Kennedy, Going Viral: Stedman's Narrative, Textual Variation, and Life in Atlantic Studies

John Gabriel Stedman's Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam (1796) is a very complicated text. It tells the story of an officer in the Scots Brigade deployed in 1772 to the Dutch-controlled colony of Surinam to suppress an armed black revolt against plantation slavery. It also exposes the cruelty of both slavery and military authority, while providing a rare account of a wide spectrum of colonial society. It takes advantage of Stedman's role as a colonial authority, writing from the privileged perspective of the colonial gaze, but it also challenges many assumptions and prejudices natural to the colonizer's world view. Stedman's Narrative is gaining importance in Atlantic Studies, because it both reflects the larger experience of circum-Atlantic circulation in the Age of Revolution and provides a unique perspective that differs from other primary material from the period. It should be possible to differentiate between what is typical of society and what is particular to an individual's perspective in Stedman's Narrative, right? There is just one problem: there is more than one Stedman's Narrative.

Today's reader is in a position to understand the role that variation plays in the construction and interpretation of Stedman's Narrative. Contemporary culture is comfortable with the idea of media going “viral,” taking on a life of its own as it is experienced and altered by users on the net. Likewise, a type of reading that is attentive to reference and mutation is necessary for Stedman's Narrative because of the proliferation of versions that have emerged over the more than two-hundred year history of its publication legacy.

While Stedman's Narrative is gaining critical attention in Atlantic Studies, a close look at its textual history reveals that the text has never been out of the public’s consciousness for long. The current multiplex configuration of Stedman’s Narrative emerged in 1988, the result of Richard and Sally Price's new scholarly edition. The Prices’ text transcribed Stedman's 1790 manuscript version for the first time, aiming to restore his original authorial intent and exposing the extent to which the text had been altered by Stedman's first editor, Joseph Johnson. [1] The original, 1796 published version of the Narrative was successful, resulting in several editions in multiple languages. It contained, however, views on race, slavery, social justice and inter-racial sex that were very different than those found in Stedman's manuscript. Upon seeing these alterations, Stedman reflected in his journal, “receive the 1st vol. of my book quite mard oaths and Sermons inserted etc” (June 24, 1795). These changes coalesce around the description of
Stedman's relationship with Joanna, a woman in bondage. To briefly give a sense of what is at stake in the competing texts, in their introduction to the revised manuscript edition the Prices note that "the edited version, saying nothing of her beauty, emphasizes Joanna's pitiable condition (bathed in tears rather than bathing with her companions) and makes Stedman her protector and patron, rather than her lover-aspiring-to-be-her-husband" (ix). If the editorial imperative to cloak Joanna in the modest garb of a sentimentalized relationship with Stedman protects her, in a sense, from being the Narrative's object of sexual desire, it also obscures the nature of Stedman and Joanna's relationship by defaulting to the confines of gender hierarchies: paternal protection and female emotional dependence. Both versions of the Narrative are troubled by what they cannot contain, whether it be the sexual exploitation made possible by plantation slavery, or the inter-racial desire that would eventually mark Stedman's Narrative as a singular example of resilience to the exploitations inherent in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.

The Prices' edition made Stedman's Narrative available to contemporary critics, enabling its increasing importance for literary and historical scholarship in Atlantic studies. It also introduced the complexity of having two texts sharing the same name in a field that emphasizes the material production, publication, and dissemination histories of primary sources. The difference between the original published version and the recovered manuscript raises an essential question: how should we read Stedman's Narrative now that there are two of them? On one hand, it is a text that is similar to a planter's journal, a record of colonial society that can be read for silences and echoes of life under plantation slavery. On the other, it is a text that crosses social boundaries between master and slave, white and black, colonizer and colonized, wealthy and poor, in ways that make even the comparatively conservative first publication version appear radical. For scholars interested in reading Stedman's Narrative as a reflection of history, Stedman's manuscript version might offer a closer depiction of his perceived experience. And yet, focusing on the Prices' recovered manuscript edition leaves out the prevailing cultural biases that Johnson's 1796 version reflects. Choosing one edition over the other is no longer an option for scholars who turn to Stedman's writings as a gateway to eighteenth-century life. Both are essential for triangulating Stedman's particular experience and the larger cultural biases that mediated that experience in print.

I will confess now that it is not my intention to map the differences between the two versions of Stedman's Narrative. The Prices' introduction to their revised manuscript edition describes these changes in extensive detail.

However, I take up the task of understanding the ramifications of the Prices' edition not only on criticism that has emerged as a result of their recovery work, but also to understand the recent revival of Stedman's writings in the context of a much longer process of cultural appropriation that has been ongoing since the Narrative's first publication in 1796. In essence, this is an effort in tracking: in tracking knowledge circulating in the Atlantic; in tracking the cultures that respond to and appropriate Stedman's account of his time in Surinam for their own purposes; and in tracking the significance of alterations made to the text. It is clear from the two versions of Stedman's Narrative that authorship is only one force at work in shaping the text, and not necessarily the most powerful force, either. In order to bring the work in the construction of Stedman's Narrative to light, it is necessary to expand the notion of authorship to include not only the figure of a single author, but also the acts of referencing, printing, and reprinting.

Rather than arguing for a definitive edition of the Narrative, I argue that the work can best be understood by considering it simultaneously as manuscript, editorialized publication, and re-telling. All together, this plurality of authorship and edition forms the core of what I call the Stedman Archive: the collectively produced text. The Stedman Archive is a convenient shorthand denoting the many documents that have Stedman's experience in colonial Surinam as their center. In one way or another they each recount that experience from a perspective unique to the type of material at hand. The archive undertakes, and together they reveal the incomplete understanding that any one in particular is able to capture.

The central texts of the archive are the Narrative's original publication and the Prices' restored manuscript edition produced from the rare manuscripts and journals first recovered by antiquarian Stanbury Thompson. In the 1960s, Thompson published Stedman's journals and letters, as well as a biographical history of the Stedman family defined from these sources and interviews conducted with Stedman's living descendants. (Thompson found these important documents in a junk shop, and is ultimately responsible for their preservation.) While Thompson's publications offered a fair reading copy for readers unused to working with hand-written manuscripts, they are at times unreliable in their transcription and translation, and can usefully be checked against the originals held by the James Ford Bell Library at the University of Minnesota lest Thompson's bias be mistaken as Stedman's. [2] The same is true
It should be noted that the Prices’ introduction includes a meticulously researched list of the textual variations that the Narrative underwent over the course of two hundred years, including descriptions of the changes made to the text in each case. Indeed, the only limitation to their research is that it ends with the addition of the restored version of the text. In 1988 they could not foresee the effect that their edition would have in scholarship or the arts over the following two decades. Critics have since assessed Stedman’s account of Surinam as imperial travelogue, as a vector of revolutionary knowledge, as a carrier of the hidden history of women in slavery, or as colonial pornography.

Alongside this renewed scholarly attention, Beryl Gilroy re-wrote Stedman’s experience from his first-person perspective in Stedman and Joanna - A Love in Bondage (1991) . Drawing on the Narrative, as well as Stedman’s private journals and letters, Gilroy focuses on Stedman and Joanna’s relationship even while expanding the length of the tale to include Stedman’s pre- and post-Surinam life. All of these texts maintain an important fidelity to Stedman’s account, but their strategic changes leave authorship in the archive indeterminate. During the two centuries since its original publication, Stedman’s account has resurfaced repeatedly alongside the struggle against slavery, terrorism, and racism. As a result, the full scope and importance of the Stedman Archive only becomes clear from a critical perspective informed by the black Atlantic; it is an archive endowed with both the conventions of British culture and print apparatus in the eighteenth century, and productive of post-colonial re-writings emerging in diverse political and national contexts.

