WHITE WOMEN, SLAVERY AND RACISM:

IMAGES OF THE BRITISH CARIBBEAN

IN WOMEN'S PUBLISHED WRITING 1770-1845

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the published writing about the British Caribbean, by white women, in the years 1770-1845. The study includes travel accounts, published histories, natural histories, diaries, letters and novels, which represent a range of views on slavery from anti-slavery to pro-slavery. White women's writing from the Caribbean remains a neglected topic, despite pioneering work about North America, and some of the texts I examine have not previously been used in a study of slavery in the British West Indies.

As well as using these 'new' sources, the thesis also makes a theoretical contribution to the study of slavery in the Caribbean. Texts are deconstructed in order to analyse the powerful images of 'race' and racism present in women's writing. It is argued that white women travellers and novelists played an important role in imperialism in contributing to contemporary discourses on racism and white superiority. I suggest that even 'anti'-slavery texts contained powerful negative images of slaves and of the free black and mixed-origins populations. The thesis also suggests that white women accepted white male patriarchy in slave society, and even contributed to their own gender oppression by their glorification of stereotypical female gender characteristics.

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Part One

Introduction, Historiography, Methodology

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Scope and Purpose of the Thesis

This study is concerned with the public discourse of white women's published writing about the British Caribbean during the late slavery period (1770-1834), although some material from the immediate post-slavery period will also be examined.[1] The aim of this is to look at white women's involvement in and writing about colonial experiences and empire building, and their contribution to an ideology of racism.[2] The West Indies[3] generated tremendous interest in Britain at both a popular and 'scholarly' level, and there was a very large amount of literature produced about the region. The British Library, for example, has almost a thousand titles relating to the West Indies in this period. As well as published histories and travel accounts, works of literature, art, and publications of the anti-slavery lobby, and Parliamentary debates, all meant that the West Indies caught the public imagination on an enormous scale.

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[1] The term 'discourse' is used throughout this thesis. The term is mostly associated with Michel Foucault who used it in a very specific way to refer to writings in an area of technical knowledge, where specialists work together to establish their field. Thus, it is not language, or a text, but an 'historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms categories, and beliefs.' Joan Scott states 'discursive fields overlap, influence, and compete with one another; they appeal to one another's 'truths' for legitimation....Precisely because they are assigned the status of objective knowledge, they seem to be beyond dispute and thus serve a powerful legitimating function.' Joan Scott 'Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Postmodernist Theory for Feminism,' *Feminist Studies*, (1988) 14, 1, pp.33-50. I suggest that the discourse on slavery and 'race' was that which established black people as inferior objects to 'civilised' white Europeans.

[2] There is some vigorous debate about definitions of racism. In this thesis, racism will be used quite generally, to refer to an ideology of white superiority to blacks. Though such a definition may appear to be very broad and crude, I believe that in the historical period my thesis relates to, feelings of superiority were at the core of racism, and formed the entire justification for colonial rule. Indeed, like Fanon, I would suggest that colonial societies were built around such racism. See, for example, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth, 1967) or Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask* (London, 1970).

[3] I would prefer to use the term Caribbean, but in this context, such a term would be incongruous, since the construction and image of 'the West Indies' to the British reading public is the very discourse I seek to address.

Women's contribution to this public discourse seems rather slight in comparison to the whole. For example, only a small number of 'travel accounts' and novels by women have survived.[4] These published works by women form the core of primary material for this thesis (although they will also be contextualised with a much wider reading of other primary material). Whilst these works by women comprise a relatively small number, since women have traditionally largely been represented in history by men, to have access to women's own direct voice is unique and adds an important contribution to women's history. The novels perhaps do not represent a uniform set of writing since some of the authors did not travel to the West Indies. Also, defining a slavery novel is not necessarily straightforward since many novels mentioned slavery but were not overtly concerned with it. Given these problems, and the general lack of published material by women, I decided to use any novels by women that had a strong slavery theme, and to use all of the women's published travel accounts, diaries, journals and letters that I could find.

The small number of works by women, of course, raises the question of representativeness. This question is not a major obstacle for me, since my approach is one of deconstructing each text as an entire piece.[5] I am aware, however, that this

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[4] It is slightly more problematic to count the number of novels than the number of travel accounts, since it depends on how one defines a slavery novel. In this thesis, I have included only novels that had slavery as a significant part of the theme.

[5] The term deconstruction seems to be used by theorists in different ways. In its strict use, the term comes from Jacques Derrida where it means analysing the operations of 'difference' in texts, and the ways in which meanings are made to work. Derrida's concept of 'difference' comes from Saussure's structuralist linguistics, where meaning in language is made clear through implicit or explicit contrast with something represented as antithetical to it. Derrida took this further with the notion that such 'binary opposites' contain a power hierarchy because one term is always given primacy over another. Derrida suggested that the Western philosophical tradition rests on binary oppositions such as unity/diversity, presence/absence etc, with the first terms given primacy. However, this philosophical tradition is disrupted by what Derrida called 'undecidabiity': where some concepts break down the logic of oppositions by occupying the space *in between* them. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, '*Différance' in Speech and Phenomena* (Illinois, 1973) or *Writing and Difference* (London, 1978).

group of female writings is not representative in the strict social science use of the term. Yet it is likely, with regard to the Caribbean, where there was always a small population of white women, that only a small number of female texts was ever created. In this case, the women's writing that has survived probably does constitute a large enough corpus of writing from which to generalise. Thus, I would argue that it is possible to make some kinds of generalisation from a small group of female travel accounts and novels. As Judith Bennett emphasises, it is important to move from the individual level to some concept of the general:

> As historians, we work always on two levels; we seek to understand the particularities of past lives, but we also quite rightly seek to place those lives in broader context. At this second level of work, generalization might be risky, but it is both proper and useful.[6]

Alice Easton, also commenting upon the importance of the individual account in relation to the broader context, says:

> We need to understand that 'experience' is not simply an individualistic matter. What is subjective is also collective and shared; it is part of the world of social and economic institutions, language and other cultural practices, and is a continuous process by which we come to have a sense of ourselves and our place in the social order.[7]

I feel that some level of generalisation is possible by adopting a qualitative approach based on an in-depth study of a small selection of texts. Indeed, there has been a general move in social science from large-scale research to more in-depth case studies as a means to explore wider issues.[8] By using women's travel accounts of the British

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[6] Judith Bennett, 'Women's History: A Study in Change, Continuity or Standing Still?' *Women's History Review*, (1993) 2, p.177.

[7] Alison Easton, 'Introduction: What is Women's Studies' in T. Cosslett, A. Easton and P. Summerfield (eds). *Women, Power and Resistance: An Introduction to Women's Studies* (Milton Keynes, 1996) p.5. Both quoted in Sarah Aiston, 'The Life Experiences of University-Educated Women: Graduates of the University of Liverpool, 1944-1979,' PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, in progress, p.27.

[8] In oral history research there have been moves away from studies based on large numbers. For example, Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: the Remaking of British Society* (London, 1975) was based on a sample of 444 interviewees, whereas more recent works have been based on life history approaches and far smaller samples. An example is Judy Giles' '"Playing Hard to Get": Working-Class Women, Sexuality and Respectability in Britain, 1918-40,' in *Women's History Review*, (1992) 1,

Caribbean, this thesis will explore such wider societal issues as women's involvement in colonialism, their contribution to a racist ideology, and the extent of women's 'collusion' in male definitions of acceptable gender behaviour and femininity. The texts thus provide a framework for discussion of issues of gender, 'race' and class.

What unites the texts is that they were written by upper-class white European women during a period of about eighty years. Given this time span during a period of virulent debate about slavery, and the fact that the women each had different reasons for travelling to the Caribbean, as one would expect, the texts offer a range of perspectives on slavery. As well as exploring change in views over time, throughout the thesis, I shall also be demonstrating the *similarity* of texts in terms of the way they expressed racial images and assumptions of racial superiority. Thus, another important aim of the thesis is to examine the extent to which texts that had leanings against slavery were also 'racist,' and thus had similarities to the earlier 'pro-slavery' texts.[9] Using the term 'anti-slavery' can be somewhat problematic. As the historian David Brion Davis says, anti-slavery can be anything from 'an organized social force' and 'political activity aimed at eradicating the slave trade' to a 'set of moral and philosophic convictions that might be held with varying intensities' and 'simply the theoretical belief that Negro slavery is a wasteful, expensive, and dangerous system of

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pp.239-55. The article was based on oral history interviews with 21 women, undertaken for Giles's unpublished doctoral thesis. M.J. Giles, 'Something that Bit Better. Working-Class Women, Domesticity and Respectability, 1919-1939,' University of York, 1989. A recent oral history doctoral thesis at the University of Liverpool was also based on interviews with 20 women. Sharon Messenger, 'The Life Styles of Young Middle-Class Women in Liverpool in the 1920s and 1930s,' University of Liverpool, 1999.

[9] A recent PhD thesis at the University of Liverpool about travellers' accounts of Sierra Leone in Africa also found many similarities between supposedly 'anti'-slavery and 'pro'-slavery texts. (Andrea Downing, 'Contested Freedoms: British Images of Sierra Leone, 1780-1850,' PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 1998).

labor which tends to corrupt the morals of white Christians.'[10] The latter two more general definitions will be adopted in this thesis, since I do not include any political or abolitionist society material. The women who expressed anti-slavery sentiments, in the texts I examine, tended to make general comments from a religious or moral perspective rather than being actively involved in any anti-slavery movement.

other academic works on women's travel accounts have suggested that women's writing was very different from comparable male writing.[11] Yet usually, such scholarly works do not directly compare male and female texts. In order to be able to discuss the extent of similarities and differences in male and female writing I shall use a sample of male travel accounts and a male-authored novel to compare with female writing. These texts have been chosen on the basis of time of writing, island focused on, type of writing (journal, diary, letters or book) and perspective of author (leaning either in favour of or against slavery) in order to make them comparable with the female texts. Throughout the thesis, I shall refer to male writing, with these selected texts and newspapers serving as a 'reservoir' of comparable work by men, with my main focus being on female writing. Whilst my aims then, are to be achieved with a textual analysis of the travel accounts, diaries, letters and novels, I shall also firstly contextualise the accounts by giving some demographic and economic information about each of the islands in the time period in question. Although my approach is definitely not one of 'traditional' historical analysis, I feel that such information will provide a useful background to the wider comments I shall be making.

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[10] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823,* (Ithaca, 1975) p.164, quoted in Srinivas Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, volume 6: fiction, (London, 1999) p.x.

[11] See below, chapter 3, for a discussion of women's travel writing.

Outline of Thesis

The outline of the thesis, then, is as follows: it will be divided into three parts. Part One is a broad secondary review where I present other historians' work about the Caribbean in the slavery period, discuss my methodology, and give critical analysis of other recent works that have focused on travel accounts. Part Two is a more specific context of historical information about each of the islands in the time period the female writers visited them. I shall include information on produce, population, and laws concerning slavery and treatment of slaves. I shall not be putting forward arguments about the nature of slavery on the different islands, but will simply offer a broad background of material. The information about crops and laws is used because authors of travel accounts continually referred to such 'evidence' to suggest that slavery was worse in the past or on different islands. Part Three is my textual analysis of the women's published writing, with wider reference also being made to male writing and to newspapers.

The thesis will challenge several notions. It will be argued that whilst there are clear differences in male and female travel writing -- both in terms of content and perspective -- there are also many similarities that have been neglected by previous writers. Unlike some historians of North America, I shall also argue that white women overwhelmingly colluded in their own gender oppression and largely accepted the patriarchal regime of plantation slavery. I shall also suggest, contrary to other authors, that in the late years of slavery, attitudes to slaves and slavery did not significantly

mellow. I shall also point to the tendency for pro-slavery and anti-slavery texts to reflect similar assumptions about black 'character' and capabilities.

CHAPTER 2:

ISSUES OF GENDER AND 'RACE' IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SLAVERY IN THE BRITISH CARIBBEAN

This chapter gives a review of the major texts that have appeared on slavery in the British West Indies from 1928 to the present, with a special focus on issues of gender and 'race.' During this time there has been a clear shift away from economic studies of the 'rise and fall' of West Indian slavery and the planter class to more concern with the slaves themselves, and, more recently, to differences *among* slaves based on gender and colour. Whilst giving a brief overview of these changes in historians' interests, I shall concentrate on issues of gender, 'race,' and the extent to which white women have been neglected as a topic for discussion, since these issues are the main concerns of my thesis.

I shall argue that the historical writing on the Caribbean has tended to focus on certain themes, issues, and sources. Most authors have concentrated on absentee plantation labour in the period from the end of the eighteenth-century to the beginning of the nineteenth-century.[1] Most historians have also made use of published travel accounts, and other published sources generated by the abolitionist debate. Too often, however, these texts have been used as representing accepted 'facts' about slavery. Indeed, the treatment historians have given these sources reflects an underlying lack of a theoretical framework in Caribbean historiography, which will be addressed in my thesis, since I shall be examining these traditional sources using new analytical techniques.

In recent years the move towards writing about slave women's experiences has added a new dynamic to interpretations of West Indian slavery. However, it will be argued that this work is still largely in its infancy and needs developing. In particular there is the need for a stronger theoretical approach, particularly the development of concepts such as

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1 This is understandable since it is a period of rich sources created by an Act of Parliament of 1815 requiring planters to register their slaves. This Act was brought about by a bill introduced by William Wilberforce. These documents appear in the Public Records Office, T.71, Slave Registration and Compensation Records.

gender as a category for historical analysis in Caribbean slavery; and there needs to be more consideration of how factors such as gender, class, and 'race' interrelate. Also, while there has been considerable attention given by historians of North America to the position and writing of white Southern women, I shall show that in contrast, white women's role in Caribbean slavery has been largely ignored.

Thus, while this chapter analyses changes in focus area over time in Caribbean slavery research, I shall also stress the continuity within change, especially in terms of sources and approaches. Whilst there are clear overlaps in the secondary historical writing, in this chapter works will be separated into five phases of study: 'economic,' 'alienated,' 'revisionist,' 'slave women,' and 'gender.' Although there can be a danger in applying simplistic labels to complex and fluid sets of writing, I believe that these categories reflect the shifts in historians' interests over time. I shall start with the earliest secondary works, eventually coming up to date in the research, and speculating about likely future research in light of the neglected areas and current theoretical trends. Here, I shall also demonstrate how my research fits into the existing 'gaps.' The main points I shall stress are that whilst there have been changes in recent years to the field of imperial history, namely influenced by debates in what could generally be called postmodernism, these changes have not been reflected at all in Caribbean historiography. Thus, as I shall show in Chapter 3, travel accounts have been used in imaginative and insightful ways about other colonial countries, yet for the Caribbean their use has been very traditional. To use travel accounts in new ways, as well as exploring the neglected area of the role of white women in racism in the Caribbean, is thus the object of this thesis. Hence this Chapter stresses the very traditional approach that has so far been the norm in Caribbean history research.

Economic

The major texts concerning the economic aspects of slavery are Lowell Joseph Ragatz's *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean 1763-1833,*[2] and Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery.*[3] Both offered a similar economic interpretation for the collapse of slavery. However, whereas Ragatz's text was heavily racist and was written from a Eurocentric position, Williams's book offered more depth and an analysis of the origins of slavery and racism, and did not corroborate the racist opinions of contemporary historians such as Edward Long.

The first book to analyse the decline of British West Indian slavery, Ragatz's work remains a classic and has influenced later historians.[4] Ragatz's thesis (based mainly on governors' correspondence, contemporary histories/travel accounts, Board of Trade papers and Parliamentary committee findings) was that the wealth of the West Indies was based on the monopoly of supplying British and British-American markets. However, the American Revolution and competition from new British colonies ended this monopoly, spelling disaster for the British West Indian planters. The abolitionist crusade thus finished off what was already a declining and weak economic system.[5]

As will be illustrated in the discussion of later historians' work, Ragatz made many points that others were to follow. Concentrating on the later period, he saw Caribbean slavery in terms of the large plantation, arguing that such small holdings as there had been had rapidly disappeared by the eighteenth-century.[6] He also saw the system as largely absentee, stressing that the Caribbean was a place where whites went solely to make money, and that residence tended to be temporary, with planters retiring to their homeland

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2 Lowell Joseph Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean 1763-1833: A Study in Social and Economic History* (New York, 1971; reprint from 1928).
3 Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1944; reprinted in London, 1964).
4 See, for example, Williams, *Capitalism* and Elsa V. Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth-Century* (New Haven and London, 1965).
5 Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, pp.viii, 274, 456.

to enjoy profits as soon as they possibly could.[7] Consequently (and again like later historians) Ragatz did not see West Indian planters as paternalists. In this last area there was a clear difference between Ragatz and the North American historians of the same period.[8]

Indeed, unlike historians of North America such as Phillips, Ragatz appeared to have an extremely negative view of the whites who inhabited the British West Indies. He called the planters 'spendthrift bankrupts,'[9] and other whites 'the dregs of England, Scotland and Ireland.'[10] He suggested that Church representatives were inappropriate and often drunks and gamblers;[11] and he stated that education was extremely poor (the wealthy sent their children abroad to be educated) and that 'Few books were read in the colonies and bookshops were quite unknown.'[12] His negative view of the society was summarised in his opinion that 'Swearing, drinking, gaming, and wenching were the young gentlemen's first accomplishments.'[13]

Yet despite this, Ragatz did romanticise some elements of slave society. In the classic style of the travel account he called the 'great house' 'an imposing structure. Wherever possible, it stood in a commanding position, frequently facing the sea.'[14] The masculine language he used -- 'imposing' and 'commanding,' with patriarchal overtones -- is perhaps indicative of how Ragatz viewed the planters themselves. That the houses faced the sea was significant; altogether Ragatz's choice of language brings to mind an image of the 'civilised' white (male) adventurer, looking out to the horizon (not inwards towards the island's interior) and was symbolic of colonialism, expansion and conquest. His racist

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[6] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.3 .
[7] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.3.
[8] See for example, Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York, 1918; Baton Rouge, 1966); and *Life and Labor in the Old South* (Boston, 1929).
[9] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.3.
[10] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.5.
[11] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p20.
[12] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.23.
[13] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.22.
[14] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.5.

views were also reminiscent of contemporary travel accounts and histories. Ragatz said the African slaves detrimentally influenced the condition of the whites in the West Indies. He said:

> The white man in tropical America was out of his habitat. Constant association with an inferior subject race blunted his moral fibre and he suffered marked demoralisation. His transitory residence and the continued importation of Africans debased his life. Miscegenation, so contrary to Anglo-Saxon nature, resulted in the rapid rise of a race of human hybrids.[15]

Although he frequently talked of the 'moral degeneracy' and 'licentiousness' of the islands, like many later historians, Ragatz stressed the part that female slaves played in this. He said, 'The highest aim of a colored girl of tolerable person was to become the mistress of a planter, overseer, bookkeeper, merchant or soldier. Mothers sought such unions for their daughters.'[16] This emphasis on the role of female slaves as 'temptresses' sat easily with the contemporary opinion that black women were sexually available and promiscuous, and ignored the issue of rape by white men, and the relative powerlessness of the female slaves in such relationships. Often, this kind of analysis appears in more modern historical writing on the Caribbean where slave women may not necessarily be portrayed as temptresses, but instead were presented as actively seeking such unions as a source of status or manumission.

Ragatz made many other stereotypical, racist comments. Echoing contemporary histories and travel accounts, Ragatz wrote, 'The West Indian negro had all the characteristics of his race. He stole, he lied, he was simple, suspicious, inefficient, irresponsible, lazy, superstitious, and loose in his sex relations.'[17] Indeed, it was here that Ragatz was most pro-slavery, since he viewed the system as a 'positive good' to Africans because it placed them under the 'civilising' influence of whites. Because of their longer influence under whites, Ragatz saw the creole slaves in a slightly better light:

> In contact with whites from his birth and knowing no other life than serving them, speaking, too, a jargon based on English, he was more tractable than the African,

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[15] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.5.
[16] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.33.
[17] Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.27.

could perform his duties more intelligently, and was less discordant socially.[18]

Ragatz suggested that in various other ways, African slaves in the West Indies were better off than they would have been in their homeland. For instance, he said that 'The blacks' health was guarded by regular visits of physicians; hospitals and lying-in houses were to be found on most properties.'[19] He also gave a rather romantic impression of slave huts as whitewashed buildings, with two comfortably furnished rooms.[20] Indeed, he suggested that

> the average imported worker doubtless enjoyed a better state than he had known in his African home and the estate labourers' material condition might well have aroused envy among the general run of eighteenth-century European peasantry, including the British.[21]

Ragatz's choice of words was revealing. By referring to the slaves as 'imported workers', 'estate labourers,' and elsewhere as 'servants,' he was not only denying their condition, but also aligning himself with the planters who used the same kind of language, and held similar views. Indeed, as Part Three of this thesis will demonstrate, Ragatz's views were typically those expressed in travel accounts.

Ragatz's book was an important early historical analysis of the economic downfall of slavery in the West Indies. However, he clearly wrote from the position of the 'superior' white male. Of course, he was educated in a time when imperialism and Empire were still expanding, and Europe reigned supreme. However, one must treat what he said about slave society very carefully since it was so clearly written from the position of the planter, and in this respect, differed very little from contemporary histories and travel accounts. Thus, in this area, one must treat Ragatz's work as a text representing an early twentieth-century Eurocentric view of black people and slavery. In this sense his work requires the same kind of textual analysis that should be given to the primary sources he used.

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18 Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.25.
19 Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.27.
20 Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.25.
21 Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, p.27.

In a broad sense, Williams offered a similar *economic* interpretation for the demise of West Indian slavery, but of course, without the kind of racist assumptions that underlay Ragatz's work. Indeed, Williams' book was dedicated to Ragatz 'Whose monumental labors in this field may be amplified and developed but can never be superseded.'[22] For Williams, British economic interests produced slavery in the colonies, which enabled the merchant class to flourish and provided the capital for the British Industrial Revolution. However, when the monopoly system proved to be 'backward' and inefficient and free trade looked like the way forward for growth, the emerging industrial capitalists turned their back on slavery.[23]

A crucial difference between Williams' and Ragatz's thesis was the role (in the demise of slavery) that Williams attributed to the slaves themselves. He said that factors such as slave sabotage and revolt -- especially as the political crisis over slavery in Britain deepened -- were crucial in its eventual collapse. He also saw slave passive resistance in the form of doing as little work as possible, as highly effective. Williams said, 'Not nearly as stupid as his master thought him and later historians have pictured him, the slave was alert to his surroundings and keenly interested in discussions about his fate.'[24] Also unlike Ragatz's book, Williams offered insight into the question of the link between slavery and racism. For Williams, slavery was not born of racism, but rather racism was the consequence of slavery. Slavery was simply something devised to justify what was, at first, a profitable economic system. Thus Williams stressed how, initially, whites and indigenous peoples were used for labour in the colonies; and Africans were only brought in when native people proved to be 'inefficient' and white emigration was reduced. Such white 'servitude' was, he argued, originally a free personal relation based on voluntary contract for a definite period, for either transportation or maintenance costs.

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[22] Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.
[23] Williams' thesis has been criticised, (for example, by Roger Anstey in, 'Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique,' *Economic History Review*, 21 (1968), pp.32-49. However, it is not the purpose of this chapter to give an analysis of the economic interpretations of slavery, but rather to focus on what authors have said about slave society, and especially slave images and gender, and to offer a textual criticism of the sources used.

Arguably Williams underplayed the element of racism in the origins of chattel slavery. One must question why only Africans and their offspring were made slaves for life. It is inconceivable that this would ever have happened to white indentured labourers. Also one must question the racial stereotyping behind such European ideas as that which suggested that the 'Indian' was inefficient but the African was strong and robust. Ever since first contact with Africans centuries before chattel slavery, whites held negative attitudes towards blacks; and other authors argue that classical, biblical, and medieval accounts of black people presented the view that the African was 'lazy,' 'treacherous,' 'brutish,' 'cruel,' and 'lustful.'[25] Thus the advent of slavery and the slave trade took place against some ideological background of hostile racial values. An interesting book by Eric Williams was *British Historians and the West Indies.*[26] This text looked at the racist, Eurocentric and Imperialist visions and views of British historians from 1830 to the 1950s. Nowadays this book would probably be seen as a 'post-colonial' text, since Williams showed how the Eurocentric views of the British historians shaped how they saw and wrote about slavery in the Caribbean. Whilst it is an extremely valuable starting point, this kind of analysis needs to be taken further in Caribbean slavery research, which my own study sets out to do.

Alienated

In the 1960s, two major works appeared on slavery in the British West Indies, Elsa Goveia's *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth-century,*[27] and Orlando Patterson's *The Sociology of Slavery.*[28] Both of these texts moved

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[24] Williams, *Capitalism*, p.202.
[25] See, for example, Winthrop D. Jordan 'First Impressions: Initial English Confrontations with Africans,' in Charles Husband (ed) *'Race' in Britain: Continuity and Change* (London, 1982), pp.42-58; J. Walvin 'Black Caricature: the Roots of Racialism,' in Husband (ed) *'Race' in Britain,* pp.59-70; Ian Law, *A History of Race and Racism in Liverpool 1660-1950* (Liverpool, 1981).
[26] Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (London, 1966).
[27] Goveia, *Slave Society.*
[28] Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (Madison and London, 1969).

away from economic analyses of the collapse of slavery to more detailed concentration on slave society, and to the experience of slavery for blacks. Whilst these two books used different approaches, both authors saw the impact of slavery on black life and traditions in a negative way, suggesting that slavery demoralised Africans and destroyed their culture.

Writing in 1965, Goveia agreed with many of the interpretations put forward by Williams and Ragatz. Having set up the Caribbean slave system as culturally bankrupt (as did Ragatz and Williams) Goveia took the thesis further by analysing how this transferred into a negative society, and especially, the alienating effect this had on slaves. Her general view was that

> The whole tendency of the slave system was to reduce the Negro to a position of marked social inferiority which was interpreted by the whites as the inevitable consequence of his racial difference from and racial inferiority to them.[29]

The implication was that blacks internalised and accepted this notion of inferiority, which was a view traditionally offered in travel accounts. Like the earlier historians, Goveia also noted that concubinage was widespread and a source of status for black women. However, she took the analysis further by suggesting that

> Although it permitted intimate relations between white men and coloured women, it nevertheless reflected and preserved the exclusion of persons of colour, even when born free, from white society in all the Leeward Islands.[30]

Thus the general picture that emerged from Goveia's work was of a highly destructive society. Whites clung to the brutal system, which gave them prestige and control, and blacks suffered from the dislocation and alienation created as a result. Goveia, like the earlier historians, mainly accepted the view of travel accounts as 'factual,' since her arguments were largely those put forward by contemporary whites.

This alienated account was also put forward by Orlando Patterson in his 1969 study of Jamaica, a book based heavily on histories, travel accounts and Select Committee

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[29] Goveia, *Slave Society*, p.135.
[30] Goveia, *Slave Society*, p.217.

reports.[31] Patterson gave the classic Hobbesian view of slavery in which life was 'nasty, brutish and short.' His view of slavery in the British West Indies was one in which there was a lot of promiscuity, and slaves were alienated. Patterson commented on the sex imbalance in Jamaica, resulting from high male slave importation from African, and he suggested that this led to promiscuity on the part of slave women. He also commented that female 'promiscuity' was further exacerbated by whites who 'competed with the male slaves for [the female slaves'] bodies.'[32] Patterson argued that abortion and venereal disease were both, as a result, high.

Patterson had very similar views to Goveia with regard to the slave family. He suggested that 'unstable unions' and 'multiple associations' were the most common forms of slave relationships.[33] He noted that the male slave could not assert his authority as a husband or a father because 'his wife was the property of another.'[34] Also, the system gave the female slave the chance to 'exploit her sex to her own advantage'[35] through sexual relationships with whites. Thus, for Patterson:

> The net result of all this was the complete demoralisation of the Negro male.... it is no wonder that the male slave eventually came to lose all pretension to masculine pride and to develop the irresponsible parental and sexual attitudes that are to be found even today.[36]

Patterson's chief sources for these conclusions were contemporary historians, especially Edward Long. However, Patterson seemed to be too uncritical in his acceptance of these sources as representing true facts about slavery. He thus accepted notions such as the view that female slaves were promiscuous and welcomed relationships with whites and that slaves had no family life apart from promiscuous sexual relations. Whilst giving attention to the male slave, Patterson completely ignored female slaves (except for the view that they were promiscuous and welcomed relations with whites). Indeed, his emphasis on the emasculation of the male slave is an area which has come under increasing attack by

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[31] Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*.
[32] Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*, p.108.
[33] Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*, p.162.
[34] Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*, p.167.
[35] Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*, p.167.
[36] Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*, pp.167-68.

feminist historians.[37] Bell Hooks criticises male historians for ignoring black women's experiences, and suggests that, if anything, black women were forced to assume a 'masculine' role under slavery, rather than males being emasculated.[38]

One area where Patterson did not simply accept the contemporary white view was in his treatment of the male slave image of Quashee. 'Quashee' was an African name, stereotypically used by whites to denote certain characteristics that they regarded as habitual to slaves (such as lying, being lazy, child-like, cheerful and using a mode of arguing which would exasperate whites). Patterson suggested that 'Quashee' may have 'existed' on three levels: firstly as a stereotyped notion held by the whites, secondly as a response in the form of role-playing by the slave, and thirdly as some kind of real psychological function for the slave. Patterson said:

> by playing the stereotype, the slave both disguised his true feelings...and had the psychological satisfaction of duping the master. The well-known Jamaican Negro proverb, 'play fool to catch wise,' well sums up this form of stereotype playing.[39]

However, it was unfortunate that in other areas Patterson seemingly accepted the Eurocentric view put forward by contemporaries.

Revisionist

In the 1970s and 1980s a new trend occurred in the historical writing about the Caribbean. Whereas the previous historians had seen the Caribbean as a declining appendage of Great Britain, with a disorganised and debased structure and alienated black population, these new historians stressed more 'positive' elements of slave culture in relation to African retentions, family strength, resistance, and creole society. Like earlier writers, however, this new group still focused on large plantations and on the late period of Caribbean slavery.

In many ways Brathwaite's 1971 book was a response to those historians who had

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[37] ie by Bell Hooks, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London & Winchester, Mass. 1982).
[38] Hooks, *Ain't I A Woman*, p.22.
[39] Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*, p.180.

written before him.[40] The main point of his book was to plot the process of creolization, which he defined as 'a way of seeing the society, not in terms of white and black, master and slave, in separate nuclear units, but as contributory parts of a whole.'[41] Thus Brathwaite saw Jamaica in the slavery period as a 'plural society.'[42] Brathwaite offered a complex account of social relations operating on a hierarchy of colour. Like Goveia, he saw the society as consisting of whites, free blacks, African slaves and creole slaves (the latter two groups being further divided by field, domestic and skilled slaves). However, unlike Goveia, Brathwaite did not agree with the view that blacks accepted their inferiority, and instead saw a more complex situation. He argued that the 'inferiority principle' can only be accepted if blacks had no autonomous attitudes and traditions of their own. However, Brathwaite found evidence to the contrary. He suggested that many slaves resisted European ideas and practices. Slaves made themselves visible through forms of protest such as running away, disobedience, sabotage and 'malingering.' He also cited many African retentions in slave custom and culture such as the nine-day rule after the birth of children, and practices such as polygyny, funeral customs, obeah, music and dance.[43]

Brathwaite also suggested that the free blacks did not simply accept their situation passively. He agreed with earlier historians that free blacks had no legal or civil rights in slave society, and he talked of a kind of 'apartheid' system that operated.[44] In contemporary travel accounts and histories free blacks were portrayed as being loyal to the Establishment and mimicking whites, which contributed to stability. However, Brathwaite suggested that in many ways, the free black population did not conform to this stereotype. For instance, Brathwaite found evidence of protests and petitions (in the later period especially) against such practices as colour bars.[45] Also, despite popular notions such as

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[40] Edward K. Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (Oxford, 1971).
[41] Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p.307.
[42] Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p.307.
[43] Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p.196.
[44] Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p.185.
[45] Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p.196.

the taboo on sexual relations between black men and white women, Brathwaite found evidence of publicised marriage banns in parish records between free black men and white women, which suggests a possible gap between the societal stereotyped attitude and the real situation.[46] Thus, in some ways, Brathwaite challenged the view put forward in contemporary travel accounts, views which had hitherto been largely accepted.

Michael Craton has written several works on the British Caribbean.[47] Craton's *Worthy Park* is a study based solely on a Jamaican plantation of that name. Thus his sources were a variety of estate papers, especially the rich information recorded by the plantation owners in the slave registration period. In many areas Craton had an extremely negative view of the impact of slavery on black traditions and culture, particularly in the areas of 'promiscuity' and slave family life. However, unlike the historians who lived in the slavery era, he saw promiscuity as more to do with uneven sex ratios, and the sale of slaves separating partners, rather than being an African 'trait.' Still, however, he accepted the point from the histories and travel accounts that slaves *were* promiscuous. His general view was that 'plantation slaves -- even when 'Creole,' or island-born -- almost invariably suffered dislocation and instability in personal, sexual, and familial relations.'[48]

Much more interesting in many ways, although still based on the Worthy Park data, is Craton's *Searching for the Invisible Man* (the fact that Craton again largely ignored female slaves was reflected in the book's title). [49] This book, as the title suggests, was an attempt to find out more about slaves' experiences from their own point of view, using new sources. Thus, Craton had chapters on the 'biographies' of various slaves. He also attempted to trace family decedents of slaves, to see if anything had been passed down

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[46] Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p.196.
[47] Michael Craton and James Walvin, *A Jamaican Plantation: The History of Worthy Park 1670 - 1970* (London and New York, 1970) Michael Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England, 1978) Michael Craton, 'Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 11 (1979) pp.1-35; Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, 1982).
[48] Craton, *Worthy Park*, p.127.
[49] Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man.*

over generations about the black experience of slavery. These interesting techniques added a new dimension to this book, which went beyond the work of other historians. The limited success of these techniques, however, demonstrated the difficulties in making slave perspectives visible in Caribbean slavery research.

A new area of study was the treatment Craton gave to slave names, although he tended to use these as evidence of slaves becoming more 'European.' He showed lists that recorded many slaves with African names (particularly African day names). Craton argued for creolization from the fact that these African names dramatically gave way not only to Christian names, but also to Christian names with surnames, in the period 1730-1838.[50] The fact that the names changed is clear. However, slightly more problematic is Craton's suggestion that this would have been a voluntary change on the part of slaves. He said 'it is unlikely that bookkeepers forced slaves to reject their own familiar names,'[51] and that the change thus 'provides a telling index of the decline of African influences and the increasing influence of Creole, Christian, and status norms.'[52] However one problem with this interpretation is that it suggests a gradual shift in the slave population over time from African to Caribbean-born, and a corresponding process of 'creolization' of culture and reduction in African influences. In reality, Craton's own data shows that well after 1790 Africans made up over 60 per cent of Worthy Park's population, and it was only after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 that African-born slaves started to fall below those who were island-born. Craton could have taken the name analysis much further, as did Gutman for North America.[53] Of interest was Craton's finding that several of Worthy Park's persistent runaways had degrading names: Villain, Trash, Whore, Strumpet; yet he did not give any kind of analysis to this point. Also, the names of these slaves suggest that they did not necessarily choose their own names.

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[50] Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man,* p.156.
[51] Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man.*
[52] Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man.*
[53] Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925* (New York, 1977).

Like the earlier historians, Craton also commented on miscegenation (which was also an important theme in contemporary travel accounts). His view, like those of all the previous historians, is that slave women actively sought relations with white men as a source of status: 'sex was rooted in lust...on the one side, connived at through social ambition on the other.'[54] Thus Craton saw such unions as voluntary on the part of black women. However, in viewing relations in this way, Craton (and the other historians) overlooked incidences of rape, and the extent to which even 'free' black women continued to be dependent upon white men, unlike their male counterparts who, usually skilled craftsmen anyway, could support themselves. Craton's attitude was shown in his comments:

> The surest and most common route of upward mobility for slaves was that which was cynically destructive of family life and, by being open only to slave women, damaging to social cohesion in general: the progressive mating of black and colored slave women with free white men.[55]

He added: 'For a black woman to trade her body with a white man in return for transient rewards was perhaps as voluntary as it was casual.'[56] The language Craton used in discussing this issue illustrates that he seemed to 'blame' the black women caught up in relations with whites rather than examing the situation on a deeper level, and was reminiscent of historians such as Ragatz.

Another important historian of the 'revisionist' era was Barry Higman, who concentrated on large-scale statistical analyses of various British Caribbean islands.[57] Higman was largely concerned with a structural analysis, relating demographic factors to economic conditions. His revisionist work lay largely in the area of the slave family. Higman noted that in all of the contemporary sources, slaves were seen as promiscuous

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[5454] Craton *Searching for the Invisible Man*, pp.168-69.
[55] Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, p.235.
[56] Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, p.242.
[57] B.W Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica 1807-1834* (Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne, 1976) B.W. Higman, 'Methodological Problems in the Study of the Slave Family' in Vera Rubin and Arthur Tuden (eds) *Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantation Societies (Anals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 292 (1977) pp.672-678) B.W. Higman, 'African and Creole Slave Family Patterns in Trinidad' *Journal of Family History*, 3 (1978) B.W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (Baltimore and London, 1984) B.W. Higman, 'Household Structure and Fertility on Jamaican Slave Plantations: A Nineteenth-century Example' in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd,

and lacking any family ties. He argued that historians have tended to see the slave family in the same terms.[58] Indeed, he said: 'All of these interpretations of slave family structure are based on the contemporary literary sources, rather than on the analysis of actual slave families.'[59] Higman's study was based on the account books for Old Montpelier estate in Jamaica, which contained detailed information on slave names, families and dependants, along with a report on the condition of the slave houses. This information, from the slave registration records, related to the nineteenth-century.[60] He combined this with information from New Montpelier and Shuttleworth Pen using data in the returns of the registration of slaves 1817-1832.

Higman found that the modal slave household comprised a male, a female and her children. The second most common kind of family comprised a male and female residing together, and lastly some households comprised of a woman, her children and others.[61] He also found some interesting variations in family form based on country of origin and colour. He suggested that African slaves were more likely to form nuclear families, but did not successfully explain why this should be the case. (Morrissey suggests that this may have been a case of Africans starting a family, which they intended to be polygynous, but were, through economic circumstances, as yet unable to effect). [62] Higman also found that the households dominated by mothers, grandmothers and aunts, 'almost exclusively' contained children of mixed race.[63]

Higman's work on the slave family has, however, been criticised. It has been criticised firstly because it related only to the last years of slavery. Michael Craton points out that in these years the influence of the churches in encouraging slave marriages and the

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Caribbean Slave Society and Economy: A Student Reader (Kingston and London, 1991) pp.250-73.
[58] Higman, *Slave Population and Economy*, p.156.
[59] Higman, *Slave Population and Economy*, p.156.
[60] Higman also used this data in his 1991 article, 'Household Structure and Fertility on Jamaican Slave Plantations.'
[61] Higman, *Slave Population and Economy*, p.159.
[62] Marietta Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* (Nebraska, 1989) p.89.

ameliorating laws may have been at work.[64] Also, the ending of the slave trade in 1807 would have tended to balance sex ratios and thus, perhaps, led to more favourable marriage markets. Also, it has been suggested that Higman's evidence related simply to cohabitation, and did not necessarily reflect 'families.'[65] Yet his work was important in challenging the views presented in contemporary sources such as histories and travel accounts, which had tended to be accepted by historians.

The major contribution of the historians of the 'revisionist' period was to emphasise positive elements of slave culture and traditions, especially in areas of religion and autonomous activities. Also developed was the move away from stereotyped notions of slave families based on promiscuity and unstable unions to work showing the prevalence and strength of family and kinship ties. The historians of this period, particularly Craton and Higman also took up new approaches to the material, in the form of large-scale statistical analyses. However, some weaknesses in this new work were the lack of attention to gender, and the failure to develop any theoretical analysis of the complex area of difference between slaves based on 'race' and colour. Also problematic was the focus on the slave registration records from the years at the end of slavery, which may not have been representative of the vast majority of the slavery period.

Slave Women

From the 1980s, a new development in Caribbean historiography was the emphasis on the roles and experiences of slave women. Three major texts appeared about slave women. Although the authors took somewhat different approaches, all were similar in seeing slave women as central rather than peripheral to the study of slavery. Previous historians had documented some features of female slavery. However, the key to this earlier work was that it did not attempt to analyse these findings and often only inadvertently included them

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[63] Higman, *Slave Population and Economy*, p.156.
[64] Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, p.163.
[65] Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, p.163.

in a wider discussion of (male) slavery. However, the new writers concentrated on slave women, attempting to conceptualise the nature of slavery for women, and to give a positive history to black women. In doing this, the authors showed how female slaves attempted to create the best life for themselves and their families whilst resisting the system that confined them.

Beckles' study of Barbados was based on plantation papers, newspapers, official papers and reports and published books.[66] Thus, of all the books on slave women, Beckles' made use of the widest range of sources. This was reflected in the comprehensive range of issues he discussed, including women's work (field and domestic) marketeering, the family, reproduction, fertility and prostitution, and punishment and resistance. The overwhelming impression from Beckles' book was one of slave women actively struggling to improve their own condition and that of their family, rather than passively accepting bondage. Beckles viewed women as 'natural rebels' because slavery put their innermost being -- fertility, sexuality and maternity -- on the market as capital assets; thus producing a 'natural' propensity to rebel against this intrusion.[67]

Beckles argued that far more has been written about Caribbean slave women in relation to their family and sexual roles than has been paid to the important area of work.[68] For Beckles, work was central to understanding the experiences of slave women; it not only occupied an important part of their lives, but was also a source of status differentiation. Like other authors, he suggested that planters valued slave women workers just as much as they did men, and that this was reflected in how hard women were worked, and the relatively equal prices that male and female field hands fetched.[69] The constructed contemporary image of the black woman supported the prevailing ideology: she

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[66] Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (London; New Jersey, 1989).
[67] Hilary Beckles 'Sex and Gender in the Historiography of Caribbean Slavery' in Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey (eds) *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (London; Kingston, 1995) p.137.
[68] Beckles 'Sex and Gender,' p.2.

was viewed as robust, aggressive and as capable as a man.[70]

Beckles made a clear distinction between the work of the field women and the domestics. other historians noted this division in slave women's occupations.[71] Comments, however, generally pointed to the improved material conditions resulting from working in the 'great house.' Beckles, instead, focused on the nature of the elite status of the house women and the contradictions their situation involved. For instance, Beckles highlighted such emotional aspects of the house woman's job as suckling, weaning and raising their owner's children. He thus noted the inherent contradiction in being 'required to socialise their own children into rejecting anti-slavery ideologies and to assist their owners by raising *their* children as pro-slavery agents.'[72] Beckles's analysis here was similar to the treatment that Eugene Genovese has given the 'tragic' North American 'mammy.'[73] However, Beckles did not suggest the same levels of accommodation by housekeepers and instead, stressed the sexual role that house occupations often involved. Indeed, he said 'the evidence is not always clear on the distinction, in occupational terms, between mistresses and housekeepers.'[74] Beckles also showed, through the example of Old Doll (a housekeeper who managed to secure a privileged position for herself and her family, and eventually, manumission in 1810):

> the ways in which these 'privileged' women struggled in pursuit of their individual and familial goals, while at the same time attempting to carve out a culture of labour and social elitism for themselves.[75]

Beckles showed that despite some privileges, house slaves lived in constant fear of relegation to the field. Whilst Beckles' general conclusion was that domestic slaves considered themselves better off than their field counterparts, his analysis went beyond that of earlier historians to give a complex picture of the difficult situation of house workers.

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[69] Beckles 'Sex and Gender,' p.29.
[70] Beckles 'Sex and Gender,' p.40.
[71] Goveia, *Slave Societies*; Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society*; Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*; and Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*.
[72] Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, p.70.
[73] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1976) pp.353-61.
[74] Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, p.142.
[75] Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, p.55.

Resistance was endemic to slave society. Beckles argued that all slaves were involved in anti-slavery activities, gender only played a role in the shape this resistance took. Beckles said 'Neither slave owners nor the slave communities considered women to be the less rebellious sex.'[76] Like Lucille Mathurin,[77] Beckles showed how women were involved in a wide range of anti-slavery activity such as avoiding work, answering back, lying, stealing, poisoning, arson, running away, violent rebellion and organising maroon societies. Beckles also showed how female slaves, especially favourite slaves or housekeepers, vigorously pursued their freedom in ways such as petitioning and writing to their master.[78]

In the introduction to his book, Beckles said that he wrote it largely as a response to questions from female students about the lives of slave women. In writing the book, Beckles saw the task in terms of 'restoring history to women' rather than simply 'adding women to history.'[79] This is an important distinction, and Beckles did succeed, to some extent, in analysing the different gendered experience of slavery for women. However, lacking a strong theoretical framework, Beckles did not take the gendered analysis further to question traditional data and approaches, which would ultimately lead to a redefinition of historical knowledge. Instead, the labour-history approach he adopted resulted, as he said, in the 'validation of many already well known and widely accepted concepts.'[80] He did not even take this 'validation' any further, as many feminist historians have done, to contribute to the debate about the extent of the differences in slavery between men and women, and whether slavery was consequently 'worse' for women. Thus, even though he explored what earlier historians had found in greater detail, there is still the feeling of pursuing old ground in Beckles's work, rather than something new and ground-breaking, since he tended to use the same sources in traditional ways.

