Economies of Entanglement:
Reading Radical Cultural Work in the Anglophone Caribbean and Victorian Britain

By

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

August, 2015

Nashville, Tennessee

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I spent most of my life as a bookworm under the impression that reading, writing, and thinking were solitary endeavors. Graduate school taught me that such is fortunately not the case, and I am humbled to thank the individuals who have made my time at Vanderbilt such a transformative period both intellectually and personally.

Colin Dayan, Ifeoma Nwankwo, Houston Baker, Rachel Teukolsky, and Jim Epstein have offered equal parts rigor and warmth as members of my committee. Jim's questions always make me rethink what I assume is obvious about my work. Rachel's eye for argumentation equips me with renewed vigor for revisions. Houston's pep talks aid me in balancing life and work. Ifeoma's knack for understanding my work before I do continues to shape how I see myself as a scholar. Colin's intensity, excitement, and dedication have been apparent to me since our first meeting when I visited Vanderbilt in March 2010. Her eagle eye on my prose and ceaseless advocacy of my scholarship continually remind me that the critical work of academia is never an exercise in aesthetics.

I also count Donna Caplan and Janis May as members of my committee for answering with aplomb and smiling faces my persnickety questions about the workings of the institution. Donna's error of spelling my name "DeGuzmann" in early paperwork launched a wonderful friendship.

I extend my gratitude to other members of the Vanderbilt community who have had a hand in my development. Teresa Goddu and Vera Kutzinski were among my favorite teachers during my time in coursework, and both have continued to meet me with good spirits during encounters in Benson. Organizing the C19 conference with Teresa also taught me priceless and unexpectedly entertaining lessons about working with intelligent people. Dana Nelson and Mark

Wollaeger in their respective terms as DGS offered keen counsel whenever I walked into their offices. Mark Schoenfield, Roger Moore, and Jay Clayton, my three teaching mentors, were instrumental in helping me grow from a quiet student to a confident classroom teacher. I also send thanks to Richard Blackett in the History department for talking about Caribbean schoolrooms with me for a 2012 interview and helping me secure lodging in Barbados for a summer research trip.

The intellectual community at Vanderbilt has also been a joyous place to make friends. I thank Faith Barter, R.J. Boutelle, Annie Castro, Dan Fang, Lucy Mensah, Petal Samuel, and Nikki Spigner for bringing merriment and therapy into my life and helping me come out of my recalcitrant shell. Faith deserves extra thanks for furthermore putting up with me during crucial consultation sessions at the Writing Studio. Jennifer Bagneris, Andy Hines, and Killian Quigley have also been part of my team during the past five years as members of my cohort. Diana Bellonby was a fantastic peer mentor during my first year in the program. Annette Joseph-Gabriel and Roxane Pajoul helped me navigate the francophone terrain of Guadeloupe in summer 2012 with laughter; Annette continues to crack me up via Skype even when she is in Massachusetts or France. Lara Giordano listened to me vent during countless evenings at the Belcourt.

The team of Gary Jaeger, John Bradley, Elizabeth Covington, and Kristen Sullivan at Vanderbilt's Writing Studio sustained a merry place to work during my fourth year. I have yet to find a place on campus as downright fun as the Writing Studio.

The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities created an ideal work environment as I finished writing my dissertation. My fellow fellows, Jessica Burch, Adam Burgos, Daniel McAuley, Luis Menéndez-Antuña, Carly Rush, Amy Tan, and Brendan Weaver, offered me generous feedback and models of scholarly accomplishment. I am also happy for the inside jokes we developed together. Edward Friedman, Joy Ramirez, and Terry Tripp also supported me through friendly conversations during my year at the RPW Center. Mona Frederick is a maestro of humanities advocacy and taught me a great deal about universities beyond the unit of the academic department.

Dillon Brown, Aaron Kamugisha, and Evelyn O'Callaghan are faces I am always happy to see at conferences. I have been lucky enough to meet Erna Brodber and George Lamming, and I thank them for engaging in interviews with me. Deborah Lilton, Carson Holloway, Beth Howse, and Jessica Lewis, librarians at Vanderbilt, Duke, Fisk, and UWI Cave Hill, respectively, kindly aided me when I needed books or periodicals. Eugene Crook guided me through the streets of London and onto my path to graduate school during a pivotal semester as an undergraduate at Florida State University.

Judy Rodman and John Glavin helped me find my voice. Jenna Wolf showed me the importance of taking care of my body. Lelia Gilchrist and Larry Woodson designed perhaps the best garage apartment in Nashville. Working in and coming home to such a space will be one of my greatest memories of living in Nashville.

Michelle Rubin continually brings balance, perspective, and delicious food into my life. Emma Ingrisani remains my go-to interlocutor when it comes to movies and music. Tim Kowalik and his family taught me the importance of letting dogs into life. I am also indebted to Tim for helping me accept that I can be a dedicated scholar and still enjoy the video games from my childhood.

I am grateful to have a family that always welcomes me home with excitement and warmth even when they are not entirely sure what I am up to in Nashville. I especially would like to thank Orfie, my maternal grandmother, for always having a proud smile on her face when I see her and Fred, my older brother, for letting me crash at his apartment en route to visits home. My parents, Robert and Imelda, deserve my greatest thanks. Whether or not they know it, my parents cultivated my curiosity by allowing me to spend hours in libraries, bookstores, and art house movie theaters. More importantly, my parents have always given me the opportunity to succeed. Maraming salamat.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading Entanglement

A headline in *The Guardian* announces that Barbados, the easternmost island in the Caribbean, plans to remove Queen Elizabeth II as its head of state. This news item is not a cultural artifact preserved on microfilm or digitized into an online database. The piece appears in the March 23, 2015 edition of the British newspaper.[1]

News of Barbados's plans to eliminate a symbol of British colonial rule suggests a story amenable to concepts of postcolonialism that have become institutionalized in literary studies over the last thirty years. The idea of replacing the Queen with a ceremonial yet locally elected president gestures toward a break with an imperial past that accords with the temporal logic of postcolonialism's bold prefix. Upon closer examination, however, Barbados's vision of relinquishing the image of the Queen in fact reveals a frustrating story that resembles threads muddled with bewildering knots rather than a linear unfolding. Owen Arthur, a former Prime Minister of Barbados, introduced plans to supplant the Queen with a local official in 2005. The same pattern eerily repeats when looking to recent events in other anglophone Caribbean islands. Jamaica's Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller pledged to break with the Queen as head of state in her 2012 inaugural address. Reports of Miller's plans note how former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson similarly sought to replace the Queen with a Jamaican official during his fourteen-year term that began in the early 1990s.[2]

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[1] Caroline Davies, "Barbados Plans to Replace Queen with Ceremonial President," *The Guardian*, March 23, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/23/barbados-plans-to-replace-queen-with-ceremonial-president.

[2] "Jamaica to Break Links with Queen, Says Prime Minister Simpson Miller," *BBC News*, January 6, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-16449969.

These ongoing attempts to remove the Queen as head of state underline the exigency of what at first glance seems like the intellectual transgression at the core of "Economies of Entanglement: Reading Radical Cultural Work in the Anglophone Caribbean and Victorian Britain," which is my claim that anglophone Caribbean and Victorian British writers are worth reading together for reasons beyond tracing their oppositions. The radical cultural work I name in this title thus first of all identifies how the pages that follow purposely rethink the project of Caribbean literary studies by expanding what falls within its purview.

Focusing on the literature of the Caribbean itself and that of other formerly colonized areas after all serves as the driving purpose of Caribbean and postcolonial studies as academic fields. Lingering on the evident relationship between the anglophone Caribbean and Victorian Britain to the extent that I do in this study thus seems tantamount to an automatic rejection of the critical priorities and cultural achievements of Caribbean literary studies established during the era of the region's political decolonization in the 1960s. But "Economies of Entanglement" shows how engagement with the writers, ideologies, and historical moments more commonly associated with the Victorian period – the era when Britain's empire stretched across the Caribbean, Africa, and India – offers both an obvious and an indispensable backdrop for understanding anglophone Caribbean literature from the 1830s to the present. The major contribution of this project therefore lies in its modeling of a critical approach that is ambitiously comparative yet ultimately concerned with the literature of the Caribbean as a subject of analysis.[3]

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[3] The scholarly trend has been the exact opposite in recent years: to absorb the Caribbean into various methodological cartographies that nonetheless remain centered in either British or American literary studies. The frameworks of Atlantic and hemispheric studies, for instance, attempt to account for the implications of imperialism in its various political, economic, and cultural guises by looking beyond the geographical boundaries of Britain and the United States.

This study's emphasis on a comparative yet Caribbean perspective traces its methodology back to an archive of decolonial cultural criticism that conspicuously grapples with the subject of British presences in Caribbean writing. The poet, historian, and critic Kamau Brathwaite voiced the most influential attitude during this era. His essay "Jazz and the West Indian Novel" (1967 – 1968), for instance, attempts to use the black American musical genre of jazz as a way to read Caribbean literature in what he calls its "proper context of an expression both European and African at the same time."[4] Brathwaite admits halfway through the essay that turning to an American landscape of creative expression constitutes part of his experiment "to outline an alternative to the English Romantic/Victorian cultural tradition which still operates among and on us."[5] Yet adopting an American musical form as a basis for conceptualizing Caribbean literature still involves a rejection of the local; Brathwaite after all dismisses musical forms such as calypso and ska as unfit to provide a framework for analyzing Caribbean writing.[6] Brathwaite's proposed alternative to British cultural tradition thus ironically continues to favor external paradigms – in this case jazz – to understand Caribbean literature.[7]

Studies with such scopes fruitfully highlight how national boundaries often fail to provide complex accounts of cultural interdependence and exchange. Yet to study British and American *imperialism* often still entails studying British and American *literature*, only in the context of previously ignored locations within the anglophone or francophone Caribbean.

[4] Kamau Brathwaite, "Jazz and the West Indian Novel," in *Roots* (University of Michigan Press, 1986), 62 – 63. The essay was originally published in three parts in the Caribbean little magazine *BIM*.

[5] Ibid., 72 – 73.

[6] Ibid., 59.

[7] As Belinda Edmondson points out in her reading of Brathwaite's essay, the writer is "hopelessly enmeshed" in the British discourse he aims to reject. See Edmondson, *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 70. Edmondson's book is the main critical precedent for my pairing of Caribbean literature and the Victorian period, and I outline how my project both builds upon and departs from hers in this introduction.

But my pairing of Caribbean and Victorian writing amplifies the voice of Sylvia Wynter, the Jamaican writer and critic who offered a more complicated methodology during Brathwaite's era of decolonial cultural criticism. Her essay "'We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk About a Little Culture'" draws from critics and writers ranging from Theodor Adorno to George Lamming to call for a self-aware method of writing literary criticism in the Caribbean. First, Wynter makes a distinction between "acquiescent" and "challenging" criticism. Acquiescent criticism either feigns objectivity or writes within the myth of universal experience. Challenging criticism, on the other hand, strives to understand the implications of connections and relationships, particularly those installed through centuries of imperialism. The difference between Wynter's and Brathwaite's models of criticism should already be apparent: Wynter lays bare all the antecedents and contemporaries that inform her perspective while Brathwaite, as we saw above, attempts to fashion a selective paradigm for Caribbean literature that adopts jazz yet shuns calypso and ska. In other words, Wynter acknowledges that making sense of the afterlife of British colonialism constitutes a necessary facet of Caribbean criticism. Brathwaite realizes as such as well yet he also makes pretense to the irrelevancy of Britain's traces.

For Wynter, the afterlife of Britain in the Caribbean goes beyond interests in topics such as linguistic refashioning that would become tenets of postcolonial studies about a decade later. This leads to the second crucial component of Wynter's idea of challenging criticism: its practitioners must realize that they too are involved in the very process that sends writers from the Caribbean to Britain in order to publish and installs critics in the Caribbean who carry "the Good Housekeeping label of a metropolitan university."[8] Wynter's criticism of the flow of

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[8] Sylvia Wynter, "'We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk About a Little Culture': Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism, Part One,'" *Jamaica Journal* 2, no. 4 (1968): 25.

Caribbean writers out of the islands to London was frequently leveled in the era of decolonization. But she stands out for turning attention to how the circumstance of Caribbean writers abroad simultaneously shapes the reason why British critics fill academic posts within the Caribbean university. Wynter's idea of challenging criticism thus attempts to grasp a comprehensive historical process that sees critics as implicated laborers rather than as gatekeepers of culture or disinterested experts on clearly delineated subjects.[9]

"Economies of Entanglement" therefore signals how the following pages traverse the often well-defined boundaries of Caribbean, Victorian, and postcolonial studies in order to, first, practice Wynter's call for challenging criticism, and second, trace how Caribbean and Victorian writers themselves sought to grasp the reality of colonial connections through the production of radical cultural work. I choose *entanglement* as an organizing term for two reasons.[10] First, entanglement's primary meaning of being caught within difficult twists calls attention to tensions, intersections, and overlaps. The image that the term brings to mind should be one of fraught messiness. I offer it as a complementary approach to the geographical and temporal rubrics into which the Caribbean has been organized over the past three decades, which range from ideas of the postcolonial to maps of the Atlantic to experiences of migrancy.[11] Entanglement's lack of association with the temporal assumptions of postcolonialism enables me to underline that the aftermath of colonial rule persists into the present, particularly on an economic level.[12] Similarly, entanglement illuminates how we can still index the relationship between the Caribbean and Britain even in the absence of actual geographical movement – whether through the privilege of travel or the exigencies of migrancy. Entanglement therefore devises a way to discuss similarities between Caribbean and Victorian writing that fall beyond the critical and political parameters typically associated with the realms of scholarship tied to those traditions.

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[9] The Frankfurt School's adaptation of Marxist thought clearly informs Wynter's thinking; indeed, she references Theodor Adorno throughout her two-part essay. As Norval Edwards points out, Wynter's opposition between acquiescent and challenging criticism resonates with Adorno's distinction between "transcendent" and "immanent" criticism. See Edwards, "'Talking About a Little Culture': Sylvia Wynter's Early Essays," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 10, no. 1 & 2 (November 2001): n. 8, 37 – 38. As I noted above, however, it is important to underline that Wynter also draws from the writings of Alejo Carpentier, Aimé Césaire, and the Mexican author Carlos Fuentes.

[10] "Entanglement" has been used in the context of the French Caribbean in Édouard Glissant's *Caribbean Discourse*. Glissant criticizes how Martinicans either engage in "reversion," an obsession with origins in Africa, or "diversion," a lack of historical consciousness with the landscape of Martinique. He thus proposes that the most salient way for Martinicans to embody the present involves a "return to the point from which we started…a return to the point of entanglement," or coming to terms with Martinique itself. See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 26. In the original French, Glissant calls for a "retour au point d'intrication." See Glissant, *Le Discours Antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 57. My use of "entanglement" therefore echoes Glissant's interest in positioning the Caribbean itself as a native land, but I ultimately approach the term more broadly to encompass an interest in Britain as well. Rey Chow has a collection of essays on media and East Asia where she sets out "to ask if entanglement could not also be a figure for meetings that are not necessarily defined by proximity or affinity." See Chow, *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking about Capture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 5. My thanks go to Scott Juengel for bringing Chow's book to my attention.

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[11] Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, his seminal study of how a transnational lens must be adopted to understand the development of black modernity, has facilitated a necessary critique of the whiteness of British cultural studies. Yet Gilroy's paradigm for studying black transnational culture still seems inadequate for understanding the Caribbean in a sustained way: he after all admits his study's exclusion of Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James immediately in the preface. See Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), xi. Important studies of Caribbean writing from the perspective of migrancy include Carole Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (London: Routledge, 1994) and more recently, J. Dillon Brown, *Migrant Modernism: Postwar London and the West Indian Novel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013). The context of migration to places such as Britain, the U.S., and Canada is crucial to Caribbean literary culture, but I ask us to pause on the idea that the Caribbean and Britain are entangled in a relationship that begins even well before the flow of immigration.

[12] Anne McClintock thoroughly outlines the problems raised by the term "postcolonial" in *Imperial Leather*. I am in agreement with her that "the historical rupture suggested by the prefix post- belies both the continuities and discontinuities of power that have shaped the legacies of the formal European and British empires." I also agree that "there seems no reason why ["postcolonial"] should not be used judiciously in appropriate circumstances." See McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 12, 13. Overall, however, I use "postcolonial" throughout this study to refer to the academic discourse it identifies rather than to describe the Caribbean literature I examine.

Entanglement's meanings as a term for troublesome relationships also inform the interpretative utility it has in this project. The *OED* lists "a compromising relationship," "an unsuitable liaison," and "an embarrassment" as meanings of entanglement, and each of these definitions has purchase between the Caribbean and Britain. Accounts of Afro-Caribbean students engaging with William Wordsworth's poetry in their classrooms and developing ambivalent relationships to novels by the Brontë sisters and W.M. Thackeray in seaside libraries have become familiar details in narratives of Caribbean literary culture. At the same time, passing references to plantations in the West Indies and racially ambiguous creole characters appear throughout Victorian fiction. But such links only constitute one aspect of the intimacy between the Caribbean and Britain. As my chapters show, Caribbean and Victorian writing also share preoccupations with the politics of respectability and the possibilities of women's empowerment. Caribbean writers in the twentieth century have also spoken back to the Victorian period through reclamations of the sage tradition and the realist novel, not just through intertextual re-writings of canonical texts such as *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre*.[13]

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[13] Both *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre* feature oppressive discourses about race through the characters of Caliban in the former and Bertha Mason in the latter. Caribbean writers across linguistic boundaries, from Aimé Césaire to Michelle Cliff, have responded to these characters in their poetry and fiction by reclaiming black and mixed race identities. Césaire's play *Une Tempête* (1969) explicitly identifies Caliban as "a black slave" in its cast of characters. Cliff's novel *No Telephone to Heaven* (1996) features a moment where its mixed race protagonist Clare Savage decides that the character she should identify with in Brontë's novel is Bertha Mason, not Jane Eyre. The long, violent history that a largely white Britain and a mostly black Caribbean share certainly shapes the longstanding critical reluctance to pair the literary traditions of the two. Race is thus one of the underlying "economies of entanglement" throughout this project in that I show how both Victorian and Caribbean writers trouble and exploit stereotypes linked to racial difference.

Entanglement could thus be thought of as an interpretive practice that takes Edward Said's influential method of contrapuntal reading a step further.[14] Said's methodology of contrapuntal reading enables informed re-readings of the English canon; his example of using our current understanding of imperialism to scrutinize Thomas Bertram's plantations in Antigua in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* has invited both praise and criticism for opening incriminating interpretative perspectives on the work of a beloved British author.[15] But contrapuntal reading has a grave limit: it primarily equips critics with a way of making sense of the scattered references to Caribbean colonies within canonical British literature. Entanglement, by contrast, provides a framework for engaging with the reality of colonial rule in the Caribbean within Victorian writing, as well as a vocabulary for examining the fascinations and reclamations that Caribbean writers demonstrate in relation to the Victorian period. Entanglement underlines a way of reading as well as a way of living; the term describes the historical condition of colonialism yet it also signals the active practice of examining that condition.

The second part of my argument accordingly delves into entanglement as conceptualized, lived, and negotiated by a range of Caribbean and Victorian authors. I fashion the idea of *radical cultural work* to, as I mentioned at the outset, describe my own critical transgression of aligning rather than opposing Caribbean and Victorian literatures, and to further bridge the ostensibly incongruent traditions of writing that I examine throughout my chapters. The texts I analyze therefore undertake radical cultural work, which explains why writers as seemingly disparate as George Eliot and Jean Rhys fall within this study's scope. Wynter's essay after all emphasizes how critics are workers, and debates about work proliferated within the Caribbean and Britain during the 1830s, the epoch where “Economies of Entanglement” begins. Parliament abolished slavery in 1834, which raised questions regarding if and how emancipated subjects would transition to wage labor. Mary Prince, an enslaved woman born in Bermuda, offers in her 1831 life narrative an example of how an individual physically worked *within* yet rhetorically labored *alongside* and *against* British colonialism’s legal, social, and economic realities. This study thus approaches the writers and characters it studies – from Prince to Jane Eyre and from Jamaica Kincaid to George Lamming, to name a few – as workers who sought to both trouble the status quo of complicity with colonialism’s transatlantic consequences and make sense of entangled realities.

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[14] Said describes contrapuntal reading in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 66.

[15] Nancy Henry rejects Said's reading practice as anachronistic and argues that postcolonial critics such as Said have "narrowed the notion of context to a morally blameworthy imperialism, distorting our understanding of the text's mimetic and moral subtleties." See Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 116.

Understanding writers as workers who exist within the structures of capitalism can be traced to Walter Benjamin’s 1934 lecture “The Author as Producer.” Benjamin outlines how authors, if they are to effectively critique the society in which they write, must produce provocative apparatuses, not merely stories that challenge readers. He explains that authors have to be aware of their “position in the process of production” in order for their work to be challenging in a way that can lead to transformative critique or change because capitalism often owns or co-opts instruments of discourse such as the newspaper.[16] Benjamin’s thinking anticipates the call Wynter makes for Caribbean criticism three decades later, and explicitly framing cultural production and criticism in the Caribbean as work in fact has a robust history.

Lloyd Best, the Trinidadian economist who was instrumental in forming the New World Group during the Caribbean’s decolonization, put the idea of intellectual work as labor most simply in his 1967 statement, “Thought is action for us.”[17] The Jamaican playwright Honor Ford-Smith extended Best’s formulation of the intellectual worker to a specifically creative context with her outline of the cultural worker over two decades later. The cultural worker is essentially Ford-Smith’s way of reiterating Benjamin’s idea of the author as producer. She suggests that the category of *the artist* carries connotations of being removed from politics and economics. For Ford-Smith, whose own work in theatre strives to transgress racial, class, and sexual boundaries, the choice to identify as a *cultural worker* stresses the quotidian links between politics, economics, and art.[18] “Economies of Entanglement” broadens the idea of the cultural worker to highlight how Caribbean and Victorian writers alike took advantage of forms ranging from the slave narrative to sage writing to the novel to examine their positions in a complex relationship of exploitation that relied on interdependence.

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[16] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writing*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 238.

My attention to such ideas of the explicit links between the arts, society, and capital might seem naive and outmoded, especially in a discursive climate where turning to an author’s comments could still be perceived as a fallacy of criticism at worse and, at best, a questionable choice. But the experience of interviewing George Lamming and Erna Brodber during the course of developing this project compels me to practice transparency regarding my own involvement in the relationship between creativity, work, and capital. Fellowships provided by Vanderbilt University, a wealthy American institution, facilitated my ability to travel to Barbados to speak with Lamming and Brodber’s visit to Nashville. Both authors live as cultural workers in the Caribbean today, a circumstance that suggests the erosion of London’s status as the region’s

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[17] Lloyd Best, “Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom,” *New World Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (Cropover 1967): 29.

[18] Honor Ford-Smith, “Notes Toward a New Aesthetic,” *MELUS* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1989 - 1990): 27.

"literary capital."[19] But while publishing possibilities for Caribbean writers have expanded in the decades after the London boom of the 1950s, the phenomena of what Wynter attacked as scholars' "'branch plant' perspective" on Caribbean literature remains largely true.[20] The academic research produced on the Caribbean today could even be seen to echo the amount of knowledge European empires produced on the region.[21]

I am in short entangled in the very economies – material, creative, and intellectual – whose legacies I examine in this project. My approach to Caribbean and British entanglement thus radically yet necessarily draws from an array of work in Caribbean, postcolonial, and Victorian studies. I have already outlined how Wynter's perspective in the Caribbean cultural debates of the late 1960s greatly informs mine here. Gayatri Spivak, another critic often thought of as polemical, serves as this project's lodestar for why scholars of literature from former colonies should re-read the Victorian canon. Spivak helped to establish a reading practice that sees literary texts such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) as producers of the stereotypes and racist perils involved in Britain's civilizing mission.[22] Many Victorianists have bemoaned Spivak's reading and accused her of lacking textual evidence and analytical rigor.[23] I nonetheless still take encouragement from Spivak's now thirty-year-old essay because it foregrounds the importance, both professionally and intellectually, of creatively crossing boundaries in Caribbean and postcolonial studies, an idea I will return to in the epilogue through a discussion of Erna Brodber's work.

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[19] Kenneth Ramchand, *The West Indian Novel and Its Background* (1970; repr., Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2004), 42.

[20] Wynter, """We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Talk About a Little Culture" Part One,'" 26.

[21] See Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London: Routledge, 2003), 197.

[22] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 243 – 261.

[23] Susan Meyer, for example, writes that Spivak's reading of Bertha Mason as "either native or not native" relies on "sleight of hand." See Meyer, *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 66. Erin O'Connor also points out that the typical postcolonial critic is "by and large not a specialist in nineteenth-century literature or history." See O'Connor, "Preface for a Post-Postcolonial Criticism," *Victorian Studies* 45, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 219. These slightly ad hominem critiques of postcolonial critics reveal how

This study more specifically finds common cause with the work of Belinda Edmondson and Faith Smith, Caribbean literary critics who are decidedly less polemical than Wynter and Spivak. Smith's *Creole Recitations* examines how the Afro-Trinidadian linguist John Jacob Thomas questioned yet at times reinforced the fiction of English superiority in the late nineteenth -century Caribbean. Along the way, Smith positions British discourses about race and colonialism as "one of the necessary contexts" for understanding Thomas, which is a perspective I adopt in this study when reading Caribbean texts produced or set within the nineteenth century.[24] Edmondson's *Making Men* is meanwhile one of the only studies that engage at length with the Victorian presences in twentieth-century anglophone Caribbean literature. In particular, Edmondson's study shows how the nationalist politics of male writers such as C.L.R. James were modeled on a paradigm of masculinity inherited from Thomas Carlyle, the most influential writer of the Victorian period. Like Edmondson, I set out to examine the affiliations Caribbean authors made with writers and strains of thought from the Victorian era.[25] But unlike Edmondson, I argue that the purchase of Victorian thought went beyond the nationalisms of male Caribbean writers. The second half of Edmondson's argument concerns how Caribbean women

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Spivak's approach to Victorian literature is often perceived as a kind of trespass on professional boundaries.

[24] Faith Smith, *Creole Recitations: John Jacob Thomas and Colonial Formation in the Late Nineteenth-Century Caribbean* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 80.

[25] Edmondson, *Making Men*, 40.

writers found their ideological and aesthetic antecedents in African American literature – an entanglement of its own – rather than within the Victorian canon.[26]

Yet part of the utility in selecting the idea of entanglement as the architecture for a critical approach lies in how it is a framework that attempts to keep intact the messiness of colonial exchange as it analyzes them. This means that the chapters that follow revisit familiar territory in Caribbean and Victorian relations, such as the links between *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. At the same time, I pair Victorian and Caribbean writers across gender affiliations. The Victorian art critic John Ruskin and the Antigua-born novelist Jamaica Kincaid, I argue, share a tradition of angry sage writing. In another chapter, I question the ongoing critical practice of understanding Caribbean writers as modernist by showing the parallel realist aesthetics of George Eliot and George Lamming. My extension of the genealogy of how Caribbean writers reclaimed ideas embedded in the Victorian milieu of their schoolrooms thus attempts a larger scope and complicates the gender division that Edmondson's study configures. Indeed, "Economies of Entanglement" covers more of the Victorian period as well as more writers across the tradition of anglophone Caribbean literature with the aim of fashioning a critical approach that retains a focus on a specific cultural relationship without purporting to tell a global account of imperialism.[27]

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[26] Kathleen Renk, like Edmondson, also turns to the limits of Victorian discourse to analyze the work of anglophone Caribbean women writers. For Renk, post-independence women writers such as Kincaid, Brodber, and Cliff reject their Victorian influences by offering an idea of the family that does not thrive on hierarchy in the way the Victorian "myth of the family" did. See Renk, *Caribbean Shadows and Victorian Ghosts: Women's Writing and Decolonization* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 7.

[27] But my project admittedly excludes at the level of the anglophone Caribbean: the writers I discuss are largely Afro-Caribbean or white creole, which means I leave out the East Indian perspectives of writers such as V.S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon.

My approach to Victorian writers beyond their reputation as categorically racist and exclusionary has been made possible by work in Victorian and postcolonial studies that shows the extent of interdependence between Britain and the Caribbean. Historians such as Catherine Hall underline how the very idea of English identity became consolidated in the faraway lands of its empire rather than simply within national borders.[28] Postcolonial literary critics such as Jenny Sharpe, Simon Gikandi, and Ian Baucom have examined women's writing, travelogues, and novels to show the instabilities and anxieties of the British empire from a cultural angle.[29] My interest in the multiple concrete manifestations of entanglement more specifically seeks to extend the findings of works by Nancy Henry, Elaine Freedgood, and Tim Watson, who have emphasized the contexts of Victorian writers' financial investments, transatlantic trade in materials such as mahogany wood from the West Indies, and events such as the 1865 Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica in their readings of George Eliot's and Charlotte Brontë's novels.[30]

Historicizing writers like Brontë, Ruskin, and Eliot is not to challenge the reality of their racial prejudices. To be clear, I am not trying to recover these Victorians as anti-imperialists in order to place them within a retrospective coalition with the likes of Kincaid, Lamming, and Brodber, who all carefully militate against the afterlife of British colonialism in the Caribbean.

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[28] Hall reminds us that history was after all the discipline reserved for studying Europe in the nineteenth century, while places "without history" such as Africa and the Caribbean were left to anthropologists. See Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9.

[29] Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[30] See Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire*; Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and Tim Watson, *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World, 1780 - 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Instead, my comparative analyses show how, in spite of these Victorians' racist attitudes and, likewise, in spite of the anticolonial politics of the Caribbean writers under study, we nonetheless see similar strategies of grappling with a world destabilized by colonial interdependence. "Economies of Entanglement" therefore bridges aspects of Caribbean, Victorian, and postcolonial studies with the goal of showing how critical protocols and historical contexts from these all fields need to be mobilized to better understand any writer or text that falls under the institutionally exclusionary rubrics of either "Caribbean" or "Victorian."

The underlying goal of this project is thus not, in the terms of Dipesh Chakrabarty's influential book title, to provincialize Europe.[31] But my ambition may be just as radical in light of tensions between the global and the particular: to challenge the idea that effective critical reading requires provincializing at all. In other words, my analyses remain anchored in the Caribbean even when they turn to discussions of events such as Britain's Great Exhibition of 1851 or traditions such as the nineteenth-century realist novel. As the four chapters that follow illustrate, radical cultural work was undertaken within some of the most restricted circumstances or ostensibly conservative forms: enslavement, marriage, and working as a domestic or governess on one hand, and inhabiting the sage tradition or writing novels about obscured parentage on the other. The chapters unfold in a roughly chronological fashion and move from the era of slavery in the early nineteenth century to the problems of independence in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century Caribbean. Yet this linear movement does not necessarily subscribe to an idea of historical progress. An additional critical utility of entanglement involves how it always laces the history of colonial asymmetries into its narrative, which my epilogue will contemplate even as it purposely attempts to turn away from a Victorian context.

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[31] Chakrabarty asserts that jettisoning the intellectual legacies of Europe is not what he means by "provincializing Europe," for all academics work within those structures. Rather, he is interested in how European thought can be "renewed from and for the margins." I obviously align with his interest in the margins throughout this study yet I am also concerned with how writers from, at least in the context here, the British center also questioned a discourse we can identify as European thought. See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16.

Chapter One, "The Roots of Radical Cultural Work: Respectability and Nineteenth-Century Women in the Caribbean," examines three women who have only been placed alongside one another by historians or critics interested in women's autobiographical writing: Mary Prince, Maria Nugent, and Mary Seacole.[32] That the broad genre of life writing supplies the primary lens for studying texts by these individuals makes sense: Prince's *History* is the oldest known life narrative by a West Indian slave; Nugent's journal is an often tedious document of her daily life as the wife of Jamaica's colonial governor, and Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures* offers perspectives into the Crimean War (1853 – 1856) and healthcare practices in the nineteenth century. But in my reading, these artifacts establish how writing from the Caribbean is always already an enterprise entangled in negotiating the links between colony and metropole. Prince, Nugent, and Seacole all take on a posture of polite and modest feminine respectability, which would seem to underline how they are circumscribed within a social institution that is both colonial and patriarchal. Yet I show how their texts – all documents of women's labor to some degree – in fact provide early evidence for the subversive rhetorical strategies critics more commonly identify within contemporary Afro-Caribbean women's writing.

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[32] Historian Bridget Brereton discusses Prince's, Nugent's, and Seacole's texts for their perspectives on Caribbean society in the nineteenth century. See Brereton, "Text, Testimony, and Gender: An Examination of Some Texts by Women in the English-Speaking Caribbean from the 1770s to the 1920s," in *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, eds. Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 63 – 93. Gillian Whitlock and Sandra Pouchet Paquet both entwine discussions of Prince and Seacole in their studies of women's life writing. See Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (London: Cassell, 2000) and Paquet, *Caribbean Autobiography: Cultural Identity and Self-Representation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).

Chapter Two, “Obeah and ‘Other Things’: *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Jane Eyre*, and the Price of Freedom,” continues exploring the question of women and work to provide a fresh perspective on the two most familiar novels of Caribbean and British entanglement. It is easy to forget that *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are both deeply concerned with women’s empowerment and freedom in light of the differences postcolonial criticism has trained readers to recognize between the two novels. This chapter thus focuses on how Jane from Brontë’s novel and Christophine from that of Rhys occupy deeply complex categories as women dealing with money: the former is a governess yet she also inherits her uncle’s fortune from a transatlantic wine trade, and the latter is a woman recently emancipated from servitude who, in my reading, earns money as a market woman whose product is the outlawed knowledge of obeah, or black spiritual magic. Both Jane’s inheritance and Christophine’s obeah are forged in the circuits of colonial trade, albeit one a consumable commodity while the other a system of intangible knowledge. The two women nonetheless fashion alternative economies that re-imagine what it means to be an emancipated subject.

Chapter Three, “Signs of the Times: John Ruskin, Jamaica Kincaid, and the Architecture of History,” moves away from the category of women’s writing to reveal a neglected genealogy of angry prose. The popular news website *The Huffington Post* lists twelve reasons why Kincaid is “a total badass” in a 2014 article.[33] Kincaid’s writing, like that of many other Caribbean writers, criticizes both European colonialism and global neoliberalism. Yet championing the writer as a badass – or worse, characterizing her through the stereotype of the “angry black woman” – ultimately dismisses taking seriously the powerful assessments of colonial history that

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[33] Joseph Erbentraut, “12 Reasons Why Writer Jamaica Kincaid Is a Total Badass,” *The Huffington Post*, October 24, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/24/jamaica-kincaid-interview-writing-badass_n_6036764.html.

Kincaid presents in texts ranging from *A Small Place* to her garden writing. This chapter links the discomfort around Kincaid's prose with a surprising yet illuminating antecedent: the Victorian sage tradition associated with men such as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin. Like Kincaid, these sages lashed out at what they perceived as society's wayward direction. Unlike Kincaid, however, these men garnered cultural prestige and the respect of their contemporaries. By tracing a strain of prophetic writing from Ruskin to Kincaid in particular, Chapter Three reveals how a prominent Caribbean woman writer reclaims the privileged position of the Victorian man of letters.

Chapter Four, "The Radical Realist Fictions of George Eliot and George Lamming," considers how the novel offers a medium for cohering the entanglements between the Caribbean and Britain. The chapter begins by juxtaposing Lamming's critical prose with his fiction to reveal how he practices a realist aesthetic that resuscitates that of the Victorian novelist George Eliot. The remarkable similarities between Lamming's *Season of Adventure* and Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* – both stage a search for parental origins as well as contemplate the role of art in society – trouble the novel's reputation in postcolonial studies as a genre that doubles as a cultural tool for perpetuating imperialism. In Lamming's and Eliot's novels, I argue, the work of the artist involves delineating the relationship between creative and political work – in other words, both authors show how politics and art must co-exist rather than stand in for each other.

A brief epilogue on Erna Brodber's novel *Louisiana* delimits the utility of entanglement as a critical reading approach. Brodber's novel, which I read as a travel narrative, underlines how the history of Caribbean and British relations must at times be completely submerged in order to reorient what the work of writing Caribbean literature can mean to future generations. For now, however, the majority of pages that follow confront links forged in a difficult past in the hope that challenging criticism may open new dialogues across the Caribbean and Victorian divide.

CHAPTER ONE

The Roots of Radical Cultural Work:
Respectability and Nineteenth-Century Women in the Caribbean

Introduction

Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands (1857) is an exemplary text for illustrating the entanglement introduced in the previous pages. Mary Seacole, the text's author, self-identifies as a Creole born in Kingston, Jamaica to a Scottish solider father and a Creole mother. Seacole strategically affiliates with either the Caribbean or British threads of her lineage throughout her autobiographical travel narrative as she recounts her experiences from Panama to the Crimean peninsula. She points to her "Scotch blood," for example, as the source of her "energy and activity which are not always found in the Creole race."[34] Seacole is of course responding to the writings of Bryan Edwards and Edward Long, the historians of the Jamaican planter class who perpetuated images of idle Creoles. Elsewhere, Seacole uses her connection to the descendants of Africa to criticize "the airs of superiority" that Americans assume over her. As Seacole points out to her British reading audience, "America still owns" the bodies of slaves, which positions "our cousins across the Atlantic" as a society lagging behind Britain in terms of civilizational progress (21). Seacole, who describes herself as "only a little brown," thereby fashions herself in a way that problematizes ideas of both Victorian femininity and Caribbean anticolonialism: her blackness is an affront to the white womanhood she co-opts, and her identification with Britain makes it difficult for present-day critics to champion her narrative (13).[35]

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[34] Mary Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857; repr., New York: Penguin, 2005), 11. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

But this chapter considers how our understanding of Seacole's entangled identificatory politics, as well as that of other nineteenth-century women linked to the Caribbean such as Maria Nugent and Mary Prince, might look differently when these individuals are approached as cultural workers rather than as women who happened to produce valuable textual artifacts. Cultural work as defined by Honor Ford-Smith after all emphasizes creative productions as occurring within the realities of their contemporary politics and economics. The questions I bring to Seacole's, Nugent's, and Prince's writings therefore show more fascination with these women's varying statuses as workers who negotiate the powerful code of Victorian respectability rather than with the handicaps and possibilities of the genres in which they write, which range from the mediated slave narrative in Prince's case to the diary in Nugent's to the autobiography in Seacole's.[36]

Wonderful Adventures from the outset foregrounds women as workers. Seacole informs readers that her mother ran a boarding house in Kingston and that she was furthermore "an admirable doctress" (11 – 12).[37] Seacole follows in her mother's footsteps when she establishes a hotel in Cruces near Panama and another in the Crimea during the war later in the 1850s. The most fascinating aspect of *Wonderful Adventures* involves how Seacole's work as a hotel entrepreneur and doctress extends rather than undermines her respectable ambitions. Simon Gikandi's reading of *Wonderful Adventures* pays special attention to how Seacole's performance of "imperial femininity" circumscribes her within an ideology of Englishness that can only exclude her.[38] Yet his analysis misses moments where Seacole's Victorian femininity actually relies on an affiliation with narratives of masculinity.

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[35] Simon Gikandi, whose reading I discuss further below, points out that Seacole is "haunted by [Englishness's] exclusive racialism." See Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 126. Sandra Pouchet Paquet meanwhile underlines how *Wonderful Adventures* "reflects an acceptance of colonialism after slavery." See Paquet, *Caribbean Autobiography: Cultural Identity and Self-Representation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 52. Both of these readings seem limited to me for constantly measuring *Seacole*'s extent of Englishness. In that regard, the reading I outline here extends Rhonda Frederick's more difficult task of exploring "the complexity of [Seacole's] *Jamaican* subject position." See Frederick, "Creole Performance in *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*," *Gender & History* 15, no. 3 (November 2003): 493, emphasis mine.

[36] Yet all three narratives also count as travelogues to some extent, as the chapter discusses below.

Seacole's alignments with masculinity range from the superficial to the coincidental to the contradictory. She opens *Wonderful Adventures* citing her paternal Scottish lineage, and she reflects on how her savings had to be "carefully husbanded" in order for her to reach the Crimea and contribute to the British war effort against the Russians (70). Yet Seacole's narrative also recounts instances where her claims to Victorian womanhood become especially complex as a result of their sympathy toward men in wartime. First, Seacole admits in a parenthetical aside when dealing with Florence Nightingale's bureaucratic staff at Scutari Hospital that she "never found women so quick to understand me as the men" (81). This reads as a surprising remark to make in a narrative targeted to a middle-class British audience: Seacole's admission of a lack of rapport with women risks isolating them as readers. British soldiers after all call the doctress "Mother Seacole" yet her brand of mothering involves the vulnerable space of an international warzone and the knowledge of science and nursing, not the conventional realms and activities of the home and childrearing. Claims that Seacole hyperbolizes Victorian femininity to access Englishness thus underestimate how her writing – which I understand as her radical cultural work – fashions its own practice of Caribbean respectability that highlights the particular subversion women at work can achieve.[39]

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[37] Sara Salih notes that Seacole's choice of the term "doctress" seems an intentional decision to distinguish herself from religious healers within Jamaican society. See Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*, n. 6, 183 – 184. Chapter Two's discussion of *Wide Sargasso Sea* explores issues around Jamaican religious healers at more length.

[38] Gikandi concludes his reading of Seacole's narrative on an extremely pessimistic note and argues, "To be a colonial subject in the nineteenth century, then, is to exist in a cultural cul-de-sac" where speaking always already involves bolstering the imperial project. See Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, 142.

Respectability developed two complementary narratives in the Caribbean within the historical process of colonial rule. For the English coming to the West Indies, the deterioration of respectable morals regarding religion, consumption, and sex earned them the reputation of creole degeneracy. For the enslaved, demonstrating respectability through acceptance of Christianity and attainment of scribal literacy often became a way of verifying the assumption that blacks could move from the status of savage to civilized. But these seemingly straightforward practices of proper middle-class behavior also hold the potential to trouble the boundaries of whose comportment counts as respectable.

