

Anyaa Anim-Addo is a doctoral student in the Geography department at Royal Holloway, University of London, and is currently conducting her research in collaboration with the National Maritime Museum.

The Society for Caribbean Studies Annual Conference Papers

edited by Sandra Courtman

Copyright remains with the author

Vol. 10 2009 ISSN 1471-2024

<http://www.caribbeanstudies.org>

**‘Capital, people and texts’: The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company
in the post-emancipation Caribbean**

Anyaa Anim-Addo

Abstract

Steamship services have primarily been related to economic forms of nineteenth-century globalization. This paper shifts focus to consider steamships in terms of cultural globalization. The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company’s service, inaugurated in 1842, connected Britain to the Caribbean (and later South America). It is argued here that mobility should be central to our understanding of the internal dynamics of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company’s vessels, and that a crucial process of creolisation occurred as the ships travelled through the Americas. The ship’s culture, as inculcated from above by the Company’s managers and directors, was contested by alternative cultural practices in the Caribbean, particularly deck cultures and the culture of coaling. A focus on the cultural dynamics of the steamship suggests that in practice, steamships did not necessarily function as straightforward ‘tools’ of empire.

Central to this paper is the dissonance between two accounts, below, of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company’s ship R.M.S. *Tweed*.¹ The first is an item of shipping news from *The Times* of November 1846:

The Royal Mail Steam Packet *Tweed*, G. Parsons R.N., Commander, arrived at Southampton yesterday, at 4p.m., bringing the usual mails, a small number of dollars on merchants' accounts, 24 tierces and 8 barrels of coffee, some ginger, 13 cases and 122 kegs succades, 87 bales of tobacco, 4 cases of cigars, and 32 passengers. [...]

By the *Tweed*'s arrival we have scarcely any news. We learn that the Company's ship *Clyde* was at Grenada; *Forth*, at Havana; *Tay*, in the Gulf of Mexico; *Trent*, on the Spanish Main; *Eagle*, at St Thomas's, and *Reindeer*, at Demerara.²

The second description of the *Tweed*, as remembered by Robert Woolward, refers to an earlier occasion in November 1844. Woolward describes the *Tweed*'s duty on arrival at Havana:

H.M.S. 'Rodney' was moored in the harbour as a receiving ship for the negroes found on board the slavers, which the cruisers took from time to time, and these were denominated 'Emancipados', as they were free immediately they got on board one of H.M. ships.

H.M. schooner 'Pickle' had captured a vessel with over three hundred men and women on board, a fortnight before we arrived, and these people were to be sent to Jamaica. They were put on board our ship for the purpose when we were ready to start, and a fine time we had with them. We were six days going to Jamaica, and several births took place on the passage.

We were very glad when we got rid of these savages. They had scarcely any clothes, and nothing to lie on but coarse mats made of rushes. It took us a full week to get the ship clean, and it was very much longer before she was sweet again.³

As the first extract indicates, the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's ships functioned as vectors of capital, people and texts, channelling animate and inanimate objects through a network of transatlantic and inter-colonial routes. Yet the second text highlights that internally the vessels were also meaningful places interacting with and shaped by their ports of call. Whereas the shipping news foregrounds the ship's external places, Woolward's account provides a sense of the ship's internal place, thus underscoring the significance of exploring both internal *and* external place when considering the processes and practices that constitute the ship-space. As David Lambert and Alan Lester suggest:

The travel of ideas that allowed for the mutual constitution of colonial and metropolitan culture was intimately bound up with the movement of capital,

people and texts between these sites, all dependent in the last resort on the passage of ships.⁴

This paper considers how we might best interpret the steamship's meanings and practices as mobile and, in so doing, revise our understanding of the relationship between this industrialised technology and empire.

