Making Global Commerce into International Health Diplomacy: Consuls and Disease Control in the Age of Revolutions

Katherine Arner

Journal of World History, Volume 24, Number 4, December 2013, pp. 771-796 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2013.0107

Making Global Commerce into International Health Diplomacy: Consuls and Disease Control in the Age of Revolutions*

KATHERINE ARNER
Johns Hopkins University

On 14 October 1799, Dr. Samuel L. Mitchill of New York City received a parcel containing a new treatise on yellow fever. As editor of a thriving medical journal, the *Medical Repository*, Mitchill welcomed a growing influx of materials on the disease, which was then raging and puzzling both medical writers and policy makers throughout the eastern seaboard of the United States. The package in question was not from one of Mitchill's many corresponding physicians. It had arrived via Timothy Pickering, the Secretary of State. When he opened it, Mitchill discovered not an essay by an American medical writer but rather a fifty nine-page treatise, in both French and English, by Etienne Cathalan Jr., a Frenchman who was the U.S. vice consul in Marseilles, France: *Recueil de pièces relatives a la fièvre jaune d'Amérique, envoyées par le consul des États-Unis d'Amérique, à Marseille, au gouvernement*

* I am grateful to Mary Fissell, Toby Ditz, Thomas McDow, Tamara Mann, John Brooke, Chris Otter, Nick Breyfogle, and two anonymous readers for their valuable comments on various versions of this article. Earlier iterations of this work were presented at the Ohio State University Center for Historical Research (April 2012) and the workshop "Epistemic Exchanges in the Early Modern World: European and Non-Europeans in Dialogue: Research Perspectives" at the European University Institute, Fiesole (June 2012). I would also like to thank the New York Academy of Medicine, which awarded me a Paul Klemperer Fellowship to research their rich collections.

Journal of World History, Vol. 24, No. 4

des États-Unis, 1799. Intrigued, Mitchill read the piece. He promptly passed it along to several of his colleagues and then penned reviews for Pickering, several newspapers, and the new volume of the *Medical Repository*. Within just a few weeks, American policy makers, physicians, printers, and periodical audiences had taken a Mediterranean consul's work and integrated it into their discussions about the problem of yellow fever in the United States.[1]

Etienne Cathalan Jr. was no anomaly in the world of health and medicine. Over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, consuls and commercial agents became increasingly active in health policy matters as well as the medical networks spanning the Mediterranean world, Atlantic world, and beyond. On the ground in ports of call, within the channels of government intelligence, and in the pages of periodicals, U.S. and European consuls and commercial agents mediated between policy makers, merchants, captains, and physicians about matters relating to health and disease.

Nonetheless, consuls like Cathalan remain underexamined in global histories of disease control. Nor have historians of disease control parsed the connections among Europe, the Americas, and yellow fever in the early modern period. Historians acknowledge the epidemiological impact of early modern commercial expansion within the Mediterranean and into the Americas. However, they are used to locating the growth of "global" governance in the mid nineteenth century, when cholera invaded multiple parts of Europe from the east. According to this narrative, the combined forces of capitalist expansion into Asia, the transportation revolution, and internationalism drove European powers to cast aside centuries-old measures that rested on the defense of national borders against plague and begin using diplomacy to coordinate international disease control policies and health relations. Atlantic polities, moreover, had little bearing on this development until the rise of the United States as a formidable industrial power toward the turn of the twentieth century.[2]

---

[1] Mitchill recounted Pickering's delivery in the prefacing comments of his review in the *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), 7 November 1799. It also appears in an inscription Mitchill made on the book's cover. That copy is on hold in the historical collections of the New York Academy of Medicine. His colleague, Dr. Felix Pascalis, delivered a follow-up review in the *New-York Gazette* (New York), 19 November 1799. See also "Medical Advice from Marseilles," *Medical Repository of Original Essays and Intelligence Relative to Physic, Surgery, Chemistry, and Natural History* 3, pp. 203–205.

[2] Valeska Huber, "The Unification of the Globe by Disease? The International Sanitary Conferences on Cholera, 1851–1894," *Historical Journal* 49, no. 2 (2006); David P. Fidler, "The Globalization of Public Health: The First 100 Years of International Health Diplo-

This article uses the world of Etienne Cathalan to revise our understanding of where and how the eighteenth century fits in the history of disease control. It does so by revising the analytical framework scholars have used to examine the period. Consuls and the Atlantic world are both missing from scholarship on global currents in disease control because of how historians have approached the concept of globalization itself. Many of their analyses assume a progression from a past in which economic and social relations were contained within nation-states or empires toward a more integrated "global present." Implicitly, they force early periods and contexts into a theoretical frame designed around the emergence of technologies, models of statecraft, and institutions particular to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The major problem with this approach is that scholars risk reducing history to teleology. We risk limiting rather than enriching our understanding of how humans responded to epidemiological transitions in their own times and contexts.[3]

This article posits a different analytical model. It takes as its point of reference recent scholarship that has demonstrated the value of employing the concept of networks to study forms and patterns of connectivity. The network concept stresses webs of connections people developed as they crossed space in different times and contexts. Historical investigation focuses on identifying those networks and explor-

---

macy," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 79, no. 9 (2001): 842–849; Alison Bashford, "Global Biopolitics and the History of World Health," *History of the Human Sciences* 19, no. 1 (2006): 67–88; Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1825–1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). The United States remains absent from scholarship on this earlier period, largely because historians of medicine and public health continue to view American statecraft and medicine as more insular (and weak compared to European states) prior to the advent of late nineteenth-century American economic and imperial expansion into the Caribbean, South America, and the Pacific. For an overview of the historiography, which reflects this viewpoint, see Nancy Tomes, "Introduction: Imperial Medicine and Public Health," in *Colonial Crucible: Empire and the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred McCoy and Francisco Antonio Scarano (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), pp. 273–277. An important exception to this larger trend is Mark Harrison, "Disease, Diplomacy and International Commerce: The Origins of International Sanitary Regulation in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006): 197–217. In his study of the origins of multilateral collaboration in quarantine legislation among European powers in the 1850s, Harrison pointedly drew historians' attention to the paucity of scholarship on earlier attempts to mediate shifting health relations. He called upon scholars to bring earlier commercial and geopolitical expansion into the picture. This essay, in many ways, answers Harrison's call.

[3] For a critique of this approach to globalization in general scholarship, see Frederick Cooper, "Globalization," in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge and History*, by Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 91–112.

ing how actors built them and mobilized them to create knowledge, circulate information, and exercise power. "Nations" and "empires," accordingly, are not conceived as phases or internally coherent units in the march toward greater integration. Rather, they are treated as sets of networks of trust, information, and economic relations built out of specific lines of connection in a given time and context. Neither local nor global, these "spatial affinities" could narrow, expand, narrow again, and undergo reorientation in geography.[4]

Important for the purposes of this analysis are the ways in which historians have used this paradigm to understand the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Many historians have cast aside predefined categories of "nation" and "empire" in favor of charting the specific texture and geography of networks that connected empires and nations in this period. In so doing, they have recovered the vital and variegated ways in which the maritime networks constituting the Atlantic world shaped American and European environmental, political, economic, and cultural history in this period.[5]

Many of these scholars have, moreover, revised our understanding of how eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century commercial and shipping networks interacted with other spheres of activity. Among those spheres were governance and natural knowledge production. More than mere resources for travel, commodities, and economic growth, the actors, practices, and information channels constituting commercial and shipping networks also functioned as resources for intelligence gathering and negotiations among polities.[6] In a similar vein, historians of early modern science and medicine have shown us how natu-

[4] Ibid., pp. 107–110.