Belinda Edmondson and Faith Smith in different ways have examined the relationship between Caribbean respectability and the model of the gentleman scholar. For Edmondson, the appropriation of the respectable scholar created an unfortunate gap in twentieth century Caribbean literature. She argues that it leaves women writers with no immediately discernible local antecedents because the Caribbean writer is always already modeled after the Victorian man of letters.[40] Smith meanwhile shows how John Jacob Thomas, the Afro-Trinidadian linguist who published the first study of the creole language in 1869 and also famously responded to Victorian James Anthony Froude's racist travelogue of the West Indies, provides an instructive example of how Afro-Caribbean subjects adopted respectable qualities to subvert the English's ostensible superiority.[41] With the expansion of an educational system imported from Britain opened to the black rural class of Trinidad in the 1850s, Thomas was part of a generation that used intellect and cultural capital rather than race and money to build a new middle class. Employed as a teacher and then as a civil servant and often a participant within the editorial pages of Caribbean newspapers, he exemplified the gentleman scholar archetype. Thomas challenged Englishmen such as Froude, in other words, by attempting to beat them at their own game.[42]

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[39] Gikandi argues that because writing is the only strategy Seacole has available, her rhetoric necessarily tends to "overemphasize" feminine Englishness. Ibid., 127.
[40] Edmondson, *Making Men*.

But the gentleman scholar was only one way to assert a respectable form of cultural capital in the nineteenth-century Caribbean. Critics have commented on how *Wonderful Adventures* contains rhetorical conventions linked to the slave narrative. Indeed, her claims to seeing and hearing the sufferings in the Crimea resonate with first-person reflections on the horrors of slavery, and her inclusion of appreciative letters from soldiers who received her care show how Seacole required the authorization of the British to legitimate her account. Yet Seacole remarkably turns her back on such deference as well. Seacole is aware that her narrative of the Crimea is one of many cultural products about the war conflict available to British readers.[43] Yet she boldly argues that her *Wonderful Adventures* have been shaped in a style all her own:

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[41] See J. J. Thomas, *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar* (Port of Spain: The Chronicle Publishing Office, 1869) and *Froudacity: West Indian Fables by James Anthony Froude* (Philadelphia: Gebbie and Co., 1890). The latter is a response to James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies: Or, The Bow of Ulysses* (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888).

[42] Smith, *Creole Recitations*.

[43] Gillian Whitlock notes that *Wonderful Adventures* existed within "a proliferation of writing around and about the Crimean War." See Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire*: *Reading Women's Autobiography* (London: Cassell, 2000), 87.

> I am fully aware that I have jumbled up events strangely, talking in the same page, and even sentence, of events which occurred at different times; but I have three excuses to offer for my unhistorical inexactness. In the first place, my memory is far from trustworthy, and I kept no written diary; in the second place, the reader must have had more than enough of journals and chronicles of Crimean life, and I am only the historian of Spring Hill; and in the third place, unless I am allowed to tell the story of my life in my own way, I cannot tell it at all. (128)

I argue that Seacole's negotiation of respectability and brazenness epitomized in this passage establishes a template of radical cultural work that enables me to retrospectively highlight subtler strategies of disruptively respectable conduct we find in earlier texts by Nugent and Prince. Seacole seems to intentionally structure her verboseness in these lines that open Chapter XV of her narrative: she enumerates three excuses even though the third and most direct one could have served as rationale enough for the "jumbled" shape of her narrative. Yet this strategy of asserting her "own way" only at the end of the paragraph points to how Seacole's commitment to politeness enables a strange pleasure in the act of crafting *Wonderful Adventures* in the first place.

Gikandi reminds us that Seacole wrote her narrative because she was penniless and in need of money.[44] Seacole even states in her conclusion that "[p]erhaps it would be right if I were to express more shame and annoyance than I really feel at the pecuniarily disastrous issue of my Crimean adventures" (169). Critics thus read *Wonderful Adventures* as a failure of colonial critique because of the extent of Seacole's interpellation within British imperialism. But taking seriously Seacole's claim that her satisfaction with being publicly recognized for the care she provided to British soldiers fulfills her more than money is precisely the kind of unexpected economy that the framework of Caribbean and British entanglement helps make legible. The radical cultural work of Seacole's narrative therefore lies in how its author emotionally profits from the attachment she has personally developed toward Britain, not from money, which would seem the most advantageous outcome for woman in such a situation. The possibility that women might have personally profited in a non-monetary manner from their writing pursuits thereby helps us reread two texts that precede Seacole's: Maria Nugent's Jamaica journal and Mary Prince's life story as a slave.

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[44] Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, 142.

Maria Nugent

I. Radical Respectability

Maria Nugent was born Maria Skinner in 1770 or 1771 to Cortlandt Skinner, a Loyalist to Britain and the advocate-general of the American colony of New Jersey. After the American Revolution ended in 1783, Skinner and his family moved to Britain. Maria Skinner then married George Nugent, a British army officer, in 1797; he was appointed governor of the colony of Jamaica in 1801.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jamaica was an extremely precious colony for Britain, which was embroiled with France in the early stages of the Napoleonic Wars. Jamaica's plantations produced thousands of tons of sugar, and the island was strategically located about 100 miles to the west of France's Saint-Domingue, the most profitable colony in the entire Caribbean – and the one whose slave population recently overthrew its colonial masters. When he arrived in Jamaica, Governor Nugent was therefore negotiating the possibility of affiliating with Toussaint L'Ouverture's new republic as a challenge to France. Such talks fizzled, however, when Britain and France resumed war with one another in 1803. Nevertheless, the Jamaica in which the Nugents lived remained on edge with the possibility of a large-scale slave rebellion across its plantations.

At first glance, the diary Nugent kept while in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805 reads like a repetitive account of dinners, balls, and meetings. An entry from September 27, 1801, for example, uses the abbreviated prose representative of many other passages in the diary: “Drove in the curricle to Spanish Town, at 5. - Found the dinner party assembling. - Dressed immediately, and dined at 6.”[45] The governorship of Jamaica was a well-paid position, much like those of Ireland or India, Britain’s other colonial strongholds in the nineteenth century. Nugent’s preoccupation with formal social engagements therefore comes as no surprise. But in her diary, Nugent expresses ambivalence toward her role as wife of the man leading Britain’s most crucial West Indian colony. Constantly dining with colonial officials and their wives in the morning and evening amid anxieties regarding the slave population's recent overthrow of the French in Saint-Domingue, Nugent in one entry rejoices at the rare treat of taking breakfast alone. In addition to recording names and dates, Nugent’s diary also provides access to her interiority. “Put on great spirits, however, and pretend to be gayer than usual,” she admits upon recognizing her husband's distress with his new position (24).

At the outset of her journal, which begins and ends in England to bookend her travels, Nugent bemoans her husband’s appointment as Jamaica’s governor. But the sense that she and her husband are fulfilling a higher calling supersedes any frustration. She admits in the preface to her journal that remaining in her Hampstead home suits her more than “playing the Governor’s lady to the *blackies*: but *we* are soldiers, and must have no will of our own” (2, emphasis in original). Nugent’s condescending term for Jamaicans alongside her eagerness to assume the profession of her husband – she stresses that “*we*” are soldiers – frames her as a kind of protoangel in the house.[46] Indeed, Nugent demonstrates the virtuousness of her Christian womanhood at the outset of the transatlantic journey to Jamaica: she packs forty-five bibles for the benighted sailors (5).

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[45] Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, ed. Philip Wright (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1966), 24 – 25. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

As Nugent spends more time in Jamaica, however, these respectable characteristics paradoxically draw out attitudes that chip away at notions of proper femininity. In contrast to understandings of radicalism that hinge on dramatic reforms and extensions of rights, Nugent's radical cultural work emerges when her journal entries challenge our expectations to show the complex, contradictory thoughts of an individual figuring out her exact position amid the entanglement of Britain and the Caribbean.

The genre of the personal journal poses difficulties for drawing out Nugent's politics in a clear-cut manner, much like how the financial realities surrounding Seacole's life often overdetermine how critics read *Wonderful Adventures*. Claudia Brandenstein argues that Nugent performs "a deliberately constructed and self-regulated" persona in the journal, while B.W. Higman underlines how personal journals can "detail everyday experience with an immediacy and purported veracity found wanting in narratives composed long after the event."[47] I align with Higman's attitude, but I want to stress how the banality of the journal operates on two levels: Nugent offers a disturbing panorama of Jamaican society that, as Sylvia Wynter points out in her neglected reading, remains valuable over a century later.[48] And I emphasize another layer: the journal's articulation of Nugent's personal mores enables her to act as a cultural worker. Later in the chapter, I show how Mary Prince's recognition of social codes enables her to practice a more explicit form of such cultural work that we already saw Seacole undertake.

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[46] For more on the "angel in the house" in the nineteenth century Caribbean, see O'Callaghan, *Women Writing the West Indies,* 28. According to historians Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, the line from St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands," supplied a model for the typical respectable English household in the nineteenth century. See Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002), 108.

[47] Brandenstein, "'Making the agreeable to the big wigs,'" 46; Higman, "Eight Iterations of Lady Nugent's Jamaica Journal," 170.

Nugent's tour of the New Hall sugar estate outside Spanish Town presents a fascinating instance where she challenges the plantation system as an extension of her feminine propriety. In her entry of February 24, 1802, Nugent, her husband, and several other colonial officials wake early to tour Bog Walk. Nugent describes it as "really the most romantic, beautiful, and picturesque road I ever saw or could imagine" (61). Carved into a mountain and offering a view of a river, Bog Walk provides Nugent the opportunity to unleash her descriptive writing skills: she details how "large fragments of rock, which had rolled down the precipice with the trees and shrubs upon them, looked like islands" dotted on the river (61).[49] Nugent and her party eventually arrive at the sugar works, where they observe "the whole process of sugar making" (62).

The combination of machines and manpower intrigues Nugent, for the process of sugar making involves waterpower that turns a mill, various cylinders, gutters, and cauldrons, and slaves assigned to tasks such as inserting cane and stirring boiling sugar. She inquires with the overseer about when the slaves are discharged from their day's work, and his response appalls her:

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[48] In 1976, Wynter suggested that *Lady Nugent's Jamaica Journal* be made available in "cheap paperback" form in Jamaica's grocery stores and pharmacies rather than the "finely bound" and "altogether handsome" edition targeted to historians that the Institute of Jamaica released in 1966. Wynter proposes that such mass availability would allow Jamaicans to better understand the longstanding tensions of race and class on the island. See Wynter, "*Lady Nugent's Journal*," *Jamaica Journal 1*, no. 1 (Dec. 1976): 23.

[49] Brandenstein reads scenes in the journal such as these in line with the Romantic period's "predisposition to gaze in a certain way." See Brandenstein, "'Making the agreeable to the big wigs,'" 56.

> He said every twelve hours; but how dreadful to think of their standing twelve hours over a boiling cauldron, and doing the same thing; and he owned to me that sometimes they did fall asleep, and get their poor fingers into the mill; and he shewed me a hatchet, that was always ready to sever the whole limb, as the only means of saving the poor sufferer's life! I would not have a sugar estate for the world! (62 – 63)

In contrast to the beautiful surroundings that delighted Nugent en route to New Hall, the industrialism of the sugar works both fascinates and disgusts her. The detail with which she describes the process of sugar production reveals how Nugent did not simply observe the process. As she discloses, comments from men such as the overseer were actively sought, and in the distillery section, she laments that the smell was too nauseating for her to "stay to make a minute enquiry" (63). Nugent's curiosity enables her to think critically about the production of sugar. Her description of an injured slave as a "poor" victim with "poor fingers" certainly exudes an attitude of sentimental crusading, but I suggest that her recognition the bodily toll of sugar manufacturing in a personal journal opens a powerful critique of the plantation system. After all, as an observation in her personal journal, Nugent's response to the sugar works lacks the propagandic posture that earned abolitionists such a vilified reputation in Britain.

Unable to stomach the thought that amputating a limb offers the only way to save the life of a slave caught in the mill, Nugent rejects the possibility of having the blood of a sugar estate on her own hands. To be sure, such a personal position fails to mobilize any effort to actually undo the sugar economy of Jamaica. But here the genre of the journal deserves closer examination. Scholars point out how the fact that Nugent kept her Jamaica journal for herself and her children shapes its unique gaze. On one hand, the litany of entries that supply rosters of attendees at dinner balls acts as a kind of social diary for posterity. But on the other, the detail that Nugent was not writing for publication strips her journal of any predictable pro-planter or antislavery agendas.[50]

Precisely because Nugent wrote in the absence of an audience, her journal entries create a unique window into how feminine respectability – seemingly a stronghold for holding onto the status quo – held the possibility for radical challenges to the plantation system. Unlike the women I will discuss later, such as Mary Prince and Christophine from *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Nugent's class position obviates her need for entrepreneurship. In fact, she admits that "pecuniary distresses" make her "exceedingly uncomfortable" (132). But when she envisions the possibility of women in business, as she does while observing the sugar factory, Nugent speaks from her position of privilege to reject such brutal industrialism as untenable. Walter Benjamin's famous comment regarding how "[t]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" thus carries eerie relevance for Nugent's journal.[51] As a diary kept amid slavery, we expect Nugent's entries to comprise a document of barbarism. But as this moment in the sugar factory reveals, Nugent attempted to approach the violent combination of industrialism and slavery with an informed perspective. Even if her future children constituted her primary audience, the record of such an attitude toward enslaved industrialism challenges complacency.

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[50] Philip Wright, editor of the 1966 edition of the journal, explains, "She wrote for her own amusement and the future interest of her children, not with a view to publication. The lists of guests and visitors, which she scribbled down daily, perhaps had the practical function of aiding her social memory." See Wright, introduction to *Lady Nugent's Journal*, by Maria Nugent (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1966), xiii. But Victorian critics also point out that the lines between public and private writing are not as rigid as our assumptions would lead us to believe. Catherine Delafield, for example, writes that even the kind of ostensibly private family journal kept by a woman "would have value in public as an acknowledgement of a life and of a circulating heredity." See Delafield, *Women's Diaries as Narrative in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 9.

[51] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (1968; repr., New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 256.

By dismissing any desire to own a sugar estate due to a squeamish stomach and a moralizing concern for slaves, Nugent's attitude also demonstrates her position as an English outsider within Jamaica's plantation society. Throughout the journal, Nugent often comments on the vacuous lifestyles of creole planters and black slaves alike. For her, both lack Christian beliefs and sustain a society that exists solely for perpetuating economic gain. But Nugent's concern for the bodies of slaves and her recognition of Jamaica as a society so inimically shaped by its sugar economy should not be dismissed as self-righteousness. Instead, her perspectives raise the possibility of colonial entanglements imagined otherwise. Her attention to the welfare of slave workers, for example, anticipates the critique of factory labor that the art critic John Ruskin, who I discuss in a later chapter, would write about later in the nineteenth century. And consider part of this April 24, 1802 entry, where Nugent reflects on Jamaica after ten months of living in Spanish Town and touring other parts of the island:

> It is indeed melancholy, to see the general disregard of both religion and morality, throughout the whole island. Every one seems solicitous to make money, and no one appears to regard the mode of acquiring it. It is extraordinary to witness the immediate effect that the climate and habit of living in this country have upon the minds and manners of Europeans, particularly of the lower orders. In the upper ranks, they become indolent and inactive, regardless of every thing but eating, drinking, and indulging themselves, and are almost entirely under the dominion of their mulatto favourites. In the lower orders, they are the same, with the addition of conceit and tyranny; considering the negroes as creatures formed merely to administer to their ease, and to be subject to their caprice; and I have found much difficulty to persuade those great people and superior beings, our white domestics, that the blacks are human beings, or have souls. (98)

Nugent criticizes wealthy and poor Europeans alike for what was widely considered creole degeneracy, and she frowns upon the latter in particular for their treatment of blacks. She seems to respect her white servants, but laments having to vouch for the humanity of blacks to them. Nugent ultimately does not affiliate with any group, only with a sense of religious morality.

As Nugent spends more time in Jamaica, however, she takes on some of the indolence that initially made her observe the island with despair. She writes of her typical daily routine of "writing, reading, and creolizing" (117). As Colin Dayan has described, Nugent's language of creolizing attempts to cast white women's privileged lives in the West Indies as a disease rather than a conscious choice, "as if they were too weak-willed or amoral to resist the contagious attractions of loose living, scanty dress, and languorous talk."[52] According to a source published in 1817, creolizing is "an easy and elegant mode of lounging in a warm climate; so called, because much in fashion among the ladies of the West Indies: that is, reclining back in one arm-chair, with their feet upon another, and sometimes upon the table" (117, n.1).[53] Nugent would go on to mention creolizing a handful more times throughout her journal, which, as any reader could recognize, accompanies her actual process of adapting to aspects of plantation society throughout her years in Jamaica.

The experience of becoming creole – that is, holding on to aspects of Englishness while adopting local Jamaican social life – presents more opportunities for Nugent to unsuspectingly practice radical actions. Her journal entry for May 26, 1803 recounts a servants' hall birthday celebration where "the blackies enjoy themselves." The food spread contains "all their most favourite dishes" such as barbecued and jerked hogs, yams, and plantains. When the dining portion of the ball is over, Nugent recounts choosing "an old negro man" with whom to dance. Such a gesture, she explains, is "exactly the same as I would have done at a servants' hall birthday in England." But this action amazes the Murphy ladies, Nugent's close friends. In her journal, Nugent writes, "They told me, afterwards, that they were nearly fainting, and could hardly forbear shedding a flood of tears, at such an unusual and extraordinary sight; for in this country, and among slaves, it was necessary to keep up so much more distant respect!" Nugent concedes that her friends "may be right" and goes on to write about their reported anxieties concerning how too much proximity to whites "might make a serious change in their conduct, and even produce a rebellion in the island" (156).

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[52] Colin [Joan] Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 178.

[53] The 1817 text that Wright cites within his edition of Nugent's journal for this definition is John McLeod's *Narrative of a Voyage in His Majesty's Late Ship Alceste, to the Yellow Sea*.

Nugent's obliviousness to such politics is ironic: as the wife of the island's governor, one would assume she is more privy to political rumors than the Murphy women, who are wives of Custos officers, or justices of the peace. But earlier in the journal, Nugent suggests that she explicitly wishes to remove herself from political affairs, which she understands as the domain of men. Less than a year into her time in Jamaica, she writes about a mutiny on the *Seine* ship; ten of the mutineers would be brought to trial immediately, which might swiftly result in a penalty of death. Nugent recounts her distress in a similar manner to her concern for the slaves in the sugar works; she uses terms such as "poor" and "dreadful." She concludes the February 22, 1802 entry by admitting, "I thank God that I am not a man, to run either the risk of such offences against society, or the being obliged to pass sentence upon them" (61). This disclosure is provocative. It reveals that Nugent believes a woman cannot be an agent of disruption in society; it also shows that she feels women lack the burden of making difficult decisions in the lives of others. Both qualities – troubling society and passing judgments with concrete consequences – are part and parcel of radicalism in a conventional political sense.

But within the entangled worlds of Jamaica and Britain, Nugent's withdrawal from political life paradoxically allows her to articulate a political attitude with the startling power to offend. Such is the situation when she chooses to dance with a black man at the servants' ball. Nugent's attempt to import English practices into Jamaica comes off to her fellow white ladies as tone deafness to the social manners of the West Indian colony. But it is also an instance where her inclinations to uphold respectable English womanhood and avoid disruption in order to implicitly remain neutral demonstrates the exact opposite. Literally situated between the English Murphy ladies and her black male servant at the ball, Nugent chooses to affiliate with the latter in a gesture of tradition only to appall the former. However unbeknownst to herself, Nugent's decisions at the ball and her act of recording reactions to them in her journal constitute noteworthy defiance to the plantation system of her daily surroundings.

II. "A Great Chasm in My Journal": The Limits of Nugent's Cultural Work

In October 1802, Nugent gives birth to a son whom she names George after her husband. Less than a year later, in September 1803, she welcomes to the world a daughter she calls Louisa. Despite these joyous occasions, the ongoing revolution in nearby Saint-Domingue – alongside conflicts between the British Royal Navy and French fleets – created a tense environment in Nugent's Jamaica. She does not seem personally concerned with the possibility of a slave rebellion in Jamaica in the May 1803 entry that recounts the servants' ball that I discussed earlier, but her journal quickly begins to register a shift only a month later. Nugent limits description of events in Saint-Domingue to what she gleans from "my dear N.," her pet name for her husband. On June 17, 1803, she writes, "It is said that much mischief is brewing in the country, and that it is connected with the St. Domingo French, &c; but all this is secret information, and must be enquired into privately" (163). By her entry of the following day, it seems Nugent and her husband have devised a safety strategy for the worst case scenario: "Should anything decidedly take place, we have agreed that my best plan would be to go on board ship, and remain there till after my confinement" (164).

Bridget Brereton notes that the fear of a slave rebellion occurring in Jamaica as a repercussion of the revolution in Saint-Domingue could be seen in one of Nugent's curious descriptions of "a horrid looking black man" she encounters on an evening walk with her children on April 2, 1805. Even though she recognizes him as a boatman from a canoe she used prior to acquiring her own vessel, Nugent writes having felt "terror" at his smile on this evening (227).[54] With the new nation of Haiti, formerly Saint-Domingue, in existence for over a year, it indeed seems as if Nugent's formerly Christian and radically respectable attitudes toward blacks in Jamaica have deteriorated. With motherhood, Nugent's entries increasingly focus on her children, particularly the fear that her son may become a profligate creole. With illness all around her – her husband and several close friends begin to suffer malaria, and some suddenly die – she furthermore feels less at ease on the island in which she used to spend days "creolizing."[55]

The radical cultural work I have traced in key moments during Nugent's first two years in Jamaica therefore retreats into complicity with the plantation system the more time she spends on the colony. This may be so, but I would like to conclude my discussion of Nugent's cultural work by underlining the difficulty of her journal-writing project. My goal is to suggest that although journaling is often gendered female for its privatized recording process away from the world of men, it was an activity that increasingly failed to provide Nugent with the same outlet for radicalism once she began prioritizing the needs of her children. The task of radical cultural work thus gets passed on to the other writers I examine in my project, all who engage in more explicit political projects after Nugent's journaling experience.

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[54] For Brereton's reading of this moment, see "Text, Testimony, and Gender," 65.

[55] Historian Vincent Brown describes Jamaica in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as "a death trap" for the prevalence of sickness and dying. As a result of malnutrition, the enslaved, particularly young children, died at high rates. Meanwhile, yellow fever took the lives of many among the white population from Britain and other parts of Europe. See Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 13 – 59.

In October 1802 and September 1803, Nugent's journal pauses for several entries due to childbirth. When she resumes the journal in both instances, she writes, "Here has been a great chasm in my Journal" (123, 174). After the birth of George, she goes nearly three weeks without journaling, and after the birth of Louisa, only four days. By calling both gaps "a great chasm," we get a sense of how important writing in her journal must have been for Nugent, even if a typical entry merely consists of a list of her day's activities. Upon resuming her journal, she rejoices at having a new topic to cover, "the progress and improvement of our dear little boy!" (125). This topic eventually draws out attitudes about creole contamination and race that do not seem to concern Nugent beyond her identity as a mother. I already cited an instance where she feels terror at the sight of black male acquaintance when out an evening stroll with her children; Nugent shows similar fears when she expresses desire to guide her son away from the creole excesses she has observed since her arrival on the island. Nugent's entry for February 12, 1803 recounts a day with her son; her niece and sister-in-law, whose husband prior to his death was Nugent's brother and a captain at Port Antonio in northeastern Jamaica, were also present. Likening her sister-in-law to "all Creole ladies," Nugent disapproves of the team of servants who quickly attend to her niece's whims and wants. She wishes to raise her son George in a different manner yet worries her environment might overwhelm her efforts: "But, in this country, it will be difficult to prevent him from thinking himself a little king at least, and then will come arrogance, I fear, and all the petty vices of little tyrants" (146).

Throughout her early months in Jamaica, the gluttony of creole men prompts utter disgust and ultimately sympathy from Nugent. "Such loads of all sorts of high, rich, and seasoned things, and really gallons of wine and mixed liquors as they drink!" she exclaims after one dinner (57). She does not want her son to go down what seems like an inevitable path for the children of colonial officials, which is partly why she moves back to England in late June of 1805. But what should be intriguing is how her desire to maintain English respectability in Jamaica complicates rather than facilitates Nugent's sense of politics. As the example of her son vis-à-vis her niece shows, Nugent prefers to raise her son as her ideal of a sensible Englishman, not as a spoiled creole. Yet just three months later when Nugent imports the practice of dancing with an elder servant at the ball, her gesture of holding onto Englishness shows an effort to include rather than exclude her local environment. This contrast in Nugent's attitudes highlights how the pragmatic demands of motherhood undermine her subtle yet important cultural work.

In addition to the "great chasm" her journal sees due to childbearing, Nugent's entries become increasingly irregular as she attends to her children and other family matters. As Nugent fretfully admits in her entry for November 7, 1803:

> I don't know how it is of late – I have no time for keeping a journal. – It is a task to me. I see a great deal of company. I have a large and *anxious* household to attend to. I have constant applications and notes to answer; and then, my dear little ones to occupy too delightfully my leisure moments, to allow of my giving any sort of description of persons of things, or what is going on here. Besides, I regret to say, that my dear N. has many and great vexations, which, added to the heat of the climate, fill my mind, more than anything, to make me constantly tremble for his health. (181, emphasis in original)

Nugent's "leisure moments" early during her time in Jamaica involved touring the island and going on to write detailed descriptions in her journal of places such as Bog Walk and the sugar factory nearby. With two children, an ill husband, and Jamaica's political affairs with Saint-Domingue, she no longer enjoys keeping a journal. In the excerpt above, she admits such writing has devolved into a "task." Indeed, by the summer of 1805, when Nugent and her children journey across the Atlantic for England, she only keeps up the journal to make her husband feel as if she, George, and Louisa are in good spirits when they all in fact suffer from seasickness (248). The practice that begins as an outlet for valuable descriptions and an archive for her unexpected politics thus becomes a mask for reassuring banality. The respectability that enables her radical attitudes earlier in the journal – rejecting the bodily toll of sugar production and extending English servant hall etiquette to a black male servant – loses its subversive edges when Nugent's domestic duties expand. Instead of thinking critically through the act of description about creoles, blacks, and the society that links them, she ends up superficially embracing a creole identity for herself as her boat approaches England. "Towards evening," she writes in her final entry before sighting England, "very cold to *us Creoles*" (252, emphasis in original). In contrast to her declaration that "*we* are soldiers" when she and her husband set off for Jamaica, Nugent identifies as "*us Creoles*" with a kind of mocking sense of detachment. This twisted, chiastic articulation of identity underlines how Nugent's radical energies deteriorate throughout her time in Jamaica.

When her husband reunites with the family in 1806, Nugent and her family live comfortably in Buckinghamshire, where George receives a baronetcy and Maria the title of "Lady." In 1811, however, George is once again flung to another part of the British empire: he is appointed Commander-in-Chief in India. Nugent accompanies her husband as she did in Jamaica, while the children remain in England. She keeps a journal in India as well, but unlike her writing in Jamaica, it has received limited critical attention. Nevertheless, excerpts from the Indian diary included in Frank Cundall's 1907 edition of the Jamaica journal show a familiar Maria Nugent. One entry crusades against what she perceives as the "odious custom" of smoking hookahs.[56] But in contrast to the enslaved in Jamaica, Nugent finds herself impressed by the East Indian's religiousness. At the same time, however, she wonders if their spirituality and rituals constitute "superstition" (365). Her India journal also contains some efforts at poetry, which she hopes might "amuse my children, should they ever read them" (369). But Nugent's predominant tone in India resembles that of her final days in Jamaica: she primarily has her children and England in mind. "My most agreeable occupation is," she admits, "when I can steal a moment to myself to shut my eyes, and build castles, upon the subject of England and my dear children" (380). But it is perhaps Mary Prince, the subject of the next section, who more than Nugent sought to steal a moment to herself.

Mary Prince

I. The Respectable Activist

Mary Prince's narrative diverges from Nugent's journal in many ways. Prince, first of all, was a slave, not a woman of privilege. She was separated from her family as a young adolescent, then from her husband in adulthood. Her daily responsibilities at various points in her life included brutal labor in Turk Island's salt ponds and washing backbreaking loads of laundry when she suffered from rheumatism in London. Though her life story, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, is a valuable artifact of women's writing, it was never close to a private text like Nugent's journal. Prince wrote her history with the assistance of both Susanna Strickland, an amanuensis with literary aspirations, and Thomas Pringle, an editor and secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in London.[57] The actual textual form of Prince's *History* thus contains a preface by Pringle that presents a strange contradiction: he describes how "[t]he idea" of writing a life story was Prince's own and subsequently that "[t]he narrative was taken down from Mary's own lips." Yet Pringle also discloses that the narrative was "pruned into its present shape," which seems to undermine its verisimilitude.[58] The British abolitionist reading public nonetheless excitedly consumed Prince's *History* when it was published in 1831. The text even went into its third edition by the end of that year. More recently, it has garnered steady attention from critics – not, like Nugent's journal, for its unique historiographical insights, but for exploring contentious topics such as the breadth of early Caribbean women's writing, narrative agency in the slave narrative, and autobiographical form.[59] Prince's reflective narrative is also exactly that – a *narrative* shaped by memory and structure, while Nugent's journal shows the rich banality of arguably unfiltered details.

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[56] Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal: Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago* (London: Institute of Jamaica, 1907), 360. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

Yet Prince and Nugent share important commonalities as well. In addition to supplying two key texts of nineteenth-century women's writing relating to the Caribbean, both practice Christian forms of womanhood that allow them to engage in unexpected forms of radical cultural work. Nugent's interest in "saving" black slaves prompts her to reject the violence of the sugar industry, and her desire to translate aristocratic English customs into Jamaican society enables her to transgress social boundaries around race. In this part of the chapter, I argue that Prince turned Victorian respectability into a different idiom of radical cultural work, one that challenged expectations about the sexual propriety of black women while it exposed the bodily gruesomeness of slavery at the same time.

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[57] The same year *The History of Mary Prince* was published, Strickland released a book of poetry. See Susanna Strickland, *Enthusiasm; and Other Poems* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1831).

[58] Thomas Pringle, preface to *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, ed. Moira Ferguson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 55.

[59] Examples include Barbara Baumgartner, "The Body as Evidence: Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in *The History of Mary Prince*," *Callaloo* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 253 – 275 and Mary Jeanne Larrabee, "'I Know What a Slave Knows': Mary Prince's Epistemology of Resistance," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 35, no. 5 (2006): 453 – 473.

But examining a text with such layers of mediation as Prince's history requires an explicit explanation of political interests because the issue of her agency has preoccupied critics. Jenny Sharpe, for example, has questioned the critical capacity to actually read Prince's voice given the narrative's circumstances of creation. "Since Prince did not write her life story herself but told it to abolitionists who then wrote it down," Sharpe argues, "she exercised minimal narrative control."[60] Unlike Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, the self-authored American slave narrative that adopted tropes of the sentimental novel, Prince's history, Sharpe suggests, is primarily a mouthpiece for British abolitionists. Sharpe questions in particular Sandra Pouchet Paquet's reading of Prince as a "political activist" (134). In Sharpe's account, to read Prince as virtuous, hardworking, and honest is to accept the Anti-Slavery Society's packaging of the enlightened slave subject; after all, the underlying ideologies of this organization only considered blacks to be capable of cultural and spiritual – rather than biological – equality (134). While I agree that the material reality of abolitionist mediation haunts Prince's narrative, I find more productive the work of scholars who have placed her narrative within a Caribbean intellectual history of activism and transnational self-positioning. As my reading of Nugent's journal emphasized, Benjamin's acknowledgement of how historical artifacts bear narratives of barbarism and civilization alike holds particular relevance in slave societies where human subjects are forced to function as industrial machines.

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[60] Jenny Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery : A Literary Archaeology of Black Women's Lives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 121.

Though naïve to Sharpe, Paquet's recognition of an Afro-Caribbean vernacular within Prince's voice that editor Thomas Pringle failed to "prune" for the British public shows how abolitionist discourse exists alongside multiple idioms in the narrative. Paquet singles out lines such as "But I must go on with the thread of my story" as part of Afro-Caribbean Anansi storytelling, not just English narrative (68).[61] Ifeoma Nwankwo also reads Prince beyond an abolitionist framework. Recognizing "a tradition of anglophone Afro-Caribbean public self-positing and positioning" that nineteenth-century contemporaries such as Trinidadian linguist John Jacob Thomas continue, Nwankwo stresses Prince's ability to articulate a "worldview" that traverses various islands in the Caribbean, as well as Africa, the U.S., and England.[62]

Following Paquet and Nwankwo, I understand Prince as a savvy activist who took advantage of the politics and possibilities of self-representation in relation to her prime audience at the time, British abolitionists. While we can identify Christian womanhood and respectability as the default attitudes for an individual of Nugent's social, racial, and class position, these characteristics prove more difficult to conceptualize in Prince's case. In what follows, I show how Prince simultaneously reinforces and challenges England's assumptions about black Caribbean subjects. By paradoxically embodying respectability – a concept I expand on below – I emphasize the radical implications of Prince's cultural work as a former slave who authored herself.

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[61] Paquet, *Caribbean Autobiography*, 40.
[62] Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, "The Nineteenth-Century Roots of Postcolonial Caribbean Discourse: Transnationalism and Anticolonialism in *Creole Recitations*," *Small Axe* 35 (July 2011): 187.

II. “I Think It Is My Duty to Relate”: Prince as Cultural Worker

The History of Mary Prince is one of a few extant slave narratives from the West Indies.[63] It begins in a similar fashion to American slave narratives with an opening sentence that identifies Prince’s place of birth: “I was born in Brackish-Pond, in Bermuda.”[64] As a child, Prince is “made quite a pet of” by Betsey Williams, the granddaughter of her second owner, Captain Williams. Prince recalls playing with Betsey as a happy time, “for I was too young to understand rightly my condition as a slave” (57). Once separated from her mother and siblings as a young adolescent – they are sold to different owners upon the death of Mrs. Williams – Prince endures a string of cruel owners before affiliating with London’s Anti-Slavery Society in late 1828.

Captain I– in Spanish Point, Bermuda is Prince’s first owner after the Williams family. Prince works as a house servant and suffers cruel beatings from Captain I–’s wife. As Prince recalls, “she caused me to know the exact difference between the smart of the rope, the cart-whip, and the cow-skin, when applied to my naked body by her own cruel hand” (66). By discussing the violence Captain I–’s wife inflicts, Prince shows how feminine propriety deteriorates under slavery: the bodies of both Prince and Captain I–’s wife become implicated in exposure and violence. According to Moira Ferguson, Captain I–'s wife lashes out at Prince as a result of jealousy, with the implication that Captain I– may be sexually exploiting Prince.[65] A similar triangulation plays out later when the Wood couple owns Prince and takes her to London. To be sure, Captain I– himself is far from innocent. After Hetty, whom Prince identifies as a pregnant "French Black," supposedly allows a cow to get loose, Captain I– unleashes a gruesome beating that results in Hetty's death (65, 67). Prince eventually suffers beatings from Captain I– as well that prompt her to run away to her mother. She ultimately returns to Captain I– with the help of her father, who pleas for his daughter to be spared from harsh beatings again.

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[63] Others include Ashton Warner, *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent’s: With an Appendix Containing the Testimony of Four Christian Ministers Recently Returned from the Colonies on the System of Slavery as It Now Exists* (London: Samuel Maunder, 1831) and James Williams, *A Narrative of Events, Since the First of August, 1834, by James Williams, an Apprenticed Labourer in Jamaica* (London: J. Rider, 1837). Nicole Aljoe also unearths what she calls “embedded” West Indian slave narratives, which she defines as fragmentary portraits of slaves included within texts such as travel journals, diaries, and legal records. See Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709 - 1838* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[64] Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, ed. Moira Ferguson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 57. Further references appear parenthetically in text. For more on the opening statement of “I was born,” see James Olney, “‘I Was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature,” *Callaloo* 20 (Winter 1984): 46–73.

After five years with Captain I–, Prince is sold to Mr. D– in Turks Island. Here Prince works in the salt ponds, whose brutality she describes in great detail for her British reading audience. Working from four in the morning until "dark at night," Prince recounts how she and her fellow slaves stood in knee-high water shoveling salt into barrels as the sun burned their heads and caused blisters "in those parts which were not completely covered." Standing in salt water also festered "dreadful boils" on their feet and legs (71 – 72). In addition to this labor, Prince describes the terror of living with Mr. D–. Prince admits she was at first hopeful that Mr. D– would be less cruel than Captain I– yet quickly learns that working for these men entailed "going from one butcher to another."

Mr. D–, Prince describes, "has often stripped me naked, hung me up by the wrists, and beat me with the cow-skin, till my body was raw with gnashes." But Prince's very next sentence stresses that such grisly experiences were quotidian: "Yet there was nothing very remarkable in this; for it might serve as a sample of the common usage of slaves on that horrible island" (72 – 73). Such attention to other slaves – note her focus on Hetty earlier – shows how *The History of*

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[65] Moira Ferguson, introduction to *The History of Mary Prince*, by Mary Prince (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 6.

Mary Prince is in fact more than that. While reflecting on her time with Captain I– and his wife, Prince also mentions the abuses the couple inflicts on two children, Cyrus and Jack. Prince describes Cyrus as a mulatto and Jack as "an African from the coast of Guinea," and both "were never secure one moment from a blow, and their lives were passed in continual fear" (66). Nwankwo calls Prince's narrative a "community autoethnography" whose purpose involves "both to tell the story of the community and to talk back to the dominant discourse on the group." Positioning herself simultaneously as "objective outsider" and "invested insider," Prince raises racial consciousness without exactly asserting kinship; after all, she others Hetty as a "French Black."[66]

I propose that she Prince also engages in a particular kind of cultural work alongside her autoethnography project. As described earlier, Ford-Smith defined the cultural worker against the artist, for the former more explicitly addresses the quotidian economics of fashioning aesthetic products for audiences. Prince's autoethnographic records of slave life operate precisely within such quotidian details, which links her narrative to the theatrical renditions of present-day, working-class life in Jamaica that serves as the specific basis of Ford-Smith's cultural worker paradigm. A brief discussion of one of Ford-Smith's theatrical productions with the Sistren Collective might help illustrate my point. In "Criss Miss," a Sistren "testimony" collected in *Lionheart Gal*, the young female protagonist Prudence describes becoming pregnant because "I didn't know anything about sex and what could really happen."[67] Colin, the father of the child, eventually abandons Prudence to seek employment in England. Prudence then meets a man named Ralston who wins her attention with flattery yet violently abuses her when she refuses sex. Facing the social obstacle of feminine propriety much like that Prince negotiates in her narrative, Prudence struggles to tell her family "because I couldn't tell them it was sex he wanted." By the end of "Criss Miss," Prudence says, "Ralston made me afraid of men, and until this day, I never live with another man."[68]

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[66] Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 167.

[67] In her introduction to *Lionheart Gal*, Ford-Smith calls the stories "testimonies." See introduction to *Lionheart Gal: Life Stories of Jamaican Women*, by Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2005), xiii. Sistren, "Criss Miss," in

Sistren's performances broke taboos around the topics of sexuality and race within late twentieth century Jamaica, and Prince's narrative similarly inserted itself into public discourse during a period when black women's mores were under extreme scrutiny by slaveholders, abolitionists, and British Parliament. Her narrative, with its careful attention to the physical and economic suffering of the body, could thus be positioned as Sistren's antecedent. The importance of recognizing Prince and Sistren within a similar practice of cultural work involves rethinking the problems of collaboration that shape critical accounts of Prince's narrative. Ford-Smith, who describes herself as "an apparently white Jamaican," acknowledges the power dynamics within Sistren of collaborating with working-class black women. She confesses that the collective could not identify any easy solutions to present their project of white and black collaboration, and it is worth hazarding that Prince likewise held complicated attitudes when working with Strickland and Pringle to produce her narrative.[69] In Prince's, Sistren's, and Ford-Smith's cases, then, cultural work by definition perseveres in the face of challenging economic and social realities.

When Prince recounts her experience as a slave, as well as those of slaves around her, she has a specific purpose. After Prince describes how Mr. D– would have an older slave named

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Lionheart Gal: Life Stories of Jamaican Women, by Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2005), 115.

[68] Sistren, "Criss Miss," 121, 124 – 125.

[69] Ford-Smith, "Notes Toward a New Aesthetic," 31 – 32.

Daniel beaten and then drenched with salt water so he “writhed on the ground like a worm,” she takes a moment to clarify why she even chooses to reproduce such scenes in her narrative:

> Oh the horrors of slavery! – How the thought of it pains my heart! But the truth ought to be told of it; and what my eyes have seen I think it is my duty to relate; for few people in England know what slavery is. I have been a slave – I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows; and I would have all the good people in England to know it too, that they may break our chains, and set us free. (74)

Feeling a responsibility to communicate the very epistemology of slavery to the English, Prince seeks “to relate” with her audience. “Relate,” of course, means to provide an account or narrate, and this is certainly the definition that Prince uses above. But in light of Prince’s extended sentences and rhythm of semicolons, I suggest that “relate” in the sense of having a connection also operates in this excerpt, especially given how the next clause moves to single out “people in England.” Prince’s cultural work of recounting “the horrors of slavery” quietly amplifies into a radical gesture because she cleverly associates with her foreign readers by assuming a respectable persona through inclusions and elisions alike.

In the early entries of her journal, Nugent described what she understood as the cultural inferiority of the white creole class. Whether it was through the men’s excessive consumption of food or the ladies’ changing speech cadences, Nugent marked the English in Jamaica as distinct from what she knew in England. Nugent’s description of creole speech, for example, is one of the most frequently cited passages from her journal. She points out that “Creole language” affects “the ladies” as well as “the negroes” and shares this anecdote: “I stood next to a lady one night, near a window, and, by way of saying something, remarked that the air was much cooler than usual; to which she answered, ‘Yes, ma-am, *him rail-ly too fra-ish*’” (98, emphasis in original).

When Prince describes Captain I–'s wife in a passage I cited earlier – the woman who struck Prince's "naked body" with "a cruel hand" – I suggest that a similar process of inclusion and exclusion around the issue of familiarity occurs. Prince, in other words, describes such female-on-female violence to reveal how the institution of English respectability deteriorates under slavery. Despite such decline in the milieu around her, however, Prince continues to assert a respectable character. Her radical cultural work entails knowing how to connect with an English middle class audience through a strategic use of restraint.

