

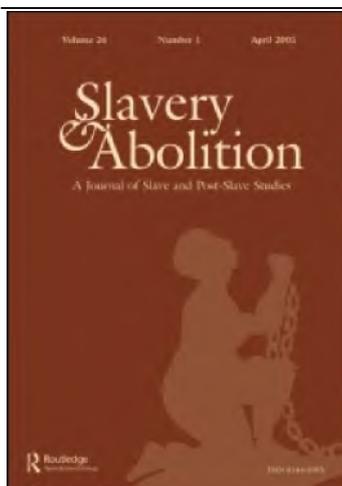
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Slavery & Abolition

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpj/title-content=t713719071>

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Online Publication Date: 01 April 1998

To cite this Article Handler, Jerome S.(1998)'Life histories of enslaved Africans in Barbados', Slavery & Abolition, 19:1,129 — 140

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01440399808575231

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01440399808575231>

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Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in Barbados

JEROME S. HANDLER

Scholars of New World slavery and the transatlantic slave trade are well aware that there are very few first-hand accounts by enslaved Africans of their experiences prior to being landed in the Caribbean or North America.' This article gives a brief overview of some accounts that relate to Barbados and then focuses on two hitherto unpublished autobiographical narratives by Africans who lived on the island in the late eighteenth century. The main purpose of this note is to make available to a wider audience what is currently known about first-hand accounts by Africans who had some connection with the Caribbean island of Barbados.

Barbados, as is well known, played a major role in the early trade network that linked the Caribbean with West Africa and Britain/Europe. Although the island's economic importance in the British sugar empire was superseded by Jamaica in the early eighteenth century, Barbados was a quintessential sugar colony, dependent on the labour of African slaves. From about 1650 to 1807, when Britain abolished the slave trade, over 350,000 Africans landed on the shores of this 166 square-mile island (by contrast, during the same period approximately 375,000 slaves were imported into British North America). During the earlier periods of slavery in Barbados, many thousands of slaves were African-born, but the number of slave imports dropped significantly by the last quarter of the eighteenth century; during this period, less than 20 per cent of Barbados's approximately 70,000 slaves were Africans, and by 1817 Africans comprised only seven per cent of a slave population that numbered about 77,000.²

Olaudah Equiano's well-known autobiography, 'written by himself', is exceptional in the details he provides on his experiences in Africa and the transatlantic crossing, and has particular relevance to Barbados. Equiano, an Igbo, was kidnapped in his natal village in present-day eastern Nigeria. In 1757, at about the age of 11 or 12, he was taken to Barbados where he

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remained 'for a few days ... not ... above a fortnight'. He was not sold on the island, but the few pages devoted to his stay offer a unique perspective on how newly-arrived Africans were approached on shipboard and sold. Moreover, his account holds a special place in the study of Barbadian history: it is the only known instance of an African who was shipped to Barbados who describes his experiences on the middle-passage and one of a handful of published accounts (*see* below) that recount life in West Africa prior to enslavement. Many of Equiano's Igbo countrymen on the same ship which brought him to the island were sold, and Equiano's 'narrative' can thus be taken *as an* indirect testimony of their experiences in coming to the New World.'

James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, a Muslim from 'Bournou' (Borno/Bornu), in present-day northern Nigeria, was another African transported to Barbados who narrated his life's story. Gronniosaw was enslaved at about the age of 15, taken overland for many miles, and around 1725 was shipped from the Gold Coast on a Dutch slaver bound for Barbados; he was sold on the island shortly after arrival and his new owner took him to New York not long thereafter. In his account, Gronniosaw describes his childhood in Nigeria (but does not identify his ethnicity/linguistic group although he possibly was Kanuri), how he was enslaved and shipped across the Atlantic (these pages comprise about 26 per cent of the 1840 edition), but most of the account details his later life in New York, his conversion to Christianity, his life with different masters as a domestic servant, how he came to England, and his life in England and Holland. Gronniosaw's account, which was 'taken from his own mouth' and written down by 'a young lady of the town of Leominster', provides no information on Barbados or the middle passage. As with Equiano, however, the story of Gronniosaw's life was recorded many years after (when he was about 60 years old) and while he lived in England'

