with much gratification, observed in numerous instances."^[35] Leonard's view of Africans did become more enlightened, but the distinction between Leonard's two volumes of autobiography is less stark than it might appear to be. Leonard might have changed his mind about the specifics of the slave trade, and about its morality, but he continued to believe completely in the superiority of British culture to all others, and in the mission of the British to raise Africa up from benighted weakness to equality. He had changed his mind only about best practices.

While traveling north along the coast of western Africa, Peter Leonard was shocked by a prison in a village somewhere in the coastal areas of the Niger Delta. "I saw a miserable-looking mortal stretched on his back upon the ground, with a spar of wood extending his arms, and another his legs ... I was informed that he had been lying in this posture for many

weeks; and as food was given him daily, life still remained—a mass of corruption, to be slowly destroyed by the animals of too disgusting a nature to mention, which were actually devouring the living flesh from his bones.”[36] This spectacle – which could easily be a revolting, titillating invention – caused him to divide Africans into the “savage” and the “civilized.” He argued that “civilized” Africans—that is, those who had been educated by missionaries—were more hurt by enslavement, and more appreciative of freedom. “Surely,” he argued, “the slave must feel his abject condition most acutely, who is blessed by the benign beams of civilization ... who feels himself a man.”[37] The Africans he encountered in Sierra Leone were ready to benefit from Britain’s paternal instruction.

In 1827 Kenneth Macaulay wrote an apology for the colony at Sierra Leone. People in London had noted that many of the missionaries sent to the colony never returned. Macaulay did not think much of the missionary mindset. “I cannot help attributing much of the more recent mortality among the missionaries ... to a morbid state of mind,” he wrote. “Other men go out filled with the hope of realizing a little property and returning home ... very different are the feelings of the missionary;—his mind is strongly impressed with a dread of the colony ... he considers sickness and death in a few years a certainty.”[38] Entrepreneurs, Macaulay suggested, were better imperialists than missionaries; because they wanted to make their pile and return home, they were more likely to stay alive than missionaries, who went to immolate themselves in God’s service. This view echoes a broader discomfort with evangelical activity along the trade routes of the Empire. Historian Andrew Porter’s work shows that imperial officials were often suspicious of missionaries, and considered the spread of Christianity to be secondary to other imperial matters.[39] The ultra-Tory magazine *John Bull* was a particularly strident opponent of missionary work. Missionaries, an editorial read, “are, for the most part, needy, under-bred, and ignorant people athirst for a livelihood.” They had little to do with the expansion of the British Empire; if anything, they “do an infinity of mischief wherever they come; and because, if any good come of the carrying [of missionaries] of such commodities, the master of a stage-coach on which any of them travel, or even the coach-master’s horses themselves, are equally entitled to our gratitude.”[40] The missionaries, *John Bull* maintained, were not spreading civilization any more than were the men, beasts and ships who toiled to transport goods by land and by sea.

Captains, sailors, and their ships were as important to the spread of British influence as were missionaries. The London *Examiner* agreed. At missionary meetings, its authors opined, "Every speech contains, first, an exhortation to put money into the Society's purse, and then a little *fable* invented for its especial honour. We have often remarked that a dozen Reverend speakers have followed each other, each in turn contributing some gross and palpable fiction, for the edification of the company."[\[41\]](#)

In the first volume of his autobiography, Peter Leonard took the side of *John Bull* and other ornery conservatives. He called the evangelicals 'saints' – a standard term of abuse for the evangelical party in Parliament. "The man who has seen the wild African roaming in his native woods," he sniffed, "and the well-fed happy-looking negro of the West Indies, may perhaps be able to judge of their comparative happiness; the former, I strongly suspect, would be glad to change his state of boasted freedom, starvation, and disease to become the slave of sinners, and the commiseration of saints!"[\[42\]](#) He also smugly dismissed the campaign, launched by evangelicals like Josiah Wedgwood, which asked the question, of slaves, "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?": But, to wind up the description of these 'brothers and natural relations!' as the saints call them; (thank Heaven, if my glass does not deceive me, I need not acknowledge the relationship; and, in my opinion, it does little credit to those Misters who are constantly boasting of the connexion)."[\[43\]](#) In the second volume, however, there is nothing but praise for the missionaries and their schools. This distinction is little more than cosmetic—whether it was missionaries or slavers who were doing the domestication, the greatest desideratum for Africa remained the construction of a new civilization on a European model. In this sense, although Peter Leonard is something of a footnote in the history of colonialism, he speaks for the majority. The reviewer for the *London Literary Gazette* understood Leonard's meaning quite clearly: "We should not allow our hearts to run away with our heads; but submit our sympathy to our reason; and consider, while we liberate and throw upon their own resources a vast body of mankind ... he must be prepared for emancipation, his new duties taught him."[\[44\]](#) Civilization meant discipline, a chain of command, concepts a naval surgeon could appreciate.