In its original form the Narrative is a more or less chronological account of Stedman’s time spent in Surinam, ranging over a wide variety of subjects including ethnographic observation, colonial history, military engagements, and the naturalist’s attention to flora and fauna, and Stedman’s relationships with the people he encounters in every strata of plantation society. It is an example of what Mary Louise Pratt has described as travel writing, in which the imperialist perspective of the traveler has the power to render what it observes as legible in the scientific, racial, and economic consciousness of the imperial observer. The travel writing genre privileges the author as individual, granting the power of interpretation over the events and peoples related in the account. Stedman’s writing, in the case of the Narrative, mirrors the function of his imperial subjectivity. It is the written analogue of his other positions of authority: as a military officer who suppresses a slave revolt, and as a white European male who is able through local/colonial custom to temporarily take a slave woman as his wife to increase his domestic comfort while in Surinam.

Stopping there would be stopping short. Stedman was more than a traveler in Surinam, and he was also more than a colonial agent and oppressor. The Narrative can be read as the outgrowth of social subjectivity categories that typify the operation of the larger plantation slavery system in the West Indies and South America, but it must also be recognized in its particularity. In the following sections, I will consider what happens when Stedman’s authorship becomes displaced in the larger archive – how critics rewrite what they read, how an author becomes a character, and above all else, how textual changes challenge criticism’s reduction of Stedman to imperialist.

Viral History

As Stedman’s Narrative goes viral, the logic of the transmission vector becomes useful in thinking about how knowledge can be tracked through an archive. Disease marks the transgressed boundary of the body, as suffering is passed from one subject to the next. It is often associated with myriad cultural interactions and social stigmas, and has become one of the primary organizations of body control in our current time via management, prevention, and treatment. Extending this metaphor to the viral transmission of a text emphasizes the split between “agent” and “effect”; the text-as-virus becomes the vehicle for disseminating the knowledge-as-disease. The subversive quality of the transmitted knowledge remains true to today’s viral media, which typically spreads its information prior to official media coverage.

In terms of today’s criticism, the primary conceptual category for the subversive, or alternative, interpretation of a text is the act of producing a “hidden history,” a re-telling of a familiar history or narrative from below. The effect of this critical effort is to empower new social consciousnesses by revealing versions of the past that destabilize the “always-already” logic of currently dominant and hegemonic social configurations. If something happened once, after all, it could happen again. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker’s The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves,
Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic helped define the field of Atlantic Studies by envisioning a model of one continuous and ongoing resistance throughout the Atlantic world to expanding global capital during the early modern era and throughout the Age of Revolution. By reading the silences of texts for the experience of the mass of humanity that did not have the privilege of producing the materials that now define our historical archives, Linebaugh and Rediker describe a counter-history to one inundated by ruling-class assumptions.

12. Stedman's *Narrative* plays a crucial role in *The Many-Headed Hydra*'s perspective of history, but his dual-natured character and text seemingly do not fit in its conception of history from below. In order to understand the relative "silencing" of Stedman that takes place in Linebaugh and Rediker's history, it will be useful to consider one of Rediker's later essays, "The Red Atlantic," that describes Stedman's role as a carrier of knowledge. Rediker reads William Blake's poetic protagonist, Red Orc, from *America, a Prophecy* to continue his project of tracing resistance from below in the Age of Revolution. (Blake engraved sixteen illustrations for the *Narrative* from watercolors and sketches done by Stedman while in Surinam.) Rediker argues that a link between Red Orc and Stedman's narration of the execution on the rack of a slave named Neptune "show[s] how the knowledge of both violence and resistance circulated around the red Atlantic – how African rebels in America influenced Blake, who in turn represented their struggle to a metropolitan public" (125). For Rediker, Stedman takes on the role of mercenary-observer, recording the stoicism of Akan-speaking people. Their revolutionary spirit moves through the middle passage, to gallows resistance in Surinam, and eventually to the pages of Blake's poem. Stedman remains a colonial oppressor while Blake, the artist, gets the creative glory. While focusing on the circulation of revolutionary knowledge through the Neptune-to-Red Orc transformation, Rediker acknowledges Stedman as the source for more of Blake's material, particularly as the inspiration for "The Tyger." [5] Taking up this particular moment of exchange at the end of *The Many Headed Hydra*, Linebaugh and Rediker demarcate their roles as follows: "Stedman respected the creature, but only with the hunter's wish to kill it. Blake also wondered about the relation between hunter and hunted, but he widened it to include the larger social forces of oppressor and the oppressed" (349). By considering the role of each in these terms, Linebaugh and Rediker tend to align Stedman with a sort of colonial realism, in which he becomes the predator par excellence and his writing becomes bare record. Blake, whose vision is limited to what Stedman reports, gains the artistic and romantic receptivity to the latent content – the disease-as-knowledge that Stedman's *Narrative* carries.

13. Considering Stedman's experience in the larger context of the Stedman Archive reveals the extent to which the *Narrative* exceeds the function of being a bare conveyer of history; the text's self-conscious construction of Stedman's character and the plurality of authorial and editorial influence over the many versions of the *Narrative* argue against the stability of Stedman-as-recorder of a particular historical-material moment. Yet even considering the *Narrative* as a stable text (Linebaugh and Rediker use the Prices' restored manuscript edition) can yield a literary interpretation as well as a historical-materialist treatment of the text. M. Allewaert considers Stedman to be representative of colonial writing that is conscious of the "swamp sublime," the ecological characteristic of the swamp which undermines Enlightenment notions of the subject that she sees emerging as a response to the author becoming a "citizen-subject of print culture.... [The] shift from subjectivity to agency [in the swamp] testifies to an organization of political life that is not dependent on the separation of subjects from the world.... [A]t precisely the moment citizen-subjects were emerging in metropolitan centers, the plantation zone gave rise to an ecological practice closely linked to *marronage*, a process through which human agents found ways to interact with nonhuman forces and in so doing resisted the order of the plantation" (341). For Allewaert, the swamp becomes a manifestation of the sublime in its dangerous indeterminacy, penetrating and altering the isolated subjectivity of the colonial master-class. It also becomes the figurative reservoir for revolutionary resistance on behalf of the escaped and revolting black populations of the plantation zone. Drawing upon Stedman's *Narrative* (again, the Prices' 1988 edition), Allewaert focuses on Stedman's appreciation of the rebel's ability to use the terrain to their strategic advantage, closely reading a Blake image to show the white colonial's discord with nature as juxtaposed to the black assimilation to the natural landscape. While many other aspects of the text speak to exchanges that undermine romantic notions of subjectivity (disease and inter-racial sex particularly), Allewaert's discussion of Stedman emphasizes that Stedman's text is an outgrowth from plantation zone experience rather than the preserved master-colonialist gaze presumed by Linebaugh and Rediker.

14. Stedman's personal experience is erased from Linebaugh and Rediker's hidden history of the Revolutionary Atlantic, leaving only his role as a carrier and transmitter of subversive history. Plates from Stedman's *Narrative* open and close *The Many Headed Hydra*, and indeed one figure graces its cover. The meditation of how Stedman impacted
the revolutionary Blake serves as the afterword to the text. Yet because Stedman fought against the revolted slaves, he remains in Linebaugh and Rediker's critical estimate synonymous with the forces of colonial domination. Stedman's ambiguous dexterity in crossing plantation culture's social barriers, experience of inter-racial love, and the specifics of his response as a witness to maroon resistance and the horrors of slavery are all silenced in their history. Stedman's politics partly explain this choice. He remained "moderate" on the issue of slavery following his return from Surinam, and while his sympathies were against the brutality of the institution even to the point of professing racial equality, he also, as the Prices' introduction puts it, "rehearsed [in his manuscript] the whole panoply of already well-worn arguments in favor of the continuation of slavery and the trade..." (lxiii). Yet it is also necessary to recall that it was Stedman, not Blake, who witnessed the colonial violence in Surinam, and that his writings exhibit a profound difference between his own mindset and that of the Surinam planters.

