Creole Constitutions: Subjecthood and the Early Novel in the British Caribbean

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Introduction

"No, don't change the subject
Cuz you're my favorite subject."

- King George III to the colonies
Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton*

I open with my favorite couplet from *Hamilton: An American Musical* because this is a project all about colonial subjects, novel and political, and I cannot think of a better emblem for such a project than the king of England rhyming "subject" with "subject." It suggests the endless multiplicities, iterations, absurdities, misunderstandings, and opportunities of eighteenth-century British subjecthood.

"Creole Constitutions: Subjecthood and the Early Novel in the British Caribbean" engages with a collection of novels from the long eighteenth century that depict British subjects in the colonial Caribbean. The *philosophe* Abbé Raynal, halfway through the eighteenth century, characterized the Caribbean island colonies as "the principal cause of the rapid movement which stirs the Universe." With my project, I contribute to recent efforts to realign literary and historical scholarship on the eighteenth century in relation to the enormous importance of the colonial Caribbean and its legacy.

I argue that novelistic treatments of the Caribbean colonies reflect and refract the fraught imperial legal status of the sovereign's subjects overseas. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century imperial subjecthood was a pluralistic and variable condition, inhering not in the rights-bearing individual of classic liberalism but in a relationship to the sovereign that manifested in different legal categories with mutable privileges and protections.[1] British imperial legal space, writes Lauren Benton, had a "peculiar and enduring lumpiness." This lumpy state of affairs caused a great deal of contestation about the extent to which the king's subjects who go or are born in to

one of Britain's colonial territories are able to enjoy what become known as cherished English liberties.

My project links the way that political selfhood coalesces around the legal structures of the eighteenth-century British empire to the way that character emerges from the narrative structures of the early Caribbean novel. Despite multiple recent challenges to the longstanding perception of the English novel as "subjective, individualistic, realistic," dominant Anglo-American cultural narratives still equate the novel with sociopolitical Western individualism and economic liberalism. In this view, the novel both reflects and calls into being a subject that is private, autonomous, and intentional. The framework of imperial subjecthood, however, offers the literary critic a new way to think about fictional character in the novel. My project maps the various ways in which early novel characters reflect the perpetual messiness of imperial legal status. These novel subjects, like subjects of the sovereign, come into being not as fully-formed, self-governing political beings, but in an enmeshment of public contexts, juridical processes, and jurisdictional relationships. The early novel of the British Caribbean portrays politics, to borrow from Jacques Rancière, not as a sphere but as a process. The early colonial Caribbean was, for reasons discussed here and those that will become apparent in the upcoming chapters, a space that threw the contradictions of imperial British subjecthood into particularly stark relief. Authors who incorporate the Caribbean colonies into their literary works do so in many cases as part of an imaginative process of working through these contradictions.

The eighteenth-century Anglophone world that is the backdrop of my project is a world in the midst of a great upheaval, and at the center of that upheaval is the Caribbean. Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein have identified the European colonization of the Americas as the advent of a new world system: "The creation of this geosocial entity, the Americas, was the

constitutive act of the modern world-system. The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas" (549). The Caribbean islands are "the focal point of overseas European expansion in the early modern world" and the "the first major outposts of a global imperium" (Morgan 52, 63). By the end of the seventeenth century, Britain's West Indian settlements were the nation's most valuable American colonies (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 50). By 1773, "imports to Britain from Jamaica alone were nearly five times as valuable as imports from Britain's North American colonies combined" (Iannini 17). Raynal observed, "the labors of the colonists settled in these long-scorned islands are the sole basis of the African trade, extend the fisheries and cultivation of North America, profile advantageous outlets for the manufactures of Asia, double perhaps triple the activity of the whole of Europe" (qtd. in P. Morgan 52-53). With the sugar revolution of the mid-seventeenth century, "as modern forms of labor organization, commercial agriculture, and economic botany took shape in the Caribbean and new consumer appetites for West Indian comestibles developed simultaneously in Europe, the islands emerged as valuable and volatile colonies" (Iannini 17).[2] Barbados, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands "quickly developed into sites for the production of sugar and its by-products and other tropical crops that the islands sent in increasing quantities to Britain and to the British colonies in North America" (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 50). Of course, the "cultivation and exchange of West Indian staples depended on the invention of another transoceanic 'commodity'—the hereditary chattel slave" (Iannini 17).[3] As Barbara Solow has put it, "what moved in the Atlantic in these centuries was predominantly slaves, the output of slaves, the inputs to slave societies, and the goods and services purchased with the earnings on slave products" (1).

Historian Jack Greene summarizes the basic chronology and geography of English colonization in the Caribbean thus:

> During the two centuries after 1600, English men and women, operating under the auspices of chartered companies, proprietary groups, or the Crown, established thirteen separate island colonies: Bermuda, Barbados, the four Leeward Island colonies of Antigua, Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Kitts, and Jamaica during the first six decades of the seventeenth century; the Bahamas in the early eighteenth century; the Virgin Islands in the 1750s; and the four ceded islands of Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent, and Tobago just after the Seven Years' War. Two of these island colonies, Bermuda and the Bahamas, were in the Atlantic, the rest in the West Indies. Later, as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, the British acquired St. Lucia from the French and Trinidad from the Spanish. (*Exclusionary Empire* 50)

When I refer to "the Caribbean" in this project, however, I will generally be referencing a conceptual entity that extends beyond the boundaries that we tend to understand today. Definitions of the West Indies remained "provisional and amorphous" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but in general the term referred to "a chain of colonial possessions extending (roughly) from Guiana and Surinam in the south, through the islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles, to Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina" (Iannini 10).[4] Peter Hulme and other modern scholars have characterized this region as the "extended Caribbean," which Hulme views even more expansively, as stretching from Virginia to Brazil. This extended Caribbean region is defined by similar social, economic, and climactic conditions—by "shared tropical and semitropical ecosystems, a black majority demographic, and patterns of social and economic development centered on plantation slavery and the commercial export of a narrow range of cash

crops" (Iannini 10). These similarities defied imperial and national borders, yoking the region together even after the American and Haitian Revolutions and well into the nineteenth century.[5] More than just a geographic artifact, I follow Hulme in mapping the Caribbean as a discursive and historical entity as well: it is constructed imaginatively in texts from Columbus's journals to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, and it is marked historically by the first European colonial interventions, the gradual extirpation of native populations and introduction of enslaved Africans, and the dominance of the plantation economy.

The colonial British Caribbean was a peculiar space in a number of ways. Thomas Krise describes it this way:

> By the time the first English settlers arrived, virtually all the native inhabitants had been driven out or killed; the population was made up of a diverse array of European transplants and enslaved Africans of multiple cultural origins imported in the largest forced migration in history; its economy was dependent on a plantation monoculture that employed the world's first large scale factory system, and slaves made up eight- or nine-tenths of the total population; finally, unlike in the continental American colonies, the typical English traveler came to the West Indies not to settle but to make money and then return to England.[6] (6-7)

The eighteenth-century Atlantic world "was the product of successive waves of navigation, exploration, settlement, administration, and imagination," and Atlantic modernity can be "defined by upheaval and dispersal, mass mobility, and cultural hybridity" (Armitage 12, 15). The Caribbean colonies, in particular, boasted "one of the most heterogeneous social mosaics anywhere" (P. Morgan 53). In addition to the scores of separate Native American societies that existed in the region on the eve of European contact, the islands played host to settlers from

Spain, France, Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark; African slaves from hundreds of states and stateless societies; and, starting in early nineteenth-century Trinidad, Chinese settlers (P. Morgan 53). The colonial Caribbean that I trace in this project is thus a space of cultural interpenetration, a "contact zone," in Mary Louise Pratt's language: a social space where "disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" and usually "involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and racial conflict" (5, 8). Though the power relations of the respective cultures in the Caribbean may be highly asymmetrical, they are not reducible to a simple binary of oppressor and oppressed; in this space of imperial encounter, subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other, developing interlocking understandings and practices that are interactive and improvisational (Pratt 8).

An older generation of historians writing in the early 1970s, including Orlando Patterson, Richard S. Dunn, and V.S. Naipaul, overwhelmingly characterized the colonial Caribbean islands as producing virtually nothing of cultural or scientific value: they were "monstrous distortion[s] of human society" and "disastrous social failures;" they were "manufactured societies, labour camps" where "nothing was created."[7] The historian Natalie Zacek points out that twentieth-century historians of the Caribbean have been too ready to adopt the negative stereotypes of the plantation colonies articulated by eighteenth-century metropolitan commentators. Both contemporary commentators and modern historians

> have repeatedly depicted these colonies as social failures, as places in which fortunes were soon won and sooner lost, where indentured servants and, later, African slaves labored under worse conditions and their masters lived in greater luxury than in Britain's other plantation colonies in North America, and where skewed sex ratios, an

> unpredictable tropical environment, and the constant threat of foreign attack and slave rebellion forestalled the emergence of many of the institutions that are seen as having exerted a calming and civilizing force elsewhere in Britain's American empire. (Zacek 3)

Zacek references in particular two works that I will be examining in the first chapter of this project, *A Trip to Jamaica* (1698) and *The Jamaica Lady* (1720), as examples of "popular but frequently inaccurate" narratives responsible for this "lurid picture," which "gave the Anglo-American reading public what it wanted, a vision of the West Indian islands as tropical hells" (4). Historians, says Zacek, have often succumbed to the temptation to accept contemporary critiques at face value, despite evidence of the different motivations that may have impelled these critiques.

Historiographic challenges, moreover, have compounded to explain why historians still know little about the West Indian colonies, compared to the North American colonies, in spite of their commercial and strategic preeminence in the eighteenth-century British empire (Zacek 6). A tropical climate subject to frequent natural disasters has meant that less documentary evidence has survived from the islands than from the northern colonies; imperial rivalries between Britain, France, Spain, and the Netherlands caused the islands to be passed back and forth between empires, complicating their histories and making them problematic objects of study within a dominant historiographic paradigm still centered on the nation state; and the islands' non-participation in the American Revolution put them in an awkward position in relation to teleological narratives of American history (Zacek 6). Taken together, "these factors have rendered these islands historiographically marginal, too Anglo-American to be part of a circum-Caribbean story focused on the syncretic 'black Atlantic' cultures developed by slaves and free people of color in the French and Spanish colonies, and too Caribbean to figure significantly in

the story of the formation of the United States" (Zacek 6). All this has resulted in a "largely unquestioned image of West Indian colonists either losing their Englishness under the negative influences of a tropical climate and a lack of necessary checks on their behavior, or clinging too tenaciously to an English identity and thus failing to develop a recognizable version of the Creole nationalism that eventually resulted in the mainland colonies in a rebellion against imperial authority" (Zacek 5).

However, historians of the last three decades, led in large part by Jack Greene, have been revising these assessments. Greene has written that British Caribbean settlers sought to "Anglicize their societies as much as their tropical climate would permit" and develop a strong tradition of "family continuity and ever greater identification with local society" (*Pursuits of Happiness* 164-65). In Zacek's work on the Federated British West Indian colony of the Leeward Islands (St. Kitts, Antigua, Montserrat, and Nevis), she argues that the documentary evidence suggests that the Leeward Islands hosted a "small but vital community, one whose white inhabitants displayed a strong sense of identification with the mother country, an emotional as well as a financial investment in the island's continued peace and prosperity, and a commitment to upholding both metropolitan and local law and ideals of polite public and private behavior" (3). Larry Gragg has done similar work on seventeenth-century Barbados, which he wants to prove played host to more than just "rapacious entrepreneurs" (10). Barbadian sugar planters, Gragg says, "endeavored, as swiftly as circumstances permitted, to transplant English ways of living to the Caribbean" (10). In spite of the challenges to creating a homogenous English world in the Americas, including the presence of indigenous peoples, Africans, other European powers, and the tropical environment, "the English settlers on Barbados consciously sought to replicate the ways of their homeland, to make their Caribbean colony truly English" (Gragg 2).

What interests me about historical assessments like Gragg's, especially, is the way that, in pushing back against historical accounts that replicate eighteenth-century metropolitan critique, they end up replicating instead the eighteenth-century protests of white British colonists in the Caribbean who desperately wanted to be identified as properly English. Gragg writes that the settlers on Barbados "rapidly created parishes, built churches, and hired clergymen. They installed familiar governmental and legal institutions. They eagerly sought spouses and started families. They resisted compromises in their diet, apparel, and housing despite their tropical setting" (10). These are just the sorts of claims that creole writers would make in their efforts towards "claiming and defining positive social value for these colonized spaces" (Sandiford 2). Keith Sandiford has written that Caribbean slavocrats, "faced with the local imperatives of producing value and building community at the periphery while divorced from the certainties and settled traditions of the centre," "found valuable allies" in colonialist authors, whose texts

> produce negotiation as a desire to win a tenuous and elusive legitimacy for an evolving ideal of Creole civilization, conflicted by its central relation to slavery and its marginal relation to metropolitan cultures. Each of these sources of conflict posed stout challenges to Creole pretensions: slavery aroused moral and economic objections crystallizing in abolitionist and anti-slavery polemics; traditional cultural preservationists (purists) back home continually interrogated the Creoles' desire for social credibility by raising the spectre of cultural pollution and political disintegration. (Sandiford 2-3)

We will encounter several examples of these kinds of texts over the course of this project.

Sandiford's remarks lead us to the other major historiographic shift in considerations of the colonial Caribbean, which builds on Edward Kamau Brathwaite's foundational treatment of creolization. In his study of colonial Jamaica, Brathwaite argues that "the people, mainly from

Britain and West Africa, who settled, lived, worked and were born in Jamaica, contributed to the formation of a society which developed, or was developing, its own distinctive character or culture which, in so far as it was neither purely British nor West African, is called 'creole'" and that "this 'creole culture' was part of a wider New World or American culture complex, itself the result of European settlement and exploitation of a new environment" (xiii). Brathwaite rejects the notion that Jamaica should be thought of solely as a "slave society" or as a polarized pluralist society of separate cultures: creolism instead is developed in the interstices of metropolitan influence and Caribbean context. He says, "the single most important factor in the development of Jamaican society was not the imported influence of the Mother Country or the local administrative activity of the white elite, but a cultural action—material, psychological and spiritual—based upon the stimulus/response of individuals within the society to their environment and—as white/black, culturally discrete groups—to each other" (296). A "creole society" is one "caught up 'in some kind of colonial arrangement' with a metropolitan European power, on the one hand, and a plantation arrangement on the other; and where the society is multiracial but organized for the benefit of a minority of European origin" (Brathwaite xv). It is a society therefore that results from "a complex situation where a colonial polity reacts, as a whole, to external metropolitan pressures, and at the same time to internal adjustments made necessary by the juxtaposition of master and slave, elite and labourer, in a culturally heterogeneous relationship" (Brathwaite xvi). The anthropologist Sidney Mintz makes a similar claim: what typified creolization "was not the fragmentation of culture and the destruction of the very concept, but the creation and construction of culture out of fragmented, violent and disjunct pasts" (302). Edouard Glissant has defined the essential local ethos of the Caribbean as a place of "dissensus" and "the sea that diffracts" (Sandiford 18). More recently, Philip Morgan has written

that "heterogeneity is the story of the slave trade to the Caribbean, and it facilitated and encouraged the borrowing, adaptation, modification, and invention of cultural forms that was such a feature of Caribbean slave life" (62).

In addition to the theorization of creolization undertaken by Brathwaite and others, it is worth briefly clarifying what it meant to be called a "creole" in the eighteenth-century world of this study. Brathwaite defines the word as having "originated from a combination of the two Spanish words *criar* (to create, to imagine, to establish, to found, to settle) and *colono* (a colonist, a founder, a settler) into *criollo*: a committed settler, one identified with the area of settlement, one native to the settlement though not ancestrally indigenous to it" (xiv-xv). In Jamaica during the period of Brathwaite's study, he writes, "the word was used in its original Spanish sense of *criollo*: born in, native to, committed to the area of living, and it was used in relation to both whites and slaves" (xv). The novel at the center of my first chapter, *The Jamaica Lady* (1720), defines the term creole as meaning "one born in the island of Jamaica" (n.p.). Morgan has defined creolization as referring to "anything or any person of the Old World born or developed in the New" (64). As Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has noted, in the U.S. context, the term "tends to have a connotation of racial and cultural hybridity," whereas "in its colonial origins in the West Indies and Spanish colonial America, the term indicated a continuity of racial descent but a discontinuity of geographical nativity" ("Secret History" 95). In the colonial context, the term is applied to white Britons born in the colonies rather than in Britain, or to those born in Britain but stationed in the colonies long enough to be considered to have "gone native." The term thus contains within it a disjunction of belonging: "the term contains a reference to nativity and foreign-ness within a single word: the créole, one might say, is the native who is non-native" (Dillon, "Secret History" 95). The term was not only applied to

colonists of European descent: black and mulatto slaves and freedmen born and raised in the New World were identified as "creoles" by the British, French, and Spanish empires (Goudie 8). Moreover, the term often denotes much more than just the birthplace of a colonial subject or slave: "creole" was also used to account for "admixtures, or syncretisms, between Old and New World" cultures (Goudie 8).

This project is influenced by a number of critical traditions, and I will briefly outline those debts here.

My project builds on the work of scholars who have examined the relationship between the advent of print capitalism and constructions of national identity. Benedict Anderson's foundational work in this line identifies ways in which the circulation of texts can create "imagined communities" that enable "rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways" (4). Michael Warner,[8] on the American side, and Linda Colley,[9] on the British, have taken up Anderson's theories in their analyses of national identity formation in the eighteenth century. Colley has argued that it is between the Act of Union, joining Scotland to England and Wales, in 1707 and the formal beginning of the Victorian age in 1837 that "a sense of British national identity was forged" (1). She attributes the "invention of Britishness" primarily to a succession of wars between Britain and France,[10] the influence of Protestantism, trade, and growing connections between Scotland and the rest of the island and its empire (1, 7).

Other scholars have highlighted a different influence on British identity formation during this period, namely the operations of the Atlantic slave trade. Eric Williams's study *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) traced the "contribution of slavery to the development of British capitalism" (viii). Susan Dwyer Amussen and Simon Gikandi, among others, have demonstrated the

centrality of the Atlantic slave trade and plantation slavery in the Americas to social and cultural change in the British metropole in the eighteenth century.[11] Srividhya Swaminathan, in *Debating the Slave Trade: The Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1795-1815*, argues that British national identity, as it emerges towards the end of the century as a pairing of commerce and freedom, develops out of debates about the abolition of the slave trade. David Brion Davis, Edmund Morgan, and others have also tackled the paradox presented by an age that witnessed the explosive growth of chattel slavery alongside the development of popular sovereignty and the values of liberty.[12]

Additionally, my project follows a multidisciplinary turn in eighteenth-century studies towards a study of texts that is not constrained by national boundaries.[13] Paul Gilroy, writing in 1993, addresses what he sees as the problematically nationalistic focus shared by English and African-American cultural studies; he identifies instead as an object of study the structures of transcultural and international feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering that he calls the "black Atlantic" (3, 4). Proposing a new chronotope for his theory—the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean—Gilroy calls attention to the "rhizomorphic, fractal structure" of the black Atlantic (4). Joseph Roach coins the term "circum-Atlantic" in *Cities of the Dead* (1996), where he contends that it is on the borders that the real work of cultural self-identification happens. Roach demonstrates manifold ways in which ideas about proper cultural behavior are tested on the margins, by those who are simultaneously of the society and alienated from it, in spaces such as the theatre, slave auctions, and the coffeehouse. He concludes that the fiction of a cultural center can only be perpetuated through these frontier spaces, as it is defined in opposition to the margins but impossible to be conceived without them.

Historians of the British Atlantic world, meanwhile, have been influenced by David Armitage's essay "Three Concepts of Atlantic History" (2003), where he picks up Roach's term and adapts it to his schema for a threefold typology of Atlantic history. Armitage distinguishes *circum*-Atlantic history, the transnational history of the Atlantic world; from *trans*-Atlantic history, the international history of the Atlantic world; and *cis*-Atlantic history,[14] national or regional history within an Atlantic context (15). He describes circum-Atlantic history as

> the history of the Atlantic as a particular zone of exchange and interchange, circulation and transmission […] It is the history of the people who crossed the Atlantic, who lived on its shores and who participated in the communities it made possible, of their commerce and their ideas, as well as the diseases they carried, the flora they transplanted and the fauna they transported. (16)

Armitage identifies circum-Atlantic history as the type least investigated by historians at the time he writes his essay. He writes that it is exemplified instead by Roach's *Cities of the Dead*, and he quotes Roach saying, "The concept of a circum-Atlantic world (as opposed to a transatlantic one) insists on the centrality of the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity" (Roach 4-5). It is this diasporic approach, "attending to flows, dispersals, and mixtures of people, goods, plants, and much else," that provides the most useful historical backdrop for my own project (P. Morgan 54). Attending to these terms also helps clarify the kinds of governmental structures and political units that were operative during the time frame covered by this project. Armitage writes that the conventional chronology of circum-Atlantic history "begins in just the period usually associated with the rise of the state, that is, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, but it ends just before the epoch of the nation-state, in the mid nineteenth century. Empires and composite monarchies, not

states, were the characteristic political units of this era," and that "Trans-Atlantic history is especially suited to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century histories of the Atlantic world, when state-formation went hand-in-hand with empire-building to create a convergent process we might call 'empire-state-building'" (17, 20).[15]

Additionally, the chronology of Atlantic history provides the time frame for my project, "beginning with its first crossing by Columbus in 1492 […] and ending, conventionally, with the age of revolutions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (Armitage 11-12). Most of the works that I will discuss here are published between the last couple decades of the seventeenth century and the last couple decades of the eighteenth century—concluding right around the time of the first big public push for the abolition of the slave trade in Britain and just before the period marked by the American, French, and Haitian revolutions. Laura Brown, in *Fables of Modernity* (2001), summarizes a number of other eighteenth-century revolutions that have traditionally been said to mark a transition into modernity:

> mercantile capitalism and privileging of property and profit, first non-European empire and institutionalization of slavery and socially pervasive racism, modern post-dynastic nation state, financial revolution and rise of banking, credit, stock trading, and national debt, innovations in agriculture and transformation of the countryside, consumption and the rise of the retail market, development of a self-perpetuating and self-disciplining bourgeois public sphere, consolidation of a culturally coherent middle class, advertising, middle class fashion, and obsolescence, changes in structure of the family entailing companionate relationships among nuclear family members. (7-8)

These social, political, economic, and cultural shifts are all important reference points for my project, but their applicability to the works I analyze is disparate and variable. Temporally, a

number of these changes solidify later than the period covered by this project. As Armitage writes, there is "a distinguished pedigree for identifying Atlantic history with 'early' modernity, before the onset of industrialization, mass democracy, the nation-state, and all the other classic defining features of full-fledged modernity" (12). Additionally, though these are the eighteenth-century legacies that modern scholars have been most likely to cite and engage with, one of the aims of this project is to contribute to the scholarly voices highlighting alternative eighteenth-century inheritances that have been obfuscated or submerged by these dominant narratives.

Early American literary critics have also turned towards a consideration of early American literature in terms of transnational, hemispheric, and global currents of exchange rather than solely in terms of a proto-nationalist tradition.[16] Michael Drexler, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Sean Goudie, and Marlene Daut have all provided frameworks for perceiving the persistent and fraught connections between the early U.S. republic and the West Indian colonies. Dillon, for instance, has used Leonora Sansay's *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808) to argue for a mode of analyzing the early American novel within a geopolitical framework of Atlantic colonialism and creole imperialism. Traditionally, interpretations of early American novels have tended to follow a national allegory model, in which the true meaning of the novel's private drama is located at the level of public history (Dillon, "Secret History" 80). As Dillon argues in the case of *The Secret History*, however, the national allegory model does not fully account for the extent to which there was no one nation to allegorize: long after the American Revolution was over, the new United States remained marked by its history of colonialism. Drexler has argued that Charles Brockden Brown and Leonora Sansay both regarded the Haitian Revolution as an example of effective collective action and that this regard shows up in their literary experiments.[17] Other scholars, including Thomas Krise, Karina

Williamson, Tim Watson, and Nicole Aljoe, have worked to recover and re-center Caribbean voices in eighteenth-century literary studies.[18]

My work is also influenced by critics, prominently Edward Said, Peter Hulme, and Srinivas Aravamudan, who have attended to the ways that texts mediate the relationship between Britain and its imperial and exotic others. This project is primarily concerned with the novel form, so it is particularly indebted to their critical insights about the ways in which the structures and discourses of British imperialism manifest in the novel's eighteenth-century development. Said declares that "without empire, I would go so far as saying, there is no European novel as we know it, and indeed if we study the impulses giving rise to it, we shall see the far from accidental convergence between the patterns of narrative authority constitutive of the novel on the one hand, and, on the other, a complex ideological configuration underlying the tendency to imperialism" (69-70). Said's famous example of the importance of a colonial consciousness for the novel is in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*—whose depiction of the English domestic world, Said argues, depends upon the sublimation of its dependence on Caribbean commodities.

Though it often goes unacknowledged, cultural awareness of the West Indies is pervasive in British literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even at the heart of texts usually cited as central to the rise of the novel, such as those by Eliza Haywood, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, and Samuel Richardson. Said has argued that colonial territories have always been associated with the realist novel as realms of possibility: for instance, "*Robinson Crusoe* is virtually unthinkable without the colonizing mission that permits him to create a new world of his own in the distant reaches of the African, Pacific, and Atlantic wilderness" (75). Laura Rosenthal expands this observation to include the imaginative place of the colonies as a refuge for Britain's undesirable subjects, including fallen women: "Equally unthinkable, we might add,

would be Sally Godfrey with no West Indian colony in which to find redemption" (par. 7).[19] More recent histories of the novel have expanded on these observations and "treat the Caribbean not as the 'other setting,' as Said characterised Austen's use of Antigua in *Mansfield Park*, but as a central aspect of literary history" (Watson 7). With my project, I aim to contribute to this line of scholarship.

My first chapter, "Characters and Subjects," takes *The Jamaica Lady; or, The Life of Bavia* (1720) as a case study for the ways in which Caribbean fictions fit into our histories of the novel. I focus particularly on the relationship of the early Caribbean novel to the theories of both contemporary and modern novel critics regarding novelistic fictionality and literary character. *The Jamaica Lady*, which owes formal debts to both the romance and natural history traditions, is a particularly illuminating instance of the mixture of emblematic sign and empirical reportage that characterizes the early English novel and helps us think through alternative understandings of novel subjects.

My second chapter, "The Topography of British Freedom," tracks a collision between two intersecting constitutional conversations within Britain's early empire in the Atlantic World. The first conversation takes shape around European assumptions about the degenerate nature of the Caribbean climate and the effects that the southern American atmosphere would produce on Britons' physical and moral constitutions. The second conversation concerns the evolving jurisprudential debates about the rights and responsibilities of creole subjects under the English legal constitution. This chapter traces discourses of creole degeneracy as they surface in and leave their mark on English literature and law in the eighteenth century and demonstrates the ways in which metaphorical conceptions of imperial geography reverberate in British legal structures of slavery and freedom. These issues come into focus through an analysis of the short

novel *The Fortunate Transport* [1750?], which traces a female subject's creolization in Virginia and Jamaica; and through a reading of counsels' arguments in the 1772 King's Bench case *Somerset v. Stewart*, which repeatedly invoke the English *soil* and *air* as competing metonyms for imperial legal space and the scope of English freedoms.