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[76] Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, p.153.
[77] Lucille Mathurin *The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery* (Kingston, 1975).
[78] Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, p.159.
[79] Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, p.5.

Bush's *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838* is an extremely interesting and readable study.[81] Concentrating mainly on Jamaica towards the end of the nineteenth-century, Bush wrote from a feminist perspective, which emphasised slave women's strength and independence. Bush celebrated slave women, analysing European images of them as sexual jezebels, domineering matriarchs or passive workhorses. She looked at the various ways slave women resisted a degrading and dehumanising system (despite the constant threat of brutal punishment) the economic role of slave women (including independent activities) and the slave family and fertility. In her final chapter, Bush also examined the important role of slave women in retaining and passing on African cultural practices.

One problem, however, with Bush's argument concerned her lack of sources. Bush often wrote several pages containing interesting comments but without any reference to support her claims. Indeed, she largely relied on secondary literature. The (limited) primary sources she used were contemporary white travel accounts or histories of various islands (in particular, early accounts by Stedman and 'Monk' Lewis) and she occasionally used parliamentary papers and newspapers. So, although Bush had interesting arguments, these were limited by her dearth of supporting evidence. Another problem is Bush's somewhat inconsistent line of argument. On the one hand, she frequently mentioned the 'patriarchal' black male slave, yet on the other she spoke about the egalitarian nature of West African communities, patterns that she saw as continuing in the Caribbean. She also mentioned the dangers of simply 'reading history backwards' and assuming that present-day practices mirror those of the past (as in when she talked about the debate over the 'pathological' black family). Yet, when comparing African practices with Caribbean patterns in order to discuss cultural retentions, she referred to Cutrafelli's study of *modern* Africa, to support her claims.

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[80] Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, p.2.

This problem with Bush's work has also been pointed out by Claire Robertson who says that Bush is guilty of paying little attention to place, time or ethnicity in favor of a generalized Africa which is presumed to be now as it was in the past, in effect denying Africa a history. [82] Robertson is also critical of the autonomous role that Bush attributed to slave women in the area of fertility decision-making. Bush suggested that slave women used abortion as a method of resistance to the system and that such knowledge would have been inherited from Africa.[83] She also used the notion of 'psychological contraception' (women failed to conceive simply because 'they did not wish it') as a possible explanation for the low birth rate in the Caribbean.[84] However, Robertson suggests that Bush made too many assumptions about female autonomy, and fell into the trap of agreeing with the slaveowners who put forward all kinds of explanation for slave women's subfecundity except poor living conditions, malnutrition and overwork.[85] Robertson further argues that

> Because Bush places the primary causality with slave women, she then is forced into the paradoxical position of explaining the relatively high fertility of US slave women as being a result of the relatively benevolent regime of slaveowners which presumably removed bondwomen's incentives to abort as a form of resistance (p.149). But we know that in both the US and the West Indies little attention was paid to relieving pregnant women of hard labor or punishment, or to improving their diet and assuring the survival of infants.[86]

Although Bush's suggestions in these areas were innovative, her desire continually to present slave women in a positive light as independent and autonomous beings has led her to assume a questionable line of argument.

The major strength in Bush's work is in her analysis of the images constructed about black women during the slavery period. She suggested that two kinds of stereotype emerged about black women: those that generally related to all slaves, and those, which related uniquely to slave women's sexuality. Bush said that the black woman was

> often labelled 'promiscuous,' cruel and negligent as a mother and fickle as a wife. As a worker, she has been portrayed as passive, downtrodden and subservient....So strong were

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[81] Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838* (London & Kingston, 1990).
[82] Claire Robertson, 'The Perils of Autonomy,' *Gender and History*, 3, 1 (1991) p.93.
[83] Bush, *Slave Women*, p.140.
[84] Bush, *Slave Women*, p.138.
[85] Robertson, 'Perils of Autonomy,' p.92.
[86] Robertson, 'Perils of Autonomy,' p.92.

> these images that they have come to be regarded as 'sui generis' of black women even in the modern era.[87]

Bush also stated that the alleged 'immorality' of the slave woman became the basis of misconceived accounts about the nature of slave marriages and slave family life. It is here that Bush's study is most revealing since she illustrated the constructed ideologies upon which contemporary sources were based, and consequently, the dubious quality of the sources, which most historians have used. This kind of analysis, however, needs taking much further, with a more theoretically-based deconstructive analysis of such sources, which my study seeks to do. Although postmodern theorists have evidently influenced Bush (especially Foucault) she failed to apply a postmodern approach *directly* in her text. Thus her work seems to lack a clear conceptual framework.

Marietta Morrissey dealt with many of the same topics as Bush, including the economic and household roles of Caribbean women slaves, and fertility. [88] Morrissey also wrote from a feminist perspective and highlighted areas of female autonomy. However, unlike Bush, Morrissey stressed *economic* factors in shaping women's experience of slavery and emphasised Marxian material explanations. A key area for Morrissey then was the interconnection between slave status and gender based on occupation and slave household economies. She used some contemporary histories and travel accounts. However her conclusions were largely based on a sociological synthesis of secondary material, although she did expand her study by drawing on comparisons, in some instances, with North America.

For Morrissey the slave household was an important area in the question of female status and autonomy. She suggested that the Caribbean slave household was a unit of subsistence production where women enjoyed some status, authority and economic power.[89] Indeed, she concurred with Mathurin that 'each woman was the recognized ruler

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[87] Bush, *Slave Women*, p.12
[88] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World.*
[89] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, pp.47-49.

of her hut and her household.'[90] However, she suggested that changing modes of production in the slave household diminished women's status. Thus, the increase in growing crops for sale by slaves, by putting a premium on male strength, weakened the importance of women despite the fact that women dominated in marketing. [91]

There are, however, problems with this argument. Firstly, one must remember that Morrissey's suggestions were based solely on her interpretation of secondary publications. Whilst it is possible that slave women ruled the slave hut, this interpretation does seem to present the slave woman as a typical 'matriarch.' Not enough is known about slave gender roles and autonomous divisions of labour. Morrissey suggested that slave men dominated the provision grounds, and women controlled marketing. However, it is possible that such divisions marked separate spheres of interest and that as an entire activity, the stages from growing to selling produce were collective family activities.

Further, Morrissey's interpretation was informed by findings from a wide range of women's studies research (Boserup, 1970; Goody, 1976; Blumberg, 1978; Sanday, 1981)[92] which suggested that 'the development of advanced agriculture generally diminishes women's status.'[93] Such foundationalist claims presuppose universal experiences of women across different economic, political and social systems, cultures and time. Thus we find Morrissey implying that the situation of women in pre-industrial Europe, the modern 'Third world,' and Caribbean slave systems, are one and the same thing. Her structuralist position denies the specific historical features of each period, and differences between women within them.

Another important part of Morrissey's text was her discussion of fertility and reproduction. Here, Morrissey placed rather less emphasis than Bush on women's choice in

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[90] Mathurin, *Rebel Woman*, quoted in Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World, pp.47-49.*
[91] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, p.16.
[92] Cited in Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World.*
[93] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World.*

controlling fertility. Whereas Bush argued that slave women regularly used contraception and abortion to reduce fecundity, Morrissey argued that malnutrition; disease, overwork and lack of sexual opportunity were probably more likely factors.[94] As Morrissey pointed out, it is reasonable to assume that there would have been more deaths recorded from bleeding and fever had abortions been commonplace.[95] Morrissey also suggested that given the risks associated with childbirth, slave women might have abstained from sexual activity through fear of pregnancy.[96] It must remain questionable how much choice slave women actually had in such decisions, but Morrissey does not overstate her case here. Instead, she concluded that planter insistence on the role of slave women in controlling births was probably ideologically based in 'European and North American fascination with African women's reputed sexual and healing powers.'[97]

Perhaps the area where Morrissey was most 'negative' about slave women was concerning sexual relationships with white men. Like the earlier male historians, Morrissey suggested that 'Slave women learned the value of sexual ties with European men and sometimes aggressively sought them.'[98] Claire Robertson was somewhat critical of Morrissey here.[99] Robertson said that Morrissey emphasised the economic advantages black women sought from such relationships, yet at the same time acknowledged that manumission as a result was not common. She also criticised Morrissey for ignoring the sexual exploitation and coercion that such relationships probably involved (a criticism that should also be made of other historians of the Caribbean).

Morrissey gave an often interesting interpretation of the historical works on Caribbean slavery. She drew together an impressive range of texts and offered some new insights. Hers was also the only book that based its discussion on a strong theoretical

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[94] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, p.113.
[95] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, p.116.
[96] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, p.112.
[97] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, p.119.
[98] Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, p.147.
[99] Robertson, 'Perils of Autonomy,' p.94.

stance. However, the materialist approach she took led Morrissey to universalise about the experiences of women in very different agricultural settings. Also, her speculative conclusions would be perhaps more persuasive were they based on a study of primary sources.

Gender

Rather than just focusing on slave women, some recent attempts have been made to use gender as a category of historical analysis in the study of the Caribbean.[100] The new 'gender history' calls for a different approach than that outlined in the previous section. Gender history uses new analytical methods to redefine historical knowledge. Thus it questions the very nature of historical 'knowledge' and the (male) epistemologies which have created that knowledge.[101] Ultimately this changes the fundamental perspective of history since it largely calls for a re-writing of older studies. Additionally, gender analysis does not focus exclusively on women, since it includes an analysis of both 'maleness' and 'femaleness.' The new approach that this requires also has scope for analysing differences among women (or men) based on other factors such as class or 'race.' The work on gender in the Caribbean slave period is, however, arguably, still in its infancy, and needs further developing.

In her essay in *Engendering History*, entitled 'Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of some Texts by Women on the English-speaking Caribbean, from the 1770s to the 1920s,' Bridget Brereton assessed the extent to which the women's writing displayed a specifically female gendered view.[102] Brereton identified several themes that she suggested were especially 'female,' and tended only appeared in female texts. These included women's fears over slave insurrection, fears concerning the development of their

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[100] Namely in the collection of essays edited by Shepherd et al, *Engendering History*. See, also, Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd (eds), *Gender in Caribbean Development* (University of the West Indies, 1988).
[101] For a discussion see Shepherd et al (eds) *Engendering History*.
[102] Bridget Brereton,'Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of some Texts by Women on the English-speaking Caribbean, from the 1770s to the 1920s,' in Verene Shepherd et al (eds) *Engendering History*,

children, worries over health and illness, complaints over managing the domestic slaves, and references to sexual relations between white men and slave women. It is somewhat problematic to argue that female writers displayed an outlook and interest that was defined by their gender, when one does not directly compare female and male texts from the same period. In fact male texts from the Caribbean between the 1770s to the 1840s, do support the differences Brereton identified; however, Brereton's argument could have benefited from this kind of direct comparison. In the last chapter of my thesis, I offer such a direct comparison of female and male texts to reveal gender differences in writing.

Another key theme explored by Brereton was whether the gender image of eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century European women as more kind-hearted, and sympathetic to suffering, than men was evident in female writing about slavery. This theme was then located within a wider chronology from the 1770s to the 1830s to see if there were any changes in the female view over time. As one might expect, given the context of increased debates over abolition in this period, Brereton identified shifts in views within four texts written between the 1770s and the 1830s. Brereton showed that the earliest text (by Janet Schaw) was overtly racist, and totally unfeeling with regard to the slaves and their treatment. To some extent, Brereton saw this attitude as giving way by the turn of the century to a more sympathetic stance. Brereton argued that, for example, Maria Nugent (writing in 1801) showed a kinder attitude to slaves. Brereton referred to Nugent's continual use of the term 'poor blackies,' her kindness to her own domestic servants, and her concern for their spiritual welfare. (Before she left Jamaica, she ensured that all of her staff had been baptised). Brereton then saw attitudes as showing even more sympathy by the 1820s and 1830s, using the texts of Mrs Fenwick, and Mrs Lanaghan, who both expressed anti-slavery views.

For Brereton, then, while the concerns of the female writers displayed a distinctly

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pp.65-93.

gendered interest, the changing attitudes of wider European society about the inhumanity of slavery, and the campaign for abolition, clearly had some impact on the women, which was shown in the changing attitudes in the texts she examined. The writings examined by Brereton will form key texts for discussion in this thesis, and so these positions will be explored in much greater depth in subsequent chapters. I shall argue that a deeper deconstructive analysis of these texts shows a much greater continuity of views than Brereton suggests

Apart from this essay by Brereton, the writing of white women in the Caribbean during the slavery period has been somewhat neglected. Historians, have of course, used the key texts (such as Janet Schaw's, Mrs Nugent's, and Mrs Carmichaels's books) but only in the 'factual' kind of way that male texts have been used, and they have ignored the gender aspect. In North America, however, there are several major works that exclusively analyse the writing of white women in the slavery period.[103] These texts suggest that slave societies were heavily patriarchal and that white women reluctantly accepted their inferior gender position. I shall challenge this view using the female writing from the Caribbean, to suggest that women overwhelmingly colluded in their gender position and supported patriarchy, and that they had reasons for doing so, since it allowed them to maintain their privileged role. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese viewed North American white women as accepting the advantages of colour and class in slave society, and not opposing patriarchy. I shall argue that this accommodation came even more easily for white women of the British Caribbean.

Conclusion

The historical writing on slavery in the Caribbean reveals clear shifts over time. These changes reflect related trends in all kinds of history which, over the past thirty years, have

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[103]For example, Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York, 1982) Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York & London, 1985) whilst this text is primarily is a study of slave women, White also comments on plantation mistresses; and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the*

seen moves away from the traditional 'history from above' approach to 'history from below.' The latter has also further expanded in recent years to include women's history and gender history. Such changes are clear in the research reviewed in this chapter. However, whilst these shifts in emphasis have occurred over time, there are clear elements of continuity between the historians of Caribbean slavery. Thus, most writers have concentrated on certain islands (i.e. Jamaica) and focused on the later period of slavery, particularly 1790-1834.

Most historians have also relied heavily and uncritically on the contemporary histories and travel accounts. Time and again the same texts have been used, even the same quotations, with uncritical acceptance of them as representing 'truth' or 'facts.' The advances made in feminist, postmodern and postcolonial theory in recent years call for a deconstructive, textual analysis of these sources, which my study seeks to make. [104] Also, while there have been recent moves to analyse the particular experiences slave women and to bring in some element of gender into discussions of Caribbean slavery, the same kind of treatment has yet to be carried out on the writings of white women during the slavery period in the Caribbean. This thesis seeks to take up these challenges by giving a deconstructive analysis to the writing of white women.

The next chapter explores in more detail the methodology used in my thesis. I look at the new advances made in imperial history, which have been directly influenced by poststructuralism and postcolonialism. As well as examining these theoretical positions, I analyse some of the recent work on travel accounts about other countries that have been influential in my research about the Caribbean.

Old South (Chapel Hill & London, 1988) remains a seminal text.

[104] See, for example, authors such as L.J. Nicholson (ed), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York and London, 1990) Edward Said *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth, 1985) and *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993) Gayatri C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London, 1988) and Gayatri C. Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,' *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 2 (1985) H.K. Bhabha, 'Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism,' in Francis Barker et al. (eds) *The Politics of Theory* (Colchester, 1983).

CHAPTER 3:

THEORETICAL TRENDS IN THE STUDY OF TRAVEL ACCOUNTS

The main aim of my thesis is to give a deconstructive analysis of female (and male) travel writing and fiction about slavery in the British Caribbean islands 1770-1845. This approach has been directly influenced by postcolonial theory and by new works on travel accounts from imperial history, also influenced by postcolonial theory. In this chapter I explore some seminal texts from postcolonial theory in order to explain the approach I have adopted. I also discuss some major new works from imperial history that have offered a similar analysis of travel accounts. As well as looking at these theoretical issues, I also examine the practical aspects of putting such a research approach into practice, since this is something that most authors do not explain. The chapter is thus broadly divided into two sections, the first on theory and the second on methods.

Postcolonial theory is important for my research not so much because I adopt or advocate a strong theoretical stance, but because the tools of analysis I use have their roots in it and related theories, such as postmodernism. I feel that there is some confusion amongst academics over the meanings and implications of each of these theories, which is reflected in the often virulent debates that take place in academic journals.[1] This is perhaps due to the fact that the various philosophical writings that

[1] Such debates have raged, especially, over poststructualism, postmodernism and their meanings for feminist theory. See, for example, the debates in the *Women's History Review* between 1994-1996. Joan Hoff , 'Gender as a postmodern category of paralysis,' (1994), 3, pp.149-168; Susan Kingsley Kent, 'Mistrials and Diatribulations: a reply to Joan Hoff,' (1996) 5, pp.9-20; Caroline Ramazanoglu, 'Unravelling Postmodern Paralysis: a response to Joan Hoff,' (1996) 5, pp.20-24; Joan Hoff, 'A Reply to My Critics,' (1996) 5, pp.25-27.

have informed such theories (i.e. texts by Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard)[2] are extremely complex works, which are easily open to either differing interpretations or misunderstandings. Given this problem, I feel it would be useful to define what I understand by the terms, and how they have influenced my research, as well as assessing general academic debates over them. The theory section of this chapter is split into sections on postcolonial theory, travel writing as a source, and feminism and empire. The methods section then relates the theory to practice in my research, as well as discussing debates among historians over the uses and treatment of written sources.

PART ONE: RESEARCH THEORY

Postcolonial Theory

Defining exactly what postcolonialism is is somewhat problematic. Indeed, in the Introduction to *Postcolonial Criticism*, a critical reader on the subject, the editors state that the term:

> designates at one and the same time a chronological moment, a political movement, and an intellectual activity, and it is this multiple status that makes exact definition difficult.[3]

This is reflected in the various ways in which academics have used the term. Indeed, it has been used to describe the discourse surrounding relations under colonialism, resistance and anti-colonial struggles, the process of decolonisation, as well as the literature and writing from the ex-colonies, and even contemporary 'imperial' relations. Indeed, this is summarised in *The Empire Writes Back*, which was one of the first texts to use and define the term. The authors state:

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[2] These authors have produced a vast amount of work. Some key texts include: Derrida, *'Différance' in Speech and Phenomena*, or *Writing and Difference* (London, 1978); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York, 1977) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977* (New York, 1980) Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester, 1979).

[3] Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley, eds). *Postcolonial Criticism* (London & New York, 1997) p.1.

> We use the term 'post-colonial'...to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.[4]

Whilst such a definition has been criticised as being too 'totalising' and covering too broad a time span, and too many different historical situations,[5] nevertheless the term continues to be used in these many different ways.

Another problem is that the various authors grouped under the heading 'postcolonial theory' often write from very different theoretical perspectives. So, for example, Fanon was influenced by psychoanalysis and a Marxist concern with social class; Said by Foucault's notion of discourse, and concept of power; Spivak's use of Gramsci's term 'subaltern' has been seen to echo Marx's 'proletarian'; and Bhabha is influenced by Freud and Lacan.[6] What does unite these authors, however, is a critical analysis of the ideological and cultural domination of Europe not only in the colonial period, but even up to the present, where the racism created out of empire serves to fragment peoples and groups throughout the colonial Diaspora. These differing interests lead to what I see as one of the most valuable assets of postcolonialism: it allows a fresh look at the inter-relationships between 'race,' gender and class. So, it is the themes and kind of analysis, rather than theoretical underpinning, that postcolonial works have in common. In order to understand more clearly what these common links are, it will now be useful to analyse some of the writings of key postcolonial authors. Whilst there is an enormous range in potential authors I could discuss, I shall focus on

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[4] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds), *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London, 1989) p.2.
[5] See debates raised by Aijaz Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality,' *Race and Class*, (1995) 36, p.9.

those three that Robert Young called the 'Holy Trinity'[7] of postcolonial critics: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is often seen as one of the founding texts of postcolonial criticism. His second major work in the field, *Culture and Imperialism*, (1993) expanded upon many of the themes of the first text. In these books, Said looked at the historical relationship between the West and the East, labelling the discourse that emerged from this relationship 'Orientalism.' Said's notion of discourse comes from Foucault. Said states:

> without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even to produce – the Orient, politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.[8]

According to Said, then, the West discursively created the East as an inferior 'other.' The East was defined largely through negative binary opposites to the West. So, while the East was constructed as 'voiceless, sensual, female, despotic, irrational, backward; the West was represented as its opposite: masculine, democratic, rational, moral, dynamic, scientific and progressive.'[9] These meanings were potently power-laden, with the West having *cultural*, as well as political, hegemony. Said's conception of culture comes from a Gramscian definition. In Gramsci's definition, in civil (as opposed to political) society, one particular class (the bourgeoisie) ensures that the ideas of that class become hegemonic, gaining the consent of 'the rest of the population.' Thus, the ideas, institutions and personal works that make up 'culture,'

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[6] Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Criticism*, p.3.
[7] Robert Young, *Colonial Desire* (London, 1995).
[8] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) in Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan, *Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader* (London, 1993) pp.43-4.
[9] Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Criticism*, p.23.

are determined by one class, with the authorisation of the population. Through this consent, some ideas become more popular, or dominant than others do; this cultural leadership then, is what Gramsci labelled *hegemony*.[10] Both of these ideas, of discourse and of cultural hegemony, are central to Said's analysis.

In particular, Said looked at the importance of literature and other arts in constructing the cultural domination of the West over the East. Indeed, he argued that colonial practices such as slavery, racism, and imperial subjugation, are inseparable from the poetry, fiction, and philosophy of the society that engaged in such practices. In *Culture and Imperialism* he said:

> stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world;...As one critic has suggested, nations themselves *are* narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.[11]

With specific reference to Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*, Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, Oliver Stone's *Salvador*, and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*; Said then goes on to say:

> all these works...argue that the source of the world's significant action and life is the west, whose representatives seem at liberty to visit their fantasies and philosophies upon a mind-deadened Third World. In this view, the outlying regions of the world have no life, history, or culture to speak of, no independence or integrity worth representing without the west.[12]

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[10] Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Criticism*, p.46.
[11] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993) p.xiii.
[12] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.xiii.

Thus, according to Said, it is through such discourses, both in the past and in the present, that the superiority of Western lifestyles, culture and institutions was created and sustained.

Said has been criticised on several grounds. Firstly, critics have pointed out that there are methodological problems in forging Foucault's concept of discourse and power, with a Marxist definition of culture. Moore-Gilbert *et al* say:

> In so far as Said follows Foucault, he argues that the 'Orient' is a discursive construct which has at best a tangential relationship to the 'real' East which Marxist theory, by contrast, would assume to exist independently of the observer and to be, in theory at least, available for 'true' knowledge.[13]

This follows from debates more generally about postmodern theory, in that such a perspective is supposed to question the kind of foundationalist 'grand theories' that would include Marxism. Thus to use a postmodern and a Marxist approach simultaneously seems incompatible.[14] Indeed, in *Culture and Imperialism*, in many ways Said appears to have abandoned his earlier stance, where he shows disenchantment with 'high theory' in general.[15]

Another criticism concerns Said's conception of 'the East.' It would seem in *Orientalism* that the East passively accepts the labels created by the West, and simply absorbs Western culture, without any resistance. However, once again, on these issues Said seems to have somewhat changed his view in his second text. *Culture and Imperialism*, in contrast to *Orientalism*, looks at anti-colonial and post-colonial

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[13] Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Criticism*, p.24.
[14] See Dennis Porter, '*Orientalism* and Its Problems,' Francis Barker *et al* (eds), *The Politics of Theory* (Colchester, 1983) pp.179-211.
[15] Porter, '*Orientalism* and Its Problems,' p.25.

literatures. He says that 'stories...also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history,'[16] and notes that 'Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic.'[17] Thus here, he is not only acknowledging that 'the other' speaks for itself and resists the West, but also that the culture of the colonisers inevitably ends up fused with aspects of the culture of the colonised.

Further criticisms include Dennis Porter's argument that an insistence on monolithic Orientalism in many texts is an oversimplification. He argues that whilst Said finds hegemonic unity among diverse accounts, this analysis tends to essentialise the West, and the diversity means that works are not historically grounded.[18] Also Said has been criticised for failing to include women's writing in his studies of colonialist texts.[19] Despite these criticisms, however, Said's texts remain as important source books in postcolonial theory.

Said's concept of 'Orientalism' and his analysis of the place of the 'other' in colonial discourse has been very influential in my analysis. I have also drawn on Homi Bhabha's work, especially on his concept of the stereotype. Whereas Said looks at both the colonial and post-colonial situation, Homi Bhabha concentrates solely on colonial relations, using a mixture of Freudian psychoanalysis and deconstruction.

Like Said, though, he also uses Foucault's concept of discourse. Bhabha says:

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[16] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.xiii.
[17] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. pxxix.
[18] Dennis Porter, '*Orientalism* and Its Problems.'
[19] See Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London, 1991), discussed below.

> The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.[20]

So, according to Bhabha, the colonial discourse constructs 'knowledge' about the 'subject peoples' based on racial difference, and through this justifies colonial rule over them. However, this is not to imply that like Said, Bhabha discusses differences between coloniser and 'other,' since Bhabha focuses more on *similarities* between them. He attempts to discover the details of how colonial discourses worked and to move 'from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes* of *subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse.'[21] This is a key aspect of my thesis since the case study approach I have adopted allows me to explore in great detail the mechanisms by which the women created images of slaves, as well as discussing their effect.

In analysing the stereotype, Bhabha mainly relies on Freudian psychoanalysis. Using Freud's concept of 'ambivalence' (opposing instincts occur at the same time, i.e. love and hate) Bhabha suggests that colonial identity lies *between* coloniser and colonised in an ambivalent mixture of fear and desire. For Bhabha, this works most clearly around the concept of the stereotype. Whilst the stereotype seems fixed and predictable, it also operates around ambivalence, since it contains so many aspects of contradiction and disorder. Thus, the stereotype is 'a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive.'[22] For Bhabha, the stereotype is a *process*, whereby what is 'accepted' about the colonised is anxiously restated, time and again, as if the inability to prove it means it must be constantly

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[20] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1993) p.70.
[21] Bhabha, *Location of Culture* , p.67.
[22] Bhabha, *Location of Culture* , p.70.

reinforced by repetition. Thus Bhabha states 'the same old stories of the Negro's animality, the Coolie's inscrutability or the stupidity of the Irish must be told (compulsively) again and afresh.'[23] Bhabha links this to Freud's concept of the 'fetish,' which must always be present for sexual satisfaction. Whilst Bhabha has offered an interesting approach to the concept of the stereotype, I shall not base my own analysis of this on Freudian theory, since I feel that it is problematic to use Freudian theory in this way.

Bhabha uses Freudian theory to create different concepts of 'ambivalence,' 'the stereotype as fetish,' 'hybridity,' and 'paranoia.' However, it is not clear how different these concepts are and whether they apply equally at all times. In particular, it is not clear how specific they are to the colonial encounter. Indeed, Nicholas Thomas says that it is not clear if Bhabha's argument 'conveys a truth about discourse as such, rather than one about colonialism.'[24] Also, Bhabha's collapsing of coloniser and colonised into 'colonial subject' ignores distinctions between them and pays too little attention to history. Bhabha has also been criticised for neglecting the issue of gender. If we apply Bhabha's concept of colonial relations operating around 'fear and desire,' it is questionable whether this concept applies equally to colonising men *and* women. Fear does seem to be a key aspect of the colonial discourse, but surely 'desire' mainly relates to white male sexual use of colonised females.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is another leading figure in postcolonial criticism. One of the most marked features of her work is the way in which she uses an eclectic mixture of theories to offer a new analysis which is not bound by the limitations of

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[23] Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London & New York, 1997) p.128.

any one theory. Thus, she draws on feminism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis and Marxism. Indeed, in the foreword to Spivak's *In other Worlds,*[25] Colin McCabe describes her as 'a feminist Marxist deconstructivist.'[26] One of the most important aspects of Spivak's work is her focus on gender. She does this on two levels, firstly where she speaks of white women's role as oppressors in the colonial period,[27] and secondly in her criticism of white western feminists as Eurocentric. Linked to this is her focus on colonised and 'Third World' women speaking for themselves rather than being represented by Western academics.[28] With regard to the latter, Spivak sees the female subaltern as doubly oppressed in terms of having a poor economic position *and* being female. This is similar to the kind of analyses that have been given to the position of female slaves in North America and the Caribbean who have been seen as triply burdened by being black, female, and slaves.[29]

An example of Spivak's approach is her analysis of how British colonists claimed to speak for Indian women in ending *sati* (the sacrificial death of Hindu widows). In this discourse, the regime of the empire was constructed as modern, civilised, liberating and progressive, and as having the support of the subaltern female, in what was presented as a 'rescuing' crusade. In doing this, British colonisers constructed Indian women as 'degraded' and Indian men as 'barbaric' oppressors.[30] In the ensuing debate, both Indian men, and British colonisers claimed to be speaking 'for' Indian women, yet as Spivak says one 'never encounters the testimony of the

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[24] Childs, *Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, p.143.
[25] Gayatri .C. Spivak, *In other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London & New York, 1988).
[26] Moore-Gilbert *Postcolonial Criticism*, p.27.
[27] See, for example, Spivak's 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism' in *other Worlds.*
[28] Particularly in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), pp.66-111.
[29] See, for example, Bell Hook's, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London & Winchester, Mass. 1982).
[30] Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Criticism*, pp.29-30.

women's voice-consciousness.'[31] Spivak argues that this process continues in the present in the academic work of many white Western feminist writers. She suggests that such writers tend to either categorise 'Third World' women as victims, or ignore difference between women and discuss 'Woman' as a universal and homogenous category, when really they are talking about white, western, middle-class women.[32]

Despite this analysis, Spivak has herself been criticised for 'repeating the gesture of constituting and speaking for, or in place of, the subaltern – the very manoeuvre for which she criticizes [others].'[33] Also, there is the sense that Spivak's work is primarily addressing Western intellectuals, rather than the subaltern themselves. These are difficult issues in postcolonial criticism that could be lodged against most authors. Linked to this is the whole question of whether it is possible to forge 'high theory' with political issues surrounding racism or women's oppression.

The logical conclusion to the kind of 'high theory' postulated by Derrida, and Foucault is that historical study itself is nothing more than a text, a 'grand narrative' that operates according to the same rules of rhetoric and logic as other genres of Western writing. Whilst postcolonial theorists such as Bhabha and Spivak take this stance, it is not a view that I wish wholly to advocate. Whilst one aspect of it is valuable, in reminding historians that historical sources are discursive constructs, which should be treated carefully, I feel that we cannot ignore historical *experience*. In my approach, I combine some of the *tools of analysis* of high theory (i.e. the concepts of discourse and deconstruction, rather than the larger theory itself) with the

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[31] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak,' p.100.
[32] Chandra.Talpade Mohanty has also made this point in 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,' *Feminist Review*, (1988) 30, pp.61-88.
[33] Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Criticism*, p.32.

idea of historical experience, which is done by carefully placing my analysis within its historical context. This not only gives a richer understanding of specific situations, but also allows discussion of the powerful consequences of racism or other forms of oppression which are clear in, and legitimated by, imperial discourses. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that whilst these discourses constructed colonised peoples as 'other,' through images and stereotypes, such discourses have had important and real political consequences in racism and other forms of oppression.

Travel Writing as a Source

The authors outlined above have carried out pioneering work, giving new analyses to the colonial situation in various countries. These theorists and their approach have clearly been influential on a whole series of work analysing travel writing from the period of empire.[34] I shall now explore some of this work, since, along with the kind of analysis used by postcolonial theorists, it has been influential in my research approach.

David Spurr adopted postcolonial-discourse analysis in his study of travel and related writing from the colonial period in a variety of places, including South Africa and South America. Spurr suggests that the same discursive forms recurred for more than a century in the writing of travellers and officials in these countries. He argues that this 'global system of representation'[35] illustrated the West's discursive drive for power and domination. Like Derrida, he links this quest to the writing itself: 'The writer is the original and ultimate colonizer, conquering the space of consciousness

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[34] Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference*; J. Wolff, 'On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism,' *Cultural Studies*, (1993) 7, pp.224-239; Cheryl McEwan, 'Paradise or Pandemonium? West African Landscapes in the Travel Accounts of Victorian Women,' *Journal of Historical Geography*, (1996) 22, pp.68-83.

with the exclusionary and divisive structures of representations.'[36] Spurr has been attacked in an article by Dane Kennedy, who accuses him (and, in fact, almost all advocates of postcolonial theory) of being ahistorical: '[Spurr's] analysis is entangled in what post-colonial theorists might call a 'double bind': it seeks to convict historically specific parties of historically specific crimes while exonerating itself of any accountability to historical specificity.'[37] Whilst Kennedy criticises Spurr and others for jumping across different continents in different time periods, and for analysing a range of written material, he perhaps underestimates or neglects the point that the authors are trying to make in seeing deep links between this wide range of material in terms of the colonial vision. Kennedy is similarly critical of Laura E. Donaldson[38] for '[flitting] from Jane Eyre to Uncle Tom's Cabin to the King and I (the novel, the play, *and* the film) as well as a bewildering array of other texts in an analysis that conflates colonialism with racism, sexism, and oppression in general.'[39] Yet this scathing comment does not do credit to Donaldson's book, which gives a good analysis of the neglected area of women's role in empire.

One key book about travel accounts is Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.*[40] The aim of this text is to explore 'how travel books by Europeans about non-European parts of the world...went about creating the 'domestic subject' of Euroimperialism.'[41] The influence of postcolonialism is clear in this statement since 'domestic subject' is taken from Spivak's use of the term. Thus

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[35] David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism* (Durham, 1993) p.10.
[36] Spurr, *Rhetoric*, p.93.
[37] Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory,' *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, (1996) 24, pp.345-63.
[38] Laura E. Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, and Empire-Building* (Chapel Hill, 1992).
[39] Kennedy, 'Imperial History,' p.351.
[40] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London & New York, 1992).

Pratt is interested in analysing how travel writing 'produced' the 'rest of the world' for European readerships, and how Europe conceived and constructed itself in relation to something it could call 'the rest of the world.' In doing this, Pratt explores a broad range of travel writing predominantly from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, about places as diverse as South Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Key themes are how the writing changed from early 'exploration' accounts, to 'capitalist vanguard' accounts that sought to possess land and peoples. Pratt also looks in some detail at how the gender of the author impacted upon the writing.

Since gender is a key aspect of my research, I shall assess Pratt's analysis of it in more detail. In her chapter on gender, Pratt examines the writing of two women in the 1820s and 1830s. Flora Tristan, brought up in France, travelled to Peru to meet her Peruvian relations on her father's side, in the hope of claiming an inheritance from them. The result of this journey appeared as a travel book, *Peregrinations of a Pariah* in 1838.The second book, by an English woman, Maria Callcott Graham, was also a travel account entitled *Journal of a Residence in Chile* (1824). [42]

Pratt distinguished several features, which she suggested differentiated women's travel writing from that of male travel writing at this point in history. Among these was the tendency for women to use their exploration to make social and political comments and criticisms of contemporary society. Pratt linked such activities to those generally of urban middle-class European women in the early nineteenth-century. Thus, the comments in the travel writing were largely an extension of middle-class women's similar concerns and activities in Europe.

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[41] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.4.
[42] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp.155.

Such concerns typically included the quest for social reform, and an involvement in charity work. Pratt quotes Tristan who visited:

> A hospital, a madhouse, and an orphanage, all three for the most part, very badly maintained....The obligations of charity are thought to be satisfied if the children are given just enough to sustain their miserable existence; what is more, they receive no education or training, so any who survive become beggars.[43]

Additionally, Tristan used a visit to a sugar plantation to make an attack on slavery, where she presented herself as the 'heroine of the enlightenment.'[44] Pratt found similar activities in Graham's text. In Chile, Graham visited a prison, an artisan village, markets, and religious institutions for girls. With regard to the latter, Graham said: 'under the direction of an old priest, the young creatures...are kept praying night and day, with so little food and sleep that their bodies and minds alike become weakened.'[45] For Pratt, such female activities and writing represented a 'branch of the civilizing mission,' and as such, 'social reformism might be said to constitute a form of female imperial intervention in the contact zone.'[46] This analysis is important, since it shows how middle-class white European women were also involved in the imperial discourse, and the extent to which the feminist concept of females as universally 'oppressed' is problematic. Pratt's notion white women involving themselves in empire-building in these seemingly 'innocent' and philanthropic ways has been very influential in my thesis, and is an important theme in my discussion of women's writing from the Caribbean.

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[43] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.160.
[44] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.161.
[45] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.161.
[46] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. P.160

The travel writing of women specifically has become an area of growing interest. One of the most important books in this field is, perhaps, Sara Mills' *Discourses of Difference*.[47] Mills' starting point is an attack on Edward Said's theory, which she sees as flawed because of its neglect of women's colonial writing. Since Said's concept of Orientalism is thus based solely on male texts, Mills' argues that it is problematic. Mills argues that 'Orientalist texts, in the main do attempt to construct the Orient as different and inferior....[but] because of the discursive constraints upon it *women's* travel writing is not straightforwardly Orientalist in the way that Said has described it.'[48] Mills suggests that women's writing was more complex than male writing because female writers had to write within the confines of acceptable femininity. Because of this she suggests that women did not contribute to imperialism in the same way that men did.[49] In particular, Mills suggests that suitable feminine topics meant that women did not write about racial inferiority or savagery. Instead, Mills suggests that women would focus on describing interactions with people and avoid discussing larger political issues.[50] For Mills, this explains why women were more likely to produce sentimental narratives in the form of diaries or letters that concentrated on the private sphere and domestic settings. Like Pratt, Mills suggests that the major way in which women could venture into political debates or activity was through philanthropic and religious concerns.[51] Whilst Mills has written an important work on women travel writers, which contains much valuable insight, in my analysis of women's writing, I shall challenge some of these assertions and argue that the differences in male and female texts do not produce the results suggested by Mills. I shall explore these issues in much greater detail in Chapter 10.

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[47] Mills, *Discourses*.
[48] Mills, *Discourses*, pp.61-62.
[49] Mills, *Discourses*, p.3.
[50] Mills, *Discourses*, p.106.

Gender is also the key theme of Alison Blunt's *Travel, Gender and Imperialism.*[52] Taking more of a case study approach, Blunt analyses the travel writing of Mary Kingsley who travelled to Africa in the 1890s. Blunt assesses, in discursive terms, how Kingsley 'negotiated' the concepts of 'home' and 'away,' in terms of the private and public spheres, as a woman in the context of British imperialism. These themes are centred around the three chapters of 'Departure,' 'Journey' and 'Return.' Within these, Blunt shows how books advising male travellers emphasised the methods and equipment necessary for scientific observation and the management of indigenous servants, whereas books for women travellers tended to focus on what was seen as appropriate behaviour for the traveller herself. Blunt also looks at how such issues were internalised by Kingsley, whose writing in Africa mentioned her concern for her physical appearance, and also that she would not wear anything in Africa that she would be ashamed to be seen in in London. Also, like Pratt, Blunt addresses 'the ambiguities of women travelers' being constructed as subordinate in terms of gender in the context of patriarchal society, but able in their travels to share in the authority of colonizers, defined primarily in terms of racial difference.'[53] In relation to this, Blunt suggests that the binary opposition 'coloniser/colonised' masks the role that white women play as both. In this debate she refers to Spivak, who talks of the heterogeneity of 'Colonial Power.'[54] Blunt also adopts Said's definition of both imperialism and colonialism:

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[51] Mills, *Discourses*, pp.68-72.
[52] Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York & London, 1994).
[53] Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism*, pp.9-10.
[54] Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism*, p.26.

> Following Said (1993), I use 'imperialism' to mean "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory, 'colonialism,' which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory."[55]

The kind of approach adopted by Pratt and Blunt is closely related to my approach, since they acknowledge the role of white women in empire, which I feel is somewhat underestimated by Mills. Also, like in my analysis, Pratt has clearly been influenced by some of the concepts developed by postcolonial theorists, but does not use 'high theory' as the basis of her own interpretation of colonial situations, and she places her arguments in the historical context.

Feminism and Empire

Some recent works have taken the relationship between feminism and empire as the object of their analysis. One of the key pioneering works in this area is Vron Ware's *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*.[56] This text is a collection of five essays that explore such topics as abolitionist politics, feminism and British Imperialism, and British feminist involvement in anti-imperialist campaigns. Ware comments that many previous feminist works have either ignored women's involvement in empire and racism, or have tended to 'glorify' 'heroic' women travellers, educationalists or missionaries. Her book, instead, seeks to give a more complex analysis of the relationship between gender, 'race,' and class in empire. She explores issues such as contemporary representations of white womanhood, the role of women in the anti-slavery movement, and the links women may themselves have made between the social relations of 'race,' class and gender. She also examines the

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[55] Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism*, p.41.
[56] Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London, 1992).

extent to which feminist ideology and practice were shaped by the forces of imperialism.

Ware argues that the presence of white women had a big impact on empire. This occurred in many ways, she argues, from more strictly regulating relations between the 'races,' to affecting the social lives of white male settlers, and also the status and sexual exploitation of black women.[57] Ware argues that on the whole, the dominant view of British women's relationship to Empire was a conservative one, since it was women who were expected to provide domestic continuity as well as to breed new citizens. For example, in her essay 'Britannia's other Daughters,' concerning the ways in which contemporary feminists (such as Annette Ackroyd and Josephine Butler) related to imperialism, Ware argues that both held views about gender and 'race,' which ultimately confirmed rather than challenged British imperialism.

Moira Ferguson's *Subject to others*, has also been an important recent work about British women and slavery. Rather than looking at travel writers and first-hand accounts of slavery in the British West Indian colonies, however, Ferguson instead focuses on British women in the anti-slavery movement.[58] One of the main concerns of the text is to examine the relationship between white women's understanding of their own subordinate position within British society and their views of colonial slavery, and to assess the links between feminist thought and the abolitionist debate. She notes, for example, that feminist writers from the seventeenth-century onwards

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[57] Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p.37.
[58] Moira Ferguson, *Subject to others: British women and colonial slavery*, 1670-1834, (New York, 1992).

used the term 'slave.' Thus, the book brings together issues such as the anti-slavery movement, colonial discourse, women's literature and the history of feminism. Unlike Ware, Ferguson argues that in their anti-slavery writings, women 'displaced certain anxieties about the frequently masked limitations imposed on their own lives.'[59] She also illustrates how gender affected women's involvement in the anti-slavery movement since they tended to focus on issues of the family and sexual abuse. She does also examine, however, the ways in which the Eurocentric nature of women's anti-slavery writings set limitations for the development of feminist thought in Britain in terms of its perspectives on class and 'race.' In this respect, some of Ferguson's work supports the view of Ware regarding the 'conservative' nature of contemporary feminists' relationships with empire. Similarly, an essay by Louis and Rosamund Billington also stresses the conservative nature of the British women's anti-slavery movement, and how their conduct and arguments fitted into contemporary gender conventions for 'acceptable' behaviour.[60]

RESEARCH METHODS

Historians and Written Sources

As is clear in the preceding discussion, I have been very influenced by recent studies of imperial history that have analysed travel accounts using concepts developed in postcolonial theory. As I have discussed, in my analysis of women's travel accounts, whilst I shall use concepts derived from postcolonial theory (such as deconstruction, and binary opposites) high theory does not ground my approach. Whilst there has

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[59] Ferguson, *Subject to others*, p.299.
[60] Louis Billington and Rosamund Billington, ''A Burning Zeal for Righteousness': Women in the British Anti-Slavery Movement, 1820-1860,' in Jane Rendall (ed). *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*, (Oxford, 1987) pp.82-111.

been good discussion of the theory behind these methods of analysis, and many studies applying the approach, there is little *practical* discussion among theorists as to how actually to apply a 'deconstructive' approach. In this section, I shall explain the techniques I have used, as well as giving some discussion to the issue of writing history.

There is perhaps the tendency in 'traditional' history to view documentary sources as somehow less problematic than other sources. As Joan Sangster puts it in her discussion of oral history, 'it would be unthinkable for historians to host a conference session asking 'written sources: what is their use? Yet one still finds that question posed for oral history.'[61] Yet the discussion in the theory section of this chapter illustrates that if we see written sources as representing discourses, then they are just as problematic as oral evidence, and we need to take into account many of the same issues. Just as in oral accounts, in written documents, authors 'construct' a certain image of themselves, and often tell their tales according to traditions of recognised literary genres, as well as constructing images of other people. These issues make it extremely difficult, especially when using sources such as travel accounts, to be able to 'reconstruct' a 'real' past. Thus it becomes essential to recognise the nature of written documents as 'discourses' and to develop methods to analyse them in a non-factual way.