15. Stedman's importance as a transmitter of Akan and other cultural legacies (with both origins in Africa and new spontaneous cultural formations of the West Indies and other Atlantic sites) should be considered as a sign of how the plantation zone had affected his subjectivity. Although associated with the dominant military power, Stedman is for that reason an importantly destabilizing vector for the transmission of African diasporic culture. Speaking through Blake's plates and editorial muffling, Stedman's mediated voice warns that the spread of knowledge about the Atlantic might always require the flexibility of sounding through the very apparatus that would deny that voice, passing the message on with the merest trace of an Akan accent. Witnessing the spread of Stedman's knowledge through text necessarily requires flexibility in relation to authorship, and speculation about the cultural saturation of the ideas he helped to transmit must therefore trace both silences and echoes.

Multiple Pathogens

16. What, then, is hidden in the Stedman Archive that makes it such a persistently engaged group of texts in the long effort to overthrow slavery and racism? As versions and variants of Stedman's Narrative proliferated over the course of two centuries, each new writer repeated Joseph Johnson's original editorial effect by imposing their own emphasis on Stedman's experience. While recent critical attention has treated Stedman's Narrative as a bearer of history and carrier of resistance in the Revolutionary Atlantic, a distinct genealogy has emerged in both primary and secondary retellings of the Narrative that focuses on the relationship between Stedman, Joanna, and their son, Johnny. For hidden history, the act of producing a genealogy is everything; it is the tool by which alternate archives of historical possibility become visible. While this sense of genealogy certainly applies, there is a quality to the Stedman Archive that exceeds the act of revelation. The problem with genealogy, as a word, is that it is implicitly associated with a system of reproduction and family that assumes many things about the appropriateness of family, love, and childbearing. All of these assumptions of typicality work against the transgressive aspect of Stedman and Joanna's relationship – if, that is, it does exceed the ongoing exploitation of people under slavery. If Stedman's text contains something that is passed on through its viral reproduction, another term from the rhetoric of disease can be useful for understanding the limitations inherent in the concept of genealogy. A virus is also a pathogen, a word that combines the concepts of pathos and genesis, suffering and passion given birth. As the Stedman Archive takes shape under the guidance of editors and re-writers, Stedman, Joanna, and Johnny form the passionate center driving reproduction of Stedman's text.

17. Many people have been drawn to this aspect of Stedman's text. In 1834, prominent U.S. abolitionist Lydia Maria Child excerpted the material related to Joanna from the Narrative for inclusion in the gift-book, The Oasis. Child's reasons for drawing on Stedman's experience were strategic; the abolitionist movement in the United States had experienced a series of violent anti-abolitionist riots fueled by the mob's fear and repulsion of inter-racial marriage. By returning to a British source, Child was able to include an example of inter-racial desire among the many other anti-slavery pieces of The Oasis, a collection including poems, factoids, short stories, dramatic sketches, personal narratives, legal summaries, and a biography of William Wilberforce, the British abolitionist who led the parliamentary effort to abolish the slave trade in 1807. As the first abolitionist gift-book in the U.S., its purpose was to describe abolitionism to a diverse audience unfamiliar with the growing movement. [6] The familiar components of abolitionist ideology are represented through a range of writing directed at both adult and young readers. Inter-racial desire remained a fixture of Child's fiction throughout her career, and including Stedman's Narrative allowed her to broach the topic amid the storm of racist violence of the 1830s. Child's redacted version reveals the wide scope of Stedman's
Narrative, for while his relationship with Joanna becomes one of the major components of his account, it makes up only forty pages when extracted and reprinted in The Oasis. Although it is by far the largest portion of Child's gift-book, this accounts for a relatively small portion of the sprawling two volume, eight-hundred page original edition of the Narrative.

18. Child's redacted version of the Narrative highlights how emphasizing the positive aspects of Stedman and Joanna's relationship can have a silencing effect of its own. The anti-abolitionist politics of Child's time required a de-emphasis of inter-racial sexuality, resulting in an even further refiguring of Joanna into what Jenny Sharpe identifies as the universal model of womanhood. In trying to use the sexual degradation of women as an argument against slavery, abolitionists sought to extend their contemporaneous culture's conceptions of womanhood across racial lines in an empowering way. The problem of this logic, as Sharpe reminds us, is that "[b]y defining slave women's lives as simply the negation of the domestic happiness that white women enjoyed.... this discourse fails to contend with the kind of domesticity white men established with their concubines in the colonies" (85). Working from the editorialized 1796 version of the Narrative, Child's version remains true to the text, but furthered Johnson's removal of Stedman's sexual attraction to Joanna and other enslaved women by altering the image of Joanna for her gift-book, covering Joanna's exposed breast. The danger of this change is made clear by Mary Louise Pratt's remark on Stedman's power as a writer, that "the allegory of romantic love mystifies exploitation out of the picture" (97). By emphasizing the domestic relationship between Stedman, Joanna, and Johnny, Child's edition calls attention to an inter-racial marriage while silencing the sexual content of the wider Narrative. Images of torture and bondage that Marcus Wood has read as colonial pornography are shed, leaving an example of inter-racial domesticity that has been modestly clothed. While the Narrative's sexual content is downplayed in The Oasis, its inter-racial couple was nevertheless content that depicted precisely the most contentious type of story for Child's violent time period.

19. And yet, following Pratt's analysis of mystification, the comparison of these two images of Joanna reveals that a further alteration has been made, the removal from the bottom corner of an inset depiction of Joanna and Johnny on a stroll. By treating their relationship as a function of text or image alone, critics attentive to the silences of exploitation in the eighteenth-century Atlantic may inadvertently have overlooked a domestic connection between Stedman and Joanna that reaches beyond the context of the plantation. Stedman and Joanna's relationship would end like many others did, with Stedman returning to Europe and Joanna remaining in America. Unlike the dénouement of other colonial love stories, Stedman and Joanna's domestic connection would continue as Johnny entered Stedman's European household following his mother's death.

20. Taking up Stedman's Narrative for reasons similar to Lydia Child's, Beryl Gilroy refashioned Stedman and Joanna's relationship to an even greater extent than that which transformed Joanna into an example of universal womanhood in the nineteenth century. Rather than read Stedman's Narrative for the reflection of colonial exploitation and silence, Gilroy emphasizes Stedman and Joanna's love as a condition that shapes Stedman's and his readers' consciousness of slavery. The cover illustration for Stedman and Joanna – A Love in Bondage (1992) provides a good example of the type of re-writing the original undergoes in Gilroy's text. Standing side by side, Stedman appears in his Scot's Brigade uniform, while Joanna is posed with one arm wrapped around his waist. The miniature inset in the image's bottom left corner depicting Joanna and Johnny is emphasized by Stedman's pointing hand. Palm fronds and rope provide the mixed-media background, and Gilroy's dependence on Stedman's private journals and letters is emphasized by the overlaid manuscript writing. Stedman and Joanna's image juxtaposition enacts the same overall effect achieved in Gilroy's rewriting. Stedman retains his significance as a colonial officer, but has been removed from the iconography of colonial domination (Stedman's figure is cropped from an image in which he stands over the corpse of a maroon rebel). Instead, Gilroy depicts Stedman as an introspective protagonist struggling to come to terms with the ill effects of colonial slavery from well before his deployment until long afterwards. Joanna has been returned to her sexualized state (her breast is again uncovered), but has gained the agency of being a desiring subject herself. She has the ability to touch Stedman sexually, undoing in part the ubiquitous degradation of women under slavery. The sum total of the image shows another way of reading the Narrative, that its sexual content is both exploitative and transgressive. For as much as Gilroy's image manipulation decontextualizes its figures, it also is able to show visually the content of the Narrative that had drawn readers for two centuries. Using their portraits from the original text, the cover depicts Stedman and Joanna's fraught domesticity.
21. In *The German Ideology*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels describe the family as the original location for the alienation of labor as private property. Their description is interesting for the imaginative work that it must do as Marx and Engels transplant the family as it existed in the nineteenth century back in time as an original, and eerily timeless, first stage of human social organization. They write: “the first form [of private property and unequal distribution] lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others” (159-60). A few necessary points need to be made. First, in projecting the heterosexual, monogamous, indeed the strangely nuclear family structure, Marx and Engels are not describing the early dependence of human society on the power relations contained in the family structure, but rather their own time’s simultaneous dependence on the family, as well as the dependence on investing that structure with the labels primitive and “natural.” The ideology of the family, then, constructs the family as an incredibly old and unchanging set of relationships capable of replication but not alteration, when in fact it is a series of relationships that are modern, rather than ancient. A second point to note is the reflection of slavery within their description of the family. Acknowledging the power that one form of social organization has to reflect in another is useful for understanding the revolutionary potential of the Stedman household. If Marx and Engels’ logic is troublesome because it imagines the growing up of slavery from within the family to a global state of race-based plantation slavery as a modern, “natural” outgrowth of the most intimate human relationships, then Stedman’s example shows the opposite potential of the domestic as a way to deny race as the primary feature of his son’s identity. Instead of calling backward to make the family into an origin, Stedman recognizes the simultaneity of the family and slavery. The importance of the mixed-race Stedman household stems not from any attempt of Stedman to interfere with the system of slavery, which he did not, but rather emerges from Stedman’s refusal to let the relations of colonial slavery dictate his relations of domesticity.