My third chapter, "The Female-Authored Caribbean," also deals with the messy and unfinished work of subject formation, this time rendered by the pens of female authors whose own subject position was less than free. The works featured in this chapter—Delarivier Manley's *The Physician's Strategem* (1720), Eliza Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), and Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1783-85)—are published respectively in the early, middle, and later years of the development of the eighteenth-century novel. These works also represent different subgenres within the history of the novel—amatory fiction, realism, and historical fiction/the gothic. All three works feature an episode in which a female character is forced on an excursion from Europe to the Caribbean colonies. These fictional Caribbean excursions illuminate a series of conflicts related to the nature of colonial British subjecthood. In *Betsy Thoughtless*, we get a view of the Caribbean colonies as a space to isolate corrupt characters away from the metropole. In *The Physician's Strategem*, a similar attempt to send off unwanted subjects fails, and the heroine seeks relief from the queen, referencing an early modern mode of subjecthood based on a relationship of mutual obligation with the sovereign. In *The Recess*, the only work of the three in which the reader actually travels to the Caribbean with the characters, we see complicated disputes about the nature of British liberty abroad and the authority of colonial elites.

I'll conclude with a few words about my approach to reading the texts in this project—mostly via assemblage, adapting the statements of scholars whose articulations of their methods have served in some part as a model for my own.

In terms of textual analysis, I will "take advantage of what might be called literary criticism's neutrality with respect to scale," as Jenny Davidson says (14). As literature scholars, she explains, "we are allowed or even encouraged to unite the examination of particular detail—often even of usage at the level of a single word—with the consideration of linguistic, literary, intellectual, and cultural elements of considerably larger dimensions" (14). This means that

> The practice of literary criticism does not necessarily commit one to a preference for any one particular unit of analysis—it is possible, for example, to look at a word, a metaphor or other trope, a line of verse or a paragraph of argument, a play, a novel, or indeed an entire literary genre or literary period—so it does not necessarily involve an either-or choice between considering an individual literary work as the conscious and determined creation of its author or as a symptom of broader cultural and historical trends. (Davidson 14-15)

Eric Slauter makes a similar point that also applies here: "I have approached different aspects of this study in different ways—sometimes by reading one text very closely, at other times by trying to reconstruct the larger and smaller contexts that made ideas meaningful" (14). I will examine texts as an "interesting guide to patterns of deployment of related tropes and arguments," and I will sometimes adopt the trope of synecdoche, "taking the part for the whole, operating by means of contiguity and association" (Davidson 14, 12).

In terms of the kinds of literary texts that appear in this project, they will include canonical and prominent works that show up in eighteenth-century undergraduate and graduate literature classes, and they will also include "works that, while obscure, make overt some of the geo-imaginary patterns threading their way through more familiar objects of study" (Carroll 12). Space constraints alone would prevent this project from exhaustively surveying all eighteenth-

century English novels that treat the Caribbean colonies, and I make no attempt to do so here, though I have, in Appendix 1, tried to give a fuller sense of the scope of these novels. In selecting the novels that I highlight in the upcoming chapters, I have chosen those that seem to me to deserve further scholarly scrutiny and those that make particularly visible the dynamics and practices of imperial British subjecthood.

My analysis centers "on literary representations" of the British Caribbean, ranging from poetry and novels "to the more broadly defined texts of culture—travel narratives, medical documents, visual artifacts, and legal records—as sites of struggle over cultural meanings" (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 1). My indebtedness to the field of cultural studies will be obvious in this project, but I will also be doing my best to respect formal differences between different kinds of textual utterances. Particularly in regard to the law, I will try to maintain its separateness as its own field of discourse—not as an autonomous realm that can be isolated from other cultural productions, but distinct in its professional character and relationship to material reality from those other productions, including literature. That being said, it might be worth stating the obvious: my training is not in the law or legal history, and this project is primarily a work of literary criticism and literary history. As a partial apology for any liberties I take in this realm, I'll follow Slauter's lead: "If I have turned to topics that seem distant from the concerns of legal or political historians, it is out of a conviction I share with many of the eighteenth-century thinkers I treat that cultural and constitutional history can and should be mutually illuminating" (18). I'll end here, with one of my favorite mission statements from a scholarly monograph, modified for the situation at hand: "My goal is simply to trace the palimpsest of our collective novelistic unconscious and bring its historical force to view. Although no readers will be freer

when this [dissertation is completed], perhaps it will make a few historical and discursive patterns clearer" (Doyle 21). If I can achieve some part of these aims, I will be satisfied.

[1] Hannah Muller delineates various uses of "subject" and "subjecthood" in eighteenth-century Britain: "If 'subjecthood' is slightly anachronistic, the term 'British subject' was widely used in the eighteenth century. It was a ubiquitous figure of speech in parliamentary papers, treaties, pamphlets, newspapers, sermons, and official correspondence, as well as in petitions addressed to the monarch and his representatives. Subject status was evoked by members of all social classes and by peoples dispersed across the globe. At times, 'British subject' was intended simply to describe someone as the monarch's subject who was of British origin. At other times, it was used to denote a specific legal status distinct from that of an alien, referring to all those who were subjects of the British sovereign, regardless of whether they were of British origin. However, 'British subject' had yet another provocative and potentially very expansive use. It could be wielded to evoke an inherent set of rights and privileges, not unlike those liberties often associated with the 'free-born Englishman'" (6-7).

[2] "By 1750, sugar overtakes grain as the most valuable commodity entering the global market. The total tonnage of sugar exports from the British Islands would increase by nearly fivefold between 1700-1787, with the volume shipped from the French West Indies increasing twelvefold in the same period. By 1787, the French and British Caribbean provided 80 percent of the world's sugar" (Iannini 17).

[3] "Between 1680-1790, the number of enslaved Africans increased from 64,000 to 480,000 in the British West Indies" (Iannini 17).

[4] South Carolina, for instance, was commonly referred to as "Carolina in the West Indies" (Iannini 20). In his recent history of colonial Georgia, *On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and British Atlantic World* (2013), Paul M. Pressly situates Georgia within the plantation complex of the greater Caribbean world.

[5] "The region was stitched together […] by patterns of commercial exchange and human mobility that routinely traversed imperial, national, and linguistic boundaries, often in blatant disregard of official mercantilist policies. It thus maintained considerable coherence through the early nineteenth century, even as factors including the territorial expansion of the United States, the political isolation of Haiti, and the gradual decline of the West Indian sugar economy brought increased fragmentation" (Iannini 10).

[6] By 1760, close to one third of British West Indian sugar plantations belonged to absentees, a number that only increases into the nineteenth century; "most British West Indian slaves belonged to men who chose to live as absentees in the mother country" (Sandiford 1).

[7] Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969, p9; Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972, p340; V.S. Naipaul, *The Overcrowded Barracoon*, NY: Knopf, 1973, p254. Also cited in Morgan, P.

[8] See Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (1990).

[9] See Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (1992).

[10] The British "defined themselves as Protestants struggling for survival against the world's foremost Catholic power. They defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree. And, increasingly as the wars went on, they defined themselves in contrast to the colonial peoples they conquered, peoples who were manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour" (Colley 5).

[11] See Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society* (2007) and Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (2011).

[12] See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1828* (1974) and E. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (1975).

[13] "The deeply ingrained division within English studies between American literature, on the one hand, and English or British literature, on the other, has foreclosed the exploration of certain historic relationships in a particularly invidious way" (Roach 183).

[14] The term "cis-Atlantic" was first coined in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* to mean "on this side of the Atlantic," compared to European side, when questioning whether one side or the other had better plants/animals/men (Armitage 22).

[15] A related clarification: in the course of the project, I will frequently refer to "the British empire," but that term is geographically and temporally bounded as it applies here. This project's scope is limited to what used to be called the "first" British empire—mainly comprising Britain's colonial settlements in the Atlantic world, as they were structured up until the last few decades of the eighteenth century. Until after the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), the British empire consisted principally of the American colonies (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 15). In the Americas, "occupying, cultivating, and inhabiting land was Britain's defining strength as a colonizing society" (Edelson 2). Around the time that Britain lost the thirteen North American colonies, it transitioned to its so-called "second" empire, which was characterized by commercial exploitation of Africa and the East supported by Britain's advancing naval power, increasingly restrictive control from the metropole, and the annexation of new possessions rather than establishing new settlements (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 15).

[16] Drexler has argued, "Early Americanists need to open the study of early republican culture to the political, social, geographic, and economic fields that define colonialism and place the post-Revolutionary United States in its hemispheric contexts. Our proclivity to conceive of culture—national culture—as a closed system has severely limited the questions that we have been willing to ask about the formation of local, regional, and national communities. Most detrimentally, regnant theoretical commitments to the imbrication of the nation-form, bourgeois subjectivity, and the genealogy of modernity not only have dictated how we read but have determined which texts (and events) are legible in the new canon of early American studies" (195). Paul Giles has argued more expansively that "the association of America, and by extension the subject of American literature, with the current geographical boundaries of the United States is a formulation that should be seen as confined to a relatively limited and specific time in history, roughly the period between the end of the American Civil War in 1865 and the presidency of Jimmy Carter, which ended in 1981. During the colonial period and the early years of the republic, the country's more amorphous territorial framework engendered parallel uncertainties about the status and authority of American discourse; similarly, since about 1981, the multidimensional effects of globalization have reconfigured the premises of U.S. national identity in relation to a wider sphere. The identification of American literature with U.S. national territory was an equation confined to the national period and not something that was equally prevalent either before or afterward" (1).

[17] See Drexler, "Brigands and Nuns: The Vernacular Sociology of Collectivity after the Haitian Revolution" in *Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies* (2003).

[18] See Krise, *Caribbeana* (1999); Williamson, *Contrary Voices* (2008); Watson, *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World* (2008); and Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709-1838* (2012).

[19] In Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Sally Godfrey is Mr. B's mistress who serves as the fallen foil to Pamela's virgin virtue: Sally is sent to the West Indies to escape ignominy after giving birth to Mr. B's child out of wedlock.

Chapter One: Characters and Subjects

In a 2011 *New Yorker* article, the novelist Jonathan Franzen writes blithely that *Robinson Crusoe*, "the book generally considered to be the first English novel," is "the great early document of radical individualism, the story of an ordinary person's practical and psychic survival in profound isolation" (n.p.). In Franzen's view, and he is by no means alone, this association between the novel and the individual continues in the form's DNA into the present: the "novelistic enterprise associated with individualism—the search for meaning in realistic narrative—went on to become the culture's dominant literary mode for the next three centuries" (n.p.).

Literary critics have long linked the development of the English novel form in the eighteenth century with the growth of the modern individual. Enlightenment philosophy and epistemology is said to underpin, or at least to align nicely with, the novelistic project of depicting individual characters negotiating the society around them and experiencing personal growth as a result. Nancy Armstrong, for instance, argues that "the history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one and the same" (3). Armstrong, building on Watt, aligns John Locke's theories of ideas with the formation of an individual character in the novel: "Much as the mind, in Locke's theory, acquired information through sensations of the world and then converted those sensations into ideas against which it measured subsequent sensations, so the body, in the fiction of Daniel Defoe and other eighteenth-century novelists, acquired social experience and converted those encounters with the world at large into self-restraint and good manners" (4). This individual growth, moreover, "could well proceed in a manner analogous to a state committed to the protection of personal property. Just as the subject

mixes the labor of his body with the material world to convert that material into his very own property, so in mixing his judgment with sensations of the things of this world he accumulates intellectual property and acquires a mind of his own" (Armstrong 11-12). The autonomy of the individual as it developed in the tradition of Locke, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Adam Smith redefines the body politic as corporate body of self-governing individuals, and we see this self-governance at work in the novelistic project of universalizing the individual subject (Armstrong 15, 10). Armstrong believes this holds true even for the contemporary, postcolonial, and global novel: "wherever novels are written and read, they are reproducing the modern individual in both fiction and fact" (9). And it does not matter if this project involves resistance, complicity, mimicry, or hybridity; for Armstrong and many other critics, a novel "cannot modify the ideological core of the genre — the presupposition that novels think like individuals about the difficulties of fulfilling oneself as an individual under specific cultural historical conditions — and still remain a novel" (10). Lynn Hunt, to take another example, has contended that there is a causal link between the growth of the novel and the theorization of human rights discourse: it was in eighteenth-century sentimental literature, Hunt argues, that rights were first imagined as natural, inalienable, and universal, located in a self-possessed individual. Franzen's *New Yorker* article indicates the extent to which the equation of the novel genre with sociopolitical Western individualism remains the dominant cultural narrative.

This narrative has been challenged, however, on multiple grounds. Literary critics and historians within the past decade or so, especially, have tried to make it "impossible to hold on to the idea that the subject or self that the novel produces or represents is anything at all like the private individual of liberal ideology" (DeGabrille xx). In *Harm's Way* (2010), for instance, Sandra Macpherson uncovers, "in a novel form persistently associated with the historical and

conceptual production of self-conscious personhood, a way of thinking of our life among other that *is* other-directed—that treats human subjects (victims and wrongdoers alike) as that most alien of others, the object" (23). In his 2010 work on chance and probability in the eighteenth-century novel, Jesse Molesworth states that his goal "is to question the idea that enlightenment thinking and the early realist novel are working toward a shared or unified goal" (2). In *Sovereign Power and the Enlightenment* (2015), Peter DeGabrielle argues that eighteenth-century literature "reveals a relationship between sovereign and subject that cannot be reduced to that between a private individual and an expanding public sphere" (xv).

In this chapter, I will take *The Jamaica Lady; or, The Life of Bavia* (1720)[1] as a case study for the ways in which Caribbean fictions might fit into our histories of the novel. I'll focus particularly on the relation of the early Caribbean novel to the theories of both contemporary and modern novel critics regarding novelistic fictionality and literary character. Ultimately, I will suggest some ways in which novels that narrate British encounters with the colonial Caribbean offer critics a new way of thinking about the novelistic subject. DeGabrielle has argued that mechanistic accounts of subjectivity in recent work by critics like Macpherson, Jonathan Kramnick, and Julie Park, which argue that "the subject of the novel is immersed in a material, objective world that defines the self to such an extent that it becomes merely another material object," while compelling, are "not able to account for the complexities involved in 'thinking matter' in the eighteenth-century novel" or for "problems of the political" (xx, xxiii). My reading of eighteenth-century novels about the Caribbean has led me to come to much the same conclusion. An examination of these novels, however, offers ways to sketch out "a concept of subjectivity that reduces the subject neither to the internal, mental world of the rational,

consenting, liberal individual, nor to the externalist, objectified world of materialism" (DeGabrielle xxiii).

The Jamaica Lady tells the purportedly true story of the amorous adventures of two "notorious women" who talk their way onto a ship bound from Jamaica to England. Holmesia is a beautiful mustee, the daughter of a mulatto man and a white shoplifter from London, who is maintained by multiple lovers; Bavia is the unattractive daughter of a Scotchman, who, after aiding many a woman to cuckold her husband and engaging in multiple affairs herself, is forced to flee to Jamaica to escape prosecution. The story takes place almost entirely in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, on the ship of Captain Fustian, and features a cast of male characters that are either libidinous or oblivious. The bulk of the tale is made up of four interpolated stories about the two women—two "false" tales of respectability that the ladies deploy to enable them to be allowed aboard the ship, and two "true" tales that expose the respective vices of each.

The novel's author, William Pittis, was friends with the satirist Ned Ward, and Ward's 1698 satiric travelogue *A Trip to Jamaica* is commonly cited as the source text for *The Jamaica Lady.* There are a few parallels in plot and a definitely similarity in spirit. Both Ward and Pittis deploy the trope of creole degeneracy with a heavy hand: the Jamaica of Ward's account is "the dunghill of the universe," as he says, and Pittis depicts all his characters as tainted by their time in the Caribbean colonies. The plainest point of comparison is the direction of travel: Ward tells of a ship of British misfits who are traveling *to* Jamaica in hopes of mending their fortunes, whereas Pittis gives the story of a ship full of scoundrels who are making their way *from* Jamaica back to the British metropole. I like to think of the two pieces together as a colonial circuit—a trip out and back that emblematizes the continual circulation of people, goods, and ideas through the British Atlantic world. This circuit also highlights the worry plain in both works that, far

from the colonies only serving as a refuse bin for Britain's unwanted citizens and a distant site for the unmannerly accumulation of wealth, in fact, creole people and modes seem to circulate easily back into Britain.

The Jamaica Lady seems to have been a work of popular fiction, produced quickly and cheaply. Few copies of the work have survived, and, with one exception, it has not been reprinted by a modern publisher.[2] Published in 1720, *The Jamaica Lady* has much in common with other fictions of its time that also emerged from the competitive atmosphere of Grub Street.[3] *The Jamaica Lady* is published the year after Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and a few years before Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, during that uncertain time around the beginning of the century that J. Paul Hunter identifies as the first of two main periods of the British novel's development.[4] During this period, innovating authors were engaged in a constant search for new and exciting subject matter, a practice roundly criticized by conservatives like Alexander Pope. For many of these authors, faraway people and places often served as the subject matter for their experiments in revivifying the language.

Like other novels of its time, *The Jamaica Lady* does not much resemble our modern conception of the form: there is no interest in internal character subjectivity, and its plot is episodic rather than teleologic. Indeed, I insist on calling it a novel not because I am invested in inserting it into a stable generic category but in order to leverage it into a conversation where I believe it belongs—that around the history of the development of the English novel form. Ever since Ian Watt published his theory of novel development in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), critics have been reacting with caveats, qualifications, additions, and corrections. Watt ties the novel's rise to particular cultural conditions in early eighteenth-century England—such as the scientific enlightenment, empiricism, secularism, capitalism, and the rise of the middle class—that created

an ideal environment for the growth of the representational strategy that he calls "formal realism." Watt bases his schema on the novels of Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding—a selective trio that has led to accusations that Watt ignored a huge swath of eighteenth-century novelistic production in forming his theories. Patricia Meyers Spacks, for instance, begins her study *Novel Beginnings* with the premise that the emphasis on realism as the primary value on which theories of the rise of the novel have been based has undervalued the aesthetic relevance of eighteenth-century fiction. She calls for renewed attention to "the complicated workings of fantasy in eighteenth-century fiction" (3). In addition to the teleology of realism, Watt has also been blamed for leaving out female authors in his story of the novel. Ros Ballaster, in her decisive study of amatory fiction, protests that "the predominance of realist teleologies in historical studies of the rise of the novel has obscured the continuing appeal of fantasy and non-realist forms (traditionally associated with the romance and feminine literary consumption) for writers of early prose fiction" (2). Ballaster points out that there is a long historical precedent for the obscuring of foundational female authors: "Early amatory fictions of Behn, Manley, Haywood were persistently written out of the novel tradition in the mid to late eighteenth century in the attempt to make it respectable. The novel, identified as a female form, was in this period refined by purging it of its disreputable associations with female sexuality and the subversive power of female wit or artifice" (3). When, in the early nineteenth century, canon-forming editions of eighteenth-century novels are compiled by the likes of Sir Walter Scott, the realist novel is privileged over anything resembling a "romance." Nancy Armstrong, drawing on Homer O. Brown, has noted moreover that these canon-forming collections[5] also prominently feature Ian Watt's trio of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, thus establishing novels celebrating the individual as central to the tradition (21). J. Paul Hunter summarizes the assumptions of

novel criticism in 1990 thus: the novel has "become subjective, individualistic, realistic—an account of contemporary life peopled with ordinary characters in everyday situations using the informal language of everyday life to describe, for ordinary readers, the directions and values that inform a series of particular, connected actions and events" (30). While these features are crucial components to the form that became popular in the early to mid eighteenth century, Hunter argues, "attention to distinctive novelistic features tends to obscure characteristics that novels share with romances or other fictional kinds and thus to present a distorted sense of the species" (30). Rather than a set of formal generic notions, Hunter persuasively describes the novel as a constellation of features (23).

The Jamaica Lady has received scant attention from critics in general. It has been reprinted just once by a modern publisher, in the 1963 collection *Four Before Richardson: Selected English Novels, 1720-1727,* edited by William H. McBurney. *The Jamaica Lady* does have the distinction of being one of only four "novelistic ghosts which seemed worth reviving" (vii). McBurney chose these novelistic ghosts avowedly from the moment when the novel genre "was just beginning to materialize" and because each "anticipates the works of the important mid-century novelists, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett" (vii). McBurney treats these four novels mainly as precursors of these great novelists to demonstrate that genius had to come from somewhere. McBurney lists his novels in a "progression of technical skill and general interest": sadly, *The Jamaica Lady* comes in second to last in these rubrics (viii). He is interested in *The Jamaica Lady* mostly as a precursor to the novels of Smollett, particularly *Roderick Random*, and some of Fielding's methods of characterization (xx).[6] *The Jamaica Lady* is given credit, however, as an "amusing and masculine knock-about farce," and McBurney acknowledges that

the book's four interpolated narratives "reveal considerable literary skill in their stylistic variations" (xxi, xxii).

Pursuant to the feminist project of opening up of the novelistic canon mentioned above, *The Jamaica Lady* has more recently been taken seriously by critics who have examined the novel's depiction of a creole love plot or highlighted the novel's participation in certain contemporary anxieties about the regulation of female sexuality, colonial degeneracy, and Britain's changing economic identity. Erin Mackie examines the novel in terms of its oxymoronic title: the way in which the gap between "Jamaica" and "lady" is perceived and constructed in novels from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, specifically in terms of "misogynist fears of feminine capriciousness and sexual/reproductive illegitimacy," which often manifests in "occult content: witchcraft, obeah, voodoo" (190). Carol Barash situates *The Jamaica Lady* in a larger eighteenth-century discourse about gender and race in order to highlight the extent to which the novels' construction of female sexuality is intertwined with larger cultural patterns of racial and sexual violence (414). Melissa Downes reads *The Jamaica Lady* as a text of the South Sea Bubble, arguing that its representation of the Caribbean enters into contemporary worries about the domestic market.

The Jamaica Lady has most seriously been interpreted, then, as a warning about excessive consumption—of non-reproductive sexuality (intertwined with dangerous racial intermixing), most overtly, and of other kinds of commercial consumption implicitly. I want to address a few of these interpretations. Barash concludes that the novel is ultimately concerned with containing and controlling its stories of female sexuality (420). She links the novel's need to delimit female virtue and vice with a "linguistic warfare and the authority of a monolithic English language" (420). This manifests when "the male characters' desire to hear about

transgressive female sexuality places the men dangerously out of control; their attempts to seek out the veracity of the women's stories produces no guarantee of truth, only more stories" (420).

It is certainly true that in the English popular imagination, the Caribbean colonies were perceived as degenerate spaces of moral laxity and sexual license (and I will delve more deeply into these assumptions in chapter three). This is the lens through which Aleksondra Hultquist interprets *The Jamaica Lady*, reading the novel as a straightforward transcription of metropolitan anxieties about female sexuality: "There is no redemptive, reproductive, or productive power in Jamaica at all in *The Jamaica Lady*. Corruption breeds corruption in generations: cast-off mistresses bear illegitimate, prostitute children. It is not the place for women to make a fortune as much as it is the place to try to avoid the worst of the localizing infection while one remains there" (41). Some elements of the story seem to support this reading. Pharmaceuticus's wife, for instance, is portrayed as a chaste spouse until she is infected by the Jamaican climate. She's lived five years in Jamaica, "long enough, not only to tincture, but to change her whole mass of blood, and totally alter her nature, and that a disease so long growing was not to be presently eradicated" (36). Pharmaceuticus's wife, then, brings the contagion of the torrid zone back to Britain, with the implicit danger that she will infect others in the metropole. This episode can be usefully illuminated by Felicity Nussbaum's observation that, "because the women in both torrid and frigid regions possess bodily torrid zones, women of all regions threaten to inject sexuality into the most temperate geographical domains even as imperial discourse strains to confine it to certain areas" (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 10).

I have a difficult time, nonetheless, detecting any sense of real moral alarm in the novel. Barash makes the distinction that whereas, "in Ward's *Trip to Jamaica* (1698) or Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko; or, the Royal Slave* (1688), readers' pleasure was the primary source of narrative

authority, in the mid-eighteenth century the readers' pleasure becomes enmeshed with the potential violence of sexual silencing, castration, and other forms of regulation" (420). She connects this latter regulatory violence with *The Jamaica Lady*, but my sense is that its narrative allegiances are much closer to these late seventeenth-century tales.[7] In his preface to the novel, Pittis declares his design in publishing the story, which follows the common Horatian dictum: "first, to divert and please the reader; and, 2dly, to expose the vice of two notorious women" (n.p.). Not only does the desire to please the reader come first; the author states plainly that he is "satisfied" if he succeeds in only one of his two aims. Ultimately, the novel's conclusion seems one not of regulation but of excess and confusion, a hubbub of voices.

It is worth relating an abbreviated version of Bavia's histories here. When the characters first hear Bavia's story as delivered by her emissary, they learn that she was born a woman of "beauty, virtue, and fortune," whose duplicitous husband transports her to Turkey to sell her as a slave; after convincing her Turkish master to sell her as a servant in the West Indies instead—for, she claims, it will be some ease to live amongst Christians and preserve her chastity—she ends up on Captain Fustian's ship (11). This story, it is later discovered, is "all a romance" (22). Her "real" story is told by the ship's second mate, thus: she was born in Wiltshire, between two chief trading cities, London and Bristol; her father is a Scotchman and schoolmaster; when he loses his fortune and is reduced to begging from gentlemen in London, she abandons him; she then sets up in London for a place-monger and match-maker, maintains Irish gallants, defrauds an "unwary Bubble" (an old beau) by marrying him to a poor whore, and flees afterward to Jamaica with his money (60); in Jamaica, she makes a master and mistress jealous of each other by hinting that each had converse with their slaves—the result of which is that he whips the male slaves while she whips the women (64); Bavia then pimps out a young gentlewoman, is bound

and whipped by the woman's father, gets a reputation as a fortune teller and a conjurer in love—and escapes with a lover to New York, hidden in a barrel of sugar.[8]

If the novel attempts to contain the chaos at the outskirts of empire, it doesn't try very hard. True, on one reading, the novel concludes with its unchaste female characters soundly punished, as Pittis promises they will be, by being exiled from the metropole and sent back to the degenerate colonial outskirts: Bavia is arraigned for stealing and transported to Ireland, while Homesia is forced to return to Jamaica and take up drudgery when her many gallants can no longer support her in London. I am unconvinced by the tidiness of this reading, however, considering the picaresque[9] messiness of the novel's structure. The entire action of the novel, framed by the limbo of the journey across the ocean, depends upon the circulation of outrageous stories about its two female protagonists. It follows Bavia and Holmesia around a dizzying retrospective loop through Britain and its colonies, with the narrator, other characters, and the women themselves telling endless iterations of their stories. These stories literally serve as Bavia's and Holmesia's passports to circulate: it is by telling the captain stories of themselves as respectable ladies that they are able to board his ship in the first place. Moreover, contrary to Barash's assertion that attempts to seek out the truth of these stories "places the men dangerously out of control," the male characters are never in danger even of believing the tales. The narrator makes it clear from the beginning that the captain does not actually care about the truthfulness of these stories of respectability: "Captain Fustian lent an attentive ear to the narration, but really imagin'd she had been no more than a domestick servant, notwithstanding the varnish with which the man cover'd it" (20).

Considering the dizzying circuit through the Atlantic world in which Bavia has already partaken, her setbacks at the end of the novel do not feel any more final than any other the reader

is told of. I wonder, then, how we think most usefully about a text like this? It seems impossible to account for the work as a simple accumulation of ideology and political beliefs, which are highly ambiguous in the text. Nor is the narrative sufficiently explained by a postcolonial reading of imperial cultural dominance. The pleasure here is in the multiple identities these women take on—not unlike Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*, though unlike *Fantomina*, Bavia and Holmesia at least partially get to tell their own stories to the reader. There seems to be little interest in containment or fixed identity.