The concept of discourse analysis offers some practical advice on how to deconstruct discourses. One key aspect of discourse analysis is a focus on how language constructs the world. A useful article explaining the use this kind of analysis

is Rosalind Gill's 'Discourse analysis: practical implementation.'[62] Gill states that one of the most difficult starting points for this kind of approach (and the same applies to using any method of deconstruction) is changing the way that one sees language. From the everyday view of seeing language as something that is conveying reality, one must step back from this to focus on the language itself and how it is conveying an account. This is quite difficult, and Gill suggests that in the first stages, one simply reads and re-reads the text in order to become very familiar with it. From this, categories can be developed for further analysis.

Gill's research into sexual discrimination in broadcasting serves as an example. One of the key questions of her study was to find out how male broadcasters justified the lack of female broadcasters. This was part of a wider theme to explore how sexism operates in institutions, within the framework of legislation to outlaw such practices. Concentrating on DJ's, Gill found that several reasons would be presented for the lack of women, for example that women do not apply in the first place, that the audiences prefer male presenters, or that women do not have the right qualities or skills to become broadcasters. Gill notes that the accounts given seemed very persuasive since they were supposedly simply describing a situation. The interviewees would use disclaimers to deny any sexism, and would give positive praise of women DJ's. On closer examination, however, it seemed that the very fact that there was such an entrenched view that on the whole DJ's are traditionally male, and that the public do not want female DJ's, was likely to lead to women not being considered for this job in the first place. Thus, sexism was operating in a very covert

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[61] Joan Sangster, 'Telling our stories: Feminist debates and the use of oral history' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (London, 1998) p87.
[62] Rosalind Gill, 'Discourse analysis: practical implementation' in John Richaradson (ed) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences* (Leicester, 1996) pp.141-56.

way, which can be 'hidden' within the language used. This kind of detailed account of *how* to analyse language is very useful, since, on the whole, most researchers do not discuss in detail how they use sources. It is especially useful for deconstruction since analysing language in such an unaccustomed way is not an easy skill to develop.[63]

This is exactly the kind of approach I used in my analysis of the travel accounts and novels. The most difficult starting point was to stop looking at *what* the authors said, and instead, to concentrate upon the *effect* a passage had, the hidden assumptions or inferences in it, and the images it created. I found that the only way to do this was to read texts many times, trying each time to 'get beyond' what authors were saying, and instead, to concentrate on how they were constructing narratives. After repeated readings, I began to develop lists of certain recurring themes and images. I made card files of these headings, which contained quotations as examples. From this I was able to make relationships between the texts in terms of similarities and differences, both among female texts and between female and male texts. In the first year of research I read as many travel accounts as possible, which were mostly male, and I began searching for female texts.

Locating women's texts proved extremely difficult. To go beyond three or four well-known books, I conducted searches at the British Library, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, the Fawcett Library, the Royal Commonwealth Collection at Cambridge University and Rhodes House Library at Oxford, as well as local searches in Jamaica at the Institute of Jamaica, the archives at Spanish Town and also at the University of the West Indies. I used an extensive range of guides to sources, and

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[63] Whilst many historians use deconstructive techniques, it is difficult to find texts that offer a practical guide to the topic, which is why Gill's text is so useful.

guides specifically for women's historical writing, including guides to diaries and letters. From these searches I found two travel accounts that I had never seen reference to in any published secondary work, and a series of novels by women from the Caribbean, to which I had never seen reference before. Studying women's historical writing is extremely difficult since it means working with a tiny percentage of the material that historians are traditionally used to dealing with. Even though the quantity of texts I have uncovered is relatively small, given these problems in women's history, I feel that finding new texts can offer a very important contribution to the field.

In addition to the new texts I unearthed, I also did research to find contemporary reviews of these published works. I uncovered reviews of several travel accounts and some novels. For the decades before the Wellesley Index, which is a guide to Victorian periodicals, there are no substantial guides to earlier periodicals. The main relevant periodicals listed in the Wellesley were the *Edinburgh Review* (1802 onwards) *Blackwood's Magazine* (1824 onwards) and the *Westminster Review*. Since many of the texts I had found fell before this period, I used the BUCOP guide, and read Derek Roper's *Reviewing Before the Edinburgh*.[64] From these I identified other titles (the *Monthly Review*, the *Critical Review* and the *British Critic*) which appeared to be the key periodicals for the eighteenth-century. Collections of these were found in the University of London, and Birmingham University Library and Public Library. Searches had to be conducted by simply working through each edition in the relevant time periods to find reviews. In addition to these, I also researched for biographical information about each author, since I felt that it was crucial to

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[64] Derek Roper, *Reviewing Before the Edinburgh*, (London, 1978).

understand who the women were and why they were in the Caribbean, in order better to understand their perspective. I also conducted searches at Colindale Newspaper Library to find out if there were any periodicals or newspaper pieces written by women in the Caribbean, and I searched the Colonial Office Collection at the Public Records Office for background information and contextual information about the islands in the time period the women visited them.

Novels as an Historical Source

Traditional historians tend to place a low value on novels as an historical source. Arthur Marwick, for example, places them at the bottom of his hierarchy of historical sources.[65] Novels can, however, be useful in traditional approaches, as well as in the kind of approach I am taking. other PhD theses have also used novels as an historical source.[66] Timothy Mullane's PhD, based on seven novels, states that:

> The novel often provides an immediate, emotional view of history; how history can be experienced....[which] gives the historian unique historical information and insights.

A similar point is made by Charles Macune, when he states that the novel 'gives a human dimension, an exciting, existential quality to a historic period. It gives life to the history of a civilization, often remote, dimly perceived.'[67]

As well as this, of course, if we view travel accounts as discourses, then novels too, can be seen simply as a different style of discourse, possibly putting forward similar perspectives and images, but employing different narrative

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[65] Arthur Marwick, *Introduction to History*, (Milton Keynes, 1977).
[66] Deborah Paley, 'The Novels of Elizabeth Gaskell as an Ethnographic Source on Middle Class Victorian Domestic Organization, (unpublished PhD thesis, City University of New York, 1981) and Timothy Mullane, 'Inevitable Meetings: The Latin American Novel and History. Seven Cases for Using the Novel as a Historical Source,' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of California, 1995).
[67] Charles W. Macune, Jr; 'Latin American Literature as a Source of History: Why it Flies in the Classroom,' *The History Teacher*, (1989) 22, pp.497-509.

techniques. Clive King has distinguished between fiction that merely uses history as a backdrop to a story which could have been set at any time, and those which are rooted firmly in the time period in which they are set.[68] This distinction is clear in the novels from the Caribbean. Those of Theodora Lynch were similar in themes to Jane Austen novels, and were set in the Caribbean during the slavery period, since that was simply where the author lived. Some of the other novels were anti-slavery texts, and thus the historical situation was itself the theme. King, like Mullane stresses the insight that novels give into how people of the period interacted, and their feelings, emotions and expectations. Many of these things, can, of course, also be found in travel accounts. Whilst acknowledging the specificity of fiction as a source, it is thus useful also to see similarities between different source bases, which is an important aspect of postcolonial theory, and is why I have included a study of novels in this thesis.

Macune notes that there are problems with using novels as an historical source. The most evident of these is probably the author's literary licence, and freedom to manipulate historical facts or events for literary effect. Yet he also states that every documentary source has limitations, and that at least novels can fully work through historical themes, in contrast to the choppy, episodic treatment of themes on other forms of historical evidence.[69] Macune quotes the Chilean literary scholar Arturo Torres-Rioseco, who wrote forty-five years ago that Spanish American novels were:

> chiefly interesting not for [their] intrinsic merit...but as a reflection of the culture of an entire continent....[they are] a precious record from which to study the life of Spanish America in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries.[70]

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[68] Clive King, 'The Historical Novel: An Under-Used Resource,' *Teaching History*, (1988) 51, pp.24-26.
[69] Macune, 'Latin American Literature,' p.501.
[70] Macune, 'Latin American Literature,' pp.497-98.

Some of these issues may be more relevant to using such sources in a 'factual' way. In my case, however, they are an important source not only because women's writing from the slavery period is so scarce, but also because they can be just as revealing as travel accounts in terms of images and representations.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at both the theory and method employed in my research into the discursive portrayals of images of slaves and whites in the British Caribbean islands during the last 50 years of slavery. It has been shown that postcolonial theory has conducted pioneering work in this kind of area, illustrating how imperial discourses constructed colonised peoples as 'other' and as inferior to the West. This kind of approach, and the techniques used to analyse discourses – namely a deconstruction of language – will be used in my research.

However, whilst I use these tools of analysis, I shall not base my entire research around high theory, or suggest that there is no reality outside of the text. Indeed, here, I shall forge discourse with the notion of 'experience,' in which the reality of racism and its political consequences will not be ignored. Indeed, the next chapter gives the historical context of the islands in the time periods the women visited or lived in the Caribbean. Whilst my approach has been pioneered by other authors, I hope that forging textual analysis with historical context will give a new dimension to the discussion. Also, I look in great detail at how language constructs images, whereas most of the pioneering work has talked in general terms about the construction of the 'other.' Also, the writing of white women in the British Caribbean islands has been hitherto neglected.

The next chapter sets the historical context in the islands the women visited. The chapter uses a mixture of some primary and secondary material. Whilst the chapter is largely 'descriptive,' I feel that it is important to place the women's writing carefully into its historical situation in order better to understand the views the women expressed. Thus, in the following chapter I am not concerned with debates among historians such as those over different crops and their implications for slavery, or how different population structures led to different experiences of slavery. Rather, I shall give a picture of the general structure of the colonial islands the women visited during the late slavery period, which will help contextualise the travel narratives.

Part Two

Slavery and Abolition: The British West Indies 1750-1834

CHAPTER 4:

CONTEXTUAL SETTING FOR THE TRAVEL ACCOUNT NARRATIVES

Whilst the overall aims of the thesis are to be achieved by giving a textual analysis of women's travel writing, given the debates touched upon in the preceding chapter, I shall first of all give some information about the historical context in which the women were writing. As noted in Chapter 3, other recent works based on travel accounts have tended to be criticised as being ahistorical and covering too large a time period and geographical area. I hope to avoid some of these problems by outlining the historical circumstances in which the accounts were written. Although the women's writing I explore did cover a variety of perspectives (from 'pro-slavery' to 'anti-slavery'), the texts were similar in relating only to the British West Indian islands from the 1770s to the 1840s.

Generally speaking, this period was a turbulent time for West Indian planters. Although sugar and other commodities were still being produced in large volumes, many factors were working against the British Caribbean economic system, including the American Revolution, competition from other markets and British moves towards preference for free trade. These factors and others, including war with France, led to short periods of 'boom' and 'slump' in the market for British West Indian products. All of this, of course, needs also to be set amidst virulent debate about the slave trade and slavery, and the rise of the abolitionist movement. This led to laws to improve the condition of the slaves (1790s), the ending of the slave trade (1807), and abolition of slavery itself (1834). Using material from secondary literature and the Colonial Office collection, this chapter will give a general historical overview of the British Caribbean

during the time the women visited and wrote about the islands. The material will include descriptions of how the islands were governed, their primary products, demographic information about the various populations of the islands, laws concerning the treatment of slaves, and the impact of the abolitionist campaign. I shall not enter into debates over historians' interpretations of this information, since that is not the purpose of my thesis. The material in this chapter is, rather, descriptive and contextual.

Political System

The Colonial System established in the British West Indies was based on the principle that the islands would contribute to the cost of their defence by employing only British ships and seamen, and by limiting their commerce only to British ports. As William Mathieson pointed out in 1926, this system meant that Britain created immense wealth for herself by 'engrossing commodities, which she did not herself produce and exchanging them for the products of her own furnaces and looms,'[1]

As British colonies in the West Indies grew, there were four Crown Colonies (Trinidad, St. Lucia, Demerara and Berbice -- the last two of which were united as British Guiana in 1831). All the other colonies (except Honduras)[2] had received charters of self-government, creating in each a Governor, a Council and a House of Assembly. The Governor was appointed by the British Crown, the Council was also chosen by the Crown with the Governor's recommendation, while the Assembly was

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[1] William L. Mathieson, *British Slavery and Its Abolition* (London, 1926), p.1.
[2] Honduras was governed by a Superintendent, holding office under the Governor of Jamaica in his military capacity as Captain-General.

appointed by local election, based on votes of the islands' male elite classes.[3] Edward Long described the system:

> It is composed of three estates, of which the governor (as representative of the king) is head. Having no order of nobility here the place of an house of peers is supplied by a council of twelve gentlemen appointed by the king; which, in our system of legislature, forms the *upper house*. The *lower house* is composed (as in Britain) of the representatives of the people, elected by the freeholders.[4]

Whilst there were minor differences in practice among the various colonies, on the whole, there was uniformity of this constitutional practice.

The role of Governor was to uphold imperial interests, and to ensure that imperial policy was carried out; and also to oversee all aspects of the local administration. This inevitably meant that there were conflicts between Governors and planters over opposing interests. In his *History of Jamaica*, Long, especially gave the planter's view of Governors as venial, greedy and extortive.[5] Whilst female travel accounts tended to ignore political issues, the narrative of Maria Nugent, who was the wife of the Jamaican Governor George Nugent (1801-1805) -- as will be demonstrated later -- contained frequent references to the political troubles her husband faced.

The Councils advised governors, who often required the assent of the Council before carrying out certain tasks. The Assemblies (elected by male franchise on a property qualification) generally represented only the slaveholding interests, and gradually came to dominate the political system, acting as a local House of Commons.

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[3] The Governors were instructed to recommend Councillors from among the wealthiest inhabitants, and especially those who were likely to be loyal to the administration. See, for example, CO 153/32 instructions to Thomas Shirley (Governor of the Leewards) 7 April 1781.
[4] Long, *History of Jamaica*, 1, p.10.
[5] Long, *History of Jamaica*, 1, pp.26-43.

All bills passed had the force of law once sanctioned by the governor, but the British Crown retained the power of final rejection.[6]

Economic Situation

Most islands produced sugar, molasses and rum, as their primary products, (although Anguilla and Bermuda depended on mixed farming and salt raking). Sugar dominated most islands to the extent that it accounted for over 90 per cent of production on many islands between 1750 and 1820.[7] Travel writers often discussed sugar cultivation since it was such a central activity in most islands, and would typically describe the labour involved in some detail (although this was more common in male than in female texts). The planters had adopted a routine of sugar cultivation that kept their slaves fully employed throughout the year. The sugar cane took about 15 months to grow to maturity after planting. The first stage in sugar cultivation involved preparing the land for planting, which was undertaken by slaves without the use of cattle. Instead of ploughing the fields, the slaves had to prepare it by hand, holing it with a hoe. The holes were made around 15 inches deep and about three or four feet wide, lined regularly. After this came planting the sugar cane, with three or four plants put in each hole. Then there would be the weeding of the cane (often done by slave children on the plantations), manuring the ground, and stripping the cane of leaves that withered and drooped, masking it from the sun. These leaves, called trash, were laid on the ground to keep moisture in the earth, and part of the trash was used for cattle, or thatching slave huts. After this, the cane would be cut, which involved more

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[6] Hume Wrong, *Government of the West Indies* (Oxford, 1923).
[7] Higman, *Slave Populations*, pp.52-53.

arduous work, and then at the harvest, most slaves would become involved in the manufacture of sugar, which was done in the boiling houses, carried out in shifts.[8]

Plantation field work was divided by three slave gangs, the first made up of the youngest, strongest men and women, the second of those who were slightly less able, including pregnant women, and the third of children, the weak and elderly. other slave occupations included domestic staff, drivers and skilled slaves, and those who worked in towns, or who hired themselves out and paid their masters a fixed weekly sum (this was frequently done with skilled slaves or some female domestics). Whilst masters and mistresses may have had some contact with domestic and supervisory slaves, especially with 'key' slaves, the vast majority of the field slaves on plantations were largely invisible to them.[9] As well as this labour, slaves had their own provision grounds where they grew produce for their own consumption (receiving a limited amount of additional food from the master), which they also sold at Sunday markets. Through this system, the slaves came to dominate the internal marketing system of most islands.

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[8] Goveia, *Slave Society.*

[9] Michael Tadman, has developed the concept of 'key slaves' in examining US slavery. Tadman (challenging historians such as Eugene Genovese) argues that the idea of close relations between masters and slaves was largely a myth, developed by whites, to justify the system. By developing relations with, and giving certain privileges to, favourite or 'key' slaves (usually drivers or a member of the domestic staff who was well known to the white family), masters could justify themselves as benevolent paternalists. In practice though, the vast majority of the rest of their slaves were invisible to them, and certainly did not benefit from any kind of paternalistic regime. See Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Trader, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, Wisconsin; and London, 1996) ppxix-xxxvii; and 'The Persistent Myth of Paternalism: Historians and the Nature of Master-Slave Relations in the American South,' *Sage Race Relations Abstracts*, (1998), 23, pp.7-23.

Populations

Most of the populations of the British Caribbean islands were heavily dominated by slaves, with whites forming a minority. Generally, historians have shown that British West Indian planters held a preference for male slaves, and this was reflected in the gender distribution of the slaves imported to the colonies and in the prices paid for male and female slaves. Indeed, Barry Higman has illustrated that in the last decades of the slave trade to the British Caribbean, slave cargoes had sex ratios varying between 150 and 180 males per 100 females.[10] The ending of the slave trade in 1807, however, tended to balance the gender differences of the slave population, as did the higher mortality rates among male slaves. It is likely that during the earlier period the women wrote their travel accounts (1770-1790) there were more male than female slaves. This would also have affected slave marriage markets, which were additionally exacerbated by white male use of female slaves for sexual purposes

All islands had a population of mixed origins, described by contemporaries as the 'coloured' population. This group was made up of free persons and slaves. The free persons included free slaves and their descendants, and these people occupied a marginal position between the whites and the slaves. Some free coloureds owned land and slaves, usually growing crops other than sugar, such as cotton, coffee, cocoa, and provision grounds such as yams, eddoes, potatoes, and plantains, since sugar tended to involve too much capital outlay. Free coloureds were also involved in the islands' internal marketing systems, and were active as shopkeepers and small merchants.

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[10] Higman, *Slave Populations*, p.116.

Most contemporary travellers and historians commented on the social and political exclusion of the free coloured population in the British West Indies. John Augustine Waller wrote that 'No property, however considerable, can ever raise a man or woman of colour, not even when combined with education, to the proper rank of a human being, in the estimation of an English or Dutch Creole. They are always kept at a respectful distance.'[11] Bryan Edwards also wrote, 'It very frequently happens that the lowest White person, considering himself as greatly superior to the richest and best-educated Freeman of Colour, will disdain to associate with a person of the latter description; treating him, as the Egyptians treated the Israelites, with whom they held it an abomination to eat bread.'[12] As a result, free people of colour were excluded from all ranks of society, and this was maintained even in death. As John Luffman wrote, 'Negroes and coloured people are not buried in the same churchyard as whites, even if free; the distinction and the superiority which the European race claim over the African, are extended as far as they can possibly go; to the grave.'[13]

An exception to this was found in Antigua, where the free coloured population who had the necessary property qualification, could vote in elections, although there was no actual Act of the island entitling them to do so. Antigua, however, was the only island that allowed this, throughout the other Leewards, free coloured could not vote in elections. In all the Leeward Islands, including Antigua, however, there were other civil and political exclusions. The free coloured were not allowed to hold public

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[11] John Augustine Waller, 'A Voyage in the West Indies, containing various observations made during a residence in Barbados, and several of the Leeward Islands,' in Sir R. Phillips (ed), *New Voyages and Travels*, (London, 1820), p.95.
[12] Edwards, *History*, 2, p.23.
[13] John Luffman, *A Brief Account of the Island of Antigua*, (London, 1789), p.109. Even in 1823 the free coloured of Antigua complained that their dead had to be buried in 'a Separate place, which can be termed in the rainy Seasons nothing but a Swamp, opposite to the Gallows and near to the Graves of Malefactors.' CO 318/76, Antigua Papers, memorial to the Commissioners of Legal Enquiry, 8 Oct. 1823.

or parochial offices of any kind, they were not eligible as jurors in any of the islands, and, since their evidence was accepted only against members of their own group and against slaves, they could not prosecute cases against whites in any of the island courts, unless they were able to produce white witnesses.[14]

The main exception to these exclusionary practices was the sexual relations between white men and coloured women. Some white men did marry coloured women, but usually against great hostility from the white community.[15] As Edwards expressed it, 'No White man of decent appearance, unless urged by the temptation of a considerable fortune, will condescend to give his hand in marriage to a Mulatto: The very idea is shocking.'[16] Most accounts suggest that it was common for coloured women to become the mistresses of white men, leaving some coloured men without a 'suitable' marriage partner, and thus, most free coloured men married black women.

Although the whites were the effective ruling class of the islands and dominated their economic and social life, there were some poor whites who were excluded from elite society, who remained largely invisible in travel accounts since most travel writers were of the elite class and socialised among it. The leading whites were planters, merchants, and professional men of property. The planters of the

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[14] CO 318/76.

[15] Mrs Flannigan in *Antigua and the Antiguans: A Full Account of the Colony and its Inhabitants*, (2 vols. London, 1844) spoke of the marriage of a white man Mr Gilbert with Anne Hart, one of the coloured Methodist Hart sisters, and the racist responses this provoked, 2, pp.178-79. The writings of Anne Hart Gilbert and Elizabeth Hart Thwaites, which concerned Methodism, are documented in Moira Ferguson (ed), *The Hart Sisters: Early African-Caribbean Writers, Evangelicals, and Radicals*, (Lincoln, 1993).

[16] Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 2 vols. London, 1793, 2, p.26. The term 'mulatto' was widely used by whites throughout the colonies to describe people of mixed origins. The term actually meant a young mule, which was the offspring of a donkey and a horse, used solely as a beast of burden. The racial barriers in the Caribbean colonies were so extensive that an elaborate system was created to describe almost every possible combination of mixed ancestry.

Caribbean islands tended to have large holdings of land and slaves. The merchants owned stores, town houses, and domestic slaves, as well as many of the small vessels and slaves engaged as seamen in the coastal trade of the islands. There were also professional men involved in the government, law or medicine. Many sources, especially travel accounts, suggest that by the end of the eighteenth-century absenteeism among wealthier planters who took up residence in Britain led to a 'levelling down' of the white upper class that remained, and to an acceptance of the estate managers and attorneys of the absentees, although, perhaps the extent of cross-class relations should not be exaggerated. The white women (although their small number was frequently commented on) were mainly wives, sisters and daughters of these men.[17]

Slave Laws

Slaves in the British Caribbean were governed *as property* by common law. Most of the slave laws of the islands concerned the difficulty of dealing with this situation in which 'property' were in fact people. Slave laws before the ameliorative legislation concerned policing and punishing slaves who stole, who run away, or who planned rebellions.[18] Of course, no slave could testify against a white in any court. Even in the slave courts the evidence of slaves was only admitted against other slaves.[19] Slaves were also not allowed to leave plantations without a ticket authorising them to do so, they were prevented from holding assemblies or from communicating at a distance by beating drums or blowing horns. Allowances of food, clothing, shelter, and land were

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[17] Goveia, *Slave Society*.
[18] CO 240/4 St Kitts Act, No. 52 of 1722.
[19] The individual islands of the Leewards had separate courts. These included a Chancery court (often used by debtors to secure injunctions against proceedings by their creditors),Vice-Admiralty courts , courts for civil and criminal cases, and slave courts for the trial of criminal slaves.

left to the governance of custom. Slaves were thus completely without protection against masters. As James Ramsay wrote, 'Our laws, indeed, as far as they respect slaves, are only licenced modes of exercising tyranny on them.'[20]

Indeed it was largely in this area that the abolition campaign was first waged. Due to parliamentary debates in the 1790s, the British government decided that the local colonial legislatures should introduce laws to ameliorate the condition of the slaves.[21] Thus, in 1797, the first ameliorative legislation was passed in Antigua. It and the legislation that followed laid down specific conditions for slaves and their treatment and punishment. This code became the amelioration policy in the Leeward Islands, with other islands gradually following suit.[22] The so-called amelioration legislation included things such as the amount of breaks that slaves should receive in plantation work, and set regulation for the provision of clothing and food to slaves. The laws also set out rules for the medical care of slaves and special provisions were made for sick and disabled slaves, and it was made illegal to manumit a disabled slave. Owners were to give accounts of the births and deaths of slaves on their plantations and owners were told to encourage slaves to adopt monogamous sexual unions. Owners who prevented slaves from attending Sunday religious services were fined. Yet, in fact, the laws were largely ineffective. Clear cases of cruelty by whites were not dealt with, which showed that the laws for the protection of slaves would have produced little improvement in their actual condition.[23] The laws were more significant for the role they played in the parliamentary debate over slavery itself and

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[20] Reverend James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British sugar colonies,* (London, 1784), p.281.
[21] Goveia, *Slave Society*, pp.152-61.
[22] Goveia, *Slave Society*, pp.152-61.
[23] Cases such as Edward Huggins of Nevis, who publicly whipped 'troublesome' slaves for hours in a market place, with slaves (men and women) receiving between 100 and 200 lashes each (despite the

the abolitionist campaign. Pro-slavery advocates argued that the laws proved that the condition of slaves was better than that of the poor in England, whereas abolitionists cited cases where, despite the laws, cruelty was still evident. These same arguments were reflected in the travel accounts and novels, with the pro-slavery texts citing slave conditions which were described as better than the poor in Europe, and anti-slavery texts conversely illustrating cruel treatment of slaves and harsh conditions.

The case of Bermuda is a good example of this debate. Bermuda was widely portrayed by contemporaries as having mild conditions for slaves. This view has even been presented by modern day historians. James E. Smith, for example, has argued that the type of slavery that evolved in Bermuda, as a consequence of its production of salt rather than sugar, meant that slavery was milder than in other Caribbean colonies. He argues that this was because slavery in Bermuda was based on the individual ownership of relatively small numbers of slaves, who performed a wide range of duties, many of them of a domestic nature. This, he suggests, encouraged a degree of intimacy between master and slave that was not possible on the large sugar plantation colonies like Barbados and Jamaica.[24] Mary Prince, however, painted a rather different picture of life as a slave in Bermuda, and of the work in the salt ponds:

> My new master was one of the owners of the salt ponds....This work was perfectly new to me. I was given a half barrel and a shovel, and had to stand up to my knees in the water, from four o'clock in the morning till nine, when we were given some Indian corn boiled in water, which we were obliged to swallow as fast as we could for fear the rain should come on and melt the salt. We were then called again to our tasks, and worked through the heat of the day; the sun flaming upon our heads like fire, and raising salt blisters in those parts which were not completely covered. Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, afflicting the sufferers with great torment....Though we worked from morning till night, there was no satisfying Mr. D---. I hoped, when I left Capt. I---, that I should have been better off, but I found it was but going from one butcher to another. There was this difference between

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1798 ruling that the maximum number of lashes to be inflicted at one time was 39), was acquitted after a not guilty vote. Goveia, *Slave Society*, pp.152-61.

[24] James E. Smith, *Slavery in Bermuda*, (New York, 1976) p.38.

> them: my former master used to beat me while raging and foaming with passion; Mr. D--- was usually quite calm. He would stand by and give orders for a slave to be cruelly whipped, and assist in the punishment, without moving a muscle of his face; walking about and taking snuff with the greatest composure....Mr. D--- has often stripped me naked, hung me up by the wrists, and beat me with the cow-skin, with his own hand, till my body was raw with gashes. Yet there was nothing very remarkable in this; for it might serve as a sample of the common usage of the slaves on that horrible island.[25]

These very different accounts of slavery on one particular island are reflective of the wider debate about slavery in the whole of the British Caribbean. Mary Prince's narrative is also unique, being the only known survival of a slave narrative from the British Caribbean. As such it offers a very different perspective on slavery compared with the predominantly 'white' sources that form the basis of most accounts of slavery.

Conclusion

Against this background, British abolitionism emerged as a mass movement at the end of the 1780s, reaching several peaks before its demise after the ending of slavery and apprenticeship. Several distinct campaigns were waged during this time: for abolition of the slave trade (1788, 1792 and 1814), for emancipation (1823, 1830 and 1833), and for the end of apprenticeship (1838). The movement first took organisational form in 1787 when the mainly Quaker Abolition Society was founded, and over the next seventy or so years abolitionism became a permanent feature of extra-parliamentary politics. Important aspects of the campaign were debated in Parliament, as discussed earlier, over the question of the condition of slaves. As will be clear in the discussion that follows in the next part of this thesis, these debates clearly had a tremendous impact on the British reading public, since the wider campaigns both for

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[25] *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, Moira Ferguson (ed) (Michigan, 1993), pp.61-63.

and against slavery were clearly visible in travel accounts and novels. As also discussed earlier in this chapter, changing world economies and the resistance of slaves themselves were other important factors in the ending of slavery, as well as these developing anti-slavery forces within Britain.[26] The next part of this thesis introduces the female authors and their texts and then gives a deconstructive analysis of these works.

[26] For a good discussion of these debates, see Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848* (London & New York, 1988).

Part Three

Women Travellers to the British West Indies 1770-1845

CHAPTER 5:

AUTHORS, CONTEXTS, AUDIENCES: FEMALE AUTHORS AND THEIR TEXTS

The preceding chapter set out the historical context of the British Caribbean islands the female authors visited between 1770 and 1840. This chapter will now introduce each of the women, their backgrounds and biographical information about them, as well as introducing their books, and examining contemporary reviews of their publications. Thus in this chapter I set out to give a good understanding of who the women were and why they went to, and wrote about the Caribbean, as well as commenting on audiences and reception of their work. The chapter will be divided into two sections, the first concentrating on the women's backgrounds and writing, and the second giving contemporary reviews of their work. I shall use a chronological format, beginning with the earliest texts, although within this, I shall treat the travel and personal writing separately from the fictitious writing. At the end of the chapter, since I shall be commenting on male texts throughout the thesis, I shall introduce some male authors and reviews of their work.

Female Authors of Travel Accounts, Diaries and Letters

Janet Schaw

Janet Schaw was a middle-aged Scottish woman, who travelled to Antigua and St Kitts between 1774 and 1775. During this journey, she kept a lengthy journal of her travels, comprising 350 pages, which was eventually published in 1939, after its 'discovery' in the British Museum. Three copies of the journal were known to have

existed. The first published edition in 1939 was entitled *Journal of a Lady of Quality.*[1] The Journal was divided into four chapters, which described the voyage to the Caribbean, and then separate chapters describing the places Schaw visited: Antigua and St. Christopher, North Carolina, and Lisbon. Her comments in the Caribbean included discussion of the white population and leisure activities as well as comments on the slaves and slavery.

Schaw travelled to Antigua and St Kitts with her older brother, Alexander, who had been appointed as Searcher of Customs at St Kitts. Her part, though, seems to have been to offer companionship to her brother, and to take the opportunity to travel, since she returned to Scotland after her visit. The Schaws were from a wealthy family, and the text made Janet's status as an educated Scottish gentlewoman very clear (as indeed, did the title of the published edition). The journal was captivating for audiences, since it was lively, interesting, and written with a good deal of humour. Through these techniques, the author constructed herself as a likeable, trustworthy narrator. The opening chapter, of the voyage to the Caribbean, for example, was full of 'adventure,' and different characters provided the excitement. Schaw's maid was the main comic character, her brother had an Indian servant (black Rob) who provided perfect service and good common sense in every dilemma, and who also served as an emblem of the exotic. A group of poor Scottish emigrants, stowed away in steerage played the tragic figures, and through their suffering, Schaw demonstrated her own resilience and strength of character. Her brother, Alexander, was the 'manly' dependable character, and the ship's captain played the villain. Thus, from the outset,

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[1] Evangeline Walker Andrews (ed) *Journal of a Lady of Quality, Being the Narrative of a Voyage from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina and Portugal, in the Years 1774 to 1776* (New Haven, 1939).

readers would have formed a favourable impression of the narrator, which would be likely to foster an acceptance of the 'truthfulness' of her account of the islands.

Upon arrival in the Caribbean, Schaw travelled firstly to Antigua and then St. Christopher. Her main comments concerned the way of life of the white elite classes and their opulent and luxurious lifestyle. Schaw also made many comments about the slaves and the institution of slavery, an institution which she completely accepted and even defended in the journal. Indeed, all of her comments in this area reflected the views of the slave-holding white classes with whom she was mixing and living. Whilst Janet Schaw's text was based on a journal, it was written in the style of a travel account, with life in the islands sandwiched between narratives of the dangerous and adventurous voyage to and from the Caribbean.

Maria Riddell

Maria Riddell travelled to the Leeward Islands, and published a book from her travels in 1792. This book was a natural history of the islands, entitled, *Voyages to the Madeira and Leeward Caribbean Isles: with sketches of the natural history of these islands.*[2] Her reasons for travelling were not clear, although her husband was a 'travelling gentleman' (i.e. a diplomat/merchant/landowner), and it was the custom for wives to accompany husbands.

Riddell stated that she wrote the book for the amusement of her friends and family, but then decided to publish it. She wrote to William Smellie, member of the Antiquarian and Royal Societies of Edinburgh, to ask if his name could prefix the

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[2] Maria Riddell, *Voyages to the Madeira and Leeward Caribbean Isles: with Sketches of the Natural History of these Islands*, (London, 1792).

book. The book was over a hundred pages and contained sections on the various plant and animal life in the Caribbean. She made occasional references to slaves in commenting on slave food (which was discussed in terms of slave 'difference' to whites, since Riddell mentioned that slaves ate rats and lizards). As was common in travel accounts, authors never questioned why slaves ate such food, or linked eating habits to issues of malnutrition or inadequate slave diet. Rather, such topics served merely as suggestions of African 'difference' to Europeans, and contained undertones of slave lack of 'civilisation' etc. Riddell also mentioned native Caribs and documented their animal hunts in a way that stressed their 'wild' and dangerous nature. In general, however, in Riddell's text, discussions of peoples were limited, the main focus was on natural history. Riddell adopted the classification system of Pennant, which she said was 'better suited to the simplicity of my plan,' than Linnaeus's system.[3] This comment would seem to support the view of authors such as Mary Louise Pratt who suggested that female natural histories tended to be less technical than male texts.

Ann Gardner Brodbelt

Ann Gardner Brodbelt lived in Jamaica, and wrote a series of letters between 1788 and 1796 to her daughter, Jane, who was at school in England. The letters were eventually published in 1938.[4] The Brodbelts were a well-established old colonial family. Ann Gardner Brodbelt and her husband Francis Rigby Brodbelt had themselves been born and brought up in Jamaica, their children Jane and Nancy were born in Jamaica, but educated in England, and Mrs Brodbelt spent a year visiting them in London in 1791-1792. Mr Brodbelt was a doctor in Spanish Town, and both he

[3] Riddell, *Voyages to the Madeira*, p.vii.
[4] Geraldine Mozley (ed) *Letters to Jane from Jamaica, 1788-1796*, (London, 1938).

and his wife were from well-to-do families who owned slaves and property throughout Jamaica.[5] The Brodbelt's residence was in Spanish Town, in a comfortable house set in grounds large enough to keep goats and cows. As was the custom, their household consisted of several black slaves. Cousins of the Brodbelts, the Millwards, owned Mount Pleasant, which was a Jamaican sugar plantation. Indeed, the Brodbelts, given their long-standing colonial history, had many relatives in the island.

The published book of letters was chronological in order, with the editor making some comments and 'filling in' broken gaps in the narrative. The letters mainly concerned purely personal circumstances, family information, and instructions to Jane. As a whole, they made very few references to slaves. In itself, this was an important aspect of the colonial discourse; the fact that many whites lived in slave societies, and even owned slaves, without making reference to them or their situation, was telling. In the series of letters, slaves, rather, were silent witnesses, making the odd appearance, especially in the case of 'key' slaves. Thus, the content of the letters revealed more of contemporary gender roles, and white lifestyles, with just fleeting glimpses of slavery. Whilst Mrs Brodbelt, then, never directly entered into the slavery debate, from her position in colonial society, and her lack of comments to the contrary, one can assume that she was a pro-slavery advocate, or at least, a defender of the system.

Maria Nugent

Maria Nugent lived in Jamaica from 1801 to 1806, while her husband, George Nugent, was Governor of Jamaica. They lived in King's House in Kingston, which was the official residence of the Governor. Maria Nugent kept a diary of her life in Jamaica during this time, which was published posthumously as *Lady Nugent's Journal*.[6] The journal consisted of over two hundred and fifty pages of daily life, documenting in great detail the life of the colonial white elite. Indeed the Nugents formed the highest echelon of white society as Governor and his wife. Whilst it was never intended for publication, several comments in the journal suggest that Maria Nugent at least expected family members to read it at a later date. Indeed, it was first published in 1839, but only for private circulation among family and friends.

Maria Nugent's journal, perhaps of all the female texts, was most specifically located within historical circumstances. During this time, Britain was at war with France, and the St. Domingo rebellion had not long occurred. Thus, many of Maria Nugent's comments concerned fears directly related to both of these events. As Governor's wife, perhaps, her life was more concerned with these political issues, which were reflected in the diaries. Whilst based on a diary format, the broad structure of the publication, like Janet Schaw's journal, was in the tradition of the travel account, since it began and ended with the narration of the voyage at sea, with life in Jamaica enclosed between. The diary did not contain a strong focus on slavery, and comments on slaves were sparce compared with comments on white society. The

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[5] Averil Mackenzie Grieve, *The Great Accomplishment of Mrs Brodbelt and Her Daughters*, (London, 1978) pp.70-71.

[6] There have been different editions of this book. It appeared as as Frank Cundall (ed) *Lady Nugent's Journal: Jamaica One Hundred and Thirty-eight Years Ago*, (London, 1939); and also as Philip Wright (ed) *Lady Nugent's Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*, (Kingston, 1966).

comments Mrs Nugent did make, however, would suggest that, like most white female contemporaries, she fundamentally accepted the system.

Elizabeth Fenwick

Elizabeth Fenwick travelled to Barbados in 1814, to join her daughter who was an actress in a travelling company. The idea was that the two women would together open a school for the children of wealthy planters. Mrs Fenwick had already owned a similar school in England, at which Jane Brodbelt was a pupil. Perhaps Mrs Fenwick's contact with the Brodbelt family – they thought her an excellent teacher, and tried to get other Jamaican families to send their children to her school – had influenced her to chance the opportunities in Barbados. The book was written in the form of letters she sent to a friend in England during her time in Barbados, and like the texts outlined already, it was published posthumously, with the letters appearing in chronological order.[7] Again, it was a text in which there were relatively few references to slaves, and instead the letters were focused much more on the personal plight of Mrs Fenwick, and her financial problems. Her life was narrated in the text as something of a tragedy. Her husband had left her in debt with two children, and thus the letters were full of references to her situation, past and present, how much money she owed, and her plans to solve her financial difficulties. The school in Barbados was one of these schemes.

Her daughter, Eliza, had married and settled in Barbados during a theatrical trip there. Elizabeth Fenwick and her son, Orlando, then joined her. Whilst the school originally began as something of a success, and Orlando found an appointment as a

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[7] A.F. Wedd (ed) *The Fate of the Fenwicks: Letters to Mary Hays* (1798-1828), (London, 1927).

clerk in a commercial house dealing with the sugar trade, things again went badly for Mrs Fenwick, and fitted into her life pattern of tragedy. Her son caught yellow fever and died, aged only seventeen, the school failed to make money, and her son-in-law turned out to be a drunk and gambler. The narrative ends when Elizabeth, Eliza, and her two children left Barbados for North America.

Mrs Fenwick did make some comments upon slavery and slaves, where she tended to be critical of the system. Her criticisms, however, focused more on 'moral' aspects in that she felt slavery encouraged stealing and laziness on the part of slaves, and she condemned sexual relations between white men and slaves, and the exclusion of rich free people of colour. Since these criticisms were linked to her own personal situation (she suffered from slave theft, and she could have benefited financially from teaching free coloured children), we cannot see Fenwick's letters as constituting a strong anti-slavery or abolitionist perspective. Instead, like many white visitors, she may have noticed negative aspects that the system fostered, but did not fundamentally oppose the institution or the society it created.

Mrs A.C. Carmichael

Mrs Carmichael was resident in St Vincent and Trinidad between 1820 and 1826, as the wife of a plantation owner. She wrote a large two-volume text from this time in the Caribbean, entitled *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies,*[8] which in total amounted to over 800 pages. Volume one concerns St Vincent, and volume two, Trinidad. The chapters of each volume concerned specific topics, such as slave behaviour, dress, beliefs,

[8] Mrs A.C. Carmichael, *Domestic Manners and Social Contdition of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies* (New York, 1969 ; original Whittaker, Treacher, and Co. London, 1833).

houses, food, as well as other specific chapters on the coloured population and on whites. Carmichael was also the author of a popular children's book called *Tales of a Grandmother*. Her books largely concerned the problems in managing slaves during the period leading up to abolition. The texts were full of comments that the slaves were difficult to manage because they had heard rumours that they were to be freed, and had become very rebellious. Thus, because of this context, the texts were also very concerned with the underlying threat of slave rebellion. Not surprisingly, as a plantation mistress, Mrs Carmichael was very pro-slavery, and attempted to dispel many abolitionist 'myths' about the institution and the condition of slaves.

Susette Harriet Lloyd

Although Susette Harriet Lloyd's, *Sketches of Bermuda* (1835) was published after the abolition of slavery in 1834, it related to the slavery period, when Lloyd visited Bermuda.[9] She spent 18 months there as the guest of the Archdeacon and his wife, partly as a holiday, but partly to help set up a scheme of Sunday schools for black children. She was a member of the 'Ladies' Society for Promoting the Early Education of Negro Children,' and her book, written in the form of letters to a friend, referred to friends in England who were financially assisting the educational projects in Bermuda. Biographical information about Lloyd has proved difficult to find. She was an evangelical, and it seems that her work with the education of black children was linked to this religious movement, although church and missionary archives have no record of her or the 'Ladies' Society'.[10]

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[9] Susette Harriet Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, (London, 1835).

[10] This limited biographical information has come from Lloyd's text itself, and also from Jane Robinson's *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford, 1990). In addition, I have used the S. Lee (ed), *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1899) and the *British Biographical Archives* at the British Library, neither of which have any information about Lloyd. I also made searches at the West India Committee Library at the *Institute of Commonwealth Research*, Lambeth

Such societies were normally offshoots of the abolitionist movement. Lloyd was later involved in the 'Birmingham Ladies' Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves' in the 1820s, and she came from a prominent Quaker family. Her sister, also travelled in a missionary capacity to Syria and set up 23 schools there after nine years' residence. These kinds of movement reflected evangelical prescriptions concerning the motivations and behaviour of women. Young women raised within evangelical families accepted their values of youthful seriousness, educational endeavour and emotional piety.[11] Thus, Lloyd's role in Bermuda was probably a 'natural' extension of the kind of work and movements she had been involved in in Britain, and with her family. Lloyd had also written the preface to a book by a Mrs Harriet Mott, entitled *The Stones of Palestine*, and written a book called *The Female Disciple of the First Three Centuries of the Christian Era, Her trials and Her Mission.*[12] So most of her life's work concerned the evangelical movement and missionary projects associated with this. Lloyd's position therefore was strongly anti-slavery. Yet in the following chapters, I shall demonstrate contradictory attitudes that she displayed, and shall illustrate similarities between images presented in *Sketches of Bermuda*, and those of the other, more 'pro-slavery' authors. *Sketches of Bermuda*, then, was intended for publication, and was written in the style of a travel account, with many descriptions of the island as well as comments on slaves, slavery and white society, and the voyages to and from Bermuda.

Palace Library, and various Church or Missionary archives in London, none of which have any information about Lloyd or the 'Ladies' Society'.

[11] Louis Billington and Rosamund Billington, ''A Burning Zeal for Righteousness': Women in the British Anti-Slavery Movement, 1820-1860,' in Jane Rendall (ed) *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*, (Oxford, 1987) p.83.

Mrs Flanngian

Little biographical information has been available for Mrs Flannigan, and indeed, there is even confusion over her name as Bridget Brereton refers to her as Mrs Lanaghan. Like Mrs Carmichael, Mrs Flannigan wrote a book of her residence in Antigua, entitled, *Antigua and the Antiguans: A Full Account of the Colony and Its Inhabitants*, which was published in 1844. In her preface Flannigan stated:

> Not being a native of the West Indies, and visiting that part of the world for the first time at an age when all looks bright around us, the novelty of the scenes which passed before my eyes struck me forcibly, and induced me to make notes of the impressions I then received....Having been resident in Antigua both before and after the passing of the Emancipation Act, and having had ample opportunity of judging of the practical effects of that memorable event, the observations I have made with relation to it may not be considered altogether unimportant.[13]

Thus, although the book was published after the abolition of slavery, it actually relates to the period of slavery as well as covering the change to emancipation and apprenticeship.

It is not clear whether Flannigan was from a slave-owning family, nor is it clear why she resided in Antigua for this length of time, although Bridget Brereton states that Flannigan was connected to the Antiguan plantocracy. There are many similarities between Lloyd's text and Flannigan's book, since Mrs Flannigan's text was also written from a moral, religious anti-slavery perspective. However, as with Lloyd's book, I shall demonstrate similarities in some racial attitudes between the 'pro' and 'anti' slavery women. Like Mrs Carmichael's text, Flannigan's book had

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[12] Susette Harriet Lloyd, *The Female Disciple of the First Three Centuries of the Christian Era, Her Trials and Her Mission*, (London, 1845).

chapters concerning slavery in the past, the contemporary condition of slaves, white society, and some natural history.