22. Stedman altered the conventions of British society both in his daily life and in his public writings by incorporating new experiences of eighteenth-century life within the familiar narratives. Following his return to Europe, Stedman produced his *Narrative* for print while keeping a journal that records his exceptional family’s experience in British society. In order to make sense of his time in Surinam, Stedman drew from literary conventions, characters, and narratives to tell his story. His private writings from the same period record his mixed-race, mixed-nationality household from the domestic perspective, depicting both the strained relationship between Stedman’s Dutch wife, Adrianna, and Johnny, as well as Stedman’s emphatic inclusion of Johnny within traditional familial relationships. If Stedman “re-wrote” his and Joanna’s relationship into the normative codes of domesticity, then his journalistic evidence of an analogous effort to establish Johnny socially within the codes of relation and inheritance tempers the critical assumption that such re-writing is necessarily aligned with a system of colonial domination. [12] Stedman’s readiness to bend the normative forces of domesticity to include the potential for legitimized inter-racial relationships is a radically destabilizing social scenario. While the racial power dynamics of plantation slavery made Joanna sexually available to Stedman in Surinam, his continual effort to endow their relationship with consent and love in his writings generated cultural tension by denying Joanna’s reduction to a sexual commodity. Stedman’s “cleaning up” of the sexual relations in the colonial system by scripting them within the codes of the British middle class family is then both at once a problematic erasure of colonial power and a powerful challenge of the homogenous constitution of British society. Stedman’s re-writing of Joanna denies her reduction to a sexual commodity, implicitly denying his own association as a white male consumer of subjugated women. The mitigating quality of this particular recorded relationship is that the denial does not transpire in silence as so many others did.

23. At the end the five years expedition, Stedman left Joanna and Johnny in Surinam to return to Europe. In the *Narrative*, Joanna is depicted as having the agency to decide not to return with Stedman “first from a Consciousness that with propriety she had not the disposal of herself - & Secondly from pride, wishing in her Present Condition Rather to be one of the first amongst her own Class in America, than as she was well Convinced to be the last in Europe at least till such time as fortune should enable me to establish her above dependance” (1988, 603). The only record of Joanna’s choice is inundated with Stedman’s narrative authority, and in itself is at best a compromised version of what grounds their domestic relationship may have entailed. Joanna’s choice in this moment signals a much wider comprehension of what her and Stedman’s relationship would mean in the wider context of colonization, rather than being limited to the local plantation society. When the *Narrative* gives Joanna agency, however, it exonerates Stedman of not only his role as a colonial exploiter of women (Joanna’s choice of separation is made on other grounds), but also...
the Stedman Archive was limited to the core texts, it would be difficult to argue that Stedman has been judged unfairly as a practitioner of the colonial romance and the mystification that authorship has the power to produce over any scene. By reading this moment in the Narrative against the wider collection of journals and textual variation in the archive, it becomes clear that their domestic relationship remained in place even while they were separated by vast geographic distance. Following Joanna's death three years later (reputedly by poisoning), Johnny, who had been manumitted before Stedman's return, traveled to Europe to live with his father. The Stedman family in Europe was then composed of Stedman, his Dutch wife Adrianna (whom he married while Joanna was yet alive), and Johnny.

24. The relationship between Stedman and Joanna evokes the unequal social agencies produced by colonial slavery between white men and women of color. In Ghosts of Slavery, Jenny Sharpe draws on the differences between Stedman's Narrative and his journal accounts of his time in Surinam to uncover probable moments of agency that Joanna would have had working within the social practice of concubinage in colonial Surinam. In an effort to de-sanctify Stedman's account of their relationship, Sharpe emphasizes the removal of any mention of monetary exchange from the public telling of their relationship in the Narrative, even though the negotiation of payment is a process recorded in the comparatively private journal entries. While Stedman made this change in an effort to construct his relationship with Joanna outside of the practice of concubinage and within the normalized conceptions of marriage, Sharpe locates Joanna's not-quite-agency not as the decision-making self control of the liberal subject but rather as a generalized social position experienced by women in bondage in slave society. Rather than privilege the idea of universal womanhood by which Joanna as an individual transcends the larger degraded experience of slavery, Sharpe finds her silenced choice at the moment when her sexual availability becomes a negotiable social relationship through the practice of contractual prostitution. Joanna's limited complicity with slave society's social practices allows her to partially navigate among sexual relationships (being raped, paid, or consenting to concubinage), but Sharpe reminds us that Joanna's choice does not equate to a resistance, for there was no position for refusal (xvii-xviii).

25. Sharpe argues that Stedman's Narrative constructs Joanna as an early version of the tragic mulatto figure, fulfilling the social role of wife within the custom of concubinage only until replaced by a white wife in the future. Stedman, notoriously, did precisely this by marrying Adrianna while Joanna was still alive. However, the journal legacy of his later domestic life counters an outright dismissal of Joanna within the narrative and social codes of marriage. The Stedman archive provides a text in which the silence of sexual exploitation is provocatively read, but only with the foreclosure of long-term family relationships. Johnny's inclusion in the multi-national Stedman household reconstitutes the domestic as a location for social change capable of supplementing the prevailing truths of colonial domination.

26. Accounting for Johnny's continued inclusion in the Stedman family draws attention to the changing social disapporportion of inter-racial relationships in Europe over the longer scale of the archive. While Stedman's relationship to Johnny is a major focus of the journals, antiquarian Stanbury Thompson editorializes throughout his print edition of these materials to remind the reader of the race difference between them by steadily footnoting Johnny as "quadroon," and leaving him off Stedman's family tree at the opening of the book. Thompson's alterations produce a distinction in the Stedman household based on race, which the journals themselves steadily refute.

27. Taken together, Sharpe and Thompson's usage of the journals illustrate two key interpretive assumptions. First, since the journals are more record-like than the Narrative, they are assumed to contain more truth than Stedman's other writings. Their authenticity becomes revelatory particularly in the case when they record the monetary negotiations of his relationship with Joanna which are entirely written out of the sentimentalized version found in the Narrative. For criticism attentive to this discrepancy, their relationship becomes an exchange of prostitution in the last resort. Extending the emphasis placed on the journal as the record of a hidden, private reality, Stedman's depiction of his relationship with Johnny in the journals should be judged on the same grounds. Second, Thompson's editorialization represents a lingering critical and social uneasiness surrounding Stedman's relationship with both Joanna and Johnny, as well as racial integration in general. Linebaugh and Rediker's uneasy dependence on Stedman's text (Stedman being an enemy of the commons revolution) and Sharpe's adamant emphasis on his complicity with gendered colonial power relations define important ways that Stedman's subject position is shot-through with condemnable affiliations. In spite of this, Stedman's subsequent writings continue to transmit a fundamental disconnection from the colonial dominant subjectivity. Though Johnny's origins are troublesome to contemporary critical assessment, his role within society resulting from his inclusion within the domestic relationships...
of Stedman's family remains resoundingly opposite to that of the majority of social relations between white male and enslaved females. Rather than accept the convoluted logic of the slave system, Stedman instead chose the domestic as the major narrative for his relationship with his son.