A third autobiography narrated in his later years by an enslaved African who was shipped to Barbados at a young age is that of Venture Smith. The son of the 'prince of the tribe of Dukandarra, in Guinea', Venture (so-named by his first European purchaser) was born around 1729 and captured in warfare when a small child. He was taken in a coffle 'about four hundred miles', kept in a fort at Annamaboe (a major British slaving station on the Gold Coast; at the time, the Gold Coast accounted for about 37 per cent of the slaves shipped by the British),⁵ and, when he was around eight years old, was transported to Barbados with 260 other Africans. About 200 survived a smallpox epidemic that ravaged the ship during the middle passage, but other than mentioning the epidemic, Smith provides no details on the middle passage or his stay in Barbados. All of the survivors were sold at Barbados, but Smith and three others subsequently were taken to Rhode

Island. A little less than one-third of his account is devoted to his early life in Africa, his family and enslavement; the remainder deals with his life in Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York (Long Island), during which period he married, had a family and became a free man. His life story was related when he was 69 years old and recorded by an amanuensis in Standard English.⁶

Another African life story, albeit not an autobiographical narrative, that relates to Barbados is *The Royal African: or, Memoirs of the Young Prince of Annamaboe* (London, 1749). The 'young prince', William Unshah Sessarakoo, was a Fanti from the Gold Coast who was taken to the island in 1744, ultimately liberated from slavery, taken to London, and then returned to his family in Africa. Aside from a brief comment, the 'memoirs' provide no information on Barbados.'

Sessarakoo's life story was written for an English-speaking or Anglo-American audience. The Equiano, Gronniosaw and Smith accounts, in common with other early African-born slave narratives, also were written for the same audience and were published in the Standard English of the day; moreover, it bears re-emphasis, they involve persons who were young when they arrived at Barbados and spent no time on the island as slaves. Given Barbados's high slave mortality rates at the period when they arrived and the almost voracious need for labour, the island's planters generally purchased able-bodied young adults and this probably explains why none of the three was sold on the island.' Equiano, Gronniosaw and Smith, as well as other African writers/narrators of life histories educated and resident in Britain and America during the eighteenth century, ultimately became Christians, and apparently were 'removed ... from the mass of black slaves in the Caribbean and North America, and culturally from their own communities in Africa.'

The two brief accounts from Barbados that are transcribed below are quite different, and appear to be unique among the known English-language autobiographical narratives of African-born slaves. Although the accounts were not written by the narrators themselves, which in itself is not unusual since most early slave narratives had an 'amanuensis editor', John Ford, the Barbados 'writer', unlike other transcribers of slave life histories, has made an effort to capture the actual speech of the slaves – not to render their words into Standard English. (Whether Ford ever intended to convert these accounts into Standard English for publication is unknown.) Not only is the language in the accounts unusual for Anglo-American slave autobiographies, but the accounts are unique for Barbados since they include the thoughts of two Africans who were actually sold on the island and who lived and, presumably, died there. These accounts add to a meagre corpus of English-language life stories of Africans who were enslaved in the

British Caribbean and North America.'

I consulted and transcribed these manuscript accounts in 1974 at the Bodleian Library (University of Oxford)." Although brief descriptions and excerpts from them have been previously published, the accounts have not been published in their entirety."

In a contemporary and obviously eighteenth-century hand, the accounts are titled 'two narratives by female slaves at Barbados, written down there by John Ford, 1799'. They are written on two foolscap pages, with writing on each side, and were 'related to the writer by an old African female slave named Sibell ... [and] an old female slave named Ashy of the Fantee tribe'.

John Ford has not been definitely identified. It is almost certain that he was white, and it is likely that he was a native (creole) Barbadian/West Indian." The narratives are supposed to be literal transcriptions of the slave dialect or creole. A Barbadian white would have been more aware of and sensitive to Afro-Barbadian speech than a foreign white, although it cannot be automatically assumed that Ford was absolutely accurate in his transcription of the slaves' speech; the manuscript gives no indication of the conditions under which the 'narratives' were related and the transcriptions made. Regardless of some possible transcription inaccuracies in Ford's original text, the narratives apparently represent the legitimate voices of the enslaved Africans (and linguistic features as well as African ethnographic data in the narratives argue for their authenticity). They provide rare materials for the study of early Barbadian creole speech since there are few other textual examples for Afro-Barbadian speech in the late eighteenth century; the narratives also contain a variety of linguistic features that are found in other Caribbean English Creoles." These features make a strong case that the narratives reflect the actual speech of the slaves; they also express, however briefly and imperfectly, their genuine thoughts and feelings.

