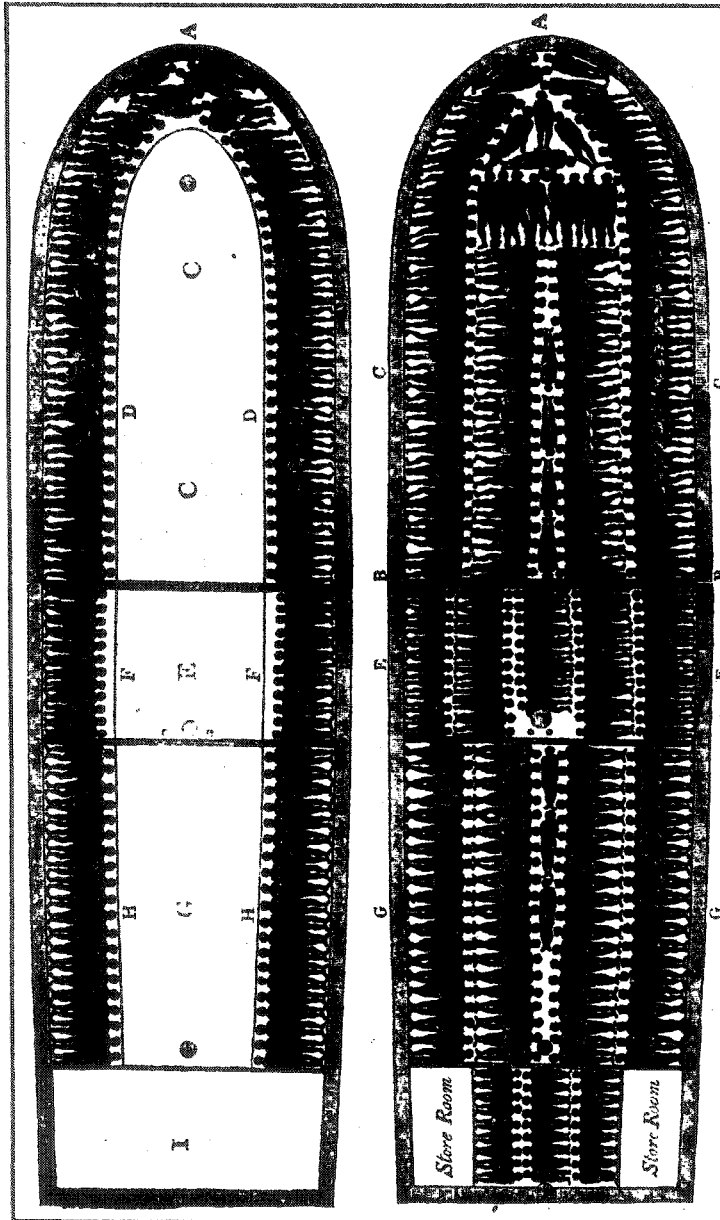


Illustration 2

The layout of a slave ship
(Mannix, 1971, pp. 146ff)



Notes on Illustration 2

The illustration on the opposite page comes from 1791 and shows how slaves were stowed on the Liverpoolian slave ship *Brookes*. The men were stowed on the right-hand side (C), the women on the left (G), and boys in the centre (E). The plan on the left shows a six-foot wide platform on which slaves were arranged 'like books on a shelf', and where they were unable even to sit up. The deck itself (right-hand illustration) is completely covered with rows of bodies.

The extent to which the illustration reflects the reality of travelling in slave ships is confirmed by contemporary reports, according to which the *Brookes* may be regarded as typical of the Liverpoolian slavers. Under a law passed in 1788 and intended to 'humanize' the slave trade, the ship was permitted to transport 454 slaves. Plans were available for many slave ships, and that for the *Brookes*, which consisted of a blueprint of the ship and a host of little black figures, demonstrates how 451 slaves could be stowed. There is no room for the other three slaves that the ship was permitted to transport, yet several witnesses, among them a former ship's doctor on the *Brookes*, testified before the British Parliament that before the 1788 law the ship had made voyages with more than 600 slaves on board.

Other, similar illustrations confirm that this was neither an unrealistic nor an extreme case. It was normal for slaves to be stowed in such a way that they often had less room on the ship than they would have had in a coffin. Nor was it unusual for ships to transport 600 or 700 slaves on one crossing. These would be chained to rough wooden surfaces so that on a rough crossing the skin on their elbows could be chafed to the bone. The women on the slave ships were easy pickings for the seamen. In addition to overcrowding, the slaves had to put up with sadistic punishments, little and bad quality food, and insufficient drinking water (see Mannix, 1962, pp. 104ff).

Often extra decks were built into trading ships in order to accommodate more people. In 1981, Negt and Kluge (p. 343) reproduced the illustration opposite under the title 'The Concept of Realism'. The sub-heading reads: 'Plan to accommodate 451 slaves on the 350-ton ship *Brookes*. The plan is unrealistic. If transported in these conditions all the people would die.'