28. Stedman’s journal reveals to us that Johnny’s life was one filled with school, tutors, trips to the local fair, and practical jokes. There is also an unmistakable tension between Johnny and his stepmother, and there are many entries in which Stedman defends Johnny from her anger or sends him out of the house. The following series of relevant entries from 1784 through the New Year narrate the difficult navigation of Johnny’s role in the Stedman family following the birth of Stedman and Adrianna’s first child together:

Nov. 27 My Johnny was today 10 years old.

Dec. 2 The Insurance Society meet now. At 4 this morning am hurried out of doors for a midwife, Mrs. Macaulay &c., and at 2 at noon, after 12 hours labour, my Dear was delivered of a beautiful strong healthy boy which crowns my happiness.

Dec. 3 I write to Wierts, Heemskirk, and Blanc. Today poor Johnny swallowed a large pin, about 1 ½ inches in length, and was not ill.

Dec. 9 Johnny is now exceedingly bad. I go at 12 at night for a surgeon, who bleeds him immediately, and orders him a physic. I now thought he was dying, but thank God he recovered and got well.

Dec. 19 My family exceedingly distressed indeed, Mrs. Stedman and infant very weak, Johnny bedfast with a pain in his bowels, the nurse a violent pain in her back, and myself tortured with a sore arm [from falling while ice skating].

Dec. 20. Our lottery ticket out a blank.

January 1st 1785. Johnny now made George, his brother, a present of half a crown; which he put in his hand and bid him remember this was the first money he had ever received in his life. I give Palmer a present of a guinea. I receive a letter from Johnson [his editor]. This evening, about 5 o’clock, was baptized by the name of George William, my youngest son, by Mr. Cambridge, curate of Portland chapel, in our lodgings....


29. Stedman’s journals mix a day to day record of household expenses with short descriptions of the events transpiring in his family’s life. This section, narrowed down to a sequence of events that links the birth of Stedman and Adrianna’s first child together with a series of painful illnesses, offers a compelling opportunity to speculate on how the material could take shape if it were re-written as narrative in the Stedman Archive. Beryl Gilroy draws from this material twice as she adds Stedman’s post-Surinam life as context for her interpretation of his relationship with Joanna, using both Johnny’s gift to George and his swallowing of the pin to locate him in the household. Gilroy disassociates the two moments into isolated events, rather than narrate their unfolding as an intertwined sequence of events (171-2). Taken as a linear sequence, these journal entries depict the destabilizing threat that the birth of George represented to Johnny’s role in the household. Stedman’s first socially legitimized (in wedlock and in race) son arrives to much fanfare. Johnny swallows a large pin, and whether intentionally or not, is forced back into the household’s attention, even if it is a negative attention. Johnny’s gesture toward George, along with Stedman’s insistence on their brotherhood, navigates the domestic crisis; Johnny’s gift of money symbolically negates the race relations of the larger capital system, rendering Johnny both a position of agency in economic exchange, and a recognized location within the Stedman household’s relations of reproduction.

30. If the Stedman household acted as a space for a different system of relationships than those typically resulting from colonialism, the journals also suggest Stedman’s continuing concern over British society’s acceptance of racialized violence. Stedman records on February 10th, 1785 that one “Capt. Kenneth Mackenzie [was] reprieved from being hanged, for killing a man on the coast of Africa, by blowing him off from the mouth of a cannon” (Journal 251). Five years later, at fifteen, Johnny went before the mast, making two voyages to the West Indies. During his last (and fifth total) voyage, Johnny died off the coast of Jamaica; the only direct record of Stedman’s response remains a letter to his brother, William George, while in Holland. Stedman clearly expected a juridical investigation into Johnny’s death: “There being but two men with him at the time, they are, by all, suspected guilty of his death, and now upon their trial in London before Sir Sampson Wright” (Thompson 65). In crafting his biography of Stedman, Thompson researched English court records, but was unable to locate any judicial proceedings in Johnny’s case.

31. If Stedman lacked a legal resolution in the death of his son, his Narrative provided him a public forum for representing its meaning. Stedman’s journals from the time of this letter are missing, but his effort to memorialize Johnny results in an essential variation between the Narrative’s first edition and the Prices’ revised manuscript edition.
Critics and readers now encounter Stedman's *Narrative* through the Prices' edition, which consistently allows Stedman's original authorial intent to separate himself from prevailing cultural biases toward race and slavery. And yet, by reverting to the 1790 manuscript, the Prices' edition significantly alters the legacy of Johnny Stedman. Johnny's death off the coast of Jamaica was marked in the first print edition by the inclusion of "An Elegy on My Sailor" as the conclusion of the text. Reverting, in this case, removes an update which likely had Stedman's support, and which stressed the legacy of race in Stedman's re-writing of his time in Surinam. In this sense, the Prices' excellent edition, responsible for recalling Stedman's reputation from the pro-slavery editorialization of the 1796 edition, also edits the legacy of Johnny and the text via the absence of the elegy. [16]

While the two endings follow a similar trajectory, the difference between the final images oscillate between a hopeful endorsement of colonial Britain (both in the 1790 manuscript and the Prices' 1988 edition based on the manuscript) and a tragic foreclosure of Stedman's happiness resulting from continued colonial activity (the first and subsequent print editions until 1988). Both endings record the news of Joanna's death by poison, and Johnny's removal to Europe to be with his father. The manuscript account carefully includes Stedman's marriage to Adrianna as a response to this news: "now a young Lady whom I thought nearest Approach'd to her [Joanna] in every Virtue help'd to Support my Grief by becoming my Other Partner.... I Sought no other Fortune & with this Amiable new Companion & my boy, whom she tenderly Loves, I peacably Retired to the Fruitful Country of devon in England..." (1988, 625). While Stedman had married Adrianna before this news, his effort to construct the sequence of events according to a proper narrative furthers his project of legitimizing his relationship with Joanna and Johnny within the parameters of traditional domestic relations. Adrianna is directly compared to Joanna in virtue, contrary to Sharpe's description of concubinage as a scenario wherein women of color hold the place which will be occupied by a proper white woman in the future.

32. The manuscript version offers continuity between Stedman's two families, and continues by briefly narrating a scene of domestic bliss in which Johnny is saved by way of his position within the family. Thinking he had already had the smallpox, Johnny gets inoculated with the rest of the family "only to encourage his Brother," but becomes unexpectedly ill with the rest of the family, having only had the waterpox before. A brief anecdote, Stedman nevertheless uses the concept of inoculation to present Johnny as a fellow sufferer in the family's precautions rather than an "immune" inhabitant of the West Indies. After briefly relating Johnny's later service to "the Kingdom of Great Britain" in the merchant fleet and navy, Stedman closes his manuscript with a depiction of Britain's future: "While, long, long, may you live & be happy in the Bless'd Island, accumulating wealth with honor & Surrounded with victory, till the Lowest subject amongst you shall have Ascended to the highest pinnacle of unfading Glory -- Finis" (1988, 626). In relation to the long description of Stedman's own service in the colonies, the insularity of this last line rings at least somewhat ironic. Offering a vision which places the colonial center at the pinnacle of glory, Stedman bases that vision on an advancement of the "lowest subject." Taking Stedman's own household as the benchmark of this accumulated glory, the colonial power's ascendancy is predicated on Johnny's happy inclusion in the domestic realm.