The 1799 Narratives of Sibell and Ashy

The 'narratives' are reproduced below in their entirety with the transcriber's (John Ford) original numbered footnotes, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and underlining; my insertions are in bold face and appear in square brackets.

The following account related to the Writer by an Old African Female Slave named Sibell

Massah! my Daddy was a great man in my country and called Makerundy," he have great many slaves, and hire many man – And

one of my Budders was a great man in de fight in my country – my Daddy nebber want – he have ground two, tree miles long and hire as many man dat he put de vittles in large tubs for dem – When he cut honey, he fill tree, four barrel he have so muchee. When we want good drink in my Country we go and cut de Tree and de juice will run, and keep some time will make good strong drink."

I bin veddy fond of my sister– and she went out of de house one Day and let me alone, and my Budder in Law come in, and take me up and say he going to carry me to see his udder Wife. he take and carry, carry, carry, carry, carry me all night and day, all night and day `way from my Country– in de way me meet a Man and de Man know my Daddy and all my Family – Ah! Budder (me beg pardon for calling *you* Budder, Massah) you see me here now but dere has bin grandee fight in my country for me, for he will tell my Family – As my budder in law carry me 'long, me hear great noise, and me wonder, but he tell me no frighten – and he carry me to a long House full of new Negurs talking and making sing –" But veddy few of dem bin of my Country and my Budder in Law sell me to de Back-erah' people. Me nebber see de White people before, me nebber see de great ships pon de water before, me nebber hear de Waves before which me frighten so much-ee dat me thought me would die --¹ My Budder in Law took up de Gun and de Powder which he sell me for and wanted to get 'way from me, but me hold he and cry – and he stop wid me till me hold Tongue and den he run away from me – De sailors keep me in dere long time and bring down two, tree ebbery day 'till de long house bin full – Dere bin many Black people dere veddy bad man, dey talk all kind of Country and tell we all dat we going to a good Massah yonder yonder, where we would workee, workee picka-nee-nee², and messy messy' grandee and no fum-fum'.

Me no know nobody in de House, but ³en me go in de ship me find my country woman Mimbo, my country man Dublin, my Country woman Sally," and some more, but dey sell dem all about and me no savvy where now– Here she burst into tears and could say no more.

[Original notes by transcriber in the manuscript]: `Back-e-rah people – white people; pick- a-nee nee – little; messy -messy – eat eat;⁴no fum-fum – no whipping;' So named by the English:1201

The following account related to the writer by an Old female Slave named Ashy of the Fantee Tribe"

Ah! Massah dis country here dat you call Barbados–um no good-2

um no good Massah— When we want rain in my Country we all take de Black Caps and put on our head — den we go and buy one big Negur Man and one Big Blackee sheep — Den we go out and take long bench and we all *sit* down and put de Blackee sheep and Negur man *behind* we and 'gin to pray— den, den we see one Big Blackee man *de same dat you call God* come down and take de Man and de Sheep `way—and we hear de sheep cry bah, bah, bah, a grandee way off, but we no see he, and 'fore we get home de rain fall so muchee dat we no wantee rain for some time `gain t22'

And Massah if any of our Grandee people die, den all de head of his servants is cut off, and bury in de same place wid him,¹²³¹ but if dey run away and stay long time, when dey come back dey no hurtee demP¹ Ah! Massah *my Country* is a boon country, a boon Country Massah , *no like yours*.

[Original notes by transcriber in the manuscript]: urn no good — it is not good. boon country—good country.1251

NOTES

This article was written when I was a Fellow-in-Residence at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, Charlottesville. I am grateful to Richard Allsopp, Marcia Burrowes, Philip D. Curtin, David Eltis, Robin Law, Michael D. Levin, Merrick Posnansky, Barbara Preston, David Richardson and Ernest Wiltshire for their assistance and advice, and, although I have not always followed their suggestions, to Douglas Chambers, Paul Lovejoy, and John R. Rickford for their very helpful comments on earlier drafts.