[5] Natasha Glaisyer provides a rich and positive appraisal of this scholarly approach among historians of early modern British Empire and trade. See Glaisyer, "Networking: Trade and Exchange in the Eighteenth-Century British Empire," *Historical Journal* 47, no. 2 (2004): 451–476. For the Atlantic context, see Nathan Perl-Rosenthal and Evan Haefeli, "Transnational Connections: Special Issue Introduction," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 2 (2012): 227–238; Jack P. Greene and Philip Morgan, "Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Greene and Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 3–34. Historians of the early United States are also taking this approach to heart. Brian Rouleau, for example, has revised our picture of the early United States as a largely insular entity by locating Americans' cultural and economic engagement with the Atlantic and Pacific worlds in the activities of seamen, captains, commercial agents, and consuls who made the vast networks of American shipping during the period. See Rouleau, "With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Commercial Expansion, Maritime Empire, and the American Seafaring Community Abroad, 1780–1870" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

[6] Glaisyer, "Networking," pp. 467–468.

ral knowledge production and circulation were intimately connected to the networks through which trust, commercial information, and trade were mediated and exchanged. It was not merely lettered physicians who claimed authority to judge and make sense of the objects, medicinals, and observations that came from abroad. Those scholars and practitioners, together with governing figures, vested authority in lay travelers, missionaries, commercial agents, and even ship captains who navigated distant cultures and regions. All of these actors, in turn, brought their own sociocultural capital and epistemological tools to bear in the production of natural knowledge.[7]

This analysis draws upon the insights of these historians to enrich our understanding of the relationship between commerce and health in the eighteenth century. Contemporaries, I argue, conceived of commerce as far more than a force that moved bodies and pathogens in new ways within the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic. As networks of knowledge and channels through which power was exercised and negotiated, commerce also became a rich resource European and American polities used in creative ways to mediate those shifting health relations. Negotiating disease control policies and health relations became deeply embedded in the expansive networks and activities of actors who operated in and between ports of call: governors, merchants, lay travelers, ship captains, medical practitioners, consuls, and commercial agents. The world of an eighteenth-century consul, Etienne Cathalan, shows us how.

[7] For general overviews of this trend, see James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, "Introduction: The Far Side of the Ocean," in idem, eds., *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–28; Marcelo Aranda et al., "The History of Atlantic Science: Collective Reflections from the 2009 Harvard Seminar on Atlantic History," *Atlantic Studies* 7, no. 4 (2010). For scholarship on knowledge brokerage in particular, see Simon Schaffer, Lissa Roberts, Kapil Raj, and James Delbourgo, "Introduction," in idem, eds., *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770–1820* (Sagamore Beach, Mass.: Science History Publications, 2009). For travel and trust in this period, see Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), in particular chapter 6, pp. 243–309. For studies focusing on the relationship between commercial networks and natural knowledge, see Harold Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008); Pamela Smith and Paula Findlen, eds., *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Sverker Sörlin also sheds light on the ways in which scientists availed themselves of shipping and shipping crews to collect specimens and make observations. See Sörlin,"Ordering the World for Europe: Science as Intelligence and Information as Seen from the Northern Periphery," *Osiris* 15 (2000): 51–69.

Etienne Cathalan's World

When Cathalan sat down to write his treatise, he had never witnessed the "American yellow fever." The son of and partner in a prosperous French mercantile family, Cathalan also had no medical credentials. It was not until Cathalan began his work as a vice consul for the United States in Marseilles that he would come to perceive yellow fever as an object of concern. His forays into international health must therefore be understood in the context of his involvement in the shifting landscape of international relations during the age of Atlantic revolutions.

While long-established as components of statecraft, consuls and commercial agents like Cathalan grew dramatically in number, political representation, and global presence in the eighteenth century. This was a product of changing economic and state-building conditions. As European powers continued to push their commercial interests and political rivalries well beyond continental Europe, they increasingly invested in the establishment of consuls and commercial agents on the ground in ports of call. These agents were tasked with preserving and expanding sprawling commercial empires by mediating between local cultures and the captains, merchants, and travelers who sought business or resources when in distress. They were also hubs of information. They gathered, translated, and circulated news of politics, war, port regulations, and prices. In order to build these far-flung networks, state officials sought out men who possessed sociocultural ties and knowledge linking them between their country and the region in question. They transformed that mobility and those channels into resources for international negotiations and information. In other words, consuls' power rested just as much on their sociocultural capital as it did on mandates from the states consuls represented.[8]

[8] Most studies of this period focus on particular national and imperial contexts. Examined collectively, they highlight the important role of commercial and political expansion in facilitating European powers' investment in the establishment of consular posts (and not merely diplomats, who were, in fact, fewer in number). Studies have also alluded to the role of international political and commercial pressures in inspiring the establishment of consuls, in particular in the Mediterranean, where the culture of consular services thrived in the early eighteenth century (and even before). Leos Müller addressed this larger context in his study of the role of consuls in the establishment of Swedish commercial expansion into the Mediterranean. See Müller, "The Swedish Consular Service in Southern Europe, 1720–1815," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31, no. 2 (2006): 186–195. Silvia Marzagalli, James R. Sofka, and John J. McCusker also address the general growth of consuls in the eighteenth century, in particular their role in the circulation of commercial and political news. See Silvia Marzagalli, James R. Sofka and John J. McCusker, "Rough Waters: American

New geopolitical circumstances at the end of the eighteenth century altered the scope and geography of both commercial and political interchanges as well as the consular networks used to mediate them. A new player—the United States—entered the arena. The young republic relied heavily on developing many international markets for its agricultural produce and carrying trade. Between 1793 and the second decade of the nineteenth century, when warfare among Great Britain, France, and Spain opened up opportunities for the "neutral" nation to carry goods across international boundaries, merchants and officials alike fought to maintain this position in the midst of political turmoil.[9] In lieu of guaranteed protection and representation by agents of their former mother country, Americans took up the tools of international statecraft. They began tapping into mercantile and social networks linking regions of interest to the United States to establish their own consuls and vice consuls in various Caribbean, European, and Mediterranean ports.[10] By the late eighteenth century, European and American powers alike had converted an array of merchants, businessmen, travelers, and former naval officers—citizens and foreign-born men—into networks of consuls stretching from continental Europe into the Mediterranean across the Atlantic into the Americas and even beyond to Eastern Europe and the East Indies.