There is also a formal dimension to this refusal to contain. In *Misfit Forms: Paths Not Taken by the British Novel*, Lorri Nandrea connects the episodic plot, found in so many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century novels, with "cumulative structures": cumulative structures "work as formal analogues of processes whose ends are immanent rather than deferred. Motored by 'interest' (as theorized by Silvan Tompkins) rather than desire or suspense, they encourage readers to associate pleasure with process itself—activity—rather than activity's deferred aim" (5). Nandrea traces the roots of the shift in preference from the cumulative to the teleological understanding of plot, associated with the nineteenth-century novel, to the judgments of eighteenth-century philologists and grammarians, who "praised 'periodic' sentences that withhold the main idea, cultivating a sense of incompleteness that is finally erased by the closing provision of suspended information—as opposed to 'cumulative' sentences that begin with the main idea and add information" (5). "Cumulative structure" is a useful hermeneutic for thinking through *The Jamaica Lady*—not only in terms of its plot accretions, which build up layers of associations with contemporary culture but never organize them around any particular ideology—but also as a particular accumulation of formal conventions and practices that mark a discrete place in the history of the novel.

In his preface to the story, Pittis attempts to stake out a place for his work amongst contemporary narratives. Like many novels of this period, the author of *The Jamaica Lady* strenuously denies that it is one. The full title of the novel identifies it as a *life—The Jamaica Lady: or, The Life of Bavia*—probably evoking *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, published only a year before *The Jamaica Lady* and making a similar claim to historical veracity. In his preface, Pittis makes a familiar truth claim, declaring that the task he has undertaken is "far more difficult than that of writing a novel only" (n.p.). He likens writing a novel to "paint[ing] a man in general," as opposed to his "true" story, which requires drawing "the portraicture of some particular person, and to make the copy exactly resemble the original" (n.p.). Pittis uses this truth claim as a cover for any potentially offensive language in the story, requesting that it be attributed not to him but to faithfulness to his characters: "the story being true, an author, if he designs to have the picture known […] is tied up close to the pattern, must suit his words not only to the reader's taste, but to the persons represented" (n.p.). He admits, meanwhile, to shaping the story for narrative pleasure: he purposefully omits "long discourses of insignificant courtship, and tedious soliloquies" because they are "neither pleasant nor profitable and serve only to increase the bulk and diminish the beauty of a history" (n.p.).

One way we might understand this novel's truth claim is with reference to the non-fictional genres that contributed to the origins of the novel form in the eighteenth century. Paul Hunter has delineated a variety of ways in which, "to understand the origins of the novel as a species and to read individual novels well, we must know several pasts and traditions—even non-fictional and non-narrative traditions, even non-'artistic' and non-written pasts—that at first might seem far removed from the pleasures modern readers find in modern novels" (x). Hunter demonstrates that "the emerging novel must be placed in a broader context of cultural history,

insisting that popular thought and materials of everyday print—journalism, didactic materials with all kinds of religious and ideological directions, and private papers and histories—need to be seen as contributors to the social and intellectual world in which the novel emerged" (5). Prominent among these non-fictional prose traditions are the travel narrative and natural history genres, to both of which *The Jamaica Lady* is indebted.

Highly popular in the eighteenth century, natural history "gains secure institutional footing with the chartering of the Royal Society and the Academie Royale des Sciences," and it serves, by the end of the century, as "lingua franca of letters, art, and politics in Europe and the Americas" (Iannini 19). The natural history genre, moreover, is inextricably intertwined with British colonial exploration and settlement in the Caribbean. Kathleen Wilson notes that the British West Indies "served a Janus-faced function in eighteenth-century English imagination and policy," irresistible to "philosophers and naturalists" as well as "merchants and planters" (129). The colonial Caribbean was, throughout the long eighteenth century, widely considered to be "the site of the most significant and valuable forms of empirical knowledge to be derived from the New World" (Iannini 5). Thus, the natural history both owes its prominence to a "long-standing metropolitan obsession with empirical reportage from the West Indies" and is shaped formally "by the long legacy of its practice in the West Indies" (Iannini 6, 5). Christopher Iannini has demonstrated, in addition, that the representational strategies employed by the natural history genre cross-pollinate with the early novel form (15). Like the early novel, natural history is "informed by the interaction between empiricist technique and emblematic method" (Iannini 25).[10]

We can see this interaction at work in *The Jamaica Lady*. The novel was published with a table of words at the end "Explaining the Sea, and other Difficult Terms." The table is a

particularly fascinating and somewhat baffling compilation of words that includes Caribbean place names ("Ligganee: a fine, plain country, full of sugar-plantations, and is the most pleasant part of the island"); West Indian cuisine ("Cassada, or Cassava, a shrub, the juice of whose root is rank poison, but of the dry substance they make thin cakes, which serve for bread"); nautical jargon ("Capstern, a draw-beam, by which they heave up the anchor"); words in the "Negro dialect" ("Fumfum, […] beat"); explanations of particular racial categories ("Mustee" and "Mulatto");[11] and even the fantastic ("Tritons, Fabulous sea-deities, having their upper parts to the middle like men, and the lower like fishes") (Pittis n.p.). What emerges from this fairly short but diverse dictionary is a striking evocation of the geographic, racial, economic, and imaginative makeup of the British West Indies in the early part of the century. *The Jamaica Lady* anticipates by about 40 years a similar intertwining of aesthetic form and naturalist intelligence, though on a much more serious register, in James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764).[12] Grainger's long poem is famously overrun with extensive footnotes supplying information about Caribbean geography, medical treatments, and flora and fauna.[13]

McBurney excises this dictionary completely from *The Jamaica Lady* when he reprints it in his collection. This decision seems exemplary of the value that he places on his "four before Richardson," which is only insofar as they seem to anticipate the works of later novelists. The qualities that interest McBurney are those that seem to point to the novel form's true destiny as "subjective, individualistic, realistic," and features that do not fit into this tradition get written out. Carol Barash is the only critic to acknowledge this table in her analysis of *The Jamaica Lady* and only briefly engages with it to suggest that it "places the author and publisher, like the captain, in the position of transporting readers from Jamaica to England, and of translating all other languages into English. The 'Table' further suggests the need for a unified English

language (or, we might say, a stable linguistic economy) at points of narrative—and cultural—stress" (420). It is certainly possible to interpret this table as an act of colonial domination, as the imposition of an English system of classification upon "native" materials. I want to examine a couple terms from this table, however, that I think work against this reading. The table ultimately seems to belong more to an older natural history tradition associated with Sir Hans Sloane than with later systems of scientific classification pioneered by Carl Linnaeus: as such, it seems to be an artifact more of curiosity and collection than regulation and delimitation. The table evinces the important interaction of emblem and empiricism in the early novel, in a way we can only perceive if we understand some contemporary context of natural history.

The first term is "Mannattee-Skin," one of the longer definitions in the table: it is defined as "the skin of a fish resembling a cow, the flesh of which is very good food; and the skin being cut into thongs, twisted and dried, makes a sort of whips or switches, with which they flog their negroes. But the punishment being look'd on to be too severe, there is an act of the country, which prohibits the use of them in the correction of slaves." This evocative definition resonates on several levels: as a naturalist description of a West Indian sea creature; as an instrumental instruction for colonial outsiders to survive in the New World; as a dispassionate ethnographic statement about a society dependent upon a violent economic system from which the author feels removed. The latter portion of the definition shows that Ward's *Trip to Jamaica* was not Pittis's only source of information about the Caribbean: it echoes almost exactly a line in Hans Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* (1707). In a famously explicit passage, Sloane enumerates various physical tortures doled out as punishment for disobedient slaves: for negligence, "they are usually whipt by the overseers with lance-wood swiches, till they be bloody […] Beating with manati straps is thought too cruel, and therefore prohibited by the customs of the country" (lvii).

This direct borrowing from Sloane seems to call for an examination into Sloane's own practices when accumulating Caribbean information for study. Historian James Delbourgo notes that Sloane was an "avowed Baconian" and attests in the *Natural History of Jamaica* his "commitment to gathering particulars" (81). Sloane's descriptions of African slaves in the *Natural History* responded to an impulse to catalogue natural variety in physical, moral, and technical terms, by "attending to the curious in each": curiosity here has at least two distinct emphases, connoting "on one hand the careful and minute observation of particulars as part of the quotidian collection project of reformist Baconian natural history, but retaining, on the other hand, an older connotation of the strange and marvelous. […] He framed his account not as a description of the institution of slavery, but rather as the study of a putatively natural group" (Delbourgo 88). In his examination into the phenomenon of transgenerational color change in the skin color of certain enslaved subjects, Sloane, "rather than offer an interpretation of this phenomenon or draw out its implications for a philosophy of human variation," instead "indulged his collector's predilection for exhibiting the range of interpretation such phenomena could provoke" (Delbourgo 89).

The second term is "Cacao, the nut of which chocolate is made." Pittis seemingly felt the need to include this as a "difficult term," though at this point the British public in London had long been exposed to chocolate: Delbourgo writes, "Prepared according to various recipes but often sweetened with sugar, chocolate became a luxury good throughout much of Europe by the seventeenth century, taken either as a stimulant and alleged aphrodisiac or with alcohol, in coffeehouses and elite chocolate-houses" (78). To contrast another English work on the Caribbean, in Edmund Hickeringill's 1661 report of Jamaica titled *Jamaica Viewed*, Hickeringill assumes that information about chocolate is so common as not to merit any explanation. *Jamaica*

Viewed is dedicated to the newly restored King Charles II, to "give His Majesty intelligence of a territory he knew little of" (33). Though the island may be little known, however, its products are not: Hickeringill's only comments on "cacoa-trees" are, "Of the fruit or nuts of these trees is made the so fam'd chocoletta, whose virtues are hiperboliz'd upon every post in London," and "The composition of these cacoa cakes or chocoletta is now so vulgar that I will not disparage my reader by doubting his acquaintance in so known a recipe" (35). Chocolate's increasing popularity was, Delbourgo says, "part of the 'Caribbeanization' of British tastes, at once eager and ambivalent" (78). Mr. Spectator warns his readers in the April 29, 1712 issue of *The Spectator* "to be in a particular manner careful how they meddle with romances, chocolate, novels, and the like inflamers, which I look upon to be very dangerous to be made use of during this great carnival of nature [the month of May]." Delbourgo compares Sloane's treatment of enslaved Africans in Jamaica with his history of cacao. Just as Sloane exhibits an inclination more towards collection than biologic classification in the case of the African slaves, Sloane's history of the cacao plant is "largely given over to describing its commercial and cultural functions, not its anatomy" (Delbourgo 84). Delbourgo notes that, "contrary to Michel Foucault's contention that 'classical era' natural history marked a decisive shift from the magical Renaissance emblem to the naturalistic anatomical diagram, Sloane's *ars excerpendi* mobilized a substantial quantity of commercially inflected ethnographic reportage that tellingly multiplied its very object of inquiry: cacao as species, cacao as crop, and chocolate as recipe, medicine, and commodity" (84). Sloane's authorial voice "matched the multiplicity of the object of his inquiry — not a botanical species narrowly construed, but an entity whose natural history was exhibited predominantly for its ethnographic interest" (84). Its evident reliance on Sloane's *History*, as well as its total lack of schema, lead me to conclude that the table of terms in *The Jamaica Lady*

is not performing a straightforward act of linguistic domination. Like an antiquarian in his study, *The Jamaica Lady* accumulates a lot of interesting foreign material but does not demonstrate a particular interest in ordering it for use.

The novel's connection to natural history and travel narrative provides one context for the claim to historical veracity in *The Jamaica Lady*'s authorial preface. At the same time, similar truth claims are conventionally employed by most writers of fiction working at the same time: Defoe's preface to *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, states that "the editor believes the thing to be a just history of fact; neither is there any appearance of fiction in it." It is characteristic of what Nicholas Paige, following Barbara Foley, calls the *pseudofactual* mode of reference, in that it "masquerades as a serious utterance" (x). Novelists of the late seventeenth century and eighteenth century "routinely assert—though ambiguously, half-heartedly, or ironically—the literal reality of their books," pretending to offer readers "real documents ripped straight from history—found manuscripts, entrusted correspondence, true stories, and all the rest" (Paige 12, x). The pseudofactual posture offered authors certain discrete advantages: it permitted more commentary on contemporary life; it made a place for writers, from bourgeois hacks to aristocratic women, who were not poets in the old, classically trained sense; and readers who read for leisure and not for learning could read about themselves rather than figures of the remote past (Paige 29). We see evidence of a further rationale for the pseudofactual posture in Richardson's insistence that he be named as the "editor" rather than "author" of *Clarissa*'s letters: for Richardson and his contemporaries, the power of the artwork is more perfect the closer it approaches to reality. While the pseudofactual pact demanded that readers pretend to regard novels as true, however, "later novelists asked for something quite different—that they accept the writer's inventions as a kind of model of reality" (Paige x). What makes fiction

fiction, and what makes the realist novel fiction, according to Paige, is "not content but the oblique manner in which it makes propositions about the world": the pseudofactual mode "asserts literal truth so as to lay claim to other sorts of truth (moral, emotional, and so on)," whereas fiction "operates analogically or hypothetically" (17-18).

Paige's articulation of the pseudofactual mode is useful for understanding *The Jamaica Lady* and other novels of its ilk because it does not assume that these pervasive truth claims for patently fictional stories are a sign of naiveté on the part of the contemporary readership, on the one hand, or, on the other, an indication that the authors were just working themselves up to proper novelistic fiction, which is finally able to come into its own in the nineteenth century. The pseudofactual novel was not just an incubation period for modern realism; what came "before fiction," rather, was not fiction: "It was not inadequate, clunky, or naive for not being fiction; it simply consisted of practices and rationales that fiction replaces or at least supplements with others" (Paige 4). I am less interested in signing on to Paige's exact arguments about what is and is not "fiction" than I am in thinking about the novel as, in Paul Hunter's words, a "constellation" of formal features: these features each have certain affordances and drawbacks, and they gain or lose prominence in response to dominant social, cultural, and technological preferences. Examining practices that are motivated by preferences other than those we currently recognize "allows us to imagine other possibilities for the novel" (Nandrea 3).

The tradition of amatory fiction also takes part in the pseudofactual mode of reference, and *The Jamaica Lady* is clearly formally indebted to this tradition. Ros Ballaster defines amatory fiction as "a particular body of narrative fiction by women which was explicitly erotic in its concentration on the representation of sentimental love" (31). Particularly associated with Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood, these narratives were inspired by French

fiction as it was imported into Britain in the seventeenth century. Ballaster divides the tradition into four distinct narrative forms: the romance, the *petite histoire* or *nouvelle*, the *chronique scandaleuse*, and the epistolary novel (42).

In his preface to *The Jamaica Lady*, Pittis attempts to distinguish his work from "a novel." In his account, novels "are generally of two sorts": in the first,

> the author of one kind has commonly no more to do than to abridge the story of some larger history, from which he picks and culls what he believes most apt to please the palate of the reader; and it is usually not much otherwise than a bare transcription: or if there be an alteration he is left at liberty to add or diminish, as his fancy dictates; and the language is such as is best adapted to his own genius. (n.p.)

The second type is "a translation of some foreign piece, where the plot, humour, and discourse, are ready made to his hand, and he has nought to do but to render it into English; which if he performs in an elegant stile, the reader's pleas'd, and the author applauded" (Pittis n.p.). Here again is how he differentiates his own work: "here are represented persons of different characters distinctly wide one from the other: And the story being true, an author, if he designs to have the picture known, without (like a bad painter) writing under it, is tied up close to the pattern, must suit his words not only to the reader's taste, but to the persons represented" (n.p.).

It is hard to know, based on these rather oblique statements, how Pittis's taxonomy of literary prose would line up with our modern genre categories. What does seem clear, however, is that *The Jamaica Lady* draws on a number of narrative forms in the lineage of amatory fiction. The romance tradition is invoked and dismissed within the context of the novel's action when the second mate calls Bavia's initial story of respectability "all a romance." Indeed it partakes in many romantic clichés, such as the woman of "beauty, birth, and fortune" who is taken

advantage of by a tyrannical, duplicitous husband. McBurney attributes the false account of Bavia's life to the contemporary novels of Eliza Haywood: it "is in the highly romantic style typical of Mrs. Haywood's novels" and makes use of Haywoodian trademarks such as "the indignant aside, […] the verbatim repetition of involved conversations, and the description of the heroine's swoon" (xxi). Additionally, McBurney speculates that for the first sort of "novel" that Pittis dismisses in the preface, he may have had in mind the popular "secret histories" of the Tudor courts (xv). *The Jamaica Lady* itself, however, also participates in the secret history form. Works like Manley's *The New Atalantis* (1709) and Haywood's *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia* (1725) are *romans à clef*, or key novels, which promise to reveal the scandalous exploits of the aristocracy and would be accompanied by a separate published "key" to inform readers exactly which court figures are implicated by the characters in the novel. Pittis himself gestures to this form when he says in the preface that he "designs to have the picture known": he wants the reader to be able to identify his characters. *The Jamaica Lady* is not a proper key novel, but with these gestures, as McBurney says, it "had some of the lure of the picaresque and of the popular key-novel," and "it gained even more by the use of colonial as well as English settings" (xx). In fact, the key, if there is one here, would be the Table of Terms that follows the story; instead of giving clues to contemporary scandals in British high life, however, it gives the key to supposed scandals of exotic colonial outposts.[14]

The novel's formal debt to amatory fiction is also apparent in its methods of characterization. As Catherine Gallagher points out in "The Rise of Fictionality," the "majority of seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century credible prose narratives— including those we now call fictions—were meant to be read either as factual accounts or as 'allegorical' reflections on contemporary people and events" (339). In the scandal chronicle form popular in the late

seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the characters' names were meant to serve as clues to their real high-society equivalents. It is around midcentury that we start to see a new assumption for novel form: "novels are about nobody in particular" (Gallagher 339). *The Jamaica Lady* might be interpreted as a kind of scandal chronicle, and it follows the common scandal chronicle convention of employing "pseudonyms that often referred to the moral qualities of persons" (Gallagher 353). Pharmaceuticus and Phlebotomus, for instance, have characters that are coterminous with their professions.

The novel's presentation of fictional character deserves further scrutiny, however. Its particular mix of emblematic sign and empirical reportage, which is related to its situation at an early moment in the development of the novel form and the development of Britain's Atlantic empire, is illustrative for understanding both contemporary and modern debates about novel characters.

In *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars* of his life (1772), formerly enslaved British African James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw[15] relates an incident in which a relatively kind mistress gives him a work by John Bunyan; Gronniosaw has been feeling miserable about the state of his soul, and his mistress thinks he will be comforted by reading an account of similar spiritual travails. Gronniosaw feels just the opposite, however:

> I found his experience similar to my own, which gave me reason to suppose he must be a bad man; as I was convinc'd of my own corrupt nature, and the misery of my own heart: and as he acknowledg'd that he was likewise in the same condition, I experienc'd no relief at all in reading his work, but rather the reverse. —I took the book to my lady, and inform'd her I did not like it at all, it was concerning a wicked man as bad as myself; and I did not chuse to read it, and I desir'd her to give me another, wrote by a better man that

> was holy and without sin. —She assur'd me that John Bunyan was a good man, but she could not convince me; I thought him too much like myself to be upright, as his experience seemed to answer with my own. (41)

In a relatively short account of his life, this episode stands out for the narrative space that Gronniosaw takes to make a point about literary character. Knowingly or not, Gronniosaw wades into a live debate, happening in the contemporary press around the time of the publication of his narrative, about the kinds of characters that should appear in works of fiction. With the novel form gaining in popularity, critics fretted over the implications of its increasing focus on the sorts of everyday personages that the reader could recognize in herself or her acquaintances. Print wars raged over the author's responsibility to depict morally upright characters that would inculcate good lessons in their novels' young, purportedly vulnerable readers.

Samuel Johnson is perhaps the most prominent advocate of the contention that fictional characters should be moral exemplars. In his *Rambler* No. 4 (1750), Johnson observes that, unlike ancient epic or romances, the "works of fiction, with which the present generation seems more particularly delighted, are such as exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind" (9). In these works, the task of the modern writer is to paint portraits "of which every one knows the original, and can detect any deviation from exactness of resemblance" (10). This is a potentially dangerous state of affairs, however, for readers of these contemporary works of fiction: Johnson expects that these books "are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life" (11). This is an urgent issue in a way it was not for authors who wrote in older fictional styles, for "in the romances formerly written, every transaction and sentiment was so remote

from all that passes among men, that the reader was in very little danger of making any applications to himself; the virtues and crimes were equally beyond his sphere of activity" (11). When, however, "an adventurer is leveled with the rest of the world, and acts in such scenes of universal drama," the young reader is more likely to look to that character in regulating his own conduct (11). Johnson takes an extreme view of the power of literary example and a dim view of the ability of the reader to resist it: when, therefore, "the power of example is so great, as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited; and that which is likely to operate so strongly, should not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects" (12). In fictional narratives, authors should exhibit "the most perfect idea of virtue […] the highest and purest that humanity can reach" (14).

Johnson represents one strain of this line of criticism, but some of his contemporary critics disagreed with his assessments. Henry Fielding and others argued instead that an author's moral duty towards his readers in fact requires him to depict decent characters who sometimes exhibit bad behaviors, in order to warn the reader against committing these behaviors himself. The authorial preface to *The Jamaica Lady* claims this merit for its tales exposing "the vice of two notorious women;" in so doing, the author hopes "that others, whose inclinations direct 'em the same course, may (if not for fear of future punishment, yet) by the dread of present, and of publick shame, be restrain'd from their ill intentions" (n.p.). The impulse towards verisimilitude in depicting realistic persons, moreover, might dictate that authors depict characters with a mixture of virtues and vices, for "certain virtues have their correspondent faults, and therefore that to exhibit either apart is to deviate from probability" (Johnson 13). Johnson has no patience for this line of argument, however, and views it as a "fatal error" for authors to "confound the

colours of right and wrong, and instead of helping to settle their boundaries, mix them with so much art, that no common mind is able to disunite them" (14).

Johnson gained many adherents among novelists in the second half of the eighteenth century. In her preface to *Sir George Ellison* (1766), Sarah Scott makes a very Johnsonian argument for her own exemplary literary character (who is for a time the owner of a plantation in Jamaica). Scott attests first that in selecting her hero, she did not choose a great man, as "great generals, wise statesmen, saints and martyrs" are "generally above our reach, or out of the sphere of common persons" (3). A more useful model, because more within the reach of imitation, is the life "of a man more ordinarily good, whose station and opportunities of acting are on a level with a great part of mankind" (3). Scott protests that this depiction of ordinary goodness does not require the virtues of her hero to be blended with vice: "the chief use I have seen made of mixed characters," she declares, "has been to gather from them a sanction for the worst parts of our own" (4). An author who exhibits "a character proper for imitation," then, "should rather endeavor to conceal the failings which may have stolen into a good heart, than industriously seek to discover them" (Scott 4).

Modern theorists of the novel have had just as much trouble agreeing on the proper relationship of fictional characters to human persons. Narratology and literary theory both have been vexed by the particular nature of fictional character as, in John Frow's terms, "ontologically hybrid," a mixture of textual effect and quasi-person (1). Deidre Shauna Lynch describes these two different approaches to character as coming out of changing critical priorities and trends: "The narratological/structuralist approach to character has tended to stress one dimension of characters, their writtenness, at the expense of the other, the one that might be summed up as their capacity to strike readers as being as personlike and as alive as themselves. Critics who

view characterization as the privileged locus of the novel's mimetic ambitions reverse these priorities" (211). There is a tension in literary character between an implied humanity or personhood and "the reduction of the character into the thematic or symbolic field" (Woloch 15). Put another way, Alex Woloch writes that characterization is such a divisive point in literary theory precisely *because* "the literary character is itself divided, always emerging at the juncture between structure and reference. In other words, a literary *dialectic* that operates dynamically within the narrative text gets transformed into a theoretical *contradiction*, presenting students of literature with an unpalatable choice: language *or* reference, structure *or* individuality" (17). Woloch develops his narratological categories of character-space and character-system[16] as a way to mediate within this dynamic: "By interpreting the character-system as a distributed field of attention, we make the tension between structure and reference generative of, and integral to, narrative signification. The opposition between the character as an individual and the character as part of a structure dissolves in this framework, as distribution relies on reference and takes place *through* structure" (17).

One of the louder objections to the humanist or referential basis of character has been that it is implicated in a particularly bourgeois notion of personhood, that is, as a universal constant rather than historically contingent (Woloch 16). Alternatively, "accounts of the novel's rise into realism have frequently treated characterization as indexing historical trends in the world the novel *reflects*," so that a "critical account that begins as an engagement with character's literary history" ends up "as a history of selfhood and its successive transformations" (Lynch 211). In order to actually engage with character's particular ontological hybridity, to respect its claims as both textual and person-like, Lynch argues that we should attend to the diverse metaphors that British novelists and commentators have used to deal with "character's particular mode of

existence" (213). One of the metaphors that Lynch catalogues, character as specimen, is particularly useful for interrogating character formation in *The Jamaica Lady*.

To return to the novel's preface, the author states his aim as making "the copy of some particular person resemble the original;" the work of a novel, on the other hand, requires "painting man in general." This is an interesting anticipation of Henry Fielding's declaration in *Joseph Andrews*, often read as a departure for novelistic nonreferentiality of character, that his new province of writing describes "not men but manners; not an individual, but a species." Lynch points out that the word species "was first used in English to designate the outward appearance of an object" (218). The language of species, she notes, "does not only align characterization with a project of social taxonomizing that assigns population units to their appropriate types. It also calls up that pictorialist episteme that associates character more with externalized, visible information than with the invisible truths of the psychological interior" (218). *The Jamaica Lady*, says the author, represents "persons of different characters distinctly wide one from the other." The novel thus offers a range of "sociological and ethical and […] humoral types," and it uses character as "at once a means of aggregation—it marks out the person's affinity with others belonging to the same category—and a means of segregation—it differentiates the person from the membership of some other category" (Lynch 217). *The Jamaica Lady*'s treatment of the character Captain Fustian is paradigmatic of this kind of species-based classification. The narrator declares first that "To be concise in his character, I need only acquaint you, that he was a downright tar, having had his whole education at sea" (2). In defiance of this concision, however, the narrator then spends the next five pages elaborating Fustian's character, with far more particular qualities than we get about any other character in the novel. Though more narrative space is devoted to the adventures of the two female protagonists,

it is Fustian whose character is elaborated at length. We learn about his virtues and vices, his politics, his physique, and his intelligence, a description that concludes with a disturbingly pithy anecdote about a time that a "malicious chirurgeon" once "stole some of his brains" (5). McBurney calls Fustian the novel's "outstanding achievement," explaining, "in outline he is the stock sea dog, unpolished, opinionated, and alcoholic. However, he is particularized by his gullibility, his taste for luscious tales, his fondness for minuets, his humane opposition to the flogging of the slave, and his parental affection for 'Compy-boy'" (xxii). To introduce a character is "frequently a matter of describing the sort of person he or she is;" the details that follow, though, "often complicate such pigeonholing" (Lynch 217).

It seems to me that we can link the way that character emerges from narrative structure, as a textual artifact and a quasi-person, to the way that subjecthood operates through the legal structures of the eighteenth-century British empire. In the next chapter, I will offer a related but differently focused account of the novel subject as an imperial subject.

[1] This is how the title appears on the title page; on the first page of the story, the title appears reversed: *Bavia: or, The Jamaica Lady*.

[2] The English Short Title Catalogue lists six extant copies of the book: at the British Library, the Newberry; the Clark (UCLA); University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Yale, and Princeton. I've examined four of these copies—at the British Library, the Newberry, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Yale (Yale's copy is unverified by the ESTC; the copy on the shelves is a photocopied edition created in 2000.) The only modern reprinting of the novel is in the collection *Four Before Richardson: Selected English Novels, 1720-1727*, William H. McBurney, ed. (Lincoln, 1963).

[3] McBurney's dismissive but evocative description of the Grub Street style: "it was a period of undirected and exhaustive experimentation. […] The rivalry of Continental fiction, and continued critical disdain, made necessary or inevitable structural brevity, careless style, stereotyped descriptions, and repetitious multiplication of those types of fiction which pleased the most obvious tastes of the reading public" (xvi).