1. Philip Curtin's observation, made many years ago, still holds: 'narratives of experience in slavery, especially in the United States, are much more common' 'Neneral Introduction', in Philip D. Curtin (ed.), *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p.4 fn2; his introductory essay and foreword to Part I (pp.13-16) of this now classic volume also provide excellent introductions to some of the general issues/problems surrounding early narratives of African-born slaves.
2. The Barbados figures are taken from sources published in Jerome S. Handler and Frederick W. Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados: An Archaeological and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.22, 29, and John R. Rickford and Jerome S. Handler, 'Textual Evidence on the Nature of Early Barbadian Speech, 1676-1835', *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 9 (1994), pp.230, 238. Most slaves brought to Barbados were sold on the island, and others – the quantity is unknown – were transhipped elsewhere, largely to other British Caribbean and North American colonies. Estimates for imports to the North American colonies and the United States in the early national period are from Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p.268, and James A. Rawley , *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton; 1981), p.167. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman produce slave import figures for North America (and Barbados) that are higher than those given here; *Time on the Cross* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), Vol.1, pp.18 (fig. 3), 25 (fig. 6); Vol.2, pp.28-29, 30-1.

3. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, 2 Vols. (London, 1789), Vol.1, pp.83-9. As a free sailor, Equiano returned to Barbados in 1771, but he provides no details on this visit (Equiano, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p.96). Equiano wrote his 'narrative' when in his mid-forties to arouse in Britain's Parliament 'a sense of compassion for the miseries which the slave-trade has entailed on my unfortunate countrymen'. His book sold widely in the British Isles and he became the most prominent black abolitionist in Britain. For details, see James Green, 'The Publishing History of Olaudah Equiano's Interesting Narrative', *Slavery and Abolition*, 16 (1995), pp.363, 366. See also Robert Allison (ed.), *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Written by Himself* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995); the excerpts in Paul Edwards and David Dabydeen (eds.), *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp.54-80; and William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp.56-60; and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York, Mentor, 1987), pp.1-182. G. I. Jones finds Equiano's descriptions of his 'home and his travels in Nigeria ... disappointingly brief and confused'; he attributes these lapses to Equiano's youth when he was kidnapped, 'and the little he can remember of his travels is naturally muddled and incoherent'. Moreover, Jones, apparently alone among modern scholars, finds that Equiano's writing 'style is far too close to the literary standards of the period to have been entirely his own work' ('Olaudah Equiano of the Niger Ibo', in Curtin (ed.), *Africa Remembered*, pp.61, 69). Douglas Chambers (personal communication) has drawn my attention to several works which challenge Jones's views of Equiano's early memories. See Catherine O. Acholomu, 'The Home of Olaudah Equiano – A Linguistic and Anthropological Search', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 22 (1987), pp.5-16; idem, *The Igbo Roots of Olaudah Equiano—An Anthropological Research* (Owerri, Nigeria: Afa Publications, 1989).
4. James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince. Related by Himself* (London, 1840), 2nd edition (reprinted Nendlen, Kraus Reprint, 1972; New York, Readex, 1995). Gronniosaw's 'narrative' was first published in 1770. A number of editions were subsequently published in America, Ireland, England and Scotland, but the 1840 edition is 'the only conveniently available full text' (Edwards and Dabydeen, *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890*, p.8). See also Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'James Gronniosaw and the Trope of the Talking Book', in James Olney (ed.), *Studies in Autobiography* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.51-72, and Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story*, pp.35-46, passim.
5. Curtin, 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade', in Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975), pp.114, 116, 118, 123, 126; cf. Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, p.24.
6. Venture Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, a Native of Africa: but resident above sixty years in the United States of America. Related by Himself* (New London, CT: C. Holt, 1798); reprinted in Dorothy Porter (ed.), *Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837* (Bottom Beacon Press, 1971), pp.538-58. Smith's precision at remembering events in his life when he was a small child, e.g. the number of miles he travelled from his home territory in Africa to the coast, the number of slaves aboard his ship and the number who died en route, is questionable. My attempts to identify Dukandarra failed, but in a recent and thoughtful historical analysis of Smith's account (that came to my attention after the present article was accepted for publication), Robert Desrochers observes that 'no place called Dukandarra seems to have existed in the broad area of "Guinea" from which Smith claimed to have been taken.' While Desrochers acknowledges that 'limited evidence has made the odds of establishing Smith's birthplace seem long indeed', he speculates that Smith's 'childhood home lay between the Bakoy and Bating rivers in the region of modern-day western Mali known as Gangara', an area of Mandikan-speaking peoples of Mande descent. Desrochers argues that Smith was enslaved by 'soldiers from the Bambara kingdom of Segu', and that he did, indeed, travel a great distance and was ultimately shipped from the Gold Coast rather than the closer Senegambia region. 'Not Fade Away: The Narrative of

Venture Smith, an African American in the Early Republic', *The Journal of American History*, 84 (1997), pp.40-66.