Editor Thomas Pringle certifies that Prince's narrative has been "pruned into its present shape" while retaining all of the "fact" and "sentiment" she provided to Susanna Strickland. Taking seriously Pringle's opening claim in the preface that "[t]he idea of writing Mary Prince's history was first suggested by herself," it is worth paying attention to how Prince fashions respectability through what she decides to discuss, rather than through clothing like Seacole would over two decades later.[70] At three instances in her narrative, Prince engages in apophasis – raising a topic while claiming to avoid discussion of it. First, after Captain I– beats her, Prince recounts how he verbally lashed out at her "with every ill name he could think of, (too, too bad to speak in England)" (68). That is, she broaches the matter of foul language while withholding further mention of it. She does this again when describing an argument with Mr. D–: "I can't repeat his answer, the words were too wicked – too bad to say" (77). Finally, this time when describing Mrs. Wood, the wife of her final owner before emancipation in 1834, Prince says, "My mistress was always abusing and fretting after me. It is not possible to tell all her ill language" (80). According to Ronald Pearsall, such discretion around potentially profane or offensive language became part of Victorian attitudes toward sex. He explains, "Because there was no general agreement on what would shock, what was taboo, what was printable, ambiguity often ruled the roost."[71] By purposely withholding the foul language to which her owners subjected her, Prince therefore marks Captain I–, Mr. D–, and Mrs. Wood as uncouth and herself as upstanding and decent. At the same time, as Paquet's reading underlines, Prince's language shows kinship with an Afro-Caribbean vernacular. In addition to the connection between Anansi tales and Prince's use of the phrase "the thread of my story," Paquet reads the use of repetitions such as "weep, weep, weep" and "clatter, clatter, clatter" as "a distinctive feature of West Indian speech."[72] In her accounts of Captain I–'s and Mr. D–'s foul language above, note Prince's additional rhythmic repetitions: the former's terms are "too, too bad," while the latter's are "too wicked – too bad." Prince's repetition subversively emphasizes her masters' lack of decency while managing to withhold the identification their exact words. She maintains respectability while calling out its absence among whites, male and female alike.

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[70] Thomas Pringle, preface to *The History of Mary Prince*, by Mary Prince (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 55.

Prince also reverses expectations about crude and respectable when she describes the unfortunate task of having to bathe Mr. D–. Given how, in Britain, only sizable towns with the infrastructure for pipes began to provide water to homes during the 1850s, it seems that Mr. D–'s request to receive full-body baths signals another form of creole excess in the West Indies. According to historians Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, "personal cleanliness was directed to washing hands and faces rather than overall bathing" in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[73] Yet Prince recollects, "He had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked, and ordering me then to wash him in a tub of water. This was worse to me than all the licks. Sometimes when he called me to wash him I would not come, my eyes were so full of shame"

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[71] Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 411.
[72] Paquet, *Caribbean Autobiography*, 40.
[73] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 382.

(77). Prince claims that this chore surpasses the severity of Mr. D–'s beatings. In light of the graphic scenes of violence she describes on her body and those of other slaves, it is hard to assess the extent to which Prince is being rhetorical here. But the rhetoric has a specific goal: to assert Prince's decency and sense of shame against Mr. D–'s wantonness. As Prince emphasizes, "he was a very indecent man – very spiteful, and too indecent; with no shame for his servants, no shame for his own flesh" (78).

Sharpe understands such upright comportment as a "projection of the kind of slave women Prince's antislavery readers wanted to see" (134). But it is worth turning back to Nugent's journal to underline the radical import of respectability as embodied by Prince. Early in her journal, Nugent reports her excitement at instructing her slaves enough to have them baptized (38). In spite of what she sees as her Christian generosity and enlightenment, she continues to ostracize slaves by calling them "blackies" and even "little monkeys" (42). For Nugent, baptism into the Christian faith is an event that fails to transform how she identifies blacks in her journal, even though, as I discussed above, she powerfully singles out the older black man at the servants' ball.

In Prince's history, however, she provides a better account of how the institution of slavery proves incompatible to black subjects' full acceptance of Christianity. Exposure to Methodism opens Prince's interest in religion, but the Moravian church is where she learns "I was a great sinner" (83). She recalls being baptized in 1817 to seek forgiveness for her sins yet is unable to continue her religious learning. Mr. Curtin, the Sunday school teacher, would not instruct Prince without written authorization from the Wood family, her owners at the time (84). The reality of slavery thus limits Prince's access to Christian womanhood and ultimately stymies her cultural work. Prince reports learning how to read and spell with the Moravian missionaries, and we have to wonder if she would have attained scribal literary – and produced her history without Susanna Strickland – if permitted to attend Sunday school. With Prince's exclusion from Sunday school foregrounded, we can understand the long final paragraph of her narrative as more than a performance of decency for her abolitionist readers. Rather, it once again supplies an instance of Prince cleverly asserting respectability by affiliating with blacks *and* the English while distinguishing herself from white West Indians.

III. Prince's Positioning

As Prince draws her narrative to a close, she focuses on returning to Bermuda from London to reunite with her husband, a carpenter named Daniel who had purchased freedom from his owner. They married in 1826 at a Moravian church in Bermuda; the English church did not permit marriage between slaves (84). Given black women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation at the hands' of their masters, Prince's attention to her husband offers English readers another chance to relate to her despite their voyeuristic interest in her narrative. In Nugent's journal, one entry describes a conversation with an Irish-born housekeeper named Nelly. According to Nelly, black women in the Caribbean are simultaneously sexually wanton and remarkably strong. After speaking with Nelly, Nugent reports that "it was astonishing how fast these black women bred, what healthy children they had, and how soon they recovered after lying-in" (69). But with Prince's attention to her deteriorating, rheumatic body and her husband in Bermuda, she contests stereotypes about the licentious yet resilient female slave.

Prince intensifies her corrective image of blacks in the extended final paragraph of her narrative. She argues, "I am often much vexed, and I feel great sorrow when I hear some people in this country say, that the slaves do not need better usage, and do not want to be free. They believe the foreign people, who deceive them, and say slaves are happy. I say, Not so" (93). Prince carefully identifies three parties in the transatlantic debate about slavery: slaves; "people in this country," or the English; and "the foreign people," or white West Indians. This constellation of parties sets up a radical positioning as Prince – as she has been doing throughout her entire narrative – argues for the abolition of black slaves using the attitude of respectability. Earlier passages in Prince's narrative exposed the shameful brutality of slavery: Captain I–'s wife beats a naked Prince, and Prince is forced to bathe an unclothed Mr. D–. Prince translates these indecent practices into a broader vision of violence toward slaves as the final paragraph of the narrative continues. She asks, "How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? and are disgraced and thought no more of than beasts? – and are separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sisters, just as cattle are sold and separated?" The violence of slavery in the West Indies, Prince underlines, hinges on the total absence of "modesty or decency."

Her radical cultural work therefore lies in her ability to expose the quotidian Caribbean slave experience as violent, shameful, and unjust while at the same time asserting an informed respectability that, to some extent, reproduces the same assumptions about West Indian licentiousness. Prince's difference lies in how she restricts the accusation of West Indian dissolution to *white* West Indians. Unlike, for example, the planter historian Edward Long, she consistently highlights blacks' willingness to work, not the myth of their idleness.[74]

Sharpe underlines the competing expectations slave women faced in her suspicion toward recovering Prince's voice: they "existed outside the structures of domesticity but had to uphold its ideals."[75] In my reading, however, Prince embodies a different paradox. She adapts the silences and modesty of what would become Victorian respectability to fashion an Afro-Caribbean consciousness informed by middle-class Englishness yet distinct from white West Indian vulgarity.

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[74] In his chapter titled "Negroes," Long writes, "They have no moral sensations; no taste but for women; gormondizing, and drinking to excess; no wish but to be idle." See Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Vol. 2, 353.

John Jacob Thomas contested Victorian claims about the Caribbean while reproducing some of their prejudices at the same time, as Faith Smith has shown. He tried to mark "lewd songs" as contamination from the island of Curaçao rather than cultural products of his native Trinidad.[76] In the same way, Prince claims respectability as a constitutive part of her character and also uses it as leverage for exclusion – and such exclusion extends to women of color as well. While in London, Mrs. Wood hires additional help in light of Prince's rheumatism. Prince describes Martha Wilcox, the hired help, as "a mulatto woman" who also considers herself "such a fine lady she wanted to be mistress over me." Prince finds it "very hard" to receive orders from a woman of color who is, unlike herself, free. She goes on to call Martha "a saucy woman, very saucy," which is a characterization that resonates with Nugent's references to the "mulatto favourites" that supposedly preoccupy every European man of rank in Jamaica (79). With Mr. and Mrs. Wood competing for ownership of Prince in different ways – the former initially purchases Prince only after the latter recognizes her skills as a worker – Prince's animosity toward Martha underlines the twisted envies that arise among women within the overlapping realms of servitude and domesticity.[77] Understanding Prince within a framework of transatlantic engagement that interpellated Afro-Caribbean subjects into Victorian ideals while nonetheless allowing for radical cultural work therefore enables us to trace a more carefully gendered genealogy from the nineteenth century onward. Prince is ultimately an antecedent to other nineteenth-century Afro-Caribbean writers such as Mary Seacole and John Jacob Thomas, as well as an embedded ancestor of present-day female authors such as Jamaica Kincaid and Erna Brodber.

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[75] Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery*, 121.

[76] Smith, *Creole Recitations*, 133. Smith draws Thomas's remarks on "lewd songs" from an article in the *Trinidad Review* that she suspects Thomas wrote. See *Creole Recitations*, 132.

[77] As Prince describes, "Mrs. Wood found that I could work, and she wanted to buy me….So I was purchased by Mr. Wood for 300 dollars (or £100 Bermuda currency)." See *The History of Mary Prince*, 78. Even though the narrative does not suggest sexual relations between Mr. Wood and Prince, the fact that Mrs. Wood obtains Prince through her husband's agency as a man might

I examine Prince's self-identification as a worker to both conclude and revisit Mary Seacole's paradigm of radical women's labor with which this chapter began. In the process, I aim to elaborate my proposal that Prince's narrative supplies a crucial link in the continuum of Caribbean writing and quotidian political action that simultaneously affiliates with yet responds to English values concerning respectability. While in London, Prince seeks means of income to buy her freedom from the Wood couple in spite of her ailing body. "Sometimes I bought a hog cheap on board ship," Prince explains, "and sold it for double the money on shore; and I also earned a good deal by selling coffee" (81). These entrepreneurial endeavors show how Prince fashioned herself as a market woman in London: a savvy intermediary between suppliers and buyers. In the Caribbean, market women carved out alternative economies to the plantation system. They sold goods at Sunday markets drawn from their provision grounds; later, they bought in bulk from suppliers to introduce into the market themselves. In Jamaica, these market women were known as higglers, a far-reaching status that I discuss further in my reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s Christophine in the next chapter. For Prince in London, entrepreneurship, which

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illuminate why she covets Prince through physical and verbal abuse. Similarly, Prince's marriage to Daniel James angers Mr. and Mrs. Wood alike, but Prince notes, "Mrs. Wood was more vexed about my marriage than her husband. She could not forgive me for getting married, but stirred up Mr. Wood to flog me dreadfully with the horsewhip." See *The History of Mary Prince*, 85. This scene uses Mr. Wood as an agent of violence and bolsters my suggestion of Mrs. Wood's strange desire for Prince.

also included taking on work as a charwoman, links to immigrant resourcefulness as well as to Caribbean market women. Using language that anticipates Thomas Carlyle's accusation of "idle black West Indians" as well as rhetoric during the waves of Caribbean immigration into Britain after World War II, Prince outlines the plight of slaves specifically as laborers:

> We don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment, and proper wages like English servants, and proper time given in the week to keep us from breaking the Sabbath. But they won't give it; they will have work – work – work, night and day, sick or well, till we are quite done up; and we must not speak up nor look amiss, however much we be abused. And then when we are quite done up, who cares for us, more than for a lame horse? *This is slavery.* (94, emphasis mine)[78]

Prince's narrative of indecency and murderous abuse concludes with the insertion of slavery into discourses of the plight of laborers. Social scientists and historians would begin to explore this link in the twentieth century, but Prince's appeal maintains the importance of difference even as she underlines the similarities between English servants and enslaved Caribbean workers.[79]

Arduous work, Prince recognizes, is a given in English society. But using the rhetoric of respectability, Prince highlights how the enslaved Caribbean worker lacks equity. She repeats the key term "proper" to simultaneously invoke respectability and describe the treatment, wages, and free time workers such as herself require. Prince therefore affiliates with English servants to the extent that their treatment by employers supplies a model for how black workers from the Caribbean should be regarded and compensated. As long as black workers are subjected to long hours and bodily abuse that itself results from strenuous demands of their time, Prince argues they will be as valuable as "a lame horse." Her pithy sentence, "This is slavery," thus serves as a strategic conflation of English servants and black workers: it is meant to underline for readers how slavery ultimately entails unjust labor practices. C.L.R. James's portrait of Haitian slaves in *The Black Jacobins* as "revolutionary peasants" thus has a predecessor in Prince's history.[80]

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[78] Enoch Powell, a Conservative Member of Parliament for over two decades, delivered an infamous speech about immigration in Birmingham, England in 1968. He sympathized with English laborers who "found that employers hesitated to apply to the immigrant worker the standards of discipline and competence required of the native-born worker." See a full text at "Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' Speech," *The Telegraph*, November 6, 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643826/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html. Powell's use of terms such as "discipline" and "competence" echoes Long's and Carlyle's racial myths from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

[79] See Sidney W. Mintz, "Was the Plantation Slave a Proletarian?," *Review: A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1978): 81 – 98.

But Prince's narrative offers a unique window into the specific tolls of gendered labor, which operates on sexual, domestic, and industrial levels: exploitation by owners, laundering and other housework, and working in Bermuda's salt ponds. Prince's history, as Paquet has suggested, emphasizes "the economics of buying her freedom," and its final paragraph ultimately prioritizes workers' rights rather than a utopic vision of liberation.[81] Prince's work might also be read in terms of activism; she assumed a key role in Britain's abolitionist debates in the early 1830s. *The History of Mary Prince* was submitted to Parliament as substantiation of slavery's tremendous violence, and its gruesome details were, according to Nicole Aljoe, enough to inform aspects of the Emancipation Act that took effect in 1834.[82] After Prince, radical cultural work would be continued by British and Caribbean women alike in relation to colonialism, slavery, and money. These women are the subjects of the next chapter.

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[80] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938; repr., New York: Vintage, 1963), 85.

[81] Paquet, *Caribbean Autobiography*, 38.

[82] See Aljoe, "'Going to Law': Legal Discourse and Testimony in Early West Indian Slave Narratives," *Early American Literature* 46, no. 2 (2011): 355, 373. As Aljoe summarizes, Prince's narrative generated three legal trials. First, Prince brought charges against John Wood for abuse, and then Wood responded with a libel case against Pringle. Pringle lost the case because he could not generate any witnesses. See Ferguson, introduction to *The History of Mary Prince*, 28. Finally, Pringle sued *Blackwood's Magazine* for libel after it published a review of the narrative that questioned Prince's moral character. James Macqueen wrote the review in *Blackwood's*, and he was a famous opponent of emancipation. Pringle won the case against *Blackwood's*, and he was paid five founds by its publisher, Thomas Cadell. See Aljoe, "Going to Law," 376, n. 14.

CHAPTER TWO

Obeah and "'Other Things'":
Wide Sargasso Sea, *Jane Eyre*, and the Price of Freedom

Introduction

A much different response to Caribbean and British entanglement was underway in Jamaica as Mary Prince advocated for her rights as a black worker with the Anti-Slavery Society in London. The black Baptist deacon Samuel Sharpe and a network of skilled, enslaved men from surrounding estates in the northwestern section of the island near Montego Bay were coordinating a widespread revolt to take place after Christmas in 1831. Unlike the uprising in Saint-Domingue that kept the Nugents on edge three decades earlier, Sharpe aspired for non-violence. The plan entailed ceasing work on plantations and using force only in retaliation. Sharpe furthermore envisioned such force to take the form of fires restricted to plantation houses; crops, sugar works, and provision grounds were to be left alone.

But as historian Michael Craton has underlined, Sharpe's hope for a non-violent revolt equated "a contradiction in terms."[83] On December 27, beacon fires began in Old Maroon Town, and according to a contemporary source, "the sky became a sheet of flame" soon after.[84] As masses of the enslaved took arms and the colonial militia responded, news eventually reached Spanish Town in the southeast of the island, and martial law was declared.

By the end of January 1832, Sharpe was in custody and nearly two hundred slaves died in conflicts with militias. Over three hundred more slaves were killed as a result of judicial orders after the uprising. When the Jamaica Assembly put together a review in March, over two hundred properties throughout the island reported damages. As news of the uprising, which is variously known today as the Baptist War or the Christmas Rebellion, reached Britain, public debates over emancipation were already at a fever pitch. William Knibb, an English Baptist missionary to Jamaica, certainly added fuel to these debates when he returned to England to testify about the uprising yet showed up with collars and whips to highlight the sins of slavery rather than accounts of Sharpe's organizing endeavors.[85] Fresh off the democratizing energies of the 1832 Reform Act, Parliament passed an act for emancipation on August 28, 1833, and it took effect throughout the empire in August of the following year.[86]

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[83] Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 301. I also draw details, names, and statistics relating to the 1831 – 1832 uprising in Jamaica from this study.

[84] Hope Waddell quoted in Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 303.

Within such a climate of black uprising in the Caribbean and Parliamentary fervor in Britain, the idea of radical cultural work could potentially encompass anti- and pro-slavery attitudes alike. Indeed, during the Baptist War, it would be fair understand both Sharpe's initial vision of anti-violence and the Maroon community's alliance with the colonial militias as radical.[87] But this study at large shows that the coordinates of radical cultural work also exist on the banal plane of everyday struggle lived by ostensibly non-historical figures.

This chapter therefore digs deeper into the discourse of work that Mary Prince introduces at the end of her narrative to examine the possibilities of radical cultural work within personal finance. Mary Seacole may have profited from her work in the Crimea in a non-monetary manner at the beginning of "Economies of Entanglement" yet this chapter explores how circumstances were different in both rural Britain and post-emancipation Jamaica. In particular, I delve into the complex ways that women earned money within intermediary occupations as higglers and governesses. *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*, the two novels I align to reveal such financial radicalism, share a long, entwined critical history that at first glance does not seem conducive to political affiliation.

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[85] Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 319. For more on Knibb and other Baptists in Jamaica, see Hall, *Civilising Subjects*.

[86] The 1832 Reform Act overhauled England's and Wales's electoral systems by removing Parliamentary seats in small boroughs, adding them in expanding counties to reflect the growth of industrialization, and extending voting rights to men who rented land.

[87] According to Craton, militias used "bloodthirsty maroons" and "Cuban dogs" to terrorize the uprising slaves in 1831. See *Testing the Chains*, 311.

Critics understand the 1966 novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* as the Caribbean corrective to the Victorian classic *Jane Eyre*. Jean Rhys in a letter to Francis Wyndham even expressed the rehabilitative project of her novel when she imagined it as "[t]he real story" of *Jane Eyre*'s famous madwoman in the attic.[88] But in the late 1960s, the rise of Afro-Caribbean awareness among scholars and writers limited the cultural purchase of a novel chiefly about the declining planter class written by a white creole woman. Kamau Brathwaite, for example, argued that "a fictional statement that ignores vast areas of social and historical formation" – namely the reality of black Caribbean subjects – does not merit inclusion within Caribbean literary culture.[89] In the decades following Brathwaite's influential assessment, Caribbean feminists have welcomed *Wide Sargasso Sea* into the canon, albeit with varying degrees of warmth.[90]

For postcolonial feminists, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and its Victorian antecedent alike remain troublesome texts. Gayatri Spivak boldly questions the revisionary implications of Rhys's novel when, at *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s end, Antoinette still goes on to commit suicide and thereby allows Jane Eyre to maintain her status as "the feminine individualist heroine of British fiction."[91] Spivak directs most of her critique to Anglo-American feminism and *Jane Eyre* itself, which she calls a "cult text."[92] She contends that the feminism that critics celebrate in *Jane Eyre* succeeds because of its complicity with British imperialism. Jane the orphan becomes the lawful wife of Rochester and the financially supportive cousin to St. John and his sisters as a result of two events: the suicide of the Jamaican "Creole" Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife, and the inheritance left by her uncle, who sold Madeira wine to buyers in Jamaica.[93]

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[88] Jean Rhys to Francis Wyndham, 29 March 1958 in *The Letters of Jean Rhys*, Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly, eds. (New York: Viking, 1984), 153.

[89] Kamau Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean* (Mona: Savacou Publications, 1974), 38.

[90] Evelyn O'Callaghan has been influential in highlighting the work of Caribbean women writers, particularly white women such as Rhys and Frieda Cassin. See O'Callaghan, *Woman Version: Theoretical Approaches to West Indian Fiction by Women* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); *Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939: "A Hot Place, Belonging To Us"* (London: Routledge, 2004); and "'The Unhomely Moment': Frieda Cassin's Nineteenth-Century Antiguan Novel and the Construction of the White Creole," *Small Axe* 13, no. 2 (July 2009): 95 – 106. By contrast, Belinda Edmondson reads Antoinette's implied suicide at the end of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as evidence of how, for Rhys, "writing in the native land is an impossibility." See Edmondson, *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 157.

But just as critics would challenge Brathwaite's early reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Victorian scholars such as Susan Meyer have qualified Spivak's important political energies by examining more closely the roles of race, gender, and empire in Brontë's novel. Meyer concedes to Brontë's "Anglocentric" politics and concludes that *Jane Eyre* indeed perceives colonization as a potential contaminant of British ideals.[94] But the author, Meyer stresses, nonetheless illuminates the oppression of the colonized – African slaves, Indians, and Persians – by using metaphors of race to represent the tolls of patriarchal domination. In scenes where Jane calls herself a "rebel slave," Brontë on one level shows her heroine committing appropriation. [95] At the same time, however, such use of racialized figurative language also draws attention to the plight of various oppressed peoples around the empire.

In their preoccupation with the scope of what counts as Caribbean, Victorian, or imperial, Brathwaite, Meyer, and Spivak miss an important affiliation embedded in the critical tensions between *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*: both novels are deeply interested in the issue of women's financial independence. This chapter thus turns to *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* to offer two propositions. First, I argue that women, who offered services as higglers or governesses that by necessity blurred class and social boundaries, held the potential to assert power in unexpected ways. Second, I demonstrate how tracing Rhys's and Brontë's representations of the higgler and the governess, respectively, shows how the two writers are more similarly invested in ideas of women's power and independence than heretofore acknowledged. By aligning rather than opposing *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* – and more provocatively, proposing an analogous relationship between a black former domestic servant and a white governess – this chapter stresses the similar ways that both novels envision the possibilities of radical cultural work through financial decisions.

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[91] Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," 251.
[92] Ibid., 244.
[93] I use "Creole" because it is the term that identifies the character in *Jane Eyre*. See Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847; repr., New York: Penguin, 2006), 335.
[94] Meyer, *Imperialism at Home*, 94.
[95] Ibid., 15.

My objective in contextualizing these seemingly over-studied novels is to advance my larger goal of re-entangling Caribbean and British similarities and overlaps. But I also aim to engage with questions about women and finance that have been opened in Caribbean and Victorian studies alike. Historical and cultural accounts of the relationship between the financial world and colonialism primarily focus on grand narratives. Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery*, for example, famously argued that Britain ceased the slave trade because industrialism had evolved to a point where it no longer needed it rather than as a result of a shift in moral attitudes.[96] More recently, Ian Baucom has shown the importance of the 1781 massacre of slaves aboard the Liverpool-based *Zong* vessel for the development of speculative finance capital.[97] But the lives of women – as I began to highlight in the previous chapter – supply important cultural and historical narratives, and these stories become silenced in the ambition of Williams's and Baucom's projects.

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[96] Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (1944; repr., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). For critiques and discussions of Williams's argument, see Barbara Lewis Solow and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Mary Prince, for exampled, lived as a shrewd market woman despite her status as a slave. Her strategy of obtaining commodities such as hogs from ships in the docks of London and selling them for twice the amount in the city provided her with a supplemental source of income with the hope of purchasing her freedom from the Wood couple. This kind of entrepreneurship was common among the enslaved throughout the Caribbean, and it was based in their provision grounds, or the plots of land given by their owners to provide additional sustenance.

Sylvia Wynter explains in "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation" the relationship between the plantation and provision grounds. Plantations, she underlines, produce goods for the market whose value lies in their ability to be sold and carry exchange value. By contrast, provision grounds sustained a culture that "recreated traditional values – use values." But Wynter establishes this dichotomy to reveal a crucial tension: "But since he [the slave] worked on the plantation and was in fact the Labour, land and capital, he was ambivalent between the two. After the abolition of slavery the slave-turned-peasant, grew crops both to feed himself, and to sell on the market."[98] Provision grounds thus entailed more than a romantic notion of a pre-industrial means of sustenance; they also equipped Afro-Caribbean people with the means to participate in the market economy and generate wealth for themselves. Wynter identifies the ambivalent capitalist slave as male in her essay, but the example of Mary Prince already highlights how women positioned themselves to gain wealth through entrepreneurial activities within the market system.

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[97] Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

[98] Sylvia Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," *Savacou* 5 (June 1971): 99 – 100.

Likewise, we are increasingly learning how women participated in the financial life of Victorian Britain. The notion of separate spheres conveniently organizes how men and women move through the world in the nineteenth century: the former make decisions on the public stage, while the latter tend to tasks within the private realm of the home. My reading of Maria Nugent in the previous chapter even reinforced aspects of this gendered understanding of social and political life. But women actually held a surprising amount of financial agency during the Victorian period. As Nancy Henry points out, women were free to buy shares in businesses and vote for company directors even when they lacked the right to vote in political elections.[99] Charlotte Brontë, for example, lived as a governess and then a famous author, but she also bought shares in the York and North Midland Railway in the early 1840s.[100] I therefore ask the question of how Brontë's life as an investor informed her depiction of Jane Eyre. One subject I examine in particular involves Jane's relationship to Chartism, the national movement throughout the 1830s and 1840s that sought increased working-class political rights. Upon learning of her sudden inheritance of twenty thousand pounds late in the novel, Jane immediately wishes to divide the fortune among herself and St. John Rivers, Diana, and Mary, her newly-discovered cousins. Given Brontë's own investment endeavors, I propose that Jane's plan involves more than Christian charity. Jane's radical vision for her distribution of wealth also alerts us to the rural extent of colonial money within Britain.

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[99] Nancy Henry, "'Ladies do it?': Victorian Women Writers in Fact and Fiction," in *Victorian Literature and Finance*, ed. Frances O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111.
[100] Ibid., 121.

It is well known that the wealth of Jane's soul mate Rochester carries the taint of the plantation system: it comes from his wife Bertha Mason, a white creole whose family owned slaves in Jamaica prior to emancipation. But the Madeira wine trade, the economic route that provides Jane's inheritance, is less explored. Similarly, when approaching Bertha Mason's life prior to Rochester's brute act of entrapping her in England, critics commonly turn to *Wide Sargasso Sea* in order to gain a more sympathetic portrayal of "the madwoman in the attic." In my pairing the two novels, however, I reveal the economics of both power and money that Bertha (identified in Rhys's novel as Antoinette) and her former servant Christophine embody through the supposed witchcraft practice of obeah. By examining more closely obeah and the Madeira wine industry, I demonstrate how the economic dimensions of colonialism and emancipation enable us to understand the radical cultural work of women in Rhys's and Brontë's novels.

Wide Sargasso Sea

I. Plantation Ruins

Jean Rhys's 1966 novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* depicts a period simultaneously haunted by the past and the present. Walter Benjamin described "the angel of history" who recognizes the events of the past as "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage," and a similar image of disastrous time suits the reader's perspective in Rhys's novel.[101] In its second paragraph, young Antoinette Cosway asks her mother why no one visits Coulibri Estate, the family's plantation home near Spanish Town, Jamaica. Antoinette learns that the road between the two places is in poor condition because “road repairing was now a thing of the past.”[102] The next two paragraphs describe Mr. Luttrell, a neighbor of the Cosway family. One day he speaks to Antoinette’s mother about the commotion among fellow planters regarding compensation from the English following the Slavery Abolition Act. Not long after, Mr. Luttrell himself “grew tired of waiting” and killed his dog before swimming out to the sea to presumably commit suicide (5). The failures of emancipation therefore quickly establish *Wide Sargasso Sea*’s sullen atmosphere – all without explicit mention of the formerly enslaved or the plantation system.

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[101] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257.

Mr. Luttrell in *Wide Sargasso Sea* may have killed himself waiting for compensation funds, and the two major studies of the subject give a strong suggestion as to why: much of the money went to members of the West India Interest who were not planters in the Caribbean, but rather merchants and agents based in Britain.[103] Historians and literary scholars have grossly neglected compensation even though it was a crucial aspect of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act. Indeed, the full title of the legislation was An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies; for promoting the Industry of the manumitted Slaves; and for compensating the Persons hitherto entitled to the Services of such Slaves. As this long title shows, apprenticeship, or transitioning the formerly enslaved to a wage labor system, and compensation, or granting of indemnity to slave-owners, were designed to accommodate major social and economic changes in light of slavery’s abolition. For the absentee landlords, merchants, and agents who made up the West India Interest in Britain’s Parliament, compensation in particular was meant to reduce the blow of abolition. Slavery, they argued, supported many English citizens who never set foot in the West Indies; abolishing it therefore entailed a tremendous loss of property that England was responsible for paying back. Even though there were differences of opinion regarding compensation among abolitionists and slave-owners alike as the emancipation legislation was debated, the West India Interest enjoyed a victory when Parliament's initial proposal of a fifteen million-pound loan was amended to a twenty thousand-pound grant.[104]

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[102] Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966; repr., London: Penguin, 2000), 5. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

[103] Kathleen Mary Butler studied the impact of compensation funds in Barbados and Jamaica, and Draper examined the extent of the grant within Britain. See Butler, *The Economics of Emancipation: Jamaica and Barbados, 1823-1843* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) and Draper, *The Price of Emancipation*.

In Rhys's novel, readers witness a plantation in ruins in the wake of emancipation. Antoinette describes how "[a]ll Coulibri Estate had gone wild like the garden, gone to bush" (6). She later takes a walk "past the old sugar works and the water wheel that had not turned for years" (12). These images offer a chilling counterpoint to the scenes of sublime nature and industrial efficiency Maria Nugent recorded in her journal after visiting a Jamaican sugar factory just three decades prior to emancipation. Antoinette's disclosure that the water wheel has not operated in years also suggests that Coulibri Estate had been in decline prior to the abolition of slavery. Within this setting, which is both already deteriorated and in the process of further deterioration like the past Benjamin's angel of history looks upon, it is easy to see why Rhys's novel could be read as a sympathetic representation of the planter class and the white Jamaican woman in particular.[105] Antoinette and her mother Annette are literally left behind at Coulibri Estate after the departure of their enslaved labor and the deaths of Mr. Luttrell and Annette's debauched, alcoholic husband.

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[104] Among abolitionists, for example, some groups completely opposed any compensation, while others only recommended it to plantation owners who could demonstrate loss. Within the West India Interest, methods of calculating loss prompted most quarreling in Parliament. See Draper, *The Price of Emancipation*, 93 – 95.

[105] *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s reputation as a white creole novel compelled Kamau Brathwaite to question its importance for the Caribbean, whose population is predominately black. See his famous comments in *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean* (Mona: Savacou Publications, 1974), 33 – 38.

According to Thomas Holt, the Slavery Abolition Act's compensation component was designed to promote "new labor-saving, capital-intensive systems of production" as an incentive for planters to accept emancipation.[106] But as Kathleen Mary Butler and Nicholas Draper have shown in great detail, most compensation funds went to paying debts on mortgages, as well as fees and commissions owed to merchants. Some investment occurred within the West Indian islands, as the case of new Luttrell family that purchases and takes over Mr. Luttrell's estate in *Wide Sargasso Sea* suggests, but compensation money never enabled planters to restore or innovate their modes of production. For the Cosway family, Annette's marriage to the "very wealthy" Englishman Mr. Mason pulls them out of destitution early in the novel (13). After the wedding, Antoinette overhears gossip that speculates why Mr. Mason, supposedly a man with his choice of women in both the West Indies and England, "should marry a woman without a penny to her name and Coulibri a wreck of a place" (13). The gossip suggests Annette's beauty earned her the affection of Mr. Mason, but other voices contend that he has plans for making "a clever man's gain" from Coulibri Estate (14). In an argument with Annette a year into their marriage, readers learn that Mr. Mason also owns an estate in Trinidad, as well as property in Antigua (15).

Mr. Mason's injection of funds into Coulibri Estate certainly improves the material condition of the plantation home. According to Antoinette, the home became "clean and tidy" with "no grass between the flagstones, no leaks" after her mother's honeymoon (14). But the changes feel most palpable for Antoinette in relation to the new servants that Mr. Mason employs. "It was their talk about Christophine that changed Coulibri, not the repairs or the new furniture or the strange faces," Antoinette admits. She adds, "Their talk about Christophine and obeah changed it" (14).

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[106] Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832 - 1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 130.

The black former servant Christophine destabilizes *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s reputation as a white creole novel, and she thus preoccupies the remainder of the first half of this chapter. Much critical debate has been concerned with the fact that the novel's author and protagonist alike are white women who move between the Caribbean and Britain yet Christophine enables us to understand the broader racial, political, and economic aspects of Jamaica during emancipation.[107] By tracing Christophine's strategic self-positioning throughout the novel, I reveal the radical nuances of her resistance to the emancipation regime. Her status as an oppositional character in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is firmly established among scholars, but I want to challenge the consensus that Christophine is primarily a symbol for a nebulous conception of Afro-Caribbean knowledge and resistance. Instead, I underline the concrete extent to which Rhys characterizes Christophine in order to link it to contemporary issues of legal regulation and concepts of work and capital.

We learn a great deal about Christophine from the novel's opening pages. Like Annette, Christophine is originally from Martinique, an island about 1,100 miles to the southeast of Jamaica that moved between French and British occupation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and returned to the French after the Napoleonic Wars. According to Antoinette, Christophine is physically distinct from black Jamaican women: "She was much blacker – blue-black with a thin face and straight features." Christophine also dresses differently, choosing to wear a black dress and gold earrings and a yellow handkerchief on her head tied in "Martinique fashion." Linguistically, Christophine prefers to blend in with black Jamaicans despite her ability to operate in multiple registers. Antoinette says, "though she could speak good English if she wanted to, and French as well as patois, she took care to talk as they talked" (7).

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[107] For an overview of biography's purchase in Rhys studies, see Jean D'Costa's entry in *Fifty Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Daryl Cumber Dance (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 390 – 391 and Veronica Marie Gregg, *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing the Creole* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 1 – 3.

But Christophine's movement between the categories of property and entrepreneur interest me more than her ability to navigate across forms of English and French. Curious about the former servant's origins, Antoinette learns from her mother that Christophine had been a wedding present from Antoinette's father; their shared Martinique origins were intended to please Annette. Such explicit reminder that Christophine had been property before emancipation intensifies the radicalism of her actions in the course of the novel. But similar to the cases of Maria Nugent and Mary Prince, the radicalism of Christophine's self-fashioning in large part results from how it challenges assumptions about what constitutes resistance in the first place. Just as Nugent's lady-like manners at one point bring her closer rather than farther to black subjects as the governor's wife, and just as Prince's reproduction of exclusionary attitudes enables her to identify as a respectable worker deserving of fair treatment, Christophine contests the continuity of white hegemony by squatting on its discourses of power rather than rejecting them.

I choose the term "squatting" intentionally because it carried particular meaning during emancipation. In another insult to the formerly enslaved during emancipation, planters began to collect rent for inhabiting homes and provision grounds. During slavery, blacks were permitted to design, build, and maintain housing structures on and near plantations. But amid a shortage of cash and credit after abolition, planters devised rent-collection as a way to continue to manage blacks and extract money from them as wage-laborers.[108] During the decades after emancipation, planters advocated to punish those who failed to pay rent with anti-squatting laws. In *Wide*

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[108] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 134 – 135.

Sargasso Sea, Christophine's presence on Coulibri Estate seems less regulated. When her mother rejects her company early in the novel before marrying Mr. Mason, Antoinette describes passing her time in a kitchen within an outbuilding away from the main home at Coulibri Estate. Christophine sleeps in a small room in the same outbuilding (7). But Annette's characterization of Christophine soon after suggests there is more to Christophine's ongoing proximity to the family than meets than eye. When Antoinette inquires about Christophine's history, Annette responds in frustration and explains, "Why do you pester and bother about all these things that happened long ago? Christophine stayed with me because she wanted to stay. She had her own very good reasons you may be sure. I dare say we would have died if she'd turned against us and that would have been a better fate" (8). To understand Christophine's rationale for staying, we have to explore the suspicions about obeah that preoccupy Coulibri Estate's new servants.

II. Representing, Regulating, and Higglering Obeah

Obeah had been represented as witchcraft from Africa since the eighteenth century. In *The History of Jamaica*, the influential planter historian Edward Long describes obeah practitioners as priests who could create powders that, when applied to the body, would protect against "the white men" by redirecting their bullets.[109] Long's account is part of an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial discourse that characterizes obeah as a form of witchcraft that uses objects such as "feathers, teeth, and other implements of magic."[110] Rhys depicts obeah subtly in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, but its appearances are crucial to understanding Christophine's radical cultural work. The arrival of new servants and their accompanying gossip jeopardize the maternal intimacy between Christophine and Antoinette and activates prejudices in the young girl. After reporting the "strange" feeling the new servants stir up, Antoinette describes Christophine's room, which is a familiar place to her. The small room contains Catholic objects such as the prayer for a happy death and portraits of the Holy Family; it also has discarded housewares such as a rocking chair from Annette. But one day, the servants' gossip installs terrifying assumptions in Antoinette's imagination about Christophine's belief systems:

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[109] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica: Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of the Island: With Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government,* vol. 2 (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), 451.
[110] Ibid., 452.

> I was certain that hidden in the room (behind the old black press?) there was a dead man's dried hand, white chicken feathers, a cock with its throat cut, dying slowly, slowly. Drop by drop the blood was falling into a red basin and I imagined I could hear it. No one had ever spoken to me about obeah – but I knew what I would find if I dared to look. (14 – 15).

In the passage above, Antoinette envisions feathers and links them to obeah. At the same time, she claims that no one has ever discussed obeah with her. The new servants' gossip has clearly shaped the young girl's imagination. Antoinette's confidence that her suspicions would be confirmed if she were to open Christophine's cupboard illuminates her disturbing reality: the hierarchy at Coulibri Estate is more tenuous than ever.

In Nugent's journal, the revolution in Saint-Domingue creates anxieties about whether the enslaved in Jamaica will follow suit. As described at the outset of this chapter, Jamaica experienced its own fiery upheavals during the Christmas uprising of 1831, which accelerated the shift to emancipation. And the fact that emancipation was a legislative program enables us to begin to understand the connections between Antoinette's fears about obeah and Christophine's manipulation of those worries.

In the second part of the novel, Antoinette, now a young woman married to an Englishman implied as Rochester from *Jane Eyre*, actually seeks out Christophine precisely for the infamous capabilities of obeah. Before closely examining that exchange, it is important to mention Rochester’s unease toward Christophine. He criticizes her language as “horrible” and wonders why she does not hold her dresses up in order to prevent them from getting dirty (52). Translating local customs to an Englishman flung to Jamaica to secure a dowry, Antoinette tells Rochester, “‘They don’t care about getting a dress dirty because it shows it isn’t the only dress they have’” (52 – 53). With his prejudices about Christophine already in motion, Rochester receives a letter from Daniel, a man who claims to be Antoinette’s half-brother through her father, the depraved Mr. Cosway. When they meet in person, Daniel tells Rochester that Christophine once had to leave Jamaica and go to jail. Rochester asks why, but Daniel only averts his gaze and urges him to leave Spanish Town (79). Eager for more information, Rochester inquires with a local magistrate who calls Christophine “a most dangerous person” (92).

These details about Christophine’s time in jail open a surprisingly neglected aspect of *Wide Sargasso Sea*: its depiction of obeah’s regulation specifically through the law. The legal context of obeah is valuable because it is a microcosm for the emancipation period’s intensification of differences that the novel stages. The new servants hired by Mr. Mason, himself a recent arrival to Coulibri Estate and the island, and their ability to alter Antoinette’s relationship with Christophine foreshadows how Daniel Cosway, an ostracized local man who identifies as “coloured,” exploits Rochester’s perception of Antoinette and Christophine (61). Taken together, the tensions regarding who is an insider and who is an outsider underlines how the epoch of emancipation does not rupture links between races, classes, or nationalities. Instead, it creates possibilities to reconfigure the relations among these groups. For opportunistic Englishmen such as Mr. Mason, such reconfiguration involves an attempt to sustain a master and servant order in places such as Jamaica, Trinidad, and Antigua, where he has recently bought collapsed estates and property. But for Afro-Caribbean women such as Christophine, emancipation offers new horizons for independent living even in light of how the period reinforces colonial rule.

Expanding our perception of obeah to include its legal dimensions allows us to grasp the particularly economic character of how Christophine asserts her independence in a Jamaica contradictorily emancipated to an apprenticeship society and police state. At first glance, *Wide Sargasso Sea* reinforces obeah as suspicious magic. Halfway through the novel, Antoinette comes to Christophine in fearful yet curious awe of how she "can make people love or hate. Or…or die" (71). Norman Cary has explained the predominately unfavorable depiction of women who practice obeah or voodoo. Examining novels such as H.G. de Lisser's *The White Witch of Rose Hall* (1929) and Andrew Salkey's *A Quality of Violence* (1959), Cary stresses that women with spiritual power "are allied from the first to evil, or they are usurpers of male roles, or they use their powers destructively."[111] On the other hand, the obeah woman also acts as a societal healer. Loretta Collins, writing about Ma Kilman in Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990), argues that the obeah woman remedies "postcolonial wounds."[112]

Positioning Christophine within this continuum of obeah woman representations – malevolent on one end and healer on the other – is more difficult. For Antoinette, Christophine's obeah has the unsettling potential to produce both harm and good. Meanwhile, obeah's wicked reputation provides Rochester with an excuse to rationalize his discomfort around Christophine. But Rhys's inclusion of details such as Christophine's jail time and the Spanish Town magistrate's letter to Rochester highlight how the ostensible forces of good and evil play out within a society whose stratifications are codified in particular laws. It is thus impossible to read Christophine relationship to obeah in a strictly religious or medicinal sense. Though many have commented on obeah in Rhys's novel, these critics understand the term primarily as religion, resistance, or witchcraft.[113] Teresa O'Connor's position that obeah in Rhys's novels represents "the power of black West Indian women" is the critical attitude toward obeah that anticipates the radicalism I outline here.[114] Nonetheless, I problematize O'Connor's claim that obeah for Christophine foregrounds a relationship "to an older and purer African past."[115] Bridging obeah as a way to earn money to the figure of the higgler, I instead emphasize how obeah concerns Christophine's present and future as an emancipated black subject making a living.