[4] The second period came around mid-century, when the novel starts to become a well-respected literary form and professional endeavor under the influence of giants like Fielding, Richardson, and Sterne.

[5] Armstrong cites Barbauld's *British Novelists, with an Essay, and Prefaces Biographical and Critical* (1810) as an example.

[6] McBurney says, "Captain Fustian is an early example of the loveable quixotic character soon to appear in Fielding and Smollett's works," and "The caricature of Bavia also brings to mind the descriptive method of Smollett and Fielding's Mrs. Slipslop" (xxii).

[7] Ward insists in his *Trip to Jamaica*, "I do not therein present you with a formal journal of my voyage, or geographical description of the island of Jamaica, for that has been already done by persons better qualifi'd for such a task. I only entertain you with what I intend for your diversion, not instruction" (78).

[8] The image of a licentious woman traveling across the Atlantic hidden in a barrel of sugar is a comically overdetermined symbol. As Keith Sandiford says, "In its consumable substance and in the politics spawned by its trade, sugar represented a complex signifying system" (2). For an insightful account of this signifying system, see Sandiford's *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (2000).

[9] In the manner of the picaresque, *The Jamaica Lady* is relatively formless, "a simple succession of intrigues and cheats" (McBurney xxi). It's clear from a reference to Dulcinea that the author read Cervantes. McBurney speculates that *The Jamaica Lady* was inspired by Spanish picaresque narratives with female rogues (xx).

[10] Iannini cites Cynthia Sundberg Wall in *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (2006) for evidence that "early fiction tends to use the detail emblematically, but it frequently invests those emblems with a rich ordinariness, a telling local concreteness, that seems to hold them more firmly to the here and now than the hereafter" (3).

[11] "Mulatto: one whose father is a blackamoor, and mother a white; or father a white, and mother a blackamoor;" "Mustee: whose father is a mulattoo, and mother a white; or mother a mulatto, and father a white" (Pittis n.p.).

[12] The half of the Horatian dictum that Grainger privileges is just the opposite of Pittis, however: Grainger writes, "though I may not be able to please, I shall stand some chance of instructing the

reader; which, as it is the nobler end of all poetry, so should it be the principle aim of every writer who wishes to be thought a good man" (167).

[13] Iannini also gives an account of the relationship between the georgic, empirical knowledge creation, and the Caribbean. The revival of the georgic as a popular verse form, he argues, is intertwined with the new Baconian science. For commentators such as Joseph Addison, the georgic could be an instrument "much like the new ocular technology of the microscope," as it "provided a new verbal medium for the deliberate enhancement and extension of sensory perception, allowing for the influx of new kinds of empirical knowledge" (Iannini 23-24). For poets such as James Thomson and William Cowper, "georgic verse functioned as a 'microscopic eye' for perceiving troubling new social realities at the outer limits of empire" (Iannini 23-24). For a fuller exploration of the connections between georgic verse and the new science, see also Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (2004).

[14] I am indebted for the germ of this intriguing idea to Melissa Downes, with whom I discussed *The Jamaica Lady* at the Early Caribbean Society Symposium in London, July 2014.

[15] In their seminal anthology *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century* (1995), Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr name Gronniosaw's autobiography as one of the foundations for Paul Gilroy's conceptualization of the Black Atlantic—that "hybrid sphere of black culture in which ideas and activities, thinkers and activists, circulate among Africa, America, the Caribbean, and Europe" (2).

[16] Character-space: that "particular and charged encounter between an individual human personality and a determined space and position within the narrative as a whole;" character-system: "the arrangement of multiple and differentiated character-spaces—differentiated

configurations and manipulations of the human figure—into a unified narrative structure"

(Woloch 14)

Chapter Two: The Topography of British Freedom

In a 1751 pamphlet, novelist and justice of the peace Henry Fielding undertakes to describe the English constitution. He writes that it is a common error to regard the constitution of England as something uniform and permanent, as if it "partook rather of the nature of the soil than of the climate, and was as fixed and constant as the former, not as changing and variable as the latter" (*An Enquiry* v). Fielding makes a distinction between *soil* and *climate*, between rootedness and variability, as ways of understanding the composition of the English legal order. This interplay between *soil* and *climate* (or alternately, as we'll see later, *air*) as metonyms for the reach of English legal space will take center stage in this chapter. It is a distinction that points to fiercely contested territory among the king's subjects in eighteenth-century England and its empire.

In addition to soil, climate, and air, I'll add one more crucial term: constitution. As we've seen, eighteenth-century Britons generally took a dim view of conditions in the colonial Caribbean: to leave the temperate for the torrid zone, one must surely be a degenerate—or, if not, one could expect that degeneration was the natural consequence of a trans-Atlantic relocation. These convictions about the Caribbean climate put it at the center of two hotly contested debates within Britain's early empire—that surrounding the effects of the American atmosphere on Britons' physical and moral constitutions, and that around the rights and responsibilities of creole subjects under the English legal constitution. Eighteenth-century Britons used the word *constitution* in both of these senses: the bodily and temperamental—the "physical nature or character of the body in regard to healthiness, strength, vitality, etc." and the "nature, character, or condition of mind; mind, disposition, temperament, temper"—as well as the governmental—

"the mode in which a state is constituted or organized; especially, as to the location of the sovereign power" and "the system or body of fundamental principles according to which a nation, state, or body politic is constituted and governed"[1] (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The playwright George Farquhar, for instance, connects the two senses in his *Discourse upon Comedy* (1702), where he says that the English are "a people not only separated from the rest of the world by situation, but different also from other nations as well in the complexion and temperament of the natural body, as in the constitution of our body politick" (140).

In what follows, I will trace assumptions about the degenerate nature of the Caribbean climate as they surface in and leave their mark on a selection of English literature and law in the eighteenth century. Negative assumptions about the Caribbean climate and its effects on British constitutions, I will argue, help shape the way that British colonists construct jurisprudential theories of imperial subjecthood: creole subjects needed to formulate a theory whereby the privileges of British subjecthood could travel with them across the ocean and take root in very different material circumstances. These conflicts are thrown into relief in the short novel *The Fortunate Transport* [1750?], penned by an anonymous "Creole." The novel traces the female protagonist's journey from indentured servitude to member of the Jamaican plantocracy: along the way, it illuminates the perceived contradiction between creolization and English constitutional liberties. I'll conclude with a reading of a legal case that further focuses the issue of imaginative notions of imperial geography. By attending to counsel's use of *soil* and *air* as competing metonyms for British legal space in their arguments for the 1772 King's Bench case *Somerset v. Stewart*, we can see the very real impact that these conflicting notions could have on the British legal landscape.

I. The 'dunghill of the universe': American air and creole degeneracy

I alluded in chapter one to the discourse of creole degeneracy, upon which *The Jamaica Lady* builds its unflattering, secondhand depiction of the British Caribbean. It is this discourse the narrator references when discussing Pharmaceuticus's wife and her extramarital affairs: "It's true, indeed, he had caught her tripping at Jamaica, but that he thought was not so much the fault of the woman as of the climate, believing 'twas not her natural inclination, but that cursed malevolent planet which predominates in that island, and so changes the constitution of its inhabitants, that if a woman land there as chaste as a vestal, she becomes in forty-eight hours a perfect Messalina" (35). Here I will fill in the context behind the idea that the constitutions of Englishmen and women would somehow degrade if transplanted to the tropics. As Roxann Wheeler has demonstrated at length, a key to understanding the ways that eighteenth-century thinkers viewed human difference is to start with the then-general adherence to a climate theory of development. Broadly, climate theory posited that natural differences among people arose from geographic variation and climatic conditions.[2] In this model, human characteristics "were formed over time by external forces working on the body" (Wheeler 22). The most influential external factors included "exposure to the sun, the absence of winds, elevation of land above sea level, proximity to large bodies of water, fertility of the soil, and diet of the inhabitants" (Wheeler 22). In his *Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies* (1733), the physician John Arbuthnot makes a characteristic argument to this effect when he says that the "diversity of national features and shapes is not altogether the effect of propagation from the same original stock; for it is known by experience, that transplantation changeth the stature and outward shape, both of plants and animals" (146-147).

By "positing that all bodies (minds, emotions, and the like) responded similarly to the environment," climate theory also necessarily suggested that "some environments were better than others for enabling humans to fulfill their potential" (Wheeler 21). Inevitably, the climate seen as best suited to human physical and cultural potential was a temperate one; however, the definition of temperate tended to change depending on who was doing the defining. The origins of climate theory can be traced back to Hippocrates's "Airs, Waters, Places" (ca. 400 BCE), which experienced a resurgence of popularity in the eighteenth century (Davidson 3). In its ancient conception, the Mediterranean countries were the most temperate and thus most suited to human cultivation; under this model, Britain was too far north and thus too cold to be hospitable to growth. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, Britain was imaginatively reconceived as a temperate climate: as Wheeler notes, "In the eighteenth century, proximity to Europe and to temperate climates generated a theoretical hierarchy" that placed Europeans at the top (23).

Torrid zones, like the Caribbean, inevitably fell at the bottom of the climate hierarchy. We see assumptions about the degrading nature of the Caribbean climate everywhere in eighteenth-century literature, philosophy, and politics. Ned Ward's satirical 1698 travelogue *A Trip to Jamaica* puts it most vividly perhaps, labeling Jamaica the "dunghill of the universe, the refuse of the whole creation, the clippings of the elements, a shapeless pile of rubbish confus'ly jumbl'd into an emblem of the chaos, neglected by Omnipotence when he form'd the world into its admirable order" (88). After halfheartedly listing the different species of wildlife that he encounters, Ward concludes with, "and the devil and all of monsters without names, and some without shape" and declines to describe the creatures "because some of them are so frightfully ugly, that if any friends wife with child should long for the reading of my book, it should chance

to make her miscarry" (87). Nor is it only the animals that are deformed; of the men, Ward writes that he observed "more variety of scare-crows than ever was seen at the Feast of Ugly-Faces" (90). Ward's satire is particularly instructive in its suggestion that the native Jamaican wildlife are so hideous as to be actually inimical to human procreation. While we might be tempted to dismiss Ward's language as exaggerated for comedic effect, his Jamaican caricature is not that distant from characterizations made by respected eighteenth-century natural philosophers.

Famously, in book fourteen of *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), "On the laws in their relation to the nature of the climate," the Baron de Montesquieu attributes any number of degenerate characteristics to the inhabitants of hot climates. A warmer climate triggers a greater sensitivity to stimulus: "In cold countries, one will have little sensitivity to pleasures; one will have more of it in temperate countries; in hot countries, sensitivity will be extreme" (Montesquieu 233). This excessive sensibility makes those who inhabit hot climates naturally predisposed to all kinds of vices: "As you move toward the countries of the south, you will believe you have moved away from morality itself: the liveliest passions will increase crime" (Montesquieu 234). A hot climate, in Montesquieu's account, leads ultimately to bodily, spiritual, and governmental lassitude: "The heat of the climate can be so excessive that the body there will be absolutely without strength. So, prostration will pass even to the spirit; no curiosity, no noble enterprise, no generous sentiment; inclinations will all be passive there […] and servitude will be less intolerable than the strength of spirit necessary to guide one's own conduct" (234).

As this quotation from Montesquieu indicates, the use of climate theory to account for human difference has always had political stakes. From an early date, colonial promoters made an effort to defend the Caribbean climate from this kind of censure in order to encourage

European exploration thither. As Keith Sandiford describes it, early Caribbean colonizing texts "are driven by the sheer demands of making these far outposts of empire known to audiences 'back home,' domesticating differences in physical nature, and assimilating diversities in manners and mores of both indigenous and colonists," as part of a strategy "to stir the hunger of prospective new settlers for the promise of individual enterprise and prosperity that awaited their exploitation on this new economic frontier" (2). Edmund Hickeringill's *Jamaica Viewed* (1661), for instance, undertakes to defend the island's climate as hospitable for Englishmen. He cites the inhabitants of the old town of St. Jago de la Vega, founded by Christopher Columbus, as proof that European constitutions can indeed adapt to the torrid zone. The long history of the town provides Hickeringill's readers with an example of the long term effects of the climate: "The major part of the inhabitants being old West-Indians, who now naturalized to the countrey, grow the better by their transplantation; and flourish in health equivalently comparable to that of their mother-soil"(48). If men are like plants—a common analogy in natural histories of the time—and adapt to the climate in which they grow, the creoles of St. Jago de la Vega prove that Europeans can flourish in the atmosphere of the Caribbean.

In *A Trip to Jamaica*, Ward lampoons exactly this sort of promotional travel literature that encouraged settlement in the colonies:

> I then began to consider what climate might best suit with my constitution, and what part of the world with my circumstances; and upon mature deliberation, found a warm latitude would best agree with thin apparel, and a money'd country with a narrow fortune; and, having often heard such extravagant encomiums of that blessed paradise Jamaica, where gold is more plentiful than ice, silver than snow, pearl than hailstones, I at last determin'd

> to make a trial of my stars in that island, and see whether they had the same unlucky influence upon my there, as they had, hitherto, in the land of my nativity. (80)

Under Ward's parodic climate theory, the climate best suited for the potential of the poor and out of luck is a warm and moneyed one. This slippage between climactic factors and human factors in the island is illustrative of the ways in which theories about the negative influences of a torrid climate upon human growth feed back into negative metropolitan perceptions of the kinds of Britons who would travel to the West Indian colonies in the first place. In the above passage and in the *Trip to Jamaica* as a whole, Ward plays into stereotypes of the Americas as attractive only to those who have failed socially or economically in Britain. With the 1718 Transportation Act, Britain systematically adopted exile as a punishment for serious crime, as an intermediate remedy between capital punishment and lesser corporeal sentences such as whipping or branding.[3] Transportation also became an attractive option for dealing with those unwanted subjects whose only crime was poverty, and colonization was frequently used and looked upon as a form of poor relief. As Michal Rozbicki traces, the English perception that America was a dumping ground for criminals and the poor was a major obstacle to the respectability towards which the colonial elites in America desperately aspired (736). By the eighteenth century, at least, wealthy American creoles were eager to be perceived as legitimate English gentlemen. Metropolitan critiques, however, painted these colonial gentlemen as "upstarts to gentility, without family lineage and traditions of education, refinement, and taste to validate their rank" (Rozbicki 740). This criticism was leveled at colonists who held respectable professional positions, as those who likely would not have been able to attain those positions in Britain: as Ward says of Jamaica, "a broken apothecary will make there a topping physician; a barbers prentice, a good surgeon; a baliffs follower, a passable lawyer; and an English knave, a very

honest fellow" (91). In Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Moll's mother makes a similar assessment of the Virginia colony: she notes with pride that Newgate prison "half peoples this colony" and brags that they have "several justices of the peace, officers of the train bands, and magistrates of the towns they live in, that have been burnt in the hand" (Defoe 74, 73). Indeed, these stereotypes were not without basis in fact; illiteracy in the plantation region was high, even among those colonists who held public office, and "economic success enabled a number of uneducated ex-servants to obtain county offices that implied genteel status" (Rozbicki 732). Metropolitan critique was overwhelmingly focused on West Indian plantation owners, however, who were "the most conspicuous rich men of their time."[4] These nouveaux riches were accused of ostentation and vulgarity at a time when the English national character is increasingly identified with discrimination and *taste*. Under the influence of cultural critics such as Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, English gentility becomes associated with the principles of good sense, politeness, decorum, and benevolence.[5] Metropolitan commentators consistently associate the planter class with traits that are just the opposite, however, including greed, alcoholism, and coarseness.[6] Plantation life is said to corrupt the Britons who undertake it, making the planters materialist, immoral, crude, and cruel.[7]

In another contest over environmental determinism more than a century later, the Comte de Buffon makes an enemy of Thomas Jefferson by claiming, in his hugely influential *Histoire Naturelle* (1749-1804), that the climate of the New World caused plants, animals, and men to degenerate. Buffon asserted that North America was too cold and humid, too filled with moist, unhealthy vapors, to be hospitable to growth; it was a place where only insects and reptiles could flourish (Jefferson xxii). Buffon's evidence included claims that New World animals were smaller than their Old World counterparts, that there was less variety in species of quadrupeds in

the New World, and that animals introduced into America were diminished in size and quality from their European ancestors—that, in short, "everything languishes, decays, stifles" in America (Jefferson xxii). This deterioration applied to men as well; Buffon described Native Americans as "so torpid as to be barely human" (Jefferson xxii). As the thirteen North American colonies edged towards revolution, leaders of the country would find that they had a particular interest in proving to Europe that the climate of the New World was just as well suited to civilization as that of the Old World. One of Crèvecœur's central aims in his *Letters from an American Farmer*, for instance, is to counter Buffon's arguments with the authority of a first-hand account, an aim that he highlights by addressing his *Letters* to the Abbé Raynal, a *philosophe* in this same school as Buffon. Crèvecœur testifies that, far from leading to degeneracy and dissipation in those men who inhabit it, the geographic situation of America is in fact uniquely suited to rebirth: "men are like plants," he says, and "every thing has tended to regenerate" those who live there (45, 42). Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787) takes up the same mantle, though with more detailed empirical evidence and increased urgency, coming from the post-Revolutionary standpoint of a fledgling country. Jefferson is at pains to list the measurements of the *very large* animals found in North America and to give evidence of the intellectual capabilities of the Native Americans. Jefferson, moreover, was one of multiple commentators to suggest that the American climate was actively being improved—that is, growing closer to the European norm—by civilization and cultivation; in *Notes*, Jefferson reports the consensus that "winter colds and summer heats had been moderated within living memory, as deforestation and cultivation advanced inland from the coast" (Golinsky 152).

Precisely because of the uneasy relationship they still felt to discourses of creole degeneracy, which were employed by European powers as a means of "colonial and imperial

control," leaders of the new United States worked hard to distance themselves rhetorically from their creole, colonial pasts (Goudie 7). As Sean Goudie writes, Anglo North Americans "were acutely aware of the dominant perception in England about their intellectual inferiority, and of the view […] that their contacts with Native Americans, the wilderness, and slavery had caused them to degenerate" (7). One way in which they tried to manage this perception was by defining themselves against the West Indian colonies. In the early republic, the West Indies frequently serve as a figure—"alternately threatening and alluring, abject and desired, entombed and fetishized"—against which to define a new U.S. American culture and character (Goudie 9-10). For instance, the Caribbean climate becomes a focal point in the panic surrounding the deadly outbreaks of yellow fever in the republic in the 1790s. Because "it was widely assumed that the epidemics were caused or aggravated by atmospheric conditions," Jan Golinsky has argued, the outbreaks "undermined enlightened optimism about the prospects for improving the American climate; and, because the discourse on climate was shot through with assumptions about national character and destiny, they also raised doubts about the political and moral standing of the republic" (150, 151). The blame for the corruption of the American air was attributed to different sources, often depending on one's political persuasion. While some writers argued that the source of the pollution was local, there were many who contended that "the air had been contaminated by noxious influences brought to American shores by maritime trade and migration" (Golinsky 150). The West Indies were frequently indicted as the source of the yellow fever; the College of Physicians, for instance, arguing for this position in a letter addressed to the Pennsylvania legislature, declared that the fever was "essentially different from the diseases that occur in this climate, and which originate from domestic causes" (qtd. in Golinsky 154).

Moreover, the Caribbean climate *was* demonstrably dangerous to European constitutions. Transplants to the islands found themselves especially vulnerable to the disease environment, a "notably lethal crossroads of contagion" (P. Morgan 58). One third of Africans forcibly transported to work on Caribbean sugar plantations typically died within their first year there, and the islands were a "fearsome charnel house for Europeans" as well (P. Morgan 58).[8] The physician John Hunter observes at the beginning of his 1796 *Observations on the Diseases of the Army in Jamaica; and on the Best Means of Preserving the Health of Europeans, in that Climate,* "The dreadful mortality, that has always accompanied military operations in the West Indies, in consequence of sickness and disease, renders every attempt to point out the causes of such calamities, and the means of obviating them, an object worthy of the public attention" (vii).

The islands of the Caribbean were subject to particularly precarious environmental conditions as well. They were prone to natural disasters including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and droughts (P. Morgan 58). At the same time, there was a dawning awareness among observers at the time that the climate of the Caribbean islands might be further degrading: "Writers in many locations in Europe, and in European overseas colonies, recorded their belief that climates were being altered, especially by deforestation, drainage, and cultivation of the land. European colonies in the Americas were prime sites for the emergence of this sense that human activities were transforming the atmospheric environment" (Golinsky 149).[9] Starting with the Spanish colonization of the islands, but picking up precipitously with the introduction of the plantation sugar monoculture, the islands' ecologies were changed drastically by their encounter with alien people, flora, and fauna. Within twenty years of the introduction of sugar cultivation to Barbados, its tropical rainforest was almost entirely decimated (P. Morgan 57). By the 1730s, Caribbean ecology had been almost wholly transformed (Iannini 22). Contemporary

observers took note of these changes not necessarily from a dawning ecological consciousness but because they threatened the productivity of the islands. The sugar monoculture, profitable though it was, threatened the survival of other valuable commodities, flora and fauna native to the islands (Iannini 22). The white plantocracy, meanwhile, was constantly plagued by problems of deforestation, soil erosion, soil exhaustion, and the invasion of pest species, all threatening the profitability of their plantations (Ianinni 22). These environmental threats show up in the contemporaneous literature; like Virgil before him, James Grainger devotes many lines of his georgic poem *The Sugar Cane* to the pests that threaten a farmer's (or plantation owner's) livelihood.

One way that plantation owners try to reassert control over threatening climates is through their inscription on and of tropical spaces: planters "emphasized geometric order, precisely defined plantation boundaries, and demarcated fields by straight lines. They had surveyors provide lovingly detailed estate maps, which were always more highly developed in the sugar colonies than in any other part of the New World (P. Morgan 58). As Max Edelson writes of colonial South Carolina, colonists "saw each of their individual plantations as an enterprise that contributed to the transformation of an American wilderness into a settled, British place […] They integrated new territory into Britain's transatlantic empire as they extended the geographic scope of plantation agriculture" (2).

II. The Caribbean climate and the British muse

The allure and peril of the Caribbean climate takes a prominent place in Anglophone literature of the time as well. Particularly in the case of British poetry from the second half of the

eighteenth century, reports of the Caribbean environment, with its novel flora, fauna, and weather, often serve as a source of poetic inspiration and imagery.

Edward Long reproduces the text of Francis Williams's "Carmen, or, An Ode" as part of his racist attack in the *History of Jamaica* (1774) on the intellectual capacities of people of African descent. Long presents the poem to his readers as a specimen, leaving it "to the reader's opinion, whether what they shall discover of [Williams's] genius and intellect will be sufficient to overthrow the arguments, I have before alleged, to prove an inferiority of the Negroes to the race of white men" (316). Though Long clearly thought he was providing evidence for black inferiority, he seriously undermines his contention by translating Williams's poem from Latin into English for publication and providing extensive footnotes elucidating Williams's classical and Biblical allusions.[10] Williams was a free black Jamaican, the subject, as Long describes it, of "an experiment, which, it is said, the Duke of Montagu was curious to make, in order to discover, whether, by proper cultivation, and a regular course of tuition at school and the university, a Negroe might not be found as capable of literature as a white person" (316). Williams joined the children of many white creoles in going abroad to England to get his education.[11] He studied classics at grammar school and mathematics at Cambridge, and he later returned to Jamaica and ran a school in Spanish Town.[12] In the previous quotation, Long uses the term *cultivation* to refer to something like civilization or acculturation, but he also seems to subscribe to a pretty orthodox climate theory when speculating about Williams's capacities. Citing the passage from Montesquieu mentioned above, Long suggests that the experiment with Williams was not quite a true test of African faculties:

> Considering the difference which climate may occasion, and which Montesquieu has learnedly examined, the noble duke would have made the experiment more fairly on a

> native African; perhaps too the Northern air imparted a tone and vigour to his organs, of which they never could have been susceptible in a hot climate; the author I have mentioned will not allow, that in hot climates there is any force or vigor of mind necessary for human action […] The climate of Jamaica is temperate, and even cool, compared with many parts of Guiney; and the Creole Blacks have undeniably more acuteness and better understandings than the natives of Guiney. (317)

Williams dedicates his "Ode" to George Haldane, the new governor of Jamaica who arrives in 1759;[13] he situates it in the martial tradition of Virgil's *Aeneid*, addressing the governor as the "Caesar of the West."[14] The poem indulges a fairly standard humility topos, but here it takes on a distinct cast:

> What! Shall an Aethiop touch the martial string,
> Of battles, leaders, achievements sing?
> Ah no! Minerva, with th'indignant Nine,
> Restrain him, and forbid the bold design. (Long 322)

Strikingly, not unlike Long, Williams attributes any poetic inferiority on his part to the excessive heat of the Caribbean:

> We live, alas! where the bright god of day,
> Full from the zenith whirls his torrid ray:
> Beneath the rage of his consuming fires,
> All fancy melts, all eloquence expires. (323)

If poetic genius cannot thrive in Jamaica, it is the fault of the torrid climate.

With this claim, Williams differs from many white poets of his time who take the sugar islands as their subject. The Caribbean is often invoked instead as a fertile source of new poetic

inspiration, a climate abundant in gifts for revivifying the poetic fancy. As James Mulholland has traced, around the middle of the eighteenth century, British poets began looking for new sources of poetic inspiration, and they often found this inspiration in exotic locales: "oral traditions and foreign voices from the edges of the British Empire revitalized eighteenth-century English literature as poets experimented with various ways to represent these traditions and voices on the printed page" (156). The physician James Grainger takes the Caribbean sugar plantation as inspiration for his georgic poem *The Sugar Cane* (1764). In a preface to the poem, Grainger states that his inducements for writing the poem were the importance and novelty of the subject: "as the face of this country was wholly different from that of Europe, so whatever hand copied its appearances, however rude, could not fail to enrich poetry with many new and picturesque images" (167).

The anonymous author of the sentimental abolitionist poem *Jamaica, A Poem* (1777)[15] begins with a similar suggestion. Situated "far distant from my native soil," the speaker claims, "I wake the lyre 'midst gay Jamaica's Isle;/ Whose fertile vales ne'er with the Muses rung,/ Whose fruits no bard, whose dames no poet sung" (Anonymous 328, lines 12-14). The speaker proposes to be among the first to sing of these fruits and dames:

> Be these my theme: to tune the long-lov'd lyre,
> When the Cane Isles and sun-nurs'd nymphs inspire;
> To make the new to the old world be known,
> And sing the torrid to the temp'rate zone. (328, lines 17-20)

The poet places himself in the tradition of James Thomson, whom he apostrophizes a few lines later, asking him to preside over the "sylvan strain" of a "youthful bard" (329, lines 39 and 40). For a writer of pastoral poetry, the speaker suggests, the Caribbean climate has several

advantages over the British landscape as a font of inspiration—including beguiling women, "biennial springs," and "double autumns" (328, line 23).