Female Novelists

Dorothy Kilner

Dorothy Kilner lived with her brother and sister-in-law in Essex. Both she and her sister-in-law authored children's books. Her novel which was indirectly related to slavery was *The Rotchfords* (1786). The book was about a family who gave sanctuary to a runaway slave in England. The editor of *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, suggests that the runaway, 'Pompey,' probably represented James Somerset, who was the focus of Granville Sharp's legal case over the question of slavery in England.[14] The book was a moral text designed to teach children the virtues of charity, and the injustice of slavery.

Charlotte Smith

Charlotte Smith was born in London. She married Benjamin Smith, the son of a West India planter and director of the East India Company, in 1765. Charlotte assisted her father in his business in London, until she retired to the country to look after her family. Her marriage was not a happy one and in 1783 her husband was imprisoned for debt. Charlotte accompanied him for some time, and her husband eventually died in prison in 1806, the same year that Charlotte herself died. She was a relatively famous novelist, due mainly to the success of her novel *Emmeline*, which was

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[13] Mrs Flannigan, *Antigua and the Antiguans: A Full Account of the Colony and its Inhabitants* (London, 1844), p.v-vii.
[14] Aravamudan, Srinivas (ed), *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, volume 6: fiction, London, 1999.

reviewed in the *Analytical Review* and the *Monthly Review*. Sir Walter Scott also wrote about her in his *Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Novelists*. She wrote three novels that concerned slavery, although not directly, these were *Desmond* (1792) (which largely concerned the French Revolution), *The Wanderings of Warwick* (1794), and *The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* (1800-1801).

Elizabeth Helme

Elizabeth Helme was a popular novelist, and accomplished translator. Her book which (indirectly) related to slavery was the *Farmer of Inglewood Forest* (1796). This book has been described as an 'incest-obsessed melodrama.'[15] The novel concerned two rural families, and touched upon slavery with the black domestic slave characters and the theme of rebellion on plantations. The black characters formed 'heroic saviours' of their white masters during rebellion.

Maria Edgeworth

Maria Edgeworth lived most of her life in Ireland. She was educated in a girls' school, where she suffered much from attempts to increase her growth by mechanical devices including hanging by the neck. Her family was familiar with fashionable society due to her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth who was a wealthy landowner. Edgeworth wrote *Letters to Literary Ladies* in 1795, which was largely a feminist defence of female education. Edgeworth herself never married and, indeed, devoted her life to her father and family, her writing and charity work. She appeared to have a lively personality, since even in her 70s she began teaching herself Spanish. Her books relating to slavery were *Belinda* (1801) and *The Grateful Negro* (1804). In *Belinda*,

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[15] Aravamudan, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, p.147.

slavery was a very minor topic to a novel set in Ireland. (Indeed, the slavery theme was only introduced as the means by which the hero's family had made their fortune, and also in the guise of a black male servant, the latter being removed from later editions). *The Grateful Negro*, was, however, set in the Caribbean and concerned a slave rebellion.

Jane West

West was self-educated. She spent her life on a Northamptonshire farm after her marriage to a yeoman farmer, Thomas West. As well as writing her novels, her time was spent attending the household, dairy and her children. She used the Caribbean as background for her novel *The Advantages of Education* (1793), where the slavery theme mainly emerged in the moral condemnation of white male sexual relations with female slaves, while the novel as a whole did not concern slavery.

The Koromantyn Slaves

The author of this novel, published in 1823, was anonymous. She also published another novel, *The Solace of an Invalid*, which was again, anonymous, but which did not relate to slavery. (It was a book of hymns and religious writing for a friend who was sick). The *Koromantyn Slaves* was a religious anti-slavery story, and given the views expressed in the novel, and the author's other published work, it was likely, that like Susette Lloyd, she was an evangelical and reformer.

The novel concerned an anti-slavery Christian hero (Charles Beresford) who inherited a slave plantation in Jamaica. Whilst his plantation was constructed as the ideal of enlightened Christian teaching and principals, a neighbouring plantation was

operated by an evil overseer, Bromley, who was totally devoid of religion. A rebellion took place on Bromley's plantation, led by newly acquired 'Koromantyn' slaves, the leader of whom had been separated at sale from his lover, and also his brother, who had been purchased by Charles. Many of these ideas seem to have been influenced by travel accounts. Many accounts narrated some kind of tragic story of separated slaves rebelling or committing suicide.[16] Usually, such stories were narrated as examples of the violent passions of African feelings, in the genre of the 'noble savage.' Also, it was usual for travel accounts to 'stereotype' slaves according to their place of origin. Robert Renny a travel writer, for example, wrote in 1807:

> The Coromantee is fierce, savage, violent, and revengeful. This tribe has generally been at the head of all insurrections, and was the original parent-stock of the Maroons.[17]

Thus, it was no surprise that the anonymous female author chose the 'Koromantyn' slaves as the protagonists for rebellion in her novel.

My archival and library searches have been unable to uncover any information about this female author. Details within *The Koromantyn Slaves* itself, could in fact suggest that it was not written by a Caribbean resident, and may even have been largely based on famous texts such as Bryan Edwards' *History of the West Indies.* Indeed, the author states in her Introduction that

> The descriptions of local scenery, and the characteristic traits of the inhabitants of the Western World and of the Africans, have been principally derived from the voluminous "History of the West Indies", by Bryan Edwards, Esq.[18]

As I shall demonstrate in subsequent chapters, many of this author's descriptions of the landscape, as well as other incidents and characterisations, appear to have been

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[16] See, for some examples, Robert Renny, *An History of Jamaica with Observations on the Climate, Scenery, Trade, Productions, Negroes, Slave Trade, Diseases of Europeans, Customs and Manners, and Dispositions of the Inhabitants* (London, 1807); Mr F.W.N Bayley, *Four Years' Residence in the West Indies* (London, 1830); and Mrs Flannigan, *Antigua.*
[17] Renny, *History*, p.236.

taken almost directly from travel accounts. This in itself reveals how important and effective travel accounts were in creating a 'domestic subject' of Euroimperialism as Spivak has suggested, and in creating the 'rest of the world' for a European audience, as Pratt has noted.

Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna

Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna was the daughter of Michael Browne, rector of St. Giles' Church, Norwich. She married a Captain Phelan with whom she spent two years in Nova Scotia while he was serving with his regiment there. However, the marriage was unhappy and they separated in 1824, from which time Charlotte resided with her brother. After her husband died in 1837, she remarried in 1841, and her new husband, Lewis Tonna, shared her ultra-Protestant religious views. As well as writing fiction, Charlotte Tonna also edited a *Christian Lady's Magazine* from 1836.[19] Her religious views are clear in her novel, *The System*, which is a religious anti-slavery text.[20] According to biographical information, it would seem that the author was never in the West Indies, and had no connection there. However, perhaps she visited the islands on travelling to or from Nova Scotia, or perhaps her religious views were the sole reason she chose to write an anti-slavery novel. Yet again, this points to the power of the discourse in England, and the interest among the reading public in the West Indies and the debate over slavery.

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[18] *The Koromantyn Slaves; or, West Indian Sketches* (London, 1823) p.vii.
[19] From the *Dictionary of National Biography*, S. Lee (ed) (London, 1899).
[20] Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, *The System: a Tale of the West Indies* (London, 1827).

Theodora Elizabeth Lynch

Theodora Elizabeth Lynch was born at Dale Park, Sussex. Her father, however, was a Jamaican sugar planter, who owned *Lodge Estate*, where Theodora was raised and spent most of her life. She married Henry Lynch (a born Jamaican) who was a barrister, who later became a judge.[21] Theodora Lynch wrote several novels that concerned slavery and plantation life, as well as numerous religious texts. Her novels about slavery included *The Cotton Tree, or Emily, the Little West Indian, a Tale* (1847), *The Family Sepulchre: a Tale of Jamaica* (1848), *Maude Effingham, a Tale of Jamaica* (1849), *The Mountain Pastor* (1852), *The Red Brick House* (1855), *The Wonders of the West Indies* (1856), *The Story of My Girlhood* (1857), *Rose and Her Mission: a Tale of the West Indies* (1863), and *Years Ago: A Tale of West Indian Domestic Life of the Eighteenth-century* (1865). Clearly all of these texts were published after the abolition of slavery, yet they mainly dealt with the slavery period and slave society in Jamaica, and the novels often mixed fact and fiction. For example, in *Years Ago*, the narrator said, 'We dined at King's House to-day. Lord Effingham is a fine-looking old gentleman. He has been in the army all his life, and was Captain-General of our Island before he was Governor.'[22] The novel was set in the 1790s and in fact, Thomas Howard, Earl of Effingham, was Governor of Jamaica from 1790-1791. Unfortunately, three of Lynch's books are missing from the British Library, and one has been destroyed.[23]

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[21] Taken from the *Dictionary of National Biography*, S. Lee (ed) (London, 1893).
[22] T.E. Lynch, *Years Ago: A Tale of West Indian Domestic Life of the Eighteenth-century* (London, 1865) p.50.
[23] *Maude Effingham*, *The Red Brick House*, and *Rose and her Mission* are missing, *The Family Sepulchre* is destroyed. I have not found copies of *these* books in the other archives I have searched (including the Royal Commonwealth Collection at Cambridge University, the Institute for Historical Research, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies West India Collection or the rare books section in Senate House at the University of London). I have also checked both the British Library's relevant finding aids (the *Bibliography of Nineteenth-century English Literature*, and their CPOAC computer system (which contains information on contributing libraries' holdings) and I have checked the CD Rom of Oxford's Bodleian Library).

THE REVIEWS

Whilst I have not been able to find reviews of all of the female books, some were discovered.

Maria Riddell, *Voyages to the Madeira and Leeward Caribbean Islands: with sketches of the Natural History of those Islands* (1792)

I found two reviews of this book, an analysis of which can reveal much about contemporary audiences, and how female texts were received. The first review, from the periodical *The Monthly Review*, is short enough to be reproduced in full:

> This sensible lady appears to have agreeably and rationally amused herself, by committing to paper the observations which she made in her travels; and the perusal of them, (although they do not contain much novelty), will furnish an agreeable entertainment, and some information to others. It is evident that she had previously made some progress in the study of natural history; in which she is no mean proficient. -- Few ladies have so well employed the opportunities afforded them of improving their minds, and extending their knowledge of useful things, by what is called "going abroad." -- Our fair traveller has made good use of Linné and Pennant; and it is some praise to have known how to avail herself, with some judgment, of such valuable assistance.[24]

Thus, in this review of her book, it would appear that the critics did not take Riddell's account as seriously as male accounts. The emphasis was very much on the gender of the author, and Riddell's reviewer seemed to see it as being quite remarkable that a woman had dedicated herself to such a pursuit. The latent criticisms and conventional view of eighteenth-century gentlewomen were clear: it was suggested that 'improving' their minds in a serious academic way, was far from the norm. other than favourably commenting on Riddell's knowledge of Linneus and Pennant, the critic did not really offer a review of her book at all.

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[24] *Monthly Review* (1792) 9, pp.219-220. Held at the University of London archives.

A more lengthy, and serious review, was, however, found in the *Critical Review*, which also included a good deal of direct quotation from Riddell's account.

The reviewer stated:

> If our fair author steps occasionally over beaten paths, where novelty cannot adorn her pages, she has sometimes had the advantage of surveying countries less frequently described; and she has drawn instruction from sources not accessible to every female traveller, we mean the operations of nature. She has observed with attention; and, being no mean proficient in natural history, has been able to describe with scientific accuracy. She has adopted the classification of Mr Pennant, as better adapted to her confined scale than the system of Linnaeus.[25]

Thus, the main criticisms of her text included that it was not 'novel,' in that it did not offer many new facts and descriptions of the islands for the domestic reader in England. Pratt states that it was usual for female writers to use less technical or scientific descriptions than men. This was possibly the case in Riddell's book, since she had chosen to use Pennant rather than Linnaeus for her classification system, the latter being seen as too complicated for her purposes. As far as the critics were concerned, however, the Pennant system was acceptably 'scientific.' That Riddell was sensitive to such issues is perhaps shown in the preface to her book, where she addressed a letter to Mr William Smellie (Member of the Antiquarian and Royal Societies of Edinburgh). This letter, perhaps typically for female writing, offered apologies for her 'ignorance' and the hope that the book would be well received.

Mrs Carmichael, *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies* (1833)

This book received quite a lengthy review in the *Monthly Review*. The review, of nineteen pages' length, gave an extremely good summary of the two volumes of Mrs Carmichael's texts, and emphasised her view of slavery. This view was generally that the whites had completely arduous and abstemious lives, and that the slaves, more or

less, had an easy time by comparison. As the reviewer stated, 'if there be any truth in the representation given by the authoress of the duties of a planter's wife, the career of a galley-slave must be a paradise to it.'[26] Thus, on the whole, the opinion of the critic was that Mrs Carmichael's view of plantation slave society was inaccurate, or at least, highly exaggerated:

> [she says] that she has been frequently both late and early on plantations, and that she never saw a single instance of the whip being used. But how futile, how unworthy of her good sense and understanding, are these palliations of Mrs. Carmichael. Not see the driver flog? Why to be sure not -- what! -- do it in the presence of an English lady? No, no, - the system of negro ill-treatment stands upon a better organized footing than that.[27]

So, whilst the critic stated at the outset of the review that Mrs Carmichael was a 'very clever lady,' he clearly did not accept her views. Indeed, in conclusion, he argued:

> We have now concluded our review of this work, and though we have been gratified, and even instructed, by several portions of it, we are led to apprehend that many of its conclusions, particularly as respects the relation of master and slave, are too hastily drawn.[28]

This was perhaps due to the period in which the book was published and reviewed. The power of the abolitionist debate and the current state of slavery would be likely to have led the critic to disbelieve Mrs Carmichael's account. This was also the case with male texts, which, for comparative purposes, I shall mention at the end of this chapter. Thus it is interesting to see that the strength of such debates had a big impact on the British reading public, who, by the 1830s, were ranged against planting interests.

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[25] *Critical Review*, (1792) 6, pp.77-80.
[26] *Monthly Review*, (1833) 3, pp.111-19; p.112.
[27] *Monthly Review*, (1833) p.124.
[28] *Monthly Review*, (1833) p.129.

Dorothy Kilner, *The Rotchfords*, London, 1786

This novel was reviewed in several contemporary publications, and most comments concerned its moral message. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, said it was 'well managed with good moral instincts.'[29] The *New Review* called it 'unfinished' and the *Monthly Review* said that the author could be more attentive to tastes and morals. In a similar style, the *Critical Review* said that the book gave 'some useful precepts, despite "improper" and "exceptional" language.'[30] Thus, the main theme of the novel -- its moral message and didactic style -- were clearly the major issues the reviewers highlighted.

MALE AUTHORS AND TEXTS

Whilst this thesis is about women writers, in order to make some direct comments on the extent of differences and similarities between female and male texts, I shall use some male texts for comparative purposes. These male texts have been chosen from a much wider selection to be comparable with female texts by such criteria as time of writing, island visited, and perspective of author. Given the large number of male texts I shall incorporate into the thesis, it is not possible to give background information about all authors. I shall therefore, in this discussion, just select the male authors for whose books I was able to find reviews (Beckford, Renny and Bayley).

William Beckford wrote about Jamaica in the 1780s.[31] Beckford's book was written after thirteen years' residence in Jamaica, as an estate manager and slave owner. His text was anti-slavery, based largely on descriptions of bad treatment of

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[29] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1787, 57, pp.346-7.
[30] *New Review*, 1786, 9, pp.37-38; *Monthly Review*, 1786, 74, p.398; *Critical Review*, 1786, 61, pp.77-78.
[31] William Beckford, *Remarks upon the Situation of theNnegroes of Jamaica*, (London, 1789).

slaves, and it largely concerned suggestions for improvement to the condition and treatment of slaves. Robert Renny wrote about Jamaica in the first decade of the nineteenth-century.[32] I have not been able to find any biographical information about Renny, or his reasons for residence in the Caribbean, although he described himself as an historian. F.W.N. Bayley travelled to Barbados and published a book of his four years' residence there in 1830. It appears that Bayley was an independent man of means, and he, by his own statement, had no involvement in plantations or work on the island.[33]

William Earle wrote a popular novel set in British Caribbean slave society entitled *Obi, or The History of Three-Fingered Jack.*[34] Earle was a novelist and son of a book seller in London, writing at the end of the eighteenth-century. He was accused of plagarising Maria Kemble's *First Faults*, with his play *Natural Faults* (1799), and he was later jailed for six months in 1814 on another charge.[35] His novel *Obi* was, however, very popular, and is discussed in more length in Chapter 11. The story concerned a maroon leader, 'Jack' who was ascribed superhuman strength. Supposedly based on a true story, the book was based on romantic legends that had sprung up about Jack.

REVIEWS OF MALE WRITING

Renny's history of Jamaica was reviewed in both the *British Critic* and the *Critical Review*. The first of these gave a rather favourable review, saying that the text was

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[32] Renny, *History*,1807.
[33] Bayley, *Four Years' Residence*, 1830.

[34] William Earle, *Obi, or The History of Three-Fingered Jack* (London, 1800).
[35] Aravamudan, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, p.271.

concise and interesting, and offered a useful and practical alternative to the voluminous histories of Edward Long and Bryan Edwards. This reviewer also pointed out that Renny gave 'a discussion on the slave trade, in which the advantages likely to result from its abolition are pointed out with great benevolence of feeling and much force of argument.'[36] A rather different judgement was reached, however, in the *Critical Review*. It argued:

> Mr. Renny gives a minute description of the customs, habits, proceedings, amusements, and condition of the slaves, from which it would appear that their general system of living is by no means so intolerable as we are apt to suppose. Were this system of mildness, to which he bears witness, secured to them by right, and individuals unable to infringe upon it with impunity, there might be comparatively little to complain of; but depending as it does on the arbitrary will of an uncultivated, capricious, and interested master, the depravity of human nature compels us to believe that the aggregate of misery must be extreme, and to distrust as partial or superficial, every statement that might tend to reconcile us to a continuation of slavery.[37]

Thus, the reviews would, on the whole seem to suggest that the debate over slavery, which had been growing since the 1790s in Britain, had a big impact on the reading public, and consequently, on their acceptance or rejection of arguments put forward in travel accounts.

This is also illustrated in a review of Bayley's text. The reviewer said:

> No person can write about the West Indies without stumbling forthwith on the eternal subject of slavery. Mr. Bayley swears that he is an anti-slavery man; that he detests the traffic quite as much as Mr. Wilberforce himself; that he has no interest at stake on one side of the question or the other; that he is a most impartial judge; but that, nevertheless, the slaves are very happy in their present condition, and that freedom would be to them no boon whatever....Hence it is that he repeats the stories, which we have been hearing for years, of the happiness which the enslaved negroes enjoy, of the humanity of their proprietors, overseers, and drivers; of the kindness with which they are treated in sickness and health, and of the affluence which reigns among them compared with the peasantry of the UK....He heard as much from one or two individuals of the race, and concludes, from these solitary cases, that they are all of the same way of thinking.[38]

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[36] *British Critic*, (1808) 30, pp.284-91; p.287.
[37] *Critical Review*, (1808) 13, pp.165-73; p.170.
[38] *Monthly Review*, (1830) 14, pp.360-75.

Thus, the critic was highly sceptical of Bayley's argument, and in fact, completely rejected it. Apart from disagreeing with Bayley over the question of slavery, the reviewer also attacked the style of this text, arguing that, 'He mistakes mere verbiage for merriment, and triviality for wit. Sometimes he attempts to be poetical, and becomes more prosy than ever.' In the nineteenth-century, then, reviewers were taking openly anti-slavery stances.

This change in attitude on the part of reviewers is also clear when we look at reviews of comparable texts from the eighteenth-century. Reviewed in 1788, for example, critics tended to agree with William Beckford's argument for the continuation of slavery. The 1788 review in the *Critical Review*, stated:

> Mr. Beckford opposes emancipation, and with reason: it is one of the visionaries of a weak mind, which, in the present circumstances, is impracticable. He gives a good account of the management of negroes, and expatiates on their comforts; but still tells us that they are the slaves of caprice, and that their good treatment may be as transitory as the present system.[39]

Similarly, the *Monthly Review* in 1788 said:

> The observations of an intelligent writer, drawn from the experience of so many years, will naturally, at this time, and on so important a subject, excite the attention of the Public; ....He is of the opinion, that neither the *abolition* of the slave trade, nor the *liberation* of the Negroes already imported, can be either adviseable or practicable; and that the only good which can arise from the interference of our legislature, in consequence of the well-meant applications that have been made by the friends of humanity, will be, to restrain the rigour of a cruel master, and render the situation of the slave as tolerable and as comfortable as possible. He speaks with the utmost feeling and commiseration of the unhappy lot of the poor Africans[40]

Thus, it would seem that the reading public in Britain was inclined to listen to the perspective of the plantocracy in the eighteenth-century, albeit with suggestions for ameliorative legislation, yet by the first decades of the nineteenth-century, the same suggestions no longer held any support. The reviews are, thus, a good source for

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[39] *Critical Review*, (1788) 66, p.76.

exploring the change in public opinion during these years, and also help to contextualise the shifting perspectives of the travel accounts themselves.

Having briefly introduced the authors and their works, the following chapters will offer a deconstructive analysis of the texts. Starting with the images presented of slaves in the travel accounts and novels. Whilst the focus will be on female writing, I shall also refer to a wide selection of comparable male travel accounts, books and newspapers, to compare male and female comments. Whereas chapters 6 to 9 concentrate on similarities in the female and male writing, chapter 10 will discuss key gender differences in the writing.

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[40] *Monthly Review*, (1788) 79, pp.69-70.

CHAPTER 6:

'SAVAGE BRUTES' AND 'POOR BLACKIES': IMAGES OF SLAVES IN WHITE WOMEN'S COLONIAL DISCOURSE

In her analysis of writing about the British Caribbean by white women, Bridget Brereton suggests that during the period 1770 to the 1830s, given the context of the abolitionist debate, female writers showed a softening in their attitudes to slaves.[1] This chapter will show, contrary to such a thesis, that women's writing displayed continuing racial imperial superiority and a negative attitude to blacks throughout this period. Thus, I shall argue that whether a text was overtly pro-slavery, or had leanings against slavery, images of slaves tended to be negative, and arguably racist. By illustrating how images were constructed on many different and often subtle levels, I shall show how women contributed to the colonial discourse of racism.

Whilst my analysis of the texts highlights negative attitudes and images towards Africans that have previously been documented in the history of racist thought, this chapter adds a new dimension by analysing the writing of white women.[2] Also, the chapter is concerned with deconstructing *how* attitudes were conveyed and constructed on many different levels in texts, as well as what those attitudes were. The discussion is based around seven of the eight known texts by women from the British Caribbean, four of which were

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[1] Bridget Brereton, 'Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of some Texts by Women on the English-speaking Caribbean, from the 1770s to the 1920s,' in Verene Shepherd et al (eds) *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, (London & Kingston, 1995), pp.65-93.

[2] Some texts that look at images of race in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries are D. Lorimer's *Class, Colour and the Victorians* (Leicester, 1978); J. Walvin 'Black Cariacture: the roots of racialism,' and W.D. Jordan's 'First Impressions: Initial English Confrontations with Africans,' both in Charles Husband (ed), *'Race' in Britain: Continuity and Change* (London, 1982); or J.N. Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven & London, 1992); or even general text books, such as Peter Fryer's *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London, 1984). There are few books concentrating specifically on white women's racism in this period. A pioneering work is Vron Ware's, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London & New York, 1996). See Chapter 3 for a discussion of Ware's book.

used by Brereton in her analysis,[3] as well as also analysing images presented in women's novels. The chapter will assess books in chronological sequence in order to show both continuity and change within them. Throughout the chapter I shall also refer to comparable male writing and to contemporary newspapers. By making comparisons with some writing by men from the same period, I shall be able to make comments on differences and similarities in perspective on 'race' between men and women.

Janet Schaw

Bridget Brereton suggested that of all the women's texts she looked at from the Caribbean, Schaw's was the most obviously racist and the only text that actually put forward a view of black people as a 'subhuman,' and totally different and inferior 'race' to whites. Whilst this was ostensibly the case, there were also many other, and more 'hidden' ways in which Schaw constructed images of black people as 'other,' which were very similar to later texts. This was especially the case in the construction of black women as masculinised objects, and also in some descriptions where slaves were used as 'ornaments.'

The overt racism of Schaw's journal was clear. It was informed very much from the eighteenth-century discourse on race, which constructed Africans as a different and inferior species to Europeans. This discourse included suggestions from the idea that differences in colour were produced by climate, to 'pseudo-scientific' explanations, which suggested that blacks were a different species. The latter ranged from Linneaus's classification of the 'four types' of human, to craniologists' views that the skulls of Africans were more closely related

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[3] In this chapter I shall not discuss Maria Riddell's *Voyages to the Madeira and Leeward Caribbean Isles: with sketches of the natural history of these islands* (London, 1792), since this text was a natural history book that did not discuss slaves.

to those of apes than those of humans.[4] In such schemes unsurprisingly, fair-haired fair-skinned Europeans were at the top of the evolutionary scale, and Africans at the bottom.[5] Such ideas were clearly reflected in travel accounts. The racist planter, Edward Long, wrote, for example, 'When we reflect on the nature of these men, and their dissimilarity to the rest of mankind, must we not conclude, that they are a different species of the same *genus*?'[6] Schaw, like Edward Long, it seems, was also influenced by this discourse. When she first arrived at St. Johns, Antigua, she said:

> We proceeded to our lodgings thro' a narrow lane...a number of pigs run out at a door, and after them a parcel of monkeys. This not a little surprized me, but I found what I took for monkeys were negro children, naked as they were born.[7]

This comment clearly fitted into the kind of racist discourse put forward by planters such as Long, where blacks were seen as closer to apes than humans. Schaw also frequently presented the Africans as 'brutes' who had no feelings. She said:

> I must tell you that I was some days ago in town, when a number [of slaves] for market came from on board ship. They stood up to be looked at with perfect unconcern. The husband was to be divided from the wife, the infant from the mother; but the most perfect indifference ran thro' the whole. They were laughing and jumping, making faces at each other, and not caring a single farthing for their fate. This is not however without exception; and it behoves the planter to consider the country from whence he purchased his slaves; as those from one coast are mere brutes and fit only for the labour of the field, while those from another are bad field Negroes, but faithful handy house-servants. There are others who seem entirely formed for the mechanick arts, and these of all others are the most valuable; but want of attention to this has been the ruin of many plantations. Strange as it may seem, they are very nervous and subject to fits of madness.[8]

The effect of this was to suggest that Africans were 'different' from whites; here they were presented as 'unnatural' since the suggestion was that they did not even possess the basics of

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[4] See any of the texts listed in footnote 1 for references to such pseudo-scientific theories. Also, see Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London & New York, 1992), pp.32-33 for a description and drawing of Linneaus's 'four types.'

[5] Jordan, 'First Impressions.'

[6] Edward Long, *History of Jamaica*, (London, 1774, republished 1970), 2, pp.354-5; along similar lines, the 'historian' Robert Renny also wrote, some considerable time later, 'there seem to be, in the opinion of many philosophers, insurmountable difficulties in supposing, that [the Negro] descended from the same parent with the northern European.' Robert Renny, *History of Jamaica*, (London, 1807), p.161.

[7] Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776*, E. Walker Andrews (ed) (New Haven, 1939), p.78.

human life -- a value for family ties. Schaw did not consider that the slaves, freshly arrived from capture in Africa, may not even have known what was happening, and may have been grateful simply to be on land again. Or that slaves were compelled by ships' captains to laugh and play (and had probably already had their family ties broken through the slave trade). Instead, the only suggestion was that the slaves were brutes who had no feelings of love or tenderness for one another, and no desperation for their situation, which again worked as a justification of the system of slavery. It was also telling that, at the end of the piece, Schaw thought it 'strange' that Africans could be subject to 'nervousness,' since this would seemingly show a sensibility that Europeans would not usually associate with the 'savage' and 'brutish' Africans.

Schaw was working within a similar frame of reference when she said:

> The Negroes who are all in troops are sorted so as to match each other in size and strength. Every ten Negroes have a driver, who walks behind them, holding in his hand a short whip and a long one. You will too easily guess the use of these weapons; a circumstance of all others the most horrid. They are naked male and female, down to the girdle, and you constantly observe where the application has been made. But however dreadful this must appear to a humane European, I will do the creoles the justice to say, they would be as averse to it as we are, could it be avoided which has often been tried to no purpose. When one comes to be better acquainted with the nature of the Negroes, the horreur of it must wear off. It is the suffering of the human mind that constitutes the greatest misery of punishment, but with them it is merely corporeal. As to the brutes it inflicts no wound on their mind, whose Natures seem made to bear it, and whose sufferings are not attended with shame or pain beyond the present moment.[9]

I shall discuss what this quotation had to say about slavery as an institution in the next chapter, since here I am concerned with images it presented of slaves. Brereton says of this quotation, 'Schaw...saw the Africans as sub-human brutes, outside her frame of reference and therefore unworthy of pity, let alone empathy,'[10] yet there are so many other suggestions working in this piece.

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[8] Schaw, *Journal*, pp.127-28.
[9] Schaw, *Journal*, p.127.
[10] Brereton, 'Text, Testimony and Gender,' p.75.

In this quotation Africans were stripped of their gender and both women and men appeared as 'masculinised' objects, whose semi-nakedness distinguished them from Europeans, and set them closer to animals. Black women's status as desexualised work objects was also reinforced by this, since contemporary European gender conventions would have made it normally unacceptable for women to be displayed in this way. Given the eighteenth-century idealisation of femininity, the implication of this was clear: black women were not to be thought of or treated like white women, or indeed in this case, like 'women' at all (except, of course, in their use as sexual objects).

Gender differences between slaves scarcely appeared at all throughout Schaw's text. Rather, female slaves were masculinised in stark contrast to the construction of white femininity.[11] Indeed the only comments relating specifically to female slaves were those which stressed their 'licentiousness,' where blame was attributed to female slaves for white male sexual relations with them. Black women even here, were presented in a masculinised animal-like sense, as essentially physical beings, with large sexual appetites. Thus, even in the construction of sexuality, women slaves were not presented with traditional eighteenth-century female characteristics of passivity, shyness and ignorance in sexual matters, but as actively and aggressively seeking sexual gratification.

Schaw depicted the female slaves as flaunting themselves with 'little or no clothing...they are hardly prevailed upon to wear a petticoat.'[12] This flaunting of their sexuality was then blamed for miscegenation, which Schaw viewed with horror, and for which she completely blamed the black women. She talked of 'the indulgence they give themselves in their licentious and even unnatural amours, which appears too plainly from the

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[11] This is documented in the next chapter.
[12] Schaw, *Journal*, p.87.

crouds of Mullatoes, which you meet in the streets, houses and indeed everywhere.'[13] Schaw went further to say:

> The young black wenches lay themselves out for white lovers, in which they are but too successful. This prevents their marrying with their natural mates, and hence a spurious and degenerate breed neither so fit for the field, nor indeed any work, as the true bred Negro. Besides these wenches become licentious and insolent past all bearing, and as even a mulattoe child interrupts their pleasures and is troublesome, they have certain herbs and medicines, that free them from such an incumbrance, but which seldom fails to cut short their own lives, as well as that of their offspring. By this many of them perish every year.[14]

Thus, the argument about black women was that they were 'unnatural' since they would do anything to avoid the 'natural' role of motherhood. Race mixing and abortion were equated as vile and unnatural practices, for both of which black women were to blame. In this sense black women were seen as threats to the natural 'female order' of which white women, their superior opposite, represented the mainstay. The importance of contrasting representations of white femininity as a binary opposite to such images of female slaves will be discussed at length in Chapter 9.

The operation of racial hierarchies was also at work in the above quotation. People of mixed origins were seen as a 'degenerate' breed who were fit for nothing, as a breed apart from both whites and blacks. Such views were common in both pro-slavery and anti-slavery literature. An anti-slavery essay by Henry Whitely, who visited Jamaica in 1832, suggested that when punished the 'mulatto' slaves 'bled more profusely' than blacks, 'appeared to suffer most acutely,' and were less capable of hard work.[15] Indeed even as late as 1930 in England, a social services report was condemning of the mixed origins population in Liverpool based along the same lines of it being a 'degenerate' breed[16] In this piece, Schaw also objectified the

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[13] Schaw, *Journal*, p.112.
[14] Schaw, *Journal*, pp.112-13.
[15] Henry Whiteley, *Excessive Cruelty to Slaves: Three Months in Jamaica in 1832*, (London, 1834), p.3.
[16] Ian Law, *A History of Race and Racism in Liverpool 1660-1950*, (Liverpool, 1981), p.31.

black women as 'wenches,' they did not even deserve the name 'woman.' This use of the term 'wench' to describe black women was common practice in the islands. An anonymous author, writing about Barbados in 1790, for example, remarked upon this. S/he wrote: 'That wench, a fine wench, a good wench, a valuable wench, are the modes of speech used by both gentlemen and ladies when talking of the black women.'[17] Similarly, newspaper advertisements for the sale of slaves often described females as 'wenches.' An advertisement in the *St. Christopher Gazette*, on 16 February 1771 said: 'At auction....a wench who is a very good seamstress and darner, with her child a fine girl two years old....Also to be sold...a dozen Morocco leather bottom chairs;' another in the *Kingston Journal* on Wednesday 26 August 1789, offered for sale 'a young healthy negro breeding wench.'[18] The use of this term again denied the humanity and individuality of black women, who were simply reduced to chattel and exploited for their reproductive capacity.

We received fleeting glimpses of other female slaves, such as domestics, in Schaw's text. However, they were 'silent witnesses' who revealed more about how whites racially objectified slaves, rather than appearing as 'real' people. Schaw mentioned for example, Memboe, 'lent' to her as a waiting maid. Schaw only described her as 'swarthy,' and said no more than that she was 'extremely well qualified for the office.'[19] At another point, on visiting her old friend Lady Isabella Hamilton, Schaw said:

> She had standing by her a little Mulatto girl not above five years old, whom she retains as a pet. This brown beauty was dressed out like an infant Sultana, and is a fine contrast to the delicate complexion of her Lady.[20]

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[17]Anon. *A Short Journey to the West Indies, in which are interspersed curious anecdotes and characters* (London, 1790), pp.46-47.
[18] Colindale Newspaper Library, C.464; CC.MISC 218 (5).
[19] Schaw, *Journal*, p.107.
[20] Schaw, *Journal*, pp.123-24.

The child was seen simply as a 'pet,' who was there as a symbol of the 'exotic,' to demonstrate the wealth and extravagance of the Hamilton family. It is telling that in this narration, the complexion of the child was used to compliment the more 'delicate' complexion of Lady Isabella's 'fair' skin. This contrast of colour was talked of in an aesthetic way in terms of pictorial composition, and frequently appeared in travel writing. Also black people were frequently used as symbols of the 'exotic' in European society, dressed in expensive and elaborate costumes and jewellery, as the many paintings of the eighteenth-century of aristocratic families with black slave attendants, demonstrated.[21] Thus, while Schaw very overtly used discussions of racial difference in suggesting that slaves were 'savage brutes,' as Brereton pointed out, she also used many other more subtle ways of constructing slaves as 'other,' thus adding to the contemporary discourse on 'race.'

Ann Gardner Brodbelt

Ann Brodbelt's letters made remarkably few references to slaves, considering that she was a life-long resident of Jamaica and a slave owner. As mentioned in Chapter 5, in itself this was a revealing aspect of the colonial discourse: whites lived in slave society, and usually owned slaves, yet it was not unusual for an author to not mention slaves at all in her/his writing. As stated previously, in such texts, slaves were silent witnesses, making the odd appearance as domestic slaves. In the Brodbelt letters, slaves were there as a racialised 'other,' on whom owners' wealth depended but who were so insignificant that they did not even warrant any special comment.

The only slave mentioned in the Brodbelt series of letters was Jane's nursemaid Tabby. She appeared seldom, only to 'present her respects,' to send her 'warmest wishes' and to show gratitude for Jane's appreciation of guava marmalade and other gifts she had sent to

[21] See the references in footnote 1 for details of such works.

England. The editor to the collection of letters stated 'Tabby...was a Mrs Marshall, a negress. No doubt her heart yearned at times for her little charge, faintly discerned across the estranging seas.'[22] Clearly then, Tabby's role in the text was that of the favourite, or 'key' slave. She represented the image of the mythic 'mammy' figure, the slave who supposedly devoted her life to the white children, and loved them as her own, in a shared relationship of loving reciprocity. Eugene Genovese has written about the slave mammy figure in North America largely in these terms, viewing her as a 'tragic' figure:

> Mammy remains the most elusive and important black presence in the Big House....To understand her is to move toward understanding the tragedy of plantation paternalism.[23]

Genovese's analysis, based on his theory of close accommodation between masters and slaves, was that mammy was loved by whites, she brought up generations of white children and loved them like her own, and she was perhaps the only slave who managed to have authority over the white members of the Great House, who were often afraid of her.[24] Perhaps it is due to differences in sources -- I am using travel accounts more than planter reminiscences -- as well as differences in slave systems and crop (Genovese looked at North America), yet it is difficult to find any evidence for the kind of view expressed by Genovese. Just because whites may have spoken fondly of some key slaves, as Tadman points out, does not mean that slavery was in any way paternalistic, or that friendly relations were real.[25] In the sources for my thesis, whites seldom spoke fondly of slaves. They may have constructed images of themselves as benevolent and said that slavery was paternalistic, but there is no evidence of shared loving experiences or genuine reciprocal relations, or even close relations with 'key' slaves.

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[22] Geraldine Mozley (ed), *Letters to Jane from Jamaica 1788-1796* (London, 1938), p.iv.
[23] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974), p.353.
[24] Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p.354.

Maria Nugent

Lady Nugent's Journal also made relatively few references to slaves. When she did refer to them, her use of the term 'poor blackies,' and her concern for the spiritual welfare of her slaves were pointed to by Bridget Brereton as supporting the idea that Nugent's text displayed a much more sympathetic attitude to slaves than that shown by Janet Schaw. Whilst there did seem to be a shift away from overt comments on the slaves' animality or brutishness, arguably, however, Nugent still constructed racialised images of blacks, and many of her comments can be seen as building on earlier racist ideas of Africans as 'other.' Also, her constant use of the term 'poor blackies,' rather than illustrating sympathy as Brereton argued had the effect, I would suggest, of rendering the slaves as passive objects.

There were countless examples of racial images in Nugent's journal. While staying at one plantation, she spoke of the number of slaves present and said 'never in my life did I smell so many.'[26] On a visit to a Maroon settlement, she viewed their display of dancing and military exercises as 'so savage and frightful, that I could not help feeling a little panic, by merely looking at them.'[27] When meeting a new West India regiment of black soldiers she said: 'They made a most savage appearance, having only just arrived from Africa.'[28] So clearly, Nugent had many preconceived ideas about slaves and the 'savagery' of Africans that informed her comments and attitude. This link between savageness and Africa was again reinforced at another point, when Nugent wrote:

> In returning home from our drive this morning, we met a gang of Eboe negroes, just landed and marching up the country. – I ordered the postillions to stop, that I might examine their countenances as they passed and see if they looked unhappy; but they appeared perfectly the reverse....One man attempted to shew more pleasure than the rest, by opening his mouth as

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[25] See the earlier reference to Michael Tadman's work in this area; footnote 9, Chapter 4, p.69.
[26] Philip Wright (ed) *Lady Nugent's Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*, (Kingston, 1966), p.76.
[27] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.76.
[28] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.199.

> wide as possible to laugh, which was rather a horrible grin. He shewed such truly cannibal teeth, all filed as they have them, that I could not help shuddering. He was of Herculean size, and really a tremendous looking creature.[29]

Such comments were similar to those of Edward Long, who delighted in telling lurid tales of African cannibalism. He wrote:

> It is doubtful whether we ought to ascribe any superior qualities to the more ancient Africans; for we find them represented by the Greek and Roman authors under the most odious and despicable character; as proud, lazy, deceitful, thievish, addicted to all kinds of lust, and ready to promote them in others, incestuous, savage, cruel, and vindictive, devourers of human flesh, and quaffers of human blood, inconstant, base and cowardly, devoted to all sorts of superstition; and in short, to every vice that came in their way, or within their reach.[30]

Nugent's fears of cannibalism also contained strong undertones of the gothic tradition in contemporary literature, which included similar stories of vampires. Thus while not herself overtly constructing blacks as savage brutes who lacked the sensibilities of whites, Nugent was clearly influenced by the racist tradition of the previous generation, and herself contributed to this discourse. The operation of racial hierarchies was also shown in Nugent's text when she commented upon meeting a Captain in the army: 'although a mulatto, [he] is not very dark, and has a pleasing countenance.'[31] Thus, in her terms of reference, lightness of skin was viewed as more attractive, a view which had a long history in the discourse on race.

Like Schaw, Nugent also compared slaves to apes, as in her comment, 'December 1st....One of the black women produced two boys this morning. Went to see them, and they were exactly like two little monkeys.'[32]Also, the way she described childbirth on the part of the female slave, simply as 'production,' denied the humanity of the woman, and echoed the newspaper advertisements for 'breeding wenches' quoted earlier. Nugent also made similar

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[29] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.220.
[30] Long, *History of Jamaica*, 2, p.354.
[31] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.173.
[32] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.42.

comments to Schaw regarding black women and the 'mixed-race' population. A woman told her that

> it was astonishing how fast these black women bred what healthy children they had, and how soon they recovered after lying-in. She said it was totally different with mulatto women, who were constantly liable to miscarry, and subject to a thousand little complaints, colds, coughs, &c. Indeed I have heard medical men make the same observation.[33]

The implication in this was that 'true bred negroes' (as described by Schaw) were robust and well-suited to slavery, since they possessed almost miraculous health, whereas 'mixed-races' were somehow a 'corrupt' breed. This was clearly informed from the eighteenth-century discourse, which suggested that blacks were a different species to whites, thus mixing the 'races' in this way was almost dangerous, and certainly harmful to the health of the offspring. The view of black women as 'breeding' quickly and easily was an image used to rationalise slavery, and was also evident in the newspaper advertisements quoted earlier.

As in Schaw's account, in Mrs Nugent's journal slaves appeared as objects of ornament and amusement:

> A little mulatto girl was sent into the drawing-room to amuse me. She was a sickly delicate child, with straight light-brown hair, and very black eyes.[34]

Nugent was then informed that the girl was the daughter of the plantation owner, and in fact, that he had children on every plantation he owned. Although Nugent did not pass any comment on this information at that point, at another point in the journal she said that until there was a 'great reformation' on the part of white men in this respect, then nothing could be done to improve the morality of slaves.[35] Thus, rather than simply blaming slave women as Schaw did, Nugent's strongly religious and moral perspective also blamed the white men.

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[33] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.69.
[34] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.68.
[35] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.86.

There was also an implicit suggestion, however, that as superiors, whites should have been 'setting an example' to the immoral and irreligious Africans.

Mrs Fenwick

Mrs Fenwick also did not write in any great depth about the slaves. However, as in most texts, she constructed a view of 'black character' as something different from that of whites, and as very negative. Thus, like other authors, she listed characteristics of the black 'race:' 'They are a sluggish, inert, self-willed race of people, apparently inaccessible to gentle and kindly impulses.'[36] She also stated that, 'they are a detestable set of people – idle, ungrateful, dirty, dishonest and profligate in the extreme.'[37] These were similar to comments passed in Matthew Lewis's journal in the same decade: 'to do the negroes justice, it is a doubt whether they are the greatest thieves or liars,'[38] and 'I am assured that unless a negro has a interest in telling the truth, he always lies – in order to keep his tongue in practice.'[39] Robert Renny similarly wrote:

> The general disposition of the Negroes in Jamaica, therefore...may safely be asserted to be thievish, lazy, and dissimulating. When asked a question by a white person, they seldom, if they can avoid it, give a direct answer; and whatever they can steal from *buckra*, (or a white man), is appropriated to their own use with as much coolness, and perhaps more pleasure, than if it was assigned them by law." [40]

Whilst Mrs Fenwick attributed many of these characteristics to the institution of slavery itself, as we shall see in the next chapter, and many of her views were shaped by difficulties she had with domestic staff, the point is that she still constructed an image of 'black character' as something different from that of whites, and something that could easily be classified.

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[36] A.F. Wedd (ed) *The Fate of the Fenwicks: Letters to Mary Hays* (1798-1828), (London, 1927), p.163.
[37] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, p.167.
[38] Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor, Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (New York, 1969; reprint of 1834 edition), p.178.
[39] Lewis, *Journal*, p.148.
[40] Robert Renny, *History*, pp.165-66.