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[111] Norman R. Cary, "Gender and Religious Leadership in West Indian Novels," *Caribbean Quarterly* 34, nos. 1 and 2 (March 1988): 49.

[112] Loretta Collins, "'We Shall All Heal': Ma Kilman, the Obeah Woman, as Mother-Healer in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*," *Literature and Medicine* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 157.

The anglophone Caribbean's first significant piece of legislation that named and outlawed "the practice of obeah" took force in 1761 after Tacky's Rebellion in Jamaica.[116] As this act shows, early legal definitions of obeah were written under the specter of slave rebellion. Colonial officials perceived obeah priests such as the "old Coromantin" described in Long's *History of Jamaica* as threats to the plantation order for his ability to marshal slaves to action.[117]

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[113] Among Rhys's earliest commentators include Louis James and Wilson Harris. James writes that Rhys's "imaginative awareness of *obeah* was to enable her to create the most hallucinatory scenes of *Wide Sargasso Sea*," while Harris obscurely connects obeah in the novel to pre-colonial religion and an "Arawak foodbearing tree." See James, *Jean Rhys* (London: Longman, 1978), 5, emphasis in original and Harris, *The Womb of Space: The Cross-Cultural Imagination* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 52. Meanwhile, Mary Lou Emery and Elaine Savory both argue that obeah has a resistive, formal influence in Rhys's writing. See Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End": Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 45 and Savory, "'Another Poor Devil of a Human Being…': Jean Rhys and the Novel as Obeah," in *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and the Caribbean*, eds. Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 217.

[114] Teresa O'Connor, *Jean Rhys: The West Indian Novels* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 118.

[115] Ibid., 209.

[116] *The Laws of Jamaica: 1760-1792*, vol. 2 (Alexander Aikman, 1802), Act 22.

[117] Long, *History of Jamaica*, 451.

Between Tacky's Rebellion and emancipation in the 1830s, Jamaica passed a handful of slave acts with provisions that specifically named obeah and its supposed connections to the devil and poisons. The provisions also outlined punishments for practicing obeah, which included hanging and transportation out of the island. When an 1856 obeah law was amended in 1892, punishment for women in the form of flogging was removed.[118] On one hand, this gendered differentiation in punishment shows how dominant ideology positioned women as the weaker sex unfit for bodily harm. On the other hand, such sexism was advantageous: obeahwomen could escape physical punishment and thus continue their financial pursuits.

The criminalization of obeah shifted and expanded with the nullification of the slave acts in light of emancipation. Jamaica began to put its own legislation on vagrancy into place in 1833, 1839, and 1840 that adapted and even copied verbatim parts of England's 1824 Vagrancy Act. Targeting "rogues and vagabonds" as well as those "pretending to be a dealer in obeah or myalism," Jamaica's vagrancy laws sought to increase criminalization rather than thwart large-scale rebellion. Laws specifically drafted for criminalizing obeah were passed in 1856 and consolidated in the Obeah Act of 1898.[119] These nineteenth-century pieces of legislation also resulted in trials where records show that clients often sought good fortune in their personal or financial lives, which differs significantly from earlier laws that focused on the harm obeah could produce either against whites or other slaves.[120]

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[118] Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica 1865-1920* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 27; Jerome S. Handler and Kenneth M. Bilby, *Enacting Power: The Criminalization of Obeah in the Anglophone Caribbean, 1760-2011* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2013), 51.

[119] I draw this history of Jamaica's obeah legislation from Handler and Bilby, *Enacting Power*, 45 – 53.

[120] Diana Paton, "Obeah Acts: Producing and Policing the Boundaries of Religion in the Caribbean," *Small Axe* 13, no. 1 (March 2009): 8.

Historian Diana Paton highlights how these post-emancipation laws also brought the matters of fraud and financial gain into definitions of obeah.[121] For example, Jamaica's Obeah Act of 1898 defined an obeah practitioner as "any person who, to effect any fraudulent or unlawful purpose, or for gain, or for the purpose of frightening any person, uses, or pretends to use any occult means, or pretends to possess any supernatural power or knowledge."[122] The idea of obeah as fraud, Paton underlines, is not itself revelatory; indeed, this is one of the resilient images of obeah in the present day: its practitioners are quacks.[123] What is potentially transformative about the presence of fraud and financial gain lies in how such definitions underline the possibility that practitioners *know* their services are false. After all, Jamaica's Obeah Act tellingly inscribes an individual who "uses, or pretends to use" the occult and supernatural as an obeah practitioner.

As Paton explains, the post-emancipation laws "constructed obeahmen and obeahwomen as rationalists while presenting their clients as dupes or victims."[124] This finding profoundly shifts the terms of power among Christophine, Antoinette, and Rochester. In a key scene, Antoinette consults Christophine for advice on her precarious marriage to Rochester. Christophine suggests she "pack up and go," thereby opening a discussion on where exactly Antoinette should travel (68). Continuing a dream-like image of England that began earlier in the novel, Antoinette thinks of England. Christophine thus asks Antoinette if she believes there is even a place such as England. Taken aback that Christophine contests the existence of a country, Antoinette asks, "'You do not believe that there is a country called England?'" In response, Christophine clarifies her position and explains:

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[121] Ibid., 2.
[122] "The Obeah Law, 1898 (Jamaica)," *Obeah Histories*, accessed January 14, 2014, http://obeahhistories.org/1898-jamaica-law/.
[123] Youree Dell Harris, a California woman who adopted faux Jamaican speech in late night infomercials as "Miss Cleo" to sell fortune-telling services, plays on this image of obeah. She was the focus of a Federal Trade Commission investigation for misleading consumers in 2002. See Mitch Lipka, "'Jamaican' Miss Cleo Is Really From Los Angeles, State Claims," *Sun-Sentinel*, March 14, 2002, http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2002-03-14/news/0203140211_1_access-resource-services-psychic-readers-network-cleo
[124] Paton, "Obeah Acts," 7.

> 'I don't say I don't *believe*, I say I don't *know*, I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it. Besides I ask myself is this place like they tell us? Some say one thing, some different, I hear it cold to freeze your bones and they thief your money, clever like the devil. You have money in your pocket, you look again and bam! No money. Why you want to go to this cold thief place? If there is this place at all, I never see it, that is one thing sure.' (70, emphasis in original)

Readings of this exchange consider Antoinette's perception of Christophine rather than the latter's detailed explanation of her rationale toward the existence of England.[125] Christophine explains that she can only legitimize England as part of what she knows if it she sees it firsthand. With conflicting word-of-mouth that Christophine has likely collected from black Jamaicans, white creoles, and visitors from England like Mr. Mason and Rochester – as well as from her youth in Martinique, an island occupied by the British at the turn of the nineteenth century – the former domestic refuses to take sides. The claim that England might not even exist as a "place" comes off as an extreme position that prompts Antoinette to cast Christophine as an "ignorant, obstinate old negro woman" (70). But within the obeah practitioner and client relationship – which I also understand as a vendor and purchaser one – that these two characters eventually play out, this exchange indicates how Christophine begins to manipulate Antoinette by taking advantage of the white creole's assumptions about obeah. Christophine's comment, "'You have money in your pocket, you look again and bam! No money," also foreshadows an important transaction that takes place between the two women later in the novel.

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[125] For example, even Lucy Wilson's article on black West Indians in Rhys's work is more interested in Antoinette's rather Christophine's actions in this scene. See "'Women Must Have Spunks': Jean Rhys's West Indian Outcasts," *Modern Fiction Studies* 32, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 444.

Given how Christophine is what postcolonial critics such as Gayatri Spivak have instructed us to understand as the most "powerfully suggestive character" in Rhys's novel, it has made sense to read her as symptomatic of colonial discourse – as the "other" constructed for metropolitan consumption.[126] The tendency in Rhys studies to turn, perhaps too uncritically, to her biography and personal letters has also generated one-dimensional readings of Christophine.[127] But Christophine's attitude toward England is in fact far from "ignorant" or "obstinate": by contrast, I propose that she is marketing knowledge to Antoinette in the manner a higgler would negotiate the price of commodities. In this context, Christophine holds the position of power; Antoinette is the superstitious individual – remember, she daydreams of England – who seeks authoritative knowledge from Christophine.

Christophine tells Rochester just prior to her exit from the novel, "'Read and write I don't know. Other things I know'" (104). This curt statement seems to establish a binary between Christophine and Rochester: the former is understood as the matriarch who wields obeah and orality against the latter's patriarchal investments in law and order.[128] What I am pointing out, however, involves how financial savvy ranks high among the "'other things'" Christophine knows. In her article on Jamaican higglers, Victoria Durant-Gonzalez uses case studies from Kingston to provide a detailed portrait of the market women whose most apparent role involves distributing commodities from rural farms. Examining the female higgler in particular, Durant-Gonzalez calls the occupation an "archetype of Jamaican womanhood at its most dynamic; symbol of strength, endurance, courage and – if necessary, quarrelsomeness."[129] The post-emancipation laws I discussed above suggests how some practitioners engaged in obeah because they knew a clientele existed regardless of whether their services actually worked. Obeah in this criminalized sense is thus an exploitative, moneymaking endeavor with a rational yet dishonest connotation. But I draw from the image of the higgler for analyzing Christophine's financial use of obeah because her nuanced actions go beyond charlatanism.

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[126] Benita Parry also reads Christophine from a postcolonial perspective, although she disagrees with what she calls Spivak's "deliberated deafness to the native voice" and identifies the character as an important figure of resistance. See "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Oxford Literary Review* 9, nos. 1 and 2 (1987): 39. Carine Mardorossian moves away from the oppositional readings of Spivak and Parry and points instead to "the complex interplay between colonial strategies and subaltern practices" as the novel's moment of "[b]lack resistance." See "Shutting up the Subaltern: Silences, Stereotypes, and Double-Entendre in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*," *Callaloo* 22, no. 4 (Autumn 1999): 1072. Keith A. Russell has taken Christophine out of postcolonial accounts to consider her use of language. See "'Now Every Word She Said Was Echoed, Echoed Loudly in My Head': Christophine's Language and Refractive Space in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 87 – 103.

[127] In a letter to her editor Diana Athill, Rhys writes, "The most seriously wrong thing with Part II is that I've made the obeah woman, the nurse, too articulate. I thought of cutting it a bit, I will if you like, but after all no one will notice. Besides there's no reason why one particular negro woman shouldn't be articulate enough, especially as she's spent most of her life in a white household." See Rhys to Athill, 20 February 1966 in *The Letters of Jean Rhys*, Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly, eds. (New York: Viking, 1984), 297. My reading of Christophine in part speculates about the amount of careful, legally contextualized thought Rhys put into the character, which comments such as this belie.

Higglers, as Winnifred Brown-Glaude asserts, are "female micro-entrepreneurs" who sustain livelihoods through informal economies. Such economies date back to the goods slaves would vend at Sunday markets. Mary Prince also brought inserted herself into these economies in London, which also persist on a larger scale in the present-day with the work of informal commercial importers that buy commodities wholesale in places such as China to sell in Jamaica. Brown-Glaude calls globalized market women "modern higglers."[130] The social turmoil of emancipation in which *Wide Sargasso Sea* takes place creates the informal economy of higglering obeah that I identify with Christophine.

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[128] Spivak writes, "it is Christophine alone whom Rhys allows to offer a hard analysis of Rochester's actions, to challenge him in a face-to-face encounter." See "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," 253.

[129] Victoria Durant-Gonzalez, "The Occupation of Higglering," *Jamaica Journal* 16, no. 3 (August 1983): 2 – 3.

[130] Winnifred Brown-Glaude, *Higglers in Kingston: Women's Informal Work in Jamaica* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 2.

The sales skills of a higgler offer an opportunity to rethink what at first seems outlandish (questioning England's existence) and supernatural (selling obeah treatments) in the novel. Continuing with the scene of Christophine and Antoinette's conversation about England reveals how the former's resistive practices are rooted in a keen awareness of the island's white legal gaze – a gaze that, as I show below, Christophine uses as well. When Antoinette walks away from her former nanny's small house, she hears the crow of a cock. The sound prompts Antoinette to think, "'That is for betrayal, but who is the traitor?'" (74). She refers to how she has supposedly badgered Christophine into supplying her with an object "wrapped in a leaf" (75). Desperate to rescue her deteriorating marriage, Antoinette has come to Christophine seeking a solution in the form of obeah. When Antoinette hears a cock's crow and wonders about the traitor associated with the biblical sound, she indicates her guilt for having "forced" Christophine with "ugly money" to offer obeah to whites (75).

But from Christophine's perspective, the betrayal evoked in the cock's crow signals her status as a free woman. No longer bound by law or employment to Antoinette, Christophine's obeah enterprise demonstrates her independent financial livelihood after emancipation. Though in line with gothic and romantic tropes from Antoinette's perspective – she rides a horse to a secluded, rocky area called Mounes Mors, or "the Dead Ones," to obtain a love potion – the scene between the two that I have been examining also installs, from Christophine's perspective, a practical survival economy that erodes the already tenuous hierarchy between master and servant (67). Throughout this conversation, Christophine parries on whether she practices obeah. She laughs heartily when Antoinette broaches the powers of making people love, hate, and even die. Yet Christophine immediately swerves on what she calls "[a]ll that foolishness and folly" when she tells Antoinette that obeah "is not for *béké* [white people]" (71). After seeing a pile of chicken feathers, which are among obeah's alleged ritual items, Antoinette throws her purse on her former caretaker's bed. Christophine admits she is helping because Antoinette has begged her, not for money – but Christophine never returns the purse.

I belabor how a monetary transaction takes place between Christophine and Antoinette because it is the mundane detail neglected in favor of the scene's gothic aura that abides with stereotypes of obeah. When translated into higglering, Christophine's actions resemble the occupation's resourceful sales techniques. Durant-Gonzalez explains what is known on the ground as "the 'knowledge' of higglering." This includes navigating interpersonal relations that younger higglers often learn from older women, computing change, and embodying the price-negotiation process. As Durant-Gonzalez outlines:

> Higglers manipulate the performance of computing skills between self and customer by exerting control over how this is carried out. When a customer attempts to confuse or outwit a higgler by out-computing her or calculating the sum of a purchase for her, the higgler simply stops the transaction. She does this by rearranging her produce, returning to the shelling of gungo peas, or other activity or simply by turning to her stall neighbor and engaging in chat. While she is engaging in such diversionary techniques she is at the same time computing the purchase. The customer usually gets the message and the transaction is reinitiated with the higgler in control.[131]

When Christophine tells Antoinette at the outset of their transaction that "[b]ad, bad trouble come when *béké* meddle with" obeah and, later, that "[i]f *béké* say it foolishness, then it foolishness," she plays along with assumptions about obeah as malevolent and superstitious (71, 74). Christophine also allows Antoinette to feel that she is receiving special treatment. Antoinette follows Christophine into her home, but the scene that awaits the white creole seems purposely arranged to provoke a response: recall that it contains a collection of chicken feathers. Christophine registers Antoinette's distress at the sight of the feathers and asks, "So already you frightened eh?" (74). Taken together with her cautionary language about obeah's incompatibility with "*béké*," the arrangement of the main room in Christophine's home constitutes a strategic performance of obeah with the aim of completing a sale. As Christophine says of Rochester during her transaction with Antoinette, "'Money have pretty face for everybody.'" The problem with Rochester, however, involves how "'for that man money pretty like pretty self, he can't see nothing else'" (72). This comment provides a telling indication that Christophine enjoys money as well. The difference from Rochester, as well as from the English more generally that Christophine described to Antoinette earlier, lies in how she can "'thief'" money in creative and unsuspecting ways.

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[131] Durant-Gonzalez, "The Occupation of Higglering," 6.

Christophine and Antoinette's conversation about Rochester also highlights how the two women understand the economy of the Victorian marriage market. This institution of coupling is, like the monetary transaction I underlined earlier, another banal detail that in fact sets into motion the entire conflict between Rochester and Antoinette, and by extension, a set of social relations between Britain and the Caribbean. After all, Antoinette's dowry came from the renewed wealth Mr. Mason brought to the family when he married her mother, which shows the entanglement of capital. As Antoinette bemoans her marriage, the two women briefly discuss the topic of husbands. While Antoinette feels a sense of subservience – she says, "But I cannot go. He is my husband after all" – Christophine champions her personal and financial freedom from the institution of marriage. She says, "'All woman, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I have. One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband, I thank my God. I keep my money. I don't give it to no worthless man'" (69). Alongside the detail that

Christophine does not return Antoinette's purse, her critique of marriage bolsters her practical financial mission. The assertion, "'I keep my money,'" serves as a proto-higgler strategy. Though men also work as higglers, Durant-Gonzalez points out how women in the occupation are "surreptitious" in their handling of cash. The male higglers she studied in Kingston brandish money clips and even leave cash in the open near their merchandise, whereas the women store funds in a small bag that is furthermore "attached to the body for safety."[132] These gendered differences in higglering and money handling help transition to the ideological and legal conflicts between Christophine and Rochester that I turn to now.

III. Christophine's Radicalism

Christophine's informal survival economy takes on a radical register when she questions the meaning of the law in Jamaica. Scoffing at the idea that slavery is no longer practiced on the island as newcomers from England move in nearby, Christophine explains, "'These new ones have Letter of the Law. Same thing. They got magistrate. They got fine. They got jail house and chain gang. They got tread machine to mash up people's feet. New ones worse than the old ones – more cunning, that's all'" (11). Christophine condemns apprenticeship, the violent system of paid work and harsh punishment that replaced slavery. As I discussed above, legal definitions of obeah after emancipation sought to cast a wider net that framed obeah as a petty crime rather than an engine of large-scale revolt. This shift reflects the broader controversial aim of apprenticeship that characterized emancipation's early years: British authors of emancipation policy understood "slaves as children needing to be reeducated as wage laborers and resocialized as citizens."[133] Though slavery ended in name, then, the legal dimensions of emancipation brought special magistrates to Jamaica that enforced the forty and a half-hour apprenticeship workweek. If these hours were not fulfilled, the emancipated slaves would receive the exact punishments Christophine identifies: fines, imprisonment, flogging, or the treadmill. Christophine's attunement to the relationship between the law and emancipation thus bolsters Thomas Holt's observation that women workers in Jamaica exercised "[t]he most resistance to the apprenticeship regime."[134]

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[132] Ibid.

Yet what makes Christophine's resistance paradoxically radical is how her defiance works *within* these legal restrictions. Unlike the women field workers that Holt brings to light, Christophine does not destroy property on plantations and sugar estates to challenge apprenticeship.[135] Instead, she attempts to inhabit the law's capacity for exerting power. When Antoinette blames English law for the loss of her money upon marrying Rochester, Christophine incisively parallels Satan with Richard Mason, Antoinette's heartless brother. "'Law!'" Christophine exclaims, "'The Mason boy fix it, that boy worse than Satan and he burn in Hell one of these fine nights'" (69). As Antoinette's interiorized flashback recounts when Christophine tells her there is no one left to trust in Jamaica, Richard Mason singlehandedly arranged the financial terms of his half-sister's marriage to Rochester. Antoinette's Aunt Cora urged establishing a settlement via a lawyer, but Richard, eager to make a financial deal with an Englishman, chose to negotiate the marriage on his own. Christophine's arguably superstitious hyperbole regarding how Richard is "'worse than Satan'" therefore undoes the tangles of law that Antoinette finds so binding. Law, as Christophine's assessment of the milieu of Jamaica after emancipation indicates, is mere "'cunning'" for individualized acts of violence, cruelty, and deceit. Within the subject of law, Christophine is thus able to open up a path of resistance that has not caught critical attention: she insightfully gets to the bottom of the law's abstraction (it was Richard in particular, not English law in general that compromised Antoinette's fortune).

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[133] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 56.

[134] Ibid., 64. For more on gender, emancipation, and punishment in Jamaica, see Diana Paton, *No Bond But the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780 – 1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

[135] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 63.

What is especially worth recognizing is how Christophine envisions taking advantage of the very legal realities she both critiques and claims do not exist in order to advance her own material interests. Her famous confrontation with Rochester thus emphasizes her legal savvy against the white male character who, at first glance, seems more invested in the "'Letter of the law.'" With Antoinette extremely distressed after learning that Rochester has slept with their servant Amélie, Christophine and Rochester exchange heated words over who has been more manipulative in the marriage. They then engage in a patchwork dialogue, which is narrated by Rochester but also includes snippets of Christophine's comments and Rochester's paraphrases of her responses. Christophine asks why Rochester does not simply return a portion of Antoinette's dowry and leave the West Indies. She encourages him to "'fix it up with lawyers and all those things,'" which would allow her to "take good care of Antoinette (and the money of course)." Christophine then proposes the two women would travel to Martinique and beyond, adding "'I like to see the world before I die.'" She also matter-of-factly describes how Antoinette would marry another man, forget Rochester, and live happily. Upon hearing these possibilities, Rochester admits a "pang of rage and jealously shot through me," and he maliciously laughs that Antoinette will not forget him, which of course foreshadows how he will imprison his wife in the attic of his manor house (102).

Earlier in the novel, Christophine critiqued law for its "'cunning'" use by those coming to Jamaica after emancipation. She nonetheless asks Rochester to *go back* to the law in an effort to restore Antoinette's happiness. And we do not even need Rochester' parenthetical comment on Christophine and money to hazard that she proposes this plan of action for her own benefit as well: travelling back to Martinique means returning to her home island, and her desire to "'see the world'" furthermore suggests the personal gain she envisions if Antoinette and Rochester were to "'fix it up with lawyers.'" Christophine therefore grasps that law is a method for deceit and exploitation, but more fundamentally one of power as well. In this argument with Rochester, she attempts to wield the ruses of law, albeit through her proximity to Antoinette, to imagine a kind of world tour now that is she no longer a servant to Cosway and Mason family. The bottom line of this exchange is that it demonstrates how Christophine schemes her power partly within the terms of colonial law, not exclusively within alternative Afro-Caribbean knowledge. It is therefore worth reading her famous exiting lines ("'Read and write I don't know. Other things I know'") with yet another nuance: the "'[o]ther things'" Christophine knows include obeah as a outlawed spiritual practice, higglering's financial strategies, and the law's possibilities.

Seeing how Christophine traffics in the law also allows us to register Rochester in a different manner. When Rochester thinks, "I knew the sound of patois now" during his argument with Christophine, the novel suggests how the Englishman undergoes changes in the West Indies (104). After all, when he first arrives, he disapproves of Christophine's language; by the time of their confrontation, he claims to be able to navigate local forms of verbal speech, at least as a listener. But I instead underline here how Christophine's manipulative actions position Rochester's power more within personal jealousy rather than the "'Letter of the law.'" Despite their arranged marriage, Antoinette and Rochester seem to adjust to each other's company, especially on a sexual level. This suddenly changes, however, when Rochester receives a letter from Daniel Cosway, the man who claims to be Antoinette's half-brother through one of her father's sexual dalliances. The letter outlines a cautionary tale for Rochester: the Masons evince the madness latent "in all these white Creoles" on the island, and it is therefore only a matter of time before Antoinette's hereditary imbalance manifests itself (60). Immediately after reading the letter, Rochester thinks, "I felt no surprise. It was as if I'd expected it, been waiting for it" (62). Like the Victorian travel narratives that merely rehearsed Thomas Carlyle's influential racist stereotypes about "[t]he idle black man in the West Indies" once their authors left Britain to visit the West Indies, Rochester does not take his experiences in Jamaica and Dominica as an opportunity to rethink any of his metropolitan prejudices.[136] If Rochester and Christophine seem to stand at political and epistemological odds for their attitudes toward writing – the former embraces it while the latter claims to not possess scribal literacy – I suggest it is worth pausing to see what Rochester's literacy is actually able to read.

Throughout his narration in Part Two, Rochester invokes contrasting yet typical accounts of the Caribbean. The island on which he and Antoinette honeymoon is both a virginal natural paradise and a "damned place" where blood relations among people of vastly different physical appearances are highly "possible" and "even probable" (81). His recurring action of turning to the written word, whether it is to consult a book chapter on obeah or to write letters to the magistrate of Spanish Town to learn more about Christophine's criminal records, often legitimizes what he already believes. Rochester's tautological way of collecting and verifying knowledge shows how he cannot imagine taking advantage of the law in the way Christophine does. As a white Englishman in a colony, he arguably does not need to exercise such savvy. Nonetheless, his solution for resolving martial tensions is not to turn to the law to renegotiate Antoinette's dowry. Instead, his plan is pure bitterness: to forcibly take Antoinette to England to ensure she cannot marry again. The "pang of rage and jealousy" he feels toward the possibility of Antoinette finding another husband links back to Rochester's insecurity early in the novel when she experiences cold feet; the Englishman cannot stand the prospect of being "jilted by this Creole girl" (102, 48). To be sure, Rochester realizes his ownership of Antoinette's property under English law. But his awareness of this statute does not carry the same tactical manipulation as Christophine's proposition to "'fix it up with lawyers and all those things'" (102). Christophine's solution to the martial discord involves adding more twists to the knots of law whereas Rochester's entails violent force. The foreshadowing of taking Antoinette to England is thus not that different from Rochester's use of the written word to substantiate his preexisting notions. It involves a nearly instantaneous reaction to a challenging situation. A careful reading of Christophine and Rochester's confrontation reveals the former's sophisticated grasp of legal possibilities and the latter's brute desires for vengeance, which reverses colonial binaries of "barbaric" and "civilized" and ultimately empties those very categories of meaning.

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[136] Thomas Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," *Fraser's Magazine* 40, no. 240 (Dec. 1849): 674. Simon Gikandi argues that "touring becomes a form of retour: opinions formed before the commencement of the voyage are not dissipated by experience; on the contrary, they are authorized by the weight of personal observations." Gikandi has James Anthony Froude in mind, as well as Charles Kingsley and Anthony Trollope. See *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 117.

Christophine's sudden exit from the novel certainly serves as a creative riposte to imperial desires for narrative closure.[137] I even suggest that Christophine's departure offers a narratological foil to the shadow narratives – particularly the letters from Daniel Cosway and the book chapter on obeah – that Rochester values, reinforces, and perpetuates as an Englishman coming to the West Indies. But I also add an additional consideration: Christophine is such a compelling character not because her politics and intents are difficult to categorize or even read, but because the competing body of knowledge she works within (the "'other things'" with which she taunts Rochester) is to a certain extent the same body of knowledge and practice of power she denounces. If Christophine is an "evil" woman as Rochester argues to Antoinette, this is because she can imagine political and personal gain within the "'Letter of the law'" *and* the law's treatment of outlawed and frowned upon financial practices (94).

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[137] I therefore agree with Spivak's updated reading of Christophine's departure as a "strength" of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 131.

Late in Part Two when Rochester's correspondence with a Spanish Town magistrate reveals that Christophine had once been in jail, the novel underlines the stakes of her participation in higglering obeah (91 – 92). Yet as the narrative's events show, Christophine perseveres and continues her risky financial practice by selling obeah to Antoinette, the very woman whose family once employed her. In doing this, Christophine sustains a quotidian yet radical means of personal finance. Trafficking in colonial assumptions of obeah to create value, she uses the landscape of emancipation to fashion a means of employment beyond economies of servitude and domestic work. More fundamentally, Christophine's financial livelihood underscores one of her final statements in the novel: "'This is free country, and I am free woman'" (103).

Jane Eyre

I. Revisiting Jamaican Connections

Christophine's assertion of free womanhood as a savvy higgler in post-emancipation Jamaica allows us to extend similar concerns with labor, money, and class back to *Jane Eyre*.

Even though class shapes each stage of Jane's life and the social relations she experiences, critics interested in imperialism overstate the protagonist's supposed privileges as a white British heroine. Spivak, for example, takes as unproblematic what she calls the "ambiguous *class* position of the governess."[138] The ambiguity Spivak acknowledges yet disavows actually spurred major cultural anxieties in Brontë's time.

The occupation of being a governess brought working-class women to a realm with different – and supposedly superior – social codes. Governesses lived in middle-class and aristocratic homes teaching subjects such as French to children; this is precisely what Jane does as a governess in Thornfield Hall. While the female employers in these homes embodied lives of lady-like leisure, the governess's very presence signaled that she was engaged in labor and therefore *not* a lady. The position of the governess thus enabled contemporary commentators to portend that working-class vices would spread to middle-class homes.[139] While Christophine's occupation as a higgler of obeah hinged on her manipulation of white assumptions of Afro-Caribbean culture, the governess could be accused of being unfit to manage her working-class morals and sexual desires while in the homes that employed them.

Elizabeth Rigby, the critic who later became Lady Eastlake, linked what she understood as the unfortunate morals of governesses to both *Jane Eyre* and the working-class fervor of the Chartist movement. Chartism organized working-class concerns that the 1832 Reform Act failed to fully address. In particular, the 1838 People's Charter, which gave the movement its name, sought six key reforms: universal male suffrage, the abolition of property requirements for Members of Parliament, annual elections, electoral districts of equal size, payment for Members of Parliament, and vote through secret ballots. According to historian Gareth Stedman Jones, Chartism spurred cultural anxieties not because of its specific demands or the rhetoric therein, but because its proponents organized themselves into a legitimate social movement.[140]

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[138] Spivak, "Three Women's Texts," 248, emphasis in original.
[139] Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 129.

Rigby thus responded to *Jane Eyre* and its depiction of a governess as the Chartists raged on and set out to assemble their 1848 Petition. In her famous review of Brontë's novel, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and the Governesses' Benevolent Institution's 1847 report, Eastlake bemoans the "illegitimate romance" between Jane and Rochester and attempts to express sympathy for the thousands of British women employed as governesses.[141] As the report reveals, governesses comprised the largest occupational group of women committed to mental asylums.[142] But Eastlake deems Jane a poor "mouthpiece" for the concerns of governesses.[143] In Eastlake's view, Jane appallingly contests "God's appointment" – in other words, the character questions authority – and brings to mind the disruptive energies that have "overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home."[144] By questioning Jane's affiliation with her occupational group and instead framing her among the "workmen" who "rebel" and the "tradesmen" who "combine" to make demands of society, Eastlake caught on to the radical possibilities of Jane's class position that postcolonial critics such as Spivak shy away from exploring.[145]

As I show below, the context of Chartism alongside Jane's work as a governess and an unexpected colonial inheritance stages the possibilities of a Victorian woman's disadvantageous financial position. These connections may not be illuminating in themselves, but what is involves how issues of political unrest and women's labor intersect in ways we have already seen staged in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. After all, the period of emancipation and the occupation of higglering spurred tensions that enabled Christophine to champion her financial independence.

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[140] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832 - 1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 91.
[141] Elizabeth Rigby, review of *Vanity Fair*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Governesses' Benevolent Institution - Report for 1847*," *The Quarterly Review* 84, no. 167 (December 1848): 166.
[142] Ibid., 177.
[143] Ibid., 176.
[144] Ibid., 174.
[145] Ibid., 179.

Part of the problem in failing to see such continuities between Brontë's and Rhys's novels involves how race was often co-opted to describe issues of class across the empire. *Jane Eyre*'s scenes of poverty in England's northern moorlands of course offer a counterpoint to Maria Nugent's reports in her Jamaica journal of wearing exclusive dresses gifted by the wife of France's General Leclerc. Examples of contrasts such as these propelled uproar within Britain. Commentators turned to the West Indies and pointed to the well-fed bodies of white creole and black enslaved bodies alike and wondered why working-class men, women, and children starved on London's overcrowded streets.[146] Henry Mayhew, a journalist and social reformer, even prefaced his 1851 study *London Labour and London Poor* by cautioning readers about "the undiscovered country of the poor" they would learn about.[147] Using the rhetoric of travel, Mayhew characterized London's impoverished districts as foreign territory. In reality, the comforts of tropical excess were largely projected onto the West Indies. Nugent's Jamaica journal described the constant threat of death from illnesses such as yellow fever, and the enslaved – contrary to what Thomas Carlyle imagined in his "Occasional Discourse" – were often underfed.

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[146] After passing near St. Kitts, Charles Kingsley writes in his travelogue, "Nowhere in the West Indies are to be seen those haggard down-trodden mothers, grown old before their time, too common in England, and commoner still in France. Health, 'rude' in every sense of the word, is the mark of the Negro woman, and of the Negro man likewise. Their faces shine with fatness; they seem to enjoy, they do enjoy, the mere act of living, like the lizard on the wall." See *At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1871), 33.

[147] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work* (London: George Woodfall and Son, 1851), iii.

Racialized discourse nonetheless permeates *Jane Eyre*'s figurative economy, as Susan Meyer has shown. But I underline *Jane Eyre*'s Jamaican connections to elaborate on two missing links crucial to understanding the protagonist's financial independence: the Madeira wine industry and Nugent's journal. Despite the amount of scholarship on *Jane Eyre*'s imperial dimensions, one subject remains neglected: via Madeira wine, Jane's own family participates in a colonial financial endeavor. But because Madeira's wine industry defies the familiar national boundaries that typically launch studies of empire, its complex history has not been extended to Brontë's novel. John Eyre, an uncle through Jane's mother, works as a wine merchant based in Funchal, Madeira. Upon his death, he leaves Jane a sum of twenty thousand pounds. The amount, which Jane calls a "stunner," takes her breath away and creates a rare moment of lightness with St. John, who had delivered the news (441). Jane's shock at the amount and her insistence that it must be an error suggest how nebulous her uncle's work might have been to those in Britain. But recent work in early Atlantic history reveals an extensive archive on Madeira wine and its presence in Jamaica and consequently enables further scrutiny of Jane's inheritance.

Reports of white creole degeneracy comprised one of the well-known cultural images about the West Indies in the British imagination, and Brontë may have more subtly incorporated the politics of creole excess than critics have understood. According to Sue Thomas, for example, Brontë was well aware of notions of white creole depravity. In fact, Thomas suggests that Brontë might have been familiar with Nugent's Jamaica journal, either by reading it herself or having it read to her.[148] Below, I link the images of white creole wine consumption from Nugent's journal to the routes of Madeira wine and argue that Jane's subsequent division of her Madeira inheritance shows how racialized discourse also works as an important vehicle for dis-identification – not just affiliation – in Brontë's novel. By sharing her colonial fortune, Jane enacts a modest vision toward her money that offers a powerful counterpoint to white creole excess and the financial attitudes of various men in the novel.

II. Madeira Wine, Creole Drunkards, and Jane's "Average" Politics

Madeira is small yet strategically situated both within the Atlantic Ocean and the fabric of *Jane Eyre*'s plot. The Portuguese claimed the island in the fifteenth century, and it is located nearly 1,500 miles to the southwest of London. Though Madeira is only 34 miles in length and 14 miles wide, most ships from Europe en route to the Caribbean or the Americas stopped at the island because a junction of trade winds and currents made it easy to do so. Unlike European travelers' accounts of the Caribbean that note the islands' beauty as well as their oppressive heat, those of Madeira delight in its geographical magnificence and mild climate. Temperatures in Madeira were often between a high of 74 degrees Fahrenheit and a low of 62, and this environment made its soil easily capable of growing non-native fauna and crops. The temperate climate also made the island a desirable place to recuperate for the sick and invalid, which explains why Richard Mason in *Jane Eyre* spends time in Madeira following the injuries he suffers at Thornfield Hall from his sister Bertha (339).[149]

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[148] Sue Thomas, "The Tropical Extravagance of Bertha Mason," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27, no. 1 (1999): 4.

[149] David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 2 – 7.

Richard's route from Jamaica to Britain to Madeira alerts us to how the map of empire that Brontë draws in her novel comprises more than a collection of global allusions. The links she makes evocatively correspond to how people, commodities, and money flowed throughout the plantation system. Although the island's name means "wood" in Portuguese and signals its abundant forestation, wine took top billing as a Madeiran export beginning in the seventeenth century – the same century that Britain took Jamaica from the Spanish.[150] Prior to the cultivation of grapes, Madeira grew sugarcane. But this industry declined with the advent of sugar production in the West Indies and Brazil.[151] When exports peaked in the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century, Madeira wine was clearly a global commodity: the drink traveled beyond the nearby market of Portugal and went to Asia, North America, and the West Indies.[152]

Thus when Maria Nugent's Jamaica journal expresses disgust at the white creoles' "gallons of wine and mixed liquors," the wine likely came from Madeira (57). Nugent mentions Madeira wine's medicinal uses in select entries, but export figures and merchant-customer networks suggest that the creoles with whom Nugent dined stocked their kitchens with Madeira's famous beverage. Madeira wine entered the West Indies duty-free beginning in the seventeenth century thanks to the 1663 Navigation Act. After the Seven Years' War concluded in 1763, the British West Indies received an enormous amount of Madeira wine. Exports to both Barbados and Jamaica quickly returned to prewar numbers and then increased twofold in the 1780s and 1790s. While the North American colonies received an average of 1,800 pipes of Madeira wine per year after the Seven Years' War, the number for the British West Indies was 2,500 pipes.

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[150] Elaine Freedgood discusses Madeiran connections in *Jane Eyre* through the material histories of mahogany forestation and furniture. See Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 30 – 54.

[151] Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 19.

[152] Ibid., 21.

Pipes were containers for shipping wine, and each held 110 gallons. Newton & Gordon, a wine exporting firm in Funchal owned by Englishmen, supplied wine to 33 regular buyers in Jamaica in the 1780s, and these customers ranged from individuals in Spanish Town to plantations in unidentified locations on the island.[153]

I cite these numbers because they help provide a sense of the prosperity John Eyre may have derived from his Jamaican links as a Madeira wine merchant and Brontë's representation of "Creole" Jamaicans. The figures also invite closer scrutiny of the connection between Jane's inheritance and her dis-identification with white creoles. Meyer's careful reading of figurative language in Brontë's novel keenly points out that John Eyre directly supplies wine to Richard Mason in the West Indies.[154] Historical records also show a crystallized triangulation across Britain, Madeira, and the West Indies. Madeira's strategic location encouraged men from England, Scotland, France, Russia, and Germany to settle on the island to take advantage of prosperous trade and export industries. Out of these so-called foreigners, English-speaking merchants made up the largest group. At the start of the nineteenth century, the British had a population of 500 in Funchal, the island's largest port city. Like West Indian planters, British men came to Madeira from non-landed families in order to seek financial opportunities. When St. John reveals that his mother had two brothers, one a clergyman who is Jane's father and the other John Eyre, we can assume that the Eyres came from humble beginnings that would reasonably compel John to migrate to Madeira (443 – 444). Indeed, when Mr. Lloyd the apothecary asks Jane about relatives as a young girl following an outburst against her cousin John, she says her Aunt Reed once told her she might have "some poor, low relations called Eyre" (29). But while John Eyre's circumstances in Madeira align with accounts of what brought men to the island, the fact that he remained unwed and childless is odd, at least statistically speaking. While ubiquitous up to about 1750, bachelors from places such as England shrank in number as wine exporting grew. Put simply, establishing a multi-generational family business in Madeira became crucial to consolidating specific customer networks across the Atlantic.[155]

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[153] Ibid., 122, 151.
[154] Meyer, *Imperialism at Home*, 93.

The merchant and buyer relationship between John Eyre and Richard Mason implicates the imaginative economy fuelling Brontë's depiction of white creoles as well, not just the financial origins of Jane's inheritance. If Brontë encountered the graphic scenes of white creoles' consumption of wine in Nugent's journal, it is possible to connect those descriptions of excess to the portrayal of Bertha. Using the women whom Nugent describes as "perfect viragos" at the Rose residence at Seville as a link, Sue Thomas proposes that Brontë modeled Bertha after such domineering behavior. Indeed, Nugent's entry about her day with the Roses paints an unintentionally chilling portrait. She calls their residence "a most uncomfortable house," complete with "awkward and dirty servants" and children who spend the entire day screaming. The Rose ladies "never speak but in the most imperious manner to their servants." But Nugent only hears such harsh treatment thanks to what she describes as the thin walls of West Indian houses: "one hears every word, and it is laughable, in the midst of the clamour, to walk out of my room, and see nothing but smiles and good humour, restored to every countenance in an instant" (80). Such controlled performance of social conduct, Thomas suggests, informed Brontë's depiction of Bertha's mental decline.

In a letter to her editor W.S. Williams, Brontë responds to reviewers' assessments of Bertha. Brontë explains, "I agree with them that the character is shocking, but I know that it is but too natural." She goes on to outline what she understands as "moral madness," which she calls “a phase of insanity” where “all that is good or even human seems to disappear from the mind, and a fiend-nature replaces it.” In the process, “[t]he aspect,” which by Brontë means the face, “assimilates with the disposition – all seem demonised.”[156] Rochester’s descriptions of Bertha as a “demon” below the category of human certainly resonates with the type of madness Brontë explains in this letter (339).

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[155] Ibid., 14, 139, 141.

Thomas is keen to highlight the particularly moral dimension of the madness that interests Brontë even though the range of sources that allow the author to call such madness “but too natural” could include the discourse of white creole moral degeneracy that Nugent perpetuates as well as word-of-mouth about William Makepeace Thackeray’s mentally unstable wife.[157] After all, Brontë’s letter to Smith goes on to add that “Mrs. Rochester, indeed, lived a sinful life before she was insane, but sin itself is a species of insanity – the truly good behold and compassionate it as such” (384). Brontë’s invocation of “the truly good” shows how she envisions Bertha and Jane as opposites of one another: the former is the sinful white creole while the latter is the poised, sympathetic Englishwoman. But we should not take this simple contrast at face value, especially if John Eyre was in the business of exporting Madeira wine to Jamaica.

With our current understanding of Madeira export routes and figures, John Eyre presumably propelled the “sinful” lives of the white creoles Nugent wrote about. And by extension, Nugent’s journal created an archive that likely supplied ideas for Brontë’s depiction of

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[156] Charlotte Brontë to W.S. Williams, 4 January 1848, in *The Brontës; Life and Letters: Being an Attempt to Present a Full and Final Record of the Lives of the Three Sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë from the Biographies of Mrs. Gaskell and Others, and from Numerous Hitherto Unpublished Manuscripts and Letters*, ed. Clement King Shorter (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 383 - 384.