IV. *Peter Leonard, surgeon*

A surgeon in the Royal Navy needed to be stoic, and a surgeon in the West African service needed a heart of stone. The station was by far the most mortal British theatre of operations. From 1825 to 1845, an average of 981 sailors served on the station each year. And each year, on average, 6.3% of those sailors died from disease. The rate of death was 58.4 deaths from disease per 1,000 serving men (with 64.9 deaths per 1,000 from all causes). In comparison, mortality from disease in the Mediterranean service was 9.3 deaths per 1,000, 9.8 per 1,000 in the English Channel, and 18.1 per 1,000 in the West Indies.^[45] This raw data on mortality says nothing about the effect of malaria and other diseases on fighting strength and productivity. An attack of malaria might not kill a sailor, but it was likely to incapacitate him. The average mortality rate also obscures years of horrific epidemic disease. In 1829, for example, 202 of 792 sailors in the squadron died from disease (26%). In a prolonged epidemic of yellow fever in 1837 and 1838, roughly thirteen percent of the squadron's force died each year.^[46] Peter Leonard, like his professional peers, was cavalier about disease. When he and his fellow surgeons offered the traditional toast, "To a bloody war or a sickly season," they were only partly being ironic—their livelihood was vomit and gore, and they knew it.^[47] Leonard was casual about his own experience of disease. He wrote, with impressive *sang-froid*, that near the end of his first period of service on the coast, "I had for some time been affected with a disease in the liver, accompanied with severe pain in the side; and, within the last two months, had been suffering much from a complaint in the lungs, frequently throwing up large quantities of blood."^[48] Leonard was happy to have survived the disease, but his illness is mentioned as an aside. There is no way of knowing whether naval surgeons "really" believed in their rhetoric, but they certainly made an effort to present themselves as fearless and implacable. At the same time, Leonard was careful to distinguish himself from his charges; his published works treat sailors as they do Africans—with a carefully distant, callous hauteur.

And yet, Leonard would have lived cheek-to-cheek with Jack Tar, sharing provisions, space and pathogens with the crew. Zachary Friedenber, a historian of naval medicine, takes the long view of shipboard epidemics. "A ship on a long cruise," he writes, "was a superb model with which to study the epidemiology of contagion. When at sea, [a ship was] an

isolated unit, not subjected to diseases introduced by strangers.”^[49] But few surgeons could have had the leisure time to make systematic observations. The Royal Navy’s *Report on the Climate and Principal Diseases of the African Station*, written by senior physicians Alexander Bryson and William Burnett, was compiled in London from the disparate individual accounts of surgeons at sea. Surgeons ashore might have styled themselves as men of science, but at sea they were officers first and foremost, interested in good order on board their ships. Surgeons killed many seamen with their ministrations but improved the morale of the others. As long as the surgeon and his mates were alive, sailors felt safer. On board a warship, at anchor a few miles from the coast of Africa, the atmosphere of isolation and paranoia must have been intense. An epidemic of tropical fever might have thrown the ship into anarchy, and the ship surgeon’s could keep the ship calm. Peter Leonard was more of a talisman than a healer.

In 1829 the *United Service Journal* published a letter from an officer in the African service. The officer reported that an epidemic of yellow fever had begun on board the ships in the squadron. For both officers and men, the beginning of a particularly deadly epidemic on board ship was terrifying. For one thing, the origins of the epidemic were murky and frightening: “some believe that a ship from Gibraltar took it there; others that some of the prizes, with slaves from the Benny, did.” No one knew exactly whence the epidemic had come, but everyone on board was acutely aware of its virulence. “The panic was dreadful,” the contributor to the *United Service Journal* wrote, “and no wonder, it was a certain ‘CLUE UP’ with you, if attacked: at least, there are not more than three or four instances where they survived it: *well*, ILL, DEAD and BURIED within forty-eight hours.”^[50] For a surgeon, an epidemic was an opportunity for a display of clinical bravado. One Dr. M’Kinnal, mentioned in Bryson and Burnett’s *Report*, epitomizes the spirit to which surgeons aspired. During an epidemic of yellow fever, M’Kinnal asked his assistant to collect some of the blood-saturated “black vomit” associated with hemorrhagic yellow fever. The assistant complied, and later that day, when the men were assembled for their noon meal,

Mr. Green, the officer of the forenoon watch, was then going below, when [Dr M’Kinnal] called him over, and filling out a glassful of the black vomit, asked him if he would like to have some of it; being answered in

the negative, he then said, 'Very well, here is your health, Green,' and drank it off. It is almost unnecessary to add, that it did not impair his appetite for dinner, nor did he suffer any inconvenience from it afterwards.[51]

Dr. M'Kinnal was lucky – as it happens, yellow fever is blood-borne, and so unless Dr. M'Kinnal had abscesses in his mouth or innards, he was relatively unlikely to become infected. Still, his stoic performance represents the *summa* of the dispassionate leadership that was expected from Royal Navy surgeons.

Although Peter Leonard's autobiographical writings include few accounts of his professional activity, the hard-boiled posturing of maritime medicine nonetheless pervades his writings. Leonard presented himself as a kind of omniscient observer of the passing scene – an apt pose and gaze for a medical officer. He was nervous about the disease environment in the colony, but he presented his anxieties in mannered, cool prose.

"While we are assured that a return [from the colony] is as next to impossible, or, if our guiding star should be so propitious, it will be with impaired health: the choicest jewel of the casket will be lost." [52] Leonard, when reflecting on his mortality, stepped away from the personal and into the first-person plural. His metaphor for health is wryly fatalistic—human life is represented as a "casket," and good health is just a decoration for the bier. Leonard continued in the same vein: "Again, hope, like a cunning juggler, intermingles with our darker thoughts, perverts our reason, and flatters us with the hope that all may yet be well ... grave as the subject must be, it is almost impossible to avoid smiling at the unique winding up of the sad history of almost every person he met in Freetown." [53] Because of his medical training and his professional calling, the naval surgeon was the best-qualified to understand and rationalize the high mortality at the colony. He survived with his sense of irony intact: "The brief history of almost every poor devil," he wrote, "whether resident or casual visitor, is wound up by our friend with these words—'He died one day.'" [54]

Leonard was staggered by the natural beauty of West Africa but was always alert to the dangers he thought were concealed in the scenery – the miasmas which he believed caused epidemic disease. Philip Curtin, one of the few historians to have paid the surgeon any attention, takes Leonard to be a typical colonial observer of West Africa. Writers like