Involvement in the Mediterranean in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Introduction," in Silvia Marzagalli, James R. Sofka and John J. McCusker, eds., *Rough Waters: American Involvement with the Mediterranean in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (St. Johns: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2010), pp. 1–6. For other contexts, including France, see Christian Windler, "Representing a State in a Segmentary Society: French Consuls in Tunis from the Ancien Regime to the Restoration," *Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 2 (2001): 233–274. As a testimony to consuls' increased presence in on-the-ground diplomacy, a number of historians of the Atlantic revolutions have used and promoted consuls' records as a lens through which to study transatlantic relations during the period. See, for example, Robert J. Alderson, *This Bright Era of Happy Revolutions: French Consul Michel-Ange-Bernard Mangourit and International Republicanism in Charleston, 1792–1794* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

[9] For a general discussion of the effects of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars on American shipping, see Anna Cornelia Clauber, "American Commerce as Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793–1812" (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1932).

[10] Charles Kennedy, *The American Consul: The History of the United States Consular Service, 1776–1914* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1990), 19–41. In his study of American seamen, Brian Rouleau found in sailors' correspondence, diaries, and court records multiple instances of consuls serving as translators, mediating fights, and hunting down facilities for seamen in Atlantic, Pacific, and European ports. See Rouleau, "With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Commercial Expansion, Maritime Empire, and the American Seafaring Community Abroad, 1780–1870." See also Anthony Antonucci, "Consuls and Consiglieri: United States Relations with the Italian States, 1790–1815," in Marzagalli, Sofka, and McCusker, eds., *Rough Waters*, 77–100.

Etienne Cathalan Jr. was born in 1757 to a successful French merchant family that thrived on the export trade in Marseilles. As Cathalan came of age, European powers expanded their commercial contacts beyond the Mediterranean and Levant and into the Americas. Revolutions in the late eighteenth century pushed expansion even further. When Etienne Cathalan Sr. began integrating his son into the business in the 1770s, many French merchants in the region were becoming involved in the American Revolution by taking up the risky venture of exporting grains and even ammunition to the rebelling colonies. Cathalan Sr. was among those who seized the moment, identifying not only pecuniary advantages but also the possibility for future prosperous ties to a new nation. Cathalan Jr. absorbed his father's outlook and a legacy of transatlantic commercial, political, and social ties, which he subsequently integrated into his connections to ports and merchants in France, Spain, Italy, and the Levant region.[11]

New geopolitical circumstances in the 1780s and 1790s altered the information channels and networks that Cathalan Jr. had used to connect Marseilles with the broader world. The newly independent Americans had come to regard not only Caribbean ports but also southern French and Italian entrepôts as viable alternative markets for their carrying and export trade. Cities like Marseilles subsequently experienced an unprecedented influx of American vessels that transported goods and seamen between the United States, West Indies, Spain, and various destinations within the Mediterranean and into the Levant. The region was also witnessing new forms of naval activity. The Napoleonic Wars introduced new movements of American, British, and French troops and agents throughout the Mediterranean—between the Atlantic, various southern European ports, and northern Africa. Barbary privateers, who frequently attacked American shipping and kidnapped seamen, also roamed the region and magnified the Mediterranean's significance for the U.S. government.[12]

Americans' expanded naval and commercial activity opened up

---

[11] André de Gasquet, *Étienne Cathalan: Vice-consul des Etats-Unis à Marseille de 1789 à 1819. No. 78, Cashiers du Comité du Vieux Marseille* (Marseille: Comité du vieux Marseille, 1998), pp. 68–73. For a brief overview of Marseille's commercial situation over the course of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, see Charles Carière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIIIe siècle: Contribution à l'étude des economies maritimes*, I, pp. 564–565; and William Hamilton Sewell Jr., *Structure and Mobility: The Men and Women of Marseille, 1820–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 15–21.

[12] See Marzagalli, Sofka, and McCusker, "Rough Waters: American Involvement in the Mediterranean in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Introduction," in Marzagalli, Sofka and McCusker, eds., *Rough Waters,* pp. 1–6; John J. McCusker, "Worth a War?

more exchanges in goods, news, and people between the Mediterranean and North American ports than before independence. In the wake of the American Revolution, Cathalan Jr. became part of a growing class of merchants in Marseilles and other ports in southern France who could boast business and familial ties to Philadelphia, Charleston, and other large U.S. seaports.[13] Growing numbers of regionally based American businessmen only expanded those connections. Through his early business transactions with Americans and exposure to American commercial and government agents, Cathalan Jr. acquired proficiency in English, and he put both French and English skills to work in the transatlantic personal and business correspondences he cultivated during and in the wake of the American Revolution.[14]

Because of the growing importance of the Mediterranean for American shipping, U.S. officials began recruiting diverse merchants and educated travelers—U.S. citizens and foreign-born men—to take up consular posts in ports along southern Spain, northern Africa, southern France, and Italy. Cathalan's status as a trusted intermediary and participant in trade relations won him an appointment as the U.S. vice consul in Marseilles in 1789.[15]

He then began putting his skills, resources, and networks to new use. To help American merchants navigate southern European markets, Cathalan translated policies; he used his and his father's connections to local French merchants, the consul in Bordeaux, as well as contacts in Spain to create surveys of markets and negotiate favorable

The Importance of the Trade between British America and the Mediterranean," in ibid., pp. 7–24; Silvia Marzagalli, "American Shipping into the Mediterranean during the French Wars: A First Approach," in ibid., pp. 43–62.

[13] For more on the dense webs of familial, social, and business ties that linked southern French ports to various Caribbean and north American ports throughout the eighteenth century, see R. Darrell Meadows, "The Planters of St. Domingue, 1750–1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic" (PhD dissertation: Carnegie Mellon University, 2004).

[14] Cathalan's correspondences came to include, among others, Thomas Jefferson, who became acquainted with Cathalan during his time in Paris. See Gasquet, pp. 75–79. For Cathalan's involvement in the American Mediterranean trade to the Mid-Atlantic and Carolinas, see Joyce Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730–1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 150–152.

[15] Thomas Jefferson commented on the reasons for Cathalan's appointment in a letter to John Jay, dated Paris, 14 November 1788: "He speaks our language perfectly, is familiar with our customs [. . .] is sensible, active, and solid in his circumstances." See United States, Department of State, *The diplomatic correspondence of the United States of America: from the signing of the definitive treaty of peace, 10th September, 1783, to the adoption of the Constitution, March 4, 1789*, Volume 2 (Blair and Rives, 1837), p. 196.

treatment of American shipping.[16] Cathalan's knowledge and networks also became critical for the difficult task of creating regional intelligence channels and support networks for Americans trying to escape the threat of Barbary privateers. Not unlike fellow consuls, Cathalan began turning trusted captains and regional commercial contacts into informants for naval intelligence and resources for relaying his dispatches to merchants and state officials back in the United States. Cathalan, in turn, became an intermediary between the United States and the consuls in Algiers, who frequently required help in freeing kidnapped Americans or needed to find alternative routes for naval intelligence.[17] Private American business contacts and state officials back in the United States used the country's vibrant periodical networks to disseminate the consul's reports along the eastern seaboard and back across the Atlantic to the European officials and printers who surveyed periodicals for news in America.[18] In sum, a varied and multinational cast of state officials, port authorities, merchants, seamen, consuls, and even printers were converting the sociocultural capital of a local southern French merchant into resources for negotiations among European, Mediterranean, and Atlantic polities.