7. Scholars, apparently starting with Wylie Sypher – upon whom later writers have relied – have often considered the 'memoirs' a novel, but Douglas Grant reasonably challenged this view and argues that this anonymously authored 'biographical pamphlet' is not a novel but a realistic account of Sessarakoo's life. Douglas Grant, *The Fortunate Slave: An Illustration of African Slavery in the Early Eighteenth Century* (London, Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.145-8; Wylie Sypher, 'The African Prince in London', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 2 (1941), pp.237-47; *ibid.*, *Guinea's Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the XVIII & Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), pp.166-8.
William Unsah (or Ansah) Sessarakoo was an actual person. His stay in London in 1749, with a synopsis of his life, was reported in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (Vol.19, 1749, pp.89-90, 522); an engraving of his painted portrait appeared in the same magazine in 1750 (Vol.20, pp.272-3) with an accompanying notice identifying his father as 'John Bannishee Corrantee, Ohinee [chief, prince] of Anamaboe'. The portrait with its caption giving the main features of Sessarakoo's parentage and with notes on the artist by Neville Connell, is also published in the *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, 27 (1959), p.2. That these individuals actually existed is independently attested by Thomas Thompson, an Anglican missionary who in the early 1750s spent several years on the southern Gold Coast, primarily among the Fanti. At Annamaboe in 1752 he reports on his visit with 'John Courantee [of] Anomaboa' whose son was 'William Ansah'; Thomas Thompson, *An Account of 71vo Missionary Voyages by the Appointment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (B. Dod, London, 1758), pp.41, 47-8, 58. See also Jerome S. Handler, *A Guide to Source Materials for the Study of Barbados History, 1627-1834* (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), pp.33-4. Annamaboe/Anomabu played a very prominent role in the eighteenth-century British slave trade (e.g. David Eltis and David Richardson, 'West Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Evidence of Long-Run Trends', *Slavery and Abolition*, 18 (1997), pp.22-3).
8. Equiano, Gronniosaw, and Smith arrived at Barbados roughly between 1725 and 1757—these were high slave import years on the island; during this period, an average of close to 3,000 Africans were annually imported (Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, p.22).
9. Edwards and Dabydeen, 'Introduction', in *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890*, p.xiii. For a provocative alternate view and interpretation of the influence of the African heritage on the life of an enslaved African, see Desrochers, 'Not Fade Away'.
10. I do not claim that these are the only texts available for the study of early English creoles in the Caribbean or North America, or the only texts in which the transcribers have not converted Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American speech into Standard English. However, these two accounts appear to be the only unpublished ones that are specifically autobiographical narratives wherein the original speech has been consciously and explicitly retained. For other early texts, see, for example, Rickford and Handler, 'Textual Evidence'; John R. Rickford, *Dimensions of a Creole Continuum: History, Texts, & Linguistic Analysis of Guyanese Creole* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); Barbara Lalla and Jean D'Costa, *Language in Exile: Three Hundred Years of Jamaican Creole* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1990); and J.L. Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (New York, Random House, 1972).

For other English-language autobiographical accounts by the African-born, see, for example: Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London, 1787; see also Edwards and Dabydeen, *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890*, pp.39-53); Cugoano, a Fanti, was enslaved around 1770, shipped to the Caribbean island of Grenada, and then taken to England. Ofodobendo Wooma, or 'Andrew the Moor', an Igbo, was enslaved in the late 1730s when about 12 years old, taken to Antigua, also in the Caribbean, and from there to New York City; Daniel Thorp provides an excellent introduction and notes to this very brief and little-known account (Daniel Thorp, ed., 'Chattel With A Soul: The Autobiography of a Moravian Slave', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography*, 112 (1988), pp.433-51). Archibald

John Monteith (Monteeth, Monteath) was another Igbo who became a Moravian. His story was recorded by a Moravian missionary in Jamaica in 1853 when Monteith was about 54 years old. At the age of about ten, Monteith was kidnapped and shipped to Jamaica where he spent the rest of his life. A very small portion of his account deals with his life in Africa and the middle passage; the rest of it, with his life in Jamaica, particularly his conversion to Christianity and his experiences as a 'native assistant or helper' in the Moravian church. Monteith died in 1864 and not long thereafter his narrative was published in English (although a German translation of the original English account had appeared slightly before his death). See Vernon H. Nelson (ed.), 'Archibald John Monteith: Native Helper and Assistant in the Jamaica Mission at New Carmel', *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society*, 20 (1966), pp.29-52; Paul Lovejoy brought this account to my attention.