Writing of the Atlantic world, Paul Gilroy highlights ships as 'the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined'.⁵ His call for ships 'to be thought of as cultural ... units' is addressed in this paper.⁶ Thus it is argued here that mobility should be central to our understanding of the ship-as-place, since culture on board ship was as mobile as the vessels themselves, and was subject to fracture as the ships moved. This process can be understood through a theoretical intersection between Gilroy's notion of countercultures operating in the black Atlantic, and the concerns of creolisation theory, specifically O. Nigel Bolland's emphasis on creolisation as 'a process of *contention* between people who are members of social formations and carriers of cultures'.⁷ In this light, the steamship's mobility enabled a process of creolisation on and around the ship-space, as countercultures contested the officially inscribed cultural norms of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's vessels.

Daniel Headrick has cast steamships as one of the nineteenth century's 'tools of empire'.⁸ Similarly, Jeffrey Pardue describes the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (RMSPC) as 'the government's agent'.⁹ Styling P&O a 'flagship of imperialism', Freda Harcourt implies that steamships served but also represented empire. In this respect, historians have arguably adopted the presentation of the owners and directors of these services. To illustrate, a publication commemorating seventy years of the RMSPC's service was entitled *A Link of Empire or seventy years of British shipping*.¹⁰ Whilst steamships should be understood with reference to their imperial context, the historiographical focus has tended to imply that the intentions of company directors could be straightforwardly implemented, and that the meanings of the vessels they employed were static. Yet the sample texts, above, begin to indicate how the ships were transformed as social spaces as the vessels moved. Furthermore, the ships' mobility enabled the officially inscribed ship

culture to be contested by counter-cultures (such as those of ‘these people’ in Woolward’s account). By drawing on a range of sources, including memoirs such as Woolward’s, and recognising the nature of the ship’s mobility as central in shaping the social and cultural dynamics that operated on board, the RMSPC’s steamships can begin to be understood as sites of creolisation.

The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, brainchild of James McQueen, was founded in 1839. The business networks that spawned the Company overlapped with interests in the West India Committee and the Colonial Bank.¹¹ The steamship service was intended to provide a more regular means of communication than the former system of Government sailing packets. As steamship technology was in its infancy during the 1840s, the RMSPC, like other steamship lines such as P&O, successfully secured financial backing in the form of a government mail contract.¹² The Company initially planned for a comprehensive schedule of two transatlantic routes complemented by twelve different routes through the Americas.¹³ This ambitious scheme was subsequently scaled back to more practical proportions but still encompassed the French, Spanish, Danish Caribbean, and Haiti.¹⁴ In 1851 the Company extended its service into Brazil and the River Plate.

In 1838, McQueen justified his plans for the creation of the RMSPC to Francis Baring M.P. and wrote that: ‘[t]he West Indies everywhere want a little European energy and regularity infused into them, - and this is one efficient, perhaps the simplest and most efficient way to do it.’¹⁵ Thus the service was to provide regular transatlantic communication even as it was conceived of in terms of cultural imperialism. Yet the RMSPC’s service has not hitherto been considered with reference to cultural globalization. While steamships have been related to nineteenth-century globalization, it is economic definitions of the term, concerned with price convergence and the shrinking of distances, that have primarily contextualized the discussion.¹⁶ Yet McQueen’s words indicate that the steamship should not only be analysed in respect of its contribution to commerce but also in terms of ‘European energy’ designed to promote commercial activity. Such designs fail to account for a vital counter-energy on board: instead of

acculturating the West Indies to European norms, the ships became spaces in which more complex creolised patterns of cultural globalization emerged.

Although extensively examined as social units in naval and merchant naval histories, cultural practices on board nineteenth-century steamships remain relatively under-scrutinized.¹⁷ Steamship historiography is dominated by histories of individual companies, and is yet to be affected by the cultural turn that has recently influenced land-focused imperial history.¹⁸ For the nineteenth century, even recent monographs on steamship companies, whilst considering the social composition of different passenger services and the facilities available to travellers of different classes, rarely engage in explicit analysis of cultural practices on board.¹⁹ A notable exception to this trend is John Butler's *Atlantic Kingdom*, which describes leisure practices on nineteenth-century ships with reference to Charles Dickens's descriptions of travel on board the *Britannia* and the *George Washington*.²⁰ Work on twentieth-century steamships more systematically includes descriptions of food, décor and cultural practices on board.²¹ This paper builds on such work by engaging with theory to further the understanding of cultural processes operating on board nineteenth-century vessels.