Leonard, Curtin insists, interpreted tropical Africa “as both alien and forbidding. A romantic antithesis was often drawn between the beauty of nature and the sinister shadow of tropical death.”^[55] This is a fair assessment, but Curtin does not do much with it. Curtin uses Leonard as a foil for other, more enlightened colonialists. Leonard wrote, in the second volume of his memoir, “It is painful to the imagination to conceive this ... exuberance of vegetation is the remote cause of that great destruction of European life, for which [Africa] is so distinguished—contaminating the surrounding atmosphere with mephitic exhalations by its annual death and putrefaction.”^[56] In his first volume, Leonard was even more direct. The African landscape, he wrote,

Is beautifully picturesque, and about sun-set presents one of the grandest objects it is possible to conceive, as the chasms in the neighbourhood of the peak afford so many splendid and varying colours when the sun is far below our visible horizon; but yet, falling with his dying lustre upon these high pinnacles, every projecting fragment reflects different bright tints, which keep constantly changing as he approaches his ocean bed. It is strange that the most picturesque spots along this coast are in general the most deadly. Sierra Leone is a beautiful grave: this spot again is almost unrivalled for scenery, but the air is contaminated.^[57]

This sense of the tension between the beauty of the country and its dreadful diseases was relatively common, and Leonard’s professional training encouraged him to emphasize its irony; a surgeon was expected to cultivate an air of detachment.

There was nothing Peter Leonard could do to arrest or treat most fevers. Whenever humans move between disease environments, even in the twenty-first century, people die—especially those from the global north moving to the global south—because of exposure to novel pathogens. Philip Curtin calls this process the “relocation cost” of colonialism, measured in the percent increase (or, extremely rarely, percent decrease) between the mortality rate in the metropolis and the mortality rate in the colony. “Almost any movement from Europe to the tropical world,” Curtin concludes, “exact a price in increased deaths. In the early nineteenth century it was around 200 to 300 percent for movement to India, and it rose to 600 percent for movement to West Africa.”^[58] Surgeons like Peter Leonard, because of their adherence to the miasmatic theory of disease causation, had a particularly keen feeling

of the inevitability of disease in the tropics. And so Leonard's interventions into medical debates tended to focus less on therapeutic techniques and more on preventing sailors from being exposed to miasmas. He disapproved, for example, of the use of mercury.^[59] He worried about the side-effects of the treatment, "soreness of the mouth, foetor of the breath, ulceration of the gums ... bloated and oedematous tumefaction of the face and head," and wonders why, considering the grisly side-effects, "Several of the medical men here, from some unaccountable fatuity, continue to practise the same treatment."^[60] The debate on mercury speaks to the transnational, convoluted world of British imperial medicine: the treatment of fevers with mercury and the eschewing of blood-letting were distinctive to medicine in the British East India Company from roughly 1750 to 1830.^[61] It is not clear whether Dr. Leonard was making a plea for the distinctive localism of African medicine by condemning mercury therapy or whether he was even aware of the predilection of India-trained physicians for mercurial treatment, but it seems plausible; the climactic theory of disease causation was based on an intense awareness of local conditions. The overall impression, though, of Leonard's autobiographical writings, is less that we are reading work about medicine, and more that Leonard is adopting the poses and attitudes typical of a medical man in the early nineteenth century.

V. *Sailors' bodies in quarantine*

In his dealings with African people, Peter Leonard took care to emphasize both his physical and cultural separation from them. He used the disease environment as a symbol of both the fecundity and apparent mortality of Africa and Africans. Leonard would have been unable to avoid frequent and intimate physical contact with common sailors, but he found other ways to differentiate himself, to emphasize his elevated class and status. Before the germ theory of disease causation conquered Western medicine, many British physicians believed that disease was caused by miasmas rising from the soil. For miasmatisers, etiology came close to animism; disease was a morbid expression of the *terroir*. Malaria was believed to be caused by the fumes of decomposing plants and every biota had its own particular fever. Auguste Hirsch, Professor of Medicine at the University of Berlin, summarized the conventional wisdom: "All that we *know* of the production of malaria forces us to assume that it

stands in a close connexion with the processes of decomposition of organic matters, especially vegetable matters ... we are led to assume that malaria is bound up with the soil in an essential degree.”[62] Physicians and chemists debated the origin and composition of the malarial poison. Chemists suggested it might be a kind of sulfurous fume, and botanists insisted that fungal spores were to blame, but most physicians agreed that *some* invisible power inherent in the landscape caused infectious disease.

In Berlin, Dr. Hirsch read and distilled the literature on remittent and intermittent fevers and published his findings in sturdy handbooks. For a naval surgeon in a malarial zone, the disease was an intimate, a mutineer among the crew. On September 4, 1841, on board a British steamship cruising up the Niger Delta, John Pegler, a stoker, visited the ship’s surgeon. The surgeon, J.O. M’William, wrote in his log that Pegler “complained yesterday [of fever], for which he had a dose of calomel and James’ powder.”[63] The calomel and James’ powder, two mercury-based preparations, would have caused Pegler to sweat and to salivate profusely; the surgeon hoped that the drugs would flush out the sailor’s system, and eliminate the malarial poison. The treatment was unsuccessful. Dr. M’William prescribed more calomel and a course of bleeding. He wrote his observations in English and his prescriptions in Latin shorthand. At 11 p.m., Pegler fainted from blood loss, but M’William was happy to note that the patient “inclines to sleep ... headache easier ... eyes less suffused.” The next morning, Pegler seemed a bit better. M’William noticed that the patient “has been quiet and easy since last visit. Slight mercurial fetor of mouth. Bowels again opened, stools dark, scybalous.” M’William’s notes ooze professional confidence. But notwithstanding the surgeon’s expertise in interpreting the quality (poor) and consistency (hard) of his charges’ bowel movements, he had done little to ease his patient’s suffering. At 8:30 in the morning of September 5, Pegler was nearly comatose, “arms spasmodically extended, and he moves them about with a sawing motion ... pulse small and thread. Respiration short and frequent.” Pegler died less than twelve hours later.[64]