33. The 1796 edition follows the news of Joanna's death not with a transition to Stedman's integrated family, but instead turns quickly to Johnny's death and elegy. The exclusion of social integration serves to demarcate Johnny firmly within the realm of the colonial periphery, rather than acknowledge his position within British society or the domestic sphere. Yet while the conservative first edition forecloses both the acknowledgment and acceptance of Johnny within British society, it also emphasizes the importance of Stedman's relationship to his son and Joanna. Markedly, the elegy allows Stedman to describe the domestic unity with Joanna displaced by his return to Europe:

Yet one small comfort soothes (while doom'd to part,  
Dear gallant youth!) thy parent's broken heart;  
No more thy tender frame, thy blooming age,  
Shall be the sport of Ocean's turb'pent rage;  
No more thy olive beauties on the waves  
Shall be the scorn of some European slaves;  
Whose optics, blind to merit, ne'er could spy  
That sterling worth could bloom beneath a western sky. (2: 403)

34. The departed Johnny's body, poetically praised for its "blooming age" and "olive-beauty," offsets the two lines containing the "rage" of the ocean and the "scorn" of European racial biases. The evidence for Stedman's alternate understanding of the world – a different sort of "optics" in the poem's terminology -- is contained in the poem's logical inversion of the colonizers as "European slaves." In 1792, at the time of his son's death, Stedman viewed the world quite differently than the way enshrined in the ending of the 1790 manuscript.
The belief that Stedman had found a space for Johnny within British society at the apex of colonialism is displaced by the material (and racial) poetics of the elegy. He could look at his son and see both himself and the "sterling" worth of life that the economic drive to accumulate guineas made invisible. The elegy concludes with an image that completes the exclusion of Stedman's Surinam family from the domestic space of the British nation, but in so doing emphasizes the Narrative's purpose in describing the familial-social aspect of his time in Surinam:

Fly, gentle shade – fly to that blest abode,
There view they mother – and adore thy GOD:
There, Oh! My Boy!--- on that celestial shore,
Oh! May we gladly meet and part no more!!!
A Parent. (2: 403)

Rather than the long-term accumulation of wealth, Stedman's 1796 ending subverts his return to Europe by imagining the heavenly reunion with Joanna and Johnny. The foreclosure of racial mixture within British society is only enacted through the emphatic presentation of Stedman's inter-racial family in heaven, and the erasure of Adrianna and the other children from the account.

Though Stedman's Narrative reached a wide audience, appearing in multiple editions and languages, the revolutionary domestic relationship between Stedman and his son found another, spontaneous vector of dissemination among the larger culture. Forms of popular publication including periodicals and epistolary sample books gave Stedman's writings a perpetual access to the household ramparts of British middle-class ideology. Stedman composed a letter to his son intending it as a portion of Johnny's inheritance to be delivered after the elder Stedman's death. A journal entry from January 14, 1787 reports that Stedman showed the letter to Johnny once, before sealing it up with several important documents, including Johnny's manumission certificate, baptism record, and other legal detritus from the Surinam court. Following Johnny's death off the coast of Jamaica, this letter found its way into print, receiving sustained republication (sometimes sourced, other times not) as an example of the highest sentiment of the father-son relationship.

For the many editors of the various publications which reprinted Stedman's letter to Johnny as an example of the epistolary art, the prevailing trend was to reprint it without too much bother about either the stability of the text or its original context. While these eighteenth and nineteenth-century editors typically maintain Stedman's name, the re-printings (other than The Weekly Entertainer) lack any mention of a race context, and instead slip into the naturalizing assumption that the sentiment of the father-son relationship on display is as socially typical as it is well expressed. By this assumption, the colonial context of Stedman and Johnny's relationship is forgotten, consummating the inclusion of the legacy of colonial race relations within the domestic codes of British middle-class ideology. While the meaning of race for the readers of this letter is not directly challenged, this nevertheless represents how an unmarked and subtle counter-example to the hegemony of an assumed British homogeneity came to be absorbed within the boundaries of normalcy.

The letter reached print twice before coming to Stedman's attention. The first printing, in Gentleman's Magazine (Sept 1793) is typical of later printings; the brief introduction lacks any specification of race, focusing instead on the context of Stedman's military gentility and recovery from illness. (Many subsequent letters would get even this fact wrong, presuming Stedman to have died before his son, further naturalizing the letter into presumptions about genealogy and descent.) The publishing history of the letter continues in The Weekly Entertainer, the only printing accompanied by an introduction from Johnny's tutor which specifically polices race by marking Stedman's son as "mulatto." By 1796, the letter appeared three more times, in The Correspondent as a reprint from The European Magazine (April, 1795), and also in Town and Country Magazine (July 1795). Following this spate of publication, the letter circulates well into the nineteenth century, appearing in the Journal of Health Conducted by an Association of Physicians (Feb 1833), the Parlor Letter Writer, and Secretary's Assistant (1845), and the American Fashionable Letter Writer as late as 1850. These many printings attest to the popularity of the letter's sentiment, and unlike the legal documents of emancipation it was once sealed with, Stedman's letter records and transmits a version of history that willingly inverts and forgets the racial hierarchies of his time. The letter took on a life of its own, but it also marks a propagation of sentiment between Stedman and his son.

Knowing the historical specificity of the circumstances of its composition allows current readers to understand the truly provocative nature of the letter, and the extent to which Stedman's writing inverts the hierarchies of racism
model, uniqueness polices the boundary between the category of the exchangeable, bland gentleman-observer who through the complex idea of singularity. Singularity is unlike the uniqueness deployed in Lynch's analysis. For her 43 capital exchange – a character that circulates, rather than accumulates, knowledge.

As a result, the Stedman archive represents an effort to define character at odds with the logics of relationships. As a publicly traded (and supplemented or de-historicized) text, the Stedman archive brings to attention the transformation of Stedman from author to character. Deidre Lynch's *The Economy of Character* identifies fictions of social circulation as a key component of mass British culture's literary self-fashioning in the eighteenth century. From the familiar narratives of items (most often money) circulating in society and tales of social pretension such as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* or Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random*, Lynch identifies the key binary between sameness and singularity underlying the social function offered by fictions of circulation. The difference of character is between the uniqueness of the "bland handsomeness" of the generalized, exchangeable gentleman (even on the face of the coin) and the uniqueness of everyone else. Marking both the "high" and the "low" of society, the difference "between those qualified to observe and those who are objects of others' observation" in these stories of circulation, Lynch's critique of character identifies the social use such narratives had for rendering society as an economically comprehensible whole (82). Stedman's *Narrative*, and hence the archive, begins with a determined self-fashioning by way of direct references to Jones and Random. If these characters allude to the cultural picaresque narrative which Lynch describes as the accumulation of experience in preparation for the attainment of the privileged social position of the gentleman, they also mark Stedman's own incomplete inhabitation of the dominant male-imperial perspective. Unlike Jones and Random, Stedman does not only accumulate social experience or wealth, he accumulates intimate domestic relationships. As a result, the Stedman archive represents an effort to define character at odds with the logics of capital exchange – a character that circulates, rather than accumulates, knowledge. [17]

Standing at the edge of his own transmogrification from an author to a character, Stedman defines himself through the complex idea of singularity. Singularity is unlike the uniqueness deployed in Lynch's analysis. For her model, uniqueness polices the boundary between the category of the exchangeable, bland gentleman-observer who

Conclusion: An Economy of Character.

40. Stedman's pen sent the message that he considered his relationships with Joanna and Johnny to be equitable and meaningful within the social patterns of his contemporary culture. Whether through editorial distortion, free appropriation to other ends, or strategic re-tellings, Stedman's record of inter-racial relationships has proven invaluable to studies of colonialism. The line between public and private writing has dimmed as authors and critics return to previously unpublished material for analysis, but the archive itself illustrates that the instability of authorial intent is a vital characteristic of circulating knowledge. Stedman's influence on Blake does more than connect the legacy of Akan speaking peoples of Africa to a radical poetics distributed to British culture. Tracking the circulation of revolutionary ideas fundamentally destabilizes authorship, and the notions of identity and ownership associated with it. Between Stedman, Blake, the sundry editors who either mediated or appropriated Stedman's writings over more than two centuries, critics, and contemporary writers who re-tell his story, treating Stedman as the sole authorial agency at work in constructing the material in the archive would be to ignore the web of social connections also at work contributing to the text's meaning over time.