The relative paucity of work relating to culture and the nineteenth-century steamship reflects the content of official steamship company archives. For this reason, this paper seeks to expand the official archive and consider the culture of the steamship with selected reference to steamship travel narratives.²² The traveller-authors of these accounts were predominantly privileged and prejudiced men of a particular class, thus the asymmetrical power relations at work on board the ship are also evident in the source material. One must therefore treat these accounts of interaction on the steamships with caution.²³ However in examining such writing, this paper draws upon Lata Mani's insistence that colonial texts should not be read simply to analyse the colonizer.²⁴ By reading steamship travel narratives against the grain and in conjunction with records from the official company archive, evidence of cultural contention on board the vessels begins to emerge.

The Company's directors attempted to fashion the ship into a place that would match McQueen's desired 'regularity'. Foucault's writing of a particular kind of space, the 'heterotopia [...] of compensation', the function of which is 'to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled', bears comparison.²⁵ The Company attempted to create just such a 'well arranged' space on board, and the Company's ships were highly regulated spaces from the moment of their conception and throughout their service. The Company sought the Admiralty's approval before vessels were constructed, and ships were subject to frequent inspection to ensure that they adhered to the Admiralty's standards.²⁶ The Company matched regulation of the ship as a physical structure with attempts to shape many other aspects of life on board. RMSPC officers were implicated in an inspection regime that supported the ship as heterotopia of compensation.²⁷ Since the Company desired the ships to be places of 'order, cleanliness, and efficiency', the superintendent at Southampton inspected the ships with these requirements in mind.²⁸ Yet the officially inscribed systems and practices on board ship were subject to mobile translations.

In contrast to Woolward's 'emancipados', the Company's desired passengers were first-class ticket-holders travelling on the transatlantic route, particularly those who Lambert and Lester style as 'imperial careerists'.²⁹ For example James Bruce, the eighth earl of Elgin and Governor of Jamaica, was amongst those who escaped from the *Medina* after the ship struck a reef in 1842.³⁰ Also by the 1860s, a special RMSPC service catered specifically to judges on circuit around the Windward Islands and their servants.³¹ James Anthony Froude and Charles Kingsley were two figures (notorious to Caribbeanists) whose mobility was facilitated by the RMSPC. The Company's directors were of similar social status, and accordingly the Company sought to cultivate a culture for the steamship that reflected the norms and expectations of the directors and their desired first-class passengers. The RMSPC's pricing structure was focused towards the means of first-class passengers, as was the culture fostered in the ship space.³² That which is here termed 'saloon culture' not only met with Company approval but was perhaps closest to an official Company culture on board.³³ The Company fostered saloon culture through the

use of uniforms, particular décor, the deployment of servant labour, the enforcement of spatial divisions on board and the establishment of saloon dining practices.

Uniforms were one means through which the Company instilled saloon culture. Captains wore a 'blue cloth frock or dress coat' and 'trousers of blue cloth or white duck'.³⁴ Officers' uniforms were variations on the captain's but had narrower bands of gold lace around their collars in accordance with their rank. RMSPC officers' uniforms were therefore reminiscent of the Navy, whose ornamental uniforms included such items as double-breasted blue cloth jackets.³⁵ The Company stipulated that the commanding officer of each ship was to supervise the junior officers, 'especially the Midshipmen' and was to 'encourage, as far as practicable, an observance of moral principle, and a gentlemanly, officer-like deportment'.³⁶ In attempting to mould 'gentlemen' to serve on their ships, the Company privileged upper-class values as appropriate for positions of power in a stringently regulated ship-space. Thus the Company fostered a culture amongst its officers shaped by naval influences and reflected in their ordering of employees' appearance.