M’William’s account of a single case of fever aboard his ship is poignant synecdoche for the struggle of many surgeons in the Royal Navy. The doctor’s confident tone and command of the esoteric vocabulary of

nineteenth-century medicine speak to his education and professional status, but his horribly destructive prescriptions—bloodletting for anemia and diuretic calomel for dehydration—speak to his inability to heal. M'William and other naval surgeons have left behind these case histories for posterity as a record of their service in the tropics. Peter Leonard did not; his works do not engage with his professional duties, and so his peers' experiences must stand as a proxy. Leonard chose not to write about the bloody details of tropical disease. Instead, his memoirs consist in ruminations on status and promotion. Still, it is important to remember that Leonard would have killed more than a few Peglers in his service, and he chose to exclude those experiences from his autobiography.

The absence of ordinary sailors in Leonard's memoirs is particularly glaring because so much of Leonard's time in the colony would have been spent on board ship. By the time Peter Leonard served on the coast, sailors in the Preventive Squadron were only very rarely permitted ashore. The sailors were confined even in port, when their ships would anchor as far from the coast as could safely be managed. "Society," wrote one observer, "must be entirely given up by those serving in the blockade. At Sierra Leone and Ascension there are a few ladies, but it is not often you pay a visit to either."^[65] The Admiralty admitted that "The service in this bight [viz. the Bight of Benin] ... has always been one of the most irksome and monotonous character that can be well conceived."^[66] The quarantine imposed by the Royal Navy on its West African vessels had a two-fold purpose. First, trial and error showed that sailors were less likely to suffer from fever if they were kept offshore. And second, the colonial missionary establishment was anxious about the effect of British seamen on the morality of the "natives."

An Admiralty report on the health and well-being of sailors serving on the West African station remarked,

It appears ... that the officers and men who navigate prize vessels to Sierra Leone suffer most severely. They generally arrive worn out by excessive labour, broken rest, and exposure both by night and day upon the deck of a small vessel, probably crowded with slaves in a loathsome state of misery and disease. After the human cargo has been delivered over to the authorities on shore, and the vessel condemned to be broken up or sold, they also land, and take up their quarters in a building in the town

appropriated for the purpose, and denominated 'the barn;' here it generally happens that the officer, quartered, perhaps, in a different part of the town, loses all control over his men, who being left to themselves, at once plunge into every kind of excess with all the characteristic carelessness of British seamen.[67]

Sailors were thought to spread moral contagion through Britain and to demean its imperial profile. The 1820s were the high-water mark of British missions to sailors, and the missionaries at work among British seamen were unanimous in condemnation.[68] "Jack Tar," one bellowed, "was allowed ... to run into all sorts of excess in immorality, to wallow at pleasure in the mire of the most debasing iniquity, without punishment and without reproach! His maddened riot was called jollity! His reckless improvidence, generosity! His lack of reason, bravery!"[69] Another wrote, "we sent out of the port of London, *ten thousand* missionaries for the devil, in our ships, to *corrupt* the heathen, by their drunkenness and debauchery ... Nineteen hundred ships had been in these docks since last January; and could any person prove that any NINE, of this nineteen hundred, had been engaged in promoting the gospel of Jesus Christ, by the life and conduct of the crew." [70] Sierra Leone, a place of particular interest for Evangelicals because of its association with abolitionism and its many Christian missions, seemed particularly vulnerable. The putative feral immorality of British sailors was a kind of moral contagion, as dangerous in its way as the miasmas of the West African coast. Both "disease environments," the literal environment of the littoral and its people, and the moral environment of the ship and its tars gave Peter Leonard space to emphasize his difference and his superiority.

VI. *Peter Leonard, surgeon and man of letters*

Medical consultations with run-of-the-mill sailors were quick and perfunctory – the surgeon had a putative monopoly on medical knowledge, and was at any rate a ranking officer. The few instances in his autobiographical writings in which Peter Leonard reported on a medical consultation are consequently very important. Peter Leonard did not write his journals in order to describe the everyday life of surgeon at sea. Primarily, Leonard seems to have written in order to intervene in the debates about the future of the Sierra Leone colony then current in the United Kingdom. But that intervention and, more broadly, the decision to present himself in print as an author, was rooted in an intense anxiety

about class and about his own position in the British world order. When Peter Leonard did write about himself as a physician, it was in the context of an examination of a high-class Portuguese grandee at Boa Vista, an outpost in the Cape Verde Islands. "I landed on the 18th," Leonard calmly recounted, "at the request of Colonel Martinez, on a professional visit to his wife, who is afflicted with a most painful disease of the eyes." It is unlikely that Leonard was able to ease Colonel Martinez's wife's affliction. Still, Leonard was happy to note that "I had many acknowledgements, of course, besides a present of a hundred-weight of coffee from [Martinez's] own plantation."^[71] Leonard learned later that Col. Martinez was a notorious slave-trader, but there is still an element of pride in his report of this request to call on the wife of a powerful man. Peter Leonard was an educated man, subordinate to less-educated commissioned officers, and generally dealt with the illnesses and injuries of lower-class British sailors; he aspired to greater social prominence and found it difficult to attain as a surgeon in the Preventive Squadron. His autobiography reveals this desire for upward mobility both in its content and in the fact of its publication.