[157] Brontë dedicated to the second edition of *Jane Eyre* to Thackeray, a writer she greatly admired. She was apparently unaware of the links readers would draw between Bertha and Thackeray’s his wife, who suffered from a mental breakdown and reportedly entered an asylum for treatment. See Christine Alexander’s entry for Brontë in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Bertha. Another fascinating moment in Brontë's novel colorfully suggests the influence of Nugent's journal and foregrounds how the links between Madeira wine and white creole identity politics finally have consequences for Jane's attitude toward money. When St. John reiterates that the Madeira inheritance consists of twenty thousand rather than two thousand pounds, Jane thinks, "I again felt rather like an individual of but average gastronomical powers sitting down to feast alone at a table spread with provisions for a hundred" (442). Here Jane completes the route of her uncle's Madeira wine trade and the white creole consumption it fed: receiving such a vast sum as an inheritance, she pictures herself as a modest Englishwoman transported to the gluttonous dinner spreads Nugent recorded. And in a way, the Madeira inheritance literally embodies such a scene of excess, for the money came from supplying gallons of wine to buyers in Jamaica. For Jane, then, the origins of her inheritance and its connotations with superfluous consumption shape how she envisions herself as a British woman in an imperial world.

I therefore position Jane's division of wealth as a self-defining moment that allows her to assert a level of political awareness with regard to money and class. While Meyer proposes that Brontë promotes Anglocentrism through Jane's anxieties about the use of dark "Indian ink" to write her own name, I see in Jane's description of her "average gastronomical powers" a powerful instance of *failing* to affiliate.[158] Jane's demarcation between her capabilities as a common consumer and those of the white creoles her uncle satisfied enables her to mobilize her blurry class position for the benefit for her newly-discovered cousins. By contrast, men from different class positions in the novel promote various ideas of guarding wealth. St. John, a modest clergyman, encourages Jane to keep the money for herself and favorably enter the marriage market. Similarly, Rochester's father had left his wealth exclusively to Rowland,

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[158] Meyer, *Imperialism at Home*, 94.

Rochester's older brother, which placed Rochester in the situation of marrying Bertha in order to secure an alternative source of money. Though of the middling and aristocratic classes, respectively, St. John and Rochester's father alike seem to believe that the only action to take with regard to wealth is to defend it. When wealth falls into Jane's hands, however, she pursues a union of romance with Rochester and a fair division of money between herself and her cousins.

III. Women's Investments and Chartist Connections

Jane's concrete handling of money, not her rhetoric alone, therefore resonates with the Chartist energies that alarmed readers such as Elizabeth Rigby. Women, however, had a reputation for poor financial judgment. As early as the South Sea Bubble in the eighteenth century, stereotypes about women's emotion and hysteria contributed to the image of their recklessness with regard to financial investments.[159] When Jane shares her plan for dividing the inheritance, for example, St. John seeks a glass of water in order to "tranquillise" her emotions (445). While such cultural anxieties reveal the extent to which women participated in the financial world as stockholders and investors, it also shows how they often lacked the respect of their male counterparts.

Given Jane's dramatic move from disowned orphan to governess to extreme poverty, her actions with the Madeira inheritance invite links to Brontë's life as an investor and the Chartist movement that raged during the composition of the novel. In a letter she wrote to her publisher George Smith in 1850, Brontë suggests how she informally learned about her relationship to money: "Though women are not taught the minutiae and the mysteries of business, yet in the course of observation they manage to gather up some general idea of the leading principles on which it is conducted."[160] Jane, too, carefully observes her money throughout the novel – not out of vanity, but because she never has much of it. She knows, for instance, that her salary as governess at Thornfield is thirty pounds a year and objects when Rochester attempts to pay her fifty (259). When she departs Thornfield after learning of Bertha's existence, she tells readers she only has twenty shillings. Unfortunately, Jane soon leaves her pocketbook in the coach by accident, which leaves her "absolutely destitute" until she receives the hospitality of Diana, Mary, and St. John (371). As an investor, Brontë kept abreast of the price of railway shares, and she equips Jane with a similar level of attention to personal finances.[161]

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[159] George Robb, "Ladies of the Ticker: Women, Investment, and Fraud in England and America, 1850 – 1930," in *Victorian Investments: New Perspectives on Finance and Culture*, Nancy Henry and Cannon Schmitt, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 131.

Like Christophine in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jane takes advantage of the limited power that her money makes available. Some contemporary readers such as Rigby were of course taken aback at how *Jane Eyre* contests "the privations of the poor," but I would like to conclude with the suggestion that Jane's actual actions put her more in line with Chartists than her famous moments of rhetorical flair.[162] Jane's musings that underline the masses "in silent revolt against their lot" and how "women feel just as men feel" show the character's provocative and expansive political energies (129). As Susan Fraiman reminds us, Rigby's review spotlights Jane's participation in "a timely lexicon of defiance."[163] One of the most radical scenes in the novel, however, hinges on what Jane does not explain at length for readers. When Jane decides to divide her Madeira inheritance, readers never learn the complete drama involved in her effort:

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[160] Charlotte Brontë to George Smith, *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol. 2, Margaret Smith, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 436.
[161] Henry, "Victorian Women Writers in Fact and Fiction," 122.
[162] Rigby, review of *Jane Eyre*, 173.
[163] Susan Fraiman, *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 93.

> I need not narrate in detail the further struggles I had, and arguments I used, to get matters regarding the legacy settled as I wished. My task was a very hard one; but, as I was absolutely resolved – as my cousins saw at length that my mind was really and immutably fixed on making a just division of the property – as they must in their own hearts have felt the equity of the intention; and must, besides, have been innately conscious that in my place they would have done precisely what I wished to do – they yielded at length so far as to consent to put the affair to arbitration. The judges chosen were Mr. Oliver and an able lawyer: both coincided in my opinion: I carried my point. The instruments of transfer were drawn out: St. John, Diana, Mary, and I, each became possessed of a competency. (448)

On one level, Jane's thoughtful handling of her Madeira money highlights how colonially-derived wealth could be put to use in refreshingly moderate – and therefore radical – ways. But Jane's financial radicalism also springs from her practical effort to implement her vision. As Rigby's review suggested, the fact that workers were rebelling and combining constituted one of Chartism's most palpable threats. Jane, Diana, and Mary might have never withheld their labor as teachers yet Jane's decision to make each one of them less worried about money suggests a localized effort at reform.

Understanding Jane as a feminist heroine thus has more in line with *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s concerns with women's empowerment than critics such as Spivak have argued. To be sure, Jane's experiences offer a range of departures from Christophine's relationships to the law, money, and family. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Christophine – as Rochester's anxious investigation revealed – had been punished with transportation from Jamaica and jail time for selling obeah. But asserting, "'This is free country, and I am free woman,'" she continues earning money and defying the law by maintaining her practice of selling obeah (103). And though Christophine acts as a matriarchal figure to Antoinette by signing lullabies to her as a young girl, she treats her own relations with an air of detachment. We only see one of her three children, Jo-jo, during her obeah transaction with Antoinette, and Christophine calls him a "leaky calabash" for his fondness for gossip (73). By contrast, Jane's summary of how she enacted her division of the Madeira inheritance offers a different portrait of women and money as regulated by the law. Though "a very hard" process, she secures both the consent of her cousins and the affirmative opinion of a judge and a lawyer. By effortlessly narrating the legal process with the use of colons to underline cause and effect, Jane demonstrates the payoff her commitment to divide the Madeira money. Yet more interestingly, both Jane and Christophine take advantage of the financial possibilities opened by social reorganization in the aftermaths of Chartism and emancipation.

CHAPTER THREE

Signs of the Times:
John Ruskin, Jamaica Kincaid, and the Architecture of History

Introduction

Anxieties about working-class unrest lingered within Britain even though the Chartist's 1848 petition to Parliament failed.[164] As uprisings swept across continental Europe that same year, Britain's working classes, to the surprise of many, did not rebel. But when the Great Exhibition of 1851 flung machines, artwork, and curiosities from all over Britain and the empire to London, the working classes in attendance also inevitably served as a spectacle worthy of scrutiny. One-fifth of Britain's population visited the Great Exhibition, and the figure represents how industrial developments such as the railways began to erode boundaries between country and city, private and public, and the middle and lower classes. The Great Exhibition might have been officially billed as a showcase of "the Works of Industry of All Nations," but Britain itself was most prominently on display.[165]

The exhibition's organizational schema implied a familiar yet skewed anthropological narrative of progress. First, organizers chose to make the exhibition international to outshine the French, who had been staging their own industrial showcases throughout the early nineteenth century.[166] By inviting various nations to participate, Britain could stand alongside innovative powerhouses yet also deem itself the core of such ingenuity. Second, organizers of the Great Exhibition categorized the thousands of objects on display into four classes: Raw Materials,

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[164] The 1848 petition was the Chartist's third such document in nine years; they also presented versions of the "People's Charter" containing millions of signatures from the public to Parliament in 1839 and 1842.

[165] George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 2.

[166] Ibid., 1.

Machinery, Manufactures, and Sculpture and the Fine Arts. These groupings confined contributions from British colonies such as the Bahamas to the Raw Materials section, where artificial flora and crowns made of shells were on display.[167] Meanwhile, contributions from Britain, France, and Germany included industrial innovations such as model locomotives, steam engines, and mechanized looms that underlined Europe's advanced position within the narrative of civilization.[168]

These European nations also suggestively filled the western half of the Crystal Palace, the exhibition's famous venue. The Crystal Palace epitomized the exhibitory character of the event: the building was a massive structure of glass and iron that resembled a greenhouse. Given its innovative design, which was developed by gardener and architect Joseph Paxton, the structure could be easily disassembled in spite of its immensity. The Crystal Palace itself therefore stood as one of Britain's cherished works of industry on display. Together with the French sculptures, cast iron cooking stoves, and fake Caribbean palm leaves that it housed for the six-month duration of the exhibition, the Crystal Palace represented an exhilarating material culture. As Thomas Richards outlined, the Crystal Palace concentrated a strange cultural force through its collation of display, consumption, and advertising. The building and the Exhibition, Richards explains, worked in tandem and "placed the commodity at the center of cultural life and invited visitors to lose themselves in a utopia of visible commodities."[169] But as the exhibition drew to a close in October 1851, commentators such as *The Times* did not celebrate utopic consumerism. Instead, it asked what the Crystal Palace foreshadowed for Britain's future.

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[167] For recent studies on the Great Exhibition as it relates to matters of empire, see Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, eds., *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) and Paul Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). An illustration in *Dickinsons' Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition* shows a rather bare section of the Crystal Palace where signs for the Bahamas and Trinidad hang from the ceiling above tabletop displays of fruit encased in glass. The right-hand foreground of this illustration also depicts a black female servant chaperoning two finely addressed white children through the Crystal Palace. See *Dickinsons' Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (London: Dickinson, Brothers, 1854), no pagination.

[168] India's displays stood as an exception to the relegation of colonial items to the Raw Materials section. Its contributions included an ivory throne, rubies, and a large stuffed elephant bearing a howdah, an elaborately decorated carriage.

Wonder, nostalgia, and unease characterizes *The Times*'s report on the Great Exhibition's closing ceremony. Underlining how "no ordinary degree of emotion" can accompany the conclusion of such a public marvel, the report looks back on the showcase of visual curiosities that included animal skins from Tunis and the Koh-i-noor diamond.[170] Though the report unabashedly approaches the closing ceremony as a national occasion, it also criticizes the poor acoustics of the Crystal Palace for ruining a performance of "God Save the Queen." By the end of the article, *The Times* poses a sobering question about Britain's industrial character: "Standing between the civilization of the New World and that of the Old, should we raise our manufactures to the highest European and Oriental Standards of taste, or should we still struggle chiefly to extend their boundaries and to command, by the element of price, the markets of the world?" Feeling pressure both to cultivate the arts among the young and to compete with American industrial advances, Britain, according to *The Times*, is left with serious questions following its Great Exhibition.

For the eminent Victorian art critic John Ruskin, the Great Exhibition raised questions that exceeded contemporary geopolitics. Although the Crystal Palace's location and layout situated Britain at the forefront of global technological progress, the exhibition and its famous venue had its share of critics who bemoaned its ostentations and juxtapositions of gadgets and machines, and Ruskin stood among them.[171] If the exhibition constituted a significant moment for thinking about the relationship between nation, power, and material culture, Ruskin amplified these concerns in a distinctly prophetic way by looking to the past, not exclusively to the future as *The Times* did.

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[169] Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851 – 1914* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990), 46.
[170] "The Great Exhibition," *The Times*, October 13, 1851, 5.

In *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin's three-volume study of Venetian architecture published between 1851 and 1853, the Great Exhibition weighs heavily on the art critic's mind. Thinking about economics and society as well as aesthetics, Ruskin writes in the opening chapter, "It does not much matter that an individual loses two or three hundred pounds in buying a bad picture, but it is to be regretted that a nation should lose two or three hundred thousand in raising a ridiculous building."[172] Voluntary public donations from across Britain funded the Great Exhibition, and for Ruskin, such support for a structure as polished as the Crystal Palace offers a moment to reflect on his nation's historical stature among empires.[173] Put simply, the context of the Great Exhibition alongside the composition of *The Stones of Venice* enabled Ruskin to accelerate his evolution into a Victorian sage akin to his mentor, Thomas Carlyle.

The Stones of Venice in some respects reads as a continuation of Carlyle's famous 1829 essay, "Signs of the Times." Carlyle pointed out cultural and technological developments ranging from royal academies for science that stifle individual genius to machines that supplant nature by hatching chicken eggs and chopping cabbage. These shifts prompted Carlyle to frown on his moment as “the Age of Machinery.” He blasted how society, “with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches and practises the great art of adapting means to ends.”[174] These words were published over two decades prior to the Great Exhibition; it is thus fitting that Carlyle took on a prophetic posture that intensified his claims. In the manner of an Old Testament prophet, Carlyle positioned himself as a speaker carrying traditional wisdom in an era that has veered away from God’s teachings. Combining references to Leviathan with rhetoric borrowed from Shakespeare to shape his diagnosis of nineteenth-century Britain’s spiritual vacuity, Carlyle fashioned himself as the leading Victorian sage.

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[171] Even though thousands from Britain's provincial population visited the Great Exhibition, these areas were initially reluctant about the idea of the event. At first, affluent communities in the urban centers of London and Liverpool primarily supported the exhibition, while poorer areas including Tower Hamlets near London and agricultural districts such as Durham County opposed it. See Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 55.

[172] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 1 (New York: Lovell, Coryell & Company, 1851), 38.

[173] Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 33 – 37.

Hearing echoes of Carlyle in Ruskin is no surprise. But the strand of the Victorian sage tradition captured in Carlyle’s and Ruskin’s rhetorical energies and passionate misgivings about industry also pushes all the way to the present-day Caribbean and one of its most famous active writers, Jamaica Kincaid. Plastic flora primarily represented the Caribbean inside the Crystal Palace, and for many commentators, such absent lifelessness characterizes how Victorian men such as Ruskin envisioned issues relating to the West Indian colonies. Paul Gilroy, for example, cites the art critic’s assessment of J.M.W. Turner’s painting *The Slave Ship* as a key instance of British lettered culture’s longstanding failure to discuss the role of transatlantic slavery within its cherished traditions. To Gilroy’s chagrin, Ruskin’s chapter, “Of Water, as Painted by Turner,” in the first volume of his influential *Modern Painters* (1843) focuses on the sea rather than the ship, which was the infamous *Zong* vessel jettisoning the black bodies of what it deemed surplus cargo en route to Jamaica.[175] In 1995, the Guyanese-born writer David Dabydeen even published a sequence of poems called *Turner*; in the collection’s preface, the poet remarks how Ruskin only mentions the context of the slave trade in a footnote that "reads like an afterthought, something tossed overboard."[176] Sarah Fulford, who unlike Gilroy and Dabydeen analyzes Ruskin's description beyond his tactless footnote, lambasts the art critic's juxtaposition of his vivid attention to color – he uses phrases such as "an awful but glorious light" – with his failure to attend to the dead.[177] Although these readings point out the neglected historical layer of Britain's enmeshment in the slave trade, they miss the complexity of Ruskin's prophetic prose.

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[174] Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. 1 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1887), 474.
[175] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 16.

Ruskin's grand rhetoric contains more substance than florid descriptions of how Turner's brushstrokes constitute aesthetic experience. The art critic's concluding description of the ship, for instance, points out that it "incarnadines the multitudinous sea." For Fulford, "incarnadines" only signals how the ship has reddened the sea with blood, which allows Ruskin to further praise Turner's skill with coloring.[178] But as George Landow points out, Ruskin's use of the term also alludes to a line in *Macbeth* that confronts the irreversibility of wrongdoing.[179] After Macbeth murders King Duncan, he contemplates, "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood/Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather/The multitudinous seas incarnadine,/Making the green one red." This allusion thus enables Ruskin to connect his reading of color to an ethical position: he suggests that Turner's lone ship similarly sullies the world's vast green oceans with its guilty crimson blood. Of course, an evocative reference to Shakespeare does not justify Ruskin's containment of slavery to a footnote. Such rhetoric nonetheless demonstrates how Ruskin's prose – and thus his political attitudes – must be read beyond face value.

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[176] David Dabydeen, *Turner: New and Selected Poems* (1995; repr., Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2010), 7.

[177] Sarah Fulford, "David Dabydeen and Turner's Sublime Aesthetic," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 3, no. 1 (June 2005): 3; John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 1 (1843; repr., London: Smith, Elder, and Company, 1848), 376.

[178] Ibid.

[179] George P. Landow, *Images of Crisis: Literary Iconology, 1750 to the Present* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 196.

Ruskin's sage writing offers a way to complicate his reputation without glorifying him as an eminent Victorian. I therefore emphasize a striking contradiction in Ruskin that problematizes the conventional Victorian and Caribbean opposition: despite his narrow view on the slave trade, he was nonetheless a source of radical discontent in his time. And Kincaid, who inherited elements of Victorianism via colonial rule, repurposes this Ruskinian discontent for the Caribbean.

Gilroy's attention to Ruskin's relationship to *The Slave Ship* – he even points out that the art critic owned the painting – stresses the necessity of examining unexpected British and Caribbean connections. But over the past two decades, paradigms of opposition, influence, and periodization have limited this critical project. Ruskin's allusions to Shakespeare may not be the first quality that present-day readers recognize yet similar references to earlier British literature shape a large amount of scholarship on Kincaid. Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" plays an important role in Kincaid's second novel, *Lucy* (1990). The eponymous character recalls reciting the poem as a 10-year-old pupil at a colonial girls' school in Antigua and describes it as "the height of my two-facedness: that is, outside I seemed one way, inside I was another."[180] Lucy's predicament of living in the tropical Caribbean while imagining flora of the English Lake District has generated what postcolonial critics identify as the "daffodil gap."[181]

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[180] Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1990), 17 – 18.

[181] Several articles have been published on Kincaid and Wordsworth: Alison Donnell, "Dreaming of Daffodils: Cultural Resistance in the Narratives of Theory," *Kunapipi* 14, no. 2 (1992): 45–52; Helen Tiffin, "Cold Hearts and (Foreign) Tongues: Recitation and the Reclamation of the Female Body in the Works of Erna Brodber and Jamaica Kincaid," *Callaloo* 16, no. 4 (Autumn 1993): 909–21; Irline François, "The Daffodil Gap: Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*," *MaComère* 4 (2001): 84–100; Jana Evans Braziel, "Daffodils, Rhizomes, Migrations: Narrative Coming of Age in the Diasporic Writings of Edwidge Danticat and Jamaica Kincaid," *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 3, no. 2 (2003): 110–31; Ian Smith, "Misusing Canonical Intertexts Jamaica Kincaid, Wordsworth and Colonialism's 'absent things,'" *Callaloo* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 801–20; and Jocelyn Stitt, "Producing the Colonial Subject: Romantic

This concept usefully highlights the asymmetrical power relations of colonialism and the cultural indoctrination that underlies Britain's exported educational curriculum. In turn, however, the "daffodil gap" paradigm has produced a predictable narrative within literary scholarship that neatly opposes canonical British figures and twentieth century Caribbean writers. Focusing on the foundational scene of the schoolroom ultimately fails to tell a messier story of how Caribbean and British writers fashioned their rhetorical styles and political attitudes as subjects of empire.

This chapter thus argues that Ruskin and Kincaid practice a similarly radical mode of prophetic discourse despite their respective reputations as bigoted Victorian man of letters and best-selling star of contemporary Caribbean fiction. On one hand, the two writers have understandably never been examined alongside each other, which makes sense at first glance given how several distinctions – historical period, race, gender, and class – separate them. Yet on the other hand, scenes such as those of artificial West Indian fruit in the Raw Materials section of the Great Exhibition and countryside daffodils in a twentieth-century Antiguan schoolroom underline how Ruskin's and Kincaid's broader contexts have long overlapped.

Faith Smith and Belinda Edmondson, scholars of Caribbean literary culture, have already turned to Victorian Britain as one of the "necessary contexts" for their work.[182] Both have shed light on how ideas of the gentleman scholar shape the politics of Afro-Caribbean men ranging from the late nineteenth-century Trinidadian linguist John Jacob Thomas to twentieth century writers such as C.L.R. James and George Lamming. I slightly reconfigure the historical links

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Pedagogy and Mimicry in Jamaica Kincaid's Writing," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 37, no. 2–3 (July 2006): 137–67.

[182] Faith Smith, *Creole Recitations: John Jacob Thomas and Colonial Formation in the Late Nineteenth-Century Caribbean* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 80 and Belinda Edmondson, *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

drawn by Smith and Edmondson to explain the relationship between Ruskin and Kincaid. Smith intends her nineteenth-century genealogy to position intellectuals like Thomas as embedded ancestors to present-day writers such as Kincaid, and Edmondson turns to Carlyle to sketch out the archetypal man of letters that, in her account, leaves little room for black women writers in the anglophone Caribbean canon. Here, I also chart a course from the nineteenth century to the present-day, but I propose an affiliation – rather than an opposition – between the Victorian and the Caribbean, the masculine and the feminine, and ultimately, between Ruskin and Kincaid, in order to think more broadly about the latter's contradictory position in the Caribbean literary landscape.

Kincaid, after all, is a provocateur. Born Elaine Potter Richardson, she reports changing her name when she began her writing career in *The New Yorker* in the 1970s to veil her identity from family in Antigua. In early interviews, she claims the name choice was arbitrary; when questioned more recently, however, Kincaid describes, "I wanted something that was from that part of the world that I was from, and I wanted something that was from the other part of the world that I come from, something Scottish- or English-sounding."[183] This act of self-identity, which claims both the Caribbean and Britain, challenges the famous "daffodil gap" critics have propounded in her early novels. At the same time, Kincaid admires subverting expectations and challenging assumptions. She read from Milton's *Paradise Lost* instead of her own work when promoting her latest novel *See Now Then* (2013) at the 9th Annual PEN World Voices Festival. "I was almost sure people wanted me to read from my writing," Kincaid explained after the reading, "but I never give people what they want."[184] Comments like these, which are not unusual from the writer, showcase Kincaid's sly personality that was described as "badass" by the online news aggregator *The Huffington Post*. [185] Kincaid perhaps intentionally presents the popular media and academia alike with these thorny statements: she faced years of rote questions regarding the autobiographical quality of her writing.[186] Both *Annie John* (1985) and *Lucy*, as well as her famous one-sentence short story "Girl" (1978), evoke the melancholy *bildung* of growing up in colonial Antigua.

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[183] Kay Bonetti, "Interview with Jamaica Kincaid," *The Missouri Review* 15, no. 2 (1992): 132; "Why Did Jamaica Kincaid Change Her Name?" YouTube video, 1:53, posted by Kojo Nnamdi, February 28. 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fj1t9fZuVPE. In the latter interview with Kojo Nnamdi of NPR's Washington D.C. affiliate, Kincaid mentions that "Havana Davenport" was another name she considered using.

Yet Kincaid's writing career beyond the novel both supplies a less studied strand of her writing and illuminates more of her commonalities with the Victorian prophetic tradition established by Carlyle and Ruskin. Essays in publications ranging from the *New Yorker* to *Architectural Digest* to *Transition* highlight Kincaid's interests in botany, gardening, and material culture. These works similarly explore the theme of childhood amid British colonialism, but they also enable Kincaid to delve more deeply into the darker history of seemingly innocuous terrestrial phenomenon such as daffodils. Like Carlyle in "Signs of the Times" and Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice*, Kincaid takes aim at the "Age of Machinery," albeit from a present-day perspective that has arguably witnessed and directly experienced more of its havoc.

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[184] Alyssa Loh, "A Conversation with Jamaica Kincaid," *The American Reader*, http://theamericanreader.com/a-conversation-with-jamaica-kincaid/.

[185] Joseph Erbentraut, "12 Reasons Why Writer Jamaica Kincaid Is a Total Badass," *The Huffington Post*, October 24, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/24/jamaica-kincaid-interview-writing-badass_n_6036764.html.

[186] When asked in a 1992 interview if the events in her fiction reflect her life, Kincaid replied, "Everything I say is true, and everything I say is not true." See Bonetti, "Interview with Jamaica Kincaid," 125. Preoccupation with the idea that Kincaid's writing primarily entails a fictionalization of her life also characterized articles leading up to the publication her latest novel *See Now Then*. *The New York Times,* for instance, ran a feature story on Kincaid with the headline, "Never Mind the Parallels, Don't Read It As My Life." See Felicia R. Lee, "Never Mind the Parallels, Don't Read It As My Life," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2013, page C1.

The criticism on Kincaid's garden writing remains small in comparison to studies of her other work. Jana Evans Braziel's chapter in the edited collection *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* surprisingly does not even address publications such as Kincaid's 1999 collection *My Garden (Book)*. Braziel, however, shows how *A Small Place* engages with ideas of genesis "as if a site of an originary crime" rather than a mythic beginning.[187] The most sustained analysis of Kincaid's *My Garden (Book)* is an essay by Agnese Fidecaro. She challenges Kincaid's own idea that gardening entails that the writer has "joined the conquering class."[188] Instead, Fidecaro outlines how Kincaid's garden writing "resists from the inside the consumerist, amnesic reification of the intimate."[189] Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and its famous proposals that a woman needs both such an eponymous room and an androgynous mind in order to thrive as a creative artist contrasts, Fidecaro argues, with Kincaid's reluctance to celebrate "forced synthesis."[190] I am most interested in extending Sarah Phillips Casteel's characterization of garden writing as having the potential to "accommodate a more radical representational practice" than the paradigms of genesis and domesticity allow. What is striking about Braziel's, Fidecaro's, and Casteel's readings of Kincaid and the terrestrial world involves how they all configure others writer into their discussions. Fidecaro's pairing of Kincaid and Woolf has been mentioned; meanwhile, Braziel reads Kincaid alongside the Caribbean male writers Derek Walcott and Edouard Glissant, and Casteel places Kincaid in dialogue with the American activist and gardener Michael Pollan. Ruskin's presence in the first half of this chapter thus provides a particular historical antecedent for Kincaid's conservative yet radical writing about built and natural worlds. In the chapter's second half, I examine Kincaid's under-studied essays together with *A Small Place* (1988), her famous "jeremiad" against the tourism industry, to show how the writer's vision of a historicized landscape architecture reclaims the criticisms Ruskin made of mainstream Victorian aesthetic values over a century earlier.[191]

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[187] Jana Evans Braziel, "'Caribbean Genesis': Language, Gardens, Worlds (Jamaica Kincaid, Derek Walcott, Édouard Glissant)" in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, eds. Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 112.

[188] Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden (Book)* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999), 123. Further citations appear parenthetically in text.

[189] Agnese Fidecaro, "Jamaica Kincaid's Practical Politics of the Intimate in My Garden (Book)," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1–2 (Spring 2006): 253.

[190] Ibid., 267.

John Ruskin

I. The Aesthetics of Slavery

Victorian Britain was under the spell of the Great Exhibition and its glimmering Crystal Palace at midcentury. It would be naïve to understand the Crystal Palace as a monolithic representative of cultural values in the 1850s, but the structure supplied an undeniable barometer for Victorian attitudes toward industry and aesthetics – if only because of the publicity that proliferated around it. The *Illustrated London News* commended the Crystal Palace and its contents as a "whole work" that "comes together well," while Charlotte Brontë called it "a wonderful place – vast, strange, new and impossible to describe."[192] John Ruskin, however, summoned an extremely specific image to describe the Crystal Palace; he thought of the building as an eyesore “possessing no more sublimity than a cucumber frame between two chimneys.”[193] Such vivid indignation seems to cast Ruskin as a reactionary curmudgeon yet that characterization would fail to capture the complexity of his nostalgic attitudes toward architecture that tell important cautionary stories about commodification, labor, and the world beyond Britain.

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[191] The paperback edition of *A Small Place* contains a quote on its back cover from author Salman Rushdie, who calls the text, "A jeremiad of great clarity and force that one might have called torrential were the language not so finely controlled." See Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988; repr., New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2000). Further references appear parenthetically in text.

[192] *The Illustrated London News*, May 3, 1851, 364; Charlotte Brontë to Reverend Patrick Brontë, June 7, 1851, in *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle*, ed. Clement K. Shorter (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), 425.

The first two volumes of *Modern Painters* (1843, 1846) already announced Ruskin as a major iconoclast. He rejected the symmetry of neoclassicism in favor of Turner’s canvasses, which contain evocative and atmospheric sweeps of color. In Ruskin’s opinion, Turner’s abstraction allowed viewers to experience a powerful spiritual proximity to nature. The art critic praises Turner’s representation of the sky as “something which has no surface and through which we can plunge far and farther, and without stay or end, into the profundity of space.”[194] Ruskin thus embraced and promoted Turner’s innovations as modern yet also linked the painter’s achievements to established ideas of religion and truth.

Scholars of the Black Atlantic and postcolonial writers have therefore been right to take issue with Ruskin’s aesthetic gratification in relation to Turner’s depiction of the sea. His praise of *The Slave Ship* appeared in the early 1840s, about a decade prior to Ruskin’s turn to weaving passionate social criticism into his art writing. But before discussing “The Nature of the Gothic,” Ruskin's iconic and influential chapter about aesthetics and workers’ rights from *The Stones of Venice*, it is worthwhile to briefly outline his life and politics.

Ruskin was immersed in reading, religion, and drawing from an early age. Born to a wealthy sherry importer father, he took regular trips to the European continent – a privilege even for members of the upper middle class – beginning in adolescence. As a student at Oxford, Ruskin wrote poetry and joined a society for the preservation of Gothic architecture, which provides an early sign of an interest he would write about extensively beginning at midcentury. Shortly after completing an M.A. at Oxford, Ruskin in 1843 published the first of what would become five volumes of *Modern Painters*. The study of J.M.W. Turner brought the writer supporters and critics alike. Between the first and final volume of *Modern Painters*, which came out in 1860, Ruskin produced two major studies of architecture, delivered several lectures, and began publishing *Unto This Last*, a series of essays on political economy, in *Cornhill Magazine*. As this snapshot of Ruskin's oeuvre already suggests, the art critic's investments broadened as he aged; his interests expanded from a single painter to the social economy around Britain's laborers.

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[193] John Ruskin, *Præterita: Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts, Perhaps Worth of Memory, in My Past Life* (Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent: George Allen, 1885), 67.
[194] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 1, 205.

Ruskin held progressive attitudes regarding laborers, but his position toward another class of workers – the enslaved in the West Indies – was straightforwardly racist. In late 1865, an uprising in Morant Bay, a town on the southeastern coast of Jamaica, divided the British public. Economic distress on the colony had been intensifying since the period of emancipation and apprenticeship in the 1830s. The decline of the sugar industry, rising food prices amid the American Civil War, and colonial policy's resistance to agricultural alternatives based on black farming practices fostered a political climate of high unemployment and racial tension. When black Jamaicans, including the Native Baptist community leader Paul Bogle, were sought for arrest on October 9 for supposedly disrupting that weekend's petty court sessions, violence finally erupted. Jamaicans faced off against police and militiamen near the Morant Bay courthouse, and the rebellion spread to adjacent areas. With an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 Jamaicans participating in the event at its peak, officials feared the violence portended a larger uprising to take place during Christmas. Toward the end of the month, Bogle was hanged, and the island's governor, Edward John Eyre, declared martial law. For Jamaicans, the suppression of violence and the reversion of the island's status to a crown colony underlined the ruses of emancipation. For those in Britain who received news of the uprising a month later via transatlantic newspapers, Morant Bay represented yet more grisly evidence of the savageness of colonized subjects. Sepoys in India rebelled just 8 years earlier, which generated sensational reports of violence on Englishwomen, and conflict with Maoris in New Zealand also made news.

Within Britain, intellectuals and writers demonstrated their stance on the events in Morant Bay by either defending or criticizing Governor Eyre's decision to declare martial law and wield violent retaliation. The Jamaica Committee, which included John Stuart Mill, argued that Governor Eyre deserved prosecution for hastily ordering the hanging of Paul Bogle. But among those in the Eyre Defence Committee, whose financial supporters included Carlyle, Dickens, and Ruskin, the governor merited praise for disciplining black subjects in the name of maintaining order on a British colony. As Ruskin explained in a letter to the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, he felt Eyre's declaration of martial law was simply part of his duty as governor "to do his work sharply."[195] In the same letter, Ruskin outlines how he believes "white emancipation not only ought to precede, but must by law of all fate precede, black emancipation."[196] He also calls himself "a Conservative in the deepest sense – a Re-former, not a De-former," which foreshadows his famous self-description at the outset of his autobiography of being a "Tory of the old school."[197] Ruskin's political attitudes ultimately evince what today strikes us as paradoxical interests: he admired government order yet simultaneously promoted the improvement of workers' labor conditions.

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[195] Ruskin to editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 December 1865, in *Arrows of the Chace; Being a Collection of Scattered Letters Published Chiefly in the Daily Newspapers, 1840-1880*, (Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent: George Allen, 1880), 32.
[196] Ibid., 31 – 32.

As I will delineate, the art critic's labor politics passionately encourage a strategic practical focus that places the onus on those who spend money. David Craig has explained how Ruskin anchors his ideas of economic ethics in consumers' choices rather than in institutions or modes of production. Unlike his contemporaries such as Marx, who wrote about workers' alienation from their own labor power, or Mill, who promoted changes within institutions, Ruskin looked to a particular end of the manufacturing process: when consumers buy goods. By calling out middle class purchasers, Ruskin sought to reveal to consumers the historical process within their ostensibly quotidian decisions regarding home décor and fashion.

"The Nature of the Gothic," a chapter from the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1853), demonstrates how Ruskin communicates his moralizing anti-industrialism through a prophetic discourse that combines historical iterations of slavery, scenes from middle class Victorian domestic life, and images of smoggy manufacturing cities. Ruskin's chapter has a vivid afterlife among late-Victorian socialists, particularly via William Morris, who reprinted it in pamphlet form as a kind of manifesto for the Arts and Crafts movement. The chapter underlines how Gothic aesthetics contain distinctive qualities legible both with the naked eye and the penetrating mind. A building might have "pointed arches" and "vaulted roofs," but according to Ruskin, it is not necessarily Gothic unless the structure also reveals to onlookers details about the human hands that constructed it. "It is not enough that [a building] has the Form," Ruskin explains, "if it have not also the power and life" (154). Ruskin's Christianity partly explains his respect for architecture that appears imperfect; after all, if men are fallen, their material creations must be flawed.

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[197] Ibid., 31; Ruskin, *Præterita*, 1.

But Ruskin's chapter intensifies from unremarkable adherence to Christian hierarchy to radical Victorian prophecy when he criminalizes English citizens who sit in parlour rooms with fine ornamentation and exquisite polish. As critics have pointed out, Ruskin quarantines to a footnote any mention of the British slave trade within in *Modern Painters*. Less recognized, however, is how Ruskin has quite a bit to say about slavery in "The Nature of the Gothic."[198] His chapter draws implicit geopolitical lines: he calls Greek, Assyrian, and Egyptian styles of architectural ornamentation "servile" for their attempts to execute perfection, while medieval and Christian forms showcase flaws and imperfection, or what Ruskin calls "rudeness" that deserves viewers' reverence (160). George Landow, who has examined both Carlyle's and Ruskin's prose in detail, suggests that the Victorian prophetic tradition usually contains four qualities: identifying society's current woes, linking these distresses to having deviated from Christian order, pointing out the threat of further despair should people remain on their misguided path, and proposing a return to good fortune if society returns to God's ordained order.[199] "The Nature of the Gothic" is shot through with the first two qualities; Ruskin's explanation of "servile ornamentation" becomes a platform for the art critic to referee Britain's abolitionist zeal. At midcentury, the comparison of English workers to black slaves in the U.S. South actually offered critics of abolitionism a way to protest widespread attention to plantation slavery. The enslaved in the Americas, some argued, at least received some welfare from their masters, whereas workers in England were at the mercy of factory owners.[200] In a rhetorical move that was far from uncommon in Victorian Britain, Ruskin therefore likened factory workers to the enslaved yet prioritized the plight of the former by lashing out at their employers.

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[198] For more on Ruskin's "slave-aesthetics," see Rachel Teukolsky, "Pictures in Bleak Houses: Slavery and the Aesthetics of Transatlantic Reform," *ELH* 76, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 491 – 492.

[199] George P. Landow, *Elegant Jeremiahs: The Sage from Carlyle to Mailer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 30.

Ruskin's comparison, however, goes beyond the contrast of English workers with West Indian slaves we see in his idol Carlyle. In Carlyle's rhetoric, it is regrettable that black West Indians supposedly refuse to work while English workers starve in search of employment. By contrast, for Ruskin, England's problem involves how "the modern English mind has this much in common with that of the Greek, that it intensely desires, in all things, the utmost completion or perfection compatible with their nature" (160). Expecting perfection in workers' products entails slavery in Ruskin's view because it makes British laborers "tools" and "machines" when they should be "men" (162). Yet specifically targeting the factory owners and consumers who sustain the demand for "perfect" objects is what makes Ruskin's rhetoric distinctive. When he describes "the modern English mind," he refers not to the workers themselves, but to the factory owners and purchasers who implicitly supply workers with the parameters of their labor. In this hierarchy, Ruskin accords factory owners and consumers with the power to make decisions that will impact society. The art critic encourages Victorian factory owners "to look for the *thoughtful* part" of laborers, for that part allows them to use imagination (161, emphasis in original). Workers, meanwhile, are neither romanticized nor ignored; instead, how they are treated becomes a litmus test for English values.

Ruskin saves his most passionate and pointed rhetoric for middle class English consumers. In a paragraph that transports readers out of Venice and historical overviews of Greek and Egyptian architectural styles, Ruskin turns attention to English parlour rooms:

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[200] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class, and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 94.

> And now, reader, look round this English room of yours, about which you have been proud so often, because the work of it was so good and strong, and the ornaments of it so finished. Examine again all those accurate mouldings, and perfect polishings, and unerring adjustments of the seasoned wood and tempered steel. Many a time you have exulted over them, and thought how great England was, because her slightest work was done so thoroughly. Alas! if read rightly, these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek. (163)

Ruskin as prophet accuses the middle class – the same social stratum that campaigned for the abolition of slavery in the West Indies – of ignorantly sustaining a practice of domestic slavery. By purporting to read the fine details of home décor "rightly," Ruskin discerns slavery rather than good English taste. To be sure, slavery for Ruskin is a metaphor. A system of labor wherein workers are paid to effectively produce careful ornamentation is not tantamount to the brutality of West Indian plantation slavery that haunts Ruskin's historical moment. But reading with rather than against Ruskin's appropriation of slavery as a practice of oppression is important because he boldly indicts his own peer group. As Craig highlights, Ruskin's idea of a "good economy" is "'person-centered'" rather than "'thing-centered'"; the objects themselves only have meaning because they are produced and demanded by people (289). In this light, Ruskin's admiration for hierarchy enables an attack on the "slave-driver," not on the slave as Carlyle does (167).

Ruskin's rhetoric becomes more aggressive as he shifts focus from the English parlour room to the Englishwoman's wardrobe. Fine-cut jewelry, an image that preoccupies Ruskin in works beyond "The Nature of the Gothic" as well, represents a complete absence of Gothic aesthetics and thus of ethical economics. He regrets how "no design or thought" goes into the manufacture of glass-bead jewelry and then paints images of workers' "hands vibrating with a perpetual and exquisitely timed palsy." These workers are never presented "the smallest occasion of any single human faculty." Deep indignation underlies Ruskin's portrayal of glass-bead manufacturing, but as with the scene of the parlour room, his passionate emotions take aim at those with purchasing power, not the workers themselves. “[E]very young lady...who buys glass beads,” Ruskin argues, “is engaged in the slave-trade, and in a much more cruel one than that which we have so long been endeavouring to put down” (167). Again, Ruskin’s exhortation that so-called domestic slavery was worse than the transatlantic trade that forcibly brought Africans to the New World raises an eyebrow. But keeping in mind that he shapes his rhetoric in the prophetic tradition, his correlations also function as an incriminating visual exercise.

By looking at ladies’ jewelry and seeing a historical process of workers suffering physical and mental palsy as a result of responding to their own tastes, ostensibly respectable, middle-class readers of Ruskin are forced to confront their complicity in a form of oppressive exploitation. In this context, those of us familiar with Jamaica Kincaid’s writing already see a resemblance between her prophetic energies and those of Ruskin. *The New Yorker*, an American magazine with a reputation for catering to high-brow, informed middle-class readers, reportedly shied away from publishing the essays that went on to comprise Kincaid’s *A Small Place*. Like the Victorian ladies wearing fine jewelry that Ruskin condemns, Kincaid’s exposé of tourism in Antigua forces North American readers to confront the historical processes behind their decisions as consumers. I discuss these echoes further in the section on Kincaid below. For now, I explain how Ruskin’s command for readers to “see” in a particular way links to a prophetic idea of history that summons the past in order to re-envision the present.

II. Ruskin’s Material Idiom of History

As a Victorian prophet, Ruskin uses of his position of privilege to route the present through a reanimation of the past. For the literary critic Ian Baucom, who has also studied

Ruskin in relation to Britain's colonial identity, Ruskin's "rhetorics of nostalgia" resemble the proleptic mindset associated with travellers buying souvenirs. Ruskin, Baucom proposes, only values the present for how it will soon be the past.[201] Yet this reading, which does not engage with *The Stones of Venice*, only illuminates one side of Ruskin as a nationalist yearning for the past. The art critic's self-styled role as a Victorian prophet, I argue, means that the present and the future alike carry utmost importance. It is therefore not so much nostalgia that characterizes Ruskin's attention to the past. Rather, the past – particularly as embodied by the history of imperial powers and architectural structures – supplies a material idiom for a radical critique of the present.