In the *The Life and Sufferings of John Joseph, a Native of Ashantee, ire Western Africa: Who Was Stolen from his Parents at the Age of Three Years* (Wellington, J. Greedy, 1848), John Joseph relates how, as a young child, he was captured and transported directly to New Orleans in the early nineteenth century; he worked in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia, became a Christian, and came to England in 1843; his account appears to have been narrated to an amanuensis and is written in Standard English. Other autobiographical accounts include Asa-Asa's very brief narrative in *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, related by Herself. To which is added the Narrative of Asa-Asa, a Captured African* (London, 1831), reprinted in Gates, *Classic Slave Narratives*, pp.240-2 and Moira Ferguson (ed.), *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (London, Pandora Press, 1987), pp.121-4. See also Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story*, pp.32-60, passim; Edwards and Dabydeen, *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890*, passim; and Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, p.4fn2 and passim.

Published accounts in English, some originally written in Arabic, by African-born Muslim slaves in North America also are in Standard English; see Allan D. Austin (ed.), *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York, Garland Publishing, 1984), pp.705-6 and passim; Michael A. Gomez, 'Muslims in Early America', *The Journal of Southern History*, 60 (1994), pp.671-710, passim.

11. Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. b.4, fols.50-1. Published here with permission. I am grateful to T.D. Rogers, Deputy Keeper of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian. The Bodleian has no record of how or when the manuscript was acquired although T.D. Rogers (personal communication) conjectures 'it was acquired before 1893 (and certainly before 1905)', and notes it formed part 'of a group of things found in various rooms in the Bodleian in the 1890s'. The manuscript originally came to my attention through Peter Walne (ed.), *Guide to Manuscript Sources for the History of Latin America and the Caribbean in the British Isles* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.324.
12. See I landler, *Supplement to a Guide to Source Materials for the Study of Barbados History, 1627-1834* (Providence, Rhode Island: The John Carter Brown Library, 1991), p.58; and Rickford and Handler, 'Textual Evidence', pp.235-7.
13. Earlier efforts to identify John Ford proved unsuccessful (Rickford and Handler, 'Textual Evidence', p.235), but in March 1997, another attempt was made and records in the Barbados Department of Archives were searched. John Ford may have been a member of a white creole family, many of whose members lived in the parish of St. Thomas during the last quarter of the eighteenth century (although Fords were also scattered in other parts of the island). A John Ford (it cannot be certain, however, if he was the transcriber) was baptised in St. Thomas in February 1741, the son of Richard and Elizabeth (nee Hoskins) Ford (married 1735); he had a younger brother, William, born of the same parents and baptised in St. Thomas in November 1752. By the late eighteenth-century, a William Ford owned Lancaster plantation, in St. James parish. William died in 1803 and the plantation inventory shows that the slave contingent included a 'woman' named 'Sebel' and a 'girl' called 'Ashey Phillis'. Place of birth is not given for the slaves, but Sebel, as a 'woman' (i.e. an adult) possibly could have been born in Africa while Ashey Phillis, recorded on the plantation inventory as a 'girl', was probably a creole and certainly not the 'old' woman identified in the Ford manuscript; however, she might have been named for a female relative, e.g. grandmother or mother, whose name was Ashey, a namesaking practice found among

Barbadian slaves (Jerome S. Handler and JoAnn Jacoby, 'Slave Names and Naming in Barbados, 1650-1830', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 53 (1996), pp.711-17). A search of the Slave Registers for 1817, which list each slave's place of birth, was inconclusive. The question of John Ford's identity (including his date of death) as well as of the slaves and their place of residence remains open.

The preceding paragraph is based on the following materials in the Barbados Department of Archives: RL1/49, pp.22,41; RL 1/57, p.66 (birth, baptism, and marriage registers, indexes); Proved Wills Index (1743-1859); Slave Registry, 1817 (microfilm T.71/522; of the originals in the Public Record Office, London); Inventory of the estate of the late William Ford of Lancaster plantation, August 24,1803 (Original Estate Inventories). Carol O. A. King provided research assistance.