Health and Preservation in the World of Commerce and Warfare

Very shortly after his appointment, Cathalan began confronting another set of challenges in his work: health and disease. New patterns

[16] In 1792, for example, Cathalan Jr. surveyed both business contacts and consuls in Bordeaux, Cadiz, and other Spanish ports to inquire after the markets for corn and flour. He likewise produced a letter from the mayor and several merchants of Marseilles, who wanted American merchants to concentrate on sending wheat rather than tobacco. See, for example, Cathalan to Timothy Pickering, 24 August 1792, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseille," RG 59.

[17] Gasquet, pp. 99–112.

[18] For more on the intersection between commercial expansion, print, and transoceanic information circulation during this period, see John McCusker, "The Demise of Distance: The Business Press and the Origins of the Information Revolution in the Early Modern Atlantic World," *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (2005): 295–321. Cathalan's reports on markets and shipping conditions in the Mediterranean entered American periodical networks via both the Secretary of State and his business contacts. See, for example, *The Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia) 17 November 1792 and *The Diary of Loudon*, 19 November 1792. Lawrence A. Peskin discusses the role of consuls and commercial agents as resources for the accounts of American captives that circulated in periodicals and treatises. See Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785–1816* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), in particular pp. 7–23.

in shipping were placing travelers and ports in contact with foreign diseases, bodies, and medical cultures. Matters concerning health subsequently became tangled up in the politics of preserving shipping and international relations in ports of call—Cathalan's domain.

Like many other southern European ports, Marseilles's health regulations and disease experiences rested heavily on a long and intimate history with the plague. Commercial expansion into the Mediterranean and Levant had exposed the city to waves of destructive plague epidemics over the course of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries. These webs of economic, cultural, and political interchange likewise drew Marseilles into the process of cultivating disease intelligence channels and health policies in relation to other Mediterranean ports and, ultimately, the Levant. By the late seventeenth century, for example, the city's officials had followed in the footsteps of several Italian and Spanish ports by establishing a permanent health office and creating a quarantine establishment. The city boasted a lazaretto: a fortress-like, multichambered institution many European ports in the Mediterranean erected to receive and inspect ships, house sickly vessels, isolate the sick, and fumigate imported goods cotemporaries suspected of engendering plague outbreaks. The city's officials and mercantile and shipping communities cultivated elaborate information channels to circulate intelligence about plague and texture of health responses in the region. By virtue of their presence and function as resources for commercial and naval intelligence, the correspondence and shipping networks of consuls and commercial agents in the region became intimately involved in this process.[19]

By Cathalan's appointment in 1789, plague had not appeared in the city for sixty-eight years. Nonetheless, plague was still entrenched in the city's culture, medicine, and health regulatory culture. Plague tracts from earlier in the century were still reprinted, cited, and talked about in Marseilles as well as other parts of Europe. So long as trade continued its vital economic and political function, communities in and around Marseilles remained apprehensive and vigilant. Lazarettos persisted as prominent fixtures in the landscapes, port activities, and politics of European ports in the Mediterranean. Regional port communities had, in fact, absorbed them into local political and economic

[19] Daniel Panzac, *Quarantaines et Lazarets: L'Europe at la peste d'Orient (XVII e-XXe siècles)* (Aix-en-Province: Édisud, 1986), pp. 31–56; for a discussion of port communities' perceptions of quarantining ships as a "lucrative business," see Harrison, *Contagion: How Commerce Has Spread Disease* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 14–15.

life, making them into sources of civic pride, resources for city revenue, and additional protection during naval conflicts. In the wake of Marseilles's 1720–1721 outbreak, the city's lazaretto and health office had acquired among local citizens the status of a vital and powerful bastion against plague in Europe. The lazaretto underwent renovations in 1730 and 1787, and it continued to bustle with activity.[20]

Disease ecologies, health literature, and health policies of ports in the Americas, by stark contrast, remained relatively distant from the world of plague. Warfare, the plantation economy, and trade patterns in the early to mid eighteenth century had yielded a very different disease environment for inhabitants of Atlantic ports in mainland America. Along with African labor forces for the booming sugar and coffee plantations, the transatlantic slave trade introduced a new African virus into the Caribbean: yellow fever. The mosquito-borne vector found an attractive home in the West Indies. Here, Europeans cleared forests and created marshy landscapes to expand their plantations. Soldiers and newly arrived settlers, never previously exposed (and thus not immune) to the virus, cycled in large numbers from island to island. By the late eighteenth century, the Caribbean had more or less become a reservoir for yellow fever in the summer months. Epidemics periodically crept up the coastline into mainland America through the hemispheric trade routes that expanded in the eighteenth century.[21]

Different economies of disease also created an environment for different cultures of disease control. In the young ports of mainland America, Euro-Americans of Cathalan's generation grew up without the experience of labyrinthine lazarettos or permanent health offices. Quarantine existed as a practice; however, it was sporadic. Local officials in most port towns tended to restrict it to the summer months and direct it primarily toward shipping from the Caribbean and nearby port towns.[22]

Distinct confluences of bodies, fauna, climate, and shipping within the Americas were also fostering a growing belief among medical practitioners and laymen alike that Euro-Americans and travelers were operating in disease environments that were not only distant but also distinct from Europe. Those new environments, according to

---

[20] Laurence Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 352–356.

[21] John R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 15–267.

[22] Harrison, *Contagion,* pp. 19–23; John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 20–33.

eighteenth-century medical thought, altered bodies that were used to environs in different parts of Europe. What emerged in the eighteenth century was a corpus of knowledge framed around the rejection of European disease studies in favor of new observations and knowledge derived by and for those with firsthand experience in the Americas. Travelers and inhabitants of the Americas subsequently began producing new topographies of American port towns to map and characterize the diseases and health phenomena peculiar to them. They created studies of the differences between the European body in "Europe" and the European body in "America."[23] Medical literature, disease intelligence, and news about health regulations certainly circulated through Europe via print, correspondence, and expanding government channels over the course of the eighteenth century. However, that health information played more of a role in the management of empire and commerce abroad than it did in how Europeans managed their immediate disease environs.

Those ecological and cultural circumstances changed dramatically during Cathalan's tenure as vice consul. The 1780s and 1790s witnessed an unprecedented transformation in both the Mediterranean and Atlantic health landscapes. Plague recurred in Egypt, Algiers, and islands off the coast of northern Africa. The disease itself was not a new threat, but its routes and victims were. As the Napoleonic Wars played out in Egypt, French troops threatened to spread the disease to the southern European ports-of-call where they typically touched.[24] Americans fell victim not only to attacks and kidnappings in northern Africa but also to outbreaks of plague, a disease many had never experienced. And they, too, threatened to spread the disease as they traveled from port to port.[25]

New plague activity likewise raised concern about the vulnerability of U.S. ports to the Mediterranean pandemic. During a regional plague outbreak in 1796, Cathalan became outraged with the consul in Gibraltar, who decided to shorten a ship's quarantine and send it

[23] For an overview of this development, see Mark Harrison, *Medicine in an Age of Commerce and Empire: Britain and Its Tropical Colonies, 1660–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For the mainland American context in particular (among laymen and physicians), see Karen Kupperman, "Fear of Hot Climates in the Anglo-American Colonial Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser., 41 no. 2 (1984): 213–241.