The poem takes a turn, however, and the speaker ultimately refuses to draw on the richness of the Caribbean climate as a source of imagery, because the climate has been corrupted by its reliance on slave labor. Asking, "how can I forget the sugar cane?", the speaker spends a few ambivalent lines testing the possibility of writing about the sugar crop: "How, by the mill comprest, the liquor flows?/ Boil'd by the jetty race, how sugar glows?" (329, lines 171, 174-75). The uncharacteristically clunky rhyme in this couplet, of "flows" with "glows," presages the dismal fate of this endeavor. The speaker references Grainger's georgic about the sugar cane explicitly[16] in setting up his own refusal to treat the subject. Grainger's attitude toward slavery is not unambiguous in *The Sugar Cane*, and he advocates the humane treatment of the enslaved workers on the sugar plantation, but their place in the poem is relegated to another aspect of farm machinery that the owner must manage in order to profit—and another mundane detail of farm life that can be turned to fine poetry. The speaker of *Jamaica, A Poem*, to the contrary, rejects the proposition that the muse would deign to sing of the "culture of a sugar soil":

> Th'ingrateful task a British Muse disdains,
> Lo! tortures, racks, whips, famine, gibbets, chains,
> Rise on my mind, appall my tear-stain'd eye,
> Attract my rage, and draw a soul-felt sigh;
> I blush, I shudder at the bloody theme,
> And scorn on woe to build a baseless fame. (329, lines 185-191)

The Argument to Part I of the poem puts this point succinctly: "The Muse thinks it disgraceful in a Briton to sing of the sugar-cane, since to it is owing the slavery of the Negroes" (328). Indeed,

the speaker's recitation of the scourges of slavery—"tortures, racks, whips, famine, gibbets, chains"—causes the otherwise fairly regular iambic pentameter of the poem's heroic couplets to break down, devolving into a series of laborious stressed syllables. In recording its degradation through man's intervention in the form of sugar plantations, the speaker denaturalizes the Caribbean climate, marking it as an unfit subject for pastoral poetry.

III. The Fortunate Transport and the Free-Born Englishman

I'll turn now from poetry to the novel, which, as I've suggested, has a special purchase on the dynamics of British character(s) under the influence of the Caribbean climate. The central conflicts in *The Fortunate Transport; or, The Secret History of the Life and Adventures of the Celebrated Polly Haycock, alias Mrs. B_____, The Lady of the Gold Watch* [1750?] partake in discourses of creole degeneracy, but also in the relationship of those discourses with contemporary debates about English constitutional liberty.

The author of *The Fortunate Transport* is unknown, but he pseudonymously calls himself "a Creole" on the title page. The scarcity of surviving copies of *The Fortunate Transport* suggest that it was a cheap pamphlet production of the popular press, not manufactured with an eye to literary posterity.[17] A quick overview of the plot might lead the reader to characterize the novel as a shorter, less masterful *Moll Flanders* in which the female protagonist never repents of her wicked ways. The eponymous Polly is born out of wedlock after her mother tries to abort her, then thrust onto the charity of the parish when her mother dies; she is taken in by a kind gentlewoman who would have provided her a good home if Polly could bring herself to stop stealing, which she cannot; so she takes a turn as a thief and sharper, then as a prostitute; she is transported to Virginia for theft, where she is initially sold into a good situation, then into a bad

one after she tries to seduce her mistress's son; she escapes from a cruel master to become the mistress of a kind one, and leaves this master after her term of indenture is up, taking many of his belongings with her as revenge for his refusing to marry her; she then goes to Jamaica, passes for a captain's widow, and takes charge of the captain's plantation; she marries a wealthy planter, Mr. F, and becomes a lady of fortune and rank; she marries another gentleman, Mr. B, upon Mr. F's death; and following Mr. B's death, retires to England to live with her daughters in "splendor and affluence" (42). This is all over the course of less than 50 pages. While the tale certainly does seem to owe some debt to Defoe, *The Fortunate Transport* stands out among novels of its time in the extent to which it immerses itself in the British colonial milieu. *The Fortunate Transport* spends almost half of its narrative space describing Polly's time in Virginia and Jamaica, and it engages extensively with colonial politics and characters.

The Fortunate Transport traffics in many negative metropolitan stereotypes about the Caribbean colonies. For one, the novel plays into anxieties about the effect of West Indian plantation money circulating in the British economy. Polly secures her fortune by marrying Mr. F, a planter of the first rank in Jamaica. The narrator notes that Mr. F purchases an estate in England, "which his eldest son, a man of unblemished reputation, enjoys at present" (41). Though this eldest son may have the taint of new money, he does escape the stigma of the planter. The fate of Mr. F's two younger sons, however, is a little more ominous. He leaves his second son three thousand a year in plantations in Jamaica and leaves his third son about half as much. This third son, the narrator notes with scorn, was lately "over here" (in Jamaica) and marries "one of the ladies of the town he had pick'd up in a bagnio," then brings her back with him to England (41). These few short sentences about characters we never hear more from have

the effect of reminding the reader that it is not only West Indian money—necessary, if somewhat distasteful—that circulates back to England, but also morally suspect West Indian characters.

Polly herself ends up in Virginia when she is sentenced to transportation for theft and is sold into servitude. Polly falls under the power of a planter who embodies the worst characteristics of contemporary stereotypes about this class:

> He was a mere planter, consequently, cruel, haughty, and mercenary, without any soft sentiment of humanity in his breast […] he had no thoughts but how to work the value of his money out of the slaves, and make the most of them, without regard to their happiness or misery […] In a word, like most of the tribe of planters, he had no appetite but for money; nor pleasure in any pastime but torturing the unhappy wretches in his power. (32)

The narrator considers the Virginia tyrant's cruelty typical for a planter in the colonies. What is unusual is a man of feeling, as the narrator depicts the justice of the peace who eventually rescues Polly from this master: this humane justice, the narrator notes, has "as little of the planter in him as it is possible for any man to have who had lived forty years in that country" (34). The justice seems to have maintained his humanity in spite of colonial conditions that would otherwise tend to degrade it. There is an important distinction between the Virginia tyrant and the humane justice of the peace, however. The justice of the peace has lived forty years in the country, but he is sixty years old: he is not a creole, and he presumably spent his formative years away from the corrupting atmosphere of the American plantations. In fact, the narrator describes him as virtually untouched by the Virginia climate: the justice had "a healthy vigorous constitution, and perhaps as much of the man about him at some times, as when he was forty" (33). Polly's master, on the other hand, one of "the tribe of planters," is definitively marked as a creole. We can track his bodily degeneration, as opposed to the justice's "healthy vigorous

constitution," by the loss of his "appetite" for any pleasure other than the acquisitive. While the planter is devoid of sexual impulses, the justice of the peace takes Polly into his bed. The planter has been rendered dysfunctional by his time in the colonies. We will see more about this paradoxical connection between a torrid climate, libido, and sterility in the next chapter.

The conflicts that seem to interest the narrative most are those that involve slippage between categories that should remain distinct, and characters' inability or unwillingness to properly discriminate between different statuses. Under the power of her Virginia master, Polly experiences cruel and arbitrary physical punishment: almost once every two or three days, Polly "was stript naked, tied to a tree, and whipt till her back was all over in a gore of blood" (33).[18] The explicitness of this physical violence is striking amidst a story that is otherwise composed largely of sexual euphemism. It is during one such incidence that the humane justice of the peace walks by and sees "an old negro labering her with an unmerciful cat-and-nine-tails" (34). The justice is outraged—mostly, it seems, by the fact that the punishment does not fit the skin color: the justice admonishes Polly's master for "using a white servant in that cruel manner, upon any provocation" (34).

Polly finally achieves financial and social security by acquiring a plantation and setting up as a plantocrat herself: she "employ'd the old servants to overlook her slaves, and for a year or two behaved with great decency, and gain'd the esteem of the neighboring planters" (39-40). In the process she imbibes "too much of the spirit of the planter," however, making her unfit for polite English society upon her return to the mother country (42). She was not known for her kindness to her slaves in Jamaica, the narrator notes with unconcern; even after returning to England, however, she displays "a disposition to use her servants with great severity, and scarce any share of humanity" (42-43). Polly thus commits the same error as her Virginia tyrant in

refusing to distinguish between white English servants and West Indian slaves. The problem for the narrator is not her cruelty per se, but that "she has the same opinion of those who serve her as she had of such as she employ'd among us, and as far as the law will permit, uses them with the same harshness" (43). Polly treats her English servants exactly like her Jamaican slaves: the only difference is in the laws of the two locations. The laws of England, as the narrator implies, do not allow a master the same latitude in the punishments he/she may inflict upon servants.

The narrator remarks that Polly's behavior "embitters the sweets of her present grandeur": it prevents her from fully completing the story arc modeled by that more familiar transported criminal and indentured servant, Moll Flanders (43). Whether or not one is convinced by the earnestness of Moll's professed regret for her former misdeeds, Defoe's story enables Moll to successfully leverage her capital from the colonies into a place in the British bourgeoisie. Polly's story is a total rebuke to this narrative: her interpolation into a domestic middle class order of propriety is blocked by her creolization. It is this process of creolization that Polly's story traces: in her journey through the Caribbean and back to England, Polly goes from being whipped to the one doing the whipping. In these mirrored scenes, Polly replaces the figure of the "old negro" who is illegitimately whipping an English servant—a racialization of the creole that raises the specter of miscegenation.

Polly is not particular in her fault: the narrator has "heard all Creolians complain of their English servants with great warmth" (43). This indistinguishing treatment is a serious problem, according to the narrator: the Creolians "treat free-born Englishmen as they do negroes and felons in the plantations, and expect the same submission from the one as the other; but they are mistaken. An honest servant will not put up with such usage here, but a knave will" (43). Only knavish servants who cheat their masters will put up with the tyrannical treatment of a creole

master: “free-born Englishmen” can expect to be treated better than “negroes and felons in the plantations.” The distinctions of these statuses are based on a cluster of qualifications including geographic territory, race, and legal standing. Polly's fault, and the fault of all creole planters that return to England, is an inability to recognize these important distinctions.

The stakes of these somewhat opaque exchanges in the novel become clear within the context of an emergent empire. The differences between these categories in *The Fortunate Transport*—free-born Englishman, servant in Jamaica, servant in England, felon, slave—are more legible when we consider contemporary debates about English constitutional liberty abroad.

It is necessary first to clarify what an eighteenth-century jurist would have comprehended in an invocation of the English *constitution*. Henry Fielding defined the constitution as “the original and fundamental law of the kingdom, from whence all powers are derived, and by which they are circumscribed; all legislative and executive authority; all those municipal provisions which are commonly called the laws; and, lastly, the customs, manners, and habits of the people” (v-vi). This is obviously a much more expansive notion of the constitution than we tend to understand today. Fielding rebukes those who confine their notions of the constitution to simply the law, or the legislature, or the executive; in fact the constitution is made up of all these different governing systems and more: it is “something which results from the order and disposition of the whole […] as harmony doth from the proper composition of the several parts in a well tuned musical instrument” (vi). The legal historian Daniel Hulsebosch agrees that we should think of eighteenth-century Anglo-American constitutions “not as documents but rather as relationships among jurisdictions and people mediated through highly charged legal terms;” a constitution “was a way of thinking about, and practices for carrying out, the project of

government that never depended on a single institution of enforcement" (*Constituting Empire* 7). This idea of constitution does not involve a U.S.-style separation of powers between different branches of government or an aspiration to divorce the legal from the political. Constitutional discourse "was a legalist idiom that highlighted arguments not just about courts, legislatures, and executives but also the fate of political society" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 8). Nor were there authorities who determined constitutional meaning for the whole nation: constitutional culture "was not sealed off from the rest of Anglo-American culture. Control over it was decentralized; no one held a monopoly on constitutional meaning" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 8).[19] Jurists cited an evolving canon of legal texts and commentary upon those texts; "beyond the documents and the commentary were the institutions that interpreted and applied them, the practical conventions that gave constitutions life. Collectively, these documents, ideas, and practices formed the empire's constitutional culture" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 8).

The decentralized nature of the English constitution meant that in the early modern legal landscape and well into the eighteenth century, British subjects employed—or, just as importantly, avoided—multiple different and overlapping bodies of law and legal structures in order to mediate their relationship with sovereign power. Literary historians have sometimes tended to identify early English law solely with the common law. This ignores, however, the other bodies of law that regulated the lives of ordinary subjects in England, including the courts of equity, ecclesiastical law, and manorial or borough law. These other bodies exercised substantially different legal rules and procedures than the more familiar common law courts. Equity "originated in order to modify what was perceived as the harshness of the common law," and ecclesiastical law "followed Roman civil law, which was considerably more egalitarian [in terms of property distribution] than the common law" (Erickson 5). English law was "defined in

terms of jurisdiction," consisting in "a collection of courts and procedures for resolving disputes, each jostling with the others for preeminence" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 9).

Legal historians, moreover, have shown that this uneven state of affairs persists into the British empire. The historical evidence indicates that the British imperial state was "marked by legal pluralism and polyvalent authority" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 5). Hulsebosch describes the state of imperial governance this way:

> Relationships that today appear vertical were then horizontal, as the empire was a collection of competing power centers rather than a pyramid of sovereignty. Who governed what? The answer turned on who asked whom, when, and why. The empire's legal architecture was baroque but unfinished: ornate in some areas, rude in others. Most Britons adhered to no single theory of the empire or its constitution; legal integration remained a controversial goal, not a reality. (*Constituting Empire* 5)

Indeed, legal historians have argued more recently that expanding empires relied precisely on legal pluralities in order to grow: "the option of one law for all, applied consistently and thoroughly to all subjects and to their relations with each other and the state, was sure to fail. Successful imperial law had to be variegated and adaptable to multiple and changing circumstances, while affirming the sovereign's ultimate authority" (Burbank and Cooper 280). Or, as Paul Halliday puts it, "early modern states, in their cores and on their peripheries, became strong not by squelching plurality and thereby approximating the unity apparently required by our Hobbesian and Westphalian expectations. They became strong because of plurality" ("Law's Histories" 268-69).

At the same time, the growing British empire also requires an increasingly integrated idea of English constitutional liberty as a set of principles rather than a collection of practices.[20] As

Laura Doyle writes, "the growth of American colonies particularly threatened to create the experience of freedom as aporia, insofar as, economically, geographically, and viscerally, the colonies put new stress on the contours of English identity" (7). Stakeholders in the colonies develop the ideal of English constitutional liberty as a way of working against this dispersal of English identity.

The discourse of English liberty therefore develops in tandem with Britain's colonial expansion in the Atlantic world: the British "began venturing across the Atlantic at the same time that they were consolidating their national identity around the English language, Protestant religion, commercial expansion, and a legal order soon known as the ancient constitution. Overseas expansion and the English constitution developed simultaneously and reciprocally, each structuring the other" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 15). The conception of the English constitution as a British subject's birthright becomes crucial to British settlers transplanting themselves overseas in their efforts to think of themselves and be thought of as English. Sir Edward Coke's invocation of English law as "the surest sanctuary that a man can take" and "the best Birthright of the Subject" is taken up as rallying cry (qtd. in Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 3). In his analysis of the transfer of English liberty to the British West Indies, historian Jack Greene writes that the free settlers in the island colonies "came to America fully intending to reproduce the old world in the new" (*Exclusionary Empire* 51). The invocation of English liberty had a practical as well as a rhetorical component: in addition to their urgent desire to retain their English identities, these settlers "regarded English legal and constitutional arrangements as the best way to preserve the properties they hoped to acquire" in the New World (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 51). The British empire, Hulsebosch argues, "could not have expanded so

successfully without the integrating symbols of English constitutional liberty" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 5).

The efforts of creole subjects to maintain the privileges of English liberty were particularly fraught in the island colonies. Their vulnerability to invasion from competing imperial powers as well as the constant threat of slave revolt "raised the question of to what extent peoples so dependent on the parent state for protection […] could maintain credible claims to such an identity" (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 70). British creoles also had to contend with theories of environmental determinism that maintained that a tropical climate was incompatible with a liberal government. To return to Montesquieu's assessment, cited above, of the natural dispositions of the inhabitants of hot climates: he claims, "servitude will be less intolerable than the strength of spirit necessary to guide one's own conduct" (234). The suggestion behind Montesquieu's words here is quickly made explicit; he clarifies soon after, "the peoples of these climates have greater need of a wise legislator than the peoples of our own" (235). Because they are thought to be highly impressionable and liable to be ruled by their passions, the peoples of the torrid zones are considered incapable of self-government. Of course one implication of such a philosophy is to justify European imperial expansion when the colonizers are confronted with native populations that already have claim to the land. Even within the British imperial administration, however, we see evidence of the constant struggle of settlers in the island colonies to govern themselves on matters of local concern in the face of doubts that perhaps the local conditions just weren't right for this kind of self-governance.

Among the rights that British settlers in the West Indian colonies wanted guaranteed, the right to exclude dependent people from the capacity to enjoy full liberty was by no means the least important: "colonial self-government not only empowered the enfranchised to disempower

all others, but the inherited concept of liberty as they understood it required them to do so" (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 24). The ability to delineate different legal privileges for different classes of people was, in other words, central to the West Indian colonists' conception of themselves as inheritors of English liberty.[21]

With this legal context in mind, we can return to the category disputes in *The Fortunate Transport* with a new understanding of the stakes of these contests. For instance, the struggle between the cruel Virginia master and the humane justice of the peace over Polly's treatment is not a mere personal dispute. When the justice learns that Polly is being whipped for the minor infraction of over- (or under-; the narrator isn't sure) cooking her master's turkey dinner, the justice tells the planter, "it was a pity but the law provided against such unnatural cruelty, and said he would not fail to represent it to the governor and council" (34). The justice proposes to amend the laws of the colony regarding the permissible treatment of (white) servants. The planter is not particularly worried by the justice's threat, however, for he "knew he had all the Assembly of his side" (34). The planter feels secure in his sovereignty over his personal domain—a sovereignty emphasized by the narrator when he refers to Polly's turkey infraction as a "high crime and misdemeanor" and notes that the planter fancies Polly's cries as finer music than that which entertains any "monarch upon earth" (33). For a British creole of the ruling class, the right to punish his servants as he sees fit is part and parcel of his birthright of self-governance.

If the novel's narrator expects servants—both black and white—in England to be treated better than servants in the West Indies, it is precisely because the laws regulating the treatment of servants are different in the two places. It was crucial for British settlers in the island colonies that they maintain their privileges to representative government, which included the ability to

pass laws in their individual assemblies that diverged from those passed by Parliament for governing the metropole.

Later in the eighteenth century, as activists for the abolition of the slave trade start trying their cause in the public sphere, sympathetic jurists will call on the tradition of natural rights theory to support their contentions that all men, enslaved or free, deserve the same protections under the law. West Indian writers with a stake in the slave trade, however, are able to fend off these attacks for a long time by pointing to English jurisprudential traditions, which support categorical legal distinctions among different classes of people (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 61). In the early nineteenth century, reform efforts "to create a connected legal order" throughout the British empire focus on breaking down exactly the sort of sovereignty claimed by the Virginia tyrant (Benton and Ford 188). Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford argue that these efforts came to focus in particular on reforming the office and duties of colonial magistrates—to bring "magistrates into prominence within the legal order" and "erode the private jurisdiction of masters" (188).

Thomas Hodges writes in 1701 that "it is grown a Proverb with the English Merchants, that tho a Man goes over never so honest to the Plantations, yet the very Air there does change him in a short time" (10). Hodges's reference to the air of the plantations seems to place his remark easily within contemporary assumptions about the corrupting nature of the Caribbean climate, and that is often how the quotation appears, divorced from context, in modern scholarship. In the context of Hodges's text, however, which is called *Plantation Justice*, the crucial environment that changes when a man goes to the plantations is not the climate, but the legal apparatus under which he is governed. Hodges is writing about the corruption of the legal system in Barbados, which occurs as a result of faulty imperial administration. His concern is

mostly with how this irregularity will detract from the plantation colonies' prosperity. Hodges in fact makes it clear that this is not a matter of climate when he clarifies, "nothing is more plain, that that their depravity proceeds only from thence [that is, from the corrupt legal system]; for let them send factors, agents, or servants, into any other part of the world, Italy, Turkey, Muscovy, or the East Indies, they are no where to be found to degenerate so much from their original honesty, and to give those that imploy them so much cause to complain, as in the plantations" (11). In comparing Barbados to other countries with a wide variety of climatic conditions, Hodges makes clear that if the imperial administration in Barbados is corrupt, the climate is not to blame. Or, if it is, that a regular system of justice has the ability to counteract any degenerate tendencies. Again, the fact that Britain's emergent empire in the Atlantic World develops simultaneously with the powerful idea of English liberty is not an accident. I would contend that the rhetoric of liberty develops in part as a reaction to the assumption that climate determines who you are; British colonists needed to formulate a jurisprudential theory of subjecthood that would be portable, rather than stopping at the borders of the English soil.

IV. Soil, air, and water: the borders of freedom in *Somerset v. Stewart*

The rhetorical force of different metaphorical conceptions of imperial legal geography makes its way beyond the *belles lettres* and into the governing structures of the empire, determining the privileges and protections of those subject to the British sovereign. This intersection of metaphor and litigation emerges in a particularly potent combination in the 1772 King's Bench case *Somerset v. Stewart*.

A divergence in the laws governing the colonies and the metropole, which resulted from creole subjects invoking their rights as Englishmen to self-governance, creates the conflict at

issue in *Somerset*. This case is often celebrated as the case that declared slavery illegal in Britain. Legal historians are mostly in agreement that this is a mischaracterization of Lord Mansfield's holding in the case, which was considerably narrower than its popular legacy would indicate. According to many historians of the case, this narrowness in the decision allowed for a kind of spatial double consciousness in the legal geography of Britain and its American colonies: "it allowed for the continuation of slaveholding and slave trading and the profits they realized, but it also created a measure of imaginary and physical distance so that those practices could coexist with English legal rhetoric about freedom and equality before the law" (Rabin 22-23). Legal historians have extensively mapped different legal zones in the British imperial landscape and *Somerset's* intersections with this map.[22] My goal here is to trace British imperial space as it is limned by two different material metonyms for the reach of English liberties—the soil and the air. These metonyms recur repeatedly in counsels' arguments on both sides of the cause in *Somerset*, as recorded in contemporary printed reports of the case.[23] The controlling metaphor in these arguments, which comes to symbolize the case's popular reception, is the idea that Britain has *a soil whose air is too pure for slaves to breathe in*.

Counsel on opposing sides of the question in *Somerset* give very different spatial accounts of Britain and the geographic reach of its laws concerning slavery. Those arguing for the enslaved man James Somerset's release tend to draw a sharp boundary between Britain, a space of purity and freedom, and its colonial dependents, to which corruption and slavery are relegated. Somerset's case, on their account, becomes a battle over whether the airspace of Britain will be kept inviolate or infected by the disease of slavery. Counsel arguing for the defense, to the contrary, tend to imagine Britain as more continuous with its empire: the border

between the island nation and its Atlantic colonies is not as sharply drawn, and ideas, objects, and people seem to flow more easily across its borders.

James Somerset was an enslaved African who was purchased by Charles Stewart in Virginia; Stewart later took Somerset with him as a personal servant when he went to England on business. Somerset ran away while in England and was later recaptured by Captain John Knowles; Knowles, on Stewart's direction, held Somerset on his ship *Ann and Mary* in the Thames and bound Somerset for sale in Jamaica. After interested parties, organized by the abolitionist Granville Sharp, filed an affidavit on Somerset's behalf, a writ of habeas corpus was issued demanding that Knowles show cause for seizing and detaining Somerset. Lord Mansfield, as Chief Justice of the Court of Kings Bench, issued the unanimous decision on June 22, 1772 that Knowles did not have the power under the laws of England to detain Somerset and that Somerset therefore must be discharged. Mansfield's decision resolved only the question of the habeas writ and ultimately did not give an answer as to the legality of owning slaves in England; read narrowly, the ruling declared only that a master did not have the legal right to compel a slave by force to leave England.

Historians have argued for decades about what Mansfield actually said and what the effects of his decision were. What seems to be clear is that the narrow holding did not line up with the case's popular reception.[24] The case was big news at the time and was covered extensively by press on both sides of the Atlantic;[25] it was a test case that pitted early abolitionist efforts led by Sharp against vested trading interests and the money of the West Indian planters, which supported Stewart. The counsel on both sides of the case were talented and distinguished.[26] According to contemporary reports, black residents in England left the courtroom congratulating each other[27] and held celebrations in the streets; there were also reports

of slaves in the colonies running away from their masters after hearing of the decision, believing they had been freed.[28]

The Somerset case was an explicit challenge to the Yorke-Talbot ruling of 1729. The ruling originated when the West Indian lobby, worried about the ambiguity of their property rights in slaves they brought over to England, submitted a petition to the attorney-general at the time, Sir Philip Yorke, and the solicitor-general, Charles Talbot. Yorke and Talbot ruled that a slave coming into Britain from the West Indies does not thereby become free, that the master's property right in the slave continues, and that the master has the legal right to compel the slave to return to the plantations.[29] This ruling was later reaffirmed by Yorke, who had since become Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, in a case before the Court of Chancery: as part of his ruling, Hardwicke noted, "I have no doubt but trover will lie for a Negro slave; it is as much property as any other thing…The reason said at the bar to have been given by Lord Chief Justice Holt[30]…as the cause of his doubt, viz. That the moment a slave sets foot in England he becomes free, has no weight with it, *nor can any reason be found, why they should not be equally so when they set foot in Jamaica, or any other English plantation*."[31] We can see in Hardwicke's ruling an inclination to treat the colonies as continuous with Britain for the purposes of maintaining the laws that undergird plantation slavery. This orientation is consistent with the arguments that the counsel for the defense make in the case of Somerset; in their efforts to defend Stewart's property rights in his slave, the lawyers invoke an image of Britain with porous boundaries that stretch across the Atlantic.

For Somerset's counsel, on the other hand, Britain is best imagined as a vulnerable space of liberty that needs vigilant protection from colonial contamination. Granville Sharp's 1769 *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery* is his refutation

of the Yorke-Talbot ruling from 40 years prior. In it, Sharp argues that if the "uncivilized customs" of the colonies are permitted in England, "we ourselves must insensibly degenerate to the same degree of baseness" (104-105). This declensionist argument is employed by Somerset's counsel as well. John Alleyne, for instance, in his remarks on behalf of Somerset, highlights Britain's exceptional status as a bastion of liberty and argues for the protection of its borders by calling up a sentimentalized image of a slave's torture:[32]

> Ought we not, on our part, to guard and preserve that liberty by which we are distinguished by all the earth! to be jealous of whatever measure has a tendency to diminish the veneration due to the first of blessings? The horrid cruelties, scarce credible in recital, perpetrated in America, might, by the allowance of slaves amongst us, be introduced here. Could your Lordship, could any liberal and ingenuous temper indure, in the fields bordering on this city, to see a wretch bound for some trivial offence to a tree, torn and agonizing beneath the scourge? Such objects might by time become familiar, become unheeded by this nation; exercised, as they are now, to far different sentiments, may those sentiments never be extinct! the feelings of humanity! the generous sallies of free minds! May such principles never be corrupted by the mixture of slavish customs! (Lofft 503)

In Alleyne's account it is the "allowance of slaves" themselves within British borders that would lead to diminishing the "veneration" in which the British hold that "first of blessings." He represents for his auditors a scene of cruelty "scarce credible in recital, perpetrated in America." The mere recital of such cruelties is not enough, he seems to suggest, for metropolitan Britons to credit; instead, he paints a picture of the misery of slavery in the style of the sentimental literature popular at the time. This act of imagination that Alleyne asks of his listeners is spatially

bounded, however. To preserve the state of the English constitution, it is crucial that Londoners are not regularly subjected to the image of a slave bound and scourged within the borders of their nation. It is the sight of this object in "the fields bordering on this city" that would degrade English liberties; a similar scene exercised out of sight in the colonies does not pose the same danger. For those arguing in favor of Somerset, slavery is a threat to the integrity of the free English soil that needs to be kept far at bay.

The invocation of the English soil as the source of the ancient English constitution and cherished liberties was fairly commonplace by this time. Francis Hargrave, one of the counsel for Somerset, references one such well-known instance when he cites William Blackstone in his argument; the editor of the *State Trials* report of the case, remarking that "the authority of Mr. Justice Blackstone having been cited both for and against the rights of persons claiming to be the owners of slaves in Great Britain," takes the opportunity to reproduce in a footnote all that he finds relevant to the subject of slavery in Blackstone's *Commentaries*. Among the passages he cites is the following: "The spirit of liberty is so deeply implanted in our constitution, and rooted even in our very soil, that a slave or a negro, the moment he lands in England, falls under the protection of the laws, and so far becomes a freeman; though the master's right to his service may possibly still continue" (Howell 28n).[33] For Blackstone, liberty is *rooted* in the English soil; a "slave or negro" falls under the protection of the laws "the moment he lands in England"—but not before.