As a privileged space on board ship, the saloon was a place of exclusion. Only senior Company officers such as the captain, the chief officer, the chief engineer and the surgeon could eat or spend time in the saloon.³⁷ As journeying by steamship was frequently experienced as monotonous, food and drink assumed a heightened importance on board.³⁸ Dining took on such significance, in fact, that a committee of three 'gentlemen' from amongst the passengers was allowed to inspect and comment on the menu on a daily or weekly basis. Passengers gathered to eat four times a day, sitting at the table according to their cabin numbers.³⁹ Dining practices were therefore central to saloon culture.⁴⁰ The materiality of the saloon was similarly indicative of officially-sanctioned Company norms. The saloon of the *Nile*, which entered the U.K.-West Indies service in 1869, was 'to be fitted with maple or other fancy woods inlaid, as required, French polished, with chaste relieving in carved and gold work'.⁴¹ The saloon, then, was an exclusive and appropriately decorated space on board in which dining customs reflected the officially fostered culture of the RMSPC steamship.

Servants were another key means through which the Company shaped the ship as a place comfortable for the upper classes. Waiters and saloon servants on the ship were required to dress ‘in a decent and *uniform* manner,’ be clean-shaven and wear clean clothes.⁴² During the four days prior to a ship’s departure, waiters, saloon servants, cooks and bakers cleaned plate and glass as well as the saloon galleys, its cooking implements, fires and floors.⁴³ Thompson describes the relationship between working- and middle-class Victorian women in consciously over-simplistic terms: ‘One very large group, the domestic servants, worked so that another group of women, chiefly middle-class wives, could be leisured’.⁴⁴ On the steamship, working-class men laboured as domestic servants so that another group of men, predominantly aristocratic and middle-class, could enjoy leisured travel in comparable comfort to their domestic arrangements at home.⁴⁵

Due to the RMSPC’s trans-imperial routes, the culture in the saloon became more European than British.⁴⁶ The saloon as dining space catered to French and Spanish as well as to English dining culture and was served by a French and English cook.⁴⁷ The Company directed that French soup should be available daily as well as a minimum of four French dishes for dinner. On the Brazil and River Plate Service, the Company was at pains to provide a Portuguese dining experience.⁴⁸ Therefore in catering to its saloon passengers, the Company took into account differing European cultural preferences. Despite its limited (European) diversity, the saloon was nevertheless characterised by a degree of cultural contest. Trollope criticised the Spaniards as ‘bad fellow-travellers’ on account of their customs at the table.⁴⁹ James Anthony Froude commented on the smoking habits of the Spanish colonists on board.⁵⁰ Yet ‘saloon culture’ was still sufficiently unified so as not to undermine, or contest the Company’s official culture. Sources of starker cultural contention stemmed from spaces other than the saloon.

Saloon culture, the heterotopic and officially established culture on board ship, was contested by counter-cultures that emerged as the ship moved through the Americas, particularly deck cultures and cultures of coaling. Deck culture can be understood as twofold: it derived from the exchange of goods and services around the ship in port towns

of the Americas but also stemmed from the presence of deck passengers. Although the Company desired first-class passenger traffic, the ships must also be considered in terms of other mobilites. Inter-colonial deck passengers paid one-fifth of the rate of cabin passengers, only journeyed inter-colonially and were defined by the Company as ‘troops, common sailors, labourers, and others not superior to those classes of society’.⁵¹ Captain Woolward estimated that he transported up to three hundred deck passengers a month from Carthagena to Colon when the Panama railway was under construction.⁵² A similar wave of migration followed when the Panama Canal was being developed, and adding to the two descriptions above, such mobilites underscore a dissonance that is evident between the publicly celebrated role of the ship and the vessels’ other functions.⁵³

Firstly to consider vendors, Kingsley describes the scene on board the *Shannon* on arrival at St Thomas, its first port of call in the Caribbean:

The engine had hardly stopped, when we were boarded from a fleet of negro boats, and huge bunches of plantains, yams, green oranges, junks of sugar-cane, were displayed upon the deck; and more than one of the ladies went through the ceremony of initiation into West Indian ways, which consisted in sucking sugar-cane, first pared for the sake of their teeth.⁵⁴

That Kingsley describes this as a cultural ‘initiation’ is indicative of the two-way cultural exchange that took place on the deck, though it must be noted that this exchange is played out in the context of unequal power relations. The ‘ladies’ being initiated are at leisure, while those initiating them are doing so in order to earn money. As Pratt suggests in her analysis of contact zones, the relations here are ‘asymmetrical’.⁵⁵ A similar asymmetry can be observed in Dillon’s observation of Vincentians diving for money around the ship.⁵⁶ Those selling goods and services on and around the steamship’s deck transformed the ship *through their labour* into a site of cultural contention, or creolisation.