[24] Salvatore Speziale, "Epidemics and Quarantine in Mediterranean Africa from the Eighteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 16 (2006): 249–258; Brockliss and Jones, pp. 833–834.

[25] Joel Barlow to Étienne Cathalan, 12 July 1796, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseilles," RG 59.

on its way back to the United States. "If this could have been allowed to me," he observed to the Secretary of State, "I would have opposed to it, to prevent Plague to be imported by them to the United States." It was not so much the ship itself, but rather American ports' defense, that concerned Cathalan. "There being no place fitted for quarantine, nor proper known ways to extirpate from all their clothes the effluvia, which is the custom here."[26] American ports, to his mind, lacked the experience and necessary facilities so well established in Marseilles.

The growth of trade with the Americas also brought with it a new disease threat to the Mediterranean: yellow fever. In the 1790s and 1800s, unprecedented pandemics of the disease broke out in successive waves along the eastern seaboard of the United States and in the West Indies.[27] Reports and rumors about outbreaks in both regions spread through Spanish, French, and Italian ports via consuls, merchants, and intraregional government networks. The threat of yellow fever became all the more real in 1800, when outbreaks began occurring along the Spanish coast in Cadiz and Gibraltar—right at the mouth of the Mediterranean. By 1804, the disease had spread to Cordoba, Grenada, Valencia, Catalonia, Malaga, and Livorno. The latter was one of the top destinations for the American re-export trade.[28]

Clashes ensued. Health authorities in Marseilles began approaching Cathalan with news from the French consuls in Charleston and Philadelphia about the state of health in their regions—points of origin for many of the American ships arriving in Marseilles.[29] Port officials in nearby Cadiz, Bordeaux, Naples, and Livorno subjected Americans to particularly rigorous quarantine policies. Their decisions, consuls and captains learned, were the result of conflicting reports from foreign agents in the United States, uncertainties about the new republic's approach to health policies, and suspicion about American captains'

---

[26] Cathalan to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, 26 July 1796, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseille," RG 59.

[27] K. David Patterson, "Yellow Fever Epidemics and Mortality in the United States, 1693–1905," *Social Science and Medicine* 34, no. 8 (1992): 856–857; David Geggus, "Yellow Fever in the 1790s: The British Army in Occupied St. Domingue," *Medical History* 23 (1979): 38–58.

[28] For an overview of early outbreaks in southern Europe, see William Coleman, *Yellow Fever in the North: The Methods of Early Epidemiology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), pp. 18–20. For Livorno's status as the major port for American shipping, see Marzagalli, pp. 54–55.

[29] See, for example, the Health Office's report to Cathalan, dated 2 February 1802, which Cathalan forwarded to Secretary of State James Madison. Cathalan to James Madison, 10 March 1802, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseilles," RG 59.

accounts of their movements from port to port. The Neapolitan Health Office blamed Americans for the 1804 outbreak in Malaga, cutting off all trade from Philadelphia and southern U.S. ports.[30] Captains were also subjected to accusations of disregard for port towns' quarantine practices, as in the case of Livorno, Italy, where, in the summer of 1799, the governor extended the length of quarantine against American shipping after a number of captains failed to comply with all of the regulations in the city's lazaretto.[31]

American captains and merchants, in turn, registered complaints about what they understood as unjust stigmatization of American shipping. Moreover, while a number of captains could boast familiarity with regional languages, fellow U.S. consul Thomas Appleton of Livorno quickly discovered that linguistic and cultural barriers, not merely economic motives, were obstructing less-experienced captains' close adherence to inspection and quarantine regulations of regional lazaretto facilities. Cathalan, in turn, began receiving requests from frustrated regional consuls for information about captains who might have touched in Marseilles before approaching health authorities in other Mediterranean ports. Captains, merchants, and state officials were applying to various consuls with pleas for assistance on the ground in navigating local quarantine laws and using what powers they could to lessen the rigor of the policies toward U.S. shipping.[32]

Remaking the Tools of Preservation

With these new challenges to the viability of international commerce, Cathalan started putting his resources to work in matters concerning health. One set of challenges presented itself in July 1796, when

[30] See John Mathieu to John Marshall, 12 February 1804, NARA, Department of States, "Consular Dispatches from Naples," RG 59.

[31] See Appleton to Pickering, 28 June 1799, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Livorno," RG 59.

[32] See, for example, Cathalan to John Marshall, 4 September 1804, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marsellies," RG 59. The consul in Cadiz, Peter Walsh, received a petition from American merchants and a captain regarding local authorities' decision to maintain a sixty-day quarantine against American ships well into November 1793. He discovered through his interaction with the authorities that they were relying on disease information from the Spanish minister of affairs in Philadelphia, and he had not delivered confident news about the good health of the city and region. See Peter Walsh to Timothy Pickering, 20 November 1793, NARA "Consular Dispatches from Cadiz, Spain," RG 59.

a group of Americans kidnapped by Barbary corsairs encountered a plague outbreak in Algiers. Americans began falling victim to the disease. The consul in Algiers, Joel Barlow, quickly turned his regional support networks for aiding kidnapped Americans into resources for medical assistance and disease prevention. After acquiring money to free kidnapped Americans in the region, he directed the ship to Livorno with a letter of explanation to the consul there: "It is the only way in which I could get the people free and save the rest of them from dying with the plague."[33] The ship arrived in Marseilles instead. The captain explained to Cathalan that he had altered his course because the strong winds had prevented an easy passage to Livorno. He had decided against Spanish ports as an alternative, knowing that authorities there would have been inclined to burn a plague-stricken ship. Applying his own knowledge of the regional health regulatory cultures, he charted a course for the ailing Americans that put them in Marseilles. Cathalan quickly sent word of the captain's arrival to Barlow and the consul in Livorno, forwarding all of his correspondence to the Secretary of State.[34] Cathalan, fellow consuls, and a captain had made overlapping maritime and government channels into a tool for disease surveillance.

Such situations often demanded the vice consul's skill in negotiating between the needs and desires of American seamen on the one hand and those of the authorities and local population of Marseilles on the other. When the captain arrived, he begged Cathalan to assist in care for the sick seamen and consultations with local authorities that might "expedite our quarantine."[35] Cathalan obliged. He interviewed, translated, and explained the medical information to the captain and the Secretary of State. Cathalan, as it turned out, was also in a particularly good position to negotiate with the lazaretto surgeons and doctors. He was not only a local citizen who grew up with the city's medical culture, but the head physician, "Citizen Bourg," was Cathalan's personal physician. Cathalan expressed to both Pickering and the captain his faith in the physicians' skill and sense of pride in the lazaretto facili-

[33] Letter from Joel Barlow to Fillipo Fellicchi [consul in Livorno], 12 July 1796. Cathalan sent this letter in a dispatch to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, [undated], NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseille," RG 59.

[34] Cathalan to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, 26 July 1796, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseille," RG 59.