By using the Crystal Palace as an interface for discerning a prophetic constellation of the ancient past, the present moment, and the ominous future, Ruskin's radicalism hinges on making social critiques that drag up the process of history. The practice of recovering history serves as a common undertaking among twentieth century anglophone Caribbean writers, but Ruskin and Kincaid share a relationship to the past that identifies its most telling artifacts in the structures of architecture.

I thus turn now to a twenty one-page pamphlet Ruskin published in 1854 when the Great Exhibition's signature structure moved to Sydenham in south London. This "new" Crystal Palace became known as "the People's Palace" because it was intended to serve as a facility for education and leisure where Londoners could stroll in and observe art and unique exhibitions on topics such as flowers and photography.[202] Ruskin praises the building for the opportunities it opens to the working class yet this sentiment only maintains his attention for a single page of the pamphlet. Less than three pages in, Ruskin censures architectural thought in Britain for having "magnified a conservatory" rather than create a building style truly worthy of the attention the Crystal Palace has seized since its initial erection in 1851.[203] Ruskin's pamphlet therefore quickly becomes a critique of the phenomena of architectural restorations and commodification rather than of the Sydenham Crystal Palace itself. His concern shifts to restorative work on Rouen Cathedral in France; Ruskin calls such projects misguided because they fail to match up to what was there before and thus have more of a detrimental effect on the cathedral's Gothic character than the "partial, though not dangerous, decay" that was already present in the building.[204] In "The Nature of the Gothic," Ruskin attacked factory owners and consumers; in his pamphlet on the Sydenham Crystal Palace, he adds city officials and wealthy architects to the list of social agents with great power making poor decisions.

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[201] Baucom, *Out of Place*, 51 – 55.

[202] Edward MacDermott, *Routledge's Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park at Sydenham* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1854), 14.

For Ruskin, the movement of the Crystal Palace from Hyde Park to London highlights the commodification of architecture – the "Age of Machinery" taking over the most meaningful process of material creation. His pamphlet goes further and draws attention to the typical street in Europe, which has taken symmetry – a term that certainly brings up images of the Crystal Palace – to the extreme and prevents citizens from engaging in any act of contemplation when walking through their cities. If the goal of Europe's upper class is to "make every place in the world as much like the Champs Elysées as possible," then Ruskin wonders why one should travel at all.[205] The art critic thus lays the groundwork for an argument Kincaid will reclaim in her writing over a century later: in most cases, exportation leaves a history of lethal consequences.

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[203] Ruskin, *The Opening of the Crystal Palace* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1854), 5.
[204] Ibid., 13.
[205] Ibid., 14.

Ruskin therefore only appears to erase the present with his focus on the past. His musings on cathedrals and continental European cities indeed displace attention to the Crystal Palace in London. Art historian Gary Wihl has even pointed out how "Ruskin only cared to look at [the Crystal Palace] from afar."[206] But Ruskin's ability to make such links across time and space is precisely the purchase of his writings on the Crystal Palace alongside Kincaid's critiques of architecture, commodification, and colonial economic ventures. Architectural structures, as Ruskin underlines in his Crystal Palace pamphlet and in *The Stones of Venice*, bespeak more than a single artist's hand. They involve workers, a nation, and, most importantly, how a nation treats those workers. And if a nation's architectural aesthetics create "palsies of repetition" in and "mere machine[s]" of its laborers, this indicates a deeper rot in society than the appearances of buildings themselves.[207] In other words, Ruskin's architectural aesthetics are, unlike his attitude toward Turner's paintings, anchored in an understanding of history that emphasizes the trivial and quotidian. This is not mere nostalgia or romantic medievalism. Instead, Ruskin's act of reading of history in architecture demonstrates a sense of social responsibility, even if at times such responsibility involves celebrating the hierarchal project of empire.

Still, Ruskin's writings on the Crystal Palace and Gothic architecture are never about the epochs tied to those styles alone; they are comparative, layered contemplations on social and creative practices. *The Stones of Venice* even opens its first volume with a comparison of "three thrones" that mark the high points of mankind: ancient Tyre, medieval Venice, and modern-day England. Of England, Ruskin writes that it assumes the reputations of Tyre and Venice, but warns that "if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction."[208] Such expansive, portentous layering explains why Ruskin raises the topics of both the slave trade and industrial manufacturing in *The Stones of Venice*; these "rhetorical risks" characterize prophetic discourse for their ability to compel audiences to practice a far-reaching moral imagination.[209] Indeed, recall how he even contextualizes the transatlantic slave system of his moment: when criticizing fine interior decoration in English parlour rooms, he harkens back to the "helot Greek." By showing the intersections of historical examples, Ruskin aims to place the present within an evocative narrative of social and material artifacts that will provoke readers' imaginations in order to spur change.

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[206] Gary Wihl, "'Neither a Palace nor of Crystal': Ruskin and the Architecture of the Great Exhibition," *Architectura* 13, no. 2 (1983): 187.
[207] Ruskin, *The Opening of the Crystal Palace*, 18; Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 2, 168.

The project of reading history in manufactured structures and objects is probably more famously associated with Walter Benjamin, the twentieth century German critic of culture, media, and politics, rather than with the Victorian Ruskin. In *Out of Place*, however, Baucom identifies a Benjaminian Ruskin: the art critic's denunciation of the machine process prefigures the German's famous argument about the destruction of the art object's aura. Both critics, Baucom points out, "are devoted to a hermeneutics of decay," for Ruskin admires a building's deterioration and Benjamin applauds the diminishment of art objects' reified auras that comes with mass reproduction.[210] Indeed, Ruskin urges readers to go examine "the old cathedral front" and notice its grotesque goblins and deformed statutes so that they might notice the "signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone" (163). In a similar fashion, Benjamin in 1936 claimed that the advent of "mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual."[211] For both, the rejection of prescriptive ideas of perfection has liberatory possibilities insofar as it enables the proliferation of admirable mistakes and unexpected meanings.

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[208] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 1, 15.
[209] Landow, *Elegant Jeremiahs*, 46.
[210] Baucom, *Out of Place*, 66.

While "The Nature of the Gothic" and "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" alike diagnose the larger meaning of technological reproduction, I would push Baucom's alignment of Benjamin and Ruskin even further on the topic of architecture and history. Benjamin's insistence on reading the haunted histories of ordinary architectural structures in *The Arcades Project* seems to continue Ruskin's practice of aesthetic criticism with a moral edge. In the wake of Ruskin and Benjamin, readers see structures such as deteriorating cathedrals on one hand and glass and iron arcades on the other as material phenomenon that reveal nuanced histories of the quotidian. The cathedral stands not only as a structure of worship; it also serves as a memorial to Gothic labor; the arcades do not simply anticipate department stores; they furthermore reveal an attempt at creating self-contained worlds.

But Ruskin's affinity for hierarchal order ultimately differentiates his politics from Benjamin and contrasts his prophetic mode with Kincaid. When touring Italy as a young man of twenty-two, Ruskin fancied himself having "a sensual faculty of pleasure in sight, as far as I know unparalleled." As Ruskin describes, he "liked small things for being small, great for being great; the weak for their weakness, and the strong for their strength."[212] The art critic's fetishization of order ironically echoes the Great Exhibition's arrangement of nations and objects discussed above: each country and material item has an assigned place that reveals its significance among the event's showcase of "the works of industries of all nations." Although Ruskin writes about workers in order to criticize consumers and factory owners, his radicalism primarily remains rhetorical. He is a prophet by virtue of his privilege. After all, if the art critic admires "the strong for their strength," he only accords middle class purchasers – and as the Morant Bay uprising revealed, commanding governors – with the ability to actualize necessary change. Ruskin links details such as misshapen statutes on cathedrals with laborers' untamed imaginations. He therefore implies that these workers are noble chiefly because their place on the social hierarchy corners them into a position where only consumers and factory owners can influence their livelihoods. Put simply, Ruskin's attitude toward buildings values workers as workers, not as a group that can practice meaningful politics.

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[211] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (1968; repr., New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 224.

[212] John Ruskin, "Additional Passages from the MS. of 'Praeterita,' Etc." in *The Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, vol. 35 (London: George Allen, 1908), 619.

Benjamin's reading of buildings, on the other hand, more closely scrutinizes the messiness of material structures and objects. For Benjamin, the term "phantasmagoria" captures the power of nineteenth-century economic and technological developments because it melds "the immediacy of [materiality's] perceptible presence" and the ideas they contain. Thus, Parisian arcades made of iron and glass, world exhibitions' showcases of commodities, and interior spaces that private individuals nurture away from their workplaces all highlight the interconnectedness of materiality and meaning. This interconnectedness in turn proliferates its own meanings – much like how a "phantasmagoria" functioned in its original sense as a theatrical projection device. In contrast to Ruskin, then, Benjamin's attention to phantasmagorias highlights how workers' imaginations go beyond what they create with their hands as laborers. When describing a city's glass and iron arcades, for example, Benjamin writes of "[a] world of secret affinities." Behind the glass of the arcades, commodities, "like cancerous tissue," coalesce into "the most irregular combinations." Here, Benjamin points out that "<how> one ought to read" the juxtaposition of items such as "the birdseed kept in the fixative-pan from a darkroom" and "the broken screws atop the musical score" remains "right on the tip of one's tongue."[213] When the small, great, weak, and strong lay atop one another, Benjamin suggests an ambivalent wonder in contrast to Ruskin's romance of hierarchy. The disruption of order within the phantasmagoria of the arcades ultimately allows onlookers to discern meaning, even if the varied arrangements resemble cancerous tissue.

Yet Kincaid's engagement with architecture and history puts to the test both Ruskin's prophetic politics of order on one hand and Benjamin's attention to the liberatory possibilities of materiality on the other. Her 1990 essay "On Seeing England for the First Time" exposes the violence that underlies Ruskin's investment in ideas of hierarchy. Recall how, in Ruskin's rhetoric in "The Nature of the Gothic," he urges middle class readers to look carefully at their parlour rooms. This exercise allows them to recognize evidence of the servile labor practices their architectural preferences sustain. In Kincaid's essay, she likens her recollection of childhood in an Antigua colonized by England to having "an iron vise at the back of my neck forcing my head to stay in place."[214] Kincaid thus contends that, in a colonial context, anywhere an individual looks is already predetermined through ideological or physical coercion.

Even Benjamin's proposal of the emancipatory potential of ubiquitous reproduction becomes questionable in Kincaid's Antigua. Ideas of subversive misuse and self-fashioning that arise in Benjamin's depiction of material juxtapositions in nineteenth-century Paris do not quite translate to a Caribbean island where the phrase "Made in England" appears on nearly every household item.[215] Kincaid, for example, recalls how her father wore a brown felt hat amid Antigua's searing climate. The felt hat was the first garment he put on in the morning and the last he removed before retiring for the night, and Kincaid hazards that "my father must have seen and admired a picture of an Englishman wearing such a hat in England, and this picture that he saw must have been so compelling that it caused him to wear the wrong hat for a hot climate most of his long life."[216] Mechanical reproduction of an image in this case diminishes the aura of an Englishman in England: such an individual could just as well be found across the Atlantic in Antigua as well. But the uncomfortable incongruity of felt material and warm weather limits reading any disruptive power in Kincaid's father's sartorial choices. Indeed, expressing anger with the saturation of ideas and images of England in Antigua is the goal of Kincaid's essay. She pushes readers to understand that colonized Antiguans – in contrast to the middle class consumers we saw Ruskin admonish – had little choice when it came to fashion and home décor.

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[213] Walter Benjamin, "The Arcades of Paris," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), 874 – 875.

[214] Jamaica Kincaid, "On Seeing England for the First Time," *Transition* 51 (1991): 35.

Jamaica Kincaid

I. Angry Prophet

Kincaid's revisions to the Victorian prophetic tradition will become clearer now that the politics of Ruskin's prose have been examined. Ruskin, as we have learned, "liked small things for being small," but the world through Kincaid's eyes functions with an order that cannot be understood with careful sight alone. The lack of critical consensus on *A Small Place*, Kincaid's critique of the tourism industry and government corruption in Antigua, suggests that freshly reading the famous text within the prophetic mode might shed light on its contradictions. Moira Ferguson, for example, calls *A Small Place* "counterknowledge with a vengeance" for comically twisting what readers would encounter in travel guides to the Caribbean by *Lonely Planet* and *Fodor's*.[217] But Suzanne Gauch questions such a simple analysis of Kincaid's text and contends that it "leaves us with no final representation of Antigua and its people."[218] After all, aversion to Kincaid's text went beyond North American and British readers; some Caribbean scholars frowned upon its presentation of Antiguans as passive and indifferent.[219] *A Small Place* moreover delves into the unsavory misconduct of Antiguan politicians in addition to mocking the North American and European vacationers who come to the island on holiday.

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[215] Ibid., 33.
[216] Ibid.

Kincaid's project of aggressively presenting readers with uncomfortable observations in *A Small Place* and elsewhere in her writing has heretofore mostly allowed commentators to perpetuate the stereotype of the "angry black woman." "People only say I'm angry because I'm black and I'm a woman," Kincaid said in a 2013 interview.[220] Robert Gottlieb, editor for *The New Yorker* from 1987 to 1992, reportedly told the writer he could not publish *A Small Place* because it was "very angry."[221] Once the essays were put together in book-form as *A Small Place*, Kincaid noted that media outlets such as *The New York Times* lamented the absence of the "'charm'" found in novels such as *Annie John*.[222] "But all sorts of people write with strong feeling, the way I do. But if they're white, [critics] won't say it," Kincaid contends.[223] The writer suggests that being labeled as angry allows critics to prevent thoughtful engagement with her work.[224]

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[217] Moira Ferguson, *Jamaica Kincaid: Where the Land Meets the Body* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 100.

[218] Suzanne Gauch, "A Small Place: Some Perspectives on the Ordinary," *Callaloo* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 912.

[219] See Ifeona Fulani, "Caribbean Women Writers and the Politics of Style: A Case for Literary Anancyism," *Small Axe* 17 (March 2005): 73.

[220] Loh, "A Conversation with Jamaica Kincaid."

[221] Donna Perry, "An Interview with Jamaica Kincaid," in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1990), 497.

[222] Ibid., 498.

[223] Loh, "A Conversation with Jamaica Kincaid."

I argue that the "strong feeling" within Kincaid's writing reveals her underappreciated reorientation of the Victorian prophetic tradition made famous by Carlyle and Ruskin. Like these nineteenth-century men of letters, Kincaid has written prolifically across various publications targeted in various ways to the middle class. She even admits thinking of her *New Yorker* readers as "friends in some peculiar way" until the fallout with Robert Gottlieb.[225] And like Carlyle and Ruskin, Kincaid seizes these platforms in order to provoke a moral imagination of the quotidian that moreover takes ownership of being a formerly colonized black female subject. "For isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of [the crime of colonialism]," Kincaid frankly asks readers of *A Small Place*, "is the language of the criminal who committed the crime?" (31). Kincaid, as I will show below, goes further than Ruskin in her assessments of the both the past and the quotidian and their implications for the future. She proposes that a return to order is not even a possibility in the aftermath of colonialism in spite of how she writes in ways that resonate with the prophetic mode.

The fierce opening pages of *A Small Place* often push critics to interpret the text as a polemical response to tourism discourse around the Caribbean.[226] Kincaid opens the book with an assault of information the typical tourist to Antigua would rather not know: rain-free vacation days belie months of drought for local residents; the island's Minister of Health would not seek service at his own hospital; the sewage system is the Caribbean Sea itself where visitors frolic. *A*

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[224] Ibid.
[225] Perry, "An Interview with Jamaica Kincaid," 497.
[226] In addition to Ferguson's reading, see Corinna McLeod, "Constructing a Nation: Jamaica Kincaid's A Small Place," *Small Axe* 25 (February 2008): 77–92 and Ian Gregory Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

Small Place quickly explodes the beauty of paradise that postcards and travel magazines reinforce. In Kincaid's account, even the tourists themselves are "incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed" vacationers instead of toned, bronzed bodies (14). She also plays with the assumption that Caribbean destinations are "backwards in that charming way" that tourists might expect and even embrace (17). But Kincaid also presents more complex assessments of Antiguan society alongside these clever provocations of her audience.

The recurring image of Antigua's public library in *A Small Place* allows Kincaid to radically use architecture to interface with history in a way that simultaneously echoes yet amplifies Ruskin's fiery attitudes toward the ethical connotations of materiality. But prioritizing materiality in the work of a writer within the anglophone Caribbean canon such as Kincaid requires some explanation of rationale. Material objects both valuable and trivial more famously fill the novels of Ruskin's Victorian peers and the halls of Benjamin's nineteenth-century Parisian arcades.

Within the anglophone Caribbean literary tradition, the opening stanza of a famous Derek Walcott poem proposes a different relationship to materiality by answering the question, "Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?" with the haunting response, "The sea/has locked them up. The sea is History." The Atlantic's conceptual capacity helped to propel Paul Gilroy's transnational approach to black modernity in *The Black Atlantic*. More recently, the spaces of seas and oceans have generated work in ecocriticism, the effort to entwine analyses of literature and the environment for political change. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues, "The shift in focus from terrestrial history to the transoceanic spaces that enabled African, Asian, European, and indigenous crossing to the islands complicates genealogical roots and destabilizes the colonial architecture that literally constructed the region as European."[227] By looking to the sea, ecocriticism in Caribbean studies thus proposes to turn away from rubrics such as anglophone and francophone, which demonstrate the land grabs of European empires, in order to unearth ostensibly lost artifacts of history, memory, and culture within the region.

But Kincaid's analyses of literal colonial architecture suggests that terrestrial aspects of the Caribbean still carry meaning that cannot be categorized as simply "European." As a result of *A Small Place*'s complicated affective passages on architecture in Antigua, I approach manmade materiality as a valuable bearer of history as well. Kincaid calls Antigua's library "one of those splendid old buildings from colonial times." It is at first difficult to discern Kincaid's tone toward the library: she repeats the phrases "splendid old" and "colonial times" to describe the sign on the building that reads "REPAIRS ARE PENDING" (9). Whether she is mocking the language of tourism or highlighting nostalgia for her childhood relationship with the library – especially in light of the wonder suggested in the phrase "splendid old" – is ambiguous. In the book's third section, however, Kincaid makes it clear that library's physical state signifies more than dilapidated tourist charm.

In a rhetorical move akin to what we have already seen in Ruskin's writing, Kincaid presents an extended hypothetical situation where she provides a portrait of the library's architectural characteristics to readers. "But if you saw the old library," Kincaid writes, you would see "a big, old wooden building painted a shade of yellow that is beautiful to people like me." One would also see a "wide veranda," "big, always open windows," "rows and rows of shelves filled with books," and "beautiful wooden tables and chairs for sitting and reading." Alongside these visual descriptions, Kincaid adds sensory dimensions and outlines how one would also need to experience “the sound of its quietness,” “the smell of the sea,” and “the heat of the sun.” But Kincaid suddenly swerves to colonial critique as her description continues. If one saw the old library, they would also ultimately see:

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[227] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 51.

> the beauty of us sitting there like communicants at an altar, taking in, again and again, the fairy tale of how we met you, your right to do the things you did, how beautiful you were, are, and always will be; if you could see all of that in just one glimpse, you would see why my heart would break at the dung heap that now passes for a library in Antigua. (42 – 43)

Kincaid offers much to sift through in this description. First, note how she melds three distinct images into one: the library as library, the library as church, the library as “dung heap.” Each image carries distinct connotations. The library signals a rich collection of knowledge, the church offers a place of both worship and indoctrination, and the dung heap underlines waste and decay. Kincaid’s sprawling yet calculated sentence includes all these meanings in a single image, which brings to mind Ruskin’s attention to the process of history available to discerning eyes on his beloved Gothic structures.

Kincaid, however, shows a far more ambivalent attitude whereas Ruskin admired and even fetishized decay. The presence of a large veranda evokes images of colonial and plantation architectural styles likely constructed by slaves, but the yellow paint Kincaid highlights conversely legitimizes local preferences that might be deemed tasteless in other contexts. By asking readers to imagine how the library’s quietness is inseparable from the nearby sea’s odor and the unforgiving sun’s intensity, Kincaid subtly intensifies *A Small Place*’s conceit of idyllic Caribbean tourism. She explicitly situates the building within time and space in order to embody the library for readers, which can only be a hypothetical situation given the building’s present state of neglect and her North American readership’s very inability to identify with the emotions she remembers. In contrast to Ruskin’s provocation for readers to see evidence of slavery within their careful home décor, the radical significance of Kincaid's portrait of the library lies in how her audience presumably *cannot* see the same meaningful connotations that she recognizes in the building.

Kincaid's adoption of the prophetic tradition therefore finds its firepower in a seemingly gentle illustration of nostalgia that hinges on revealing the history of colonialism's indoctrination practices. Her extended syntax lulls readers into a kind of virtual tourism: the long description of the library before its fall into disrepair replaces Ruskin's direct commands to "look round" with devastatingly evocative memories of how the beloved building and its surroundings looked and smelled. But if Ruskin was preoccupied with mythical ideas of ancient Tyre and medieval Venice when envisioning his ideal of Victorian England, Kincaid's concern with the past alongside Antigua's present state involves a personal embodied link with architecture. Kincaid entangles visions of the present with palpable narratives of colonialism's and slavery's histories – both when remembering her own past as a child in the old library or tracing the slave-owning family responsible for the Barclays bank on the island's High Street.

Her attitude of what she calls within the text being of "undone" at the library's present physical condition therefore emphasizes the irreparable character of her dismay with history's ongoing presence in Antigua (42). Indeed, moments in both *A Small Place* and "On Seeing England for the First Time" seem to diminish to juvenile wishful thinking. Kincaid in the former contends that the only "good people" among the English were those who "stayed home" – those who never colonized (35). Within the prophetic mode, this statement successfully communicates thought-provoking, cosmic anger. On the other hand, the claim ignores how even sectors of the British population who remained at home – merchants, insurers, and lawyers – benefited from slavery and colonialism. Elsewhere, Kincaid concludes "On Seeing England for the First Time" describing an encounter with the dirtiness of Dover's famous white cliffs and wishing that all the ideas of England she had been forced to absorb since childhood could "jump and die and disappear forever" from the cliffs' height (40). Though impossible, these wishes crucially show how Kincaid's engagement with architecture goes beyond specific buildings. Colonialism, after all, thrived on forcibly seizing and using land for the production of raw commodities to enrich European empires.

Yet the materiality in Kincaid's prophetic writings still bears a distinctly terrestrial character: titles of works such as *A Small Place* and "On Seeing England for the First Time" already indicate as much. Expanding to ideas of *landscape* architecture therefore offers the most useful framework for reading Kincaid alongside Ruskin. The practice of landscape architecture is interdisciplinary: it encompasses botany, ecology, psychology, and of course, architecture. The framework of landscape architecture also more readily allows me to engage with the complex issues around history, conquest, and personal choice raised in Kincaid's garden writing.

II. Kincaid's Landscape Architecture

Kincaid's participation in garden writing might at first glance seem to reinforce one aspect of her popular image as a woman writer interested in issues of motherhood and domesticity. But writing about the space of the garden – whether metaphorically or literally – has deeply political resonances. Ruskin's famous 1864 lecture "Of Queens' Gardens" radically urged that young women should receive an education "as serious as a boy's" yet also romanticized the female gender through images of flowers that "wither without sun."[228] Yet Kincaid's interest in gardens – similar to her concern with buildings such as the library – is far more layered and contradictory. Her garden writing, much like Ruskin's earlier readings of the Crystal Palace, recognizes how collections of flora tell a larger story than what meets the eye.

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[228] John Ruskin, *Sesames and Lilies* (1865; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 84, 83.

Landscape architecture thus highlights how what seem like digressions in Kincaid's garden writing in fact always link back to larger historical processes. In Antigua, for example, Kincaid reports that agriculture rather than botany or gardening operates as the keyword when it comes to the population's relationship to matters of the soil.[229] Taking up residence in Vermont, a place whose cold winters and mild summers provide a stark contrast to Antigua, and writing about botany in *The New Yorker* and *Architectural Digest* thus means that garden writing necessarily has a different focus and scope in Kincaid's hands. The space of Kincaid's lawn in Vermont enables the writer to specifically explore two interconnected concerns that amplify ideas about the irreversibility of colonialism only subtly implied in her engagement with the Antiguan library: a strange reconciliation with Wordsworth's famous poem about daffodils and a demand to reclaim a relationship to quotidian beauty.

It is well known that Kincaid's fiction illustrates the deleterious influence of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" on Caribbean subjects of colonial rule. But our characterization of Kincaid's relationship to the poem's subject matter should change after reading one of her essays published in a 2007 issue of *Architectural Digest*.[230] "Dances with Daffodils" opens with a summary of Kincaid's experience as a schoolgirl in Antigua that of course already feels familiar to readers of *Lucy*. Kincaid recalls associating the poem with "the tyrannical order of a people, the British people, in my child's life" (41). Kincaid, however, does not reify this past. The essay goes on to explore the daffodil's evolution in Kincaid's life. "[F]or memory is not set," Kincaid explains,

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[229] Jamaica Kincaid, "Alien Soil," *The New Yorker*, June 21, 1993, 50.

[230] Jamaica Kincaid, "Dances with Daffodils," *Architectural Digest* 64, no. 4 (April 2007): 78 - 82. I cite parenthetically in text from the essay's reprint in *Best African American Essays: 2009*, eds. Gerald Early and Debra J. Dickerson (New York: Bantam Books, 2009), 40 – 42.

"no matter how we wish it to be so, and the past will intrude on the present new and fresh" (41). This disclosure is key because it suggests that gardeners, unlike Ruskin's workers or Kincaid as a colonial schoolgirl, might thoughtfully use the land at hand as an expression of creativity and imagination. Kincaid thus engages in act that feels oddly imperial: she plants, "without qualms," over 5,000 daffodils in her Vermont lawn (41). She realizes the number falls short of the 10,000 daffodils celebrated in Wordsworth's poem, but Kincaid does not care. The writer only wishes to completely cover her lawn with the flower.

Such a dramatic change in attitude toward daffodils pushes us to confront the complicated relationship with history that runs through Kincaid's garden writing. Her garden writing's insistence on exploring history allows her to treat engagements with the land as if they were the stones of cathedrals put together by human hands that remain legible, not just a home for ephemeral plants. The writer is all too aware that her fondness for gardening would raise eyebrows in Antigua. In *My Garden (Book)*, she acknowledges that "[i]in the place I am from, I would have been a picture of shame: a woman covered with dirt, smelling of manure…and her back crooked with pain from bending over" (121). Gardening echoes enslaved labor. Yet Kincaid – much like Ruskin did when he invoked the image of the "helot Greek" in "The Nature of the Gothic" – aims to place gardening within a longer history than more proximate cultural memory allows.

The banal yet rewarding practice of cultivating plants for the visual joy they bring characterizes the ironic political edge of Kincaid's landscape architecture. She outlines a narrative of alienation from "ordinary, everyday beauty" in the section of *My Garden (Book)* called "To Name Is to Possess" (117). In this account, European conquerors such as Hernando Cortez arrived to the New World and, impressed with flora such as the dahlia, brought them back to Europe. There, New World flora underwent their first act of fetishization through being named within the system developed by Carl Linnaeus. “The naming of things is so crucial to possession,” Kincaid explains, “– a spiritual padlock with the key thrown irretrievably away” (122). By contrast, Kincaid proposes that the people of the New World rejected such singular fascinations; she claims “there were so many other flowers and shrubs and trees and vines, each with some overpowering attribute of shape, height, color of bloom, and scent, that [the dahlia] would not be singled out” (118). Kincaid therefore stresses that prior to European conquest, inhabitants of the New World “noticed,” “cultivated,” and ultimately marveled at the sight of their environmental surroundings in the same way that is now better associated with the luxury of gardens (116). Kincaid’s enthusiastic planting of daffodils in her personal garden thus works as a political act because it reclaims the pleasure of cultivating what brings her visual gratification. That the daffodils also recalibrate her relationship with a dreaded poem from childhood only reveals one layer of the garden’s meaning.

The championing of Kincaid’s garden writing as a critique of “Western ways of knowing” therefore requires some nuance.[231] Kincaid’s hostility toward the British is clear in texts such as *A Small Place* and “On Seeing England for the First Time.” The writer nevertheless affiliates with the privileges of now residing in the U.S., the heir to Britain’s imperial ambitions since the beginning of the twentieth century. “Alien Soil,” an essay from a 1993 issue of *The New Yorker*, reveals how Kincaid’s relationship to landscape architecture simultaneously links and distances her from theories of the land outlined by other Caribbean women writers such as Sylvia Wynter. Recall how in the essay “Novel and History, Plot and Plantation” Wynter differentiates between the two forms of land she names in that title. The plot, or the small parcel of land plantation owners allotted to the enslaved for personal use, allowed Afro-Caribbean men and women to grow food for their own consumption or to sell crops at weekly markets. The plantation, of course, is where the enslaved were forced to submit to essentially two masters: the capitalist market and the owners of their labor. In “Alien Soil,” Kincaid uses Mary Prince’s life story as a source for distilling what Wynter pointed out two decades before: the “wretched historical relationship to growing things” that today compels an attraction to practicality of agriculture rather than the joys of botany and gardening in the Caribbean. Kincaid yearns to identify a history of gardening for quotidian pleasure in the island of her birth yet discovers that most of the visually striking flora in Antigua was brought in by the British. Bougainvillea is from South America, hibiscus is from Asia, and even breadfruit, the starchy fruit popular throughout the Caribbean, hails from India.

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[231] Braziel, “‘Caribbean Genesis’: Language, Gardens, Worlds (Jamaica Kincaid, Derek Walcott, Édouard Glissant),” 122.

The eponymous “alien soil” of Kincaid’s essay then surprisingly refers to Antigua, the writer’s ostensibly native land. Returning to that island as an adult equipped with gardening knowledge and realizing that “most of the plants I saw there came from somewhere else” prompts Kincaid to see Antigua for the first time as well. But neither animosity nor nostalgia operate as key sentiments as they did when Kincaid visited the mother country in “On Seeing England for the First Time” or when she lamented Antigua’s library in *A Small Place*. Instead, readers witness Kincaid’s complicated embrace of being an American.

Kincaid’s careful use of pronouns and proper nouns strategically situate the writer within time and space in the essay. She begins by distinguishing the English from Antiguans, and she clarifies that when she writes “ordinary Antiguans,” she refers to the descendants of slaves. Kincaid only explicitly self-identifies in two parenthetical instances in the essay. The first occurrence takes place when she writes “(I am one now)” after referring to how Americans eventually came into Antigua after the English. Only much later does Kincaid affiliate with Antiguans; she writes, “they (we) were brought to this island from Africa a few hundred years ago.” These reluctant attachments might frustrate critics eager to label Kincaid as a Caribbean writer; she even slyly addresses this issue when she claims the influence of the English has “not yet worked to the literary advantage of the Antiguan people.” But Kincaid ultimately reveals the significance of her quiet affiliations in a casual yet key moment in “Alien Soil.” She describes Antigua as “the place where I was born” and her adopted home in Vermont as “the place where I choose to live.” These characterizations stage the trauma of return – a common tension in anglophone Caribbean literature – as an ordeal most effectively reconciled by ambivalently putting down roots in a land that allows the cultivation of quotidian beauty uncontaminated with the colonial ideology of British and Caribbean contact.

The European fantasy of the Caribbean as a virginal landscape therefore plays a provocative role in Kincaid’s landscape architecture. The writer may not use the terms of virginity, but her proposal in *A Small Place* that the English “should have never left their home” basically yearns for a world prior to colonial encounter (24). This desire is surprising for two reasons: first, it reinforces the image of the New World as an unsullied landscape. Kincaid is aware that this impossible wish would essentially erase the history of ordinary Antiguans: “As for what we were like before we met you, I no longer care,” she explains (37). The writer’s claim that going back and changing history offers the only way to remedy the ongoing trauma of colonialism is also surprising because it is seemingly bereft of political action. But fully grasping the radicalism in Kincaid’s seemingly conservative practice of cultivating visual pleasure in her garden involves foregrounding the familiar yet relevant inferiority complex installed by colonialism.

Kincaid's garden writing explores the psychology of colonialism when she makes seemingly passing comments on the Antiguan flora she hated as a child yet now loves as an adult. As she explains in *My Garden (Book)*, this shift entailed more than maturity; it involved acknowledging how her tastes as a child were shaped by colonial standards. "[N]othing about you is of any interest unless the conqueror deems it so," she explains (120). Reading landscapes as an adult thus enables Kincaid to question the beauty associated with particular plants. She recalls seeing "a mass of tall stalks of red flames" while in Kingston, Jamaica, most likely a Poinciana or flamboyant tree (119). Kincaid at first detests the sight of it because it reminds her of a similar tree she has seen in North America, the salvia or sage plant. The Poinciana triggers frustration in Kincaid because its resemblance to the salvia brings to mind schemes of conquest and histories of displacement: such overwhelming redness belongs on a large tree in Jamaica rather than what she calls a "dwarfish plant" in North America (119). Her initial revulsion to the Poinciana in Jamaica is thus not directed toward that tree; rather, her suspicion lies in a fear that the humongous plant may have been carefully downsized by botanists looking to import the beauty of another land into their own backyards.

Kincaid's wariness toward the forcible adaptation of flora to different locations should sound familiar. Ruskin expressed similar misgivings about the exportation of architectural styles in his pamphlet on the Crystal Palace's move to Sydenham. The writers therefore share attitudes about notions of order and place: for both, the natural and the built alike have an appropriate context, whether the Poinciana in Kincaid's case or the Champs-Élysées in Ruskin's. Kincaid and Ruskin diverge, however, on ideas regarding hierarchy as it plays out within order. Remember that, for Ruskin, the small, the weak, the great, and the strong each have distinct characteristics that determine relationships and responsibilities. The strong in this vision thus rule over the weak, which in turn involves Ruskin taking on a prophetic position to rouse the middle class to the detrimental implications of their purchasing decisions. The effect of Ruskin's prophecy is ultimately top down: his privileged sight inspires him to jolt the middle class into action with the aim that the workers beneath this purchasing class will subsequently be able to exercise their creative imaginations as men who work with their hands.

But Kincaid's understanding of order has no opportunity for redemption. The writer's contradictory emotions of longing and defeat at the sight of Antigua's library already underlined how returning to the past would fail to restore an order without hierarchy: Antiguans would still be taking in English knowledge regardless of the building's physical state. As a citizen of the U.S. now, Kincaid instead asserts a sense of privilege that only prophesies its own immanent shortcomings. Consider the sudden incursion of Kincaid's reflection of the meaning of dissent among Americans in "Alien Soil":

> [W]e are divided about how we ought to behave in the world. Half of us believe in and support strongly a bad thing our government is doing, while the other half do not believe in and protest strongly against the bad thing. The bad thing succeeds, and everyone, protester and supporter alike, enjoys immensely the results of the bad thing. (48)

The writer highlights the inescapability of complicity. Her broad strokes – speaking of a "bad thing" and dividing the population into neat halves – compel a thoughtful pause rather than a scrupulous analysis yet they also help make sense of history's jarring track record. Kincaid goes on to cite Thomas Jefferson as an example: she describes him as a fellow gardener dedicated to the concept of freedom who simultaneously owned slaves and sought to expand the U.S. at the expense of indigenous people. But the curious aspect of Kincaid's prophetic insights and glance back at the historical record lies in her suggestion that she ultimately cannot envision and propose a path for a return to order.

This is surely a pessimistic quality within Kincaid's writing, and it is one that critics such as Fidecaro have shied away from when examining Kincaid against the grain and questioning the writer's confession that gardening signals her affiliation with "the conquering class."[232] But a recuperative reading misses the most important and unsettling force of Kincaid's landscape architecture. Kincaid outlines a situation wherein protestors too enjoy "the results of the bad thing" to not only be critical and aware of her own position as a successful writer living in the U.S., but also to delimit her own significance as a prophetic writer. She has communicated this position more succinctly in "On Seeing England for the First Time," where she acknowledges that "I may be capable of prejudice, but my prejudices have no weight to them" (40). Such measured pessimism ultimately differentiates Kincaid's adoption of the prophetic mode from Victorian predecessors such as Ruskin.

Both writers turn to history as a radical archive for understanding the present in order to urge readers to test their moral imaginations yet it is Kincaid who finally grasps that the "Age of Machinery" portended earlier by Carlyle has already mutated the world in irreversible ways. If *The Stones of Venice* opens with Ruskin attuned to England's impending doom, a Kincaid essay such as "Alien Soil" identifies the real crisis of English commodification in Antigua, where the imperial cash crops of sugar, tobacco, and cotton have left the island perpetually plagued by drought. For Kincaid, digressing in historical reflection and aggressively proposing visual experiments for readers underline the ongoing crisis of colonialism; for Ruskin, the same rhetorical practices still signaled a faint hope for reshaping the architecture of history.

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[232] Fidecaro, "Jamaica Kincaid's Practical Politics," 252.

III. Fiction as Paradoxical Prophecy

Kincaid's appropriation of the prophetic mode's rhetorical moves paradoxically strips the prophet position of its ability for compelling change. Rather than confront readers to reroute the course of the present, Kincaid as prophet offers reminders of how violent histories of conquest accompany quotidian sights as various as a ruined library in Antigua and a garden of daffodils in Vermont. But a final yet important divergence from Ruskin also shapes Kincaid's distinct relationship to the prophetic tradition: her established career in fiction. Though Ruskin was a prolific critic, as well as an art professor and artist in his own right, his primary literary work includes a fairy tale and assorted poetry. Kincaid, as detailed above, is more famous for her fiction than her garden writing. It is worthwhile to briefly return to the familiar terrain of Kincaid's novels now that such under-read garden writing has been examined.

Understanding Kincaid as a paradoxical prophet – as a writer who inhabits the role of bringing audiences clear yet uncomfortable messages – helps us rethink both her relationship to Victoriana and her complicated position among anglophone Caribbean writers. While her novel *Lucy* may be a loose revision of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* and its themes of female subjectivity and sexuality, Kincaid's garden writing shows a preoccupation with the relationship between ideas of beauty, ethics, and the land that brings to mind a masculine rather than feminine antecedent: Ruskin's incisive, historicized social criticism. The affiliation I have traced with Ruskin therefore leaves us with a configuration between the Victorian period and the anglophone Caribbean that acknowledges the context of influence without rehearsing familiar paradigms of liberatory misuse. Kincaid's pessimistic foregrounding of the futility of most resistive practices in the aftermath of colonialism sustains the vitality of cultural work yet leaves behind the vexing project of representing her native land. When the architecture of history – outlined above in

Kincaid's case as a kind of landscape architecture – involves people reshaping the land as well as the land holding the possibility to reshape people, a prophet's purpose becomes more about acknowledging the trauma of lived time rather than measuring society's departure from order.

It is thus telling that *See Now Then*, Kincaid's most recent novel, contains jarring incursions of her prophetic writing we have already seen in *A Small Place* and essays like "Alien Soil." Briefly examining one of these passages will help bridge my consideration of prophetic writing with the next chapter's study of entangled fictionality. *See Now The*n charts the unraveling of the Sweet couple's marriage. Mrs. Sweet is a writer who enjoys maintaining her garden in a village in New England. Her husband, Mr. Sweet, is a composer and music teacher at a nearby college. These details align with Kincaid's life: her former husband is the composer Allen Shawn, who is also a teacher at Bennington College.

Mrs. Sweet's upbringing in Antigua invites further comparisons to Kincaid's biography, but the novel is more fascinating for its prose. Sentences in *See Now Then* meander in ways we have already seen in Kincaid's prophetic essays. They take readers from Mrs. Sweet peering out a window of her New England home to thoughts of bodies of water that flow out into the Atlantic Ocean. Yet the novel's syntactical constellations are never random. As Mrs. Sweet contemplates her life early in the narrative, she realizes "that the past and the present and the future has no permanent present tense."[233] The very structure of this clause collapses the past, present, and future into one with Mrs. Sweet's use of the third person singular "has" rather than the plural "have." Mrs. Sweet's transhistorical reflection takes on a more concrete form when she ponders on how her husband fetishizes her dark eyes as "impenetrable." Echoing the themes of colonial encounter and pleasure Kincaid raised in "Alien Soil," Mrs. Sweet reports that Mr.

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[233] Jamaica Kincaid, *See Now Then* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2013), 13. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

Sweet delighted in her dark eyes because they allowed him to ignorantly partake in a fantasy of discovery. By contrast, Mrs. Sweet claims that no one else saw such covetous impenetrability in her eyes. Instead, they saw “the turbulent waters of the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean” that Mrs. Sweet thought of each morning:

> for behind her eyes lay scenes of turbulence, upheavals, murders, betrayals, on foot, on land, and on the seas where horde upon horde of people were transported to places on the earth’s surface that they had never heard of or even imagined, and murderer and murdered, betrayer and betrayed, the source of the turbulence, the instigator of the upheavals, were all mixed up, and the sorting out of the true, true truth and the rendering of judgments, or the acceptance of wrongs, and to accept that, to accept and lay still with being wronged will wear you down to nothing so that eventually you are not more than the substance that makes up the Imperial Sand Dunes in the Imperial Valley in California, or the pink beaches surrounding the rising shelf of landmass that is now, just now, the island of Barbuda, or the lawn of a house in Montclair, New Jersey. (18 – 19)

This prophetic reflection on the history of forced transatlantic migration and its proposal that accepting its narrative of “being wronged” would render an individual “down to nothing” offers a final nuance to Kincaid’s relationship to the “Age of Machinery” that we were introduced to via Thomas Carlyle at the beginning of the chapter. In *A Small Place*, “On Seeing England for the First Time,” and “Alien Soil,” Kincaid charts a relationship to the material world ruined by the physical and ideological forces of colonialism. But within the intimacy of *See Now Then*’s framework of a deteriorating marriage, the material world – whether sand dune, beach, or lawn – merely supplies an empty language that rationalizes individuals’ failures to understand each other.