‘Deck culture’, stemming from the presence of deck passengers, also affected the cultural dynamics of the ship. Deck passengers were not allowed to eat in the saloon and were effectively excluded from the primary space of ‘saloon culture’; instead they brought

their own food and bedding on board. Froude, in characteristically racialised discourse, noted the presence of deck passengers on an inter-colonial steamer:

Forward there were perhaps two or three hundred coloured people going from one island to another, singing, dancing, and chattering all night long, as radiant and happy as carelessness and content could make them.⁵⁷

Although Froude's description is deeply problematic in its use of animalistic terms and in its condescending suggestion of care-free 'coloured people', it might nevertheless be interpreted from his writing that deck passengers re-inscribed that space of the ship with their own cultural practices, quite separate from those of the saloon. By 'performatively' 'constituting' their identities on the deck, inter-colonial passengers contested and creolised the culture of the steamship.⁵⁸

The potential speed and reliability of steamship technology was dependent on the consumption of coal as fuel and associated coaling labour practices. In the Americas, coal bearers were employed to load coal on board the Company's ships. Whereas in Grenada the Company hired coaling labour in the context of a wage economy, the employment of coal bearers at St Thomas was contracted out to a Mr Stubbs, who, during the first six years of the Company's service, hired enslaved labour from their owners to carry coal on board the ships.⁵⁹ After protracted negotiations with the Admiralty, the Company secured access to convict labour at Bermuda for coaling purposes.⁶⁰ The Company's employment of coaling labour therefore cut across differing local economic realities.

The presence of coal bearers around the ship-space provided an additional strand of cultural contest. As the ship on which he was travelling was coaled at St Thomas, Charles Kingsley described the coaling 'men and women singing over their work'. He expanded:

A lad, seeming the poet of the gang, stood on the sponson, and in the momentary intervals of work improvised some story, while the men below took up and finished each verse with a refrain, piercing, sad, running up and down large and easy intervals.⁶¹

Kingsley contrasted the labourers' songs and stories with the quadrilles and waltzes being played above the coaling, on the deck of the ship. He transcribed one line from the coalers' song as being about the ship's captain drinking whiskey in his cabin.⁶² Thus while Kingsley, a first-class transatlantic passenger, commented in his narrative upon the labourers' cultural practices, the coaling labourers also integrated observations of the cultural practices on board ship into their songs. An important source of the cultural contention, or creolisation, that took place around the space of the ship derived from the presence of coaling labourers around the ship. Culture, therefore, was mobilized at the coaling wharf, as the wharf acted as a site of cultural exchange and cultural contest.

In calling for a revision of our understanding of steamships as 'tools of empire', this paper seeks to underscore the mobility of the steamship as eluding the control required of an effective 'tool'. Thus sanctioned Company culture, shaped on the shores of Southampton, became fractured by counter-cultures as the ship moved across the Atlantic so that in Caribbean waters, the ship became a different kind of place, characterised by creolisation as cultural contest. Not only did these ships change across time and across space, to use Massey's terms, even within one particular moment, as spaces, they enclosed 'contemporaneous heterogeneities'.⁶³ Like many other projects of empire, the theoretical *ideal* of steamship services failed to correspond exactly with their implementation.

Notes

¹ The *Tweed* was a ship of one thousand eight hundred gross tons constructed in Glasgow in 1841. See D. Haws, *Merchant Fleets 5: Royal Mail & Nelson Lines* (Sussex: TCL, 1982).

² Shipping News, *The Times* 21 November 1846.

³ R. Woolward, *Nigh on Sixty Years at Sea* (London: Digby, Long & Co., 1894) 65-66.

⁴ D. Lambert and A. Lester, eds., *Colonial lives across the British empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 10.

