

personal aspects and interviewing psychopaths, authored by the book's editors. The practical implications of the interpersonal behavior, deception and manipulation, and violence threat of psychopathic individuals is reviewed. The authors provide 11 practical tips for interviewing psychopathic individuals that highlight the need to understand the construct of psychopathy so that one can conduct efficient, effective, and safe interviews with these types of patients or examinees. Although some of their practical tips may seem basic, the editors raise awareness of the need to be reflective and mindful of the particular challenges that should be explicitly considered when interviewing psychopathic individuals.

On balance, the editors achieve their goal of producing a practical, useful book on psychopathy. For a busy clinician who plans to read chapters of interest selectively, this book provides an accessible means of obtaining knowledge of key points and ideas on the different aspects of psychopathy. It is not a reference for psychopathy but instead is a source for quick review of topics, some of which are likely to apply directly to current clinical practice.

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“Let Justice Be Done Though the Heavens May Fall”: The *Zong* in Amma Asante’s *Belle*

Written by Misan Sagay. Directed by Amma Asante. Produced by Damien Jones. A DJ Films, Isle of Man Film, Pinewood Pictures, BFI Production. Released in the United States, May 2, 2014. 104 minutes.

A legal case in which more than 132 slaves were intentionally thrown from a British slaving vessel into the ocean to die may seem an unlikely backdrop for a period romance, but *Belle* attempts just that. The critically acclaimed film takes its name from Dido Elizabeth Belle, a woman born of the union between

a black woman and a white man in 1763. Belle's likeness, next to that of her white half-cousin, was famously captured in a portrait that demonstrates a degree of equality unheard of at the time. The painting has sparked interest in the form of articles, a biography, and now a movie about Belle's life.

Director Amma Asante begins the film with Belle as a young girl meeting her father, Sir John Lindsay, for the first time. He picks her up from a slum in his horse-drawn carriage, amid stares in the street, to take her to the life he says she was “born to.” He goes off to sea in the Royal Navy and leaves her in the care of his uncle, William Murray, Earl of Mansfield, who was the Lord Chief Justice of England. Also in Lord Mansfield's care is Belle's half-cousin, Elizabeth Murray. The film shows a close relationship between the girls as they grow into young women who must find husbands if they are to secure futures for themselves. They are introduced into society at a critical time, during the appeal in the *Zong* case.

Belle first learns of the case of the *Zong* massacre from a local clergyman's son, John Davinier, who has come to study law in an apprenticeship with her uncle. The *Zong* was a slave ship that set sail from Africa in 1781 with 442 slaves on board.¹ Over the course of the voyage, many of the slaves became sick and died. The ship owners alleged that the vessel was running dangerously low on water, requiring the crew to jettison 132 slaves into the sea, to save the ship and its crew. Upon the ship's return to England, the company that owned the ship sued the insurance company for the value of the drowned slaves. The case, which came before Lord Mansfield, Belle's uncle, hinged on the necessity of jettisoning the human “cargo,” since natural deaths occurring at sea (such as those from illness) would not be covered by the company's insurance. In the film, Davinier voices his belief that the crew was not in need of water, but had coldly calculated that the slaves were worth more dead than as ruined merchandise. (One must set aside any imagining of a murder trial, as such a trial never occurred; rather the trial was about insurance fraud and “necessity.”)

The case of the *Zong* is a central element in the movie, driving the actions of the main characters. The Lord Chief Justice has weighty responsibilities in the Commonwealth and is described in the movie as “next to the King, the most important man in England.” The case is portrayed as being paramount to the financial future of Britain, because of the

lucrative nature of the slave trade. Others in the aristocracy are terrified that Lord Mansfield will destroy England with his ruling. The case becomes a vehicle for debate over the purpose of the legal system between the established Mansfield and the young idealist Davinier. When confronted with concerns that he will destroy England with his ruling, Mansfield takes the approach “let justice be done though the heavens may fall,” indicating his belief that the right decision should be made despite the potential consequences.

As forensic evaluators often called on to testify in court, the movie gives us an important reminder about the role of personal bias in court proceedings. The film makes clear that it is well known that the Lord Chief Justice is raising his half-black grandniece, whom another character describes as “his famous mulatto,” and that there was concern that this would influence his decision in the *Zong* case. This was historically true as well, according to the diary of Thomas Hutchinson who, in 1779, wrote in regard to the *Somerset* case (a case that Lord Mansfield had decided several years earlier, also regarding slavery):

A few years ago there was a cause before his Lordship bro't by a Black for recovery of his liberty. A Jamaica planter being asked what judgment his Ldship would give? “No doubt” he answered “He will be set free, for Lord Mansfield keeps a Black in his house which governs him and the whole family” [Ref. 2, p 10].