[35] Cathalan copied the content of the captain's note in his dispatch to Secretary of State, 22 July 1796, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseille," RG 59.

ties.[36] Beyond his linguistic dexterity, Cathalan was utilizing his social and cultural position as a patron of local medicine to facilitate good relations.

As a resident of Marseilles, Cathalan also understood aspects of the city's relationship to the ancient lazaretto facilities. He observed that "the good policy of the lazaretto, and the safety of the Town" created limitations in how the sick seamen might acquire foodstuffs and other goods to refresh themselves in light of the sickness. Cathalan used both his personal relations with the health officials and his acquaintance with a nearby innkeeper to set up provision of breakfast and dinner rations for the men.[37] When the men completed their stay, the captain expressed his gratitude to both Cathalan and the superintendent of the lazaretto "for their humanity in using every possible means for Preserving our health" and ensuring a smooth performance of quarantine.[38] Cathalan's interactions with captains would not always prove as smooth and successful. Regardless, this incident reveals the social and cultural capital the Marseilles merchant–turned–U.S. consul used to mediate health relations on the ground.

Through this mélange of exchanges and clashes, consuls, seamen, and port authorities were working out means for American shipping to navigate European and Mediterranean ports in light of the shifting health landscape. As consuls learned to read the information resources and practices health authorities used and trusted, they used that knowledge to instruct their superiors and commercial men in strategies to ameliorate the rigor of health measures. Collaborations extended beyond individual ports. In 1806, Cathalan received a pamphlet from his commercial contact and fellow consul in Livorno, Thomas Appleton. After a few years of frustration with miscommunication between local port authorities and American captains over lazaretto procedures and the state of American shipping, Thomas Appleton set about translating all 284 of the "general and particular instructions for the three lazarettos of St. Rocco, St. Jacopo & St. Leopoldo in the environs of [Livorno]." Appleton had decided to translate the regulations himself, arguing that "the language masters here are mostly foreigners, whose prose resemble a verse which of course is totally unfit for the necessary

[36] Cathalan to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, 26 July 1796, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseille," RG 59.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Letter from the captain dated Lazaretto, 24 July 1796. Cathalan included the letter in the above dispatch to Timothy Pickering, 26 July 1796, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseille," RG 59.

plain of regulations." Appleton, in contrast, had, through his work as a locally immersed merchant and consul, acquired both Italian and the "plain language" captains needed for navigating the policies and local politics of the lazarettos. Through his conversations with the governor and port officials, Appleton had, not unlike Cathalan, developed a better understanding of the lazaretto's cultural and political relationship to the maritime city. Appleton, for example, provided not only a translation but also prefacing remarks about the appearance of the lazarettos, their relationship to the physical environment of the port, and officials' concerns about them in the wake of regional privateering. Regional privateering, as it turned out, had only heightened port authorities' anxieties about the port's vulnerability to attack and the origins of ships that arrived in port. These political circumstances had thus strengthened officials' desire for strict compliance with the laws. This "guidance," as he called it, would "prevent as much as possible the evils that arise from ignorance of the laws."[39] Appleton translated the physical and cultural aspects of the lazaretto as well as the regulations into terms both the captains and federal officials back home could better understand.

Relating the Worlds of Plague and Yellow Fever

As Cathalan witnessed these ecological transformations, brokered disease information, and mediated health relations, he began to reevaluate the relationship between American and Mediterranean health measures, bodies of disease knowledge, and the medical men and policymakers who produced them. He was not alone. Clashes and misunderstandings over health regulations, local anxieties over yellow fever, and American anxieties over plague all suggested to the vice consul as well as many others that American and European disease zones and experiences were colliding in unprecedented ways. These circumstances, Cathalan believed, warranted new types of interchange between American and European physicians and health offices.[40]

Inspired, Cathalan embarked on a new project. He was going to do more than translate and channel information. He would help remake relations between American and European health authorities and

[39] Thomas Appleton to James Madison, 14 July 1806, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Leghorn," RG 59.

[40] Cathalan to Timothy Pickering, 10 June 1799, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseilles," RG. 59.

medical writers. Sometime between 1796 and 1799, Cathalan decided to set up a meeting with "Citizen Bourg" and "three others of our most reputed physicians." The vice consul approached the doctors with a series of questions about the city's lazaretto facilities as well as their opinions about the cause of yellow fever.[41] After a number of consultations, Cathalan returned to his desk. He pulled recent letters from Timothy Pickering out of his files. They were letters that had described the state of yellow fever in Philadelphia in 1798—personal and official—and contained queries about the character of health regulations in Marseilles. He began arranging and rearranging the French and American materials together. He finally set to work translating from French into English and from English into French.

By the time he finished, Cathalan had produced a fifty-nine-page treatise: *Recueil de pièces relatives a la fièvre jaune d'Amérique, envoyées par le consul des États-Unis d'Amérique, à Marseille, au gouvernement des États-Unis, 1799*. *Recueil de pièces* reads like a series of exchanges—between Cathalan and the physicians, between Pickering and Cathalan, and between "American and European" physicians. It was a product of the very administrative tools and materials Cathalan had used to perform both his commercial and consular work. And it captures Cathalan's belief that Americans and Mediterranean Europeans shared common experiences with diseases, right down to the level of personal suffering. The treatise opens with a personal letter from Pickering to Cathalan, dated 15 December 1798, in which Pickering conveyed the sad news that the Frenchman's brother-in-law as well as a close friend had both fallen victim to a recent yellow fever outbreak in Philadelphia. "Last year," Pickering wrote, "I had the melancholy task of announcing to you the death of your brother in law, of the yellow fever, in this city; and now I have to mention the much lamented death, by this same disease, of his and your friend, Mr. Joseph Anthony." The volume proceeds with an official letter from Pickering. This one updated Cathalan on discussions in the United States about "means of prevention of this calamity and plague" and expressed interest in the "establishments at Marseilles for preventing the introduction of the plague, [and] said to be the most complete in Europe."[42] Through the medium of letters,

[41] Cathalan compiled records and materials from his project into the above dispatch.

[42] Stephen Cathalan, *Recueil de pièces relatives a la fièvre jaune d'Amérique, envoyées par le consul des États-Unis d'Amérique, à Marseille, au gouvernement des États-Unis, 1799* (A Marseille: De l'Imprimerie de Jean Mossy, imprimeur-librairie, a la Canebiere, an VIIe de la République française, 1799), pp. 3–5.

both personal and official, Cathalan presented both the cultural bonds as well as the ecological and intellectual ties that united American and Mediterranean encounters with maritime pandemics.