Mrs Fenwick felt that many of the problems she faced were because she hired slaves. Indeed she wrote, 'of course, the best slaves are not hired out, but kept for their owners' domestic purposes.'[41] Indeed contemporary texts often suggested that hired slaves were even worse than bought slaves. Typical advice was offered by Bayley, who was, like Mrs Fenwick, a traveller to Barbados in the late 1820s:

> Too many of these slaves are worthless and bad....The master expects to receive a certain sum, monthly, from his slave...and it too often happens that, provided it is regularly deposited in the hands of the master, he gives himself very little trouble or concern about the manner in which it is acquired Hence arises the great difficulty of obtaining good servants, and the still greater one of getting bad ones punished as they deserve. Their petty larcenies, their great impositions, their infamous neglect, their frequent disobedience of orders, and their total indifference to the pleasure or displeasure of those who hire them, must be tolerated and endured....Therefore all ye who may be hereafter doomed to cross the broad Atlantic, and to vegetate in the tropics, on this subject listen to one of those whom experience hath taught, and take the advise of the initiated Your servants, if they be hired slaves, will plague, tease, worry, torment, discompose...vex, irritate, put you out of temper, and make you perspire beyond all calculation; therefore you must suffer yourselves to be wronged robbed imposed upon, displeased and disobeyed only when all this happens you must not complain, you must not make a fuss, you must be quite quiet, quite civil, quite calm, and quite cool;[42]

Problems caused by slave behaviour, whether bought or hired were a common theme of most female texts. Indeed such views were an almost standard complaint in white mistresses' writing. Lady Nugent spoke of difficulties with her slaves, and in a series of letters from Jamaica in the 1790s, Mary Ricketts, while not discussing slavery on the whole, did mention difficulties with slaves and her lack of privacy. In fact, she had to send her letters through a minister, so that the slaves would not know where they were going.[43]

Despite such problems, at other times, like the other texts we have examined so far, Fenwick narrated about the slaves using a discourse of the aesthetic. She wrote :

> To you it would be an extraordinary sight to pass through the ante-room and see it lined with female slaves, attending with their young Ladies' breakfasts, mostly attired in picturesque costume, -- white muslin petticoats, colored jackets, colored cotton or silk Handkerchiefs on their heads most fancifully put on, and very frequently coral and gold Necklaces of a value and

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[41] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, p.168.
[42] Bayley, *Four Years' Residence*, pp.409-11.
[43] Clarkson Papers, British Library Manuscripts Collection, MSS41262-41267.

> beauty that a London belle might envy. They always attract my eye from the symmetry and beauty of their forms as well as their fantastic attire.[44]

Again, this 'picture' contained many ideas we have seen before. The slaves were described in a picturesque way as being ornately and decoratively dressed and wearing expensive pieces of jewellery. Their costumes were thus used to 'display' them as emblems of the exotic, and to show the wealth of white owners. The contrast of the colours and textures and the gold jewellery were seen in a pleasing and aesthetic way. The slaves here seemed scarcely recognisable as the same idle and thievish brutes who were not influenced by kindness mentioned earlier by Fenwick. Yet she did notice this contradiction, since she afterwards stated that it was *only* in outward appearances that she could say anything positive about slaves. Thus she suggested that some slaves may have dressed and *appeared* as if they were 'civilised' yet in reality, their deeper character could not be as easily changed as their clothing.

Fenwick, also commented on the free coloured population, and saw them in a much more positive light than the slaves. She said:

> An impassable boundary here separates the white from the coloured people (many of whom are a fair, light haired people); and those Creoles whose wealth would introduce them to the first circles in England a white beggar would not speak to here. We cannot admit a Creole pupil, yet some Creole families on this Island live splendidly and are very rich. I wonder they do not remove to England.[45]

Fenwick misused the term 'creole' here, since the implication was that it referred to the 'mixed-race' population, but in fact, the term was used by contemporaries to refer to anyone (white or black) who was born on the islands. Yet even here, part of her grounds for accepting the 'mixed-race' population was based on their colour (they were light haired and light skinned), as well as their wealth. Fenwick's view here could also be due to the fact that she

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[44] Lewis, *Journal*, p.167.
[45] Lewis, *Journal*, pp.169-70.

was greatly impoverished and needed pupils for her school in Barbados. Thus, the children of the coloured population, had they been allowed to attend, would have been a valuable source of income for her.

Susette Harriet Lloyd

On the surface, the view of slaves and slavery exhibited in Susette Lloyd's *Sketches of Bermuda* would seem to set it apart from the texts examined so far, since it was informed by an evangelical, anti-slavery perspective. Whilst supporting abolition, however, the text rested on many racist and racially-stereotyped images of slaves, images which had previously been used to defend slavery. Indeed as her stay in Bermuda progressed many racist assumptions appeared in Lloyd's narration, and racialised images were frequently presented to the reader.

During Christmas celebrations, Lloyd stated that she saw some 'most Caliban-looking negroes.'[46] It was extremely common in travel writing to find references to European or classical literature. Edward Said said that this served the purpose for colonisers to 'see yourself, your people, society and tradition in their best light.'[47] In this reference to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the implication was not only that Europeans represented the 'Prospero' figure (a civilised intelligent and all-powerful magician), but that their opposite, the slaves, were 'Caliban' (the brutish, ignorant, and evil slave of Prospero). Despite Prospero's 'kindness' in trying to educate and improve Caliban, the 'savage' repaid this by attempting to rape Prospero's daughter. Thus, the implications of Lloyd's comparison would not be lost upon the Western reader. Such binary opposites served a powerful function in stressing the 'civilised' nature of Europeans, in contrast to the 'savage' Africans.

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[46] Susette Harriet Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, (London, 1835), p.89.
[47] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993), p.xiii.

other stereotypes abounded in the text. Lloyd said the slaves were the most 'loquacious' beings she had ever encountered[48] that they had a 'thoughtless gaiety of disposition,'[49] that the slaves had a 'natural' taste and love for music.[50] But, they were also idle and made terrible servants,[51] they were incorrigible thieves,[52] they were too familiar with whites and spoiled white children;[53] and, of course, 'the passions of the negro are violent, and his anger easily roused'.[54] Here was illustrated the whole range of (contradictory) white images of black people. Such images managed to justify and rationalise the whole system of slavery. Put forward by its defenders in the period before the abolition movement, these images suggested that blacks were like children, but were also savage monsters -- thus the system of slavery was required to 'control' them. By the 1830s, with the abolitionist debate, the same images were modified and instead it was suggested that good, moral, Christian teaching could show blacks the 'error' of their ways, and cultivate in them the qualities which whites perceived as necessary prerequisites for freedom.

Views that Africans were 'naturally' lazy were entrenched with white myths about black people that dated back over centuries of contact via the slave trade and slavery. Even though Susette Lloyd professed to find slavery 'odious,' there can be little doubt that she held an extremely Eurocentric view in which black people were constituted as 'other,' and as inferior to whites. Lloyd's account of a slave wedding she observed is a case in point. Whilst she propounded views that Christian education was the only 'hope' for black people, any grounds for suspecting real sympathy or care in Lloyd's text were highly dubious. Her narration of the wedding was as follows:

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[48] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.100.
[49] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.92.
[50] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.91.
[51] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.162-3.
[52] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.137-8.
[53] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.166-9.
[54] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.102.

> Last Sunday I witnessed the amusing ceremony of a negro wedding...The bride was attended by a train of *para nymphas*, all attired in transparent muslin dresses; and the glimmering of their black arms had a strange effect amid the profusion of white satin ribands, flowers, &c. There was such a display of white gloves and favours – such shifting of sides – such crowding around the bride to enjoy the privilege of ungloving – such whimsical blunders between the right hand and the left, that, though I wished the good people all possible felicity, I could with difficulty preserve my gravity, especially when the bride/groom, in a very hearty tone, cried out, 'I Cupid take thee Venus for my wedded wife!' Though these names had now become familiar to my ear, the effect of this association was more ludicrous than I can describe.[55]

Whilst making many efforts to ensure the religious education of black children, to improve their 'morality,' Lloyd appeared to find this wedding ceremony a somewhat ridiculous affair. The superior and satirical tone of the piece was clear. She found the sight of black arms contrasting with the white dress 'strange,' a telling expression which revealed much about the negative associations with the word and colour 'black,' compared to its opposite for 'white.' Lloyd was able to feel that this contrast existed and was strange because for centuries, 'black' had meant evil, wrong, deceitful, barbaric and savage; whereas 'white' had meant pure, virginal, good and innocent.[56] It was the coupling of these sets of meanings in the form of a Christian wedding ceremony that Lloyd found odd.

Lloyd was clearly unable to take the ceremony seriously. She represented the slaves as childlike and bumbling, her whole description of the ceremony made it appear as some kind of farce. The final irony lay in the names of the slaves; for Lloyd the association of the African slave bride and groom with the Roman goddess and god of love was 'ludicrous.' It was customary for Europeans to name their slaves with classical names as a source of irony and amusement for whites. It is therefore no surprise that Lloyd found the whole wedding scene 'amusing.' Considering, however, that Lloyd was dedicated to spreading Christianity among slaves one might have expected her, at least, to value the slaves' commitment to

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[55] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.215-6.

Christian matrimony. Yet she could not detach herself from Euroimperialist views in which black people were, at best, a source of amusement to whites.

Lloyd's portrayal of an ideal-type black woman also illustrated the operation of white racism. Lloyd was involved in a programme for the education of black children. One of the teachers, Maria, exemplified the European notion of an acceptable African woman. Lloyd narrated an account of visiting her:

> On entering [the cottage], I was much struck by the appearance of the little group, some repeating the lessons which were hung round the walls, others engaged at work. Maria herself was an interesting object. Her tall slim figure was wrapped in a full plaid mantle, and the deep olive of her complexion set off by a showy turban; her countenance is exceedingly pleasing and more expressive of the Asian than the negro.[57]

Maria was described as an 'object.' She represented the 'acceptable' black woman for a white audience since she possessed a blend of the romantic notion of 'the exotic' (the 'showy turban,' the 'olive skin') and positive white attributes. Lloyd commented that Maria's beauty was more Asian than African. This is no surprise since, for Europeans, Asian features and characteristics -- according to pseudo-scientific human classificatory schemes, such as Linnaeus' 'four types' -- were closer to those of Europeans than were Africans.[58] In racist ideology and domestic European popular culture, this related not only to intelligence but also to notions of beauty. Thus, here, Lloyd's text was operating on the same grounds of racial hierarchies that we have seen displayed in all the texts.

This discussion reveals how racist images were constructed in many different ways in the text. Whilst on the surface, Lloyd may have appeared to demonstrate sympathy for the

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[56] Jordan, 'First Impressions.'
[57] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.152.
[58] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp.32-33.

slaves, and she supported emancipation, a deeper analysis of the attitudes that were hidden in her narrative reveals the operation of white racism. This is important because it shows how the discourse on 'race' was constructed in such a variety of ways, and even in abolitionist material. Thus, a deconstructive approach emphasises similarity in racial assumptions and images in both 'pro'-slavery and 'anti'-slavery literature. This analysis also usefully demonstrates the essentially conservative attitudes even of pioneering women, and thus is a good example of women's role in empire and 'race.' Pratt's suggestion that white women's intervention into empire was illustrated by their social-reform work is also supported by Lloyd's text and her reforming zeal was demonstrated in her involvement in a programme to educate black children with Christian teaching, as well as in women's desires to instruct slaves in religion.

Mrs A.C. Carmichael

Mrs Carmichael's two books largely concerned the problems she experienced as a plantation mistress in managing slaves during the period leading up to abolition. The texts were full of comments that the slaves were difficult to manage because they had heard rumours that they were to be freed and had become very rebellious. The books were virtually pro-slavery treatises. They described how well off the slaves were, and explained in great detail the material situation and comfort of the slaves. As well as this the books also contained many comments about slaves, which we have seen in the previous examples, especially with regard to the inferiority and 'savagery' of Africans and stereotypical views regarding slave women.

Mrs Carmichael frequently used the word 'savage' to describe slaves. Indeed she commented that the slaves thought themselves very civilised 'by being removed from

Africa.'[59] She frequently referred to differences between Europeans and Africans, and took the view, developed in the eighteenth-century, that differences in character and 'races' were due to climate. She said:

> It is our bounden duty, as Christians, to instruct the negroes in religion, and help them forward in civilization; but if by civilization it is intended to make them live in the same manner as Europeans, I would say that the negroes would not submit to such an arrangement; and beyond a doubt, it would make them most uncomfortable and unhealthy. Every country has its own customs, and these customs are the result of the climate, which dictates even to the savage how to eat, lodge and clothe himself. Many most important improvements might doubtless be made in all these matters; but they must be improvements upon the same plan now existing; for as to introducing English customs, this would be both cruel and unwise.[60]

These ideas formed the key themes of her texts. She tried to instruct the slaves in religion, like Maria Nugent and Susette Lloyd, but these attempts were always framed around the 'difference' of Africans, and their implicit inferiority:

> Any one instructing savages, ought to insist much upon practical duties, - "he who loveth Me, keepeth my commandments:" these, and many such plain and short sentences, I taught them to repeat.[61]

She frequently stated that the mistake most commonly made in instructing slaves in religion was to assume that slaves understood and believed what they were told:

> The first time they see the emotion of a negro, when instructing him in religion, they are in transports of joy; enthusiastically persuaded that they have only to preach, and the bulk of the negroes will believe; - they forget that they are speaking to a people emerging only from a savage state; and that the emotions and feelings of an untutored savage, are not the same as the emotion and feeling of a civilized being.[62]

Thus, in her constant repetition of these themes, Carmichael was operating within the racist frame of reference that Africans were 'savage' and uncivilised and needed instruction from Europeans in order to progress.

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[59] Mrs A.C. Carmichael, *Domestic Manners and Social Contdition of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies* (2 volumes, New York, 1969, original 1833), 1, p.252.
[60] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, pp.126-27.
[61] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.223.
[62] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.233.

Carmichael also spoke at length of the superstition of slaves, and linked this again to African savagery. She mentioned cannibalism and said that slaves made no 'secret of admitting to [her] that their nation ate human flesh,' and she wrote a good deal about obeah.[63] She said that:

> The Obeah of the negro is nothing more or less than a belief in witchcraft; and this operates upon them to such a degree, as not unfrequently to produce death.[64]

But she also said that often this superstition was no worse than what she had witnessed among peasants in Scotland.

Like most other authors, Carmichael said that the slaves were great liars. She wrote:

> It appears almost temerity for any one at the present day to attempt to delineate the character of negroes as they really are; for they have been for a length of time described to the world, as beings, although destitute of religion, yet so gentle, so amiable, so inoffensive, so patient under oppression, so affectionate and faithful, even to their tyrants, that had I not lived among them, and found that after all that had been said, this was only a dream of the imagination, I should probably to this moment have believed that Christian virtues exist in a superior degree where Christianity sheds her dimmest light. But a few years' residence among negroes, went far to lead me to a sounder way of thinking.[65]

She then documented several stories about slave stealing that she had witnessed such as a silver thimble with her friend's initials on that a slave stole from her but swore that she had bought, and slaves insisting that they had no clothes when they had only just received their traditional clothing allocation. She said, 'I have seen negro servants appear with part of my wardrobe, and wear it without fear of detection or shame at being a thief,'[66] and narrated several stories, such as:

> B. could pack pretty well, and I employed him the day before I left St. Vincent in packing a case of liquor, and so very clever was he in his mode of deceit, that although I stood by the whole time till the box was packed and the lid nailed on, - after which it was deposited where he had no access to it, - yet when this case was opened the bottles were found all empty, and they were not the bottles I had given him to put in; for those I gave were French bottles, and

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[63] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, pp. 252-53.
[64] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p. 253.
[65] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, pp.256-57.
[66] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.263.

> the ones he put in were English: now he must have contrived while wrapping the straw around each bottle, to place an empty English bottle instead of a French full one. Negroes will steal, cheat, and deceive in every possible way, and that with a degree of adroitness that baffles the eye and the understanding of any European.[67]

Most authors narrated examples of such stories even Susette Lloyd expressed the view that whites perceived slave stealing as 'a perfectly venial offence.'[68] Bayely, writing three years before Mrs. Carmichael, also documented several such stories of slave theft. Referring to the organisation of secret slave dances, he said:

> After dancing, the group sit down to the supper table, the contents of which have all been stolen from the masters or mistresses of the different guests. One has brought a fowl, another a turkey; a third, a ham; a fourth, a pie, pudding, or tartlet; a fifth, a bottle of champagne; a sixth, a bottle of madeira; a seventh, a bottle of port; an eighth, a bottle of claret; a ninth, a bottle or perhaps half a dozen of porter; and a tenth, pineapples, mangoes, oranges, shaddocks, plumbs, almonds and raisins, with a few *French* preserves, for which the donor had taken *french* leave; and a tempting water melon: so that for their *dessert* they get more than they *deserve*; and the whole supper, even if it be not arranged upon the table according to the strictest rules of etiquette, and may not be called elegant, is, nevertheless a very substantial meal.[69]

Again, such stories, especially when told in a light-hearted manner, supported the racist discourse, and presented distinct racially-based views of blacks. The use of the story, and also humour, in this way was very effective in convincing readers of the authenticity of the accounts, and the reality of 'black character,' and stories and anecdotes were a common feature of both male and female travel writing.

Carmichael also made many comments about female slaves. She described their semi-nakedness as 'disgusting,' and said that 'from the waist upwards all was in a state of nudity.'[70] She tended to blame the women for this, rather than the system itself, and argued that they preferred to appear in that manner, and that 'a sense of decency is scarcely known to the savage.'[71] And also:

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[67] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, pp.262-63.
[68] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.137.
[69] Bayley, *Four Years' Residence*, pp.70-71.

> When I first landed in the West Indies, I was shocked at the unclothed state in which I saw many negroes; but a few months' careful observation soon shewed me that it was not the want of clothes, but the dislike to their burden that occasioned this. As the negro advances in civilization, this will no longer be the case.[72]

Clearly such an opinion and perspective was influenced by the discourse on 'race,' which set out 'black character' as different to whites. Again, like the other authors we have examined Carmichael clearly accepted this discourse, and contributed to it. Her other views about slave women were also highly stereotypical. She wrote that they made extremely bad, and uncaring mothers, and that the nurses assigned to look after children while mothers worked in the fields were far more caring: 'These women are far kinder to the children than I ever knew any of the negro mothers to be, and the infant unvariably shews more affection for the nurse than for its parent.'[73] She added:

> Negro mothers, with only one exception, I have found cruelly harsh to their children; they beat them unmercifully for perfect trifles - ...I have frequently seen mothers flog their children severely for forgetting to say yes or no ma'am, to them....A. was smoothing clothes, when Q. her eldest daughter, came too near the ironing table; she persisted in annoying her mother in this way, until A. took the hot smoothing iron and clapped it upon Q.'s back, which to this day bears evident marks of the mother's cruelty.[74]

Carmichael narrated several such anecdotes as evidence of such behaviour.

Carmichael also argued that slaves were dirty, were liars and were extremely violent and passionate, and were lazy and would feign illness to avoid work. With regard to their work of carrying manure on their head, for example, she wrote:

> the truth is, in so far as cleanliness is concerned the negro is perfectly indifferent; these sort of things do not affect their personal comfort, because their whole habits and manners of life are different from Britons: what are comforts and pleasures to them, would not be so to us; and what we esteem as the comforts and luxuries of life, they would neither thank you for nor make use of.[75]

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[70] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.10.
[71] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.149.
[72] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, pp.154-55.
[73] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.188.
[74] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, pp.269-70.
[75] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.105.

She also told several anecdotes of slaves pretending to be ill, and stories of slave violence:

> I have seen a brother and sister butt each other like cows, bite, and try to fasten their teeth into the fleshy part of each other's shoulders: I have seen sisters box each other's faces, and bite so dreadfully, that they have borne the marks of each other's fury for weeks. I have known a mother who, whenever she saw her son, tried to stone him[76]

All of these views were classically stereotypical and found in most travel accounts I have examined despite differences in perspective of author (pro-slavery or anti-slavery), or their gender. Matthew Lewis's journal, for example, summarised most of the above characteristics:

> There are so many pleasing and amusing parts of the character of negroes, that it seems to me scarcely possible not to like them. But when they are once disposed to evil, they seem to set no bounds to the indulgence of their bad passions. A poor girl came into the hospital to-day, who had had some trifling dispute with two of her companions; on which the two friends seized her together, and each fixing her teeth on one of the girl's hands, bit her so severely, that we greatly fear her losing the use of both of them. I happened also to ask, this morning, to whom a skull had belonged which I had observed fixed on a pole by the roadside, when returning last from Montego Bay. I was told, that about five years ago a Mr; Dunbar had given some discontent to his negroes in the article of clothing them, although, in other respects, he was by no means a severe master. However, this was sufficient to induce his head driver, who had been brought up in his own house from infancy, to form a plot among his slaves to assassinate him; and he was assisted in this laudable design by two young men from a neighbouring property, who barely knew Mr. Dunbar by sight, had no enmity against him whatever, and only joined in the conspiracy in compliment to their worthy friend the driver....An ambuscade was therefore laid to intercept him; and on his passing a clump of trees, the assassins sprang upon him, the driver knocked him from his horse, and in a few moments their clubs despatched him. No one suspected the driver; but in the course of enquiry, his house was searched and not only Mr. Dunbar's watch was found concealed there, but with it one of his ears, which the villain had carried away, from a negro belief that, as long the murderer possesses one of the ears of his victim, he will never be haunted by his spectre. The stranger-youths, two of Dunbar's negroes, ad the driver, were tried confessed the crime, and were all executed the head of the latter being fixed upon a pole *in terrorem*.[77]

So here, slaves appeared as a distinct 'other,' as violent and passionate, as without civilisation or reason, and mostly as the opposite of Europeans. Of course, it is ludicrous to suppose that slaves, who were well aware of the punishments for such crimes, would murder a white for no reason. Yet this was clearly what Lewis was suggesting, and expecting white readers to accept. Mrs Carmichael's books were published only one year before the ending of slavery,

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[76] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.271.
[77] Lewis, *Journal*, pp.181-83.

yet she still used pro-slavery racist arguments that had been put forward since the eighteenth-century.

Mrs Flannigan

By contrast, Mrs Flannigan's book was written from a very moral, religious anti-slavery perspective that gave it some similarity to Susette Lloyd's travel account. However, as in Lloyd's narration, one can find many racialised images and assumptions at work in Flannigan's 'anti-'slavery book. Brereton saw Flannigan as highly sympathetic to the slaves. Whilst on the surface she expressed sympathetic comments, like in the other texts, a deeper deconstructive analysis, reveals many racist arguments and assumptions.

In her chapter on the 'appearances of Negroes,' Flannigan wrote that not all blacks looked the same (contrary, she stated to what most whites believed) and that some had quite 'pleasing' (i.e. more European) features such as 'High and well formed foreheads...aquilene noses.' However, she then continued:

> A great many of the negroes are very ill-favoured approximating to what may be called hideous....Many again, are exactly like an ape, only, perhaps, they have not so much animation in their countenances.[78]

Like the previous texts we have examined even by 1844 in Flannigan's book, the eighteenth-century views of Africans as closer to apes was still being put forward, in what was supposed to be an anti-slavery text.

Flannigan also wrote about slave women, describing them as 'masculine':

> Many of the negro women...are so very masculine in their voice, manners and appearance, that it is at times a matter of doubt to say to which sex they belong. This may be attributed to the general system of treatment during slavery: they were required to work the same as the

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[78] Mrs Flannigan, *Antigua and the Antiguans: A Full Account of the Colony and its Inhabitants* (2 volumes, London, 1844) 1, p.147.

> men; and when punishment was thought necessary, no regard was paid to their feelings, but their persons were equally exposed as those of the other sex. Of course, these proceedings in time rendered them callous, and in the end, divested them of all those principles of modesty which are so great an ornament to the feminine character, whether in high or low condition of life....While employed in their daily avocations, it is customary to tie up their garments almost - if not quite - as high as their knees; and even when walking about the streets of the capital, if it is rather wet weather, the dame degree of indelicacy is practised[79]

Flannigan quite clearly showed her gender values here, and saw the black women as very different to white women, in lacking the virtues of ideal femininity. Like Mrs Fenwick, Flannigan tended to blame the system of slavery itself rather than the women. But again, the effect of this was to construct black women as masculine, as different, and as the opposite of white women.

Flannigan also narrated many anecdotes showing slave stupidity. One such narrative concerned a slave whose master was a keen geologist. The slave was told to take a bag containing samples of fossils to his master's residence from the excavation site. Flannigan said:

> After receiving his orders, and well poising his load upon his back, the man started upon his journey. The weather was very sultry, and the way was very long; the bag was very heavy, and poor *blacky* was very tired Still he plodded on "his weary way," stopping only now and then to dash the flowing perspiration from his brow, and had had arrived within a mile of his home, when he was suddenly joined by a friend.[80]

She then narrated a conversation between the two men, in a heavy mocking slave dialect, in which the friend suggested that it was a waste of energy to carry a bag of heavy stones all the way to the plantation house, in the tremendous heat, when there were plenty of stones near the house itself. Flannigan then continued:

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[79] Flannigan, *Antigua*, 2, p.146.
[80] Flannigan, *Antigua*, 2, pp.150-51.

> No sooner said than done; the splendid specimens were thrown away without compunction, and the negro, who found if much easier to march with an empty bag than with his former load, sped on his way, joyfully. At the bottom of "Dow Hill" [the plantation] he stopped and once more replenished his bag with the rough stones, which liberally bestrewed the pathway, choosing the largest for the purpose. These he safely conveyed to his master's study, carefully shutting the door, and left them. The surprise and consternation of the [master] when, upon inspecting, as he thought, his hard-earned specimens, he found only a heap of useless rubbish -- the interrogations he addressed to his servant, and the ludicrous answers of the negro -- are matters for the imagination to dwell upon.[81]

Important work has been done by historians in documenting such slave behaviour as acts of resistance. Thus, by 'playing the fool to catch wise,' slaves could resist the system, within feigned accommodation.[82] Yet here, the story was simply told for whites as a humorous example of how stupid blacks were, which was probably also how such stories were received by white audiences. Such 'humorous' stories as we have seen, were an important way in which authors contributed to the discourse on 'race.' The slave was characterised in Flannigan's story as child-like and stupid, and incapable of understanding simple instructions. It also added to the colonial discourse in demonstrating the ways in which whites travelled the globe engaging in the 'new' scientific projects of labelling and classifying all manner of things. Such classifications also stretched to how they viewed other 'races.'

Matthew Lewis also told similar 'humorous' stories about slave stupidity:

> Naturalists and physicians, philosophers and philanthropists, may argue and decide as they please; but certainly, as far as mere observation admits of my judging, there does seem to be a very great difference between the brain of a black person and a white one. I should think that Voltaire would call a negro's reason "une raison très particulière." Somehow or other, they never can manage to do anything *quite* as it should be done...Cubina...has all his life been employed about the stable; he goes out with my carriage twice every day; yet he has never yet been able to succeed in putting on the harness properly...Indeed the attempt to make them correct a fault is quite fruitless: they never can do the same thing a second time in the same manner.[83]

Whilst talking about slaves as if they were completely incapable of behaving with intelligence, this piece also overtly stated that Africans were inferior to whites. Lewis told

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[81] Flannigan, *Antigua*, 2, pp.150-151.
[82] Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery*, (Rutherford, Madison & London, 1969), p.180.

another similar story to demonstrate his point, which was about a domestic slave who he each night instructed to put the cats out, although the cats were always in the house. Lewis quizzed the slave over this:

> "No," he said, "he had not left one; but a pane in one of the windows had been broken two months before, and it was there that the cats got in whenever they pleased" Yet he continued to turn the cats out of the door with the greatest care, although he was perfectly conscious that they could always walk in again at the window five minutes after....Yet, among all my negroes, Nicholas and Cubina are not equalled for adroitness and intelligence by more than twenty. Judge then what must be the remaining three hundred![84]

There were some differences between the male and female texts here since, Lewis overtly stated inferiority, whereas in Flannigan's account that point was implicit within the narration of the story itself. Yet the texts were similar in their use of the story as a technique. Stories and anecdotes tended to be appear more legitimate since they seemed to be 'harmlessly' narrating an event that the author had experienced and were a common feature of travel accounts. As Gill has noted discourses that seem simply to be describing something are often more effective than structured arguments.[85]

NOVELS

As Judy Giles points out, it is somewhat unusual in an historical study to include sources that would normally be associated with literature. She states, however, that such an approach is helpful since:

> in placing alongside each other sources usually kept apart and subjected to different methodological analyses, it becomes possible to read across as well as into the written and spoken expressions of historical experience.[86]

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[83]Lewis, *Journal*, pp.392-93.

[84] Lewis, *Journal*, pp.394-96.

[85] Rosalind Gill, 'Discourse analysis: practical implementation' in John Richaradson (ed) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences* (Leicester, 1996) pp.141-56.

[86] Judy Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britian, 1900-1950*, (Basingstoke & London, 1995), p.4.

Given the kind of approach I am taking with the travel accounts -- textually analysing the workings of the discourse on 'race,' rather than viewing them in a 'factual' way -- the analysis of novels can also be useful, since they too implicitly contributed to the colonial discourse and to discourses on slavery and 'race.' Additionally, while the use of novels may be somewhat unconventional in traditional historical approaches, they have been used extensively by postcolonial theorists to discuss colonialism, empire and 'race.'

Most of the female novels concerning the British Caribbean were written from an anti-slavery perspective, and yet as with the published diaries, journals and letters by women, I shall show that many similar racialised images of slaves were put forward in women's fiction. Such images included fear of slaves and undertones of savagery, and the concept of the 'white Moor' or 'good' slave who had been educated in Christianity and who displayed similar characteristics to whites. Novels also tended to associate dark skin colour with negative character traits.

Charlotte Smith

In the next chapter, I discuss two of Smith's novels which basically attacked slavery as an institution, but which also portrayed slaves, as most anti-slavery novels did, as passive and childlike. Another of her novels, written rather late in her career, however, gave a rather different view of slaves. *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* (1800) has been described by the authors of the collection *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, as 'virulently racist'. Indeed talking about the literature of the slavery period, the editors suggested that Charlotte Smith's writing displayed a 'full circle' of sentiments from anti-slavery to pro-slavery.'[87] As I demonstrate and argue throughout this thesis, however, such a trait is not as contradictory as it

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[87] Srinivas Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, volume 6: fiction (London, 1999), p.xviii.

may at first appear, since most authors (even when avowedly anti-slavery), expressed racist views and saw black people as 'other.'

Smith's 'virulently racist' *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* concerned a white Jamaican woman, Henrietta, who was kidnapped by runaway slaves until rescued by her English suitor, Denbigh, who she then married. Before the kidnapping, Henrietta's father had arranged for her to marry a cruel planter, Maynard. Thus the kidnapping served as a vehicle to effect Henrietta's escape from the maroons, and also from Maynard, since his lack of concern for her welfare or attempt to rescue her allowed her to marry her real love and saviour. The novel, which switched narration between Henrietta and the hero, Denbigh, constructed the slaves as fearful and savage. On her plantation before the attack, for example, Henrietta said of her personal slave:

> As he put the candle down on a low table near me, there was an expression so wild and fearful on his dark countenance, that I felt it alarm me even more than the whirlwind and thunder that were roaring without.[88]

Henrietta also said 'there are times when the hideous phantasies of these poor uninformed savages affect my spirits with a sort of dread.'[89]

After her capture, one of the major themes and fears of the novel was whether she would have been 'ruined' by the runaway slaves:

> She was released from the power of Maynard only to fall into that of savages, always terrible in their passions, and in whom the fierce inclination for European woman was now likely to be exalted by the desire of revenge[90]

The question of whether Henrietta may have been raped by the maroons was also one of Denbigh's main concerns. Indeed, this fear was so primary among whites that when

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[88] Charlotte Smith, *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer*, (London, 1800) p.84.
[89] Smith, *Letters*, p.96.
[90] Smith, *Letters*, p.114.

Denbigh's search ended, and he discovered Henrietta safely in the hands of another English gentleman, the first words the gentleman spoke to Denbigh spoke was a reassurance that Henrietta's virtue remained intact. Clearly the thought of her 'violation' by a black man was the overriding concern of the white hero Denbigh, over and above the question of whether she was alive and well. His justification for this was that he 'knew she never would survive the horrors I dreaded for her.'[91] Denbigh also spoke of fearing:

> Their dark faces and that peculiar look of ferocity which the eye of the negro rolling in its deep socket gives to the whole race of Africans.[92]

Letters of a Solitary Wanderer contained other images of slaves which were popular in both fiction and travel accounts. Slaves, for example, were assigned specific characters determined by their place of origin:

> Clara was an Eboe, Caesar an Koromantyn negro: the Eboes are soft, languishing, and timid; the Koromantyns are frank, fearless, martial, and heroic.[93]

Also as in the *Koromantyn Slaves*, discussed below, it was a plantation obeah woman who had incited the initial rebellion in *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer*. So, whilst Smith was supposedly an anti-slavery novelist, the racist attitudes behind all of the sentiments expressed in *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* was clear.

The Koromantyn Slaves

The Koromantyn Slaves, written by an anonymous female author, was basically an attack on slavery, and was thus significantly different from Smith's *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer*. As we shall see, however, even *The Koromantyn Slaves* carried racist assumptions (as did anti-slavery travel accounts). As described in Chapter 5, the hero of *The Koromantyn Slaves* was Charles Beresford who had inherited a slave plantation in Jamaica. He was a Christian and an

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[91] Smith, *Letters*, p.115.
[92] Smith, *Letters*, p.119.

anti-slavery character who was kind to his slaves. Whilst there was a rebellion on a neighbouring plantation (run by the cruel overseer, Bromley), Charles was able to avoid a rebellion on his plantation due to his kindness, and loyalty of his slaves.

The rebellion was caused by cruel treatment and slave family separation through sale. There was already a tradition of female authors touching upon similar issues, dating back to Aphra Benn's *Oroonoko* in 1678. Also, many of these ideas and themes were influenced by travel accounts. As described in Chapter 5, most accounts narrated some kind of tragic story of separated slaves rebelling or committing suicide. Usually, such stories were presented as examples of the violent passions of Africans and as part of the genre of the 'noble savage.' Also, it was usual (as noted earlier) for travel accounts to 'stereotype' slaves according to their place of origin. Renny said:

> The Coromantee is fierce, savage, violent, and revengeful. This tribe has generally been at the head of all insurrections, and was the original parent-stock of the Maroons.[94]

Given these widespread European attitudes, as stated in Chapter 5, it was not surprising that the author chose the 'Koromantyn' slaves as the protagonists for rebellion in her novel.

Many of the images of slaves put forward in the *Koromantyn Slaves* were similar to those put forward in the travel accounts. Slaves were described as 'loquacious,'[95] and references were made to stealing by slaves. This was explained by the fact that slaves had 'simple minds' and were therefore easily open to temptation.[96] References were made to elaborate slave costumes and jewellery, and some slave huts, especially those of key slaves, were described as picturesque and containing many luxury items.[97] There were also some

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[93] *Slavery, Abolition*, p.303.
[94] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, p.236.
[95] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, p.77, p.135.
[96] Anon, *The Koromantyn Slaves; or, West Indian Sketches* (London, 1823) p.92.
[97] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.75 and p.87.

images of 'good' slaves. An old African, Quante, who had completely embraced Christianity, was seen as an ideal-type slave, and described as 'venerable' and 'gratifying.'[98] Quante taught one of the new 'koromantyn' slaves, Yamousa, who then also became an enthusiastic convert to Christianity. These slaves, by embracing religion, became 'good.' Such slaves contrasted with the general character of the koromantyns, of whom it was said: 'They might be said to be educated in cruelty, in contempt of death, and a perfect indifference of life,'[99] which was very similar to Renny's description above. The author's concern in the novel with the idea of religion improving slaves also links to the view put forward in female travel accounts.

Thus, the slaves were presented as being 'barbarous' in their 'natural' state, and as the 'slaves of superstition.'[100] Indeed superstition and obeah figured strongly in the *Koromantyn Slaves*, and represented some of the 'evils' that Christianity had to overcome. As in the travel accounts, the novel described some obeah stories, where slaves had been led to bad behaviour through obeah practitioners. An obeah practitioner's hut was described:

> Forcing open the closed door; a scene presented itself which was at once ludicrous and distressing, exhibiting, as the interior did, so many evidences of abject superstition and human craftiness. The whole inside of the roof, which, as usual, was of thatch, and every crevice of the walls, was stuck with the implements of the beldame's trade, consisting of rags, feathers, bones of cats, and a thousand other similar articles....[there were] round balls of various dimensions, large and small, whitened on the outside, and variously compounded - some of ...the skulls of cats, or stuck round with cat's teeth and claws, or with human or dogs teeth.[101]

Thus the suggestion was that the 'natural' state of Africans was base, superstitious, and with undertones of evil. It was only through contact with 'civilised' and enlightened Europeans that this could change. Indeed just like the witches in Macbeth, it was an obeah man who first put the evil idea of rebellion to its eventual leader, Soumaudo:

> He resorted to an Obeah professor, and obtained from him a preparation of poisonous ingredients to administer to the author of his disgrace; and, should no opportunity be found, he

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[98] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.170.
[99] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.142.
[100] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.136.
[101] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.182.

> was encouraged to rebel against him, by hopes held out that by so doing he would regain his liberty, and become the chief of those who should unite with him in his effort for freedom[102]

Novels, like the writing from travel accounts and various other sources, contributed to the view of Africans as savage, evil, superstitious, heathens, and cannibals. The images presented in the above quotation were almost identical to those put forward in travel writing and so, even in anti-slavery novels then, just as in 'pro'-slavery travel accounts, there was still the powerful view of Africans as savage.

Maria Edgeworth

Edgeworth's two novels that concerned slavery could almost have been prototypes for the *Koromantyn Slaves* since the themes and plots were so similar. Her story, 'The Grateful Negro,' in *Popular Tales*, was almost the same as the *Koromantyn Slaves*. It concerned two neighbouring plantations that were governed along very different lines. One, owned by Mr. Jeffries, was constructed as the worst case of slavery: he viewed his slaves as an inferior species who were incapable of gratitude, and who were naturally savage and lazy. Thus they were treated with the utmost brutality and inhumanity. Mr. Edwards plantation, by contrast, was governed along the principles of enlightened Christian teaching, and slaves were treated with humanity. Edwards supported gradual emancipation since he argued that immediate freedom would 'increase rather than diminish the slaves' miseries.'[103] The main plot concerned two ideal-type slaves, Clara and Caesar, on the Jeffries brutal plantation; these slaves were to be sold from one another, but Edwards bought them to prevent this. Caesar was so grateful that he betrayed his brothers and fellow slaves on the Jeffries plantation by telling his new master about a rebellion planned by Jeffries' slaves. Thus slaves were constructed along familiar lines as 'noble.' Caesar had not been used to kindness: his new master's

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[102] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.196.

kindness 'was new to him; it overpowered his manly heart; and, at hearing the words "my good friend," the tears gushed from his eyes: tears which no torture could have exorted!'[104] Such themes of loyalty and nobility were popular in contemporary anti-slavery novels, as we have seen. Similar comments concerned the black servants in the Elizabeth Helme's novel, *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest*. In this book, set in England, a servant, Felix, 'saved' his master from punishment by pretending that he, rather than his master, had broken some household porcelain. He said; 'the idea of shewing my young master of what I was capable of bearing to screen him from blame, rendered me equal to the effort.'[105] Thus the idea of the 'noble savage' was very popular among novelists.

Edgeworth's other novel that mentioned slavery, *Belinda*, also had an obeah theme. In the original 1801 edition, the book, which was set in England, had a black character who was servant to the novel's hero, who had made his fortune in the West Indies. This character, Juba, introduced obeah to the novel since he believed he was being punished by an obeah woman. This idea was dispelled by the 'rational' arguments of the heroine, Belinda, who convinced Juba that his ailments had other causes. Thus, the 'science' of Europeans conquered the 'superstitious' African. Interestingly the character, Juba, then went on to marry a white farm girl, Lucy. This interracial marriage, and the entire character of Juba was removed from later editions of the novel, when he was replaced by an English servant, 'James Jackson.' Again images of blacks worked strongly in the novel as likeable and capable of 'good,' but as having a tendency to superstition, and thus, as different to Europeans. Apparently, the removal of the

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[103] Maria Edgeworth, 'The Grateful Negro,' in *Popular Tales*, (London, 1804). Quoted from extracts reproduced in Aravamudan *(ed) Slavery, Abolition*, p.299.
[104] Aravamudan *(ed), Slavery, Abolition*, p.303.
[105] Elizabeth Helme, *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest*, (London, 1796) in Aravamudan *ed), Slavery, Abolition*, p.153.

black character and the interracial marriage was at the advice of Edgeworth's father, who thought it too controversial.[106]

Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna

Tonna's novel, *The System* (1827), was also very similar in its anti-slavery theme, and partly in its plot, to the *Koromantyn Slaves*. The hero of the book was Sir William Belmont, who travelled to Jamaica to visit his younger brother, George who has inherited a plantation there. While George began with an 'unfavourable' view of slavery, his manager convinced him of the barbarity of the slaves, and thus he became hardened to them. From the outset, however, William was an anti-slavery character. This novel also concerned a slave rebellion. In this case, however, one of the leaders of the rebels was an educated free coloured gentleman, Caesar, who joined the rebels as a reaction against the abuse of blacks and coloureds.

The main idea in the novel was that the slaves could be instructed in religion and Christian matrimony to change the 'error' of their ways, and that the whites also needed religion to make them cease their 'irreligious' relations with slaves and free coloured women. As we have seen, these were common themes of both female travel accounts and novels. The slaves were described as 'sable' and lacking education or 'civilised' behaviour, but the suggestion was that Christianity could change this. More underlying attitudes to colour, particularly the discourse on blackness and savagery, were, however, also revealed in the novel by changes to Caesar after his rebellion:

> Caesar was greatly altered in appearance: his skin had assumed a much deeper hue; and an expression of sternness amounting almost to ferocity was stamped on his countenance...and his dress was scarcely better than a common slave's.[107]

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[106] Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition*, pp.293-294.
[107] Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, *The System: a tale of the West Indies* (London, 1827) p.67.

Thus, Caesar, the polite and educated coloured gentleman, became 'savage,' losing all sign of civility and refinement, and as he took on this new 'savage' role, even his skin became darker. Thus the links between colour and civilisation were implicit. Again, many of these images and themes were very similar to those presented in other works of fiction and in the travel accounts we have so far examined.

Dorothy Kilner

Kilner's *The Rotchfords*, was not really a novel that concerned slaves or slavery. However, I shall include a short discussion of it since it contained images of blacks which were clearly influenced by the contemporary discourse on both 'race' and slavery. It was an evangelical work, set in England, in which a 'good' and kind family found a starving runaway slave who they took in. In the story, the black character, Pompey, told the Rotchfords stories of his past in slavery were he was subject to horrendous punishments and separation from his mother. Thus, such sections of the story stood as anti-slavery messages to the English reading public. The slave was constructed in the novel as a 'poor boy,' both for his condition and his ignorance of Christianity. Many comments concerned his colour, since one of the Rotchford's children said that he was 'dirty' and in a 'nasty condition.' However, Mrs Rotchford then said:

> O fie, George!...you surely have more sense, and good nature than to dislike persons upon account of their personal deformities: besides, those particulars which you object to, in his own country are deemed beauties instead of defects; and was you to be carried amongst them, they would look with equal dislike upon your complexion and features as you now do upon this poor boy.[108]

Whilst the novel unquestionably constructed the African boy as a pitiable object for his situation and lack of Christianity, this speech about colour set the book apart from the other

texts I have examined since it at least recognised that 'other' perspectives existed which were as credible as European views. The depth of this sentiment is, however, questioned by the evangelical perspective of the author and characters, who, no doubt, would not view African lack of Christianity in the same way.

Conclusion

The deconstructive approach taken in this chapter is important in revealing the very conservative and, arguably, racist attitudes even of anti-slavery women. Thus, the analysis reveals not only the contribution that women made to the discourse on 'race,' but also the underlying similarities in attitudes to 'race' among both pro-slavery and anti-slavery women. Exploring the detailed ways in which the racist discourse was created and maintained is useful not only because such views have remained powerful in the post-slavery African Diaspora, but because this construction of an entire continent of peoples as not only different to Europeans, but as inferior objects, provided the foundation for the whole rationale of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and slavery itself, as well as post-emancipation forms of oppression.

Whilst this chapter has concentrated on negative images of slaves in both pro-slavery and anti-slavery writing by women, the next chapter explores images of slavery as an institution. It will be shown that once again, that pro-slavery and anti-slavery writing was united in a fundamental acceptance of the 'inferiority' of slaves, and many racialised images of slaves were put forward in both kinds of text. Assumptions of white superiority appeared in pro-slavery literature in the idea that slaves were savage and needed controlling through slavery, and in anti-slavery literature in the argument that slaves needed the guidance of whites in order to use freedom correctly.

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[108]Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition*, p.38.