Leonard feared the African climate, but he could calm himself by trying to explain it; organized knowledge might lead to mastery. But Leonard could not master the vicissitudes of class and status. In the 1830s it was very difficult for medical officers to secure advancement in the navy. In 1814 the Royal Navy employed 840 surgeons and 600 assistant-surgeons. In 1835, two years after Leonard published his memoirs, there were 600 surgeons and only 280 assistant-surgeons in the senior service, and the possibilities for promotion among those who had kept their jobs were poor.^[72] Ironically, the Preventive Squadron was a relatively happy hunting ground for commissioned officers (as distinguished from surgeons and other officers who served by warrant and not by commission). Siân Rees argues that in the late 1820s, "the Preventive Squadron was the only naval service that offered bounty, excitement and promotion."^[73] An ambitious lieutenant who lived long enough could hope for a command in the Squadron, but a surgeon was unlikely to be promoted. Leonard complained that the government's priorities were askew. The island of Fernando Po had recently been leased from the Spanish as a new base for the West Africa Squadron, and Leonard thought the money had been poorly spent. "Forty thousand pounds a year," he wrote, "are thus expended upon Fernando Po, while dock-yard

curtailments are daily going on, and the energies of the navy, upon which our country mainly rests her hopes of peace and safety, are cramped and paralyzed, in consequence of the insurmountable obstacles thrown in the way of that necessary stimulus, promotion.”^[74] In part, Leonard’s decision to write and to publish his memoirs speaks to a desire to win fame and fortune outside the professional channels of the Royal Navy. This simple analysis also hints at the history of a more complicated social reality and at the complexities of national and imperial identity.

In his life-writing, Peter Leonard often alluded to both the Classics and to the classics of the Augustan period. These allusions are generally documented with quotation marks but without a particular reference—the educated reader would have appreciated Leonard’s sophistication. Leonard described the smell of Orango Island, near the mouth of the Gabon River as “an agreeable perfume probably like that which we are told regaled the senses of Hanno, the Carthaginian Admiral, and his followers, during their voyage of discovery.”^[75] The allusion is a plea to his readers to Britain and America to understand that he is a man of parts, and a participant in the common culture of the educated. This tendency is particularly apparent in the second volume of autobiography, perhaps because Leonard was more concerned with how he was seen and represented in the British press. Leonard’s work is replete with examples. Off the African coast, remoras sometimes clung to the hulls of ships in such numbers that they slowed the boats to the point of incapacitation. Leonard reported on this phenomenon with a strange elitism, punctuated by an allusion to Shakespeare.^[76] “A few diverting skippers have been in the habit of compelling their crews to catch two [remoras] daily, and to muster every morning with one in each hand, or subject themselves to the severe displeasure of their sage commander. It is astonishing through what strange, minute, and undiscovered crannies the sagacity of some men, ‘vested with a little brief authority,’ will sometimes ooze out.”^[77] The quotation seems to point to the strange role that surgeons played aboard ships—the sarcasm of “sage commander” and the contempt of the verb “to ooze” seem to suggest a certain measure of resentment toward command as a concept (although perhaps not toward Leonard’s own superior officers). Leonard, along with this snuffle at maritime authority, established his literacy and sophistication by quoting from *Measure for Measure*.^[78] The quotation

itself (and *Measure for Measure*, for that matter) raises questions about the source and authenticity of political authority. Leonard's quotation is a subversive nod to his non-naval audience. He might have been a sailor, but he was an educated man first and foremost.

In another incident, Leonard described a female slave, "with a chastity of demeanour 'above all Greek, all Roman fame,' and a purity of heart that would have done honour to the most refined and exalted state of human society."^[79] In this quotation, Leonard revealed both his civilized understanding of the role of women in society—itsself an enlightened notion—and also quoted from Pope's *Imitations of Horace*.^[80] Likewise, he quoted John Gay while reflecting on the tension between the beautiful landscape and its deadly vapors, writing "'All the grateful country breathes delight.' If we could but add with Gay, 'Here blooming health exerts her gentle reign,' the agreeable picture would be complete, but merged in its fatal climate, all the beauties of the country are lost."^[81] These quotations, and many others like them, are an expression of Leonard's intense desire not to be forgotten by the Enlightenment culture that he left behind in Edinburgh and aspired to join in London. His points of reference are typical – occasionally the Bible, but most often Shakespeare, followed closely by Augustan poets and translators of the Classics. These both indicate Leonard's civilization to his readers, and console him in the alien civilization of West Africa.

Another stock figure in the literary bestiary of the early nineteenth century was "Jack Tar," the loveable and patriotic, but ignorant and occasionally violent British sailor.^[82] A typical joke, published in a cheap jest-book sketches the stereotype well:

Seven Jack tars, having hired each his horse, at an inn in Chalfount, near Uxbridge, which horses lately belonged to a regiment that was broke; an officer seeing them galloping very fast, said to some of his friends, standing at an inn door, I will now shew you some diversion; at which time, the tars on full speed, with their heads over their horses, were come to a brook that ran across the road; and upon the officers crying out *Halt* the horses suddenly stopped, and threw them all into the brook, to the no small entertainment of the spectators.^[83]

Peter Leonard knew about this stereotype, and his writings show an intense desire *not* to be considered a typical tar. Instead, Leonard took it

upon himself to act as a kind of anthropologist of the Tars. Sailors, he wrote, are “generally strangers to each other ... [and yet,] their circumscribed society ... [makes] them feel that mutual assistance and mutual good are not mere virtues to be talked of, but actual duties to be performed.”[84] He also reported on the tars’ jargon and manner of life. The giant rats that infest the ships, Leonard wrote, “are well whiskered and long-tailed, and generally known amongst our sailors by the classical cognomen of *Bandicote*, the derivation of which is to me a mystery.”[85] The sailors are “our” sailors, not “us.” Although he treated them, and was responsible for them, Peter Leonard was not one of them. “It is gratifying,” he wrote, “to think that *Jack* is still the same—that he fights for the love of it just as he was wont to do—for it is not to be supposed that any notions concerning the inhumanity of slave-dealing, or the boon of emancipation which he is about to confer on so many hundreds of his fellow-creatures, enter his thoughtless head, when he begins the conflict. He is ordered—it is his duty: and, besides this, he likes it.”[86] Peter Leonard was a sailor who defined himself against sailors, a Scot who defined himself as English using African proxies to exemplify Scottishness, and an ambitious surgeon who wanted to be recognized as a man of cultivation.