The tension between the two geographic imaginations of Britain in the case is illustrated particularly well by the metaphor of the English air being too pure for slaves to breathe, and the dispute often takes shape around this metaphor. Hargrave initiates the terms of this argument, asking, "Will not all the other mischiefs of mere utter servitude revive, if once the idea of

absolute property, under the immediate sanction of the laws of this country, extend itself to those who have been brought over to a soil whose air is deemed too pure for slaves to breathe in it" (Lofft 500).[34] Grammatically, Hargrave indicates that the air belongs to the soil over which it hangs: the purity of the English air is dependent on the purity of the English soil.

James Wallace and John Dunning, meanwhile, arguing on behalf of the defense, pick up Hargrave's metaphor and attempt to undermine it. Wallace argues that historically, England has been far from the space of freedom imagined by Hargrave: as for domestic slavery, he states, "villenage has all but the name. Though the dissolution of the monasteries, among other material alterations, did occasion the decay of that tenure, slaves could breathe in England: for villains were in this country, as were mere slaves, in Elizabeth" (Lofft 502). During his arguments, Dunning echoes these remarks: "Let me take notice, neither the air of England is too pure for a slave to breathe in, nor the laws of England have rejected servitude. Villenage in this country is said to be worn out; the propriety of the expression strikes me a little. Are the laws not existing by which it was created?" (Lofft 506). Wallace and Dunning here invoke the laws of villeinage, a kind of unfree land tenure under feudal England in which the tenants were bound to perform any and all services commanded by the lord of the land. For counsel for the defense, these laws prove that the English air is not so different from American air after all. For Somerset's counsel, however, the chattel slavery of the Atlantic slave trade is fundamentally different from villeinage, which they figure as an internal, white, hereditary slavery tied to the English soil; attempts to introduce African slaves to England, on their account, represent an encroachment of a "new slavery" from the outside (Howell 35).[35]

Serjeant William "Bull" Davy, arguing on behalf of Somerset, revives the metaphor once more to counter Wallace and Dunning's characterization of the English air as historically

amenable to slavery. Davy's arguments on this point appear slightly differently in different published reports of the case. The author of the *Memoirs of Granville Sharp* reports that the "following expressions […] occurred in the course of [Davy's] pleadings" (Hoare 77n). Davy references the first appearance of the idea that "England was too pure an air for Slaves to breathe in," in the 1569 case of Cartwright,

> who brought a slave from Russia, and would scourge him: for this he was questioned, and it was resolved, That England *was too pure an air for Slaves to breathe in*. […] That was in the 11th of Queen Elizabeth. I hope, my Lord, the air does not blow worse since. But, unless there is a change of air, I hope they will never breathe here; for that is my assertion,—the moment they put their foot on English ground, that moment they become free. (Hoare 77n; italics in original)

Davy again asserts the exceptional status of the English air as a source of liberty, while also raising the specter that the air could one day change and "blow worse" if it is allowed to be corrupted. In Lofft's report, this point is put somewhat differently. Davy argues,

> For the air of England; I think, however, it has been gradually purifying ever since the reign of Elizabeth. Mr. Dunning seems to have discovered so much, as he finds it changes a slave into a servant; tho' unhappily, he does not think it of efficacy enough to prevent that pestilent disease reviving, the instant the poor man is obliged to quit (voluntarily quits, and legally, it seems we ought to say,) this happy country. However, it has been asserted, and is now repeated by me, this air is too pure for a slave to breathe in. (Lofft 509)

In this instance, Davy imagines the wholesomeness of English air to have resulted from a gradual filtration process since Elizabeth's reign: regardless of its past impurities, the air is now

unpolluted by slavery. Davy suggests here that the English air is a kind of tonic against the disease of slavery, but one that only works within the borders of the country; the pestilence recurs immediately upon leaving. James Mansfield, another of Somerset's counsel (and no relation to the chief justice), approaches this issue from the other side of the Atlantic, invoking instead the air of the Caribbean colonies: where, he asks, "is the mighty magic of the air of the West Indies, [that] by transplanting them for a while *there*, […] they should become our absolute property *here*?"[36] The West Indian air, pestilent though it may be, is not powerful enough to blow across the Atlantic and affect the laws of the mother country.

The metonym of the English soil is usually tied to English common law, to long practice and time immemorial; the English air, though, seems like it should be a different story; air, after all, is not easily seen or captured; its components seem more unstable, more capable of drifting. Though it would have been easy to imagine such a thing, however, in no instance of the metaphor in Somerset's case do its employers imagine the English air as capable of dispersion, as a kind of freedom-bearing particle that might be wafted across the ocean to the colonies; it is strictly restricted to the atmosphere over English soil. England becomes something of a vacuum, a container whose walls, if pierced, will suck in the disease of slavery everywhere threatening the borders. In arguing for his freedom, counsel for Somerset draw a strict distinction between England and its colonies. Davy asks, rhetorically,

> With regard to the laws of Virginia, do they bind here? Have the laws of Virginia any more influence, power, or authority in this country, than the laws of Japan? The King makes laws for Virginia alone, if he pleases. If he has thought proper to introduce a particular form of making laws in that country, or the Assembly makes them under the power of the Crown—as he might have granted such a charter, or any other—*that* refers

> to Virginia alone. He cannot make laws *here* without the consent and authority of the two Houses of Parliament. (Hoare 76; italics in original)

Davy invokes constitutional jurisprudential theories to highlight the divergence in the laws of the metropole from those in the colonies that results from representational government. He also, however, suggests that the laws of Virginia have no more relationship to the laws of England than the laws of Japan. Davy emphasizes the bright line between England and its colonies again when he argues, "If the Court would acknowledge the relation of master and servant, it certainly would not allow the most exceptionable part of slavery; that of being obliged to remove, at the will of the master, from the protection of this land of liberty, to a country where there are no laws; or hard laws to insult him" (Lofft 508). The court operates in a land of liberty, and it should have no correspondence with a lawless country like Virginia. Of course, the case was different for those invested in slaveholding interests. Henry Marchant, a prominent American attorney, for instance, wrote in his diary around this time that the argument that "British soil and British air" were different from American "Soil and Air" where "Liberty" was concerned was just a "plausible Pretence" to "cheat an honest American of his slave" (qtd in Van Cleve 628). Edward Long, in *Candid Reflections Upon the Judgement Lately Awarded by the Court of King's Bench in Westminster-Hall, on What is Commonly Called the Negroe-Cause* (1772), wrote that precisely because colonial slave owners were free-born Britons, "the pretended magical touch of the *English air*" could not, "like the *presto* of a juggler, turn" slave owners' "gold into counters" without divesting them of a property that had been "solemnly guaranteed by the consent of the nation in Parliament" (qtd. in Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 66; italics in original).

After the *Somerset* decision, Granville Sharp waged a publicity campaign that seemed to deliberately misinterpret the narrow holding into a much broader one, a legacy that is still with

us today. In his 1772 *Appendix* to the *Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery*, Sharp writes, "negroes, and all other aliens are the *king's subjects*, when resiant in this kingdom; and that they are entitled to the protection of the English laws in general, and of the Habeas Corpus Act in particular" (Sharp, *An Appendix* 4; italics in original). Though counsel for Somerset occasionally suggest something like a reciprocal relationship between Somerset and the English sovereign—Hargrave, for instance, states, "From the submission of the negro to the laws of England, he is liable to all their penalties, and consequently has a right to their protection" (Lofft 501)—neither the counsel in their defense nor Mansfield in his decision make the move to call Somerset an English subject. The legal case is centered instead on *Stewart's* rights as a subject and the kinds of authority he can and cannot lawfully exercise. Somerset may be discharged from bondage,[37] but he is not, in the eyes of the English courts, a member of the vaunted land of liberty.

At the same time, however, Hargrave's image of the pure air of Britain is quickly picked up by the contemporary press, often mistakenly attributed to Mansfield, and takes on a life of its own after the case. I want to conclude with a look at two of these afterlives, not in the news but in literature. In Book II of William Cowper's 1785 poem *The Task*, the speaker meditates on the ills of the world, including slavery; after declaring that though he prizes freedom above all price, he would rather wear chains himself than inflict them on another, he goes on to ponder:

> We have no slaves at home.—Then why abroad?
> And they themselves once ferried o'er the wave
> That parts us, are emancipate and loos'd.
> *Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs*
> *Receive our air, that moment they are free,*

They touch our country and their shackles fall.

That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud

And jealous[38] of the blessing. Spread it then,

And let it circulate through ev'ry vein

Of all your empire. That where Britain's power

Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too. (Cowper 47; italics mine)

Cowper's poem is striking for the way it inverts the movement of British air compared to the assumptions of Somerset's counsel. This passage begins with a typical invocation of the binary of freedom at home and slavery abroad—but then immediately moves to collapse that spatial distinction. "They themselves"—those slaves abroad—are carried over the ocean, and over the enjambed second and third lines, to be immediately "emancipate and loos'd." The "wave / That parts us" is imagined not as a yawning gulf separating the free from the unfree but as a road to emancipation easily crossed. The next few lines evoke Hargrave's words and again picture the British air as charged with liberty. It seems like they will follow the rhetoric we've seen from Somerset's counsel, with the air imagined as continuous with the "country," hanging heavily over the soil and only breathable once you have set foot on the land; however, the passage ends instead in the imperative: "Spread it then, / And let it circulate through ev'ry vein / Of all your empire." The empire is figured as one of circulation, mirrored again in an enjambed line, as a single body through whose veins the same blood must run. Cowper addresses the British reader, to whom the empire is figured to belong, and the instruction is to waft the free British air to the furthest colonial periphery. Unlike the handwringing from Somerset's counsel about the contagion of slavery infecting the British airspace, Cowper imagines the British air as capable of an opposite dispersal of freedom. It is in this poem that we finally get a dislocation of the air

from the soil of Britain, a more capacious understanding that British freedoms might be disseminated beyond the space of the nation.

Cowper's poem offers an attractive poetical solution to an intractable legal problem. It is a solution, though, that only opens up further conflicts. Spreading British freedom, of course, also means spreading British imperial control, swallowing up more imperial subjects along the way. This contradictory dynamic appears in another poem that draws on the imagery of the Mansfield decision: the abolitionist poem *Jamaica, A Poem*, discussed earlier, invokes *Somerset*[39] in a paean to British freedom:

> Hail, only isle! girt by the only shore,
> Whose feeling cliffs the captives rights restore!
> Hail, happy shore! wash'd by the only wave
> That bears to freedom the desponding slave;
> Whose awful view unbinds his galling chain,
> Whose sacred justice makes his bondage vain! (Anonymous 336, lines 107-112)

Here the speaker imagines an inverse transatlantic passage that leads to freedom rather than bondage. The British Isles are figured as the negative of the sugar islands—for a ship bearing an enslaved person, the only shore whose approach means freedom rather than more slavery. The poem also makes explicit the connection between British freedom and imperial power. An apostrophe implores, "Freedom descend! Invigorate the whole,/ And stretch your free domain from pole to pole/ Till the Cane-isles accept your easy reign" (335, lines 85-87). And it is clear who will be the managers of this "free domain": "May Britain first her grateful tribute bring,/ And all the world consenting Paeans sing!" (335, lines 95-96).

The poem's sentimentalized images and appeals to British freedom are somewhat undermined, however, by the "Poetical Epistle" that follows. This concluding epistle, addressed to a companion in London—"a Gentleman of the Middle-Temple"—takes a rather darker turn.[40] The epistle recalls Francis Williams's indictment in "Carmen, or, An Ode" of the tropical climate as inimical to poetic imagination. Calling out to the addressee of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, the speaker implores, "O Pollio! can I here pretend to rhyme,/ In such a warm, and such a sickly clime?" (Anonymous 337, lines 1-2). The speaker recalls his youthful ambition, upon first coming to the island, "Midst tropic heats, and sickly climes, to scan/ The works of Nature, and the ways of man" (337, lines 17-18). Upon arriving in Jamaica, however, the muse finds it unamenable to poetry. She

> Was forc'd by far to pass her joyless days,
> 'Mong men unknown to sympathetic lays.
> To see the captive drag the cruel chain,
> Repaid with tortures, and solac'd with pain;
> To give the Afric's fate the pitying tear,
> And spurn the slavery that she could not bear. (337, lines 21-26)

The epistle harkens back to the poem's refusal to sing of the sugar cane, but then it goes one step further. While the preceding poem incorporates the woes of the slave trade and planters' treatment of the enslaved, the epistle documents the muse refusing to touch the subject of slavery altogether: "But soon she scorn'd on human woe to rise,/ Nor with a tort'ring hand would stain the bays" (337, lines 27-28). Here, the speaker suggests that perhaps the only thing to do in the face of such horrors is to refuse to write poetry altogether.

A possible way forward, though, is hinted in the poem's address to a "Gentleman of the Middle-Temple," or, in other words, a barrister. Following the dismal lines quoted above, the speaker addresses the gentleman, asking, "What can the smiling Muse expect from thee?" (338, line 30). The speaker references the virtues of eminent poets James Thomson, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift, but ultimately bypasses them:

> Or wilt thou still, more glorious as the theme,
> Assert thy country's freedom, and her fame;
> Teach Britain to resist tyrannic sway,
> And drag her venal traitors to the day? (338, lines 35-38)

The injunctions here—"assert," "teach," "drag"—are much less triumphant than those we see either in the main body of *Jamaica, A Poem* or in *The Task*. They are, however, perhaps a bit more doable—a modest imperative for poetry to work hand in hand with the slogging labor of the lawyer in the cause of freedom.

[1] According to the OED, "this sense [of constitution] gradually arose out of the [preceding definition] between 1689 and 1789."

[2] For an insightful account of the interlocking debates about human nature and nurture as they develop from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, see Jenny Davidson, *Breeding: A Partial History of the Eighteenth Century.* As Davidson notes, in the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, British writing about anthropology, horticulture, and animal breeding increasingly comes to emphasize hereditary rather than environmental factors (2).

[3] For an extended study on the fate of those transported, see Robert Ekirch, *Bound for America: The Transportation of British Convicts to the Colonies 1718-1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.)

[4] Richard Pares, *Merchants and Planters*

[5] See, for instance, *Spectator* #409, "Taste," which praises an aesthetic based on "rational and manly Beauties" and "a natural Simplicity of Thought."

[6] Again, not without basis in fact: it's clear "that many of the settlers drank excessively" (Gragg 7).

[7] Visitors to Barbados, for instance, remarked that the excesses of slave owning planters included "materialism, quarreling, drinking, whoring, negligence, swearing, and deceptive business practices" (Gragg 7).

[8] Garrison mortality averaged about 20 percent annually, and the mortality rate was much worse for expeditionary forces; 60,000-70,000 Europeans died trying to put down Haitian rebellion, almost all from disease (P. Morgan 58).

[9] Of course, the western media is just as fascinated by disaster narratives about the Caribbean today, particularly in Haiti. A recent Vice News article by M.R. O'Connor treats the persistent

myth of Haitian deforestation and environmental degradation: https://news.vice.com/story/one-of-the-most-repeated-facts-about-deforestation-in-haiti-is-a-lie

[10] Long is actually fairer to Williams than David Hume, who had no firsthand knowledge of Williams when he derides his accomplishments in a footnote added to the 1753 reprint of "Of National Characters" (first published 1748), saying, "I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. […] In Jamaica indeed they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly." David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. T.H. Green and T.H. Grosse (Darmstadt, Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964), 252n. Quoted in Fryer, *Staying Power*, 152.

[11] Peter Fryer observes, "In the 1670s about 300 sons of West Indian planters were coming to England every year for their education. A hundred years later, three-quarters of the planters' children—daughters as well as sons by now—were doing so" (19).

[12] See Fryer's biography of Williams in *Staying Power*, 420.

[13] Fryer notes that it was Williams's "practice to welcome each new governor with a Latin ode" (420).

[14] Thomas Krise points out that, as a native of Scotland, Haldane's "appointment was not well received by the English planters in Jamaica, so Williams's welcome ode ought to be understood as being against the popular sentiment among powerful whites in the colony" (315).

[15] Krise describes the poem as "an abolitionist text from the first stage of the abolitionist movement that peaked in 1788" and "an early and influential example of what would become a flood of anti-slavery prose and poetry in the decades to come" (326).

[16] "Here could I sing what soils and seasons suit,/ Inform the tap'ring arrow how to shoot;/ Under what signs to plant the mother cane,/ What rums and sugars bring the planter gain" (Anonymous 329, lines 180-83).

[17] The English Short Title Catalogue lists seven surviving copies: at the Newberry [my research reveals that the Newberry actually holds two different copies of the text], British Library, Case Western Reserve, McMaster University, the Alexander Turnbull library, the New York Public Library, and the Library of Congress.

[18] This is not the only instance in which Polly's journey through Virginia and Jamaica reads almost like a parodic slave narrative. In addition to the episodes of violence at the hands of a tyrannical master, Polly's story features a number of conventions of eighteenth-century transatlantic slave narratives, including an episode of escape. Her escape is not from the Virginian tyrant; the narrator notes specifically that she could not run away because the laws of the country are so strict against harboring renegade servants, "and as she was a woman, she had still less opportunity of succeeding in such an attempt, without the assistance of the neighbors" (33). After Polly has completed her indenture, she and a fellow servant run off with a parcel of booty they have stolen from their master. It is only because of this theft that Polly and her friend are "afraid of being pursued, for had they gone off themselves, no body could have hindered it, they had served their indentures out and procured each their discharge" (37). They are obliged to take "bye-ways through the woods till they got to the river" and "lying still all day, made their journey longer than it might have been. However, the third night after setting out they arrived without any disaster" (37, 38). This episode of suspenseful escape from a master, through the woods, traveling only at night, suggests a serious reality for enslaved Africans in the colonies. In this instance, though, the stakes are not a lifetime of forced labor but ill-gotten gains, and the

suspense of the journey is deflated almost immediately. *The Fortunate Transport* seems to have been published a good decade or two before the first narratives of chattel slavery started appearing in Britain, and I'm not suggesting any direct influence of one on the other. I note these similarities mostly as an interesting coincidence, or perhaps as evidence for the influence of the picaresque on the genres of both the early novel and the early slave narrative.

[19] Hulsebosch argues that the "Americanization" of the constitutional idea involved "the reorganization of the sources of a constitution, new institutions of enforcement, and a new conception of law as hierarchy of substantive genres:" "Where in England law was defined in terms of *jurisdiction*—who had the power to determine right and wrong and what were the boundaries of that power?—abroad it was increasingly conceived as *jurisprudence*, a rational system of rules that bound governments and private parties" (*Constituting Empire* 9). For an astute account of this "Americanization" of the constitution, see also Eric Slauter, *The State as a Work of Art: The Cultural Origins of the Consitution* (2009). Slauter writes, "this transformation is best understood as a contested and long-term transition away from ideas about the living constitution of the state and toward a notion of the constitution of a state as a static work of legislative art, an imagined object that could and should be appreciated in terms of its formal beauties" (41).

[20] Hulsebosch argues that the development of English constitutional liberty as a series of symbols and precepts, rather than a set of practices carried out in competing jurisdictions, as in England, was necessitated by the different legal conditions in the American colonies: "The jurisdictional lines that defined the ancient constitution were difficult to police overseas. In contrast, short, powerful statements of fundamental law traveled well across space. For the colonists to claim English liberties, they had to conceive of them as an abstract jurisprudence operative in all the

crown's dominions, not as a system of licenses to sue in territorially bounded courts" (*Constituting Empire* 9-10). This serves as the foundation for the new U.S. conception of constitutionalism.

[21] Laura Doyle has expanded this observation to argue that "in Atlantic modernity, freedom is a race myth" (3). The racism present in the governing structures of the United States since its founding was not, as many have characterized it, "an interloping ideology that illogically skews the formation of the liberal, contract state" (14). In fact, "transatlantic seventeenth-century history reveals that race is of a piece with the discourses of consent and freedom. From their first articulation, the vocabularies of liberty, consent, birthright, and Saxonism were tightly intertwined—by way of the idea that liberty itself was a birthright—and they continued to be so throughout the founding of the United States (14).

[22] Eliga Gould has noted that the different legal zones of Britain's imperial policy allowed forms of violence in the colonies that were unacceptable in Britain, with slavery serving as the most potent example: see Gould, "Zones of Law, Zones of Violence: The Legal Geography of the British Atlantic, circa 1772," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2003): 417-510. George Van Cleve locates *Somerset's Case* in the context of imperial governance; he uses a conflict of laws analysis to situate the case as a clash between English and colonial law and sees in Mansfield's decision a subversion of slavery throughout the empire and an emerging concept of human rights: see Van Cleve, "Somerset's Case and Its Antecedents in Imperial Perspective," *Law and History Review* 24, no. 3 (2006): 601-71. Daniel Hulsebosch, on the other hand, suggests that the participants in the case were most concerned to maintain this central tension of slavery—to keep it, and its profits, in the empire while keeping it out of England: the decision, he says, "left the institution of colonial slavery almost untouched while at the same time

insulating England from chattel slavery, the power of returning West Indian planters, and political despotism": Hulsebosch, "Nothing but Liberty: 'Somerset's Case' and the British Empire," *Law and History Review* 24, no. 3 (2006): 648. Van Cleve further argues that Mansfield draws a distinction between English and colonial law on slavery deliberately in order to undermine both metropolitan and colonial slavery; he sees in Mansfield's decision a "rights of man" principle, that "in England, core legal freedoms such as access to the courts and protection from arbitrary, unlimited physical abuse, were available to all subjects as 'rights of man,' not dependent upon birth, race, religion, or free status": Van Cleve, "Somerset's Case," 606. Somerset's case represents for Van Cleve the clear emergence of "a new idea of freedom in English law": Ibid., 603. Hulsebosch has qualified this claim by arguing that the arguments in *Somerset's Case* reflected the past more than controlled the future, tracking an old discourse of English supremacy within the empire more closely than an emerging discourse of human rights: Hulsebosch, "Nothing but Liberty," 648. He also notes that this liberty remained available only "to people in England rather than everywhere, including the royal territories of Virginia and Jamaica. The empire's legal pluralism allowed Mansfield to rationalize the brutality of slavery while locating it offshore, thus facilitating the coexistence of slavery and freedom": Ibid., 656-57.

[23] I rely here on the Lofft report and *State Trials* report of the case, as well as transcriptions from Granville Sharp's shorthand court reporter, which are reprinted in his memoirs. See Lofft, Capel, ed., "Somerset against Stewart," in *98 Eng. Rep. 499 1378-1865* (Easter Term, 12 Geo. 3, 1772, K. B.), 499-510; Howell, T. B., ed., "548. The Case of James Sommersett, a Negro, on a Habeas Corpus, King's-Bench: 12 George III. A.D. 1771-72 ," in *A Complete Collection of State Trials* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1816), 1-82; and Hoare, Prince, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp, Esq.*

(London: Henry Colburn and Co., 1820). On the subject of the Somerset case, Hoare notes, "Some few passages only are here selected from the speeches delivered by the different counsel, and, in particular, those points which appear from the sequel to have most influenced the minds of the judges. […] *N.B*. Whatever extracts are here given, are printed *verbatim* from the copy of the short-hand writer": Hoare, *Memoirs*, 75-76n. Lofft publishes Francis Hargrave's oral argument in the case, whereas the *State Trials* report reprints Hargrave's published written argument; otherwise, the arguments in the two reports are virtually the same. James Oldham writes, "the bulk of the *State Trials* report is Hargrave's 'learned argument' on behalf of Somerset. It is likely that the full argument as given here was polished and augmented after the trial for posterity" (1233n53). For a full discussion of the manuscript reports of the case, see Oldham, "Slavery," in *The Mansfield Manuscripts the Growth of English Law in the Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 1221-44; see also William Wiecek, "Somerset: Lord Mansfield and the Legitimacy of Slavery in the Anglo-American World," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 42, no. 1 (1974): 86-146; and Van Cleve, "Somerset's Case," 632.

[24] "Even at the time, the Mansfield judgment was misunderstood by some people who thought it meant the emancipation of black slaves in Britain. This misunderstanding has been perpetuated by several generations of lawyers and historians, who ought to have known better" (Fryer 125).

[25] The proceedings in *Somerset* were reported in at least thirteen British newspapers, several widely circulated magazines, and twenty-two out of twenty-four operating North American colonial newspapers (Van Cleve 602, 625).

[26] John Dunning had been solicitor general and was an MP; James Wallace later became solicitor and attorney general; Francis Hargrave, a junior counsel, made his reputation in this case (Van Cleve 626).

[27] The Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser, June 24, 1772 (qtd. in Gerzina 130).

[28] When a slave named Bacchus escaped a plantation in Georgia, his master was sure he would "board a vessel for Great Britain ... from the knowledge he has of the late Determination of Somerset's Case" (qtd. in Gerzina 133).

[29] William Maxwell Morison, *The decisions of the Court of Session* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Company, 1811), XXXIII-XXXIV. 14547 (quoted in Fryer 114).

[30] Lord Chief Justice Holt in 1706 was the first to articulate the maxim "that as soon as a negro comes into England, he becomes free" (Fryer 114).

[31] Charles Ambler, *Reports of Cases argued and determined in the High Court of Chancery* (A. Strahan etc., 1790), 76-7; *English Reports*, XXVII (1903), 47-9 (quoted in Fryer 114). Italics mine.

[32] For some thorough and insightful accounts of the eighteenth-century relationship between sentiment and slavery, see Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery 1760-1807* (2005); George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (2008); and Ramesh Mallipeddi, *Spectacular Suffering: Witnessing Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic* (2016).

[33] As multiple commentators have noticed, the passage that Howell cites is from the second edition of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, which differs significantly in this instance from the language of the first edition: "And this spirit of liberty is so deeply implanted in our constitution,

and rooted even in our very soil, that a slave or negro, the moment he lands in England, falls under the protection of the laws, and with regard to all natural rights becomes *eo instanti* a freeman" (Blackstone 123). Peter Fryer notes further that this change in the second edition was made to comply with the Yorke-Talbot ruling, and at Lord Mansfield's request: "Lord Mansfield was Blackstone's mentor and patron, and there can be no doubt whatever that this change was made at Mansfield's behest." (121n).

[34] The phrase (the English air is too pure for slaves to breathe) originates during the reign of Elizabeth I, with the 1569 case of *Cartwright*.

[35] For an extended discussion of the use of villeinage in the case, see Rabin, "'In a Country of Liberty?'" Rabin writes, "Although Mansfield's judgement has been seen as the beginning of the end of unfree labour in the British Empire, especially as it related to the rise of the abolitionist movement and its attempts to outlaw the slave trade, what it really accomplished was to define unfree labour in terms of race and space. Freedom and whiteness were metropolitan attributes while slavery and blackness were colonial. The attention in the ruling to villeinage as raced, white, hereditary and English relegated raced, black, chattel slavery to imperial sites. The ruling sharpened the binary that separated metropole and colony, insider and outsider, free and unfree. While the distinction drawn between villeinage and slavery helped Somerset's cause, it did not include him as part of the English nation" (23).

[36] *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, no. 13,480 (13 May 1772), [4]; F.O. Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain* (Oxford University Press for Institute of Race Relations, 1974), 95. Italics in the original.

[37] Mansfield's famous concluding words in his decision are "the black must be discharged" (Lofft 510).

[38] Probably meant in this sense: "Zealous or solicitous for the preservation or well-being of something possessed or esteemed; vigilant or careful in guarding; suspiciously careful or watchful" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

[39] A footnote original to the poem, tagged to the word "feeling," says that this part is "Alluding to a famous decision of Lord Mansfield's, concerning the privileges of negroes in England" (336).