CHAPTER 7:

'A HORRID SYSTEM': IMAGES OF SLAVERY

This chapter will analyse images of slavery as an institution in white women's writing. It will be argued that although the women's texts ranged from overtly pro-slavery to arguably anti-slavery in perspective, on the whole, they presented slavery as a less than terrible institution. It will be argued that all the female writers accepted slavery on some level, and defended the institution, to varying degrees. The eighteenth-century pro-slavery writers argued that slavery was benevolent and paternalistic, and also that Africans were simply brutes who should not be thought of in the same way as Europeans. The nineteenth-century 'anti'-slavery authors suggested that slavery was, in the Amelioration period, well managed, and slaves were well cared for. Thus it was suggested that slavery was worse in the past than at the time of their writing. They argued and that slavery should be ended, but that slaves required preparation for emancipation. As we saw in the last chapter, in female texts this was linked to the morality and religious instruction that slaves were seen as lacking. Yet most texts, whether pro-slavery or anti-slavery, were united in a fundamental acceptance of racist views of white superiority to slaves.

I shall show the different ways in which slavery was presented as relatively benign, and thus stress the similarity in images, despite the perspective, or gender, of the author. The main themes to be discussed are firstly, images that slavery was not as terrible as many Europeans may have thought. In developing this position, writers gave descriptions of slave celebrations and examples or discussed enjoyable aspects of slaves' lives. Slaves were also favourably compared to the poor in England or

Ireland, especially regarding the material benefits and conditions that slaves were presented as enjoying. Then, in contradiction to such images, authors also spoke of their fears of slaves and rebellion. In this context, some writers also argued, especially in the eighteenth-century, that slavery and violence against slaves were necessary due to the 'nature' of Africans. Some authors, especially in the nineteenth-century, however, argued that it was slavery itself which caused the bad character of slaves. Finally, I shall examine arguments that slaves were not 'ready' for freedom.

Slavery as Benign

Most authors spoke of the enjoyable aspects of slaves' lives, in suggesting that slavery was not as terrible as Europeans may have imagined. Many female and male authors justified slavery on these grounds. Janet Schaw, for example, sometimes narrated about slavery using the contemporary language of the aesthetic. In one lengthy extract, she wrote:

> We met the Negroes in joyful troops on the way to town with their Merchandize. It was one of the most beautiful sights I ever saw. They were universally clad in white Muslin: the men in loose drawers and waistcoats, the women in jackets and petticoats; the men wore black caps, the women had handkerchiefs of gauze or silk, which they wore in the fashion of turbans. Both men and women carried neat white wicker-baskets on their heads, which they ballanced as our Milk maids do their pails. These contained the various articles for market, in one a little kid raised its head from amongst flowers of every hue, which were thrown over to guard it from the heat; here a lamb, there a Turkey or a pig, all covered up in the same elegant manner. While others had their baskets filled with fruit, pine-apples reared over each other; Grapes dangling over the loaded basket; oranges, Shaddocks, water lemons, pomegranates, grandillas, with twenty others, whose names I forget. They marched in a sort of regular order, and gave the agreeable idea of a set of devotees going to sacrifice to their Indian Gods[1]

This scene was almost 'painted' for the reader. It was reminiscent of a romantic painting of rural folk going to market, yet with the added attraction of the slaves' 'exoticness' shown by both their clothes (contrasting with their skin), and the fact that

[1] Schaw, *Journal*, pp.107-8.

Schaw invoked romantic imagination to suggest that they were journeying to make ritual sacrifices to a god. As we saw in the last chapter, in such narratives, colour was seen as having a pleasing artistic quality. This was based around the contrast between the clean white clothing, the black skin, and the brilliant colours of the fruit and flowers. The whole scene was narrated as something wonderful and 'novel' for a European eye. Also, this description of the slaves hardly made slavery sound at all terrible as an institution. The scenes took place during Christmas celebrations, when slaves had new clothes and made a tremendous effort to look their best. When dressed in this manner during a time of joviality and freedom from work, Schaw found the slaves an acceptable spectacle and as representing a colourful display of the exotic, in contrast to her earlier description of them as 'brutes.'

Similar images of slavery as an institution were put forward in the Brodbelt letters. Anne Brodbelt made reference to Jane's cousin Mr. Millward, who owned the plantation, *Mount Pleasant*. One letter, dated September 1792, stated:

> I assure you we did not forget to drink your health on the 28th August and all the Negroes made a dance in the Evening, and gave us a great deal of Singing and most of their songs ended with success and happiness to My Lady Jane: the evening they concluded with three Huzzas and your health in a bowl of Grog.[2]

The editor then added, 'there is something very attractive about this celebration by the negroes on Mr. Millward's plantation of the birthday of their master's young cousin, far away in England.'[3] Then the editor continued:

> Before passing on from these friendly negroes it will be of interest to consider what they cultivated for their master on the plantation at Mount Pleasant – coffee, no doubt, among other commodities....All over the island little bands of negroes might be met, carrying the ripe canes on their heads to the mill; and water for turning the mills for the grinding of the canes was conveyed in the picturesque aqueducts that

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[2] Mozley (ed), *Letters to Jane*, pp.38-39.
[3] Mozley (ed), *Letters to Jane*, pp.38-39.

> were such familiar objects in the landscape. other negroes would busy themselves in carrying away the 'trash' after the juices had been extracted.[4]

Again, apart from presenting slavery as a benign, paternalistic institution, the slaves were also written about as part of the discourse on the aesthetic. The scene was painted for the reader in very picturesque terms. The work did not sound at all difficult or painful, and 'bands of negroes' happily carried out their tasks. It was quite rare for authors actually to address the issue of work. Indeed, food and all the other luxurious items of white consumption somehow seemed to miraculously appear from nowhere, with no visible labour being done. However, when slave work was discussed, it was often in picturesque terms where slave labour formed an aesthetic and pleasing part of the landscape.[5] Compare the above descriptions of slave work to those of Matthew Lewis, for example. Lewis, an absentee Jamaican planter who visited his two estates in 1815 and 1817, said:

> On three sides of the landscape the prospect is bounded by lofty purple mountains; and the variety of occupations going on all around me, and at the same time, give an inconceivable air of life and animation to the whole scene....One band of negroes are carrying the ripe canes on their heads to the mill; another set are conveying away the *trash*, after the juice has been extracted; flocks of turkeys are sheltering from the heat under the trees; the river is filled with ducks and geese; the coopers and carpenters are employed about the puncheons; carts drawn some by six, others by eight, oxen, are bringing loads of Indian corn from the fields; the black children are employed in gathering it into the granary, and in quarrelling with pigs as black as themselves, who are equally busy in stealing the corn whenever the children are looking another way.[6]

Again, the scene was a typical example of romantic notions of the aesthetic concerning rural farm labour, where slavery became part of the rural ideal. Such an image hardly presented a negative image of slavery. The idea was clearly presented that blacks were happy with their situation and enjoyed many benefits, (which would have served as a contrast to the condition of many of the poor in England).

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[4] Mozley (ed), *Letters to Jane*, pp.4142.
[5] The theme of the aesthetic will be explored more fully in a later chapter.

Slaves well cared for

The idea that slaves were well cared for was implied in the above descriptions. Some more overt comments were, however, often made *stating* that this was the case. In the Introduction to *Lady Nugent's Journal*, the editor commented that

> Though naturally curious about the effect of slavery on its victims, Mrs Nugent does not say much about it in the Journal. A Governor's wife could know little at first hand of how the slaves lived, apart from the relatively favoured category of domestic servants.[7]

Mrs Nugent, however, never really attempted to find out the condition of the slaves, and instead relied on the comments she heard from her planter friends concerning their status and welfare. Some of her views, however, came from observing her own domestics at the Governor's seat, King's House. When she first arrived in Jamaica, and had initial contact with those who were to be her slaves during her residence, she said:

> the house is put into as good order as we could prevail upon the poor blackies to do it. They are all so good-humoured, and seem so merry, that it is quite comfortable to look at them.[8]

It is not entirely clear what Mrs Nugent meant by commenting that the slaves were 'comfortable' to look at. She could have been referring to the fact that she was expecting to be revolted by slavery, but in reality, she did not find it so terrible, or it could have referred to the slaves themselves. Given all the negative European connotations of the word 'black,' and the contemporary European racist ideology that we saw in the last chapter, Mrs Nugent was probably relieved to find that the slaves

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[6] Lewis, *Journal*, pp.85-86.
[7] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.xxxi.

were not as ugly, savage, or frightful as she may have expected. In addition to this, Nugent expressed 'pro-slavery' views. At one point she noted:

> Set all the blackies to scrape and clean all around the house, the lawn, &c. Treated them with beef and punch, and never was there a happier set of people than they appear to be. All day they have been singing odd songs, only interrupted by peals of laughter; and indeed I must say, they have reason to be content, for they have many comforts and enjoyments. I only wish the poor Irish were half as well off.[9]

The assertion that the slaves enjoyed better conditions and more comforts than the poor in England or Ireland was, as we have noted, common among defenders of slavery. Later Mrs Nugent added:

> Amuse myself with reading the Evidence before the House of Commons, on the part of the petitioners for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. As far as I at present see and can hear of the ill treatment of the slaves, I think what they say upon the subject is very greatly exaggerated. Individuals, I make no doubt, occasionally abuse the power they possess; but, generally speaking, I believe the slaves are extremely well used.[10]

Again, this passage contained several ideas one frequently finds in the travel writing of this period. By acknowledging that perhaps *some* abuse occurred, Nugent was strengthening the view that slavery was not, *in itself,* bad. This device was useful since it suggested that Nugent was rational and not prone to exaggeration. She accepted, of course, that some abuse did occur, but supposedly it was not widespread, and the implication was that the abolitionists exaggerated their case.

As we saw in the last chapter, Susette Lloyds' *Sketches of Bermuda,* claimed to be an anti-slavery text, and Lloyd's family was involved in the abolitionist movement, yet perhaps surprisingly, many of her views were not as 'anti'-slavery as we might have expected. Her book started from the position that slavery was evil, yet in the text itself slavery was, to some extent, condoned, and it did not appear as at all brutal. Like many other female texts of this era, the view was presented that the real

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[8] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.13.
[9] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.53.

evil of slavery lay in the lack of morality and Christian education among the slaves. It was suggested that this encouraged bad behaviour among them in the form of idleness and stealing. (Lloyd never openly mentioned sexual relations, but she may have been hinting at this when she expressed the view that freedom was 'oftenest [given to]...a female').[11] From her introduction, written immediately before the abolition of slavery, one would expect that Lloyd would prove to be a most harsh critic of slavery, and sympathetic defender of the slaves. Giving some background to the Bermudian situation, she said:

> Bermuda, as in contrition for the rigour which stamped her ancient slave laws, has been foremost to extirpate, without delay, every trace of slavery; and, prompted by a sense of the justice which she owed the negro, for the untold wrongs that for upwards of two centuries had been legally sanctioned against him, determined altogether to discard the system of apprenticeship, and at once to give entire and unconditional freedom to the whole body of slaves.[12]

Then, in stating that her book did not proclaim to be a researched piece on the question of slavery, she said:

> The writer states facts simply, as they fell under her observation, without exaggeration of the evils inseparable from even the mildest form in which this odious system can be administered – without extenuation of any abuse of power in the master, or dereliction of duty in the slave.[13]

From the outset, then, this text would seem to support Bridget Brereton's thesis that the harsh attitudes displayed in the 1770s by Schaw, had given way to a much more sympathetic attitude towards slaves by the 1830s.

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[10] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.86.
[11] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.100.
[12] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.viii.
[13] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.x.

Later in the text, however, Lloyd gave a rather different account of the system of slavery. Indeed, she almost seemed to defend it:

> It must be confessed that in these islands slavery wears the mildest aspect of which that pitiable condition is susceptible. The character of the Bermudians is kind and humane, and their slaves enjoy many secular advantages of which the poor in our own country are frequently destitute. To the enslaved negro, all the wants of nature are amply supplied. He is, under every contingency, clothed, fed, and attended in sickness, at his master's cost. The ancient laws of slavery, odious and merciless as they are, are never enforced against him, and instances of domestic or private cruelty are, I believe I may venture to assert, almost unknown. Indeed, in many houses the young Negro grows up with his master's children, and is considered as one of the family.[14]

These were exactly the arguments used by planters and defenders of slavery. The 'evidence' was constructed in the same manner. Firstly, it was suggested that slavery was a system that could be open to abuse, but this either happened in the early years of slavery, or, in the later period, occurred elsewhere; thus cruelty was extremely rare. Secondly, it was suggested that slaves were better off than the poor in England since they had all of their material needs taken care of. These were arguments frequently put forward by defenders of slavery. It was particularly interesting to note the argument about material needs in Lloyd's narration, since at another point, when telling of slave excitement over a beached whale which they were allowed to eat, she mentioned that it was the only fresh meat that slaves ever had.[15] Yet the myth of the kindly paternalist planter was plainly put forward by Lloyd, most clearly expressed at the end of the piece, when she stated that black slaves were treated as part of the white family.

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[14] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.93-4.
[15] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.128.

The plantation mistress, Mrs Carmichael, like most of the other female authors, expressed the view that slavery was not at all bad, (writing one year before abolition). She made frequent references to the comfort of slave houses and living conditions:

> A little shelved corner cupboard, displaying many a showy coloured plate, cup, and saucer, as a common piece of furniture; a good table, one or two benches, and some chairs, with a high table to serve as a sideboard, upon which are displayed the tumblers and wine glasses[16]

She did say that these items were usually found in head slaves' or skilled slaves' huts, but argued that this was because they were more 'industrious' and that the common field slaves were too ignorant and had not yet 'progressed' enough in civilisation to want such things.[17] The next step from this argument, was, of course, to state that 'I can avouch that negroes are lodged infinitely better than, with few exceptions, the working population in England.'[18]

As we saw in the case of Lloyd, Mrs Flannigan also began by condemning slavery as an indefensible institution. (Indeed, it was in reference to Flannigan's text that Brereton suggested that the harsh attitudes displayed towards blacks by Schaw in the 1770s had given way by the 1830s). Brereton wrote that Flannigan:

> condemns slavery unequivocally as an inhumane and indefensible institution. Though in general an admirer of the Antiguan plantocracy, to which she was connected, [Lanaghan] states that she 'has no doubt' that cruelties against the slaves took place in the island even during the last years of slavery, when she was resident, though she never personally witnessed any. Her account of the atrocities of the past – in other words, before the 1820s – is sober in tone, factual yet indignant. There is no attempt

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[16] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.129-130.
[17] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.129-130.
[18] These exact arguments were also found in Lewis's journal, and Bayley's book was largely a treatise arguing that slaves themselves said that they did not want freedom once they realised that it meant that they would no longer receive a house, food, and medical care from the planter.

> here to justify slavery in the manner of the late nineteenth-century writers. And Lanaghan was too close in time to its end to project the romantic myth of a paternalist, kindly regime.[19]

Whilst supposedly condemning slavery, however, Mrs Flannigan's narrative also suggested to the reader that slaves had many luxuries. Like Mrs Carmichael and Matthew Lewis, she wrote:

> The best huts have the hall, or sitting-room, paved with bricks....Among the articles of furniture may be found sofas, sideboards of manchineel, (or some other species of native wood), mahogany and deal tables, and a large cedar chest. Besides these articles, some of them possess decanters, tumblers, wine-glasses, and a large bowl to make their punch in, with plates and dishes, tea-cups, and various other kinds of gaudy crockeryware.[20]

So, whilst Flannigan suggested that slavery was an evil, and she supported its abolition, in the text, one can still find many racialised images of Africans, and many techniques and arguments that appeared in earlier, more pro-slavery texts.

Fear of Rebellions

Female texts often spoke about fears of slave rebellion, and most female novels concerned this theme. For example, in Schaw's journal, even when she painted a pleasing verbal picture of slavery, there was the ever-present and underlying threat of plantation violence. After describing the beautiful scenes of slaves going to market and looking like Indian gods about to make a sacrifice, at the end of the piece, Schaw wrote, 'it is necessary however to keep a look out during this season of unbounded freedom; and every man on the Island is in arms and patrols go all round the different plantations as well as keep guard in the town.' [21] She was speaking about the Christmas celebrations and the 'freedom' slaves enjoyed during festivities.

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[19] Brereton, 'Text, Testimony,' p.76.
[20] Flannigan, *Antigua*, p.130.

So, whilst on the one hand Schaw constructed a picturesque and idealised version of slavery (which also served to justify the system), violence and fear of rebellion were always present. Yet this contradiction was something that authors never seemed to recognise, and certainly did not seek to reconcile. It just seemed to be accepted: the islands were there as places of wonder and of abundance for Europeans to enjoy; the other side of this pleasing picture was the violence of slavery, which enabled the profits to be made. The whole delicate balance was achieved by constructing racial differences between whites and blacks, and basing everything on this contrast.

Similarly, whilst Mrs Carmichael's text was full of details of the benefits slaves enjoyed and how 'easy' their lives were compared to the poor in Europe, Carmichael expressed deep fear of slaves. Mrs Carmichael, for example, said:

> But there is one source of suffering, that every resident West Indian has endured for some years, and is still enduring -- and it is to be feared, will and must continue to endure, -- and that is, a total want of personal security for himself and his family. The planter is often distant many miles from any white person save his manager and overseers: now on a small estate, say where there are one hundred negroes, and allowing that out of that number there are twenty-five, young and old, and other twenty-five, in whom their master has some confidence, - I say some only, for perfect confidence it is impossible to have, as negroes are such personal cowards, that even if their affection prompted them to protect their master, their fear would operate so strongly, that though they might warn him of danger, yet they would not defend him against a superiority of numbers.[22]

This passage clearly revealed the terror white women felt, often alone on the plantation, heavily outnumbered by slaves. Carmichael had obviously thought a great deal about this issue, in weighing up numbers, and in considering those slaves whom she felt she could, to some extent, trust. It is interesting that Carmichael's only explanation for the possible lack of help from key slaves, was their 'cowardice.' Yet

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[21] Schaw, *Journal*, p.109.
[22] Mrs Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*,pp.56-57.

her lack of confidence even in these key slaves, showed the poverty of the paternalism that masters and mistresses went to great lengths to express in their texts.

It is striking the extent to which the texts continually offered completely contradictory images of slaves and slavery, which the authors made no attempt to resolve. (The example just noted shows indeed, slaves stereotyped as violent savages, and at the same time as cowards). The stereotype was an essential part of the colonial discourse, since it could seemingly explain any kind of behaviour on the part of slaves. Also, since the stereotype was based on notions of constructed *racial* differences between whites and blacks, it justified colonial rule. As Homi Bhabha points out, because the stereotype was so ambivalent, and could never be 'proved,' it was essential for whites continually to restate it in the colonial discourse.[23] Fear of slaves and violence were common themes of both pro-slavery and anti-slavery texts, which again shows the underlying similarity of racialised images of blacks.

Violence as Necessary

As we have seen, Janet Schaw's journal was very overtly pro-slavery. As we saw in the last chapter, she argued that Africans were simply not the same as Europeans, and thus did not require sympathy, or indeed, should not even be thought of as human at all. The quotation we examined in the last chapter -- describing slave plantation work gangs, and appearance of welts on the slaves' naked backs -- contained powerful images both of slaves, and of slavery as an institution. At the end of the description Schaw said:

> But however dreadful this must appear to a humane European, I will do the creoles the justice to say, they would be as averse to it as we are, could it be avoided, which has often been tried to no purpose. When one comes to be better acquainted with the

[23] Homi K.Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1993) pp.67-70.

> nature of the Negroes, the horreur of it must wear off. It is the suffering of the human mind that constitutes the greatest misery of punishment, but with them it is merely corporeal. As to the brutes it inflicts no wound on their mind, whose Natures seem made to bear it, and whose sufferings are not attended with shame or pain beyond the present moment.[24]

This piece was very clearly a rationalisation of both the system of slavery and the punishment it involved, both of which were 'justified' by the idea that Africans were 'different' to whites, and suited to slavery. Schaw, the 'enlightened,' 'civilised,' and 'humane' European, felt justified and qualified to judge the slaves and to explain to her audience that they should not be thought of as human. Thus, she spoke of the 'nature of the Negroes' as some fixed thing she was able to understand and describe. By comparing slaves to brutes she was able to counteract the horror of plantation violence by suggesting that slaves were not human in the same way as Europeans, and thus did not feel things the same way as 'humane' Europeans did: indeed, their 'nature' was meant for slavery. Hence, even though the welts on the slaves' backs were clearly visible, they were not a reminder of the atrocities of plantation violence, but of the 'nature' of blacks and of the *necessity* for violence because of their nature. Whilst on the one hand opening up the question of violence that disturbed the otherwise beautiful landscape, on the other Schaw immediately negated this by proactively anticipating disturbed European sensibilities. She eased disquiet away by constructing slaves as racialised 'others' who did not require empathy since they were simply *not the same* as Europeans. All of which served as a complete justification for the system of slavery. In this analysis, slavery was *necessary* in order to control and 'civilise' the 'savage' Africans.

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[24] Schaw, *Journal*, p.127.

The idea that violence against slaves was a necessity was a common feature of travel writing. Most authors argued that since Europeans were humane and 'civilised' they would be naturally averse to inflicting horrendous punishments on others. However, given the 'nature' of blacks -- their violence, their laziness and deceitfulness (images documented in the previous chapter) -- such treatment became essential. Thus, whites went to great lengths to justify cruelty, by constructing themselves as kind, and slaves as savage. The stereotypical images they constructed of slaves were therefore essential to this kind of justification of the system of slavery. In this way, the racial stereotype became the crux around which the entire system was built.

Slavery caused bad character of slaves

Whereas some authors, such as Schaw blamed the 'nature' of black people for problems in managing slaves and for the violence that she argued was necessary because of this nature, other texts blamed slavery as an institution for the bad character of blacks. Thus, the assumption was that slaves were 'bad,' but differences emerged over why this was the case. Fenwick, for example, blamed slavery for the position it put black women in. She said:

> The female slaves are really encouraged to prostitution because their children are the property of the owner of the mothers. These children are reared by the Ladies as pets, are frequently brought from the negro houses to their chambers to feed and sleep, and reared with every care and indulgence till grown up, when they are at once dismissed to labour and slave-like treatment. -- What is still more horrible, the Gentlemen are greatly addicted to their Women slaves, and give the fruit of their licentiousness to their white children as slaves, I strongly suspect that a very fine Mulatto boy about 14 who comes here to help wait on the breakfast and luncheon of two young Ladies, our pupils, is their own brother, from the likeness he bears to their father. It gives me disgusted antipathy and I am ready to hail the slave and reject the Master.[25]

Robert Renny also blamed slavery for black character. He wrote:

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[25] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, pp.168-169.

> Even the most high-spirited and courageous Negro becomes, after remaining a few years in slavery, cunning, cowardly, and in a certain degree, malevolent; and, indeed, a debasement of all the mental faculties, and the destruction of every honourable principle, seem to be the never-failing consequences of slavery.[26]

Some differences between male and female texts were apparent here. For women, the most obvious condemnation of slavery as an institution was on *moral* grounds, and particularly for the 'bad' behaviour it encouraged among slaves, either in the form of stealing, lying, or in 'promiscuous' sexual behaviour. Male texts, by contrast, were more concerned with behaviour that was seen as the opposite of 'honourable' or chivalrous white male gender ideals. This gender difference was also apparent in novels. Jane West, for example, used the Caribbean as background from which to make similar comments in *The Advantages of Education* (1793). The issue about white male sexual relations with slaves was explained to the heroine, Maria, by her mother. The comments concerned her father:

> The planters, generally speaking, countenance each other in irregularities, at which an English libertine would blush. The redundant fertility of these tropical climes, and the bad habits which slavery introduces, are not favourable to the cause of virtue. The lord of the soil, accustomed to the mean subservience of those around him, who think themselves honoured by being made the instruments of his crimes, soon overcomes every restraint of conscience, and pleads example to conceal, if not to extenuate his fault.[27]

Here, the explanation offered for the planters' immorality was clearly to levy blame with the slaves. Thus one 'anti'-slavery comment could include the view that slavery as an institution was morally bad for both slaves and white men. The question was never raised about whether slavery similarly inculcated any negative behaviour among white women.

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[26] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, p.165.

Slaves not ready for freedom

Another view frequently expressed in supposedly anti-slavery texts was that slaves were not 'ready' for freedom. In women's texts this view often also linked to the issue of morality, especially present in the idea that slaves needed Christian teaching to guide them in an emancipated life. Indeed, for Mrs Nugent, the greatest evil of slavery was that blacks were denied the benefits of Christian teaching and morality, for which she blamed white masters. She said:

> it appears to me, there would be certainly no necessity for the Slave Trade, if religion, decency, and good order, were established among the negroes; if they could be prevailed upon to marry; and if our white men would but set them a little better example. Mrs Bell told me to-day, that a negro man and woman of theirs, who are married, have fourteen grown up children, all healthy field negroes. This is only one instance out of many, which proves, that, the climate of this country being more congenial to their constitutions, they would increase and render the necessity of the Slave Trade out of the question, provided their masters were attentive to their morals, and established matrimony among them; but white men of all descriptions, married or single, live in a state of licentiousness with their female slaves; and until a great reformation takes place on their part, neither religion, decency nor morality, can be established among the negroes.[28]

This argument was rather different to the one put forward earlier by Schaw, who only blamed the black women for such relationships. Here, however (as earlier shown by Schaw and West), white men were blamed for their part in the general lack of morality among slaves. It was charged that white men fostered immorality by engaging in sexual relations with female slaves (thus setting a bad example), and by failing to introduce Christianity on their plantations. It was not so much that Maria Nugent demonstrated a 'sisterhood' with the black female slaves – which would be unthinkable since black women were constructed as so different to white women – but rather that she disapproved of the white men for their lack of restraint. The implication was that whites, as the superior 'race' and teachers of less civilised peoples, should have been setting an appropriate example.

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[27] West, *Advantages of Education*, p.141.
[28] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.86-7.

Nugent's dedication to Christianity was shown in her attempts to spread religion among her own slaves -- and before she left Jamaica she ensured that they were all baptised. The point of this, however, can also be seen in a racialised way. Mary Louise Pratt has pointed to the fact that this reforming zeal in itself was one way in which white women contributed their own intervention into empire, and was largely a continuation of similar middle-class women's social reform work in England.[29] Nugent's crusading spirit of imperialism and the theme of the 'white woman's burden' can be demonstrated in her comment:

> This is the last day of the year, and I rejoice, as time passes, to think, that every day, now, will bring us, please God we live, nearer to England, and our domestic comfort there. I will endeavour to deserve that blessing from Heaven, by being more vigilant and active in my duties here. I will begin the new year, at the Penn, by instructing the poor negroes, and if I do but succeed in making them better understand their duties as Christians, I shall be happy indeed; and I pray for a blessing on my efforts for that purpose.[30]

Nugent's text, for these reasons of spreading Christianity and seeing the lack of religion and morality among slaves as they key evil in the system, rendered it very similar to Susette Lloyd's book. As part of her campaign to set up schools for slave children, Lloyd came into contact with some slaves who she regarded as 'ideal' and who could set an example to black children. As discussed in Chapter 6, one such character was the ideal-type black school teacher Maria.[31] When Lloyd first introduced the character of Maria into the text, she wrote:

> One of our negro day schools is conducted by a young female slave, of exemplary character and considerable acquirements. By employing her talents in teaching the little slaves in her neighbourhood, she has been for several years the chief support of her kind and aged mistress, who is upwards of eighty years old, poor and almost friendless. To her, Maria is as a daughter, and as you have been so generously

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[29] Mary Loiuse Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.27.
[30] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.49.
[31] See Chapter 6, p.121.

> endeavouring to obtain the means for purchasing her freedom, you will, I think; be pleased with some account of a visit which I have just paid to this excellent young woman.[32]

For the European, Maria exemplified the 'ideal' slave, and her relationship with her mistress reflected the romantic myth of paternalistic (or here, maternalistic) slavery. Maria was loving and loyal, and respected and was grateful for her mistress's kindness. So close was the bond between mistress and slave that they were portrayed as being like mother and daughter. Maria's gratitude to her mistress was shown by the fact that, even though a slave, she was financially supporting her mistress -- a bizarre reversal of roles. Yet she remained a slave, and the English correspondent, and Lloyd's fellow activist in educating the slaves, had been campaigning for funds to buy Maria's freedom. Clearly however much the mistress (mother) loved her slave (daughter) she was not prepared to free her without financial remuneration. Such was the delicacy of this loving and familial bond. Similarly, the benefactors in England received their own form of remuneration in the glowing account they received of their deserving beneficiary. In order to continue support, such activists needed to be assured that those they sought to help were 'respectable' and 'deserving.' This was a classic example of regulated support within boundaries very clearly defined by white European middle-class women and men as to what constituted decent behaviour and a deserving case. This also represented the classic relationship of female philanthropic endeavours in colonial society.

Conversion to Christianity of subjugated peoples, of course, has a long history in European 'expansion.' Indeed, Pratt stated that 'Christianity had set in motion a global labor of religious conversion that asserted itself at every point of contact with

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[32] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.151.

other societies.'[33] The imperialist nature of Lloyd's reforming work was clearly shown in her language: she talked of the 'gleam of Christianity [penetrating] the dreary dungeon of...African superstition.'[34] Indeed, many female writers of this period (including Maria Nugent) felt that one of the greatest evils of slavery lay in its denial of the benefits of Christianity to slaves. This was frequently linked to the moral benefits Christianity could bring to slaves in terms of sexual behaviour and stealing.

These themes were apparent in Lloyd's reforming mission. Lloyd wrote:

> I feel an encouraging hope that this, and similar institutions, will lead to a gradual but sure amelioration in the condition and character of the Negro and coloured population, and prepare them for a right use of that emancipation which all feel cannot be far distant....Though I would offer to the adult Negro every facility for acquiring instruction, I think the great stress should be laid on the education of the younger children. With minds still unfettered by prejudice or uncontaminated by the influence of bad example, we may hope that, being taken in hand so early, religion will find in them a more genial soil, and that with the heavenly guidance they will grow up beautiful plants of holiness, adorning this moral and religious wilderness, and making it blossom like the never fading roses of their own fair islands.[35]

The emphasis of the teaching lay in instructing slaves so as to prepare them to use their freedom 'correctly,' i.e. to adopt behaviour which was defined by whites as appropriate. Lloyd offered a rather sentimental perspective, as shown in the idea that black children would grow as 'beautiful plants of holiness,' and such sentimentality ran throughout the text. Here, her criticism was unlike the social reform writers Pratt analysed, since their writing displayed no sentimentality or romanticism. Lloyd, however, did tend to see herself and her fellow activists in Britain as part of a romantic crusade to rescue and re-educate black people.

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[33] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*,p.27.
[34] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.94.

[35] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.135-6.

Part of this re-education involved changing slave behaviour. Here, Lloyd said:

> there is a shade...which I trust will gradually vanish before the enlightening influence of religious instruction – I mean the petty pilfering which is so common among the Negroes, and which till lately was looked upon by very many as a perfectly venial offence.[36]

Thus she hoped her reforming work would have a twofold consequence – to 'give' the joy of spiritual happiness to the slaves, and to convert their 'immoral' behaviour.

Lloyd demonstrated her success in this area when she explained that original planter opposition to the programme was overcome once the benefits became apparent:

> When the attempt was first made to instruct the slaves, there were strong prejudices to contend with, and many dreaded that its only effect would be to make them repine at their lot, and unfit for their station. The oppositions, however, was judiciously met by a conciliatory spirit of temperance and forbearance, and the moral labours of the clergy are now, in several instances, supported by their early opponents.[37]

Caribbean planters, had long been hostile to the religious conversion of their slaves, worrying about the implications and possible consequences of such a step. Given the nature of Caribbean slave societies,[38] however, the conversion of slaves became a key obsession for the religious-minded, enlightened European. It is interesting to note the planters' attitude in Lloyd's text – once they realised that they would not be adversely affected (in terms of profit) by the slaves' conversion they did not object. In fact,

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[36] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.137.
[37] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.95.
[38] It has been widely accepted among both contemporaries and historians alike that there were few slave marriages or stable unions, and unrestrained sexual relations between white males and female slaves was the norm. (Travel accounts of the slave period express this view. It has also been accepted, to some extent, by historians. See for example, Pattterson, *Sociology of Slavery*; and Goveia, *Slave Society*. However, this view has been somewhat revised by later historians such as Michael Craton, 'changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, (1979), 10, pp1-35; and B.W. Higman 'African and Creole Slave Family Patterns in Trinidad' *Journal of Family History*, (1978), 3. Whilst it is arguable that slavery destroyed black family life, this view is prevalent even today when, for example, in British society, it is an accepted myth that black Caribbean family life is single-headed by a matriarchal female, and is turbulent and unstable. (See, for example, A. Phoenix, 'theories of Gender and Black Families' in G. Weiner and M. Arnot (eds), *Gender Under Scrutiny: New Inquiries in Education* (London, 1987); or A. Phoenix, 'the Afro-Caribbean Myth,' *New Society*, 4 March 1988).

other sources indicate that in the last years of slavery, planters actually encouraged the religious conversion of slaves, since they thought it would help instil a 'work ethic' into slaves.[39] Lloyd also mentioned several times that the schools provided the planters with an 'opportunity to dispose of their troublesome little *niggers*.'[40]

The mission to convert the slaves seemed to offer the whites involved an element of reciprocity. Apart from the middle-class nineteenth-century European sense of being involved in something 'noble' and 'good,' there was a deep sense of imperialist self-satisfaction. Lloyd said:

> On Wednesday, after examining a white free school in our parish, the Bishop visited our Negro infant school....It presented a spectacle no less interesting to the eye than gratifying to the heart. Above seventy children were present, some not more than two years old, all arranged in classes. The girls wore their neat pink frocks, with a gaily coloured handkerchief tastefully folded round the head, while their dark expressive eyes, and sable countenances, added a high degree of interest to their appearance in the eyes of an European.[41]

This was similar to Lloyd's description of the teacher, Maria. It was clear that as long as the recipients fitted the imperialist notion of a deserving case, by displaying gratitude and the correct mix of European standards of prettiness/beauty, and the exotic, then money would be forthcoming to fund the project. Black people were only acceptable to these imperialist, crusading whites as long as they fitted into appropriate stereotypes: they could wear handkerchiefs as long as they were 'tasteful' and appeared as an emblem of the exotic, it was preferable for them to have a 'sable'

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[39] Newspaper articles frequently show this. Articles in the *Jamaica Journal*, the *St. Christopher Gazette*, the *Bermuda Royal Gazette*, and the *Antigua Free Press* throughout the 1820s and 1830s showed that as emancipation became a pressing issue, the main fear among whites was that, in accordance with racialised stereotypes, the black population would refuse to work, and that the plantations and crops would go to ruin. Thus, it was hoped that religious instruction might 'teach' slaves, among other things, the moral benefits of hard work and industry.
[40] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.64.
[41] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.134.

rather than a black countenance, and 'dark expressive eyes' were supposed to show deep gratitude to the white teachers and 'saviours.'

Preparing slaves for freedom, and the suggestion that they were presently 'not ready' was a common theme in the travel accounts. Whereas in female texts slaves were not seen to be 'morally' ready and were seen as being in need of religious instruction, in male texts fears were more directly related to work, and possible loss of profits for whites. Thus, the male discourse was more related to capitalism and profits. These fears were based around constructed images of slaves as naturally lazy and idle, which, as we have seen, were common images. Thus, white men expressed fears that abolition of slavery would lead to the decline of their production and property. This was reflected in male texts and in newspapers. Robert Renny stated that immediate emancipation would lead to the 'most frightful consequences,' and stated that compensation of planters should be the first thing to happen.[42] He also stated:

> In every country, and in every age, the first step towards the civilization of man, has been to inspire him, with an idea, and a desire of property....Let the planter, then, even from motives of policy, endeavour to inspire the Negro with just ideas of property....Let some attention be paid to the cultivation of their minds; and let them be at least, instructed in the first principles of religion....In this manner, the country, instead of being threatened with convulsions, would remain in the most perfect security; the wealth, and consideration of the planters, instead of being diminished, would increase and flourish.[43]

Thus, the suggestion among planters was that the best option was to 'teach' slaves the capitalist spirit in an attempt to indoctrinate them with a strong work ethic. Religion was seen as the means to achieve this. This view was widespread and had been developed by Max Weber in his concept of the 'protestant work ethic,' and its links with the development of capitalism in Europe.

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[42] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, p.164.

Bayley, a male traveller, pointed to freed slaves to make his point that emancipation would be disastrous. He said:

> Eating, drinking, and sleeping form the main business of [the freed slave's] existence. From their natural idleness, their unconquerable unwillingness to do any thing they can avoid doing,....They generally pass their lives in the following manner. They obtain work for two, or perhaps three days, though they are seldom known to labor for so long a period at a time, and this work is of the lightest and least laborious kind....The money which they have earned with their three days' labour, will...afford them the further gratification of getting drunk at an early hour in the morning, and of laying deprived of their senses, and in the condition of a brute, sleeping away in all the glories of their freedom.[44]

This male discourse relating to profit was also seen in newspapers. The *Antigua Free Press* in 1826, for example, wrote:

> In no place have we seen [emancipated slaves condescend to betake themselves of laborious work] ....In Sierra Leone, that great and boasted despot of freedom and industry, have any such advances been made, or even contemplated, although the place is under the protection of Great Britain? No! In Hayti, no such advances have been made, nor have any such ever been offered or attempted amongst the multitudes of free coloured people in our West India Colonies.[45]

Thus, whereas female travellers expressed the desire to improve the morality of slaves through religion, male texts were more concerned with profits. Such interests related to appropriate contemporary gender behaviour, and fitted in with notions of contemporary femininity and masculinity.

NOVELS

With the exception of the work of Theodora Lynch (a plantation mistress who wrote well after the ending of slavery), the majority of female novels were anti-slavery. Most expressed evangelical or religious condemnations of slavery, and referred to the denial to slaves of the spiritual and moral benefits of Christianity. The novels also

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[43] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, pp.185-186.
[44] Bayley, *Four Years' Residence*, pp.402-403.
[45] The *Antigua Free Press*, Friday 11 August 1826.

tended to construct slaves as passive victims in order to arouse sympathy for their plight. Kilner, in *The Rotchfords*, for example, wrote:

> O! my children! Were you to know the dreadful cruelties that have been inflicted by the Europeans upon the poor innocent African, and inhabitants of America, it would make you shudder with horror; nor can a tender heart reflect without anguish, upon that vile practice which is still continued, of buying and selling slaves.[46]

Even in this quotation, 'Africans' were rendered as a homogenous group, whereas the author did not have a term to describe native Americans. Whilst slaves were often constructed as passive victims in a vile institution, novels often contained rebellions, which took place only against the brutality of harsh masters.

Charlotte Smith, for example, wrote two novels, *Desmond* (1792), and the *Wanderings of Warwick* (1794), which dealt with the question of slavery. In *Desmond*, the hero of the novel, in letters to his friend Mr Bethel, described his participation in a debate over the abolition of the slave trade. His opponent, a Member of Parliament who owned an estate in the West Indies, opposed the abolition of the slave trade on several economic and racial grounds. Smith's young hero countered each point the MP presented, and in doing so, Smith typically constructed the hero with an 'ethical' position, which would have been likely to evoke the reader's admiration and sympathy for his views. The conversation went as follows, with the MP commenting:

> you know nothing of the condition of the negroes...nor their nature. - They are not fit to be treated otherwise than as slaves, for they have not the same senses and feelings as we have. - A negro fellow minds a flogging so little, that he will go to a dance at night, or at least the next day, after a hearty application of the cat. - They have no understanding to qualify them for any rank in society above slaves; and, indeed, are not to be called men - they are monkies.." "Monkies! Sir!" exclaimed I, "that is, indeed, a most extraordinary assertion. - Monkies! I believe, indeed, they are a very distinct race from the European - so also is the straight-haired and fined formed Asiatic - So are the red men of North America - But where, amid this variety, does the man end, and the monkey begin?...."And, if I recollect alright, Sir, I have formerly, in moments of unguarded conviviality, heard you say, that when you were a

[46] Kilner, quoted in *Slavery, Abolition*, p.39.

> young man, and in the sea service you had yourself indulged this partiality for these monkey ladies."....after I had carried almost every article against him, my adversary was compelled to take shelter...- "Perhaps," said he, "the negroes *are* sometimes beat, but not half so much as our soldiers are - The punishment inflicted on soldiers is infinitely more severe." "Does not that, Sir," said I, "rather prove that our military punishments are inhuman, than that the negroes have nothing to complain of?"[47]

Thus here, the hero opposed the kind of racially constructed arguments concerning slaves that we saw in Janet Schaw's pro-slavery journal. In creating conversations in this way, authors could comment more directly on arguments for or against slavery, than one normally finds in female travel accounts themselves. The passage also revealed the shift in racial attitudes -- here we can see the view of Africans as subhuman was giving way by the 1790s to the view of Africans as human. This does not mean, however, that new attitudes were not 'racist,' since, as we have seen, even in anti-slavery material, black people still tended to be portrayed as passive victims, as child-like and as less 'civilised' than Europeans.

One of Smith's themes was the dehumanising effect that slavery had upon those involved. Smith never actually travelled to the Caribbean. Her husband, however, was the son of a West India merchant, and for a number of years she assisted her father-in-law in his business in London. In the *Wanderings of Warwick*, she wrote:

> The slave merchant studies nothing but his profit and loss; and if at any time something like a qualm of conscience should disturb the felicity he finds in acquiring wealth, he reconciles himself to his pursuit with reflecting, that if he did not drive this trade somebody else would - an argument which I have often heard used to justify every folly and every vice.[48]

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[47] Carlotte Smith, *Desmond*, (London, 1792), pp.162-164.
[48] Charlote Smith, *The Wanderings of Warwick*, (London, 1794), p.59.

This novel also contained the story, narrated in Robert Renny's travel account, of a young white woman displaying so much cruelty in beating a slave child, as to make her suitor change his mind about their impending marriage.[49]

Thus, as in *Desmond*, the sensibilities of the hero of the second novel, Captain Warwick, were deeply disturbed by slavery, again, giving readers a sympathetic character to associate with. On first arriving in the West Indies, Warwick said:

> I beheld with wonder droves of black people going into the fields under the discipline of the whip, sometimes in the hands of one of their own colour, or a mulatto, as whipper-in while a white man superintended. When I considered that these were creatures endured with a portion, and, as some have considered, an equal portion, of that reason on which we so highly value ourselves, I turned with horror and indignation from such a spectacle. Gradually I became habituated to the sight, yet it still disgusted and distressed me; and perhaps the fidelity and intelligence of my negro servant Perseus, to whom I had given his liberty as soon as he became my property, made me feel for these poor people particular commiseration.[50]

Yet at other times in the novel, slavery did not appear as a completely vile institution. Whilst the narrator said that slaves were punished for 'trifling' faults, it was also argued that 'without such wholesome severity masters would not be able to keep their slaves in subjection,'[51] and that in general, slaves were not ill-treated since it was not in the interests of planters to treat them so.[52] Also, it was suggested that the slaves were better off than the English poor, and that 'dreadful as the condition of slavery is, the picture of its horrors is often overcharged.'[53]

Koromantyn Slaves

One of the main themes of the book was the benefits of Christianity in civilising humanity. In a Hobbesian philosophy, 'man' (whether white or black) is seen as of a

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[49] Smith, *Wanderings*, pp.53-55.
[50] Smith, *Wanderings*, pp.45-46.
[51] Smith, *Wanderings*, p.52.
[52] Smith, *Wanderings*, pp.59-60.

base and savage nature; a being with purely corporeal appetites, and with a capacity for cruelty. The suggestion was thus very clear that the point and benefit of Christianity in this situation, both for the individual and for society, was to act as a moral force against human desires and instincts. A suggestion in the novel was that slavery was a system which, in giving such extreme powers of some people over others, was necessarily open to abuse, whereas 'good' Christian men were those capable of managing the system to the benefit of the slaves. Whilst the overall perspective of the text had leanings against slavery, the other suggestion at work was that good Christians would be enlightened planters who would not only ensure the well-being of their slaves, but even see to their slaves' 'improvement' through Christian teaching.

In the *Koromantyn Slaves* before the hero, Charles, arrived in Jamaica, the plantation he inherited had been run on enlightened Christian teaching and practices. On his arrival, the overseer, Elmer, informed Charles:

> The Negroes of Delavel have been superintended by an enlightened mind and humane heart, drawing their principles of action from that code of justice and mercy which is so infallible a guide to fallible man.[54]

So, whilst the overall impression of the book leant against slavery, the point was clear that the superiority of Christian teaching could give 'worthy' men and women the authority to have power over others, and to use it to the good of their subjects. The suggestion was that slavery, under such governance, not only became a humane and benevolent institution; but could even be used to 'teach' blacks how to be prepared to use freedom 'correctly.' Elmer continued his speech:

> I am fully justified by personal observation to say, that, by steadily pursuing the judicious system of Mr. Delavel, his slaves will be qualified for the enjoyment of that

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[53] Smith, *Wanderings*, p61, and quotation, p.65.
[54] Anon. *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.88.