⁵ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993) 16-17.

⁶ Gilroy, 16-17.

⁷ O.N. Bolland, 'Creolisation and Creole Societies: a cultural nationalist view of Caribbean social history,' in V.A. Shepherd and G.L. Richards, eds., *Questioning Creole: creolisation discourses in Caribbean culture* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002) 15-46 (38).

⁸ D.R. Headrick, *The tools of empire: technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 12.

⁹ J.D. Pardue, 'Agent of Imperial change: James Macqueen and the British empire 1778-1870,' thesis, University of Waterloo, Canada, 1996, 192-193.

¹⁰ *A Link of Empire, or 70 years of British Shipping* (London: Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1909).

¹¹ John Irving MP, one of the original Company directors, was chairman of the Colonial Bank and served on the board alongside Thomas Baring of the merchant banking family. George Hibbert, whose family had been involved with West India merchants for several generations, also served on the Company's board.

¹² The RMSPC's original mail contract was worth £240,000 a year.

¹³ National Maritime Museum (NMM) RMS 36/1 First book of routes.

¹⁴ NMM RMS 36/3 Modified plan, 1843.

¹⁵ J. McQueen, *A general plan for a mail communication by steam between Great Britain and the eastern and western parts of the world* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838) 56. My emphasis.

¹⁶ For example, see Y. Kaukiainen, 'Shrinking the world: improvements in the speed of information transmission, c. 1820-1870', *European Review of Economic History* 5 (2001): 1-28.

¹⁷ Although they do not focus on the nineteenth century or on steamships, Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh have perhaps particularly influenced discussions of social dynamics on ships. See P. Linebaugh, and M. Rediker, *The Many-headed hydra: sailors, slaves, commoners, and the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000) and M. Rediker *The Slave ship: a human history* (London: John Murray, 2007).

¹⁸ Historiography on the RMSPC has thus far had little to say about culture on board the nineteenth-century ship. See for example R. Baker and A. Leonard, *Great Steamers White and Gold: a history of Royal Mail ships and services* (Southampton: Ensign, 1993); S. Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy: a history of the Royal Mail line* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2001); M. Rego, *The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company* (Newbury: Cockrill, 1987). T. A. Bushell's "*Royal Mail*" *A Centenary history of the Royal Mail Line 1839-1939* (London: Trade and Travel, 1939) does include some anecdotes relating to cultural dynamics on board the ship, but does not systematically interrogate the question of culture on board the ships.

¹⁹ See, for example, M. Falkus, *The Blue Funnel Legend: a history of the Ocean Steam Ship Company, 1865-1973* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); F. Harcourt, *Flagships of imperialism: the P&O company and the politics of empire from its origins to 1867* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); S. Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy: a history of the Royal Mail line* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2001).

²⁰ J.A. Butler, *Atlantic Kingdom: America's contest with Cunard in the age of sail and steam* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2001) 54-59. Howard Johnson's earlier work similarly considers facilities on board the *Britannia*. See H. Johnson *The Cunard Story* (London: Whittet, 1987).

²¹ See, for example, E.L. Dunbaugh, *The New England steamship Company: Long island sound night boats in the twentieth century*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005). This may be because for the twentieth century more archival evidence relating to cultural themes (including photographs) is available.

²² By steamship travel narratives, I mean published and unpublished travel narratives and memoirs that describe steamship journeys.

²³ For example the Reverend Charles Kingsley joined a Committee to support Governor Eyre after the brutal suppression of the Morant Bay rebellion, and James Froude's deployment of racialized discourse is notorious.

²⁴ L. Mani, 'Cultural theory, colonial texts: reading eyewitness accounts of widow burning,' in L. Grossberg, C. Nelson and P. Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992) 392-405 (395).

²⁵ M. Foucault, 'Of other spaces', trans. J. Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16:1 (Spring 1986) 22-27 (27).

²⁶ NMM RMS 6 and NMM RMS 7 Letter books.

²⁷ NMM RMS 38/1, Regulations, 19.

²⁸ NMM RMS 38/1, Regulations, 172 and University College London Special Collections (UCL) RMSP B/1/1 Managers' minutes.