[40] The epistle concludes with an ominous prediction about the consequences of the slave trade: "At each new crime this labours in my breast,/ And this each night denies a quiet rest:/ Some Afric chief will rise, who, scorning chains,/ Racks, tortures, flames—excruciating pains,/ Will lead his injur'd friends to bloody fight,/ And in the flooded carnage take delight;/ Then dear repay us in some vengeful war,/ And give us blood for blood, and scar for scar" (339, lines 75-82). Well might he worry. Tacky's Rebellion occurred only about 15 years earlier, and smaller-scale slave rebellions would continue around the time of the poem's composition (May 20, 1776).

Chapter Three: The Female-Authored Caribbean

In this chapter, I will focus on three novels by female authors, works published respectively in the early, middle, and later years of the development of the eighteenth-century novel: Delarivier Manley's *The Physician's Strategem* (1720), Eliza Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), and Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1783-85). These works represent different subgenres within the history of the novel—amatory fiction, realism, and historical fiction/the gothic. All three works feature an episode in which a female character is forced on an excursion from Europe to the Caribbean colonies; in two of the works, the character returns; in one, she does not. These fictional Caribbean excursions illuminate a series of conflicts related to the nature of colonial British subjecthood. In *Betsy Thoughtless*, we get a view of the Caribbean colonies as a space to isolate corrupt characters away from the metropole. In *The Physician's Strategem*, a similar attempt to send off unwanted subjects fails, and the heroine seeks relief from the queen, referencing an early modern mode of subjecthood based on a relationship of mutual obligation with the sovereign. In *The Recess*, the only work of the three in which the reader actually travels to the Caribbean with the characters, we see complicated disputes about the nature of British liberty abroad and the authority of colonial elites. To adapt a deft assessment from Laura Doyle's work on the racial dynamics of freedom in Britain's Atlantic empire: "in a way, novels tell the whole story, but to gather the light we need to read them, we must begin by uncovering" some legal and political context for competing notions of what it meant to be a British subject (3). In addition to gathering that light to read by, in this chapter I aim to highlight a number of ways in which English novels posed both problems and solutions for these legal and political concepts.

I. Torrid Zones and Excess Women

As we saw in chapter two, it was common for eighteenth-century natural historians to characterize the world's torrid zones as places of irrepressible sexual desire and passion. In Montesquieu's classic formulation, those who inhabit warm climates are naturally more sensible to stimulus: "In cold countries, one will have little sensitivity to pleasures; one will have more of it in temperate countries; in hot countries, sensitivity will be extreme […]" (233). As a result of the "delicacy of organs found in hot countries, the soul is sovereignly moved by all that is related to the union of the two sexes; everything leads to this object" (Montesquieu 233). Warmer climates lead naturally to increased sexual energy and activity.

As Felicity Nussbaum has demonstrated at length, these climate theories of human difference were central to eighteenth-century efforts to distinguish the sexualized "other" woman of empire from domestic English womanhood (*Torrid* 7). Englishwomen were differentiated from their counterparts in savage countries by possessing "the ideals of reciprocal affection, refined sexuality, and private domesticity, which were equated to the highest levels of civilization" (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 13).[1] It was common to assert that "domesticity, believed to be antithetical to sexual heat, increases the farther one resides from the equator" (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 8).

If domesticity was antithetical to sexual heat, it was also antithetical to primitive society. Theories of societal development prominent among Scottish enlightenment thinkers—like the four-stages theory, in which society progresses in stages from hunter and gatherer, to pastoral, to agricultural, to commercial—link Britain's developing commercial power to a teleology of civilization. These ideas about civilization, furthermore, are imbricated with narratives about

domestic womanhood: “Since the commercial society relies on the cult of domesticity, public display of sexual desire is perceived to be un-English and associated with primitive women of earlier stages of development” (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 13).

There is significant overlap, therefore, in thinking about inhabitants of the torrid zone and inhabitants of primitive societies; in both instances, overt sexuality is linked to a lack of civilization. As Sylvana Tomaselli has demonstrated, Enlightenment thinkers generally shared the conviction that women’s status in society, their relative “slavery or enfranchisement,” was “the measure of the liberty prevalent in any one form of government” (25). As we saw in chapter two, Montesquieu connects warmer climates with greater governmental tyranny: because inhabitants of warm climates are disposed to be indolent, and “servitude will be less intolerable than the strength of spirit necessary to guide one’s own conduct,” therefore “the peoples of these climates have greater need of a wise legislator than the peoples of our own” (234, 235). Like Montesquieu, Adam Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society* explicitly links unrestricted sexual expression to “the torrid zone’s failure to nurture civilization or political freedom” (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 9). Other Enlightenment thinkers, including David Hume, disputed the extent to which climate and its attendant sexual behavior affected forms of societal governance (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 10). Nonetheless, in Nussbaum’s analysis, “though Montesquieu, Hume, Millar, Ferguson, and others map the world somewhat variously, each connects climate and sexual desire to define a temperate, civilized Europe that possesses the sexual constraint necessary to engage in the work-discipline productive of political liberty and civic virtue, in marked contrast to the libidinous and indolent torrid zones” (*Torrid* 10).

It is not difficult to find a good deal of inconsistency and paradox in the way that European naturalists write about torrid zones. Torrid zones are frequently represented as sites of

both unrestrained sexual appetite and sterility or infertility. In some accounts, warmer climates "naturally intensify the amount of sexual activity and consequently produce a larger population that freely indulges its libidinous energy" (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 8). In other accounts, however—or sometimes even within the same account—the indolence produced by a tropical climate or the drudgery of a savage society actually leads to less reproductive activity. In John Millar's *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, he suggests that the savage "has no time for cultivating a correspondence with the other sex" and has sexual desires that are "barely sufficient for the continuation of the species" (18). Buffon makes a similar assertion in his *Histoire Naturelle* (1749-1804) about the Native Americans, whom he describes as "so torpid as to be barely human" (Jefferson xxii).

Moving beyond natural history and environmental determinism, the Caribbean colonies in particular are discussed more widely in British culture as sites of figurative, if not literal, infertility. Characterized as spaces of ungoverned sexual license, the plantation colonies fall outside of acceptable modes of domestic social reproduction as legitimated in the metropole. The Caribbean plantation is a "site of *production* (of sugar, of coffee)," while it is psychically and geographically removed "from the metropolitan scene of social *reproduction* where juridically recognizable human subjects were christened, educated, coupled, and endowed with Englishness" (Dillon, *New World Drama* 27; emphasis mine). This is clear in the context of race-based slavery, which "was designed to eradicate the possibility of social reproduction among black populations at the site of sugar production," but the colonial plantation "was viewed as inimical to white social reproduction as well" (Dillon, "Secret History" 85). The sexual culture of the colonies is antithetical to domestic virtue as it was articulated by the logic of colonial capitalism. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon describes this paradox in regard to the creole, who was, by

definition, born out of an act of reproduction in the colonies: "the créole is the white or black non-native who is born (biologically reproduced) in the colony, but whose social reproduction is thus understood to be inadequate or illegitimate precisely because reproduction has occurred at the site of capitalist production (the colony) rather than at the site of consumption (the métropole)" ("Secret History" 86).[2]

Linked to these negative conceptions of the sexual culture of the Caribbean colonies is an emerging effort to send abroad women who were not wanted in the metropole. The English cult of domestic womanhood develops, as Nussbaum and others have argued, when "the increasing demands of trade and colonization required a large, able-bodied citizenry" and "women's reproductive labor was harnessed to that task" (*Torrid* 1). Britain's emergent empire leads to "a particular kind of national imperative to control women's sexuality and fecundity" (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 1). Laura Rosenthal points out further that eighteenth-century reformers proposed colonial transportation as a solution to an increase in prostitution: "The deportation of disorderly women to the colonies emerged for some mid-century prostitution reformers as a win-win solution, ridding London of its streetwalkers, giving these women a second chance, and, as reformer William Dodd put it, granting 'due attention . . . to the demands of our colonies abroad'" (par. 10). The colonies emerge as a place "where women might redeem their sexual excess by contributing to colonial reproduction" (Rosenthal par. 10). This is true not just for prostitutes but for all kinds of "extraneous" metropolitan women. In his 1708 tract *The British Empire in America*, John Oldmixon writes of Virginia that "of late years, it has been customary for young women, who are fall'n into disgrace in England, or are ill us'd by their parents, to transport themselves thither; and, as they say, try their fortunes, which have often been very favorable" (289-290).

This cultural idea gets picked up in eighteenth-century literature as well.[3] Rosenthal argues that "early eighteenth-century fiction reveals a near-obsession with excess and excessive women" (par 11). For Rosenthal, this obsession is especially apparent in the realist canon: "For Defoe, Richardson, and many other eighteenth-century 'realist' writers […] sending disorderly women to the colonies benefits both the colonial and domestic projects" (par. 11). Rosenthal points to Eliza Haywood's work in particular: "Over and over, Haywood creates dramatic conflict with plots featuring too many women for everyone to find happiness, even if they appear to deserve it" (par. 11). This is not exactly the situation in *Betsy Thoughtless*, but the novel does employ the Caribbean colonies as a receptacle for unwanted women who need to be removed from the metropole for the health of the nation.

In eighteenth-century novels, the Caribbean colonies often serve a juridical purpose, though not generally as part of a formal legal proceeding like the one we see in *Moll Flanders*. More often, the colonies function as a site of extra-judicial punishment for domestic offenses of various kinds. We see one such instance in *Betsy Thoughtless*. For a number of reasons, the domestic legal system is not a fit remedy for the crimes that the villainous Lady Mellasin commits against her family. The prospect of going before the Court of Common Pleas in order to bring a case against his wife for adultery literally sickens Mr. Goodman: at "the thoughts of appearing before the doctors of the civil law, to several of whom he was known, to prove his own dishonour," he falls into a "violent fit of an apoplexy" (301). Later, after Mr. Goodman has died, Lady Mellasin once again avoids justice by retaining a pettyfogger, "one who knew all those quirks and evasions, which are called the knavish part" of the law, to defend the fake will—in which she inherits Mr. Goodman's legacy—that she has substituted for Mr. Goodman's real will—in which Mr. Goodman leaves his inheritance to his nephew Edward (392).

When Lady Mellasin's wicked deeds finally catch up to her, Edward Goodman enacts his own extra-judicial punishment: she is forever banished from London, coerced to leave in exchange for receiving a maintenance from Edward. Lady Mellasin is given her choice of location and casts about for an appropriate spot for exile:

> But when she considered on her banishment, and ran over in her mind, what part of England she should make choice of for her asylum, the whole kingdom appeared a desert to her, when driven from the gaieties of the court and capital; —she, therefore, resolved to go farther, and enter into a new scene of life, which might be more likely to obliterate the memory of the former; —she had heard much talk of Jamaica, —that it was a rich and opulent place, —that the inhabitants thought of little else, but how to divert themselves in the best manner the country afforded; and that they were not too strict in their notions, either as to honour or religion; —that reputation was a thing little regarded among them; —so that in case the occasion that had brought her thither should happen to be discovered, she would not find herself in the less estimation. (522-23)

Jamaica, caricatured as a place of debauchery and license, is the natural choice for a debased character. Her equally corrupted daughter, Flora, having neither reputation, money, or friends, is forced to share in her mother's fortune, and Lady Mellasin's wicked servant, Mrs. Prinks, also accompanies her mistress, having "no character" to recommend her to any other service (523). Edward's friends congratulate him on this three-for-one deal, as a "service he had done his country, in ridding it of three persons, who, by perverting the talents heaven had bestowed upon them to the most vile purposes, were capable of doing the greatest mischiefs to the more innocent and unwary" (523). Lady Mellasin's exile is characterized as a service to the country, a

proper separation of those that belong within the British nation and those that do not. Villainy goes off to the Caribbean, where it belongs, and it stays there.

II. Amatory Fiction and the Royal Prerogative

Lady Mellasin's banishment to Jamaica in *Betsy Thoughtless* does not receive much space within the action of the novel; it is accomplished over the course of about two pages. It would be easy to bypass such a scene as relatively inconsequential; however, if we put the moment in conversation with a similar episode in Delarivier Manley's story *The Physician's Strategem* (1720), we can better understand the stakes of this brief incident.

The three works featured in this chapter share a common literary genealogy in the tradition of amatory fiction, as reviewed in chapter one. Manley is perhaps most notorious for her works of scandal chronicle, which narrativize the contemporary sexual intrigues of the aristocracy, covered by a thin veil of fiction and underwritten by a distinct political message. *The Physician's Strategem* is the second "novel" in Manley's last fictional work, *The Power of Love: in Seven Novels*. Ros Ballaster notes that *The Power of Love* "is not a work of scandal, but rather a reworking of a number of medieval and Renaissance Italian and French tales found in William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566)" (154). Ballaster traces an evolution in the amatory tradition starting with *The Power of Love* and continuing with the fiction of Eliza Haywood: in *The Power of Love*, "the allegorical duplicity of scandal fiction, its complex double movement between the amatory and party political plot, is superseded by the more direct aim of representing the eternal power of the disruptive force of desire, specifically female desire" (154). From 1720 onwards, according to Ballaster, "women's amatory fiction turned away from employing sexual desire as a substituting metaphor for political interest. Sexual desire, in these

'new' novels of the 1720s is too protean and absolute a quality to be the vehicle for any other form of 'interest'" (154). The place of *The Physician's Strategem* within this trajectory remains ambiguous, however. In a footnote, Ballaster points out that this story differs from the other six novels in *The Power of Love*: "Of the seven novels, only one, *The Physician's Strategem,* appears to be wholly of Manley's making and may have its source in a contemporary scandal that has yet to be identified" (154n5). Like *The Jamaica Lady*, then, *The Physician's Strategem* can best be understood as part scandal chronicle, part novel—part allegory, part realism.

A historical fiction set during the reign of Lewis [sic] the XIII of France, the story concerns Mariana, the daughter of the Count de Severin. Mariana is virtuous and serious, "but she was also haughty and full of the greatest ideas of honour: that being a reign wherein the ladies concerned themselves in politics, she had an ambition to rival Madam de Chevreuse in the Queen's favor" (144-45). Mariana also resembles Pamela, in that her behavior could serve as the pattern for a conduct book: her letters, the narrator says, "deserved to be made a rule for the epistolary way of writing" (145). While Mariana's betrothed (the Marquis de Fonteray) is abroad, Henry du Fauxgarde, the second son of a friend of the Count de Severin, insinuates himself into the family. As a second son, Fauxgarde is forced to take up a profession, but "he had rather, if fortune had so pleased, been a rake than a doctor" (146). Fauxgarde sets his sights on Mariana, but he knows that she "would not fail to correct his saucy flame," and "therefore all must be compassed by stratagem" (149). He first takes up an affair with Mariana's attendant, Katherine de Lune, known as Caton, and soon gets her pregnant, after "making her easily believe, he had, by his art, an antidote against pregnancy" (150). Caton, who expects that Fauxgarde will marry her, grows impudent as a result of this affair, and she resents any correction from Mariana. She resolves to revenge herself on Mariana for her superiority and is

therefore easily persuaded to aid Fauxgarde in the stratagem he poses for "getting her with child also, without her knowing any thing of the matter; which might be done, by giving her something that he would prepare to cast her into a deep sleep, and Caton being her bed-fellow, the doctor would take her place, and try to put her in a condition to mortify her pride, and for ever prevent her from reproaching others" (153). When Mariana does indeed find herself pregnant without knowing the cause, her parents attribute it to an episode of sleepwalking, and she is quickly abandoned by her betrothed. Fauxgarde, who would never have been a suitable match for Mariana before she was dishonored, is then able to present himself as a savior to the family, offering to marry Mariana and raise the child as his own (which, of course, it is).

For the completion of this plot, however, Fauxgarde needs to get rid of Caton, the witness and accomplice to his crime. His solution is to put Caton (still with child) on a ship bound for the West Indies, paying the ship's crew to "carry Caton to the plantations, and sell her for a slave"[4] (156). In order to accomplish this bit of villainy, he lures Caton onto the ship by tricking her into thinking that they are going to take a trip together to the Isle of France. Fauxgarde is abetted here by Caton's own ignorance, which prevents her from recognizing the difference between the East and West Indies: the narrator laments, "Caton understood no geography but what had been taught her, to her cost, in the country of love, whence Fauxgarde might unexpectedly betray her to his wish" (156).

I want to linger briefly on Manley's use of the "country of love" metaphor here. Nussbaum writes, "Love's empire and the power it brings are most easily flaunted in romance, in the past, or in the empire abroad, since its exercise at home is severely restricted by convention and civility" (*Torrid* 20). The metaphor's multiple resonances emblematize the liminal quality of *The Physician's Strategem*, as a text that occupies a place in between the older allegorical mode

of scandal chronicle and a newer amatory mode, one that we connect more directly with the eighteenth-century realist novel, that is concerned primarily with the effects of desire on human characters.

The "country of love" or "empire of love" were common literary tropes at the time Manley is writing. In works treating the distinguishing characteristics of civilized societies, a common observation was that the modern European woman and man, liberated from the drudgery of primitive societies, now had leisure to practice the arts of lovemaking. As Nussbaum puts it,

> The point for these European intellectuals, conceptualizing for the first time that women have a history, is, of course, to demonstrate to newly literate women that their situation is far superior to that of their counterparts in the past or to contemporaneous 'primitive' societies. Among the privileges European women enjoy is increased leisure, which allows them to expect greater reciprocal love and affection from men. (*Torrid* 11)

Following close on the heels of such observations were frequently misogynistic complaints about the way that women in civilized society manipulated the romantic arts to establish dominance within the "empire of love." Rousseau, for instance, writes, "Now it is easy to see that the moral aspect of love is a factitious sentiment; born of social practice, and extolled with much skill and care by women in order to establish their rule [elsewhere translated as "empire"] and to make dominant the sex that should obey" (155). At the same time, "empire afforded a convenient metaphor for feminism in that it variously conceptualized domestic sovereignty and tyranny. 'Empire,' like 'slavery,' gained primacy in early feminist descriptions of women's exploitation" (Nussbaum, *Torrid* 14).

Manley's invocation of the "country of love" moves beyond cliché, however, with the reference to its "geography." As noted above, *The Power of Love* is occupied with "representing the eternal power of the disruptive force of desire, specifically female desire" (Ballaster 154). Ballaster puts this point more strongly when she writes, "All seven stories are solely concerned with the deleterious effects of love upon the human subject" (154). The narrator's remark that "Caton understood no geography but what had been taught her, to her cost, in the country of love" is on the one hand a lament about the disastrous effects of female sexual desire. On the other hand, it seems to me that the reference to teaching "geography" hints that the story is not concerned *solely* with the effects of love. We learn at the beginning of the story that Mariana was a dedicated student of "philosophy, geography, history, and whatever could improve her mind" (145). As the daughter of a "burgeoise of Paris," Caton would not have had the advantage of this kind of aristocratic education (144). The submerged suggestion in the narrator's remark, however, is that perhaps if she had studied geography, Caton could have prevented her eventual transportation and enslavement. In a story that does not otherwise evince any interest in describing the material conditions of the place to which Caton is exiled, this remark briefly illuminates the contours of the real colonial geography that makes Fauxgarde's stratagem possible.

Fauxgarde is ultimately undone by his own complacency. Drunk at a gaming party many years later, he reveals his stratagem to his friends, and Mariana overhears the confession. In regard to Caton, he explains that after his marriage to Mariana, "no longer fearing the ill effects of that girl's tattling, he had in conscience sent to redeem her and her child from the plantations, to which she was sold; and that as he took care of the boy, for such it proved, so he had given a fortune to his mother, by which she was married to a banker, called D'ampour, who lived in Rue

St. Honore" (167-68). Caton is allowed to return to Europe when Fauxgarde believes she can no longer be a danger to him. He is mistaken, however. Upon learning the truth, Mariana flees to the protection of the queen, from whence she "commenced a process against the count, to be tryed by the parliament of Paris" (169). During this process, Fauxgarde "was not a little surprized to hear that his accomplice Caton de Lune was taken into custody, to be produced in evidence against him" (169).

Unlike what we see in *Betsy Thoughtless*, the domestic legal system is enlisted as the appropriate vehicle for punishing Fauxgard's crime. This is the case even though the "law knew no name for his transgression," and Fauxgard must be tried by a "new and until now unheard of process" (169). Caton, whose exile was supposed to guarantee her silence, returns from the Caribbean and is called as a witness in this proceeding. The process is not allowed to reach its conclusion, however. When Fonteray, Mariana's first love, hears about the proceedings, he decides to exact his own justice, for "he knew full well the slow procedure of the parliament, and thought the time too long that suffered such a villain to breath the vital air, after committing the greatest crime" (169-70). He challenges Fauxgarde to a dual and kills him. Fonteray goes to Mariana, still covered in Fauxgarde's blood, expecting to be congratulated for his triumph. Mariana is having none of it, however. She sees that it would be indecent in her now to marry the murderer of the father of her children and bitterly laments,

> Fatal resentment, how unhappy are we made by an ill-tim'd revenge? Ah Fonteray! Had you but waited the slow hand of justice, attended with but a little patience, the wholesome laws of France had punish'd Fauxgarde with death for his infamous and successful attempt against my chastity, the villain had perish'd with ignominy, and I had

found nothing to withhold me from indulging my inclinations, and rewarding our mutual constancy. (172)

In this story, it is the domestic legal process that would guarantee the happiness that Mariana deserves.

Mariana seeks redress for her injuries by going to the queen for relief: it is when she is with the queen that she is able to commence "a process against the count, to be tryed by the parliament of Paris" (169). Aside from the obvious difference that Manley's historical romance is set in the past, and in France, this illustration of the relationship between a sovereign and her subject seems to reference a conception of British subjecthood that was articulated by the courts just a few years before the time of the action of Manley's story. In physically going to the queen to seek redress, which she obtains in the form of a personalized legal procedure—a "new and until now unheard of process"—Mariana literalizes the link of obedience and protection between subject and sovereign that is articulated in *Calvin's Case*, *or the Case of the Postnati*.

Calvin's Case, a 1608 King's Bench decision, determined that a subject born in Scotland after the Union of the Crowns in 1603—when James VI of Scotland assumed the English throne (and became James I)—was entitled to hold land in England and to access the common law rights of English courts when in England. The decision was written by "the oracle of English common law," Sir Edward Coke (Helgerson 15). Coke, born in 1552, produced a prodigious series of texts—his *Reports* (1600-1615), *Book of Entries* (1614), and *Institutes* (1628-44)—that wrote the law of England as it had never been written before. Coke's influence on English law and its inheritors was enormous: "Until well into the nineteenth century, one could become a lawyer in the United States simply by studying Coke's *First Institute*" (Helgerson 17).

In *Calvin's Case*, Coke based his delineation of the rights of the king's subjects not on the territory in which the subject was born but on a spiritual connection to the sovereign; a child born to an English subject residing in a foreign country during a time of war, for instance, would still be entitled to the liberties of an English subject. English subjecthood is deemed a birthright than cannot be given up: "Ligeance is a true and faithful obedience of the subject due to his Sovereign. This ligeance and obedience is an incident inseparable to every subject; for as soon as he is born he oweth by birth right ligeance and obedience to his Sovereign" (Coke). Moreover, ligeance is based on a personal, bodily connection of subject to sovereign: as the court says, "As the ligatures or strings do knit together the joints of all the parts of the body, so doth ligeance joyn together the Sovereign and all his Subjects" (Coke). The court, moreover, takes care to distinguish to which of the king's two bodies a subject owes allegiance: it is to the sovereign's "natural," physical body, not to his "politic," mystical body. This is a connection between two people, because a subject can only swear an oath with a natural person: "every subject […] is presumed by Law to be sworn to the King, which is to his natural person; and likewise the King is sworn to his subjects […] which oath he taketh in his natural person: for the politique capacity is invisible and immortal; nay, the politique body hath no soul, for it is framed by the policy of man" (Coke). As Paul Halliday explains, "the modern mind sees sovereignty manifesting itself through a uniform, depersonalized collective being called the state, possessed of will and mind but no body. The early modern mind saw sovereignty in a living, bleeding person, possessed of will, mind, *and* body" ("Laws' Histories" 270). *Calvin's Case* conceives of subjecthood as a connection of souls. This connection, then, is not necessarily dependent on the subject's place of birth: "ligeance, and faith and truth which are her members and parts, are qualities of the mind and soul of man, and cannot be circumscribed within the predicament of *ubi*" (Coke). The

connection, however, might be circumscribed when the relationship of subject to sovereign fails to function. Subjecthood is theorized as reciprocal: "as the subject oweth to the King his true and faithful ligeance and obedience, so the Sovereign is to govern and protect his Subjects" (Coke). This means that "ligeance of the subject was of as great an extent and latitude, as the royal power and protection of the King, *et è converso*" (Coke).[5]

Political historians and theorists have long characterized the eighteenth-century enlightenment as "a move away from the absolutism characteristic of the seventeenth century, which is associated with the necessity of sovereign power to the formation of the social bond, and toward a more broadly sociable political realm in which sovereign power is replaced either by the communicative reason of the public sphere, a bourgeois individualism, or disciplinary power" (DeGabrielle xxvi). In Foucault's account of biopower, for instance, "sovereignty becomes a remnant of a bygone political era" (DeGabrielle xxvi). The age of revolutions in the late eighteenth century is considered "a turning point in world history when monarchies became republics and subjects morphed into citizens" (Muller 1). More recent scholarship, however, has begun to question this narrative and reassert "the importance of monarchy in the eighteenth century, noting, among other things, that sovereigns consistently served as crucial focal points for subjects as they dispersed across the expanding European empires" (Muller 2). Hannah Muller's 2017 work *Subjects and Sovereign: Bonds of Belonging in the Eighteenth-Century British Empire*, for instance, demonstrates a number of ways in which "the age of citizens and revolutions was still largely an era of subjects and sovereigns" (2).

Helen Dewar has written that imperial "law was an instrument that both extended the monarch's sovereignty and provided subjects with a framework within which to affirm and defend their own privileges and challenge other claims" (55). It is this dynamic that I see at work

in Mariana's recourse to the queen in *The Physician's Strategem*. It hints at a theory of subjecthood in which "each person or group of persons—owing to territory, social status, or other markers of difference—stood in a slightly different relationship of mutual obligation with the king" (Halliday, "Laws' Histories" 270). Halliday has argued for expanding our understanding of the protections and liberties that subjects were enabled to claim under this diffuse conception of sovereignty, before the advent of uniform rights under a unitary state government: "When looking at subjecthood, the modern liberal democratic eye focuses on obedience. To the early modern eye, subjecthood appeared as a condition of possibility, one arising from the protection—provided by laws—given in return for obedience" ("Laws' Histories" 270).