> freedom which shall convert them from bondsmen into the comfortable state of industrious peasantry, living in peace, respectability, and security; fulfilling the duties of life, thought worthy recipients of its social benefits, and with hearts open to all the endearing connections which confer on it value; content with their lot, and happy in a due state of subordination.[55]

Indeed, the example of a 'bad' plantation, and 'evil' overseer, was one that lacked any Christian teaching or principles either on the part of the white ruling class, or the slaves:

> [Bromley's] slaves are treated with the greatest rigour; the old deprived of proper sustenance; the young uninstructed, over-worked, badly fed, and suffered to live in the grossest state of sensuality, in which they are encouraged by the base example of their tyrant.[56]

Thus the suggestion was that with a benevolent paternalist Christian master, slavery could be tolerable (although, of course, in this view, freedom was preferable). What was more, 'good' management could prepare slaves for freedom.

The theme of 'preparing' slaves for freedom became popular in the first decades of the nineteenth-century. As the prospect of emancipation became more likely, planters feared that freed slaves would refuse to work and their plantations would go to ruin. One aspect of fear that emerged in the male discourse was linked, as I have shown, to capitalism and profits (men's texts were far more concerned with profit, which was not a theme of female texts). This fear was based around constructed images of slaves as naturally lazy and idle. Thus, whites expressed fears that abolition of slavery would lead to the decline of their production and property. This is reflected in the texts themselves and in newspapers. Renny stated that immediate emancipation would lead to the 'most frightful consequences,' and stated that the first thing that should happen is the compensation of planters.[57]

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[55] *Koromantyn Slaves*, pp.95-96.

The issues of moral and spiritual growth were shown in novels where slaves were portrayed as thankful for their introduction and conversion to Christianity. About one of the oldest slaves at Delavel the author narrated:

> The old Negro frequently interrupted the narration of this account, with simple but eloquent expressions of gratitude to "good massas," for having led him away from these superstitions to "believe in one true God; for teaching him to pray, to rest on dear Redeemer, who required no sacrifice but broken and contrite heart, and life good and holy;" and he seemed to shrink with horror at the remembrance of the many human victims he had known sacrificed to appease the anger of their malignant deity.[58]

This theme was also present in suggestions that only Christianity could change the slaves, and prevent the possibility of rebellion:

> Let the example of St. Domingo, and the dictates of self preservation, like the handwriting against the wall, warn them to enter upon and to extend the work of benevolence; and with a persevering spirit to study the improvement, religious and moral, of the beings whom the providence of God has placed beneath their influence and subjected to their power. Thus the objects of it will be progressively led to civilization and mental elevation; gradually prepared for further and further indulgences, to issue in the light of liberty.[59]

The System, another female novel, contained similar themes. The novel opened with the two protagonists debating about slavery. William argued:

> You chose the site of your habitation beneath these burning rays, you extended its lines, you fitted it up with instruments of violence, you peopled it with the white oppressor and the sable victim; you caused the groans of agony to respond beneath the sounding lash, and dare you now assert you do not make the hell you live in?[60]

Indeed, rather than containing descriptions, the novel was almost entirely anti-slavery speeches filled with sentimentality and notions of Christian superiority, or examples of atrocities committed against slaves, and the novel ended with a four page plea to

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[56] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.97.
[57] Renny, *History*, p.164.
[58] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.140.
[59] *Koromantyn Slaves*, pp.246-247.
[60] Tonna, *The System*, p.3.

readers to take a stance against slavery. One key theme was white sexual use of female slaves or free coloureds:

> Instead of encouraging lawful honest matrimony among your negroes, you leave them to live in the state of the brutes that perish, slaves to their own passions no less than to yourselves. You take the young females to be the victims of your vicious inclinations.[61]

which perhaps illustrated the gendered view of the author. This theme formed the key plot, since a free coloured, Caesar, whom William befriended (and whose father was a plantation master) formed a rebellion when his sister was taken as the mistress of a plantation owner, Seton. William was told of the rebellion, due he said, to the Christian 'conscience' of the slaves to whom he had given religious instruction, and was taken to the woods to meet Caesar. However, Caesar was unrepentant and replied to William's speech of having come to 'set before you the error of your ways, and invite you to repentance: to promise security to your lives; or at least, strict secrecy till that be granted'[62] that he should go and tell the whites the error of their ways. Finally Caesar and his accomplices were captured, tried and executed.

This discussion would seem to suggest that contemporary female novels were more 'anti-slavery' than female travel accounts. Clearly the novels had stronger anti-slavery themes. Yet the novels also relied on constructed images of slaves as objects and as different from Europeans. Also, the novels were heavily religious and sentimental, and thus contained the suggestion that Christianity was superior to any African beliefs, and that the spread of Christianity was the only 'hope' for black people.

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[61] Tonna, *The System*, pp.26-27.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that whilst many female texts purported anti-slavery views, they tended to put forward a rather mild image of slavery, and they did not portray it as a completely indefensible institution. Indeed, in convention with acceptable eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gender ideals, white women's comments against slavery tended to those that were religious and moral. Women disapproved of slavery not so much for philosophical or humanitarian reasons, but because the institution of slavery tended to lead to a 'degenerate' society in which white men became involved in 'immoral' and 'licentious' sexual relations with slaves, and slaves were either promiscuous, or engaged in other equally 'immoral' behaviour such as stealing or lying. Thus, such views comprised female anti-slavery sentiments. other women's comments, like male texts, tended to suggest that slavery was not totally odious, since slaves at least had good material benefits and were thus better off than the poor in England or Ireland.

The next chapter will analyse the views of the landscape in female and male texts. Here I shall examine the extent of women's participation in empire building, and the degree to which, like men, women held an 'imperial' vision.

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[62] Tonna, *The System*, p.141.

CHAPTER 8:

'BRAVE NEW WORLD' THE AESTHETICISED LANDSCAPE OF PLANTATION SLAVERY

This chapter explores how the very narration of the landscape in white female writing from the slavery period in the Caribbean contributed to the racial discourse. This was because the islands were created and constructed in writing as luxurious places of natural abundance and wealth, which was there for European pleasure and profit. Racial ideology justified colonial rule and the 'right' of Europeans to colonise wherever it was profitable for them to do so. Female (and male) authors spoke of the excess and decadence of plantation life, which was justified on the grounds of there being so much available to consume.

Despite the opulent lifestyle of slaveholding families, it was as if the luxury was indeed 'natural' since no work was *visibly* done. As well as this lifestyle based on the consumption of luxury goods, the way the women (and men) wrote about the landscape revealed the extent to which they were imbued with a capitalist spirit that gave them a vision, which sought to possess other lands and peoples for profit.[1] In addition to this, there was a degree to which the landscape itself was 'racialised' since land that could not be colonised was viewed in a menacing way. Also, the houses of whites were built in 'commanding positions' that demonstrated their power and authority over the colonised lands and peoples. This chapter will address each of these issues in turn, demonstrating similarities and differences in the white female and male accounts. Women's involvement in this kind of 'empire building' will be shown, and how 'race' and notions of superiority were implicit in landscape narrations.

Opulent Lives

British planters in the Caribbean islands during the slavery period lived a life marked by extravagance and luxury. This was shown in a tremendous variety of sources from works of fiction, travel accounts and published journals, diaries and letters, and also in plantation manuscript records and accounts books. Indeed, Lady Nugent's view, in 1801, that 'it is wonderful the immense sums of money realized by sugar in this country, and yet all the estates are in debt,'[2] was widespread among both contemporaries and historians alike.[3] The islands were constructed in writing as exciting new places of natural abundance and wealth, and as opportunities for European pickings. This attitude was demonstrated in Janet Schaw's comment: 'Why should we blame these people for their luxury? Since nature holds out her lap, filled with every thing that is in her power to bestow, it were sinful in them not to be luxurious.'[4]

The extent of this luxurious lifestyle was clearly evident in the female texts. Texts were full of narratives of extravagant dinners and balls, and of a luxurious lifestyle based around consumption. Indeed, the vast majority of texts gave 'list-like' narratives describing every aspect of natural produce available, including favourite island dishes and descriptions of how they were presented and prepared, as well as 'natural history' descriptions of flora, fauna, and wildlife. At one plantation, Janet Schaw wrote: 'We had a family dinner, which in England might figure away in a

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[1] Pratt called this vision 'the seeing eye,' *Imperial Eyes*, p.7.
[2] Wright (ed) *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.77-78.
[3] See Chapter 2 for a discussion of historians' comments on the economic aspects of slavery and the demise of the planters.
[4] Schaw, *Journal*, p.95.

newspaper, had it been given by a Lord Mayor, or the first Duke in the kingdom.'[5]

Then going on to describe typical dishes at such meals, Schaw wrote:

> I have now seen Turtle almost every day, and tho' I never could eat it at home, am vastly fond of it here....Here they are young, tender, fresh from the water, where they feed as delicately, and are as great Epicures, as those who feed on them. They laugh at us for the racket we make to have it divided into different dishes. They never make but two, the soup and the shell....The shell indeed is a noble dish, as it contains all the fine parts of the Turtle baked within its own body; here is the green fat, not the slabbery thing my stomach used to stand at, but firm and more delicate than it is possible to describe. Could an Alderman of true taste conceive the difference between it here and in the city, he would make the Voyage into the other world before he left the table.

Schaw feasted on these offerings with epicurean delight, and almost sensual pleasure.

She then went on to describe in detail, the layout of a typical family dinner:

> The method of placing the meat is in three rows the length of the table; six dishes in a row, I observe, is the common number. On the head of the centre row, stands the turtle soup, and at the bottom of the same line, the shell. The rest of the middle row is generally made of fishes of various kinds, all exquisite....The two side rows are made up of vast varieties: Guinea fowl, Turkey, Pigeons, Mutton, fricassees of different kinds intermixed with the finest Vegetables in the world, as also pickles of every thing the Island produces.....The second course contains as many dishes as the first, but are made up of pastry, puddings, jellys, preserved fruits etc....The pastry is remarkably fine, their tarts are of various fruits, but the best I ever tasted is a sorrel, which when baked becomes the most beautiful Scarlet, and the sirup round it quite transparent. The cheese-cakes are made from the nut of the Cocoa. The puddings are so various, that it is impossible to name them: they are all rich....They have many dishes that with us are made of milk, but as they have not that article in plenty, they must have something with which they supply its place, for they have sillabubs, floating Islands, etc. They wash and change napkins between the courses. The desert now comes under our observation, which is indeed something beyond you. At Mr Halliday's we had thirty two different fruits....They have a most agreeable forenoon drink, they call Beveridge, which is made from the water of the Cocoa nut, fresh lime juice and sirup from the boiler, which tho' sweet has still the flavour of the cane. This the men mix with a small proportion of rum; the Ladies never do.[6]

Such lavish meals were a common occurrence in all texts. Mrs Nugent's journal contained many similar descriptions and comments of consumption patterns in Jamaica. On first arriving she noted of the dinner that there was 'a turtle at the head of

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[5] Schaw, *Journal*, p.95.
[6] Schaw, *Journal*, pp.95-98.

the table, and all sorts of odd dishes covering it.'[7] With reference to the first dinner given at King's House, she said, 'I must remark the loads of turtle, turkeys, hams, and whole kids, that crowded my table.'[8] At a ball, she 'Was conducted to a sort of throne, covered with pink silk and draperies festooned with flowers. The decorations of the room were beautiful, and the supper was superb: one dish I shall never forget; it was roasted peacock, placed before me, with all the feathers of the tail stuck in, and spread so naturally, that I expected every minute to see him strut out of the dish.'[9] Mrs Nugent had ample opportunity to have dinners prepared for her as she went on a tour of the plantations of the island in her role as governor's wife. At one plantation she said, 'we breakfasted in the Creole style. - Cassada cakes, chocolate, coffee, tea, fruits of all sorts, pigeon pies, hams, tongues, rounds of beef, &c. I only wonder there was no turtle....His house is truly Creole. The wood-work mahogany - galleries, piazzas, porticoes, &c. In front a cane-piece, and sugar works, with plenty of cocoa-nut trees and tamarind trees, & c.'[10]

Then again, at another plantation, Nugent wrote:

> Our dinner, at 6, was really so profuse, that it is worth describing. The first course was entirely of fish, excepting jerked hog, in the centre, which is the way of dressing it by the Maroons. There was also a black crab pepper-pot, for which I asked the receipt....The capons, ham, tongue, crab patties, &c. &c; &c. - The third course was composed of sweets and fruits of all kinds.[11]

And finally commented:

> I don't wonder now at the fever the people suffer from here - such eating and drinking I never saw! Such loads of all sorts of high, rich, and seasoned things, and really gallons of wine and mixed liquors, as they drink! I observed some of the party, to-day, eat of late breakfasts, as if they had never eaten before - a dish of tea, another of coffee, a bumper of claret, another large one of hock-negus; then Madeira, sangaree hot and cold meat, stews, and fries, hot and cold fish pickled and plain,

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[7] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.8.
[8] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.13.
[9] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.41.
[10] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.55-56.
[11] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.69-70.

> peppers, ginger, sweetmeats, acid fruit, sweet jellies - in short, it was all as astonishing as it was disgusting.[12]

It was not just the Governor's wife who encountered opulence. Mrs Carmichael feared, at one dinner, that the table would break due to the vast quantities of luxurious dishes placed on it. [13]

Whilst it could seem that describing meals and dinner parties could be of particular feminine interest, male accounts were very similar in their descriptions of sumptuous dinners and general opulent life in the Caribbean. John Stewart wrote that:

> When an entertainment is to be given, no expense or pains are spared to render it as sumptuous as possible. The table is spread with a profusion and variety of all the viands and delicacies which industry or money can procure. Different courses do not come in succession, but the table is at once loaded with superabundance; flesh, fish, fowl, game, and different vegetables appear at once to the view, in a style which rather shews the hospitality and abundance of the master or mistress of the feast....After the removal of the dinner, the desert is ushered in, consisting of tarts, cakes, puddings, and a profusion of sweet-meats, which make a still more magnificent display than the dinner; while various wines (kept cool by wet towels), liquors, &c. are handed round to the guests by the black attendants.[14]

Lewis said of one dinner 'We had at dinner a land tortoise and a barbecued pig, two of the best and richest dishes that I ever tasted,' and 'Some of the fruits here are excellent, such as shaddocks, oranges, grandelloes, forbidden fruit; and one between an orange and a lemon, called "the grape or cluster fruit," appears to me quite delicious. For the vegetables, I cannot say so much, yams, plantains, cocoa poyers, yam-poys, bananas, & c. Look and taste so much alike, that I scarcely know one from the other.'[15]

Renny wrote of the planters:

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[12] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.57.
[13] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.34.
[14] Stewart, *An Account of Jamaica*, pp.187-188.
[15] Lewis, *Journal*, pp.151-152.

> When a stranger enters their humble dwellings...he is surprised at the elegance of their furniture, the quantity of their plate, the quality of their food, and the richness and profusion of their wines; - with all of which, the unostentatiousness of their dress, houses, and manners, forms a striking, and a pleasing contrast.[16]

And Bayley said, in his chapter about food:

> "How shall I get this gourmand stanza through?" says Byron, when describing a dinner in one of his most talented works. Reader, I will take up the expression: how shall I get this gourmand chapter through? Not surely by continuing to number the luxuries of Barbados, where luxuries are in "numbers numberless," but rather by dropping the subject altogether and flying to another not less interesting, viz. The joys of Bacchus, and the respect paid to his jovial godship in the West Indies.[17]

As well as describing food and luxurious consumption, Bayley's description of a typical hunt also illustrated the opulent and excessive lifestyle of plantation slavery.

He said:

> It appears that a party of gentlemen mount their horses, and proceed to an open plain, whither their servants are sent before them; on their arrival they find a table prepared for them, laden with fowls, ham, beef, and other luxurious viands, and wine of the choicest description; here they sit down and enjoy themselves, eating, and drinking, and chatting, with their guns loaded by their sides. Their servants are then sent to look out, and the moment a covey of birds appears in sight, they run to the sportsmen, crying "Massa, plover da come - plover da come - "plover da come!" whereupon the aforesaid sportsmen immediately rise from their seats, and levelling their weapons at the unfortunate victims, bring down as many as dame Fortune thinks it proper to allow. When they have had what they call tolerably good sport, they remount their horses and ride home in peace.[18]

On the whole, then, both female and male accounts stressed the luxurious consumption patterns of plantation societies. Some gender differences may have occurred in writing in that women, perhaps, devoted more attention describing *details* of the dishes and the table, whereas men's accounts were more summary in nature. Or gendered concerns can be seen in Bayley's description of the hunt, which did not appear in female texts. The overall impression for the reader was, however, similar: the Caribbean was constructed as a land of abundance and excess that was there for European enjoyment.

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[16] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, p.213.
[17] Bayley, *Four Years Residence*, p.150.
[18] Bayley, *Four Years Residence*. P.148.

Whilst at several points Mrs Carmichael documented the excessive dinner parties given in the Caribbean,[19] she suggested that they were not a norm among slaveholding families as general evening meals. Indeed, she said that many travellers got a false impression of the opulence of the islands in their visits, since they generally went only to dinner parties. Indeed, she stated 'How many families are there at this moment, whose dinner consists daily of jack-fish, - and either a roasted plantain, or yam, with occasionally as a treat, a bit of salt port.'[20] She went on to suggest that whilst a luxurious life may have been more normal in the earlier years of slavery, by the time Carmichael was writing, near its demise, she suggested that planters simply could no longer afford such luxuries.

Of course, in this discussion, I am not concerned with the 'truth' of the accounts, or in seeing them in a factual way. Rather, the point is that by constructing the islands in this manner in writing, the authors were 'creating the rest of the world for the domestic subject' of European readership.[21] Also, all texts had a tendency to 'list' all the produce of the islands, and describe them in detail. In books about the islands, often whole chapters were dedicated to categorising everything form the soil and weather to the vegetation, animals and food. In the form of natural history books, these texts read more like 'stock takes' of what was available for use than simple descriptions of the islands.

There was also the suggestion in texts that slaves mimicked masters and mistresses in both their style of dress and their consumption of luxury items. Female

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[19] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, pp.23-24, 32, 34.
[20] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.52.

[21] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.4.

texts mentioned the elaborate and ornate style of black and coloured women's clothes and jewellery, which they stated could be attractive if it were 'less showy.'[22] Texts also referred to slaves stealing luxury items to have their own dinners and balls. Indeed, as female texts did, Bayley related numerous stories of slaves stealing, and this again supported the idea of slavery as a benevolent institution, since a certain amount of such slave behaviour, it was suggested, was tolerated. When telling of secret dances that slaves organised for themselves (see quotation on page 125), Bayley suggested, in a very mocking and humorous way, that slaves would pilfer all kinds of luxury items -- including champagne, various meats and deserts -- from their owners without any fear. As noted earlier in Chapter 6, the use of humour in this way was very powerful. It not only constructed an image of slaves as roguish, but also contained the implicit suggestion that slavery was not so terrible if slaves were not afraid to adopt such behaviour.

Natural Abundance

Yet despite this conspicuously luxurious life, slaves were largely invisible and it was almost as if this abundance and plenty was indeed naturally provided by the island, since no visible work was done. Renny made some reference to this when he said:

> In tropical regions, the necessaries of life are so easily procured, frequently springing spontaneously, and the protection from the inclemencies of Heaven are so little required, and so easily attained, that the energies of the human mind being never excited, are suffered to remain in eternal slumber.[23]

It is evident, however, that the luxurious and complicated dishes described as the norm on planters' tables, did not just 'spontaneously spring' forward from nature. Instead, they would have been the result of many hours of arduous work on the

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[22] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.24; Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.36, Flannigan, *Antigua*, p.136, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.81.
[23] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, p.161.

plantation, looking after livestock, killing and preparing it, maintaining kitchen gardens for vegetables and fruit, as well as creating, cooking and presenting dishes. Slave work of all kinds was, however, was largely ignored in texts. Indeed, where slave labour was mentioned, (as noted in Chapter 7) it tended to form part of an aestheticised view of the wider beauty and novelty of the plantation landscape.

Landscape Narrations

The descriptions of the landscape itself also illustrates the extent to which white Europeans assumed that their 'race' justified them in taking and ruling other lands and peoples. Descriptions in this area linked the aesthetic landscape descriptions to the theme of profit and capitalist enterprise. Descriptions of the islands created them as some 'other world' possessing beauty, allure and hints of sensuousness that those who had not stepped outside the 'northern clime' could possibly imagine.[24] Lloyd wrote of Bermuda:

> I feel how inadequate is language or pencil to represent the entrancing loveliness of the scene. We children of the north know nothing of such verdure as the eye here rest on, nothing of such undimmed splendour of sunshine as here illumes every object; our imaginations cannot realize such intense and glowing azure sky, such lucid and transparent water, which, in the full blaze of the meridian sun, looks like one vast lake of burnished gold, and reflects the whole landscape with a distinctness and brilliancy almost surpassing that of the objects themselves.[25]

Similarly, Schaw said:

> I have heard or read of a painter or poet...that when he intended to excell in a Work of Genius, made throw around him every thing most pleasing to the eye, or delightful to the senses. Should this always hold good, at present you might expect the most delightful epistle you ever read in your life, as whatever can charm the sense or delight the Imagination is now in my view.[26]

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[24] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.65-66.
[25] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.65-66.

Staying at the 'Eleanora' plantation, Schaw rejoiced in the vivid colour and scent of flowers outside her bedroom window, which 'glow with colors, which only the western sun is able to raise into such richness, while every breeze is fragrant with perfumes.'[27] And then went on to say:

> the beauty, the Novelty, the ten thousand charms that this Scene presents to me, confuse my ideas. It appears a delightful Vision, a fairy Scene or a peep into Elysium; and surely the first poets that painted those retreats of the blessed and good, must have West India Island sit for the picture.[28]

other authors made comments on the beauty of nights in the Caribbean. Mrs

Flannigan wrote:

> Every author who has written about these "sunburnt isles," has, I think, mentioned the beauties of a West Indian night, and well worthy it is to be praised. The sky is of a deeper and more lovely blue, almost approximating to violet; and the atmosphere is so much clearer than in England, that many stars are visible to the naked eye which there require the aid of a telescope. The larger planets glitter with a refulgence unknown to the more temperate latitudes[29]

This quotation almost echoed Lloyd's:

> No where have I seen such glorious sunsets; there is such a flood of purple and amber in the sky, such radiant vistas of gold and crimson, that you could almost fancy you saw the portals of another world.[30]

And Mrs Nugent commented on the view from her window, which she said was:

> Enchanting indeed. Imagine an immense amphitheatre of mountains, irregular in their shape and various in their verdure; some steep and rugged, other sloping gently, and presenting the thickest foliage, and the most varied tints of green, interspersed with the gardens of little settlements, some of which are tottering on the very brinks of precipices, others just peep out from the midst of cocoa-nut trees and bamboos, the latter looking really like large plumes of green feathers. The building are like little Chinese pavilions, and have a most picturesque effect. In front is a view of the sea, and the harbours of Kingston, Port Royal, Port Henderson, &c. and then the city of Kingston, the town of Port Royal, all so mixed with trees of different sorts, and all so new to an European eye, that it seemed like a paradise; and Clifton, where I stood, the centre of the blissful garden.[31]

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[26] Schaw, *Journal*, p.90.
[27] Schaw, *Journal*, p.90.
[28] Schaw, *Journal*, p.91.
[29] Flannigan, *Antigua*, p.170.
[30] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.194.
[31] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.25.

In reality, slave labour in the cane fields was punishing and cruel, but authors saw even this in an aestheticised way. Schaw, for example, on seeing Antigua for the first time, said:

> The beauty of the Island rises every moment as we advance towards the bay; the first plantations we observed were very high and rocky, but as we came farther on, they appeared more improved, and when we got into the bay, which runs many miles up the Island, it is out of my power to paint the beauty and the Novelty of the scene. We had the Island on both sides of us, yet its beauties were different, the one was hills, dales and groves, and not a tree, plant or shrub I had ever seen before; the ground is vastly uneven, but not very high; the sugar canes cover the hills almost to the top, and bear a resemblance in colour at least to a rich field of green wheat; the hills are skirted by the Palemetto or Cabbage tree, which even from this distance makes a noble appearance.[32]

She described the appearance of plantations and cane fields later as 'noble,'[33] and said that the cane fields of St. Christopher's provided a wonderful sight since they were 'in their greatest glory;'[34] and added: 'I was surprised at the complete cultivation I met every where. The whole Island is a garden divided into different parterres.'[35]

Mrs Nugent also aestheticised the plantation landscape when she said at the Moro estate:

> You can't go ten yards from the door, without descending; but the view is really charming. In front you see a rich vale, full of sugar estates, the works of which look like so many little villages, and the soft bright green canes, from this height, seem like velvet. The guinea-corn fields make a variety in the green, and the canes that are cut are of a brownish hue; which, with the cocoa-nut and other trees, make a delightfully varied carpet.[36]

Maria Riddell in her natural history of St. Christopher, wrote 'The lands a little above the town rise gradually towards the mountains; the view of that part of the island from

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[32] Schaw, *Journal*, p.74.
[33] Schaw, *Journal*, p.120.
[34] Schaw, *Journal*, p.125.
[35] Schaw, *Journal*, p.130.
[36] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.70.

the sea is extremely beautiful, as the various plantations in the valley, with the buildings and the trees about them, appear to great advantage.'[37] And with regard to Nevis, she said: 'the houses, plantations, sugar-works, &c. dispersed on its declivity, give it a very pleasing appearance.'[38]

In the same vein, Mrs Carmichael wrote about her first sight of St. Vincent:

> The scene which rose before me that morning with the sun, was of the most captivating kind. I saw a succession of small valleys, covered with canes and pasturage, intermingled with slight elevations in the fore-ground, upon which here and there a dwelling-house could be distinguished, while the prospect was terminated by mountain heaped upon mountain, in that wild confusion that told of those awful convulsions of nature to which these tropical regions have been subject. The sea, too, - such a sea as in the temperate latitudes is rarely seen, held the island like a gem in its pure bosom; and mirrored there, the anchored ships, the moving boats, and the varied shores.[39]

Carmichael later spoke of the 'charming cultivation' she met with everywhere.[40] So, in these views, the landscape of the plantation, involving cultivation everywhere possible to make profits for the whites, was narrated in aesthetic terms. The cane fields added to the charm and beauty of the 'prospect.'

The Racialised Landscape

This added to how the landscape itself was racialised in the discourse, since land that could not be conquered or that was not under the control of Europeans, was narrated in different terms. Here, land that was under white control, and that had been organised, fenced, and cultivated, was regarded as beautiful. Land that was untamed and the interior of islands were seen in a more menacing way. Maria Riddell, for example, wrote:

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[37] Riddell, *Voyages*, pp.26-27.
[38] Riddell, *Voyages*, p.34.
[39] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, pp.3-4.
[40] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.7.

> It is impossible to describe the various scenes and views these mountains exhibit, as the landscape never continues the same for the space of two miles; in some places, you see nothing but vast rocks, high precipices, and frightful caverns; in others, deep vales, and hanging woods; and then the eye is caught from these to the more pleasing views of rich pastures, grazing cattle, and little gardens dispersed on the slopes of the hill.[41]

Male texts gave similar views. Describing the landscape of Jamaica in 1807, for example, Robert Renny said:

> The eye almost satiated with viewing the fertile vales, and gently swelling hills, is now lifted up to those immense masses of rock piled upon each other by frequent earthquakes, till they reach the Heavens, and the awful view fills the mind with mingled sensations of horror and delight. The abrupt precipices and inaccessible cliffs, covered with impenetrable forests; the awful size of the Blue Mountains, their tops dimly seen through the fleecy cloud, fill the imagination with grand conceptions, and thrill the heart with emotions, more nearly allied to terror than joy. But the view is soon turned with delight to the rich and level savannahs, and the plains waving with cane-fields displaying in all the pride of culture and luxuriance of vegetation....The clear expanse of the boundless ocean, whose glassy surface is here and there chequered with lofty ships, ploughing the still and unresisting liquid path, and carrying the commodities of one region, to supply the wants and luxuries of another, adds to the beauty of the prospect.[42]

The language was very revealing of what the whites feared or disliked. Things that were 'impenetrable,' or 'inaccessible,' were awful, and to be feared. Whereas, land that they could conquer, gain control of, and that could yield profits, was viewed as beautiful. The final aspect of beauty for whites was the 'unresisting' water, which allowed their products to be taken back to the 'mother country,' and sold for great profits. Mary Louise Pratt has made similar points, in her analysis of travel writing about South Africa and Latin America. She called these accounts examples of the 'capitalist vanguard,' that sought to possess 'other' lands and peoples in order to make profits. Pratt suggested that this was something more typical of male than female texts. The discussion, in this chapter, however, demonstrates that women had quite similar views with regard to the cultivation of the landscape, and this reflects

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[41] Riddell, *Voyages*, pp.24-5.

women's involvement in empire building. Although women viewed the landscape in very aesthetic terms, the pattern was also true of male accounts, and both appreciated land that could be developed, and feared the impenetrable. Of course, one could argue that such views were merely representative of the eighteenth-century discourse on the aesthetic, which suggested that the ideal way of looking at land separated the setting or scene from the practical or material needs of those who lived there. Thus, in these terms, picturesque scenes were faceless, and merely ornamental. These views stemmed from writing by authors such as Addison or Shaftesbury who suggested that 'polite' gentlemen (and women, presumably) were distinguishable by their ability to take pleasure in beauty and have taste.[43] But we must also be aware of the power of the 'colonial gaze' that saw scenes not only with detached sensibility, but as something actively to be possessed, and as something that could yield enormous profits.

This kind of perspective and description can also be linked to how slaves themselves were viewed. Newly arrived Africans, slaves living in the interior, and field slaves were the more feared. Here, there was a constant juxtaposing of known/unknown, near and far, and interior/exterior as linked to civilised/savage. This was very clearly expressed in Maria Nugent's journal. During the Nugents' residence there were fears of a French attack on the island. At this time, Maria Nugent wrote:

> My spirits are not a little depressed, as [my husband] hinted at the necessity of perhaps sending me and the dear children into the interior of the island, where Mr.

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[42] Renny, *History*, p.95.

[43] There has been a growth in interest in the cultural politics of the aesthetic sphere. Some key texts include Terry Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, 1990); Peter De Bolla's *The Discourse of the Sublime: History, Aesthetics and the Subject* (Oxford, 1989); and Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, 1984).

> Mitchell has kindly offered an asylum; but I am sure that the blacks are to be as much dreaded as the French.[44]

And later,

> I have been told, by the few ladies who remain in Spanish Town, such horrid things of the savage ideas, &c. of the slaves, on the estates in the interior, that I am determined...that I will take my dear children on board a ship, or any where near the coast, from whence we may make our escape, rather than accept of the asylum offered me by Mr. Mitchell.[45]

Thus, Maria Nugent felt that she would rather face the possibility of being captured by the French, than face the 'unknown' slaves in the interior of the island. Fear of the unknown, and the negative associations of blackness and darkness were also illustrated in Bayley's text when he said:

> Every thing was against us: - the night was dark, and the Negroes who received us on the strand were as dark as the night itself. Not a white face was to be seen; but a vast number of gloomy visages, black and mulatto, and mulatto and black, were grinning all around us.[46]

The latent fear in this passage was very evident and was based around acknowledgement of racial differences, and Bayley's perceived vulnerability based on such constructed differences. Again, that this fear was based on racism developed from early travel accounts of Africa was clear. In the passage, Bayley held negative associations with the word and colour black as something unknown, fearful, and not to be trusted. His suggestion of the slaves' 'grinning' was not taken as evidence of their friendliness or helpfulness, but as something menacing with gothic and 'dark' connotations. There was also a keen sense in these comments of the gothic tradition.

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[44] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.237.

Houses and the Colonial Gaze

Apart from celebrating and admiring land that could be conquered and controlled, whites also tended to focus their view on looking out to sea, not inland. Houses and plantations that were described as the most beautiful were those that were in a 'commanding position' (usually facing the sea) and those that had completely mastered the land around them, cultivated it to its maximum capability, and made it look orderly and decorative.

Nearly all authors made references to colonial houses. This led to another major theme of female texts; the description and judgement of various homes and estates on the islands. In these descriptions, the idea of travel as conquest was further explored. The descriptions of houses became another important aspect of European ownership, and also revealed upper-class female ideas of what 'proper' houses were or should be. As in descriptions of the orderly landscape, 'good' houses showed the European capitalist expression of comfort, order and efficiency. As Pratt has noted in discussions of eighteenth-century travel, often what was to be suffered as part of the travel conquest was uncomfortable, dirty or unorganised residences. In female texts from the Caribbean, these were contrasted with their opposite and ideal for efficient and organised European tastes.

One immediate and crucial aspect of the judgement of a house was that it must have a good 'situation' or 'prospect.' This meant that houses should be placed on a hill, or in as high a position as possible, with a 'commanding' view of estates and the surrounding countryside. If possible, the house should also have a view of the sea.

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[45] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.240.
[46] Bayley, *Four Years Residence*, p.26.

Such criteria were clearly examples of European expansion and domination. It was necessary to control the surrounding landscape by dividing it with fences, by cultivating it as much as possible, and when this was done, to build a house with a commanding view of all that was owned and possessed. Pratt sees this as an essential for the 'seeing-man,' 'whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess.'[47]

Mrs Nugent, who toured most of the plantations of Jamaica, had good opportunity to see many houses. Her journal gave many good examples which were representative of other female texts. At Bryan Hall (the house of Bryan Edwards who wrote the *History of the West Indies*), she wrote:

> It really is a beautiful place; the house is a good one, and tolerably well furnished, and has a Turkey carpet in the drawing-room – an extraordinary sight in this country. The house stands rather higher than Arcadia, and is surrounded by pimento (allspice) groves, so laid out, as to make the prospect of the sea and the country more picturesque, through vistas.[48]

It was indicative of the scope of imperial enterprise and expansion that an English gentleman, resident in Jamaica in the eighteenth-century, had a Turkish carpet in his drawing room. The reference to classical literature in the name of the plantation, 'arcadia' after the rural ideal of Ancient Greece, also contained familiar colonial undertones. This house clearly had many of the prerequisites of European taste since it was in a good position, and everything around it was organised to give a good view outwards to the sea, and beyond.

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[47] Pratt used this term as part of her concept of 'anti-conquest,' which described the 'innocent' bourgeois traveller, who supposedly simply travelled and explored, and yet managed to still assert European hegemony. In this idea the 'seeing man' was the traveller who looked out to landscapes he sought to possess. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* .p7

[48] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.83

Further essentials for a well-run house were seen in Mrs Nugent's comment:

> This house is as comfortable as possible. The rooms are good, and well furnished, and the situation is delightful. The town of Montego Bay is situated in an amphitheatre of very high hills. In front a most beautiful bay, full of vessels, and open to the sea. On the hills are all the gentlemen's houses, or those not immediately shopkeepers. These are interspersed with gardens, palms of all sorts, &c. So that, from the town, quite up to the tops of the hills, you see nothing but villas peeping out from among the foliage. Mr. C.'s house overlooks the whole town, bay, &c. &c. and altogether the prospect is lovely. Nothing can exceed the hospitality of our host and his wife....Every thing wears the appearance of content and cheerfulness; the children are well managed, and not young enough to disturb one with their noise.[49]

The capitalist enterprise in all of this was again, comforting to the European. The bay was full of vessels, no doubt bound with goods as part of the triangular trade. The land was cultivated and numerous gardens and houses (of gentlemen only, not shopkeepers) could be clearly viewed. Additionally, the house was well organised, and family and gender roles (happy and cheerful women, quiet and well-behaved children) were appropriately adopted. Finally, all of this was set within a protecting range of hills, the 'savage' and primitive interior lying far enough beyond.

Compare these descriptions with those of 'bad' houses. One house was described as 'dark' and gloomy. All the others we have been at were painted and newly done up, for our reception, while this is dirty and comfortless.'[50] Another was:

> really a most uncomfortable house; the servants awkward and dirty, the children spoiled, and screaming the whole day. As for the ladies, they appear to me perfect viragos; they never speak but in the most imperious manner to their servants, and are constantly finding fault.[51]

Yet another house:

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[49] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.88.
[50] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.72.
[51] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.80.

> although the situation is pretty, looks miserable, and is very low, as well as most intolerably hot. The master of it is a wretched looking man, and all the household are equally meagre, and indeed appearing as if they were half starved; but we had a coarse greasy feast, and were glad to pursue our journey as soon as possible[52]

The 'bad house' appeared to be one that had 'creole indifference to the virtues of comfort, efficiency, cleanliness, variety and taste.'[53] Pratt suggested that white inhabitants of the more provincial areas, were thus criticised for 'failing to develop modern habits of consumption.'[54] This was evident in Nugent's criticisms of the houses she disliked. In addition, she disapproved of the unruly children of these houses, who did not conform to respectable standards of behaviour.

When Mrs Carmichael moved to her new plantation in Laurel Hill, Trinidad, she said:

> The view from the house in front was, for a land view, very extensive: there was a good deal of cultivation, and beyond that a dark thick forest, many parts of which I understood had never been trodden by the foot of man.[55]

The forest, which had never had human contact, added attraction to this scene, since it was something extra to be 'discovered.' Lloyd described Lady Sarah Maitland's house as follows:

> It lies at the extremity of Spanish Point, on an isolated promontory indented with numerous creeks and surrounded with black naked rocks, which make a striking contrast with the white surf of the breakers. From its elevated position, it commands and extensive prospect over the verdant hills of Somerset, Ireland with its fleet, dock-yard, and break-water, while the horizon is bounded by the hundred islands of the great Sound, and the distant zone of coral reefs, over which the high and foaming billows break, in majestic grandeur, and then dash their white spray upon the still waters within the reef.[56]

And with regard to the Archdeacon's house, where she was a guest, wrote:

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[52] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.92.
[53] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.151.
[54] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.151.
[55] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 2, p.115.

> Picture to yourself a very pretty cottage, which, like most of the Bermudian houses, has only one story, and a verandah running along the whole front, covered with multiflora roses, noyau, and other creepers. It lies on a smooth, level plain, in the midst of a valley, shut in on the north-east and west, by hills covered with cedar, and sprinkled with numerous white-roofed houses, which have an exceedingly pretty effect when seen at a distance, rising from amid groves of cedar, with here and there a bright orange, or waving palmetto. The foreground is relieved by magnificent orange and shaddock trees, covered with golden fruit, and scenting the air with their rich perfume. The lawn is skirted with hedges of geranium, the pomegranate with its splendid scarlet fruit, the classic olive, oleander, coreal trees; pride of India, and a variety of flowering shrubs. Towards the south, the house commands an extensive view of the Atlantic, whose blue waters washed the rocky shore which bounds the lawn. It is pleasing to watch, from the terrace, through vistas of cedars, vaulted like gothic arches, the spreading sails of a fine man-of-war proudly rising the waves.[57]

Again, the references to houses in these texts revealed how it was essential for Europeans not only to master the land, but to build their houses with a good position to survey all that they possessed. In addition, they should look out to sea, and look to commercial links between the colonies and to the mother country.

There were far fewer comments concerning houses in male texts than in female writing. This represents a gendered perspective, since the domestic setting was so clearly the women's domain; female authors were more likely to take a keen interest in houses. Many of the male texts, by comparison, focused on what Mrs Carmichael called a 'concern with people not places,'[58] which was, again indicative of gender roles: men were more involved in the 'public' life of the outside world, while women were more concerned with the 'private' domestic setting.

Difficulty in Getting to the Land of Plenty

All of the travel accounts began and ended with the journey at sea. This was narrated as part of an 'adventure' story genre in which the heroine (or hero) underwent all kinds of danger and excitement in order finally to arrive at the mythic land of

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[56] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.121.
[57] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp.33-4.

abundance and pleasure. Then even when on the islands, authors commonly told stories of difficult journeys they made (usually to dinner parties or other plantations) and told of storms or perilous, even life threatening, conditions during such journeys.

As Pratt pointed out, in travel writing of our period as opposed to earlier 'discovery' writing of the seventeenth-century or earlier, travel very often became a 'triumph in its own right,' and what was overcome were 'not military challenges, but logistical ones. The travelers struggle in an unequal battle against scarcity, inefficiency, laziness, discomfort, poor horses, bad weather, delays.'[59] This clearly seemed to be the case in female narratives from the Caribbean, where the danger of travel in the 'interior' presented the most exciting and dangerous part of accounts of the islands. It was also significant that the whites always undertook such perilous journeys in carriages, or, for some of the white men, on horseback. This demarcated their lives totally from those of the black slaves who went everywhere on foot.

Mrs Nugent remarked that when travelling in Jamaica it was frequently 'necessary' to send black slaves on ahead to physically clear the pathways and woods for whites. Indeed, Mrs Nugent made several comments that prior to her arrival at a plantation, the owner would have spent a good deal of effort having his slaves prepare the roads for her. Also, while it was normal for women to view scenes from within houses, whilst white men travelled outside more, it is still the case, even for the men, that most scenes were viewed from within a carriage, or at least from on top of a horse. This was one powerful way that the whites were separated from the blacks. Whites looked out at and down upon slaves.

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[58] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.3.
[59] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.148

The idea of travel as a triumph in its own right against adverse conditions was powerfully expressed in Mrs Nugent's journal (as in all the accounts), in road journeys during storms. On one of many such occasions, Mrs Nugent said:

> Proceed on our journey at 11. A dreadful hill to mount, and the heat beyond description. A tremendous thunderstorm met us, just as we were in a narrow road, with a great precipice on one side, and a hanging rock on the other. The flashes of lightning, and the rain, beating in our faces, almost blinded the poor horses as well as ourselves. We were wet through, for General N. was obliged to throw away the umbrella to save our lives, as we were very near being down the precipice. The kittareen, that was driven by Captain Johnson, close behind us, was thrown down the precipice, and dashed to pieces, but he was active and saved himself.[60]

After this event, on safe arrival at the destination, and after being washed down in rum by servants and given warm soup and every comfort, the party was 'uncommonly cheerful and well.' Their lives may have been pampered and privileged but the adventures on the road during storms seemed to give them a dramatic sense of living, and of possessing the fortitude and strength of spirit to endure such situations. Such qualities appeared as essential for the imperial European. One feels the sense that this was how the 'greatest nation' had managed to create such an expansive empire, through the enterprising spirit of ardent adventurers and travellers, and through their 'racial superiority' over colonised peoples.

NOVELS

Koromantyn Slaves

As in the travel accounts and other novels, the Caribbean was constructed as a place of natural abundance. When he inherited Delavel plantation, Charles' grandfather said

that it is a wonderful opportunity 'To live amid the beauties of an ever-renewed spring, in a spot enriched and adorned with all the bounties and all the beauties of nature.'[61] Like in all the other works, there were descriptions of sumptuous dinners:

> The first invitation he accepted was to the villa of one of [his] friends. The plenty and magnificence of the entertainment were beyond what he had ever witnessed, and he thought could hardly be excelled. The sideboard was loaded with superb plate and exquisitely beautiful glass, the table furnished with the most delicate linen, and the wines most choice and various; and all this in an unornamented, meagre-looking room, with little of convenience, much less of comfort.[62]

other descriptions linked to the discourse on the sublime and aesthetic, as previously discussed. One lengthy passage describing the landscape, could almost have been taken directly from travel accounts:

> He beheld, with an awe which almost suspended respiration, the stupendous and soaring ridges of the Blue Mountains, as the clouds in which they were mantled here and there disclosed them partially to view. This indistinct vision of their form led the imagination to conceive the most awful ideas of what was concealed, from the magnificence of what was revealed; so quickly does the human mind seize upon, and so powerfully is it affected by, mystery of whatever kind. The sensation our voyager experienced was, however, more allied to terror than delight.[63]

This description, written in terms almost identical to those we saw in Stewart's travel account, continued:

> The prospect was indeed in the highest degree magnificent....The abrupt precipice, the inaccessible cliff, seemed to indicate that some grand convulsion of nature had laid her proudest monuments of grandeur in ruins....As he gazed upon the sublime scene before him, Charles...continued fixed to a spot on deck favourable to the contemplation of this interesting view, the bolder features of which, as the vessel neared the coast, became occasionally relieved by many cultivated spots which the hand of industry and a genial climate had awakened into life, and nourished into beauty and fertility.
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> The lower ranges of the mountains became visible in an extended flowing line, and crowned with noble trees of gigantic growth; while the broad savannahs spread their riches to the gratified view in all the exuberance of tropical vegetation. These rich and extensive plains were, for the most part, covered with cane fields, presenting a new species of cultivation to the admiring eye of our young voyager...The whole of this striking picture was bounded by that world of wonder and sublime in itself, the ocean; on whose bosom an ever-moving and interesting picture was seen; innumerable vessels continually passing in various directions; some

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[60] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.109
[61] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.15.
[62] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.31; Stewart, *An Account of Jamaica*, p.115, also commented on this contrast between the simple rooms and furniture, and elegant food.
[63] *Koromantyn Slaves*, p.25.

