

The Body Project: Anatomy, Relationships, and Representation
An Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference
University of Missouri
Presented April 12, 2008

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Oral presentation

Binding the Body, Binding the Mind: The Limitations of Empathy in John Gabriel Stedman's "Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam"

John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796) is laced with discussions of cruelty—to slaves, to soldiers, even to monkeys. Throughout, Stedman prides himself on his empathy for all living creatures, showing his own pain, mental anguish, and revulsion at watching their suffering. However, Stedman's empathy seems intricately linked to the body—in particular to bodily suffering. Thus, while the physically ill, injured, tortured, and raped all spark his sentimentality, Stedman seems oblivious to psychological trauma—from forced labor, sexual coercion, or general subservience—particularly in slaves. Though Stedman claims to “love the African” and to view Africans as his equals, and though he abhors the cruelties which they suffer by the lash, his empathy is limited by his relatively privileged social and economic status to the boundaries of the body.