VII. *Peter Leonard, the apotheosis of a naval surgeon*

Peter Leonard continued to rise through the ranks, in part because he survived the disease environment (longevity was on his side—he died at 87, in 1888). He was a good bureaucrat. After the publication of his memoirs, he wrote only one other book, *A Naval Medical Journal of Service in South America*, a compilation of data about mortality in the South American station, intended for the use of the Admiralty.[87] In 1849 he was awarded the Blane Medal, “awarded to naval medical officers who have shown the most distinguished proof of zeal and ability in the professional returns rendered annually to the Medical Department of the Navy,” by the Admiralty for his work in South America.[88] When Leonard returned to Britain at last, perhaps bolstered by his promotions and medals, he earned an M.D. degree from the University of St Andrews in 1851 and was elected to membership in the Royal College of Physicians in London in 1859.[89] He was now a physician and no longer a man on the margin. As a physician, he was transferred to the hospitals division of the Admiralty, serving first at the Melville Hospital, in Medway, Kent. His

punctilious service and attention to paperwork brought him advancement. In May 1855, he was appointed Deputy-Inspector of Hospitals.[90] He eventually became the superintendent of the Royal Naval Hospital at Haslar. On Tuesday, April 30, 1855, Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort visited Haslar:

The Queen and Prince walked through the square to the patients' walk beyond the chapel, returned, and entered the medical wards under charge of Dr Lindsay, Medical Inspector. After inspecting these the Royal party entered the surgical wards under the care of Dr Peter Leonard, the Deputy Medical Inspector. Her Majesty manifested the greatest solicitude for the comfort of the sick and wounded seamen and marines, and addressed in the most feeling manner the maimed victims of the war, of whom Dr Leonard has at present several deplorable cases.[91]

"To a bloody war, or a sickly season"—Dr. Leonard had moved up the ranks, from vomiting blood over the taffrail to the comfort of a high-ranking position in the domestic hospitals service. Empires do not succeed without rewarding their bureaucrats. On March 24, 1871, Dr. Leonard was awarded a pension of £100 a year.[92] He entered the higher levels of medical society, and attended fashionable parties.[93] He was invited to give testimony before Parliament in 1869, on the revision of the *Contagious Diseases Act* of 1866 and was charged with implementing the provisions of the Act in the naval hospitals.[94] After making his career in Africa and South America, he was modestly rewarded in Britain. He was important enough to have his obituary printed in the *Times* (although it does not seem to have been widely reproduced in other publications) but is now mostly forgotten. His life cannot be completely recovered, cannot be fully written, but his literary remains offer tantalizing glimpses of the day-to-day life of British officials in West Africa and of the possibilities of recovering the biographies of the lesser imperialists of the British world.

Peter Leonard's life also complicates the history of abolitionism in small-scale but intriguing ways. Leonard's life and work show how the realities of fighting the slave trade were translated and expressed to metropolitan audiences in London and Philadelphia and how issues of class, professional status, race, and nationality were embedded into debates about the slave trade. Above all, Leonard's career emphasizes the wide divide between opposition to slavery and any appreciation of African

cultures—or even any affirmation of African humanity. Emma Christopher’s work on sailors in the slave trade in the late eighteenth century shows how sailors in the trade organized for better wages and working conditions using African slaves as a foil.^[95] White supremacy was built into the logic of labor organization. White sailors were not Africans, and refused to be treated like Africans. For Peter Leonard, sailors and Africans were both foils; he *was not* a common sailor, and he *certainly* was not an African. In consequence, Leonard placed Africans and the European working people into crude stock poses—the “good” missionary-educated African, the “lazy” “uncivilized” African living outside of European authority, the ferocious, drunk and stupid British sailor. Peter Leonard—physician to rich Portuguese *senhores*, trained surgeon, man of letters—“*rubbed shoulders with them, but they could not touch him; he shared the air they breathed, but he was different.*”

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¹ Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim: A Tale*, ed. Jacques Berthoud (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18.

² See, among many examples, E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1964); Thomas Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976); Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class* (London: Routledge, 2002); and Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Verso, 2003). The relationship between class and empire has been explored in Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2006); Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2004); Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (New York: Anchor, 2004); Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and other books and articles. My point is that in British domestic history, the "middling sort" have been carefully studied, while in imperial history, more emphasis has been placed on the histories of the top and the bottom of the social order, and on the relationship between the empire and politics in Britain.

³ In the later nineteenth century the Squadron ranged as far as the Mozambique Channel off the coast of East Africa, but in Peter Leonard's period, the Squadron was concentrated in the Bight of Benin. For two general histories of the Squadron see Raymond Howell, *The Royal Navy and the Slave Trade* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987) and W.E.F. Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers: The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Pantheon, 1969).

⁴ William Roger Louis, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998-1999). The publication of the OHBE, its successes, and its shortcomings are ably discussed in Dane Kennedy, "The Boundaries of Oxford's Empire," *International History Review* 23 (2001): 604-622.