This conception of subjecthood as consisting in a relationship to the king that arises from *Calvin's Case* "was radical for its time because it encouraged mobility throughout the king's composite monarchy" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 23). In an overseas empire, "individuals who otherwise might have had little interaction with states and empires continued to swear allegiance to monarchical figures whom they believed would protect them once informed of their grievances. Loyalty to a distant but personalized ruler often provided one of the only shared experiences between inhabitants with little or no other connection to one another" (Muller 2). The decision was still quite limited, however, in its understanding of which of the king's subjects could enjoy cherished English liberties. Subjecthood was a variable state, and the king's subjects by no means all enjoyed the same privileges and protections. *Calvin's Case* established that "a subject born in another royal territory, like Scotland or Virginia, could immigrate to England, and if he bought or inherited land there, he could sue in the English common-law courts to vindicate his title. This was the meaning of British liberty. But English liberty was for England"

(Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 23). Under Coke's understanding of the law, "remedy defined right," and common-law writs did not extend past the English border (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 23). "No one in the early seventeenth century," therefore, would have "interpreted *Calvin's Case* to mean that the common law and liberties of Englishmen were exported to the king's other dominions" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 23). However, this point becomes highly contentious in the eighteenth century, as British subjects in the American colonies start arguing for a more expansive notion of English liberty.[6]

III. Historical fiction, the gothic, and English liberty

Like *The Physician's Strategem*, Sophia Lee's *The Recess* is a historical fiction. The action of *The Recess* takes place around the turn of the sixteenth century, only a little earlier than the time frame given for Manley's story.[7] *The Recess* posits an alternative history in which Mary, Queen of Scots secretly gave birth to twin daughters fathered by the Duke of Norfolk. The daughters, Matilda and Ellinor, are raised in the eponymous underground Recess and hidden away until they come of age. When they leave the Recess at last, Matilda and Ellinor are beset by tragedy; as heirs to the throne, they are constantly under threat from Queen Elizabeth I. This threat is exacerbated when they each fall in love with one of Elizabeth's favorite courtiers, Matilda with Lord Leicester and Ellinor with Lord Essex. These four lovers are periodically engaged with various plots to restore Matilda or Ellinor to her rightful place on the throne, but all their schemes end in misery and failure.

Siobhan Carroll has argued that the Recess can be understood as an "underworld" that refuses to be converted into modern colonizable space: works like *The Recess*, she argues, insist on the "continued existence of dark recesses, caves, and passages that could help individuals

evade the all-encompassing gaze of the imperial state" (16). Though by the end of the eighteenth century there were increasingly fewer places on the globe that had not been visited and charted, *The Recess* undermines "both standardized cartography and national history by imagining spaces and histories 'at war with…known fate'" (Carroll 16-17). Established historical narratives have tended to characterize European imperial expansion as having the effect of consolidating a global order based on flattened spaces with defined boundaries. Supposedly emerging out of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the modern nation state replaced legal pluralities with unitary sovereignty, and "the borders between both conceptual and national territories were redrawn as solid rather than dotted lines" (Shuger 11). Benedict Anderson, articulating this idea in *Imagined Communities*, writes that the modern conception of state sovereignty "is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of legally demarcated territory" (26). This pat narrative has been contested on multiple grounds. Lauren Benton takes up the question in her work on the spatial dimensions of early empires. Exploring the associations between geography and law, she found ample evidence of legal practices that contradicted the familiar narrative of "European expansion as acting to further the rationalization of space;" instead, she discovered "repeating sets of irregularly shaped corridors and enclaves with ambiguous and shifting relations to imperial sovereignty" (xii). Benton memorably characterizes British imperial legal space as having a "peculiar and enduring lumpiness" (xiii). Carroll links her project more broadly[8]—plotting the "uncolonizable spaces of imperial imagination" in literature—to Benton's work on "anomalous legal zones" of empire: both are concerned with spaces that resist conversion into national property (Carroll 6). Like Carroll, I am interested in literature's contribution to uneven imperial geographies, specifically in terms of the ways that literary works contribute to an understanding of the varieties of British subjecthood in the early Atlantic empire.

Like Caton in *The Physician's Strategem*, Matilda in *The Recess* is also carried to the Caribbean after being tricked onto a ship that she thought was bound elsewhere. Matilda's villainous French cousin Mortimer entraps her on a ship bound for Jamaica, intending to force her to marry him once they arrive. The Caribbean colonies are useful to the plot of *The Recess* for much the same reason they are useful to Manley's story—as a space of relative lawlessness where unscrupulous characters can effect their will. In both cases, the Caribbean colonies would have looked a lot different at the time of the stories' action than they did to the stories' readers. The Jamaican colony was in its infancy during Elizabeth's reign and still under Spanish rule; the English would not invade until 1655.

In *The Recess*, a good deal is made of the colony's unsettled state and consequent lack of the rule of law. Matilda's friend Rose Cecil warns her, "the island to which we are bound is yet in the hands of a few settlers; power is almost their only law" (132). The venal governor of the colony, Don Pedro, secretly colludes with Mortimer in profiting from "that piratical and illicit trade which alone can enrich individuals in the infancy of a settlement" (139). As a result of this piratical trade, "the arrogance, cruelty, and vanity of Mortimer, received a fatal increase by the accumulation of wealth, and set him above all restraint" (139). Matilda pronounces Jamaica a country "where justice is partially administered," and with good reason (151). Her forced wedding ceremony to Mortimer is interrupted by a slave revolt, during which Mortimer is killed. Mortimer had been a cruel master to his enslaved workers, whom Matilda describes as "seared by the oppressions of their murdered master to all sense of humanity" (138). Matilda is caught up with the rebels, and after they are found by the colonial authorities, the governor uses the opportunity as a pretense to imprison Matilda and claim her inheritance from Mortimer's estate: "this unworthy Governor, I doubted not, had annihilated my claim to possessions he was

resolved to appropriate, by classing me with the murderers, among whom I was found: and by an arbitrary proceeding, (not uncommon there, if Emanuel might be relied on) sentenced me at once, unwilling to venture a judicial enquiry" (144). This Jamaica is ruled by a series of tyrannical masters, unchecked by the rule of law.

Matilda's time in Jamaica reads as an implicit exemplar of the superiority of English liberty when compared to the arbitrary, tyrannical power exercised by the French and Spanish. Matilda, an heir to the English throne, is buffeted about by representatives of the two major world powers of the time, France (Mortimer) and Spain (Don Pedro). In the moments after the colonial authorities catch up with the escaped slaves, thereby freed from the oppressive dueling amorous attentions of two leaders of the rebellion, a gallant Spaniard and a noble African, after having been liberated by the rebellion from Mortimer's control, and right before she is imprisoned by the governor, Matilda briefly exults, "restored by this extraordinary means once more to civilized society, my heart acknowledged the charm, the simple, the solitary charm of liberty, and springing forward toward England, overleaped every intervening obstacle" (143).

As Britain's particular national identity starts to emerge over the course of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, its centerpiece and essence is *English liberty*. The cherished liberties of the English people—including, most significantly, the rights not to be taxed or subjected to laws without their consent and not to be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law—were considered exclusive to English law (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 2-4). Compared to their fellow European states, many of which were ruled by absolutist monarchs, English jurists saw their legal tradition as a unique bastion of the rule of law serving as a restraint on royal power. As early as 1470, Sir John Fortescue, in *De Laudibus Legum Angeliae*, "distinguished between what he called the *dominium politicum et regale* characteristic

of England and the continental (particularly French) *dominium regale*. Where in England the king had no power to change the laws without gaining the assent of the whole realm represented in parliament, the French monarch's will was absolute" (Helgerson 69). Such absolute authority "might easily degenerate into tyranny," and English common law is held up as "a barrier against such degeneration [that] served to maintain the liberty of the subject" (Helgerson 69).

Though Jamaica was not a British colony at the time of the novel's action, it would be by the time Lee writes her novel. Perhaps reflecting this eventuality, *The Recess* explicitly links the Caribbean with Britain's other colonial outskirts. Both Matilda and Ellinor end up "as colonial prisoners, not as sovereign rulers," in Jamaica and Ireland, respectively (Carroll 166). Ellinor, forced into exile in the Celtic fringe to escape Elizabeth's wrath, finds herself in the middle of a battle with a contingent of "rebellious Irish." Ellinor falls ill and is taken in by an Irish woman to convalesce, where she observes that she "was environed by a set of beings who in complexion alone bore any resemblance to myself, their language, manners, and lives, seeming no more analogous, than those of the inhabitants of the Torrid Zone. I laboured in vain to comprehend them, or to make myself understood" (224). Any racial similarity between herself and her hosts is far outweighed by customs and manners that associate the Irish more with the inhabitants of the Caribbean than with her.[9]

Given her trials at the hands of colonial authorities, it is no wonder that Matilda longs for a pre-imperial world that is lost: employing a Homeric epithet to describe the ocean during her journey across it, Matilda laments "the encircling sea" that was "once the happy boundary of human pursuits" (110). That is not the world Matilda is living in, however, and it is definitely not the world known to *The Recess*'s readers.

If the arbitrary nature of the exercise of power in Jamaica alludes, on the one hand, to an inter-imperial rivalry among European powers in the Caribbean, it also comments, on the other hand, on an intra-empire debate happening in Britain contemporaneously with the publication of *The Recess*. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, metropolitan officials start exerting greater control over the multiple sources of legal authority in the Caribbean colonies: "metropolitan observers viewed legal pluralism itself as a source of disorder because it protected private jurisdictions and the exercise of arbitrary and unauthorized power in the colonies" (Benton and Ford 8). Officials in London increasingly engage in conflicts with middling colonial authorities over the nature and scope of their power (Benton and Ford 174).

We can see evidence of worries about the unchecked power of colonial elites in Matilda's interactions with Mortimer on the island. In demanding her hand in marriage, Matilda observes, Mortimer "bade me remember he was there a sovereign, nor did I see a being who dared even to murmur at his will" (136). Matilda, who should have been herself a sovereign in England, instead has her bodily and political sovereignty threatened by the unauthorized power of a colonial tyrant. When Matilda is finally freed from captivity in the Jamaican prison, she "joyfully embarked for England, accompanied by several slaves, who preferred attending on me to the precarious blessing of liberty under arbitrary power" (151). From the perspective of the metropole, the independent legal authority that colonial elites claimed over subordinates—convicts, servants, slaves, vagrants—was another "obstacle to effective imperial command" (Benton and Ford 174). In both of these instances, Matilda stands in as a representative of true English sovereignty whose prerogative is being infringed by usurping colonial authorities.

This expansive authority was nonetheless claimed by creole elites in Britain's Caribbean colonies, on the justification of their inherited privileges of English liberty. The historian Jack

Greene has researched extensively "the transmission, application, adaptation, and operation of English ideas of liberty—especially as they involved consensual governance, trial by jury, and the rule of law—to the wide variety of settlement societies associated with the British empire" (*Exclusionary Empire* ix). Settler claims to the inherited rights of Englishmen, Greene finds, were a "critical element in the dispersal of authority throughout the settler empire": by the mid-seventeenth century, settlers had worked out a jurisprudential theory by which these rights were theirs by inheritance, not by the gift of a sovereign power, and this conviction resulted in a high degree of self-government over local affairs throughout the empire (*Exclusionary Empire* 22-23). In shaping their new polities in newly settled lands, British colonists "all shared two fundamental objectives":

> The first was to recreate and adapt to their new homes the English common-law culture they had left behind; the second was to found, in the English manner, their polities on a consensual base through the creation of a representative institution through which they could ensure that they would have a say in making the laws under which they lived and in levying the taxes necessary to support their polities. (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 5)

As a result, the proportion of subjects engaged in the civic process was actually much higher in Britain's oversea colonies than at home. In England, only a small fraction of the population ever managed to attain the independent property status necessary to participate in the political decisions of a supposedly representative government; in the colonies, however, a very large proportion of the adult white male settlers achieved this independence through their acquisitions of land or other resources (Green 5). These colonists, moreover, extended their power over local affairs even beyond that enjoyed by the representatives in the House of Commons in England by gaining "extensive authority in handling executive affairs, including the rights to participate in

formulating executive policy and to appoint most officials concerned with the collection of provincial revenues and many other executive officers" (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 7). Pursuant to their conviction that it was their birthright to have a say in the laws under which they lived, British colonists in the West Indies "acquired a large measure of legislative independence by winning control over their procedures and obtaining guarantees of basic English parliamentary privileges" (Greene, *Exclusionary Empire* 7).

Officials in the British imperial center came to view these claims as part of "an excess of autonomy that colonial elites and delegated legal authorities enjoyed," however, and in the early nineteenth century, metropolitan reformers undertake "projects designed precisely to reorder legal pluralism in the empire" (Benton and Ford 174). Paul Halliday has pointed out that modern day scholars, possibly owning to subconscious liberal biases, are attracted to the concept of legal pluralism "because we like the variety, the diversity that it calls to mind […] we believe this represents possibilities for possibilities for choosing, and thus for individual and collective self-realization, through law" ("Law's Histories" 262). However, the operation of subjecthood—in particular, I would say, subjecthood abroad in the Caribbean colonies— "also reminds us how plural legal spaces could be as productive of tyrannies—typically imposed by lesser tyrants we call by the name of masters, landlords, or local magistrates—as they were of liberation. These tyrannies might only be curtailed by the sovereign's actions in response to the subject's pleas" (Halliday, "Law's Histories" 271). Both of these dynamics—the tyranny that results from colonial British subjects exercising their privileges of English liberty, as well as the liberation that a subject might gain through an appeal to the English sovereign—are illustrated by the early Caribbean slave narrative *The History of Mary Prince* (1831).

In her history, Mary Prince describes "a quarrel I had about a pig with another slave woman" while enslaved in Antigua (15). Her mistress, as punishment for this quarrel, has Prince flogged "by the magistrate's order, at her desire" (15). Prince protests against her mistress's ability to enlist the violence of the colonial government to carry out her whims, "although I was in no fault after all; for old Justice Dyett, when we came before him, said that I was in the right, and ordered the pig to be given to me" (15). Thomas Pringle, the editor of Prince's history, comments on this episode, saying, "this cruel practice is very common in Antigua; and, in my opinion, is but little creditable to the slave owners and magistrates by whom such arbitrary punishments are inflicted, frequently for very trifling faults. Mr. James Scotland is the only magistrate in the colony who invariably refuses to sanction this reprehensible practice" (32). As Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford have shown, one way that metropolitan reformers attempt to reign in the autonomy of colonial elites is by reforming the office of the magistrate; Prince's narrative provides a compelling case for this kind of reform. Prince's narrative also demonstrates that the personal relationship between subject and sovereign persists into the nineteenth century, and one manifestation of this ideal is in appeals for the abolition of slavery. Though this is well into the age of popular sovereignty, Prince concludes her history by appealing not only to the public, but for the members of the public to appeal to their sovereign: "This is slavery. I tell it, to let English people know the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God, and call loud to the great King of England, till all the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for evermore" (23). As Halliday says, "claims of liberty and other moral goods often needed the sovereign's might for protection in a plural legal world" (271).

When Matilda is finally freed from her imprisonment in Jamaica, she learns that Elizabeth has died and that her "brother James, as well by her nomination, as the rights of his

birth, and the voice of the people, had ascended the throne of England: happily uniting under his sway two kingdoms, so many ages hostile as hardly to leave a hope of the event which was now without bloodshed fully accomplished" (149). James's depiction in *The Recess* is not flattering; Matilda describes him as "mean, base, subtle," and he refuses to acknowledge the royal lineage of his sisters (306). Nonetheless, the Union of the Crowns is the precipitating event for Coke's decision in *Calvin's Case*, and James is a central figure in the development of a legal theory of English subjecthood that has monumental ramifications for the empire and well into the new United States.[10]

Coke's "most persistent antagonist" in the law was Francis Bacon (Helgerson 73). Their fundamental clash centered on the question of which was ultimately superior—the king or the law. Bacon, for whom everything originated in the sovereign, and Coke "would repeatedly differ in situations where royal prerogative and the common law—in Coke's view, the subject's most precious birthright—were in conflict" (Helgerson 74). In Bacon's view, the English common law, consisting in practice and recorded in tomes called yearbooks that noted the decisions of judges in individual cases, was too baroque and uncertain: he therefore advocated amending the law for brevity and clarity, modeled on the top-down approach of Justinian's *Corpus Juris*, the book of the Roman civil law (Helgerson 74-75). King James, unsurprisingly, sides with Bacon on the question of whether the king is before the law or the law before the king. Bacon also succeeds in convincing James of the necessity of amending and clarifying the laws of England: in 1607, James tells parliament, "I desire not the abolishing of the laws, but only the cleaning and sweeping off the rust of them" (Helgerson 77).

Richard Helgerson analyzes this conflict between Bacon and Coke, and James and Coke, as a conflict between competing legal ideologies that might form the basis of English law—

Roman civil law, on the one hand, and ancient Saxon liberties, on the other. Bacon and James align themselves with the classicizing impulse. Coke, in contrast, "made his *Institutes* bear an anti-institutional, anti-monarchic, anti-Roman ideology, an ideology that left the king, the very font of the law for the civilians, looking like a foreigner in his own country—a task no doubt made easier for Coke by the fact that King James *was* a foreigner" (Helgerson 103). Coke's readers "took him as a kind of Goth," a "defender of ancient Saxon liberties" (Helgerson 103). In saying that "what is 'damaged,' 'fragmented,' 'dark,' and 'melancholy' in English law is uniquely its own and must be sacrificed," James sets himself against the Goths (Helgerson 78). Helgerson makes the architectural analogy: "Gothic buildings are dark and melancholy. Light and prospect belong to the newer classicizing architecture" (78). *The Recess* provides us with a kind of literary analogy. If *The Recess*, as contemporary critics claimed, is a grotesque blend of the historical and the fabulous (or gothic), then it is Ellinor and Matilda's fates to be gothic rather than historical figures: "the persecutions they endure confirm their exclusion from any official historical narrative and their consignment to the emerging subterranean genre of the Gothic" (Carroll 169).

[1] In his *History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time* (1782), William Alexander describes the ideal for modern European women's proper behavior this way: "it consists in good-nature, sensibility, delicacy, chastity, and the domestic virtues, and a thousand other qualities; which, when joined to a competent share of beauty and female softness, are almost sufficient to soothe the most rugged nature, and change the cruelest temper into gentleness and humanity" (vol I: 254). Many eighteenth-century novels concerning the domestic situation of English women seem committed, on the contrary, to demonstrating the total failure of this ideal to do what Alexander promises—to "change the cruelest temper into gentleness and humanity." It may work in *Pamela*, but Clarissa is made a sacrifice to her angelic temper. And all of the novels treated in this chapter demonstrate, in one way or another, dangers for women endemic to the cult of domestic womanhood.

[2] We see an example of these connections between capital production, sexual permissiveness, and sterility in the novel discussed in the last chapter, *The Fortunate Transport*. In an attempt to avoid the harsh treatment of her Virginian master, Polly tries to seduce him; she fails, however, for "old birds are not to be caught with chaff" (32). The planter is depicted as sexless and impotent, his only desires the acquisition of wealth and the infliction of pain. The distasteful connection between these two impulses, the sexual and the acquisitive, is made explicit when the Virginian tyrant tells the justice of the peace that he will make him "a present" of Polly, for perhaps "he might make something of her, and would perhaps give herr [sic] strokes she might like better than any he had afforded her" (34). Polly becomes the justice's maidservant, and eventually his mistress as well. The narrator notes that, contrary to what the reader might expect, the justice's female relations in the colony behave very civilly to Polly, "for there a kept mistress is no such scandalous matter as to give umbrage to the marriage part of the sex" (35).

[3] Rosenthal provides the following list of examples: "Sally Godfrey in *Pamela* begins afresh by transporting herself to the West Indies; some of Clarissa's relatives wanted to send her to Philadelphia after the rape. In Thomas Southerne's popular stage version of *Oroonoko* (1695), the Welldon sisters seek husbands in Surinam after becoming too "well done" in London. Swift's Corinna, "pride of Drury Lane," is in her nightmares "to Jamaica seems transported,/ Alone, and by no planter courted" (par. 10).

[4] In a slippery usage characteristic of the eighteenth century, Caton's description as a "slave" is followed just two pages later by a metaphorical invocation of slavery, when Mariana's betrothed returns and finds her sickly in her pregnancy: "he scarce knew her to be the same, but by the faint remembrance of that flourishing beauty which had so powerfully enslaved his soul" (158).

[5] The American Revolutionaries would make much of this reciprocal relationship in their arguments that George III had failed to uphold his promises of protection for the colonies and thus was no longer owed ligeance.

[6] "Empire and constitutional liberties were related and reinforcing, yet there was little consensus about the meaning of these key terms in the early modern British Atlantic world and even less about whether the liberties of Englishmen traveled overseas to other crown territories" (Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire* 12).

[7] Elizabeth I reigned from 1558-1603; Louis XIII of France reigned 1610-1643.

[8] In *An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable Space in the British Imagination, 1750-1850*, Carroll examines mostly nineteenth-century literary treatments of atopic spaces and spaces that appeared as blanks on official maps—"the poles, the ocean, the atmosphere, and the subterranean" (6).

[9] Later, captive in a Scottish castle, Ellinor weeps over the fate of her sister: "Ah, how easy is it

to be unknown!—to be entombed alive!— If I, even in a civilized adjacent kingdom, in effect the country of all my ancestors, can be thus helpless, what may the poor Matilda have been?—Turn, busy imagination, from the fatal supposition" (239).

[10] We see resonances of *Calvin's Case* in the right to birthright citizenship that comes out of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Coda

To conclude, I want to revisit Kamau Brathwaite's etymology of the word *creole*: the word, he says, "originated from a combination of the two Spanish words *criar* (to create, to imagine, to establish, to found, to settle) and *colono* (a colonist, a founder, a settler) into *criollo*: a committed settler, one identified with the area of settlement, one native to the settlement though not ancestrally indigenous to it" (xiv-xv). The fusion of these two terms is an apt image for the way I have thought about this project—as an investigation into the creative and imaginative structures of thought that British settlers in the Caribbean relied upon to understand themselves. The Caribbean was an early and crucial site of contention for British subjects defining and defending their place in a rapidly changing nation, and the novels treated here explore various contradictory dimensions of creole subjecthood.

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon succinctly encapsulates Brathwaite's definition of the creole, "a committed settler, one identified with the area of settlement, one native to the settlement though not ancestrally indigenous to it," when she describes the creole as "the native who is non-native" ("Secret History" 95). To be creole is to inhabit a space in a mode of constant disavowal: to be native to the Caribbean as a white Briton is to disavow the priority of extirpated indigenous populations on the land and to actively repress other creole inhabitants that are African-descended; to be non-native is to disavow the possibility of mixture with these other creoles—to deny the metropolitan suspicion of miscegenation that perpetually hangs over the white creole. It also references the nativity that the white creole claims from the motherland, juxtaposed with the metropolitan accusation that the creole is actually a foreigner within the nation.

The literary historical arc of this project ends with the rise of the gothic, a genre that, like the creole, could be said to be all about repression. An expanded version of this project might reach into the early nineteenth century and consider novels that take up issues of rebellion and revolution in the West Indian colonies in the form of romance and gothic narratives—such as William Earle's *Obi, or, The History of Three-Fingered Jack* (1800); Leonora Sansay's *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808); and Cynric R. Williams's *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827). As it stands, this project has traced creole literary structures and forms that predate the "developed" manifestations of creolization, post-1820 or so, that Brathwaite investigates in Jamaica (Sandiford 6). In his work on the *Cultural Products of Sugar*, Keith Sandiford writes that the effect of his inquiry "will be to place the origins of Creole identity and its attendant anxieties closer to the origins of West Indian settlement and sugar production" (6). Similarly, in this project, I have examined an early set of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century creole texts that are not satisfactorily explained by the largely recuperative notions of creolization initiated by Brathwaite and expanded by other modern Caribbean scholars.

Many of the works in this project portray creole authors' attempts at "claiming and defining positive social value for these colonized spaces" in the face of skepticism and antipathy from the metropole (Sandiford 2). Other works in this project narrate the characters of the colonial Caribbean from the metropolitan perspective, through the lens of this skepticism and antipathy. As we've seen, these texts imagine the colonial Caribbean in terms of contradiction and excess. It is on the one hand conceived as hypersexualized and fecund: a place of licentious and ungoverned passions, and also a source of novel flora and fauna to catalogue, adventures to chronicle, and poetic images to capture—all newly available to the literary imagination. On the

other hand, the Caribbean colonies are imagined as sites of sterility—where legitimate cultural production and social reproduction are impossible.

"Hypersexualized but sterile" might also serve as an apt summation of the way works like *The Jamaica Lady* and *The Fortunate Transport* have been read by literary critics. In the general critical consensus, novels such as these offer tales of salacious colonial exploits but do not lead to anything greater in the history of the form. I have tried to offer here some ways in which this critical understanding seems impoverished. Over the course of this project I have considered various interrelations between the kinds of characters and structures that emerge in the eighteenth-century English novel of the Caribbean alongside forms of subject status, personhood, and legal or social belonging in the societies from which these novels emerge.

The ability to recognize the interiority and autonomy of other persons is said to be the monumental eighteenth-century development that occurs in both novels and political theory. The novel subject and the legal/political subject have both been plagued by their connections to interiority, as this development has alternately been viewed as a triumph and a disaster for the claims of vulnerable people subject to state-sanctioned violence. The version of subjecthood that emerges in the early colonial British Caribbean, as it is portrayed in the literature of the time, provides us with an alternative eighteenth-century legacy to consider: a series of processes for claiming justice that do not depend on the recognition of and empathy for an autonomous individual. In her work on strict liability in the eighteenth-century novel, Sandra Macpherson identifies a legal regime in which responsibility is not dependent on the interiority of actors subject to the laws: in the case of both the fictional legal person of strict liability and the formal person in many novels of the era, their "content as represented by the state of her interior (or mind) is irrelevant to the question of her responsibility and thus to the question of what or who

she is" (23). The laws of liability offer an argument for the values of "objectification, externalization, allegorization, flatness" (Macpherson 173). The novels that I survey in this project offer a parallel history of literary and legal form in the realm of imperial subjecthood. To different degrees, all of the novels described in this project participate in the operations of objectification, externalization, allegorization, and flatness.

Lauren Benton has argued for the importance of the concept of "jurisdiction" for legal histories of colonial legal orders, applying this term "to the exercise by sometimes vaguely defined legal authorities of the power to regulate and administer sanctions over particular actions or people, including groups defined by personal status, territorial boundaries, and corporate membership" (Benton and Ross 5-6). This account also captures the way that the novels surveyed in this project portray the legal situation of the colonial Caribbean—a place of competing centers of power claiming authority over different groups of people, where the rights and responsibilities of political actors differ depending upon factors of status, territory, and group membership. Compared to the claims of full individual personhood articulated by later human rights discourse, this legal situation looks rather flat. Its legal characters are a series of types, analogous to the "specimens" of character that Deidre Lynch identifies in eighteenth-century novels that use character as "at once a means of aggregation—it marks out the person's affinity with others belonging to the same category—and a means of segregation—it differentiates the person from the membership of some other category" (217). The readings in this project have identified ways in which this characterological flatness does not necessarily need to be coded as negative. Ideally, early novels of the colonial Caribbean might posit an "alternative theory of political and ethical subjectivity, one in which form, and formalism, is not opposed to but is a species of justice" (Macpherson 23). At the least, in rethinking the value of

flatness over roundness, enmeshment over autonomy, we inherit a more robust legacy of eighteenth-century literary and legal forms.

Appendix 1: A partial list of long eighteenth-century [novels] about/related to/dependent on the Caribbean colonies

- Aphra Behn, Oroonoko (1688)
- Ned Ward, *A Trip to Jamaica* (1698)
- Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe (1719)
- William Pittis, *The Jamaica Lady* (1720)
- Defoe, Captain Singleton (1720)
- Delarivier Manley, *The Physician's Strategem* (1720)
- Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (1722)
- Defoe, *Colonel Jack* (1722)
- Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pyrates* (1724)
- Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)
- Samuel Brunt, *A Voyage to Cacklogallinia* (1727)
- Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1740)
- Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748)
- A Creole, *The Fortunate Transport* [1750?]
- Eliza Haywood, *Betsy Thoughtless* (1751)
- *The History of Miss Katty N___* [1757?]
- Sarah Scott, *Sir George Ellison* (1766)
- Unca Eliza Winkfield, *The Female American* (1767)
- Sophia Lee, *The Recess* (1783-85)
- William Earle, *Obi, or, The History of Three-Fingered Jack* (1800)
- Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda* (1801)
- Leonora Sansay, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808)
- Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* (1808)
- Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814)
- Austen, *Persuasion* (1816)
- Cynric R. Williams, *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827)
- Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince* (1828)
- Matthew Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (1834)

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