41. Many agencies have supported the distribution of Stedman's writings, with various ideological reasons for doing so. The original imperialist perspective of an account of life in the colonies (emphasized by Johnson in the first edition) is never isolated from the domestic sentiment of the archive highlighted by the fashionable magazines, nor from the nineteenth-century abolitionist attraction to Joanna's domesticity in Lydia Maria Child's re-production of the family elements of the *Narrative* in her gift-book *The Oasis*, nor Beryl Gilroy's post-colonial incorporation of Stedman's early and later life in her retelling of their story in *Stedman and Joanna - A Love in Bondage*.

42. As a publicly traded (and supplemented or de-historicized) text, the Stedman archive brings to attention the transformation of Stedman from author to character. Deidre Lynch's *The Economy of Character* identifies fictions of social circulation as a key component of mass British culture's literary self-fashioning in the eighteenth century. From the familiar narratives of items (most often money) circulating in society and tales of social pretension such as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* or Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random*, Lynch identifies the key binary between sameness and singularity underlying the social function offered by fictions of circulation. The difference of character is between the uniqueness of the "bland handsomeness" of the generalized, exchangeable gentleman (even on the face of the coin) and the uniqueness of everyone else. Marking both the "high" and the "low" of society, the difference "between those qualified to observe and those who are objects of others' observation" in these stories of circulation, Lynch's critique of character identifies the social use such narratives had for rendering society as an economically comprehensible whole (82). Stedman's *Narrative*, and hence the archive, begins with a determined self-fashioning by way of direct references to Jones and Random. If these characters allude to the cultural picaresque narrative which Lynch describes as the accumulation of experience in preparation for the attainment of the privileged social position of the gentleman, they also mark Stedman's own incomplete inhabitation of the dominant male-imperial perspective. Unlike Jones and Random, Stedman does not only accumulate social experience or wealth, he accumulates intimate domestic relationships. As a result, the Stedman archive represents an effort to define character at odds with the logics of capital exchange – a character that circulates, rather than accumulates, knowledge. [17]
Stedman's singularity is, in the Prices' quote, a method by which Stedman has recursively become known and accepted by various cultural groups, in spite of his initial strangeness. The context for this process is also important. The everyday matter which precedes Stedman's contemplation is typical for other entries in the journal, insomuch as they record day to day events and accounting tables. Whatever caused Stedman to record this reflection, whether linked to his visits or letter writing or no, is not specified. Importantly, though, his thoughts on “being singular” are not limited to his own character, but also extend to his family. The four people mentioned are Stedman and Adrianna, his second son, George William, and Johnny. The final line completes the thought; Stedman’s family have been in Devonshire for nearly a year, and have grown used to their English neighbors. Presumably, the mased, or confused, perception of the Stedmans is wearing off.

44. According to Samuel Johnson’s dictionary from 1785, there were two main meanings of “singular” in common use when describing a person's character or an event. While in a strict sense singular can mean “Alone; that of which there is but one,” this falls short of the way in which Stedman uses the term. The second definition in use is more apt: “Having something not common to others.” Johnson’s definition goes further to say that singular “is commonly used in a sense of disapprobation, whether applied to persons or things,” yet also provides a usage example from the Archbishop John Tillotson contradictory to this assertion: “It is very commendable to be singular in any excellency, and religion is the greatest excellency: to be singular in any thing that is wise and worthy is not a disparagement, but a praise.” Being singular, then, is a way to name a certain deviation from what is expected as normal. As a marker of behavior or thinking that is atypical of a prevailing expectation of eighteenth-century colonial ideology, being singular is officially inflected as a negative appellation, yet qualified in certain cases that are deemed “wise and worthy.” Perhaps the most startling revelation of this thought is the alteration of the notion of the “common.” Rather than reference the system of social organization by which a group of people share either material or land wealth, or even band together in common for political protection as is the case for Lockeian notions of private property protected through social association, the common has already at this early stage stabilized linguistically as commonly held perceptions of the world, including commonly held notions of race.

45. Stedman’s singularity is not a case of exerting his unique personality as an individual, but rather is a technique that willingly asserts that things marked as socially disreputable can be reinvested with a positive regard. Both in his Narrative manuscript and elsewhere in his writings, Stedman conjures the title characters of Henry Fielding’s Tom Jones and Tobias Smollet’s Roderick Random as models for his own behavior. By studying other “singular” characters, Stedman illustrates the reproducibility of his own particular world view as well as the potential of published material to spread ideas. Stedman employs them as examples that foreground his own rewriting of his colonial experience. While being singular often manifests as a sexual licentiousness with women of all races, or the propensity to get drunk and fistfight, Stedman also is “singular” in more ways than those which re-value rowdy behavior. Whereas Roderick Random, for example, will eventually rely on the rags-to-riches narrative when his long lost father re-enters his life with a fortune made via colonial slavery, Stedman instead uses his singular character to exceed the normal forms of colonial relations. In numerous instances, Stedman engages with enslaved members of Surinam society on equal footing. He takes their advice on how to survive and prevent the diseases which devastate the other colonial troops, settles disputes with those under his military command on equal footing with his white subordinates, and
Atlantic world.

46. By linking his own character with Roderick Random and Tom Jones, Stedman also intended to recode their characters within his own project of revaluing race and familial relationships in his Narrative. Stedman relates how many of his messmates rebuke him for his attempt to secure the freedom of his son, Johnny: “Do as we do / say’d they / Stedman and never fear, if our Children are Slaves they are provided for, and if they die... may they be damn’d into the bargain, thus keep your Sighs in your Belly, and your Money in your Pocket my Boy” (1988 289). Stedman is incensed at this sentiment, and accordingly relates a sympathetic, non-military audience shortly thereafter. A few days pass, wherein Stedman gains the assurance of assistance in buying Johnny's manumission from Mr. De Graav, who attains guardianship over the plantation held in absentee which claimed both Joanna and Johnny. Stedman relates that:

The weight of a Millstone was removed from my labouring breast... Soon after this I was surrounded by several Gentlemen, and Ladies, / to whom my friend had Communicated this very romantic adventure/ Some of whom pleased to Call me Tom Jones, and the others Roderick Random-They all congratulated me on my Sensibility, and my having met with so valuable an Acquaintance, all seem’d to partake in the pleasure that I now felt. (1988 291)

In the edited first edition of 1796, the passage remains, but the literary allusion is expunged. Stedman’s original choice to anchor this event around popular literary characters indicates the extent to which literary production could spread such atypical and incendiary stances. By associating Jones and Random to the sentiment generated by the promise of attaining freedom for his son, Stedman’s rhetorical strategy attempts to generate an audience both in his text and in the larger literary print sphere. By removing the reference to Jones and Random, the editor of the 1796 edition isolated Stedman’s sentiments in his own text. Yet within the Narrative, this instance nevertheless produces the re-coding of literary techniques- adventure and romance - across cultural lines of taboo, extending the approval of the “gentlemen and ladies” of polite society to the circumstances of his inter-racial relationship. If the removal of such references to popular literary characters stymied the connections Stedman tried to construct between his own singular experience and the larger cultural examples available in the print sphere, other forms of popular publication such as periodicals and epistolary sample books gave Stedman’s writings a perpetual access to the household ramparts of British middle-class ideology.

47. The reproducibility of Stedman as a character in the larger archive maintains an important symbolic link to the revolutionary domestic space that the Stedman household created in British society. While each retelling of the story resurrects his character in the hands of a new author, the likeness of character between Stedman and Johnny exemplifies the concept of singularity. Quite aside from the confusion of having two “characters” with the same name, the reproduction of the father in the son becomes the condition by which Stedman is lastingly disassociated from the colonial perspective while in Surinam and onward for the remainder of his life. The domestic is no longer the space for the continuance of Marx and Engels' understanding of slavery (through gender, race, or class) but rather becomes the space through which the father is re-produced as a singular subject alongside of and in relation to people alive in the Atlantic world.