Mr. Sweet’s preoccupation with quotidian material items alongside Mrs. Sweet’s acknowledgement of the banality of terrestrial landscapes quoted at length above furthermore reveals how Kincaid’s novel takes advantage of the architecture of history to tell an incisive story of unsaid domestic quarrels. Mr. Sweet, for example, who grew up in New York City, wishes the couple's kitchen were painted shades of peaches and nectarines rather than "those Caribbean colors" of mango and pineapple (15). Similarly, Mr. Sweet becomes angry rather than pleased when his wife buys him a respectable coat from the haberdasher Paul Stuart: he feels "a benighted wife" who came to the U.S. on a "banana boat" should not be attuned to the finery of such a garment (9). Kincaid therefore uses the competing narrating perspectives of the Sweet couple to restage the conflict of misunderstanding initially compelled by the epoch of colonial encounter. We see a similarly dizzying intersection of fictional narration, time, and history foregrounded in *Daniel Deronda* and *Season of Adventure*, the respective novels by George Eliot and George Lamming I examine in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Radical Realist Fictions of George Eliot and George Lamming

> You know you read [George] Lamming, and some part of it is like reading a nineteenth-century bore. It is so formal – the language – and his writing would be of absolutely no interest except that he is who he is. It's very boring, formal writing; but because of who he is, he is a black man from the West Indies and is very well educated. He is very smart, and he is telling us something that we have not heard before, a point of view we have not heard before. That is what is interesting. But the writing itself is of no interest.
> – Jamaica Kincaid[234]

> The problem facing George Lamming's work (and this is the burden of all true experiment and exploration) is one of form. His insights require poetry, and Lamming has been remarkably successful in deploying this within his novels' structure. But as he has moved from the childhood world of *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), he has become more and more concerned with the political and psychological ramifications of social living and consciousness (The *Emigrants*, 1954; *Of Age and Innocence*, 1958; *Season of Adventure* 1960), and he has had to rely more and more on the 'prose' while still trying to retain the poetry. This tug of war has affected the shape of his work; preventing it from achieving a clear, coherent, over-all whole.
> – Kamau Brathwaite[235]

> But we were orphans of the nineteenth century,
> sedulous to the morals of a style,
> we lived by another light,
> Victoria's orphans, bats in the banyan boughs.
> – Derek Walcott[236]

Introduction

The three epigraphs above run contrary to the account more and more critics are telling about the affiliations between anglophone Caribbean literature and modernism. Both the prose and poetry of canonical modernist literature, which includes the deeply interiorized novels of Virginia Woolf and the fractured verse of T.S. Eliot, are increasingly understood as formally suited and politically amenable to the creative projects of Caribbean writers. Simon Gikandi offered the first sustained study of how authors ranging from George Lamming to Paule Marshall fictionalize the colonial experience through a modernist prose style "opposed to, though not necessarily independent of, European notions of modernism."[237] As Gikandi has suggested more recently, modernism might be better understood as a particularly global and postcolonial phenomenon rather than a literary practice restricted to the avant-garde poetry of American expatriates such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.[238]

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[234] Moira Ferguson, "A Lot of Memory: An Interview with Jamaica Kincaid." *The Kenyon Review* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 169.

[235] L. Edward Brathwaite, "West Indian Prose Fiction in the Sixties: A Survey." *BIM* 12, no. 47 (December 1968): 162 – 163.

[236] Derek Walcott, *Another Life*, in *Collected Poems, 1948 – 1984* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1986), 219.

The idea that anglophone Caribbean writers schooled in the traditions of Milton's verse and Victorian novels would turn to modernism and its associations with experimental – and potentially liberating aesthetics – makes sense at first glance. The conventional divide between the Victorian and the modern after all posits the former as bound up with custom and decorum and the latter as a bold embrace of innovation and defiance. J. Dillon Brown has recently provided a grounded historical account of how four Caribbean novelists related to the modernist side of such a rift. His *Migrant Modernisms* analyzes how Lamming, Edgar Mittelholzer, Sam Selvon, and Roger Mais – male novelists illustrative of the post-World War II influx of West Indians into London – strategically took on modernist literary styles. Lamming's complicated fiction, for instance, allowed the writer to stake a claim to craft within London's literary culture, which was at the time shaped by a hostile press and a social climate suspicious of the empire's incoming black subjects. In Brown's account, Lamming positioned his creative work as a cultural product that challenged metropolitan assumptions about Caribbean backwardness by inviting audiences to cultivate slow reading practices.[239]

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[237] Simon Gikandi, *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 4 - 5.

[238] Simon Gikandi, "Preface: Modernism in the World," *Modernism/modernity* 13, no. 3 (September 2006): 419 – 424. Gikandi even proposes that it might be "solely...in the language and structure of modernism that a postcolonial experience came to be articulated and imagined in literary form." See Gikandi, "Preface," 420. Gikandi seems to overlook, however, how postcolonial writers can dramatically depart from the European modernism they co-opt, a departure Houston Baker has called in the context of Harlem Renaissance literary production an act of "radical marronage." See Baker, *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 75 – 77.

The link between twentieth century Caribbean writing and modernism thus supplies a useful language for understanding the aesthetic-political projects of writers such as Lamming within an existing paradigm. Yet this is also the chief limit of threading Caribbean literature into the canvas of modernism: the account of modernism's expanse becomes more populated with names such as Lamming without a concerted effort to understand the distinct ground from which he comes. In other words, the optimistic alignment of anglophone Caribbean writing and modernism brackets the issue of an enduring Victorianism that Jamaica Kincaid, Kamau Brathwaite, and Derek Walcott all powerfully suggest in the quotations I place at the outset of this chapter.

Lamming's infamous difficulty, as Kincaid's remarks emphasize, at times springs from his fiction's resemblance to the ostensible tedium of nineteenth-century novels rather than from the dizzying incursions of verse that resonate with modernist play. Lamming therefore might have more investments in Victoriana than has been acknowledged, even if Kincaid likening the Barbados-born author's writing to "a nineteenth-century bore" stands as a minority opinion given the increasing critical consensus regarding his modernism. Brathwaite's opinion of Lamming's writing even suggests that the novelist is unhealthily caught between two projects of form – one that is prose-based and realist and another that turns to poetry to evoke dream-like scenes from childhood. Brathwaite's assessment of Lamming's work, which was published only three years before Lamming stopped releasing fiction, clairvoyantly suggests that the author's experiment in vacillating between poetry and prose is ultimately failing. Such suggestion of failure, which haunts the elegiac language I draw from Walcott's *Another Life*, signals how Lamming's distinctive prose might be fruitfully examined by first of all understanding the writer as an "orphan" and thus an interlocutor of the nineteenth century.

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[239] J. Dillon Brown, *Migrant Modernism: Postwar London and the West Indian Novel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 77. Brown underlines the cultural field of literary London via book reviews of Caribbean novels in publications such as the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *New Statesman*. What we find when looking at this archive, Brown argues, are authors such as Lamming "necessarily enmeshed in the local politics of British literary production." See Brown, *Migrant Modernism*, 9. The approach I take toward Lamming in this chapter is less concerned with the metropolitan reception of the author's work and more interested in re-reading Lamming's own critical prose against his fiction.

Highlighting an aesthetic link with the Victorian rather than the modern in fact has a longer history within anglophone Caribbean literary culture than the increasing critical norm of the affiliation with modernism would lead us to believe.[240] C.L.R. James wrote with effusion about William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847) in his memoir *Beyond a Boundary* (1963). James's only novel, *Minty Alley* (1936), even examines class and social decorum in the barrack yards of Trinidad with a satirizing gaze similar to Thackeray's narrator.[241] Critics such as Belinda Edmondson and Faith Smith, as I have referenced in previous chapters, provide the most in-depth studies of how ideas from Victorian Britain shape the intellectual projects of anglophone Caribbean writers. By and large, however, Edmondson's and Smith's literary histories use the discourse around Victorian men of letters as a point of entry into Caribbean writing. My concern here, as I explain in more detail below, uses the most prominent Victorian *woman* of letters to pursue a case study of the interpenetrations between the realisms of two distinct novels from the twentieth-century anglophone Caribbean and the Victorian period.

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[240] The relationship between modernism and anglophone Caribbean literature was perhaps canonized with J. Dillon Brown's entry, "Modernism and Anglophone Caribbean Literature" in *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*. See *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 295 – 303. Ecocriticism and queer theory can be found as other approaches outlined in this companion; carving out a space for examining anglophone Caribbean literary culture's engagements with a Victorian past that goes beyond paradigms of influence and disavowal is one of my larger goals.

[241] Andrew Smith speculates more about James's relationship to Thackeray's novel in *C.L.R. James and the Study of Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 92 - 99. Smith points out that James did not write about Thackeray in the same way he did about Herman Melville in *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* (1953). A strange tension between absence and presence thus seems to define the relationship between the twentieth-century anglophone Caribbean and the Victorian period.

Oddly enough, Brathwaite – famous for his emphasis on the African aspects of Caribbean culture – made the suggestive link between the nineteenth-century British novel and what he perceived at the time as a nascent tradition of Caribbean fiction that I use as the basis for this chapter's comparative rationale. In the essay "Roots," which first appeared in a 1963 issue of the Caribbean little magazine *BIM*, Brathwaite explains, "to write really well about a living society…one simply has to be an 'old fashioned' writer (Hardy, Dickens, George Eliot, or Jane Austen)."[242] It is certainly jarring to read this statement today. The context of such a remark is even more surprising: Brathwaite praises V.S. Naipaul's novels in particular for achieving such an "old fashioned" style and proposes that "the negro West Indian cannot really expect novels like [*A House for Mr. Biswas*] until he has a strong enough 'framework of social convention' from which to operate and until his own technique is flexible and subtle enough to take advantage of it."[243] Brathwaite thus essentially belittles black Caribbean writers for failing to adapt the nineteenth-century British novel to Caribbean society, a project he feels Naipaul has already completed. The writer's invocation of nineteenth-century British novelists is not the only surprising aspect of his rhetoric; his singling out of Naipaul – who famously disavows local and especially black Caribbean culture – also clashes with the Afro-centric Brathwaite that would emerge in the 1970s and inform the reputation he has within Caribbean literary culture today.[244]

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[242] Edward Brathwaite, "Roots," *BIM* 10, no. 37 (December 1963): 20 – 21. This essay was reprinted in the Brathwaite collection *Roots*, which contains slight changes in formatting and word choice from the *BIM* edition. Brathwaite most notably changes "[t]he negro West Indian" to "[t]he black West Indian." See Brathwaite, "Roots," in *Roots* (University of Michigan Press, 1986), 53 – 54.

[243] Ibid., 21.

Brathwaite's comments in "Roots" serve as one of Belinda Edmondson's points of entry into her argument about the relationship between Victorian masculinity and the gendered bias of the Caribbean literary canon. Male Caribbean writers, whether in the name of Black Power as in Brathwaite's case or in support of a deleterious Anglophilia in Naipaul's, model themselves after the Victorian "Literary Man" that appears in Thomas Carlyle's 1840 essay "The Hero as Man of Letters." The lofty rhetoric of Carlyle's essay could certainly supply a source for both Brathwaite's recuperation of Africa and Naipaul's wish to break from the Caribbean. Carlyle writes that the "Man-of-Letters Hero" should be acknowledged as "our most important modern person" and "the soul of all."[245] I agree with Edmondson's proposal that male Caribbean writers at times implicitly reproduce some of the exclusionary ideals of the Victorian period. But Edmondson leaves unexamined a curious aspect of Brathwaite's barometer for achievement in literature: half of the "old fashioned" greats of the nineteenth century he names are women writers.

I therefore aim to re-trace the connection between the Victorian and the Caribbean that once so strongly characterized Brathwaite's assessment of the quality of Caribbean fiction. Brathwaite's linking of Victorian and Caribbean writing is rare only in its intensity; the epigraphs above underline how pairing the two traditions makes sense given the educational background of generations of Caribbean writers. But my way into the relationship of Victorian influence and Caribbean transformation is – as my criticism of Edmondson above suggests – also interested in a neglected consideration of gender. The links between British women writers such as the Brontë sisters on Caribbean novelists ranging from Jean Rhys to Jamaica Kincaid have been extensively studied yet male Caribbean authors were deeply steeped in this canon as well.[246] Brathwaite's comments in "Roots" after all cite a diverse range of writers: he places Jane Austen and George Eliot alongside Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy. I single out Eliot for two reasons.

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[244] It is important to note that Brathwaite does not praise Naipaul without qualms. The *BIM* edition of "Roots" concludes with what Brathwaite calls a "final twist": he quotes the passage from Naipaul's *The Middle Passage* where the novelist writes about being "awakened by a nightmare that I was back in tropical Trinidad" while in England. See "Roots," 21.

[245] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), 184.

First, Eliot's writing actually challenges assumptions of being either "a bore," as Kincaid suggests of nineteenth-century novels, or "old fashioned" as Brathwaite uses as grounds for praise. Such caricatures are unfortunately difficult to completely disassociate with the Victorian period, and they implicitly contribute to the attractiveness of avant-garde modernist literature as a practical model for the often anti-colonial politics of Caribbean writers. But *Daniel Deronda* (1876), Eliot's last novel and the one I examine in this chapter, offers enough measured instances of both attention to the complex impact of colonialism within Britain and narratorial asides on the dangers of racialized violence in the Caribbean to disrupt Gayatri Spivak's famous claim that nineteenth-century British literature writ large helped to legitimate and fortify the imperial mission.[247] Such ambivalence did more than shape the content of *Daniel Deronda*. Eliot's reluctance to either champion or condemn imperialism, as I hope to show, also explains in part why she accorded the arts such a rich, layered, and almost utopic role in the novel.

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[246] Maryse Condé, the author from Guadeloupe, has even shown fascination with Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. See Maryse Condé, *Windward Heights* (New York: Soho Press, 2003).

[247] I refer to Spivak's famous prescription, "It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English." With such a link in mind, Spivak wishes to imply a mutually reinforcing relationship between imperialism and literature. See Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 243.

Eliot's attitude toward Britain's colonial projects was not straightforward; critics such as Nancy Henry, Alicia Carroll, and Tim Watson have responded to postcolonial readings of the Victorian novelist. Henry argues for the relevancy of biographical criticism in reconstructing Eliot's opinions on Britain's colonies. She highlights how Eliot's two stepsons expatriated to South Africa as young men to find work; such familial links, Henry argues, signal how empire was often a practical financial matter despite its reputation within recent cultural history as a stage for British power.[248] Carroll meanwhile examines the instability of Eliot's representations of the other. In *Daniel Deronda* alone, for example, Eliot stages a "sexual stalemate" between the Jewish title character and the English Gwendolen Harleth even as the German Jewish Klesmer marries the aristocratic Catherine Arrowpoint without raising many eyebrows. Carroll stresses how the sexualized aspects of Orientalism are much more complex in Eliot's work than foundational postcolonial criticism lets on.[249] Elsewhere, Watson turns his attention to the West Indies to problematize postcolonial assumptions about Eliot. He examines how Eliot's *Felix Holt* (1866) surprisingly engages debates around race and genealogy raised by the Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica during 1865 despite how the novel is set during Britain's Reform Act of 1832.[250] I share the desire of these Victorian critics to reread Eliot in the light of some of postcolonialism's overdetermined claims. But I am also interested in exploring how such re-readings in turn enable us to recognize some neglected points of convergence between Victorian and twentieth-century anglophone Caribbean novels.

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[248] Nancy Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Henry explains, "My analysis of the local details in Eliot's life and writing suggests that 'imperialist ideology' is a term that not only fails to describe but actually misdescribes the complex relationship between nineteenth-century authors, their works, and the British empire." See Henry, *George Eliot, and the British Empire*, 114. I will engage more with Henry's frustration with postcolonialism below.

[249] Alicia Carroll, *Dark Smiles: Race and Desire in George Eliot* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 16.

[250] Watson, *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World, 1780 - 1870*, 173 – 186.

Second, looking to Eliot provides a framework for a history of the novel that becomes transformed in the hands of a Caribbean writer such as Lamming. The rise of anglophone Caribbean modernism, particularly within the study of poetry, has skewed critics' attention to another Eliot – T.S. Eliot. Charles Pollard's *New World Modernisms* argues that Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott, despite the former's explicit experimentation and the latter's Nobel Prize-winning verse, both draw upon T.S. Eliot's project of making cultural fragments cohere.[251] In the realm of the novel, however, detailed comparative studies of Caribbean writers and their educationally-imposed canonical interlocutors are lacking. Such a gap in part proceeds from the proclamations of Caribbean writers themselves, particularly in Lamming's case. *The Pleasures of Exile,* his book of critical prose published in 1960, has been more frequently cited and studied than any of his six novels: it logs 548 citations according to Google Scholar. His first novel *In the Castle of My Skin*, by contrast, has been cited 341 times in comparison to only 49 citations for *Season of Adventure*. In *The Pleasures of Exile*'s famous chapter "The Occasion for Speaking," Lamming places Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Austen, and George Eliot in a "tabernacle of dead names" that limits Caribbean writers' ideas of history and achievement (27).[252] By contrast, Lamming argues that American authors such as Herman Melville and Mark

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[251] See Charles W. Pollard, *New World Modernisms: T. S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004). Matthew Hart has also studied Brathwaite's and Eliot's poetry together. See Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 106 – 141.

[252] George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960; repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 27. Further citations appear parenthetically in text.

Twain offer more aesthetic utility, "particularly in the aspect of idiom," to his generation of Caribbean novelists (29). Scholars thus increasingly turn to exploring the links between the U.S. and Caribbean literary culture.[253]

The Pleasures of Exile may comprise a loose collection of essays that seem to fragment in the vein of modernism into journal entries toward its conclusion yet I am more concerned with the content rather than the form of Lamming's remarks in his famous book.[254] Lamming in the introduction positions the text as a dialogue between himself and readers. "[A]ny method of presentation may be used," Lamming explains – with one exception. "Don't tell lies," he asserts (12). I understand such parameters as inadvertently realist in the sense established by nineteenth-century British literature, which I will explain below. One of Lamming's most passionate remarks in *The Pleasures of Exile* involves his praise of what Caribbean novelists have done for the region's peasantry via realism. He commends writers such as Sam Selvon and Roger Mais for rendering the Caribbean peasant "a living existence, living in silence and joy and fear, involved in riot and carnival" (39). Lamming opposes the sensitivities of these authors to the profit motives of governments, educators, and businesses who see peasants only as "a cheap source of labour" (39). This is surely a romanticization of the relationship between artists and peasants, and it has generated much debate within Caribbean literary studies.[255] But Lamming's vision of the possibilities of art to humanize a class of society through rich yet realistic representation also unwittingly harkens back to the "tabernacle of dead names" he sought to distance himself from only pages earlier in *The Pleasures of Exile*.

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[253] See Harvey R. Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) and Belinda Edmondson, *Caribbean Middlebrow: Leisure Culture and the Middle Class* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[254] Raphael Dalleo suggests Lamming's style "degenerates" when *The Pleasures of Exile* recounts the writer's experience living in Harlem because of the onslaught of "city-space" technologies such as skyscrapers and constant stimulation. See Dalleo, *Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere: From the Plantation to the Postcolonial* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 164.

[255] Gordon Rohlehr famously criticized Lamming's work as an essayist in "The Folk in Caribbean Literature," *Tapia* 2, no. 11 (December 17, 1972): 7 – 8, 13 – 14. For an overview of debates around "the folk," see Christian Campbell, "'Folking up the Criticism': The Politics of

Lamming's laudatory comments on Caribbean novelists' representations of peasants in fact read as a condensed version of one of Eliot's famous outlines of realism, a literary mode that seeks to depict things as they are. Eliot's fiction was central to the development of realism.[256] But she is also inextricably linked to the aesthetic practice for revealing the very fictionality of realism. Her first novel *Adam Bede* (1859) contains a chapter titled "In Which the Story Pauses a Little." This interruption allows Eliot's narrator to promote the difficult task of "the faithful representing of commonplace things," a practice that would generate art that ultimately cultivates sympathy for the subjects portrayed.[257] Eliot described this brand of careful realism at more length – and more politically – in her earlier essay "The Natural History of German Life" (1856), a review of the works of the German journalist and novelist Wilhelm Riehl. She criticizes conventional depictions of peasants merely enjoying life and bristles at how "the typical moment to represent a man in a smock-frock is when he is cracking a joke and showing a row of sound teeth." Eliot calls such "unreality" a detriment to the role of art, particularly if the painter or novelist has moral aims.[258] Later in the essay, she even makes a claim that would feel at home in *The Pleasures of Exile* – that "a wise social policy must be based not simply on abstract social

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'the Folk' in Caribbean Discourse," in *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 383 – 392.

[256] Raymond Williams points out that "realism" was a new term in the nineteenth century and that it was first used in the 1830s in France and then in the 1850s in Britain. See Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1976), 258.

[257] George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 162.

[258] George Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life," in *The Essays of George Eliot* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), 143, 144. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

science, but on the natural history of social bodies" (168). The kind of peasant characters embodying silence, joy, and fear that Lamming praised in his contemporaries' works – and drew in his own novels – therefore had a Victorian advocate in Eliot's manifesto for art.

I even propose that Eliot's careful yet passionate guidelines for representing the peasantry does more justice to Lamming's intricate conception of that social class within his fiction than his own critical prose. Eliot contends, "[a] system which disregards the traditions and hereditary attachments of the peasant…is simply disintegrating and ruinous to the peasant character" (158). Eliot, the daughter of a mill owner in rural Warwickshire, England, takes issue with visual and prose representations of the peasantry that posit "idyllic" and "jocund" images of ploughmen, shepherds, and villagers (143). Eliot's essay of course has a prescriptive attitude: she still participates in policing what counts as the peasantry when she critiques sentimental representations. But her acknowledgement of how the peasantry maintain practices that the tools of government policy fail to understand or even recognize offers a crucial point about the purpose of fiction that Lamming fleshes out in *Season of Adventure*, the novel he published the same year as *The Pleasures of Exile*.

Eliot and Lamming are thus worth aligning for their similarly self-conscious projects of practicing a radical realism. I mean "radical" in terms of a careful attempt to convey why such fictionalized representations matter at all, rather than "radical" in the sense of a suspicion toward any correspondence between representation and what is represented. I focus on Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Lamming's *Season of Adventure* (1960). The novels dramatically differ in terms of geographical setting and historical context. Eliot's novel takes place in fictional and actual Italian and German cities, as well as in London and a country region she calls Wessex, a place and time ripe with symbolic connotations. Wessex was an Anglo-Saxon kingdom in Britain prior to the development of an English state in the tenth century; it thereby represents a kind of nostalgic nationalism even though Eliot's novel only names it in *Daniel Deronda*'s early chapters. The plot's unfolding from 1864 to 1866 carries distinct associations as well. The years signal the only time Eliot sets a novel amid recent events rather than during prior centuries or much earlier in the nineteenth century. The narrator and the large cast of characters thus refer to events ranging from the 1865 uprising of Afro-Jamaicans in Morant Bay to the Battle of Sadowa in 1866 during the Austro-Prussian War. Yet Jewishness emerges as Eliot's central intellectual concern amid her final novel's simultaneously expansive scope and textured specificity. Her title character is an empathetic and ambiguously "exceptional" young man who ostensibly lost his parents as a child. The English gentleman Sir Hugo Mallinger thus raises Daniel, whose "curly head" and handsome face suggests a noble spirituality that the novel delves deeper into as it also charts the fate of the spoiled Englishwoman Gwendolen Harleth.[259]

Lamming's novel meanwhile unfolds in the imaginary Caribbean island of San Cristobal amid the early era of independence from colonial power during the 1960s. The author links locales ranging from Jamaica's Morant Bay to Haiti's Pétionville as he imagines how the middle class of the island reproduces the prejudices of colonialism – particularly in its denial of an African past – and essentially sustains a neocolonial order. *Season of Adventure*'s ambitious political scope departs from the autobiographical aspects of Lamming's earlier novels such as *In the Castle of My Skin* and *The Emigrants*; in fact, his fourth novel has been called both "his most realistic, least experimental in form" and "prophetic" for anticipating the struggles many

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[259] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876; repr., New York: Penguin, 2008), 164. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

Caribbean islands would face with political independence from the U.K. later in the 1960s.[260] Lamming wrote the novel in Ghana with the support of a Guggenheim award in the late 1950s. A recuperation of African connections thus underlies *Season of Adventure*'s plot, where tension builds as the middle class young woman Fola discovers her desire for what the novel calls a "backward glance" to the past from which she been alienated.

Yet both *Daniel Deronda* and *Season of Adventure* in spite of their immediate differences stage searches for parental origins that constantly refer to the arts, particularly music. Many of the characters in Eliot's novel, including the eponymous Daniel and the complementary protagonist Gwendolen, are compared to actual paintings and demonstrate some level of singing ability. The roles of visual art and music in Eliot's fiction in general and *Daniel Deronda* in particular have been treated to ample study from Victorian critics.[261] My contribution involves showing how the way Eliot essentially makes *Daniel Deronda* a multimedia novel through its references to and uses of other arts unexpectedly yet intimately links the novel to Lamming's *Season of Adventure*. Musicians and visual artists also populate Lamming's novel: steel drum bands are outlawed by a neocolonial political order, and Chiki, a drummer as well as a painter, keeps his canvasses away from the public eye. Perhaps most importantly, *Season of Adventure* opens with a powerful scene set during a spiritual ritual that enables the living to dialogue with the dead. This theatrical ceremony enables Fola, a middle class young woman, to question her upbringing's "aesthetic denial" of blackness and form a coalition with members of San Cristobal's steel drum bands (94).[262] The "season of adventure" named in the novel's title therefore involves layers of aesthetic acceptance relating to blackness.

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[260] Brown, *Migrant Modernism*, 86; Gordon Rohlehr, "Possession as Metaphor: Lamming's Season of Adventure," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 5, no. 1–2 (August 1992): 13.

[261] These include Shirley Frank Levenson, "The Use of Music in Daniel Deronda," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 24, no. 3 (December 1969): 317–34; Hugh Witemeyer, *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Mary Burgan, "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," *Victorian Studies* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 1986): 51–76; Delia da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and John M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

But it is not the mere fact that Eliot and Lamming underline the role of music in their fictional worlds that make *Daniel Deronda* and *Season of Adventure* worthy of comparison. I argue that Eliot and Lamming defer to music in order to unromanticize the course of history and critique the commodification of art on one hand and contemplate art's relationship to the state on the other. That both novels conclude in arguably open-ended ways furthermore presses readers to make the connection between fiction and material reality. Realism in these particular novels thus boils down to foregrounding the arts to underline the interpenetration of creative and political life. Of course, the idea that a Caribbean writer invested in making sense of colonialism's afterlife such as Lamming has political aims in his fiction is not a remarkable claim. What is illuminating and important, however, lies in how *Season of Adventure* resuscitates rather than discards a Victorian strain of realism to envision its aesthetic politics. Reading Lamming as an interlocutor of Victorian realism furthermore allows us to re-familiarize ourselves with the aesthetic-political complexity of an "old fashioned" novelist such as Eliot.

I. Feeling the Arts: Sympathy and Connection Through Realism

The typical way into George Eliot's final novel *Daniel Deronda* from a perspective interested in the Caribbean is through a luncheon scene at an English country home that brings together the title character and Gwendolen Harleth for the first time since their fleeting encounter in the opening chapter at a roulette table in Germany.[263] I quote a paragraph from this scene in its entirety below because it showcases the roles of music in characterization and affiliation:

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[262] George Lamming, *Season of Adventure* (1960; repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 94. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

> '*I* found it a bore when I began to lose,' said Gwendolen. Her face was turned toward Grandcourt as she smiled and spoke, but she gave a sidelong glance at Deronda, and saw his eyes fixed on her with a look so gravely penetrating that it had a keener edge for her than his ironical smile at her losses – a keener edge than Klesmer's judgment. She wheeled her neck round as if she wanted to listen to what was being said by the rest, while she was only thinking of Deronda. His face had that disturbing kind of form and expression which threatens to affect opinion – as if one's standard was somehow wrong. (Who has not seen men with faces of this corrective power till they frustrated it by speech or action?) His voice, heard now for the first time, was to Grandcourt's toneless drawl, which had been in her ears every day, as the deep notes of a violoncello to the broken discourse of poultry and other lazy gentry in the afternoon sunshine. Grandcourt, she inwardly conjectured, was perhaps right in saying that Deronda thought too much of himself: – a favorite way of explaining a superiority that humiliates. However the talk turned on the rinderpest and Jamaica, and no more was said about roulette. Grandcourt held that the Jamaica negro was a beastly sort of baptist Caliban; Deronda said he had always felt a little with Caliban, who naturally had his own point of view and could sing a good song; Mrs. Davilow observed that her father had an estate in Barbadoes, but that she herself had never been in the West Indies; Mrs. Torrington was sure she should never sleep in her bed if she lived among blacks; her husband corrected her by saying that the blacks would be manageable enough if it were not for the half-breeds; and Deronda remarked that the whites had to thank themselves for the half-breeds. (331)

Critics have read this scene in several ways: as evidence of how specifically Eliot weaved recent historical events such as Jamaica's 1865 Morant Bay uprising and the rinderpest into the novel, as a staging of a spectrum of English attitudes toward black colonial subjects, and as one of many examples of Daniel's empathy for others.[264] But the first half of the paragraph is crucial as well; it shows the narrator contrasting Gwendolen's assessment of Daniel and Grandcourt, her two potential romantic interests, in terms of their voices' musical symbolism. Grandcourt, who Gwendolen will eventually marry in order to secure financial stability for herself and her widowed mother, has a voice akin to a "toneless drawl." We learned earlier in the novel that Grandcourt's physical appearance had disappointed Gwendolen: his head featured "extensive baldness" and his posture "inclined rather to the flaccid" (111). But these unremarkable characteristics end up belying the domineering Grandcourt that emerges once married to Gwendolen because, contrary to his lazy speech and limp demeanor, he aggressively polices his wife's actions. In fact, the novel's narrator will later on suggest that Grandcourt's brutishness would suit his ability "to govern a difficult colony" (594). Grandcourt's commentary on Jamaican blacks as a "beastly sort" therefore helps establish an irony that only becomes clear as the novel unfolds further: *he* is the beast, which the narrator presciently registered in the lazy, heartless sound of his voice.

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[263] See Watson, *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World, 1780 - 1870*, 165. Laura Callanan also uses *Daniel Deronda*'s luncheon scene to call attention to how such moments "signal the power of representations of racial conflict to figuratively spark and contain a collection of ideas, positions, and attitudes about race in Victorian culture." See Callanan, *Deciphering Race: White Anxiety, Racial Conflict, and the Turn to Fiction in Mid-Victorian English Prose* (Ohio State University Press, 2006), 8.

[264] Rinderpest, which comes from the German for "cattle plague," is an outbreak of infectious disease among cows. Britain experienced a major plague among cattle in late 1865. For more on Daniel's empathy, see Thomas Albrecht, "'The Balance of Separateness and Communication':

The musicality of Daniel's voice meanwhile reveals the novel's interest in positioning music as a medium for empathy and possibly even a better social order. Commentators have read Eliot's immersion in German philosophers such as Feuerbach and Hegel, who exult music as the purest means of expression, into her fiction.[265] The narrator describing Daniel's voice to Gwendolen's ear as comparable to "the deep notes of a violoncello" therefore indicates an attraction as resonant and moving as listening to music. Yet the novel goes beyond describing Daniel in musical terms to illustrate his admirable qualities; Daniel himself also positions music

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Cosmopolitan Ethics in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*," *ELH* 79, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 389–416.

[265] Levenson, "The Use of Music in Daniel Deronda," 319; Burgan, "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," 73; and Alison Byerly, *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134.

as a way to make connections with even the ostensibly most different of people: the Calibans of Jamaica.

The racial and musical politics of the luncheon scene show that Daniel is crucially the only character who sympathizes with "the Jamaican negro." Mrs. Torrington expresses a fear of sexual violence if she were to be in the West Indies among blacks, and her husband argues that the "half-breeds" are the truly recalcitrant group. Daniel meanwhile reminds his English companions that individuals of mixed race exist because of white desire. Such measured thinking about race of course emerges from Daniel's own racial ambiguity throughout the novel. His otherworldly "seraphic" appearance as a young boy matures into a "terrestrial and manly" face with "pale-brown skin" (186). Daniel's admission that he always "felt a little with Caliban" because of his ability to both think for himself and "sing a good song" makes for one of the novel's most complex moments regarding race and empire. On one hand, Daniel's praise of Caliban's singing abilities seems reminiscent of the exhibition of blacks for European anthropological entertainment earlier in the nineteenth century. In 1810, for example, Sarah Baartman – better known as the "Hottentot Venus" – was taken from South Africa for exhibition in London.[266] The singing abilities Daniel associates with Caliban also link to minstrel shows that were popular throughout Britain and the U.S. at the time.

But the ability to sing well also signals precious cultural capital within the milieu Eliot creates in the novel. As Delia da Sousa Correa has argued, the music Daniel associates with Caliban functions as Eliot's way of showcasing the advanced civilized status of colonized blacks rather than suggesting their subhuman status.[267] Indeed, as other critics have remarked, the distribution of talents throughout the novel suggests that Eliot sees Victorian society as bereft of meaningful musical ability and German, Jewish, and black individuals as possessing remarkable skill.[268] One of the primary ways the novel indicates Gwendolen's superficiality, for example, involves emphasis on her lack of musical talent. Julian Klesmer, a musician and, as a mix of "the German, the Sclave and the Semite," a racial other, informs Gwendolen that her choice of a Belini aria highlights "a form of melody which expresses a puerile state of culture" even though she sings it in tune. Klesmer goes further and says such melodies possess "no cries of deep, mysterious passion – no conflict – no sense of the universal" (47). This dynamic between Klesmer and Gwendolen – the foreign other working as the gatekeeper for musical ability within Britain – extends to the luncheon scene where the subject of Afro-Jamaicans dominate the conversation. Daniel's assessment of Caliban's "good song" ultimately suggests the cross-cultural resonance of Jamaican musical ability even if the phenomena of colonial exhibits and racist minstrel shows haunt the history of performance and race. The luncheon scene thus offers a concentrated instance of music's ability to politically connect similarly outcast individuals – in this case, Daniel, a parentless young man striving to become an Englishman, and the population of Afro-Jamaicans who lie beyond the scope of the novel's immediate setting. Daniel and the

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[266] For more on Baartman as spectacle, see Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 268 – 287. Vivian Nun Halloran takes up the issue of exhibition from a Caribbean perspective in *Exhibiting Slavery: The Caribbean Postmodern Novel as Museum* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

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[267] Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture*, 142.

[268] See Levenson, "The Use of Music in Daniel Deronda," 317 and Burgan, "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," 75. Byerly suggests that *Daniel Deronda*'s division of musical talent points to how music might be a "possible redeemer" of British culture, while Sander Gilman argues that Eliot equips the Jewish characters with musical skill in an effort to humanize them. See Byerly, *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 143 and Gilman, "Are Jew Musical? Historical Notes on the Question of Jewish Musical Modernism and Nationalism," *Modern Judaism* 28, no. 3 (October 2008): 242.

"Calibans" in Jamaica may never cross paths yet the symbolism Eliot accords to music allows her realist novel to produce an almost utopian portrayal of racial affiliation.

The sympathetic, connective, and realist powers of music evoked in the luncheon scene also play a direct role in *Daniel Deronda*'s plot of Jewish self-discovery. Daniel's fateful rescue of Mirah Lapidoth on the Thames, a scene also driven by the force of music, compels him to learn more about her religion. He therefore stops in a synagogue while traveling through Frankfort, Germany. The function of music in this scene occurs more powerfully at the level of the novel's action rather than through the narrator's configuration of character in the luncheon conversation. Alison Byerly has studied the roles of visual art, theater, and music in Eliot's fiction, and she proposes that a hierarchy among these arts ultimately emerges. Byerly suggests that visual art oversimplifies reality, theater promotes deception, and music offers an ineffably truthful means of representation, at least in general across Eliot's work. But Byerly singles out music as "the one art that never appears in her novels as a metaphor for novel writing."[269] I propose that Daniel's moment in the synagogue goes beyond metaphor to show the implications of realist representation for lived experience. Hearing the chants of Hebrew liturgy and observing the "devotional swaying" of bodies within "the very commonness of the building" enables Daniel to apprehend "one expression of a binding history, tragic and yet glorious" (367 – 368). Daniel's experience in the synagogue prompts a profound curiosity in Jewishness that will evolve over the course of the novel into his full dedication to the faith.

The synagogue scene also offers a concrete example of the transformative possibilities of a thoughtfully rendered "natural history of social bodies" that Eliot promoted in her 1856 essay on Riehl. The moment functions as a commentary on novel writing and the arts in general in a cohesive rather interruptive way. The beginning of Chapter 17 of *Adam Bede* "pauses a little" to reflect on representation. The narrator there lay outs realist guidelines by underlining the difficulty of depicting "a real unexaggerated lion" in contrast to the "delightful facility in drawing a griffin" (160). The project involved in the former is difficult, the narrator suggests, because it requires careful observation and sympathy for the ordinary. Eliot's narrator in *Daniel Deronda* directly folds a similar message into Daniel's experience in the synagogue. Attention to the "shabbiness of the scene" and the liturgy's rather banal "transitions of litany, lyric, proclamation, dry statement, and blessing" resists making a spectacle out of the synagogue (367). Yet the depiction of – and realization that – these ordinary qualities *are* ordinary is also what makes the experience meaningful for Daniel. Music during the luncheon conversation enabled Daniel to imagine common ground with Afro-Jamaicans. Observing music in action during the synagogue visit allows Daniel and readers alike to grasp the relationship between creative expression and life. Daniel's witnessing of a routine exercise in devotion offers the novel a way to invite readers to appreciate an existence informed by the interconnection of the expressive, the historical, and the embodied.

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[269] Byerly, *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 106 – 107.

Lamming's *Season of Adventure* similarly foregrounds music as both a language of pure communication and a purposeful device for the realist novel. Unlike *Daniel Deronda*, however, Lamming's novel immediately inserts readers into the world of expressive sounds. Mary Lou Emery has noted that Lamming "places art at the center of political change" in *Season of Adventure* yet restricts her study to the novel's moments of vision. Sounds cultures in the Caribbean, Emery claims, receive a surfeit of analysis.[270] But it is difficult to bracket Lamming's investment in music when *Season of Adventure*'s opening paragraph shuts down vision with the blackness of night in order to enhance the force of music:

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[270] Mary Lou Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

> Beyond the horizon of the trees it was too black to see the sky. But the music was there, loud as gospel to a believer's ears. It was the music of Steel Drums, hard, strident and clear: a muscled current of sound swept high over the *tonelle*. The women's voices followed, chanting a chorus of faiths that would soon astonish the night. They sang in order to resurrect the dead. (11)

The scene that unfolds over the next two chapters offers an extended complement to Eliot's depiction of Daniel in the Frankfort synagogue. It shows a ritual brought to San Cristobal from West Africa yet transformed throughout centuries of local adaptation: the living and the dead reconcile as drumming, singing, and dancing fill a secluded rural area called the *tonelle*. A priest called the *Houngan* facilitates a dialogue where the dead speak with the living regarding matters that were unsettled upon the former's passing. "A wife may have to say why she refused to love her husband," or "a husband may have to say why he deprived his wife of their children's affection," as Lamming explains more directly in *The Pleasures of Exile* (9). Only after this challenging conversation may the dead exist in death peacefully, while the living might gain an opportunity for changing the course of their future.

Lamming's portrayal of this ceremony works for both readers and Fola, the novel's protagonist, as a transformative engagement with San Cristobal's peasants. Powell and Crim, two drummers, spot Fola in the *tonelle* to observe the ceremony and immediately mark her as out of place. "'[E]ducation an' class just twist that girl mouth right out o' shape,'" Powell sneers (21). Powell and Crim furthermore scoff at Fola for coming to the *tonelle* with a white "stranger man," her teacher Charlot (21). The triangulation of these three parties – a light-skinned middle class young woman, a set of black musicians frustrated with the vacuity of the educated class, and a European with academic insight into the island's history – offers a cross-section of a newly independent Caribbean nation mired in competing visions for the future. Placing them all within the *tonelle* allows Lamming to trouble the assumption that the ceremony will function in the novel as an idealization of peasant culture. Eliot emphasized the "shabbiness of the scene" and the "commonness of the building" in *Daniel Deronda*'s synagogue scene, and Lamming likewise portrays the ceremony as ordinary rather than exotic. The *Houngan*, Charlot notes, will even attend Mass at the Catholic Church the next morning, and no one in San Cristobal would see the black priest's presence at both the *tonelle* and an institutionalized church as a paradox.

The *tonelle* ceremony's attention to the relationship between the living and the dead facilitates Lamming's way into the politically urgent matter of the state of the arts in San Cristobal. The muscular sounds of the drums compel Powell and Crim to remember Jack o'Lantern, a fellow drummer who murdered a constable for confiscating his drum. Jack o'Lantern's final words before facing death by hanging were, "'I don't care who make the country's laws if they let me make the country's music'" (20). The sound of the drums from the *tonelle* rise in intensity and cause leaves, rocks, and water to pulse while Powell and Crim reflect on their murdered friend. These elements create an informal ceremony of communication with the dead alongside the *Houngan*'s ritual. Crim even repeats Jack o'Lantern's last words to memorialize his friend's defiant politics, and Powell cries "freedom tears" (21). Powell and Crim's conversation amid the sound of the drums and the movement of the earth reveal the layers and stakes of music in San Cristobal. The drums on one hand allow Powell and Crim to connect with their executed friend; at the same time, such remembrance emphasizes how an evocatively primeval aspect of the island's culture has been subjected to violent regulation in the guise, ironically, of modern political independence. Lamming's interest in depicting these musicians' political and emotional investments in their art overshadows the romanticization of the drums' power over the earth. This scene shows that music is certainly an ancient force in the world yet it is ultimately the people who create such music that are vulnerable to the brutal reality of political inference. That Lamming shows Powell and Crim paying thoughtful tribute to a murdered peer also links back to both his and Eliot's manifestos for realism with regard to the depiction of the peasantry: it is moving and unexpected to see Powell weep when, in the scene prior, he was making lewd jokes about a woman's body.

Eliot's and Lamming's respective novels thus highlight how music and its associated rituals have been central to the marginalization of groups ranging from Germans and Jews in England to the Afro-Caribbean majority in San Cristobal. It may seem reductive that both authors underline a reconnection with traditional music in order to orient individuals and society at large toward meaningful spiritual lives. But Eliot's and Lamming's radical realism lies in how music is not simply an ideal or a symbol within their representational worlds; rather, their foregrounding of music as both practice and profession helps the authors reveal and critique their societies' vacuous mores. Daniel first suspects the devalued role of music in English society as a boy. Daniel's aristocratic caretaker Sir Hugo Malinger cultivates his already gifted singing talent with lessons yet the boy is taken aback when his father figure asks him if he aspires to one day work as a famous vocalist. The boy feels hurt at the suggestion of this career path: if his upbringing under Sir Hugo has been about preparation for the position of an English gentleman, Daniel wonders why he is being imagined in a profession associated with continental European others. In *Season of Adventure*, Powell and Crim reflect on San Cristobal's independent status and how they had hoped the end of colonial rule would entail a restoration of "all that wipin' out" that an imported education instilled. Instead, independence ushered in policing of the steel drum bands and an influx of American cultural products such as Coca-Cola, which Crim calls "overseas water" that turns children's urine into a rainbow (19). Eliot and Lamming alike recognize how music and the arts are, like Coca-Cola, after all commodities in addition to ineffably meaningful creative practices.