⁵ P.J. Cain & A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (London: Pearson Education, 2002).

⁶ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁷ See, among others, Hall and Rose, editors, *At Home with the Empire*; Stephen Daniels and Catherine Nash, "Lifepaths: geography and biography," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004): 449-458; Zoe Laidlaw, *Colonial connections 1815-45: patronage, the information revolution and colonial government* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005); David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2006); Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, "Visual Histories: John Septimus Roe and the Art of Navigation, c. 1815-1830," *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002): 144-161; Alan Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire," *History Compass* 4 (2006): 121-141; and Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁸ *The Times* [London], May 7, 1888.

⁹ *Caledonian Mercury* [Edinburgh], May 16, 1822.

¹⁰ 'Forfairshire' was the eighteenth-century Anglicized name of what is now Angus.

¹¹ Lisa Rosner, *Medical Education in the Age of Improvement: Edinburgh Students and Apprentices, 1760-1826* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 146-147.

¹² Joan Druett, *Rough Medicine: Surgeons at Sea in the Age of Sail* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 28-29.

¹³ Rosner, *Medical Education*, 196; see also chapter 4, 'Gentlemen physicians,' 62-85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

¹⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, April 7, 1823.

¹⁷ *Morning Chronicle* [London], March 18, 1829.

¹⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 3rd rev. ed. (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707-1994*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994), 61.

²⁰ Ian Donnachie, "The Making of 'Scots on the Make,'" in *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society*, ed. T.M. Devine (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1992), 135.

²¹ Andrew Dewar Gibb, *Scottish Empire* (London: Alexander Maclehose, 1937), 309.

²² Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 33-34.

²³ Eric Richards, "Scotland and the Uses of the Atlantic Empire," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the British Empire*, ed. Philip D. Morgan and Bernard Bailyn (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 78-79.

²⁴ Peter Leonard, *The Western coast of Africa: Journal of an officer under Captain Owen* (Philadelphia: E. C. Mielke, 1833), 118-119.

²⁵ Peter Leonard, *Records of a Voyage to the Western Coast of Africa, in His Majesty's Ship Dryad, and of the Service on that Station for the Suppression of the Slave Trade* (Edinburgh and London: A. Shortrede, 1833), 55. The Kru fascinated many other officials and travelers. See George E. Brooks, *The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century: An Historical Compendium* (Newark, DE: Liberian Studies Association in America, 1972).

²⁶ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 65.

²⁷ There have been a number of recent books and chapters which reappraise the history of the Black Loyalist "Nova Scotian" settlers and place them back in the broader history of the British Empire. See, for example, Suzanne Schwarz, "Commerce civilization and Christianity: the development of the Sierra Leone Company," in *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, ed. David Richardson, Anthony Tibbles, and Suzanne Schwarz (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon, 2006); Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2011); and Emma Christopher, *A Merciless Place: The Lost Story of Britain's Convict Disaster in Africa and How it Led to the Settlement of Australia* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2010). These books, however, tend to stop with the transfer of Sierra Leone to the Crown in 1808.

²⁸ See Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1991) ; see also Wyse's chapter in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982); see the chapters on Sierra Leone societies by Carol P. MacCormack, Svend E. Holsoe, and John J. Grace in *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977); Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Allen M. Howard, "Nineteenth-Century Coastal Slave Trading and the British Abolition Campaign in Sierra Leone," *Slavery & Abolition* 27 (2006): 23-49; Philip Misevich, "On the Frontier of "Freedom: Abolition and the Transformation of Atlantic Commerce in Southern Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1860s" (PhD Diss., Emory University, 2009); V.R. Dorjahn and Christopher Fyfe, "Landlord and Stranger: Changes in Tenancy Relations in Sierra Leone," *The Journal of African History* 3 (1962): 391-397; Philip Misevich, "The Sierra Leone Hinterland and the Provisioning of Early Freetown, 1792–1803," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 9 (2008); and other books and articles.

²⁹ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 203.

³⁰ For a primary-source account of the structure of the government in the colony and the role of interpreters within it, see *The Sierra Leone Almanac for the Year of Our Lord 1822*(Freetown: J. Mitton, 1822).

³¹For the "civilizing mission" version of the history of the colony, see Samuel Abraham Walker, *The Church of England mission in Sierra Leone: including an introductory account of that colony, and a comprehensive sketch of the Niger expedition in the year 1841* (London: Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, 1847), an enormous and comprehensive tome written as a panegyric to missionary work. For the "white man's grave," see F. Harrison Rankin, *White Man's Grave: A Visit to Sierra Leone, in 1834*, 2 vols. (London: R. Bentley, 1836).

³² Leonard, *Western coast of Africa*, 93-94.

³³ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁴ Leonard, *Western coast of Africa*, 96.

³⁵ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 253.

³⁶ Leonard, *Western coast of Africa*, 47.

³⁷ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 145.

³⁸ Kenneth Macaulay, *The Colony of Sierra Leone Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Mr. Macqueen of Glasgow* [1827], 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 74.

³⁹ See Andrew Porter, *Religion vs. Empire? British protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2005); Porter makes his point more succinctly in "Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm, and Empire," in *Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 222-246.

⁴⁰ *John Bull* [London], June 25, 1821.

⁴¹ *Examiner* [London], June 4, 1826, 353.

⁴² Leonard, *Western coast of Africa*, 97.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁴ *Literary Gazette* [London], March 23, 1833, 844.

⁴⁵ Alexander Bryson and William Burnett, *Report on the Climate and Principal Diseases of the African Station: Compiled from Documents in the Office of the Director-general of the Medical Department, and from Other Sources, in Compliance with the Directions of the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1847), 178.