While the film never reveals whether Belle’s presence in Mansfield’s life influenced his decision, it shows the ways in which others may perceive the potential for bias or try to exploit that potential.

Belle herself is moved along a path of discovering her identity by developments in the case. Before she learns of the *Zong*, she is just beginning to realize how different her life will be from that of her white half-cousin. When informed that she will not be dining with her family when visitors come, Belle laments her unclear status as “too high in rank to dine with servants, but too low to dine with my family.” Although she is initially felt by her uncle and aunt to be unfit to marry due to her racial background, after her father’s death leaves her an heiress, a match to a suitable man is made, and she is engaged to be married. Belle, however, continues to feel the pull of the injustice of the *Zong* case and similarly the pull of Davinier—who was dismissed from his apprenticeship with the Lord Chief Justice as a result of telling Belle about the case. She ultimately gives Davinier some of her uncle’s papers which prove that the *Zong* crew could have stopped for water at eight ports

along the way, had they actually been in need. She continues to meet with Davinier in secret to discuss the case and matters of racial equality. While her fiancé regards her African heritage as something to overlook, because her “better half” equipped her with loveliness and privilege, Davinier embraces both parts of Belle’s heritage. She breaks off her engagement, not wanting to feel that her mother is a part of her for which Belle should apologize. When Belle is caught by her uncle sneaking off to meet Davinier, Davinier finally declares his love for her, while making his case for why Lord Mansfield should rule against the owners of the *Zong*. Davinier frames his explanation in terms of Mansfield’s legacy and whether Mansfield wants a world in which his niece is worth more dead than alive. Ultimately, Mansfield reads his judgment that, while it is indeed not legal to discharge live cargo into the water for insurance compensation, neither is it morally right.

The movie paints a fascinating portrait of the life of a young woman of privilege and diverse racial background, but it takes many liberties both with the known details of Belle’s life and (more important to a forensic audience) Lord Mansfield’s famous slavery cases. The aforementioned *Somerset v. Stewart* (1769) was in actuality the first famous case, and at least the third case overall, in which Mansfield addressed the matter of slavery. James Somerset was a slave who was taken by his owner, Charles Stewart, on a trip from Boston to England. While in England, Mr. Somerset escaped, was recaptured, and was set to be sent to Jamaica to be sold. In 1772 Lord Mansfield sided with Mr. Somerset that he could not be sent to another country and sold as a slave. There remains some controversy as to the exact wording or intention of the Lord Chief Justice’s comments, but the most recognized version described slavery as being odious and unsupportable,³ the same terms that the movie uses in Mansfield’s *Zong* decision. Although the *Somerset* case has been historically credited with ending slavery in England, more recent scholars have maintained that the Lord Chief Justice was actually reluctant to make any sweeping decisions in the case, instead pushing for the parties to come to an agreement, due to the potential fallout of a judicial determination.⁴ In fact, it was the *Somerset* case, and not the *Zong*, in which Mansfield famously proclaimed “*fiat justitia ruat coelom*” (let justice be done though the heavens may fall), only after lamenting the potential inconveniences of an absolute decision in the case.⁴ His opinion is believed by many to have been

limited to protecting slaves from extreme forms of physical abuse and forcible deportation to other countries, rather than an attempt to end slavery across the commonwealth.⁵ By contrast, the *Zong* case took place over a decade later, in 1783, and the slave trade was still a major industry for the British.

The facts of the *Zong* as presented in the movie are for the most part accurate, but they overlook the fact that Mansfield addressed this as an insurance and maritime law case that hinged on the absolute necessity of killing cargo and not a commentary on the morality of slavery.⁶ Mansfield, known for his oratory, had a much more moderate legal position hinging on absolute necessity: slaves were compared with livestock.¹ His delicate position allowed insurance fraud to be prevented while the slave trade could remain intact.⁶ Despite the similarly limited decision in the *Zong* and *Somerset* cases, both became rallying points for abolitionists pointing to the atrocity of the deaths aboard the *Zong* and the court's finding against the slave traders.⁷

Belle has themes, not only of forensic psychiatric interest, but of class, race, slavery, and gender equality. As forensic psychiatrists who have presented on topics unique to women in our field, we were particularly intrigued with the film's look at the historic role of women. At several points throughout the film, the position of women in society is compared with that of slaves; they are property. Belle herself likens a

woman without a husband of consequence to a "free Negro begging for a master." We found the film to be an engaging depiction of Belle's coming into her own as a person of a diverse racial background and a woman. Liberties may have been taken in the film, but the experience for the viewer of seeing 18th century England struggle with events that continue to have a very real impact today was a valuable one.

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