²⁹ During the 1840s, a passenger from Southampton to Antigua, St Thomas, Havana, Martinique or Grenada could expect to pay forty-seven pounds for a single after-cabin or thirty-seven pounds to either share such a cabin or occupy a single berth in the forward part of the ship. UCL RMSP B/2/1 Memoranda. Lambert and Lester, 2.

³⁰ *The Times*, 11 June 1842.

³¹ UCL RMSP/B/2/2, Memoranda.

³² Travelling to South American on the RMSPC was more expensive, for example, than travelling on the Liverpool steamers. See *The River Plate (South America) as a field for emigration* (London: Bates, Hendy & Co, [1865]).

³³ The saloon was a space on board in which dining and communal relaxation took place.

³⁴ NMM RMS 38/1 Regulations 1850, 70-76.

³⁵ L. Yexley, *The inner life of the Navy* (London: Pitman & Sons, 1908) 153.

³⁶ NMM RMS 38/1 Regulations, 81.

³⁷ NMM RMS 38/1 Regulations, 26.

³⁸ See, for example, L. Dillon, *A twelve months' tour in Brazil and the River Plate* (Manchester: Alexander Ireland and Co, 1867). Much of the time was spent conversing with other passengers, viewing the passing landscapes, drinking and eating.

³⁹ Breakfast was served from eight until nine, lunch from noon until one, dinner from four to five and tea and coffee from seven to eight o' clock. See NMM RMS 38/1 Regulations.

⁴⁰ In the context of colonial Indonesia, S. Protschky has indicated the importance of food on steamships in introducing new arrivals from Europe to the *rijstaffel*. See S. Protschky, 'The colonial table: food, culture and Dutch identity in colonial Indonesia', *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 54:3 (2008): 346-357.

⁴¹ NMM RMS 34/1 Nile specifications, 1868.

⁴² NMM RMS 38/1 Regulations, 119.

⁴³ NMM RMS 38/1 Regulations, 119-120.

⁴⁴ F.M.L.Thompson, *The rise of respectable society: a social history of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana, 1988), 247.

⁴⁵ The (female) stewardess also worked on board to ensure that families travelled in comfort.

⁴⁶ NMM RMS 36/3 Modified plan, 1843.

⁴⁷ The French cook was paid a minimum of £5 a month whereas the English cook was guaranteed at least £7 per month. RMS 38/1 Regulations, 120-121.

⁴⁸ NMM RMS 38/1 Regulations, 118.

⁴⁹ A. Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1859) 9.

⁵⁰ J.A. Froude, *The English in the West Indies* (London: Longmans, 1888) 18-19.

⁵¹ NMM RMS 38/1 Regulations, 134.

⁵² Woolward, 217. Railroad construction began during the 1850s. M. Parker, *Panama Fever: the battle to build the canal* (London: Hutchinson, 2007) 29.

⁵³ The canal had two phases of construction. The first was from 1880 to 1889 and the second from 1904 to the canal's opening in 1914. See F.P. Davidson and K.L. Brooke, *Building the world: an encyclopedia of the great engineering projects in history*, vol. 1 (Westport: Greenwood, 2006) 315.

⁵⁴ C. Kingsley, *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1874) 16.

⁵⁵ M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992) 4.

⁵⁶ Dillon, 11.

⁵⁷ Froude, 48-49.

⁵⁸ For the performative constitution of identity, see J. Butler, *Gender Trouble* (Routledge, 1990) 25.

⁵⁹ NMM RMS 32/2 Cash Book, 12 December 1843 and Woolward, 61-62.

⁶⁰ Convict labourers were deployed in Bermuda to speed up the construction of the naval base between 1824 and 1863. These were convicts of the criminal justice system in England, as well as military and naval offenders. R. Willock, *Bulwark of empire: Bermuda's fortified naval base, 1860-1920* 2nd ed. (Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Press, 1988) 44.

⁶¹ Kingsley, 20.

⁶² Kingsley, 20.

⁶³ D. Massey, *For space* (London: Sage, 2005) 5.