14. The presence of reduplication ('carry, carry, carry, carry, carry me' and 'workee, workee' and the enclitic or extra word final vowels ('grandee', 'workee')) – both common in contemporaneous historical texts – reinforce the interpretation that these texts are authentic; however, the uncommon mixture of Standard English and Creole forms (particularly in the pronoun system, e.g. 'me' as subject, but 'my' as possessive) raise some questions, albeit not serious ones, about authenticity (Rickford personal communication; Rickford and Handler, 1994, pp.236-7).
15. Efforts to conclusively identify the term 'Makerundy' have failed. According to my research, the term does not appear to be of southern Gold Coast origin (e.g. Akan-, Ga-, Adangme-speakers). Richard Allsopp (personal communication) independently concluded 'it is not Akan', but raises the possibility it might be 'Efik-Ibibio', in any case Nigeria, though 'probably not Yoruba'. Although the term may refer to a place (e.g. region, village) or be the slave's father's name, Paul Lovejoy (personal communication) suggests that 'in all probability' Makerundy does not refer to the father's name and 'suspects' it was his title in 'Igboland'. I could find no corroborative evidence that the term was either a title or of Igbo derivation. Searches in the literature and personal conversations and e-mail contacts with historians of West Africa, linguists, and native-speakers of various West African languages including Igbo, Fon and Yoruba yielded no positive results.
It may be of some relevance to note that 'Makunde' was the name of an early prominent political leader among the Isuwu, a Bantu-speaking people of the coastal former British Cameroons; however, I cannot be certain if this name is related in any way to 'Makerundy'. See Edwin Ardener, 'Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons', *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, Part IX* (London: International African Institute, 1956), pp.27-8, 29 fn 67; also note 19, 'nrimbo', below.
16. The oil palm tree (*Elaeis guineensis*), an African domesticate was/is widely used in West Africa for cooking oil and its sweet juice was fermented into palm wine.
17. Long house probably refers to a barracoon.
18. This comment recalls Equiano's famous passage wherein he records his feelings upon seeing Europeans for the first time. When he was taken on board the slave ship that was to transport him to Barbados, he became 'persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke ... united to confirm me in this belief; he asked his countrymen aboard the ship 'if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair' (Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, pp.70-1). Ofodobendo Wooma, also an Igbo, reports that when he first saw Europeans he was 'terribly frightened . . . We thought they were devils who wanted to take us, because we had never before seen a white man and never in our lives heard that such men existed' (quoted in Thorp, 'Chattel with a Soul', p.448). In another case, a crew member of an English slaving vessel which arrived at Barbados in the early 1780s, reported his conversations with 'Eboes' during the middle passage: 'They all agreed that they thought we [the English] procured them for the purpose of killing and eating them' (William Butterworth, *Three Years Adventures of a Minor in England, Africa, the West Indies, South Carolina, and Georgia* [Leeds, 1822], p.124; see also, Handler, *Guide to Source Materials*, pp.72-3). When he first encountered whites, Ottobah Cugoano, a Fanti, also was 'afraid that they would eat me' (in Edwards and Dabydeen, *Black Writers in Britain*, p.42).