II. Realism and Valuing Art

The commodification of art reveals another layer of realism alongside *Daniel Deronda*'s and *Season of Adventure*'s interests in the spiritual significance of music. Lamming, who left Barbados for London to cultivate his writing career in 1950, knows all too well how creative products are enmeshed within larger economic realities. He once compared the BBC, which broadcasted readings of Caribbean poetry and fiction from London to the West Indian islands, to a sugar refinery that takes "raw material" from Caribbean and sends it back for consumption.[271] Music may supply an almost sacred interface with tradition and spirituality yet Lamming recognizes how art at large is also often subjected to harsh marketplaces.

Lamming moreover acknowledges the exploitative vulnerability of culture itself within historically fetishized places such as the Caribbean. The *tonelle* scene in *Season of Adventure* as discussed above enables profound moments of connection for the musicians Powell and Crim. Yet the presence of Charlot, a European teacher at the island's prestigious all-girls school, allows Lamming to express his ambivalence toward the intellectual commodification of the Caribbean. It is Charlot after all who brings his student Fola to the *tonelle*, and his blow-by-blow explanation of the ceremony as it unfolds highlights how he might understand the ritual on the level of textbook knowledge yet still ultimately fail to meaningfully connect with it. Lamming keenly anchors Charlot's background within the institution of English education in spite of his mixed lineage of French, Chinese, Spanish, and Jewish. Charlot is essentially in San Cristobal in a roving, privileged attempt to “re-form his tastes by notions of adventure in a foreign place” (27). But Lamming proposes that Charlot’s position as an academic buccaneer also has strategic advantages. Witnessing the ceremony in the *tonelle* launches Fola’s journey of questioning her middle class ignorance of San Cristobal’s past. It is certainly suspect that a white man initiates Fola into such knowledge, but the course of the novel underlines that the community of drummers that the young woman befriends ultimately sustain her spiritual education. Intellectual commodification of San Cristobal’s performance culture thus benefits the individuals of the island who need it most: the middle class that is more likely initially to listen to an European figurehead than a local peasant.

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[271] George Lamming, "Texas Dialogues," in *Conversations: George Lamming - Essays, Addresses and Interviews, 1953-1990* (London: Karia Press, 1992), 62.

But *Season of Adventure* makes it difficult to confidently point to a local peasant culture at all. Lamming might have come under fire for positioning the Caribbean peasantry as an aesthetic commodity for novelists in *The Pleasures of Exile* yet his fiction tells a more nuanced story. *Season of Adventure*’s Chiki at first glance seems like an archetypal peasant character; readers are introduced to him as someone who calls home “any place where a man has found and where he does his work” (187). But Chiki has a fascinating background: he is a painter who was expelled from the island’s boys’ college for interrupting the British Prime Minister’s visit with a brash sign supporting labor unions. Chiki’s present circumstances living on the Forest Reserve, a rural meeting place for the steel drum bands, thus belie how he has actually moved between classes via his education.

Lamming also uses Chiki to introduce an Eliotic dialogue between the arts within the novel. Chiki reflects on the ostensible insufficiency of his visual art alongside the steel drum bands. His paintings, which showcase motion and “the blend of violent colors,” seem to him to lack the communicative power of music that he envies in the drumming talents of his friend Gort (230). “No artifice would help to transmute the sound of Fola’s voice, or the magic of Great Gort’s drum,” the narrator tells us from Chiki’s perspective (242). Chiki’s predicament suggests his anxieties about the role of art in San Cristobal. The drums occupy a central place within the island’s culture in spite of government regulation. But Chiki’s paintings seem to have no role in society; in fact, he keeps three of his large paintings as partitions within the privacy of his home. Each canvas depicts a biblical scene “transformed into an opposite vision” because of “gods he cannot call his own” (188). Chiki’s relationship to his art thus reads as a dramatization of the tension Caribbean artists face between roots that are often Afro-centric and peasant and a religious education that is Anglican and Christian. The paintings exist as a reminder to Chiki of how his life is “the same and separate from his work” – in other words, they are a genuine representation of his Afro-Anglican aesthetic. Yet Chiki’s art is devalued precisely because of what might be called its authenticity. The ironic tragedy of Chiki’s art lies in how his paintings cannot be commodified within San Cristobal simply because there is no market for them.

Chiki’s abilities as a painter play a crucial political role within San Cristobal later in the novel during a manhunt for the murderer of the island’s vice president. If the difficulty of his art makes his canvasses resist commodification, Chiki, in tandem with Fola, exploit the population’s disinterest in art by positioning one of his paintings as an ostensible portrait of the murderer. Fola, who does not know her paternity, tells her stepfather Piggott, who is Chief Commissioner of the island’s police force, that her father is responsible for killing the vice president. This disclosure shocks Piggott and the citizens of San Cristobal in general because Agnes, Fola’s mother, has always kept secret the identity of her daughter’s father. Readers thus know that Chiki’s painting is a ruse to send police forces on a wild goose chase and keep them away from the Forest Reserve, the world of the poor whose existence the government acknowledges only when it wants a scapegoat. The painting features a man with suspicious eyes; these eyes even appear to shift their glance depending on the light in which the image is viewed thanks to Chiki's skill for rendering movement.

The clamor that Chiki's strange painting compels offers an indictment of art that lacks realism. Chiki's unique biblical paintings are never exposed to an audience out of his fear that they would fail to forge connections in the same manner as steel drum music. His fake portrait of the vice president's murderer meanwhile becomes socially commodified: poster reproductions of it proliferate around the island in the name of vigilance. Lamming therefore points to how Caribbean society often misplaces the arts; creative productions only garner attention amid a violent crime. Mary Lou Emery reads San Cristobal's response to Chiki's portrait of the murderer as a democratization of art because it invites practices of looking that the population would otherwise not exercise.[272] This claim seems limited, however, because the looking that the citizens undertake is never critical: the strange painting is by design made to resemble every man and no man at all.

I propose that the crucial exercise of aesthetic looking could be understood to occur more urgently on the level of Lamming's rendering of Chiki rather than Chiki painting an ambiguous father. The author is deeply aware that his novels are at once commodities and representations of the Caribbean, and he communicates as such more clearly in his realist fiction than his critical prose. Where *The Pleasures of Exile* brushed with a romanticism that nearly veers into the reductive, *Season of Adventure* shows peasants as political actors – even when they purport not to be. Chiki returns to Forest Reserve after his expulsion from college and a period as a farm laborer in the United States. The latter experience physically deforms the painter, which suggests that the economic promise of America – like the colonial indoctrination of Britain – comes with forms of violence as well. Chiki's body and art alike therefore supply testaments to the brutality of a world – in this case, the Caribbean as figured through San Cristobal – that mostly pays heed to images that represent nothing. Lamming's novel thus has a moralizing politics that throws in relief his realism's resemblance to Eliot's aesthetic.

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[272] Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, 170.

There are no peasants in *Daniel Deronda* yet the novel similarly explores the amorphous parameters of class and the rampant commodification of the arts as well. Both Mirah and Daniel's mother, Leonora Halm-Eberstein, once worked in the entertainment industry, the former as a traveling performer at the behest of her exploitative father and the latter as a renowned opera singer. Mirah's father planned to sell her to a nobleman, which resonates with Chiki's bodily labor in the U.S., and Leonora pursues her musical talents at the expense of raising her son, a dynamic that inverts the disavowal of the arts critiqued for much of *Season of Adventure*. But the shifting fortunes of Gwendolen's livelihood – as comfortably middle-class as it might at first seem – allows Eliot to extend the ethos of her realism from the peasants she discussed in "The Natural History of German Life" to the glamorous heroine of her final novel.

The influential critic F.R. Leavis once proposed that *Daniel Deronda* requires "simple surgery" in order to jettison its title character and foreground Gwendolen's ostensibly more tragic story.[273] Such an extreme response speaks to how cumbersome and unsatisfying critics find Eliot's entwining of Daniel's and Gwendolen's stories; I mention it here as a way into the ups and downs of Gwendolen's life and how they resonate with Chiki's anxieties about artistic practice and marketplace commodification. Gwendolen's life takes turns that in some ways prefigure those we saw in Chiki's trajectory as a scholarship student removed from the Forest Reserve only to return there by choice. The novel early on recounts how her family's source of income in West Indian plantations is lost when the company Grapnell & Co. fails. She thus must turn to one of the conventional routes of income available to women during the Victorian period, which included either marrying a wealthy husband or taking up work as a governess. Like Chiki, then, Gwendolen exists tenuously between classes, a circumstance that in itself goes beyond the peasant realist ethos Eliot set out in the late 1850s.

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[273] F.R. Leavis, "Gwendolen Harleth," in *The Critic as Anti-Philosopher: Essays & Papers*, ed. G. Singh (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 66. As Terence Cave notes in his introduction to the Penguin edition of *Daniel Deronda*, a Jewish critic writing in 1899 – 1900 named Mordecai Ben Hillel Hacohen proposed extracting all the "Gentiles" out of the novel. See Cave, introduction to *Daniel Deronda*, by George Eliot (1876; repr., New York: Penguin, 2008), xvii.

But Gwendolen unlike Chiki lacks the kind of meaningful artistic talent that could position her as a political agent. Klesmer after all tells her it is "always acceptable to *see* you sing"; the suggestion of course is that hearing her voice is another matter (48, emphasis in original). The musician amplifies his assessment of Gwendolen's abilities when she comes to him for advice on pursuing a career as an actress to maintain a steady income. The conversation that unfolds emphasizes Gwendolen as a spoiled, privileged young woman unaccustomed to being told she cannot have want she wants. Artistic endeavors such as singing and playing the piano were always for Gwendolen decorative pastimes rather than serious pursuits, and Klesmer iterates as such to her throughout their conversation. He emphasizes the life of an artist with phrases and terms such as "inward vocation" and "unbroken discipline," as well as "training" and "instruction" (255, 256, 257). Gwendolen meanwhile feels her attractive appearance should provide her some leverage onto the stage; she recounts seeing two "quite ugly" actresses onstage in Paris and argues that her physical status as a "lady" rather than a "perfect fright" must supply advantages in the world of performance (259). Klesmer accelerates the conversation to its conclusion by telling Gwendolen that her concern with exteriors underlines how “we have here nothing to do with art” (260). Her entrepreneurial attitude toward profiting on her looks implies an insult to the profession of the artist for Klesmer. Gwendolen’s middle-class society might therefore be more discerning regarding the arts in comparison to Lamming’s San Cristobal: appearances, as Klesmer underlines, do not guarantee a stable, rewarding career.

But Lamming’s and Eliot’s novels level similar critiques of the artistic marketplace despite the specific contours of the societies they depict. Chiki’s talents as a painter remain within the realm of hobbyism because he feels his art has no place in San Cristobal. With the help of Fola, however, his portrait of a man thought to be a murderer supplies his art with a political yet sensationalized function. Eliot’s Gwendolen meanwhile may lack innate talent yet her willingness to parlay her appearance toward a self-supporting profession demonstrates a level of risk-taking that Chiki lacks. The representation of both Chiki’s and Gwendolen’s cases, however, involve their respective authors expanding the realist platforms they outline in their critical prose to comment on the relationship between art and society. Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile* promotes representations of the Caribbean peasantry “involved in riot and carnival” (39). Chiki, Powell, Gort, and Crim all exceed such romanticism. Chiki’s physical disfigurement from time as a migrant laborer alongside his perception that his art has little value in San Cristobal thus demonstrate a more complex realist vision of the peasantry on Lamming’s part as an author. In fact, Lamming’s realism in *Season of Adventure* aligns with and extends the one Eliot explains in “The Natural History of German Life.” Lamming invites not only sympathy for peasants such as Chiki, but also confusion and fear with regard to Powell, as I will discuss below with *Season of Adventure*’s famous Author’s Note.

Eliot's realism in *Daniel Deronda* also enlarges the parameters of sympathy the author had outlined in the late 1850s. "The Natural History of German Life" preoccupies itself with "representing the complex facts summed up in the collective term" evoked by phrases such as "the people" and "the peasantry." *Daniel Deronda* has long been called Eliot's most mystic and romantic novel for its expansiveness yet I propose that Gwendolen's struggles should be understood as the author expanding her sympathetic realism to another collective: the tenuously middle-class.[274] Klesmer's resistance to Gwendolen's pursuit of an acting career may suggest the integrity of the performing arts in English society that Chiki finds lacking in San Cristobal. But stepping back from Gwendolen's world and apprehending her tale as a novel in the hands of readers allows us to add another layer of crucial realism to Eliot's project of the social role of fiction's aesthetics.[275] Gwendolen's circumstance of feeling like "a mere speck" in the world after Grandcourt's death and Daniel's journey to the east reveals a realist tragedy of the middle class (803). Eliot highlights the grim realities of the artistic marketplace by showing Gwendolen's arc as she moves along from being unable to sell her looks in the acting world. Writing a novel that engages with the arts as a profession ultimately allows Eliot to both reflect upon and extend her practice of sympathetically drawing social bodies. Eliot's portrayal of Gwendolen's struggles as a mediocre singer underlines how entertainment in its various forms are ultimately cultural products as well as risky career endeavors. She thus exports the moral edge with which she criticized representations of jolly peasants in "The Natural History of

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[274] Robert Edward Francillon's contemporary review of the novel, for example, characterizes the work as Eliot's shift from the realism of her prior narratives to the realm of romance. See David Carroll, ed. *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), 382 – 398.

[275] John Lurz literally considers *Daniel Deronda* as an object in readers' hands in his essay, "The Memory of the Book: The Particular Bodies of *Daniel Deronda*," *Novel* 46, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 438–52.

German Life" to the world of the middle class with Gwendolen's rather sad narrative. The various emotions of those who do not toil in the fields, Eliot stresses via Gwendolen's ups and downs, also become distorted in the artistic marketplace without sympathetic portrayals.

But it is the Author's Note in *Season of Adventure* that most urgently presses the issue of the artistic marketplace by occupying a distinctly self-critical middle ground between the interruptive realism of *Adam Bede* and the carefully class-conscious one of "The Natural History of German Life." This approximately three-page incursion occurs at the end of Chapter 14, when the drummer Powell nearly kills Fola with a knife. His "fury of hatred" during the confrontation signals his disbelief in the idea that the middle class, represented by Fola, can offer a path to meaningful independence (320). The Author's Note supplies a plot point – Powell is the vice president's murderer – but it more importantly reflects on the novel's central concerns of class, creative work, and social responsibility. The authorial voice in it is not Lamming himself; instead, it is an individual who identifies himself as Powell's brother, which distinguishes it from the narrator's pause in Eliot's *Adam Bede*. The fictional author describes himself as "a peasant by birth, a colonial by education, and a traitor by instinct" (330). Similar to Chiki, then, the author has moved between classes. The author reveals another similarity to Chiki as the Note goes on: he feels that neither "historians and analysts" nor "novelists and poets" can fully probe "the truth of Powell's defeat," or why a beloved drummer would turn to a sudden act of violent crime (330, 331). The author acknowledges the limits of the medium he chooses by paradoxically underlining its flexibility, for the novel ultimately accommodates his note.

But the author's disclosure that a scholarship took him out of the peasant world and away from Powell's side also underlines the guilt he feels in using the novel form at all. Indeed, the author even takes responsibility for his brother's turn to crime. The Note concludes with the author disclosing how he has never felt himself "to be an honest part of anything" since his childhood world with Powell (332). This might be interpreted cynically: *Season of Adventure*'s fictional author turns out to question his own aesthetic practice only more than halfway through the narrative. But such suspicion toward the possibilities of fiction would miss the crux of Eliot's and Lamming's radical realism – that fiction after all exists in a world that contains both the abstraction of the sciences and the natural histories of social bodies. Lamming and Eliot thus share the creative endeavor of mobilizing their thoughtful artificiality to draw worlds that both reflect upon and project into reality. The Author's Note and Eliot's portrayal of Gwendolen's thwarted acting profession compel readers to reflect on how the fictions they purchase and read are in fact carefully crafted social documents that use art to examine rather than explain reality.

III. "Signals of Possibility": Open-Endedness and Radical Realist Fiction

But the novel's reputation as a tool of imperialism would seem to be reinforced rather than destabilized if we are to understand Eliot's and Lamming's fictions as social documents and natural histories. The Victorian realist novel after all was one of postcolonialism's chief targets for critique because the genre purported to describe the world as it is. The realist vision for postcolonial critics entailed a fantasy that often erased or downplayed the colonies and by extension made their inhabitants inert. But what distinguishes *Daniel Deronda*'s and *Season of Adventure*'s realism, as the previous sections attempted to show, are their entwined invitations to see arts such as music, painting, and writing as both ineffably meaningful as well as concretely economic. Music, as *Daniel Deronda* highlights, enables cultures to forge connections that are visceral and empathetic alike, while the fictional author's intervention into *Season of Adventure* makes clear how artists are ultimately members of society. The realist aesthetic, as Eliot's and

Lamming's critical prose explains, involves prompting society to continually expect careful nuance rather than facile imagination in art.

It is somewhat ironic then that both *Daniel Deronda* and *Season of Adventure* conclude with frustratingly open-ended possibilities. But this section argues that such open-endedness is the crucial final element of radical realist fiction. Eliot's Daniel meets his estranged mother, learns he is in fact Jewish, and decides to move to the East with Mirah, whom he marries. Gwendolen's husband Grandcourt meanwhile dies after falling off his yacht during the couple's impromptu vacation in the Mediterranean. Lamming's novel concludes with Fola learning about her parentage as well. Her mother Agnes recounts how both the white son of the local bishop and then a black stranger sexually assaulted her. This "double fatherhood" muddles Fola's exact paternity yet also allows Lamming to highlight the Caribbean's tangled and violent genealogy (343). The beginning of the Second Republic in San Cristobal follows the indistinct closure around Fola's journey. A people's uprising finds success amid the instability of the island as officials search for the vice president's murderer. Dr. Kofi James-Williams Baako becomes president of the new government, and his suspicion toward the educational system coupled with his attention to the culture of the steel drums allows *Season of Adventure* to close with a sense of optimism for the future. Eliot and Lamming thus more or less resolve their plots on the local level of character; what is striking is how they both shy away from consolidating the broader political worlds of their novels.

But the politics around what is perceived to be Eliot's politics poses a challenge in demarcating the conclusion of *Daniel Deronda*. Edward Said famously took issue with Eliot's depiction of “the East” in the novel.[276] He reads a key passage wherein Mordecai, Mirah’s brother and Daniel’s mentor, imagines an “ancient community” of Jews forging a republic that has “more than the brightness of Western freedom amid the despotisms of the East” (535). For Said, Mordecai’s rhetoric offers an example of Orientalism: the East is portrayed as backward and oppressive in opposition to and through the lens of Western enlightenment. The Jewish community, in Mordecai’s point of view, stands an exceptional group for possessing even more rationalism the West. Said thus positions Mordecai’s politics as grounds for criticizing *Daniel Deronda* as a Zionist novel despite how “Zion” is never specifically mentioned within its pages. Daniel only commits himself to realizing Mordecai’s dream of moving to the East as the novel closes. Nancy Henry has responded to Said’s analysis by first of all pointing out how Eliot never actually depicts Daniel and Mirah in the East. The novel’s final chapter shows Daniel, Mirah, and Mordecai eager for their trip eastward; Sir Hugo and his wife even supply Daniel and Mirah with “complete equipment for Eastern travel,” as Said highlights in his reading (810). But the closing scene more specifically depicts Daniel and Mirah embracing Mordecai as he passes away. It thus remains to be seen whether the couple actually ventures to the East. Henry points out how, unlike some of Eliot’s other novels, *Daniel Deronda* lacks a postscript that informs readers of Daniel’s and Mirah’s situation. She thus reads Eliot far more generously than Said and suggests that “the projected future is lived in a land Eliot did not feel she could represent” (119). Both Said and Henry offer valid points; the former insists that *Daniel Deronda*’s silences are symptomatic of Eliot’s racism toward the East, and the latter reads crucial parts of the novel literally in order to take a less crystallized approach to the author’s underlying politics.

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[276] Edward W. Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims,” in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 15 – 38.

I would like to route Said's insistence on extracting a politics from Eliot's novel through Henry's attention to what actually does not occur in *Daniel Deronda*. In other words, I agree with Henry's hesitance to accuse Eliot's novel of enacting Mordecai's visions of moving to the East and creating a republic that would displace existing inhabitants. At the same time, Said's persistence in calling attention to the political implications of fictional representation is a reading practice that remains important to emphasize. In fact, such a reading practice is already implicit in both Eliot's and Lamming's critical prose regarding the shape realist fiction should take.

I therefore propose that aesthetic open-endedness is a quality that both *Daniel Deronda* and *Season Adventure* put into practice and furthermore, that such open-endedness is a necessary component of radical realist fiction. Returning to Eliot's "The Natural History of German Life," as well as looking to Lamming's reflective comments on *Season of Adventure*, provides a way to reread the open-endedness that Said and Henry understand as racist on one hand and inconclusive on the other. Recall how the misguided realist art that receives Eliot's scorn in "The Natural History of German Life" emerges from the assumptions of the artist's imagination rather than "direct observation" (143). Artists generate false ideas of the peasantry, Eliot underlines, because they rely on their existing notions rather than the rigors of sustained study or direct engagement. The absence of concrete representations of the East in *Daniel Deronda* might therefore be understood as the author's commitment to the natural history of realism. Eliot does not depict or even actually send Daniel and Mirah to the East because such a portrayal would clash with her realist aesthetic of carefully presenting a "natural history of social bodies."[277] But

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[277] I am reluctant to diagnose the extent of Eliot's racism. As Jenny Sharpe has pointed out, "By contemporary standards, all Victorians would stand accused [of racism]." See Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 29. But it is nonetheless worth pointing out how Eliot also wrote comments about "the East" such as this in a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe: "towards all oriental peoples with

Lamming's approach to the conclusion of *Season of Adventure* also helps us read *Daniel Deronda* better, as well as, of course, his own novel.

The appearance of Dr. Kofi James-Williams Baako toward the end of *Season of Adventure* has invited critique of Lamming's handling of his narrative. Baako, who critics have called a "deus ex machina" as well as "sketchy and undeveloped," enters the novel in the same late chapter as the Author's Note.[278] He is described as Chiki's former college classmate who went on to complete a medical education at Cambridge and worked in the U.S. before returning to San Cristobal to serve as the university's head of Science and Technology. Yet Baako detests the "secluded leisure" of educational elitism that has shaped much of his life (322). His address to the public as he enters office promises to reform education by attempting to find "a language which was no less immediate than the language of the drums" to communicate the legitimacy of modern medicine and ancient prayer alike (363). Baako in short presents himself as a leader who can champion the interests of the peasantry in the Forest Reserve in spite of his own elitist education. The very idea that such an individual could even exist in San Cristobal seems odd in light of the novel's consistent wariness of the educated class.

Yet Lamming's response when questioned about failing to draw out Baako's course of action in further detail offers a bridge to the politics of Eliot's realism. Lamming told David Scott in an extended 2002 interview how "Baako *couldn't* at that stage be fleshed out. What one

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whom we English come in contact, a spirit of arrogance and contemptuous dictatorialness is observable which has become a national disgrace to us." See Eliot quoted in Katherine Bailey Linehan, "Mixed Politics: The Critique of Imperialism in *Daniel Deronda," Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 34, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 326.

[278] See Ian Munro, "George Lamming's *Season of Adventure*: The Failure of the Creative Imagination," *Studies in Black Literature* 4, no. 1 (1973): 11 and Sandra Pouchet Paquet, *The Novels of George Lamming* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 80.

is doing there is sending out signals of possibility; no more than signals of possibility."[279] Lamming admits that Baako's long name is a kind of "code" for readers to crack. It strings together the names of three men: Kofi Baako, a member of Kwame Nkrumah's cabinet in Ghana; Eric Williams, the historian and first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, and C.L.R. James, the prolific writer and activist. These men for Lamming epitomized a particular kind of hope and energy in ideas of the collective. Williams, for example, delivered public lectures challenging the legacies of colonialism at Port of Spain's Woodford Square.[280] Baako's closing address to the people of San Cristobal closely resembles these lectures, which came to be known as Williams's informal University of Woodford Square.

Season of Adventure's open-ended conclusion thus neither naively promises Baako's success in reforming San Cristobal nor grimly portends another era of neocolonialism. The novel's closing paragraph depicts Gort teaching children of the Forest Reserve how to play the drums. Liza, a young girl, sits on his knees as he stresses the importance of remembering the drums. Such a configuration – the future sitting on the lap of the current generation – offers an inverted complement to how Daniel and Mirah hold the sagacious Mordecai as he dies in the conclusion of Eliot's novel. Both endings hesitate to suggest exactly *how* the younger generation will respond to the teachings of its elders; the trajectories of the steel drums and Judaism alike ultimately remain uncertain for the worlds of these novels.

I understand these conclusions as remarkably strategic for Eliot and Lamming because they force readers to situate the fictions in hand within their lived realities. These conclusions consequently function in a resonant way with the authors' more blatant techniques of underlining fictionality by explicitly pointing it out. *Daniel Deronda*'s mournful conclusion defers any ultimate closure that would make the novel comfortably realist. It furthermore does not even properly end with Mordecai's death – the postscript, if it may even be termed as such, is actually a quotation from Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671). Eliot therefore concludes a novel saturated with the arts with yet another turn to a companion literary art – this time a well-known English dramatic poem that inserts a biblical character into a framework that resembles Greek tragedy. Such a conclusion seems to further undercut the Zionist politics of the novel that postcolonial critics have read, for Samson is a character from the Old Testament. *Daniel Deronda*, the final novel by a renowned Victorian author, thus recuperates an Israelite figure for its parting image.

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[279] George Lamming and David Scott, "The Sovereignty of the Imagination: An Interview with George Lamming," *Small Axe* 6, no. 2 (2002): 157, emphasis in original.
[280] Ibid., 158; Paquet, *The Novels of George Lamming*, 80.

Season of Adventure's conclusion is strategic for Lamming because it explicitly underlines the role of his own novel in contemporary Caribbean politics. Its message regarding how the creative practices of previous generations must be politically preserved and sustained as San Cristobal enters another phase of independence directly fed into decolonizing arguments about the link between cultural and political sovereignty. Lamming does not expect his novel alone to communicate the political exigency around the steel drums: this is why the final chapter juxtaposes Baako's address to the public with a scene of Gort passing along the knowledge of the drums to the younger generation in the Forest Reserve. Such a scene amounts to Lamming's reclamation of the realist novel for an aesthetic-political project of portraying the interpenetration of the arts and the political. *Season of Adventure* forges ahead to a future, however uncertain, whereas *Daniel Deronda* cites the established canon of Milton.

Eliot's representation of the arts thereby keeps readers in a rather closed ecosystem of Anglicized narrative even as it invites them to contemplate the fate of outsiders within English society such as Daniel and Mirah. Lamming's closing focus on the drums meanwhile turns to an aesthetic that can neither be fully rendered within the pages of a novel nor accepted as meaningful unless political, ideological, and thus cultural paradigms within the Caribbean change. Eliot's and Lamming's radical realist trajectories therefore diverge in the end. What remains fascinating involves how the suspicion toward a "tabernacle of dead names" that Lamming expressed in *The Pleasures of Exile* is overdetermined. Lamming's realist strategies and political aims reanimate those of Eliot in spite of the claim to the contrary in his critical prose. Both authors use fiction to prompt readers to develop a sympathetic imagination that enables a political consciousness.

EPILOGUE

Disentangled: Traveling to Erna Brodber's Blackspace

The previous chapters have been telling the story of the unacknowledged intersections between anglophone Caribbean and Victorian writing. Through juxtapositions of supposedly dissimilar writers and texts, I have emphasized a relationship far more muddied by the history of colonial realities than the oppositional politics of postcolonialism has allowed. But I conclude this study with a novel that stages an important disentanglement from Britain even as it embraces a relationship with the physical and spiritual landscape of the United States. Erna Brodber's *Louisiana* (1994) purposely suggests the critical obsolescence of British and Caribbean links and stresses attention to locations surrounding the Gulf of Mexico rather than across the vastness of the Atlantic.

Louisiana in many ways revises the trajectory established in George Lamming's *Season of Adventure*. Lamming's Fola is a young woman from the middle class who seeks to connect with her obscured African past yet the novel relies on a community of male musicians to carry her spiritual journey to fruition. Brodber's novel, by contrast, literally equips its female protagonist Ella Townsend with the work of cultural recovery, preservation, and creation. Where Fola begins as an idle member of the Caribbean middle class, Ella is a Caribbean-American student in New York who quits medical school after a year and "chose to be a word smith," much to the chagrin of her parents.[281] But Brodber, herself a producer of both literature and social psychology, invites an expansive idea of what Ella's work as a "word smith" involves. Ella writes for publications such as *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*, two important venues for analysis of black life that were established in the first half of the twentieth century.[282] But Ella also writes the very manuscript that becomes *Louisiana*.

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[281] Erna Brodber, *Louisiana* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 40. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

The novel's brief prologue that consists of an Editor's Note conveniently yet complexly lays bare the main contours of both the novel's plot and Brodber's aesthetic goals. The Editor's Note maps out three stories: how the manuscript titled *Louisiana* came to the offices of the fictional Black World Press; how Ella gained employment as an oral historian through Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration; and, less explicitly, how the manuscript and Ella have moved through important cities in black America such as New Orleans, Chicago, and Miami. If Lamming's *Season of Adventure* and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* are radical realist fictions that strive to underline the role of art within social and economic realities, Brodber's *Louisiana* pushes the possibilities of fiction even further by turning to the relationship between the limits of observation and narrative.

I therefore go against the grain of most criticism that reads Brodber's third novel alongside Zora Neale Hurston's ethnographic writings on the Caribbean and approach *Louisiana* as a travel narrative, particularly one that destabilizes the genealogy of the nineteenth-century travelogue to the West Indies by Victorians such as Charles Kingsley and James Anthony Froude that V.S. Naipaul in turn famously repeated.[283] The places named in the Editor's Note already highlight an itinerary that does include Britain at all.[284] In fact, Ella's youth, training, and fieldwork keep her firmly in the new world of the Americas. She is called a "King George's negro" – a pejorative for Caribbean-Americans – while growing up in New York and trains in anthropology at Columbia University before receiving a WPA assignment to interview Mrs. Sue Anne Grant-King, also known as Mammy, an elderly woman in St. Mary's parish in Louisiana. Yet physical travel in the novel's plot does not go beyond this journey. *Louisiana* is more interested in crossing borders and overturning conventions that go beyond rubrics of place.

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[282] *Opportunity* was published by the National Urban League from 1923 to 1949 and served as a venue for the early literary work of Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. *The Crisis* is the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Founded by W.E.B. DuBois in 1910, *The Crisis* is still released today.

[283] Both Vera Kutzinski and Jenny Sharpe read Ella to some extent as a fictionalization of Hurston's work as an anthropologist. See Kutzinski, "Bodies and Borders: The United States, America, and the Caribbean," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 59 and Sharpe, "When Spirits Talk: Reading Erna Brodber's *Louisiana* for Affect," *Small Axe* 39 (November 2012): 92.

The audio recording machine that Ella uses to document her interview with Mammy underlines the novel's preoccupation with questioning the parameters of epistemology. Ella hears Mammy say much more on the tapes than what she remembers from the actual recording process; even voices of people Ella did not interview, most prominently Mammy's friend Lowly, appear during playback. The travelogue embedded in *Louisiana* thus discards the monolithic voice of the individual male writer offered in texts such as Froude's *The English in the West Indies* (1888) and Naipaul's *The Middle Passage* (1960) in favor of a community of voices – both male and female, living and dead, and Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean.

Listening to Mammy's and Lowly's voices more specifically helps Ella move through time and space to learn of a neglected history of black women's participation in political activism. Ella assembles a "sketch" of Mammy's life toward the end of *Louisiana* (150). She begins with a brief description of Mammy's mother, a woman who strategically worked hard on a Louisiana sugar plantation in order to earn the respect of her fellow workers and strive to organize higher wages and better labor conditions. Yet Mammy's activism unsurprisingly prompts the planters to forcibly remove her from the plantation, which suggests she was killed. Mammy's father, too, was lynched. Ella underlines the stories of Mammy's parents to show the genealogy of "punished resistance" within the family (151). Mammy herself would go on to participate in a longshoreman's strike in New Orleans and then move to Chicago, where she meets her eventual husband Silas King and an adolescent orphan from Jamaica named Louise Grant. Together the three would take from Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) "a framework within which to do concrete work." (153). The fascinating aspect of *Louisiana*, particularly in contrast to *Season of Adventure*'s radically realist account of the installment of a new republic, is how the novel does not delve into the actual work Mammy and her husband undertake. Brodber's project is more interested showing how generations have sustained black activism regardless of the itinerary imposed by the forces of enslavement and labor.[285]

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[284] *Louisiana* is also a co-publication between New Beacon Books and the University of Mississippi Press. The former is the famous London-based pioneer of Caribbean publishing that has also released Brodber's other novels. Cultivating relations with a university press in the American South for *Louisiana* seems intentional on Brodber's part.

Understanding Brodber's formulation of "blackspace" is crucial to grasping *Louisiana* as a travel narrative that purposefully reorients the Caribbean's entanglements.[286] Blackspace is Brodber's term for self-definition among descendants of the enslaved and emancipated. Brodber first of all characterizes "the completion of the task of emancipation" as a "creative endeavour." Such a perspective resonates with both Ford-Smith's definition of the cultural worker and Lamming's vision as a novelist. But Brodber's call for blackspace is adamantly exclusive. Blackspace levels a critique of intercultural paradigms such as hybridity and creolization, and it also contrasts with Ford-Smith's work with the Sistren Theatre Collective and Lamming's writing, which both emphasize collaboration across the Caribbean's ranges of color and class. In other words, blackspace is for those who identify as black.[287] Brodber frames space both materially and psychically to explain the necessity of fashioning a consciously black community:

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[285] Ella's story of Mammy's movements in this regard anticipates Carole Boyce Davies's theorization of black women's "migratory subjectivities." As Davies explains, "Migrations of the subject refers to the many locations of Black women's writing, but also to the Black female subject refusing to be subjugated." See Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (London: Routledge, 1994), 26.

[286] Erna Brodber, "Re-Engineering Blackspace," *Caribbean Quarterly* 43, no. 1 & 2 (June 1997): 70 – 81.

> The 311,070 persons of African ancestry emancipated in Jamaica in 1834 and fully so in 1838, owned no land and were outside of the political system – they had no vote. Few had family power – mates, children; few owned livestock. They owned no space. They had no army, no ships, no compass, no respected organized grouping. All they had was their individual minds and souls with which to create a viable space for themselves and their progeny in Jamaica and eventually to weld themselves in a nation or a respected part of a nation. (72)

She then turns to Naipaul's famous remarks in *The Middle Passage* where he grasps for an approach for writing the history of the Caribbean. Should the historian "be icily detached and tell the story of the slave trade as if it were another aspect of mercantilism?" Naipaul asks.[288] Brodber forcibly rejects Naipaul's outlook and responds, "No. You feel." For Brodber, to feel means "to claim your psychological space" rather than "to commit the academic sin of distorting" (74). Blackspace is thus a form of creative and intellectual work that re-inserts the self-empowering politics of Garvey's black activism into academic and popular conversations about history. More specifically, blackspace forges an alternative to paradigms of community that rely in one way or another on geography – the black Atlantic and the diaspora foremost among them. Space, Brodber emphasizes, begins in the individual's psyche, which is why *Louisiana* can be read as such a radical take on the travel narrative.

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[287] Brodber holds blackspace seminars near her home in Woodside, Jamaica where non-blacks are controversially not allowed to participate. Catherine John explains Brodber's rationale in an introduction to an interview with the author: "Yet Brodber has steadfastly maintained that after the trauma of slavery – the effects of which are still with us – black people need a private space to work out their differences. Because of our history, particularly in Caribbean circles, she argues that when outsiders are included, the desire to accommodate their needs can shift the focus away from honest self-examination of the residual pain and trauma experienced by the black self." See John, "Caribbean Organic Intellectual: The Legacy and Challenge of Erna Brodber's Life Work," *Small Axe* 39 (November 2012): 74.

[288] V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* (1962; repr., New York: Vintage, 2002), 20.

The travel narrative as written by Naipaul and Victorian men of letters offer accounts of mastery disguised as discovery.[289] Charles Kingsley begins his 1871 narrative of travelling to the West Indies as if he returning to his childhood, a period when he immersed in natural histories, romances, and tragedies about the region. Seeing the Caribbean inspires an exultation of "[a]t last" that becomes the title of his travelogue.[290] Naipaul meanwhile reproduces Kingsley's journey, albeit with a different bias. The author recalls his "old fear" of Trinidad when his London ship docks near Port-of-Spain rather than Kingsley's fond memories of English maritime adventures in the Caribbean (33). Nostalgia thus ironically determines the projects of these travel narratives, which makes sense given how texts such as Kingsley's and Naipaul's ultimately reveal more about their authors than the places they observe.

The traveller in Brodber's *Louisiana*, on the other hand, already diverges from the likes of Kingsley and Naipaul in that employment through the WPA rather than leisured interest drives her project of coming to the American South and interviewing Mammy.[291] Ella furthermore quickly admits that her existing knowledge fails to prepare her for the task of exercising her anthropological training. The first section of *Louisiana* throws readers into a disorienting outline of Ella's experience listening to the tapes from her conversations with Mammy. The text shows snippets of conversations where Ella asks Mammy to recount how she moved from Louisiana to Chicago and back again. More mysteriously, the line "Ah who sey Sammy dead" repeats throughout the section in italicized boldface.[292] Readers eventually learn that the line is from a song that Ella herself sings when visiting a psychic named Madam Marie in New Orleans. The manuscript's second section, which is comprised of a more straightforward first-person account of Ella's reflections on the task of transcribing the tapes, has the young anthropologist admitting, "Nothing I had read had prepared me for the notion of thought transplant or whatever name we give to it" (31). Such a disclosure stresses how Ella must open herself to the various ways learning can occur during her journey to Louisiana.

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[289] Mastery disguised as discovery is my gloss of Simon Gikandi's argument about James Anthony Froude's travelogue to the West Indies: "touring becomes a form of retour: opinions formed before the commencement of the voyage are not dissipated by experience; on the contrary, they are authorized by the weight of personal observations." See Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 117.

[290] Kingsley, *At Last*, 1.

[291] Naipaul's journey throughout the Caribbean was undertaken with a grant from the government of Trinidad and Tobago. According to Naipaul in his foreword, Trinidad's Prime Minister Eric Williams suggested that he write "a nonfiction book about the Caribbean." The author's response suggests how *The Middle Passage* fits into Gikandi's claims about the circularity of Victorian travelogues, for Naipaul explains, "The novelist works toward conclusions of which he is often unaware, and it is better that he should." Naipaul thereby suggests that writing nonfiction involves exploring subject matter the author has already

The work of interviewing Mammy in rural Louisiana and visiting Madam Marie in the city of New Orleans in fact enables Ella to reconnect with aspects of her youth that her parents shunned upon immigration to the U.S. Ella reflects, "I now know that ["Ah who sey Sammy dead"] is the refrain of a folk-song from home but I didn't know the song, having left there at an early age and my parents, wishing to disassociate themselves from some aspect of their past did not/would not have sung such a song nor would they have kept company with people who sing such a song" (31). The narrative embedded in this sentence's retrospective movement from "now know" and "didn't know" offers a moment where the spiritual and physical journey to

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mastered. See "Foreword to This Edition," in *The Middle Passage* (1962; repr., New York: Vintage, 2002).

[292] The line is from the Jamaican folk song "Sammy Dead Oh," which was popularized by ska singer Eric "Monty" Morris in the early 1960s. See Kevin O'Brien Chang and Wayne Chen, *Reggae Routes: The Story of Jamaican Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 90.

blackspace crystallizes. The Editor's Note had mentioned that the WPA hired Ella "to retrieve" the history of black Louisiana through interviews (3). But Brodber's interest in refashioning the methods of social science and literature promise that drawing a map of blackspace will defy any linearity or causality implied in the action of simply bringing something back.[293]

Louisiana on one level is a simple story of the contrast between academic and ancestral knowledge – with the latter being championed. Indeed, Ella's encounters ultimately reveal to her the limits of her bookishness. Travel thus arguably occurs psychically as well within Ella. She falls ambiguously ill amid transcribing the tapes following her time with Madam Marie in New Orleans and finds herself unable to write. This is not tantamount to the gaps in Maria Nugent's journal we saw at the beginning of this study. Ella experiences what she can only call "the hegemony of the spirit" as she establishes grounding in a past from which she has been encouraged to forget (98). The process becomes even more difficult after Ella breaks a leg while falling down stairs yet attending to this pain enables her husband Reuben to temporarily take over the work of transcribing the tapes. His efforts contribute to Ella's ability to write a sketch of Mammy's life, which in the end helps bring *Louisiana*'s narrative to a close.

Mammy, Lowly, Madam Marie, Ella, and Reuben all participate in generating the manuscript that arrives to the Black World Press; Brodber's readers in turn experience this polyvocal travel narrative as *Louisiana*. The shift to "now know" from "didn't know" that Ella experiences thus involves a communal movement from the past to the present that readers likewise share through the course of completing Brodber's novel. *Louisiana*'s story of an academic's surprising extension of her disciplinary training underlines how arriving at a communal and therapeutic blackspace requires a purposeful bracketing of the entanglements that otherwise underlie so much of anglophone Caribbean literary culture.

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[293] Brodber explains, "Boredom with a social science methodology devoted to 'objectivity' and therefore distancing the researcher from the people and spurning the affective interaction between the researcher and the researched led me into fiction." See Brodber, "Fiction in the Scientific Procedure," in *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays from the First International Conference*, ed. Selwyn R. Cudjoe (Wellesley: Calaloux Publications, 1990), 165. Meanwhile, Catherine John writes that Brodber's "modernist 'form-bending' has made her fiction popular in European intellectual circles, while the content and significance of her stories are roadmaps and symbolic guides for Caribbean intellectuals who are students of the history she draws on for inspiration." See John, "Caribbean Organic Intellectual: The Legacy and Challenge of Erna Brodber's Life Work," 73.

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