Cathalan also used *Recueil de pièces* to present the knowledge and tools he (and others) thought American and southern European port cities could and should share. Pickering had signaled to Cathalan that the health regulations in Marseilles might work as a model for those in the United States. Cathalan, in response, turned the city's physicians and legacy of plague literature into resources for Americans' own health policies. He included a detailed record of the regulations of the lazaretto, "which [the physicians] have given me for the use of the Government of the United States." Along with the treatise, he sent Pickering "a Journal abridged of what happened in this town of Marseilles during the Plague of 1720, drawn from a memorial in this Municipality [and the] Historical Relation of the Plague of Marseilles in the year 1720, by Mr. Bertrand, Doctor Physician who attended to the great number of Patients."[43] While the resurgence of plague once again tested Marseille's power against the disease, "this horrid calamity" threatened the United States all the more, as it was "not yet known there."[44]

At first glance, the physicians' and Cathalan's ideas about authoritative knowledge read like a European fashioning of Old World disease experiences as the seasoned knowledge a younger nation lacked. Cathalan, after all, was deeply embedded in a French Mediterranean medical culture that privileged the University of Montpellier. The lazaretto and health office were both well-established parts of the city's relationship to maritime diseases. They were also enshrined in heroic accounts of the outbreak in 1720–1721. This was a world that Cathalan and his fellow physicians knew very well.

Ultimately, though, both Cathalan and the physicians conveyed to readers that they felt that that world was changing. The text reveals the Frenchmen trying to work out a new epistemological relationship to the Americans in light of the dramatic changes to their worlds. Cathalan also inserted the French physicians' opinions regarding the cause of yellow fever in the United States. The physicians had used treatises at their disposal, notably John Lining's 1756 "A description of the American yellow fever"—a famous American work that had been

[43] Ibid., p. 32; Cathalan to Timopthy Pickering, 10 June 1799, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseilles," RG 59.

[44] Cathalan, *Recueil de pièces*, 34.

circulating in French since 1758.[45] They used Lining's meteorological observations, description of the marshy landscape in South Carolina and disease among "negros" to determine the environmental circumstances in which the disease could thrive and the body types that were most susceptible. More recent reports on the status of outbreaks in the 1790s had also allowed them to chart yellow fever's progress and geographic range along the Atlantic seaboard of the United States. They even related these materials to their own records of the "bilious remittent fevers of the warm climates of Europe" and their own observations of the habits of American travelers in the region.[46]

The physicians finally concluded that they wanted more information: "We still need to know how it responds to the influence of localities and in different atmospheric constitutions and seasons." They required meteorological observations and records of the fever's course in individuals and its effects on different temperaments. "All of these facts," they wrote, "could be united into one enlightening collection, which would allow us to make a decision with certainty."[47] Cathalan likewise apologized that the memorandum was "very imperfect, being redacted only on what I could have heard by few American or French people, arrived here after the yellow Fever of 1797 and preceeding years [*sic*], I have heard there are precious observations made by Physicians or other [*sic*] in Philadelphia and other afflicted towns, works on that disease have been lately published." Accordingly, the physicians and Cathalan used the treatise to request more recent volumes of medical literature from the United States. Such works, they argued, "would a great deal inlight [*sic*] the Physicians of Montpellier" and help them form their assessment. Americans, in turn, might regard the Montpellier faculty as a fellow resource for the study of yellow fever.[48]

The physicians he interviewed did not merely want to advise Americans about plague and yellow fever. "The health officers," they wrote in one letter to the vice consul, "are concerned about the Health of Europe, because of the relationship between the two worlds." By the

[45] John Lining, "A description of the American yellow fever: in a letter from Dr. John Lining, physician at Charles-town in South Carolina, to Dr. Robert Whytt, professor of medicine in the University of Edinburgh," in *Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary*, vol. 2 (1756), pp. 370–395. The French translation appeared in a French medical periodical. John Lining, "De La Fievre Jaune D'Amerique," *Journal de Med, Chirurg. et Pharm.* 8 (1758): 408–422.

[46] Cathalan, *Recueil de pièces*, pp. 40–42.

[47] Ibid., pp. 38–39.

[48] Ibid., p. 28.

end of their review, the physicians determined that more up-to-date information from Americans about yellow fever would also be useful for them when the disease threatened their own ports.[49] "I would advise," Cathalan concluded, "to request the Faculty or society of Physicians of Philadelphia, New-York, etc. To appoint a comitee [*sic*], to correspond the soonest possible with and consult the most celebrated Faculties of Physicians of Montpellier and Paris (if that has not been done already), in order that on the result of their different consultations, added to the opinion one with the other," Americans and Europeans might both produce greater knowledge.[50] The treatise was not only a resource for new ideas about health relations. Nor was it mere advice to Americans. It was a model and plea for future collaborations. Cathalan prepared the publication for both American and southern European audiences. The consultations with the physicians appear in both the original French and English. The same pages with the vice consul's letters to and from Pickering feature a corresponding French translation. In addition to Pickering, the vice consul sent one copy of the treatise "to each of our Consuls in Spain and Italy." He did not forget the local French physicians: "Ones have been asked to me by the Doctors health office, &c."[51]

While Cathalan circulated his work among regional consuls and port authorities and then back to Pickering, several of those regional consuls were likewise beginning to pen their own ideas about health policies. Appleton, for example, had presented his translation and description of the lazarettos as not merely a resource for American seamen but also a contribution to discussions back in the United States. "Having heard that the government of the United States were [*sic*] establishing in various ports lazarettos to prevent the introduction of contagious disorders I have thought that a translation of laws and regulations of the three Lazarettos of [Livorno] would be no unacceptable tribute of my respect."[52] In describing the peculiarity of the function and meaning of the regulations and facilities, Appleton was not merely helping travelers navigate the space and politics of the lazaretto. He was also trying to strip away local meanings and practices in order

[49] Ibid., pp. 12–13.
[50] Ibid., p. 30.
[51] Ibid., p. 32; Cathalan to Timopthy Pickering, 10 June 1799, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Marseilles," RG 59.
[52] Thomas Appleton to James Madison, 14 July 1806, NARA, Department of State, "Consular Dispatches from Leghorn," RG 59.

to prepare a model for discussions about policies back in the United States.

When Cathalan and his fellow consuls sent off their works, they in fact contributed to what was turning into a swelling traffic in letters, treatises, and reports moving back and forth between the Americas and Europe. New exchanges in and between ports-of-call were slowly reshaping not only health policies but also the geographies of knowledge exchange and medical communities made to grapple with new pandemic problems. As we saw at the outset of this article, Cathalan's work did not remain in the offices of the Secretary of State. Rather, it circulated among physicians along the Atlantic seaboard in the United States. Those physicians, in turn, did not dismiss Cathalan's piece. They read it like so many of the essays and letters authored by fellow physicians in multiple parts of the world. Doctor Samuel L. Mitchill thought it worthy of discussion with his colleague and fellow editor, Doctor Felix Pascalis of New York City. And they both deemed it worthy of a published review.

At first glance, their reviews of Cathalan's treatise may read as resistance to the interchange Cathalan saw as necessary. The response was overwhelmingly critical in tone. "The compilation," Mitchill wrote, "seems to me remarkably barren of such information as our physicians and legislators most need at present. The sentiments have so little affinity to the recent state of knowledge." Pascalis agreed. "The three or four subscribed physicians who probably have never seen the yellow fever, nor read any accurate account of its ravages in these countries." The physicians interviewed by Cathalan had relied on "old English authorities, omitting two of their more recent writers, and eminent physicians, M. M. Pouppe, Desportes and Dazille, who had long resided in Hispaniola." Contrary to the French physicians, Pascalis embraced the belief that accurate studies of yellow fever and its prevention rested above all on firsthand experience with the climes that had hosted so many outbreaks over the previous decades.