19. Mimbo, including its variant spellings (e.g. Mimbah, Mimboe), was among the more common African-type names of female slaves in Barbados, and Sally was among the more common Anglo-European ones; Dublin occurs as a male name although it was less frequent. In their study of Barbadian slave names and naming practices, Handler and Jacoby were unable to identify Mimbo with a specific African ethno-linguistic group. More recent research has established that Mimbo was a term in pidgin English that emerged in the eighteenth century, and was used as a trade language along the Cameroon-Southeastern Nigeria coast. Among Bantu-speaking coastal peoples of the former British Cameroons, according to Ardener, 'the form of English used is basically similar to a common West African type, but its vocabulary also contains some words peculiar to itself'; these 'peculiar' terms include 'mimbo' meaning 'palm wine, adapted from Mokpe (mimba)'. Mokpe is the language of the Bakweri (Vakpe, Kpe), who live along the upper coastal area of the Cameroons. Among the Efik of Old Calabar, neighbours of the Igbo, in south-eastern Nigeria, located only about 90-100 miles from the Bakweri, 'Mimbo' refers to the juice from the wine-palm tree, although it may not be an Efik word by origin. I have been unable to establish through personal communications or the literature that Mimbo was ever used as a personal name among the peoples of southeastern Nigeria-Cameroons (where the use of honey and palm wine are also common), but it does not appear to have been a traditional name among the Ibo, Efik, or peoples of the coastal Cameroons. Could it be that Mimbo became a personal name or nickname that was applied to or used by some enslaved peoples who came from this general region? See Handler and Jacoby, 'Slave Names and Naming in Barbados', pp.711-17; Edwin Ardener, 'Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons', p39; *ibid.*, *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon: Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast, 1500-1970* (Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1996) pp.xvii, 2; Donald Simmons, 'Notes on the Diary of Antera Duke [1785-881]', and 'An Ethnographic Sketch of the Efik Peoples', in Daryl] Forde (ed.), *Efik Traders of Old Calabar* (London: International African Institute, 1956), pp.1,11,71 n39; John E. Eberegbulam, *The Igbos of Nigeria: Ancient Rites, Changes, and Survival* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp.188-96.
20. Some of these terms, e.g. Backra, fum fum, pickney (and variant spellings) are still found in various English Creoles of the Caribbean, including Barbados, sometimes with slightly different meanings. See Richard Allsopp (ed.), *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.61,247,438-9; Frank W. Collymore, *Notes for a Glossary of Words and Phrases of Barbadian Dialect*, 6th edition (Bridgetown: Barbados National Trust, 1992), p.5.
21. The Fanti were/are an Akan-speaking group in the southern Gold Coast (modern Ghana). The term Coromantine, or a variant spelling, which is often used in historical sources, derived from the name of a Fanti-speaking coastal settlement. During the eighteenth century many Africans were transported from the Gold Coast to Barbados; moreover, primary literary sources attest the visibility of southern Gold Coast peoples in early Barbadian slave life (Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados*, pp.21-8; cf. Handler, 'An African-Type I lealer/Diviner and His Grave Goods: A Burial From a Plantation Slave Cemetery in Barbados, West Indies', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 1 (1997), pp.89-128. Cf. Eltis and Richardson, 'West Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade', and David Eltis, 'The Volume and African Origins of the British Slave Trade before 1714', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 35 (1995), pp.617-27, for the prominence of the Gold Coast in the British slave trade.
22. In the area of Cape Coast Castle in 1752, Thomas Thompson reported that 'In special cases, as of some great distress by sickness, or want of rain, and apprehension of famine, they sacrifice a sheep, or goat' (*An Account of Two Missionary Voyages*, p.39). The sacrifice of small animals such as sheep, goats, chickens was/is common throughout West Africa. Ashy may have been stressing rainfall differences between the southern Gold Coast and Barbados because the latter was no stranger to droughts. Throughout Barbadian history droughts of varying degrees of severity and duration were not uncommon; during such periods the slaves would especially suffer for want of locally-grown food supplies and drinking water (which was largely drawn from ponds). Particularly relevant is that around the time of Ashy's account, Barbados was experiencing a 'long continued drought' which

produced 'a great scarcity of food for the Negroes'(John F. Alleyne to T. Daniel and Sons, 4 April 1803, Alleyne Papers, West India Committee Library, London; for other examples of droughts in Barbados and their implications for slave food and water supplies, see William Dickson, *Letters on Slavery* (London, 1789), p.7, and Robert Haynes to Thomas Lane, 23 June 1820, Newton Estate Papers 523/831, University of London Library).

23. In pre-colonial times, among various southern Gold Coast peoples including Asante and Fanti, humans were sacrificed and buried with high ranking personages. See Arthur Ffoulkes, 'Funeral Customs of the Gold Coast Colony', *Journal of the African Society*, 8 (1908-9), pp.162-4; Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa*, 2 Vols. (London, 1853; reprinted London: *Frank Cass*, 1966), Vol.2, pp.136-7; Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa* (London, 1812; reprinted London, Frank Cass, 1967) pp.32, 186; R.S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (London, Oxford University Press, 1927), pp.104-114; M.J. Field, *Akim-Kotoku: An Oman of the Gold Coast* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1948), pp.42-3.
24. Probably an allusion to punishments for unauthorized absences (i.e. marronage or running away/flight). At this period such absences were common in Barbados, and punishments could be quite severe, especially for repeat offenders. Handler, 'Escaping Slavery in a Caribbean Plantation Society: Marronage in Barbados, 1650s-1830s', *Nieuwe West-Indische Gicis-New West Indian Guide*, 71 (1997), pp.183-225.
25. 'Urn', meaning 'it', exists today in Caribbean English creoles, including Bajan (Allsopp, *Dictionary*, p574; Collymore, *Notes*, p.112).