Works Cited


Johnson, Samuel. A Dictionary of the English Language: in Which the Words are Deduced From Their Originals, and Illustrated in their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers. 6th ed. 2 vols. London: [n.p.], 1785. Print.


Price, Richard, and Sally Price. "Introduction." Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam By John Gabriel


**Notes**

[1] To add to this confusion, the Prices' restored text exists in both a full transcription complete with original orthography and spellings (1988) and a modernized, abbreviated version (1992). BACK

[2] I would like to especially thank Dr. Marguerite Ragnow and the James Ford Bell Library for assistance with the manuscript materials for this purpose. Quotations from Stedman's journals drawn from Thompson have been compared to the original collection, *John Gabriel Stedman, Journal, diaries, and other papers, 1772-1796*, James Ford Bell Library 1772oSt. BACK


[4] See Mary Louise Pratt (travelogue), Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker (vector of revolutionary knowledge), Jenny Sharpe (hidden history of women in slavery), and Marcus Wood (colonial pornography). BACK

[5] The Prices' introduction discusses the Stedman / Blake interplay (xxix). BACK

[6] Gift-books were a popular form of publishing in the mid-nineteenth century. *The Oasis* was well received as the first abolitionist gift-book, but its sales disappointed Child, who had the volume published at her own expense. The more successful abolitionist gift-book *The Liberty Bell*, edited by Maria Chapman and published for several consecutive years, was printed more modestly, was funded by donation, and sold at anti-slavery bazaars. Child's involvement with the later *Liberty Bell* includes the stories "The Quadroons," "Slavery's Pleasant Homes," and "The Emancipated Slaveholders," among others. For more on Child's involvement with abolitionist gift-books, see Carolyn Karcher's *The First Woman in the Republic* (208-9), Valery Levy's "Lydia Maria Child and the Abolitionist Gift-Book Market" in *Popular Nineteenth-Century American Women*, and Ralph Thompson's "The Liberty Bell and Other Anti-Slavery Gift-Books" in *The New England Quarterly* 7 (March 1934). BACK

[7] Although Sharpe's reservations concerning the unintentional effects of Child's depiction of Joanna are essential for understanding the dangers of focusing on Stedman and Joanna's domesticity, Sharpe is too quick to condemn Child as complicit with the race prejudices of her time. Speaking directly to her period's intense and violent response to inter-racial marriage, Child quips ironically to reassure her readers that "should any fastidious readers be alarmed, I beg leave to assure them that the Abolitionists have no wish to induce any one to marry a mulatto, even should their lives be saved by such an one ten times" (*The Oasis*, 65). Sharpe represents this chiding comment from a writer who would serially forefront inter-racial marriage as a path to overcoming society's antagonistic relationships as a straight description of her beliefs concerning race and marriage. BACK

[8]
Figure 1: From Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (London, J. Johnson and J. Edwards, 1796). Reproduced with the permission of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Special Collections Library, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.
Marcus Wood considers the pornographic content of the Narrative at length in relation to eighteenth-century ideas of empathy. [BACK]

Although other new images depicting Stedman, Joanna, and Johnny together accompany the text in both its publication in The Oasis, and then later as a stand alone copy Narrative of Joanna; an Emancipated Slave of Surinam, the emphasis remains on her domesticity and female propriety. [BACK]

[11]
Moreover, Tassie Gwilliam has analyzed a similar "seepage" between Stedman's literary construction of Joanna in terms of sentimentality and the ongoing violence of slavery: "While Stedman intermittently represses the evidence of Joanna's incorporation in slave society in order to define her as an interlude or a relief from torture for the reader and narrator, the seepage from the surrounding text undermines his efforts, and in fact, many of his effects depend precisely on her endangered status. The sentimentalized description of Joanna that Stedman produces, with its dematerialized eroticism, cannot entirely be divorced from the horrifyingly mutilated bodies that people the text" (655).

Jenny Sharpe offers an interpretation of Johnny's manumission. Interpreting the alteration between the diary and Narrative version of the events surrounding Joanna's continued bondage, Johnny's manumission, and Stedman's return to Europe, Sharpe observes that Joanna's agency in the scenario likely opened the way for her son's freedom as much or more than Stedman's efforts and finances would allow (75-77).

For example, from Thompson's edition of Stedman's journal: "Francis Gloyns was the tutor of Stedman's quadroon son" (267). To open his discussion of Johnny's death in his biography of Stedman, Thompson begins, "Major John Gabriel Stedman's last letter to his quadroon son Johnny, is well known" (62). Unaware of his ironic reproduction of his own demarcation of Johnny's race, Thompson concludes: "How easy it is to perceive from the above lines, that the quadroon was a victim of slander, calumniation, what we call today, the colour bar, or class distinction in a sense. Man is only equal to Man in the eyes of God" (67).

"This text is drawn from Thompson's printed version of Stedman's Journals, Journal of John Gabriel Stedman, 1744-1797, (246-8). It has been checked against the original journal entry for accuracy. Some intervening entries unrelated to the ongoing domestic drama precipitated by George's birth have been redacted.

The other dominant allusion in Stedman's Narrative is the tale of Inkle and Yarico. This story depicts an early explorer's treachery toward a native woman. Having married her during a lengthy ship-wreck, Inkle sells Yarico and their unborn child into slavery after their rescue and return to Barbados (British territory). Werner Sollors summarizes the account as a "brief and simple moral tale represent[ing] slavery as the betrayal of a beloved, combining a mild antislavery sentiment with a critique of the merchant as a type" (195). Sollors also describes the literary genealogy of the tale from Richard Steele's Spectator version (March 13, 1711) through Stedman's Narrative and subsequently the logic of the "tragic mulatto" that emerged in the writing of Lydia Maria Child in dialogue with William Wells Brown's novel Clotel; or the President's Daughter (1853). Beryl Gilroy also re-wrote Inkle and Yarico.

For the Prices' discussion of this alteration, see their introduction (lv-lvii).

Beryl Gilroy also re-wrote Inkle and Yarico.
Within the arena of Modernist Studies, for instance, it is sometimes argued that "Modernism" is, of course, anyway a term applied to the literary writing of this period retrospectively" (Matthews 2004:8; italics as in the original text). If Modernist Studies can be compared to a 'CULTURAL seismology—the attempt to record the shifts and displacements of sensibility that regularly occur in the history of art and literature and thought' (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991 [1976]:19; capital letter as in the original text), modernism—the broad object of Modernist Studies—can be reckoned as a cultural development marked by those 'shifts. So conceptualised, space is indispensible to the constituting of narrative, and should be considered adequately. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano study guide contains a biography of Olaudah Equiano, literature essays, quiz questions, major themes, characters, and a full summary and ana... All in all, the people lived a plain and clean life. They cooked many variations of vegetables and flesh, and always washed their hands before consuming their meals. Strong alcohol was almost entirely unknown, although palm wine was ubiquitous. Their principal luxury consisted of perfumes. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano essays are academic essays for citation. These papers were written primarily by students and provide critical analysis of Olaudah Equiano. Abolition, Ethnicity, and Identity in The Interesting Narrative. Circulations: Romanticism and the Black Atlantic. "Going Viral: Stedman's Narrative, textual variation, and life in Atlantic Studies". Dustin Kennedy The Pennsylvania State University. article abstract | about the author | search volume. [print full essay]. Stedman's Narrative is gaining importance in Atlantic Studies, because it both reflects the larger experience of circum-Atlantic circulation in the Age of Revolution and provides a unique perspective that differs from other primary material from the period. It should be possible to differentiate between what is typical of society and what is particular to an individual's perspective in Stedman's Narrative, right? There is just one problem: there is more than one Stedman's Narrative.