⁴⁶ Statistics calculated based on tables of mortality published in Bryson and Burnett, *Report*, 177.

⁴⁷ Christopher Lloyd and Jack L.S. Coulter, *Medicine and the Navy, 1200-1900*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh & London: E. & S. Livingstone, 1963), 4:1.

⁴⁸ Leonard, *Western coast of Africa*, 116.

⁴⁹ Zachary B. Freidenberg, *Medicine Under Sail* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 36.

⁵⁰ *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine for 1829*, Part Two, (London: H. Colburn, 1829), 629-630.

⁵¹ Bryson and Burnett, *Report*, 55-56.

⁵² Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 13.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 323.

⁵⁶ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 39.

⁵⁷ Leonard, *Western coast of Africa*, 66.

⁵⁸ Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa*, (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5; see also Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁵⁹ For a careful analysis of the impact of imperial service on British medicine, see Mark Harrison, *Medicine in an Age of Commerce and Empire: Britain and its Tropical Colonies, 1660-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁶⁰ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 74.

⁶¹ Mark Harrison, "Disease and Medicine in the Armies of British India, 1750-1830: The Treatment of Fevers and the Emergence of Tropical Therapeutics," in *British Military and Naval Medicine, 1600-1830*, ed.

Geoffrey L. Hudson (Amsterdam & New York: Rodepi, 2007): 87-120, 108-109.

⁶² Auguste Hirsch, *Handbook of geographical and historical pathology*, trans. Charles Creighton, 3 vols. (London: New Sydenham Society, 1883), 1: 286-287.

⁶³ Reproduced in Dennis G. Carlson, *African Fever: A Study of British Science, Technology, and Politics in West Africa, 1787-1864* (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 1984), 95.

⁶⁶ Carlson, *African Fever*, 95-96.

⁶⁷ F.E. Forbes, *Six Months' Service in the African Blockade* (London: R. Bentley, 1849), 126.

⁶⁸ Bryson and Burnett, *Report*, 19.

⁶⁹ Bryson and Burnett, *Report*, 8-9.

⁷⁰ For the history of sailors' missions, see Roald Kverndal, *Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth* (Pasadena: William Carey, 1986) and Richard Blake, *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy, 1775-1815: Blue Lights & Psalm-Singers* (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2008).

⁷¹ *The Missionary Ship 'John Williams': Her History; Valedictory Services; Voyage Down the River; &c. &c.* (London: John Snow, 1844), 26-27.

⁷² *Mariners' Church Gospel Temperance Soldiers' and Sailors' Magazine* [London], February 1848, 49.

⁷³ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 27.

⁷⁴ Lloyd and Coulter, *Medicine and the Navy*, 4:1.

⁷⁵ Siân Rees, *Sweet Water and Bitter: The Ships that Stopped the Slave Trade* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), 169.

⁷⁶ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 241; on Fernando Po, see I.K. Sundiata, *From Slaving to Neoslavery: The Bight of Biafra and Fernando Po in the Era of Abolition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).

⁷⁷ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 31-32.

⁷⁸ The cult of Shakespeare and the powerful cultural reach of the Augustan poets is expertly explained in John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), see especially Part IV, 'Performance,' 325-426.

⁷⁹ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 78.

⁸⁰ "But man, proud man, / Dressed in a little brief authority, / Most ignorant of what he's most assured, / His glassy essence, like an angry ape, / Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven, / As makes the angels weep," from *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Scene 2, lines 117-22.

⁸¹ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 94.

⁸² "To thee the world its present homage pays; / The harvest early, but mature the praise: / Great friend of liberty ! in kings a name / Above all Greek, above all Roman fame," from the First Epistle of the Second Book of Pope's *Imitations of Horace*, lines 23-26

⁸³ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 43-44.

⁸⁴ There is a rich literature on maritime labor. See Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007); Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: sailortowns of eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Colin Howell and Richard J. Twomey, eds., *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour* (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1991); Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); and Jesse Lemisch, *Jack Tar vs. John Bull: The Role of New York's Seamen in Precipitating the Revolution* (New York: Garland, 1997), among other books and articles.

- ⁸⁵ *Revived. The Delicate Jester; or Wit and Humour without Ribaldry* (London: J. Smeeton, 1800[?], 69.
- ⁸⁶ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 25.
- ⁸⁷ Leonard, *Western coast of Africa*, 77.
- ⁸⁸ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 131-132.
- ⁸⁹ *The Times* [London], May 7, 1888.
- ⁹¹ *British Medical Journal* [London], December 3, 1870; *Caledonian Mercury*, September 20, 1849; see also *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* [Portsmouth], September 15, 1849.
- ⁹² *The Medical Register: Printed and Published Under the Direction of the General Council of Medical Education and Registration of the United Kingdom* (London, 1873), 294.
- ⁹³ *Morning Chronicle* [London], May 16, 1855.
- ⁹⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, August 7, 1855.
- ⁹⁵ *The Navy List* (London, 1887), 406.
- ⁹⁶ "At the levee held, on behalf of her Majesty, by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, on the 27th ult., the following members of the medical profession had the honour of being presented, viz.:— Surgeon L. Corban, of the 21st Hussars; Surgeon W Launcclotte Gubbins, M.B., of the Army Medical Department; Surgeon Frank Powell, Indian Medical Service; and Surgeon T. J. H. Wilkins, of the Madras Army. The levee was also attended by Sir James Paget, Sir Henry Thompson, Drs. Thomas King Chambers, Wilson Fox, Peter Leonard (Inspector-General of Naval Hospitals)..." from *The Medical Times and Gazette* [London], April 4, 1874, 376.
- ⁹⁷ *Report from the Select Committee on Contagious Diseases Act (1866); with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix* (London, 1869), 22-27.
- ⁹⁸ Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).



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