Pascalis, however, was not entirely contemptuous of the physicians' efforts. The shifting relationship between ecologies and bodies of the Mediterranean and Americas, after all, was turning American bodies and vessels into objects of study these men shared in common. Pascalis had found in their discussion of therapeutics and regimen, based on their firsthand observations of local American bodies, "judicious" suggestions "in many respects applicable to the people of these climates." Even though their methods of treatment were surely "different from what experience has shewn here to be more eligible" they might "be very well good in malignant fevers of climates famous by the likely

influence and excess of irritability which they diffuse in living bodies." Ultimately, it was not the interchange itself that Mitchill and Pascalis criticized. In the end, the review reveals both medical men, like the Marseilles physicians, working out the methods and ideas about knowledge authority that ought to inform those collaborations. Cathalan's treatise and interactions on the ground may not have completely translated into disease theories and methods Americans would actively embrace. Regardless, both had helped to further stimulate exchange as well as more active negotiations among Americans and Europeans about their respective roles in producing knowledge about the shifting health landscape.

Pascalis's and Mitchill's responses to Cathalan's work also reveal their willingness to integrate the consul into the networks that contributed to the production and circulation of disease knowledge. While Mitchill and Pascalis were inclined to criticize the methods and ideas of the French physicians, they were disposed to commend Cathalan's work and promotion of exchange. And while that piece was subjected to a particularly scathing review, the essays of several of Cathalan's fellow consuls and even foreign consuls found space in several volumes of the *Medical Repository*. Contributions ranged from Cathalan and Appleton to the U.S. consul in Havana, Cuba, all the way up to the Danish vice consul based between the island of St. Thomas and Philadelphia. Some of those works subsequently wound up in the footnotes of the journal's readers on both sides of the Atlantic.[53]

By the early nineteenth century, Cathalan had become part of a growing number of actors—consuls, policy makers, physicians, travelers, and printers—who were importing, exporting, and remaking disease experiences in the Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds. However

[53] See, for example, Henry Hill, "Observations on the Mortality by Yellow Fever, among the Seamen of the United States, who, with northern Constitutions and Habits, sail to Havanna, in Cuba; and on the Health and Longevity of the Native Spanish Inhabitants. By Henry Hill, Esq. Commercial Agent for the United States at that City: Communicated to Dr. Mitchill by the Secretary of State," *Medical Repository,* second hexade, vol. 4 (1806). See also J. F. Eckard, "Correction of Dr. Chisholm's Mistatement respecting the Prevalence of the Malignant Fever at St. Thomas's, by J. F. Echard, Esq. Danish Vice-Consul at Philadelphia, in a Letter to James Mease, M.D. of Philadelphia," *Medical Repository,* second hexade, vol. 1 (1804). Eckard's work was cited in Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, Volume 3* (Philadelphia: J. Conrad & Co., 1805), p. 226 and Edward Nathaniel Bancroft, *An Essay on the Disease Called Yellow Fever; with Observations Concerning Febrile Contagion, Typhus Fever, Dysentery and Plague* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, by G. Sidney, 1811), p. 523.

uneasy and incomplete that process, they had mobilized global commerce to help relate the transforming worlds of plague and yellow fever.

Conclusion

The world Etienne Cathalan Jr. helped to build as a consul ultimately expands our picture of the history of global governance in disease control. To begin with, his experience in the process of rerelating the health experiences of the Americas and Europe extends our chronology of the *longue durée* of global health history. It does so by revealing the role of the eighteenth-century Atlantic political economy in forcing both European and American polities to reevaluate their relations to other ecologies and health cultures as well as the tools for negotiating those boundaries. The place of health in Cathalan's duties and networks also expands our compass of the sites and actors who participated in the process of working out those relations. On a broader level, attention to both Cathalan and the place of health in his work encourages us to broaden the categories we use to locate the actors and institutions involved in transforming diplomacy into a tool for disease control and mediating health relations.

Finally, by attending to historical actors like Cathalan and reevaluating the analytical categories we use to recover them, we can also begin to ask important questions about the legacy of the early modern era for subsequent developments in the history of global governance in disease control. On the one hand, patterns in the decades following the Napoleonic wars suggest departure from earlier periods. The new climate of internationalism coupled with world capitalist expansion and the technology revolution created a context for both the dramatic growth in scale of new global health threats, like cholera, as well as new approaches to disease control that centered on multilateral legislative collaboration among states. As in other domains of cultural and political diplomacy in the second half the nineteenth century, European and non-European powers began creating new institutions—international sanitary conferences—where state representatives and physicians could work out boundaries in health knowledge, health regulatory cultures, and policy decisions.[54]

[54] Harrison, "Disease, Diplomacy and International Commerce"; Huber, "The Unification of the Globe by Disease?"

In spite of these remarkable changes, however, these later periods also display some striking similarities with Cathalan's world. Consuls like Cathalan, as economic and diplomatic historians have shown, did not fade away from the international scene. On the contrary, they only grew in number and geographic scope over the course of the century. As European and non-European powers continued to push their commercial interests further abroad, consuls persisted as agents in negotiating that expansion on the ground at the local level.[55] The same rang true for disease control and health relations. Periodicals, government reports, and medical intelligence later in the nineteenth century reveal European and non-European consuls in places ranging from the Mediterranean and Levant to the Americas all the way into diverse parts of Asia mediating between health regulatory cultures and producing information about epidemics and medicine on the ground in ports of call.[56] This suggests that political leaders, merchants, physicians, and consuls were taking up the tools of the eighteenth century and adapting them in their approaches to new global threats of the nineteenth century.

In tandem with the new international sanitary conferences, treaties, and organizations that developed in Europe and, eventually, in the Americas, consuls' posts and networks continued to function as vital arenas where diverse polities generated information about disease and health, worked out health relations, and negotiated health policy practices. This pattern in the nineteenth century was not so much a product of a new era of globalization. Rather, it reflects the complex legacy of commercial and geopolitical expansion a century before.

---

[55] As Brian Rouleau has shown, this was as much true for the United States over the course of the nineteenth century as it was for European powers. See Rouleau, p. 15.

[56] We see this in both American and European responses to, among other disease threats, cholera. During the early years of the first cholera pandemics, newspapers in New York, for example, both drew upon U.S. consuls stationed near Egypt during the outbreaks there and observed to readers that "consuls of different nations [stationed in Egypt]" were collaborating in constructing "sanitary measures" to halt the spread of the disease. See *The New York Mercury,* 21 December 1831. British and American medical periodicals also built reports on the trajectory and character of outbreaks in different parts of the world out of reports and statistics created by British and foreign consuls. See, for example, "Mode in Which Cholera Is Propagated," *London Medical Gazette* 9 (8 October 1831–31 March 1832). Henry Perrine, U.S. consul in Yucatan in the 1830s, commented not only on cholera's trajectory but also judged local methods of treatment in that part of the world. See Perrine, "Epidemic Cholera in Yucatan," *Western Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences* 7 (October–December 1833).