> crowding into, and some bearing from, the bays and harbours with which the coast is so beautifully indented.[64]

As discussed above, such descriptions were part of the contemporary discourse on the sublime, as put forward by Burke, Addison and Shaftesbury, who developed the powerful notion of disinterested aesthetic contemplation. In the travel accounts and novels of the Caribbean, the writers used this language of popular aesthetics and attached it to imperial interests and ideas of consumption and profit. Whilst such a 'gaze' has traditionally been viewed as upper class, white, European and masculine, this thesis illustrates the extent to which female texts were imbued with a similar spirit and outlook, and were equally influenced by the contemporary debate.[65]

Theodora Elizabeth Lynch

Years Ago

Many elements of descriptions about the landscape in the novel mirrored the comments made in travel accounts. Although we received brief glimpses of slave labour activities in her novel *Years Ago* -- women polishing the wooden floors in the great house, boys fanning flies away from food at dinner -- the narrator herself acknowledged that 'Roasted plantains, black crabs...all appear by magic on the table without a single angry word to the slaves, our attendants.'[66] There was also the view that Jamaica was a land of natural plenty. Referring to slave marketing and work on their own provision grounds, for example, Lynch's protagonist Dorothy said: 'Nature is so bountiful, that very little labor suffices for the growth of corn and vegetables.'[67]

And like Schaw she also thought in aesthetic terms about slaves going to market,

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[64] *Koromantyn Slaves*, pp.26-27.
[65] Re masculinity see Elizabeth A. Bohls, 'Disinterestedness and Denial of the Particular: Locke, Adam Smith and the Subject of Aesthetics,' in Mattick, (ed), *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, pp.16-51.
[66] Lynch, *Years Ago*, pp.14-15.

'Sunday,' she wrote, 'is their grand market day, and a pretty sight it is, people pouring down from the mountains.'[68] Like in the travel accounts, slave houses were viewed an aesthetic part of the plantation landscape:

> The cottages were so prettily scattered about among orange and citron trees, and pleasant fruit trees, the banana, the avocado pear, the mango, and the neesberry, that the effect as a whole was very picturesque.[69]

Again, as in the travel accounts, the wider cultivation of the plantation scenery was viewed as beautiful. Dorothy said:

> How beautiful the sugar-fields look, with the reedy canes bending to the over-passing air. Hugh said that persons who had spent all their lives in England had no idea of the delicate beauty of such a landscape. He told me, that though the English wheat-field was a lovely sight ripe unto harvest, that it had not the peculiar beauty of the sugar-field.
>
> The pliant and graceful sugar-reeds, with their arrow-shaped blossoms of a light and airy purple, swept as waves are swept on the ocean by every breath of air, and presenting an undulating surface on to the far horizon, have a most pleasing effect on the stranger who gazes at them for the first time.[70]

Such descriptions, as outlined above, illustrated the popular contemporary discourse on the sublime. Indeed, at one point, Dorothy said:

> Papa and Hugh discussed the character of Edmund Burke, the greatest statesman and orator of our age. My father said his Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful had given him a high standing among men of letters.[71]

Also, in similarity to the travel accounts, Dorothy described the kind of sumptuous and luxurious dinners in plantation society at a ball, 'I never before saw such an elegant repast. At our own home dinner-parties, the feast was sumptuous enough, but the fruits and flowers at our ball-room were so splendidly arranged.'[72]

Another of Lynch's books, *The Wonders of the West Indies*, had similar themes. This book was actually not a novel, but a descriptive text giving information

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[67] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.36.
[68] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.36.
[69] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.35.
[70] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.212.
[71] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.187.
[72] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.48.

about the natural history of the West Indian islands, and their inhabitants. As such, it contained many 'pioneering imperialist' comments about Europeans. She said:

> It is not surprising, that to the vast continent of America was given the name of the New World, for as one approaches the West India islands the whole face of nature wears a novel aspect.[73]

This kind of comment was typical of the travel accounts. Particularly during the voyage, as the ship approached the Caribbean, writers would speak of the 'novelty' of the scenes, and what a different world the tropics seemed. Also, on seeing islands for the first time, travel account writers would say how 'delightful' and 'new' everything looked, especially, as Susette Lloyd commented 'to the eye of an European.'[74]

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the different ways that female writing created the Caribbean islands as natural places of abundance that were ripe for European consumption (visually in the wonderful landscapes, and physically in consuming every delight the islands had to offer). The narratives gave lists of the produce in a way that was like a shop owner taking stock of her products. Whilst comments about profit were not a direct concern in female texts (in contrast to male writing), the aesthetic descriptions of the plantation landscape in which the cane fields and other cultivation appear as beautiful, were clearly related to ownership and control. Thus, although there were gender differences in the accounts, the effect for the readership would still remain to construct the lands as British 'possessions' that were rewards for the superiority of the 'dominant race.'

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[73] Lynch, *Wonders of the West Indies*, p.1.
[74] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.134.

CHAPTER 9:

WHITE FEMININITY AND THE PATRIARCHAL REGIME

As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has noted in her book about white and black women in the American South, slavery was a patriarchal institution in which white men effectively controlled the whole society.[1] For Fox-Genovese, white women reluctantly accepted their gender position within this power structure. In this chapter, however, I shall argue, that the unique character of slave society meant that conventional eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideals of femininity took on a new significance, which added to the discourse on 'race.' Since white womanhood was constructed as the cornerstone of ideal femininity, black women became constructed in binary opposite terms, with many aspects of their gender role and femininity denied.

I shall argue that because of the unique racial system of slavery, white women accepted the ideal of femininity and aspired to it, and I shall suggest that this has been underestimated by Fox-Genovese and other authors, such as Deborah White, who have commented on white women in slave society.[2] In this sense, with black and coloured women acting as sexual competitors, it was in white women's interests to accept the elevated position that the 'angel in the house' image gave them, and to construct black women as masculinised, inferior objects. Thus, I shall argue that white women colluded in idealised gender roles, which was demonstrated in self-

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[1] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill & London, 1988).
[2] Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, (New York & London, 1985).

representations in their texts, and I shall also argue that the extent of this collusion has been so far underestimated by feminist historians.[3]

This chapter shall analyse these issues as they are illustrated in writing by white women from the slavery period in the British Caribbean islands. I shall discuss several themes including ideals of white femininity and the maintenance of the white female gender role, and patriarchy and the ideals of white masculinity, including the issue of the benevolence of masters. I shall also explore what white women had to gain through supporting patriarchy, and shall contrast the morally superior stance of white women to that of white men (as when white women condemned white male sexual use of slaves) as well as discussing the construction of slave women as 'other.'

Ideals of Femininity in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Centuries

One of the most striking characteristics of eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature was its preoccupation with an ideal of womanhood. This ideal has come to be called, after Coventry Patmore's famous poem, the 'angel in the house.' As Patmore's title suggested, the angel brought an immortal purity to the home that she created and sanctified, a purity which meant her husband regarded her with sentimental and almost religious reverence.[4] Carol Christ suggests that the horror that many people of the period felt at the crassness of the market place, and the fear that the populace was coming to dominate the tone of society, led to a renewed emphasis on a notion of

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[3] Feminist historians have tended to neglect the more 'negative' role that women played in colluding in their own gender oppression, and in empire-building and racism. An exception to this for the modern period is Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London, 1987), which looks at women colluding actively in reinforcing gender roles in line with fascist norms.
[4] Carol Christ, 'Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House,' in Martha Vicinus (ed), *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, (London, 1977), pp.146-162.

gentility which contained a courtly reverence for women.[5] Perhaps not necessarily for the same reasons, plantation slave societies of the British Caribbean tended to place a very high emphasis upon gentility. This could have been due to a fear of 'crassness' caused by the brutality of the system itself, anxiety over the presence of lower class whites who came to the islands in order to seek their fortunes, as well as unease over the crassness of the capitalist enterprise of sugar production.

Typical traits that ideal women had in these periods were a mixture of supposedly 'feminine' values: love, intuition, gentleness, beauty, grace, virtue, sensitivity, emotion, and passivity. Women were not seen to act, or indeed, possess any desire to strive or achieve: this was rather the realm of manhood. As Davidoff *et al* point out, this gendered divide led to a world in which men were not confined within the boundaries of home and family, which women were expected to create and remain in. They say that:

> As so many of our myths and fairly tales confirm, young men go out into the world to seek their fortune while young women, like Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel, remain locked in their towers awaiting rescue by their prince and only then marry and live happily ever after as his wife within his home.[6]

These comments, of course, reflects the traditional split over private/public spheres for women and men respectively. Feminists, beginning with Virginia Woolf, have, of course, shown the ways in which this ideal of the angel in the house limited women' s political power, as well as limiting their psychological freedom.

These gender identities were even reflected in law. Married women were in no way the legal equivalents of their husbands. Women's rights to personal and real

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[5] Christ, 'Victorian Masculinity,' p.146.
[6] Leonore Davidoff *et al, Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960* (London, 1999) pp.11-12.

estate were conditional and qualified, since on marriage, property passed under a husband's control. Personal property that a wife brought to her marriage became her husband's absolutely, just as if he had purchased it himself. Thus, the married women, 'related to her husband as a child to her parents, an apprentice to her master, a ward to her guardian. When a woman married, she entered into a relationship with a person who was assumed to be more intellectually and physically capable than she of exercising the rights and responsibilities which accompanied a full legal existence.'[7] This, however, related only to married women. Single English women enjoyed, for the most part, the same rights and responsibilities as men. They owned property and chattels, which they could bequeath in a will, they could make contracts, sue and be sued. Yet this was only in private law, since in public law, of course, women had no place -- they could not sit in the House of Commons or the House of Lords, vote or sit on juries (although, of course, a woman could inherit the throne).

Constructions of Femininity

Vivien Jones has usefully explained what we mean when we talk of constructions. Using the example of an obituary of a Mrs Barclay from the eighteenth-century, Jones demonstrates how the obituary did not give any detailed or real picture of the woman it described, but rather, idealised her by attributing to her the kind of blanket qualities outlined above. Thus, Jones says, 'what we are faced with here is not a factual account, but a representation; not actuality but ideology, a distinction which has important implications for the way we use texts which...appear to give us accurate documentary evidence about a historical period.'[8] Using a variety of sources

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[7] Janelle Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman in Early Eighteenth-century Common Law and Equity,' *Studies in Eighteenth-century Literature*, (1975), 41, pp.171-81; p.175.
[8] Vivien Jones (ed), *Women in the Eighteenth-century: Constructions of Femininity*, (London & New York, 1990), p.2.

(instruction manuals, medical literature, works of political and educational theory and literary criticism) Jones demonstrates how a whole range of texts have presented such constructions of ideal femininity, and have contributed to the discourse on femininity.

Looking especially at women's own self-representation in nineteenth-century autobiographies, Mary Jean Corbett sees some degree of female collusion over their gendered images and roles.[9] When talking about the suffragette movement and the First World War, for example, Corbett notes that women put forward their arguments for the franchise on the grounds that women would:

> reconstruct society in accordance with female values and need...suffragists did not seek merely an entry to a male-defined sphere, but the opportunity to redefine that sphere. They rejected the characterisation of political life in terms of masculine qualities, and sought to redefine the state by asserting for it a nurturant role.[10]

This illustrates some degree of acceptance of gender roles on the part even of politically active 'feminist' women.

In female texts from British Caribbean, gender and the construction of white femininity were central to women's writing. Gender appeared not only in discussions of roles and ideal behaviour, but in the very structure and narrative techniques of the texts themselves. Pratt noted the tendency for women to write from a perspective of being 'within' the household, with their gaze and view looking out to the landscape and society beyond. This was very clear in the writing by white women in the Caribbean, whose descriptions tended to emanate from their houses and rooms, or from their journeys to and from the houses of other whites. Such a perspective and position was, of course, typical of gender conventions, as discussed above, which

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[9] Mary Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity: Middle Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Women's Autobiographies*, (Oxford, 1992).

placed women's role firmly within the home, while the 'outside' world was the domain of men. These issues surrounding the structure of women's writing will be explored in much greater detail in the next chapter, where I discuss differences between male and female writing. This chapter will concentrate more on women's self-representations.

Ideals of white femininity in women's Caribbean texts

Fox-Genovese states that 'At all levels, southern culture reflected and reinforced a view of the world in which women were subordinate to men.'[11] This was also the case in slaveholding societies in the British Caribbean. In supporting the patriarchal system, white women adopted responsibilities and behaviour that were largely an extension of their gender roles as wives, mothers and daughters; roles that largely defined their identity and self-conception. Such gender roles for white women involved very clear characteristics and patterns of behaviour and duties, which represented the ideals for 'ladies of breeding.' This concept of 'the lady' was the aspiration of white women and the ideal-type of white womanhood.

In all of the texts, one finds examples of ideal qualities of white womanhood, and 'perfect' behaviour. Janet Schaw devoted many pages to extolling the virtues of the white women of Antigua and St. Kitts. She wrote:

> As to the women, they are in general the most amiable creatures in the world, and either I have been remarkably fortunate in my acquaintance, or they are more than commonly sensible, even those who have never been off the Island are amazingly intelligent and able to converse with you on any subject. They make excellent wives, fond attentive mothers and the best house wives I have ever met with. Those of the first fortune and fashion keep their own keys and look after every thing within doors; the domestick Economy is entirely left to them; as the husband finds enough to do

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[10] Corbett, *Representing Femininity*, p.181.
[11] Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, p.195.

> abroad. A fine house, an elegant table, handsome carriage, and a croud of mullatoe (*sic*) servants are what they all seem very found of.[12]

Thus, Schaw's first comments related to women's responsibilities and duties as wives and mothers. Her estimation of them was set within the extent to which women fulfilled these duties. Women's realm was clearly placed within the house and domestic economy, since men's responsibilities were seen as lying outside in public life. Women, in this definition, were happy as long as they had a beautiful house and possessions that could demonstrate their material worth. Schaw then continued,

> The sun appears to affect the sexes very differently. While they men are gay, luxurious and amorous, the women are modest, genteel, reserved and temperate. This last virtue they have indeed in the extreme; they drink nothing stronger in general than Sherbet, and never eat above one or two things at table, and these the lightest and plainest. The truth is, I can observe no indulgence they allow themselves in, not so much as in scandal, and if I stay long in this country, I will lose the very idea of that innocent amusement; for since I resided amongst them, I have never heard one woman say a wrong thing of another. This is so unnatural, that I suppose you will (good naturedly) call it cunning; but if it is so, it is the most commendable cunning I ever met with, as nothing can give them a better appearance in they eyes of a stranger.[13]

Here, Schaw attributed gender characteristics to the influence of the weather (to which she also ascribed 'racial' differences among nations). Yet the contrasting gender role of women compared to men was very clear. Whereas men could indulge themselves in all areas (the hint to sexual relations was mentioned later in the text), the women by contrast were abstemious. This restriction on women's behaviour is a conventional gender role, familiar even in the present, where women are required to behave according to strict rules but where 'typical' male behaviour (in the form of excessive drinking or eating) is viewed as unbecoming for women. So, in the passage by Schaw, it was through maintaining strict discipline and control over themselves in all areas that women upheld their virtuous position in patriarchal slave societies.

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[12] Schaw, *Journal*, p.113.
[13] Schaw, *Journal*, p.113.

Schaw was surprised to find that such discipline even extended to what she regarded as the 'normal' female behaviour of gossiping. She continued her piece:

> As we become better acquainted, their reserve wore off, and I now find them most agreeable companions. Jealousy is a passion with which they are entirely unacquainted, and a jealous wife would be here a most ridiculous character indeed. Let me conclude this by assuring you, that I never admired my own sex more than in these amiable creoles. Their Sentiments are just and virtuous; in religion they are serious without ostentation, and perform every duty with pleasure from no other motive but the very consciousness of doing right. In their persons they are very genteel, rather too thin till past thirty, after that they grow plump and look much better for it. Their features are in general high and very regular, they have charming eyes, fine teeth, and the greatest quantity of hair I ever saw, which they dress with taste, and wear a great deal of powder.[14]

Probably Schaw's comment that a jealous wife 'would be here a most ridiculous character indeed' referred to the sexual activities of white males with female slaves. So, whilst white women may have resented such male behaviour, this did not lead to a rejection of the system or of male patriarchy, but rather to female acceptance of it. Indeed, white women's ability to ignore this situation was presented as a commendable virtue in terms of a lack of jealousy.

Mrs Carmichael, a plantation mistress, represented one of the 'amiable creoles' that Schaw commended. Like in Schaw's account, Mrs Carmichael's books showed how the duties and responsibilities of a planter's wife related directly to her role as wife or mother. However, rather than celebrating this role, Mrs Carmichael was critical and complaining. She wrote:

> The duties of a planter's wife, are most arduous; distant from markets, and all the few comforts that a small West India town even does afford, she must continue to live upon the stock raised on the property, or absolutely go without. The stock therefore becomes her immediate care; and besides being forced to superintend pigs, poultry, &c. with sundry other occupations of the same nature, she must attend also to the garden, and that most minutely; otherwise, she would reap little from it. Then she has to listen to all the stories of the people on the estate, - young, old, and middle aged: all their little jealousies and quarrels she must enter into, and be in short a kind of

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[14] Schaw, *Journal*, pp.113-114.

> mother to them all. The negro children must daily be watched; she must see them swallow their physic when necessary; reward the good, and admonish the bad; visit the sick, - encourage them, - and take, or appear to take, an interest in all that concerns them.[15]

This quotation directly illustrated the role of the wife within the domestic economy of household management. Another theme in the piece was the idea of white women taking on a symbolic role in the system as a 'benign' ruler, handing out 'justice' in slave disputes, and in giving attention to sick slaves. An extension of white women's role as 'natural' carers and nurturers was their adoption of such behaviour with regard to the slaves. This was also found in Schaw's text where she spoke of visiting her friend Lady Isabella Hamilton's estate. On a tour of the plantation boiling house, Schaw commented that she was 'much entertained' by the arduous work of the slaves. She then said 'My Lady had another design, besides satisfying my curiosity in this visit....There were several of the boilers condemned to the lash, and seeing her face is pardon.'[16] Thus, a definite gender division occurred between white men and women with regard to the slaves: whereas patriarchal men handed out punishment, maintaining the fear that the system was based on, the function of white women was to give out the occasional symbolic pardon; thus again reinforcing white femininity with almost religious symbolism of virginal goodness.

The common idea of women being 'trained' for their gender role, and instructed about how to be a perfect woman, was also clear in the texts. Speaking about the women of Bermuda, Lloyd wrote:

> They are tall and slender; though there are a few handsome brunettes, they are generally fair, with light hair and full blue eyes. I have seen some who are really lovely – but it is that evanescent loveliness which does not survive the first bloom of youth. The young girls, who at the age of fifteen or sixteen are just merging into the woman, have an air of charming simplicity – a certain naivete and winningness of

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[15] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.21.
[16] Schaw, *Journal*, p.129.

> manner, which is very pleasing to strangers. They are amiable and affectionate, exemplary in the discharge of the domestic duties, and extremely quiet and retiring...but with few exceptions, the young ladies receive their education in a boys' school. In several of the grammar-schools nearly a third are females, some of whom learn to construe Greek and Latin. As they are great sufferers under a system which prevents them from acquiring the more feminine accomplishments. I am glad to find that several ladies' seminaries are about to be established in Bermuda, which will call forth the talents they undoubtedly possess, and open a wider field for intellectual and agreeable conversation.[17]

Again, Lloyd constructed ideal white femininity in terms of fulfilling domestic duties, and possessing ideal feminine qualities such as affection, charm, timidity and naivete. She also lamented the lack of a school for females in which girls could learn 'feminine' accomplishments such as sewing, dancing, and music, which would make them excellent candidates for the marriage market.

A text, which is full of instructions regarding ideal femininity, is the series of letters written by Mrs Brodbelt to her daughter Jane. Since Jane was at school in England, and away from her parents' instruction, her mother's letters were full of comments regarding Jane's development and behaviour. The editor to the collection stated that 'Dr. Brodbelt was passionately desirous that his daughters, Nancy and Jane, should be well educated and thoroughly accomplished.'[18] Indeed, her parents' letters contained frequent requests for Jane to work hard at school, to improve herself, and especially to guard her posture, and sit up straight. Her mother added that

> I have placed great dependence in you returning to Me a thorough accomplished Girl, and which you pay if you please, as I spare no expense, therefore you can easily judge what a Mortification it must be to a Parent for a Child to return not what he ought to expect, when an immense sum of money has been expended.[19]

Her elder sister, Nancy, who had returned to Jamaica after her education in England, perhaps gave some insight into the reasons for such education. She said 'I have had

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[17] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.86-87.
[18] Mozeley, *Letters to Jane*, p.15.

four dances given me since I have been here, the officers of the sixty-second regiment generally make some of the party; without them there would be very little dancing for there are not many young Gentlemen here.'[20] Clearly parents were desirous that girls should make 'good' marriages, and marry young. This was clear not only in the travel accounts and letters but also in novels. It was thus essential that daughters learned the ideal gender behaviour that would make them good wives.

Such comments on the part of white women revealed their 'collusion' in their own gender oppression. Clearly women accepted, and even enjoyed, their gender role. Amanda Vickery also noted this degree of gender-role 'acceptance' on the part of 'gentile' women of Georgian England. Vickery wrote:

> In their difficulties women told each other to vow to the will of providence and do their duty. Indeed, it was a commonplace that the strict performance of duty generated a degree of secret pleasure, and ladies were relentlessly tutored on how to reach and enjoy the moral high ground.... Women's own letters and diaries do suggest that many did their duty to a round of inner applause, finding a certain exaltation in it. Ladies accepted patriarchy in theory.[21]

Thus, in her study of English women's diaries and letters from a similar time period to my analysis, Vickery also found evidence of a degree of 'collusion' in their own gender oppression on the part of women.

An example of related comments from a male text shows the operation of some gender differences. Bayley, for example, wrote about one Barbadian female he met who was shortly to be married:

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[19] Mozeley, *Letters to Jane*, pp.54.
[20] Mozeley, *Letters to Jane*, pp.30-31.
[21] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven & London, 1998), p92.

> She had ringlets, you will say. Yes, reader, she had dark and glossy ringlets, that reminded me of Laura's. She had fine eyes, you will say: - eyes that sparkled with animation and beamed with all the fire of love; cheeks tinged with the rose blush of modesty, and a brow, polished by the hand of beauty alone; but the fair Barbadian had more than this, or I doubt whether the gallant captain, young and handsome as he was, would have suffered himself to be bound in the silken cords of matrimony: - I say she had more than this, for she had twenty thousand pounds![22]

Bayley's narrative was much more directly focused on the physical aspects of the woman, which he related to behavioural traits. These traits (love, modesty) were the typical ideal feminine traits of the period, as we have seen above. For Bayley, however, the added charm of this particular girl was her dowry. The woman was constructed in the piece in a typical gender role as actively seeking marriage, whereas for the male, this was something to be avoided, unless, of course, as in this case, the financial reward was worthwhile.

Indeed, this gender difference was frequently apparent in male texts, where comments about white women related much more specifically to their physical appearance, which was then linked to personal characteristics. For example, John Stewart wrote:

> The white females of the West Indies are rather of a more slender form than the European women in general, although a tolerable proportion of them are pretty lusty. Their complexion is either a light olive, or pale unmingled white. The former has certainly the advantage: - brunettes, and beautiful ones too, are found in every part of the world, and to those of no country does the West India brunette yield in comeliness and beauty; but the pale white, not being animated by the enchanting bloom that "*speaks so eloquently*" in the cheek of the British fair, has a sickly and languid appearance. Their features are sweet and regular, their eyes rather expressive and sparkling, their hair a fine auburn, their voices soft and pleasing, and their whole air and looks tender, gentle, and feminine.[23]

And Robert Renny said:

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[22] Bayley, *Four Years' Residence*, pp.52-53.
[23] John Stewart, *An Account of Jamaica, and its Inhabitants. By a Gentleman Long Resident in the West Indies* (London, 1808), pp.155-156.

> The Creol ladies are handsome, elegant, and engaging. They appear, at first sight, extremely pale to a newly-arrived European; but their eyes, which are large, languishing, and expressive, beaming with animation, or melting with tenderness, compensate, in some degree, for the paleness of their countenances. In their mode of living, they are, in the highest degree, abstemious; while, in their manners, they are modest, retired, and unobtrusive, like the mother of mankind in her state of innocence....They are distinguished by a tenderness of heart, and a generous compassion for the sick and unfortunate; their hearts are soft, and easily affected with any tender emotion; and from their retired, regular, and abstemious manners, they generally become the most faithful wives, and the most affectionate mothers in the world.[24]

Thus, in male terms, the most important aspect of white womanhood, and the first thing men commented on, was women's physical appearance. This was closely followed, however, by ideal-type feminine characteristics that included tenderness, compassion, passivity, and modesty. Male texts did not comment on women's domestic duties, and this rather appeared as something purely in women's realm and something from which status could be achieved, if women were effective in their household duties.

Images of White Men

The most typical image of white men that appeared in women's writing was that of the strong, benevolent paternalist. The editor to the Brodbelt letters wrote that a portrait of Dr. Brodbelt 'gives the impression of great benevolence and solid worth.'[25] The typical image of the plantation patriarch was also shown in Schaw's text, in her narration about Colonel Martin:

> I long to bring you acquainted with the most delightful character I have ever yet met with, that of Coll. Martin, the loved and revered father of Antigua, to whom it owes a thousand advantages, and whose age is yet daily employed to render it more improved and happy. This is one of the oldest families on the Island, has for many generations enjoyed great power and riches, of which they have made the best use, living on their Estates, which are cultivated to the height by a large troop of healthy Negroes, who cheerfully perform the labour imposed on them by a kind and beneficent Master, not a harsh and unreasonable Tyrant. Well fed, well supported,

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[24] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, pp.211-212.
[25] Mozeley, *Letters to Jane*, p.35.

> they appear the subjects of a good prince, not the slaves of a planter. The effect of this kindness is a daily increase of riches by the slaves born to him on his plantation.[26]

Apart from this typical image of the benevolent paternalist, which was strongly pro-slavery, Schaw also said of the white men of Antigua:

> I think the men the most agreeable creatures I ever met with, frank, open, generous, and I dare say brave; even in advanced life they retain the Vivacity and Spirit of Youth; they are in general handsome, and all of them have that sort of air, that will ever attend a man of fashion. Their address is at once soft and manly; they have a kind of gallantry in their manner, which exceeds mere politeness....what they say, they really mean; their whole intention is to make you happy, and this they endeavour to do without any view or motive than what they are prompted to by the natural goodness of their own natures.[27]

In a rather less romantic style, yet acknowledging many similar male gender characteristics, Susette Lloyd wrote:

> The gentlemen are very domestic, distinguished for their hospitality and attention to strangers, and for the uprightness and integrity which characterize their commercial transactions. Many of them have been called to offices of high trust in other colonies, as well as in the mother country.[28]

So, whereas women were praised for their timidity and abstemiousness, ideal male characteristics, by contrast, were those of upright dependability, integrity and strength on which women could depend for financial security. Again, the separate spheres for men and women were clear: men belonged in the 'outside' world of business, politics and commerce, they were active and competitive, whereas women's role was constructed in opposite terms. Indeed, Carol Christ argues that women's ideal characteristics were deliberately those which were the opposite of the male's, since this made women ideal mates and complements to men.[29] Like the other Caribbean

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[26] Schaw, *Journal*, pp.103-104.
[27] Schaw, *Journal*, pp.111-112.
[28] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.87.
[29] Christ, 'Victorian Masculinity.'

female writers, Mrs Flannigan also noted the benevolence of patriarchal white males and their dignity and dependability, when she said:

> Among them are to be found men of superior knowledge, and distinguished by the possession of all the cardinal virtues; men in whom dignity of station is blended with kindliness of heart, and who, amid the blessings wherewith Providence has blessed them, have an open purse, and an outstretched hand, ever ready to administer to the wants of their less fortunate brethren; men of agreeable manners and pleasing conversation, and whose intercourse with the polite circle in other parts of the world has corrected any little errors they might have imbibed from the West Indian mode of life.[30]

Clearly, in the patriarchal regime, male kindness was viewed as highly desirable for women who were effectively under male control.

It is interesting that in the male accounts, there were few direct references to male characteristics or ideal-types of male gender traits, let alone the kind of physical descriptions that men used in writing about women. Instead, male authors tended to speak generically of 'Creoles' or British settlers, rather than specifically about 'men.' For example, Renny stated that

> the most prominent feature in the character of the white inhabitants of Jamaica is their high spirit of independence. The conscious dignity of man appears in their very looks. No tremulouness of voice, no cringing tone of submission, no disgraceful flexibility of body, no unqualified humbleness of countenance, are ever to be observed in their conduct. A natural consequence of this most laudable characteristic of man, is candour. They speak what they think, without fear or reserve. Far superior to the low arts of duplicity and cunning, they express their sentiments and emotions, without sinister intentions, or terror for the consequences.[31]

Likewise, Stewart wrote,

> The Creoles are....uncommonly active, and fond of every kind of exercise; they are commonly lively and cheerful, being blessed with an abundant flow of spirits, which has, however, sometimes the appearance of levity and frivolity; they are open, generous, and unsuspecting in their natures, and hospitable even to excess.[32]

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[30] Flannigan, *Antigua*, p.203.
[31] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, pp.209-10.
[32] Stewart, *Journal*, pp.152-53.

One area in which men did directly write of male behaviour, however, like women, was with regard to the benevolence of planters. Renny said:

> They interest themselves warmly in all the affairs of their slaves, hear their complaints with attention, and remedy their grievances with promptitude, converse with them freely, and allow them, on all occasions, to speak their sentiments, without restraint. Instead of behaving to them with the cruelty of a task-master, they foster them with the kindness of a friend, or the benevolence of a father.[33]

other male texts that did not directly discuss male behaviour, such as planter narratives, still managed to get across to the reader the image of the plantation master as a benevolent paternalist. This was achieved through several techniques in texts, such as mentioning indulgences and gifts given to slaves, parties for slaves, or, as in the case of absentee planters such as Matthew Lewis, of slave sorrow when the master was returning to England. He narrated this event, for example, as follows:

> when I came down the steps to depart, they crowded about me, kissing my feet, and clasping my knees, so that it was with difficulty that I could get into the carriage. And this was done with such marks of truth and feeling, that I cannot believe the whole to be mere acting and mummery.[34]

Having remained for some time on the plantation, Lewis suggested that his slaves' feelings towards him were real. His interpretation was constructed as logical and convincing for his readership – when he first arrived on the plantation, Lewis suspected that the slaves were overacting in their pleasure at seeing him. However, once they got to know him, the slaves grew to love him, due to his benevolence and humanity. The implication was clear in the narrative, the slaves had genuinely grown to love their master; therefore he must have been a benevolent paternalist.

Yet there was also a negative side to the mythic paternalist – namely his sexual philandering with female slaves. Most female texts commented on this in some

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[33] Renny, *History of Jamaica*, p.214.

way, yet women's distress at and disapproval of such behaviour very rarely, it seems, passed into a rejection of the system. Indeed, the only female text to reject the system because of male behaviour was Mrs Fenwick, when she wrote that slavery was a 'horrid and disgraceful' system in which female slaves were almost made prostitutes; hence her comment: 'I am ready to hail the slave and reject the master.'

More common in female texts was the tendency to deplore male behaviour (and, of course, also to blame female slaves), but not to take this to its conclusion and reject the system. Not long after her arrival in Jamaica, Mrs Nugent was warned about female slaves. She wrote: 'The ladies told me strange stories of the influence of the black and yellow women, and Mrs Bullock called them serpents.'[35] Even Schaw, who so appreciated the virtues of white slaveholding men, also condemned 'the indulgence they give themselves in their licentious and even unnatural amours, which appears too plainly from the crouds of Mullatoes (sic), which you meet in the streets, houses and indeed every where; a crime that seems to have gained sanction from custom.'[36] Yet, of course, she blamed the women for enticing men. So, whilst women did comment on male behaviour that worried or distressed them, this was far outweighed by positive comments of planters' good characteristics such as being hard working, polite, chivalrous, dependable, solid, benevolent etc. Also, the texts (both female and male) constructed the view that it was the lower classes of white men (namely plantation overseers or managers) who indulged in sexual relations with female slaves, and not the solid and dependable planters themselves. Hence, in this way, authors managed to ignore, to some extent, white male behaviour, by simply blaming the 'lower classes.' Here, whilst women condemned male sexual exploits, the

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[34] Lewis, *Journal*, pp.240-1.
[35] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.11.

majority of female texts agreed in fundamental acceptance of slavery as an institution; in the patriarchal position of white men, and in their own gendered place within the system.

At the same time, women showed some other awareness of their subordinate position and of their oppression by white men. Mrs Fenwick lamented the financial problems her husband caused the family with his drunkenness and gambling, and indeed, she was living separately from him. It was also unfortunate that her daughter had similarly married a man in Barbados who was also given to gambling and drinking. Speaking of a direct incident of oppression, Mrs Nugent said:

> I was much amused this morning, with the account of poor Mrs. Brockmuller, who is not even allowed to sit down to table with her lord and master, the Ensign, but is obliged to wait behind his chair; and he has in fact married her to have a good servant, poor thing![37]

Nugent seemed to have little sympathy with the woman in this situation, who was of her own class and 'race.' Her use of 'poor thing!' was not so much sympathetic, but rather to render the woman passive and pathetic. Nugent, who suggested that her own marriage was very happy, clearly had little sympathy here for the woman who had married a tyrant. In contrast, in a rare display of female empathy that breached race lines, Susette Lloyd wrote of a comparable incident in which a former slave gained the funds to buy his wife. She said: 'When her owner offered to give him her deed of manumission, the man positively refused to have one drawn up: and thus the wife is literally her husband's slave.'[38] She viewed this as a terrible abuse of the system. It was interesting that whilst it was acceptable to Lloyd for a white man to buy and sell men and women as slaves, Lloyd saw the black man buying his wife as something

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[36] Schaw, *Journal*, p.112.
[37] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.240.

that was wrong. One could argue that Lloyd was (perhaps unwittingly) showing an element of gender solidarity with the female slave since this situation, of the woman literally being the slave of her husband, represented patriarchal matrimony *par excellence*. Mrs Nugent, at one point in her journal also showed an awareness of the negative side to marriage when she said:

> Mrs Sympson is a widow for the second time, and has an estate of ten or twelve thousand a year, which she manages entirely by herself. They say she is an excellent planter, and understands the making of sugar, &c. to perfection. She has had many proposals, but finding all her admirers *interested*, she has wisely declined taking a third husband.[39]

In this case, the woman was portrayed as being as capable as a man, and, with her own money and plantation, she had no need for a husband. Given a single woman's better status in law, as discussed earlier, such comments show that without financial necessity, many women would have been better off alone than in a patriarchal and potentially damaging relationship.

Class and Class Differences

Of course these issues raise the question of why white women, in this situation, were such ardent supporters of the patriarchal system of slavery. White female gender characteristics had as their aim, the ideal of the 'lady,' which was the aspiration of most women. The plantation lady, like the Southern belle of the North American plantations, lived a luxurious life marked by her class position and her race. Mrs Flannigan outlined the 'aristocratic' lifestyle of the plantation elite. She wrote:

> In these mansions, a system of open but elegant hospitality is kept up; and like gentleman's country-seats in England, they are seldom devoid of puissant knights and lovely damsels. The day passes as most days do in the country. Ample respect is paid

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[38] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.96-97.
[39] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.57.

to the well-stocked breakfast table, where every West Indian luxury abounds; and then the gentlemen separate to pursue their respective avocations; ride round their estates, and mark the progress of their canes....The ladies, in the meantime, amuse themselves with various feminine and elegant employments; sometimes accompanying their soft voices upon the piano, or on well-strung harps....others frequent the library, where the works of our best writers may be met with....At length comes the hour of luncheon, when other delicacies are produced, and duly indulged in; and then the duties of the toilet have to be attended to – a stray ringlet or a captivating dimple taken to task – a smile, a look, or an attitude studied, until the time arrives when a drive in the carriage, or a stroll through some pleasant vale, is practicable.[40]

Whilst this view contrasted with Mrs Carmichael's complaints about the reality of the arduous life of a plantation mistress, or Mrs Fenwick's toils in the school, this piece represented the idealised image of white femininity and of an aristocratic and luxurious life of a 'lady' of leisure. It was this ideal-type of the image of the lady that was the cornerstone of white femininity in plantation society, and a key aspect of why white women supported patriarchy. By accepting and maintaining this ideal, white plantation women could be guaranteed a position of luxury and status.

Mrs Nugent's journal revealed glimpses of this ideal life. She said, 'If I were the Queen of Sheba, I could not be made more fuss with than I am here. It is really overpowering.'[41] After the birth of her first child in Jamaica, she said, 'I was allowed the luxury of a warm bath, of all sorts of sweet herbs and scented leaves; such as orange blossoms, & c....This I continued every day.'[42] Women's texts were also filled with dinners and balls, and discussions of the luxuriance on offer at such events. White men also chivalrously defended white women of this class. Mrs Brodbelt and Schaw both commented that white women never walked out alone without the protection of a white male.[43] Masking an oblique reference to the exaggerated fear of

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[40] Flannigan, *Antigua*, pp.206-207.
[41] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.81.
[42] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.124.
[43] Mozeley, *Letters to Jane*, p.56; and Schaw, *Journal*, p.87.

black male sexuality, these types of comment revealed the public display of white men protecting 'their' women. White women required protecting because of their representation of 'ideal' and 'perfect' femininity. They were paragons of modesty, gentility, reserve and abstemiousness, in direct contrast to slave women who, as we saw in Chapter 6, were constructed as unnatural, as licentious 'wenches.'

The operation of class differences among white women also demonstrated the gender ideal of the white female as 'plantation lady'. In mocking the aspirations of the 'mushroom gentry' in the Caribbean (plantation managers and overseers), Mrs Flannigan said of their wives:

> From the more useful occupations of washing their own clothes, and mending their own stockings, they now play the part of "my lady," and pass their time in lolling upon a sofa, with an open book before them, ready to take up should "company" arrive; or with wondering ears, listen to their daughters bungling through one of Mozart's waltzes, or stammering over a French fable.[44]

It was also noted that the success of parents could result in differences of education between them and their offspring, which could cause tensions. Differences that education could create between mothers and daughters were noted by Lady Nugent on her travels around Jamaica. She noted, while visiting one estate,

> The conversation of the hostess was not very interesting, but rather curious. The extent of Mrs. Israell's travels has been to Kingston, and she is always saying, "When I was in town;" she says too, that frost and snow must be prodigious odd things. The daughter has been brought up at the Queen Square Boarding School, and is much looked up to by her mamma; and she, in return, is in constant anxiety, for fear they should be guilty of some mistake, &c. This difference of education is, I think, a real and mutual misfortune.[45]

Mrs Carmichael also commented:

> I was informed by a very old resident in the West Indies, who had resided in many colonies, when conversing upon the subject, that about forty years ago or more, the only distinction of ranks consisted in white, coloured, and negro persons. Tradesmen

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[44] Flannigan, *Antigua*, p.199.
[45] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.58.

> of every description, if white, were admitted and invited to the best society;....these days are long gone by, and there is a sufficient number of a secondary rank among the white people, to form a society of themselves.[46]

other comments about class were common in texts. Schaw pitied her white servant who had no one of her own situation to mix with, and Mrs Nugent disapproved of the familiar relations between planters' wives and shopkeepers, saying 'am much diverted with the easy manners and familiarity of the ladies and the shopkeepers, who all seem intimate acquaintances.'[47] Similarly, class divisions were very clearly revealed when Nugent's nurse suffered the loss of her husband and child. She wrote:

> Nurse came to my room early to-day, with a much more cheerful countenance than I had dared to expect, and I am really grateful to her for the effort she evidently makes, to conquer her own feelings, on account of my precious boy.[48]

This position of the nurse was in total contrast to Nugent, who received every attention for both herself and her baby son. The class position of the nurse dictated that no matter how much she may have been suffering from the death of her own child, she had to continue nursing Nugent's baby son (who was a similar age); *and* show a brave face, so as to not upset Mrs Nugent.

Gender and Colour

Much more pervasive and more frequently commented on was colour. Both female and male authors mentioned the pale skin of the white women of the Caribbean islands, who went to great lengths to shield themselves from the sun. Schaw wrote that the white ladies of Antigua:

> want only colour to be termed beautiful....Yet this I am convinced is owing to the way they live, excluded from proper air and exercise. From childhood they never suffer the sun to have a peep at them, and to prevent him are covered with masks and bonnets, that absolutely make them look as if they were stewed.[49]

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[46] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.18.
[47] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.179.
[48] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.155.
[49] Schaw, *Journal*, p.113.

Emphasising the whiteness of women's skin called attention to the visible sign of racial difference, and to the hierarchy of plantation society based around that difference. Bhabba has used the term 'fetish' to describe the response to skin colour by white colonisers. In this sense, visible differences became a justification for slavery and colonial domination. Thus, in order for them to disassociate themselves from slave women, and to remain on their innocent and virginal pedestal, white women emphasised and exaggerated their colour above all else.

Male texts also blamed women for placing too much emphasis on colour, and in not accepting the rich free coloured population into white society. Indeed, in a wider context, Vron Ware has noted the overall tendency in colonial societies for white women to be blamed for poor relations between colonisers and colonised.[50] Perhaps the obvious reason for white men looking more favourably on the coloured population was to do with male sexual relations with coloured females. Male texts, in contrast to female texts, delighted in the physical attractions of coloured women. Lewis dedicated several passages to the 'lovely Mary Wiggins,' a coloured woman, and to mixed race slaves on his plantation. Bayley discussed coloured women at length, based largely around physical descriptions of them. He said:

> If I accord the palm of female beauty to the ladies of color, I do not at the same time deteriorate the attractions of the fairer creoles; the stately and graceful demeanour which calls upon us to admire the one, does not forbid us to be fascinated by the loveliness of the other; yet I will acknowledge that I prefer the complexion that is tinged, if not too darkly, with all the richness of the olive, to the face which, however fair in its paleness, can never look as lovely as when it wore the rose-blush of beauty which has faded away.
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> I know no prettier scene that a group of young and handsome colored girls taking their evening walk, along the moonlit avenues of mountain cabbage trees....They are extremely fond of dress, and make their toilet with much taste and extravagance....I do not, however, think their love of dress would yield to their love of pleasure, for though the climate inclines them (and every body else) to be lazy and languishing to a miracle, yet they have a high flow of spirits, and a natural liveliness

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[50] Ware, *Beyond the Pale.*

> of disposition, which enables them to dance and play and romp and enjoy themselves with as much gaiety of heart as their fairer sisters on the hills of Albion.
>
> With all this they have much to answer for, for I do wisely opine, that they are the grand cause of much of the immorality that prevails in the West Indies.[51]

However, despite sexual competition and jealously, and the importance of maintaining distinctions of colour and class, not all white women rejected the coloured population.

Mrs Fenwick noted that 'An impassable boundary here separates the white from the coloured people (many of whom are a fair, light haired people); & those Creoles whose wealth would introduce them to the first circles in England a white beggar would not speak to here. We cannot admit a Creole pupil, yet some Creole families on this Island live splendidly & are very rich.'[52] Similarly, Mrs Flannigan at some length described what she viewed as unnecessary prejudice against the coloured population. She related the story of a Methodist minister, Mr. Gilbert who in 1798 married a coloured woman, Ann Hart:

> In 1798, Mr. Gilbert...was united in the bands of wedlock to a highly respectable and accomplished coloured lady of Antigua. The *iniquity!* Of this action, as they deemed it, was resented by his brother whites; himself and his lady were openly insulted; and some wag of the island, who, with the brains of a calf, fancied himself an Ulysses in wisdom, gave to the world an example of his would-be wit, by painting Mr. Gilbert's office-door half *black* and half *white*.[53]

Yet we can find alternative reasons for these views. Mrs Fenwick was in desperate financial situation, and needed all the students she could get. Thus it was likely that being able to teach the coloured population would have greatly increased her revenue. Also, she noted in justifying her views that many of the coloured population were 'a fair, light haired people.' Thus, even here she used frames of reference of colour to

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[51] Bayley, *Four Years' Residence*, pp.494-495.
[52] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, p.169.
[53] Flannigan, *Antigua*, pp.178-179.

justify what may have been seen as radical views. Flannigan also was not a plantation mistress, and was writing during the transition from slavery to apprenticeship, and in class terms the coloured woman she referred to, Ann Hart Gilbert, was an extremely accomplished coloured woman, who adopted the gender conventions of the 'white lady.' Gilbert published a history of Methodism and an account of her husband's life, and came from the very top of the coloured society.

Alternative Images of White Women

The reference point of the plantation 'lady' as the ideal was ubiquitous in the Caribbean texts, but in some cases the suggestion in the text was that certain women were falling below the ideal. Nugent, representing 'the lady' herself as governor's wife, was extremely critical of the white women she met in Jamaica. She said of one woman: 'Mrs. C. is a perfect Creole, says little, and drawls out that little, and has not an idea beyond her own Penn.'[54] Of a group of women she had to entertain at the governor's house, she said, 'never was there any thing so completely stupid. All I could get out of them was, "Yes, ma'am," with now and then a simper or a giggle.'[55] At another house where she was a guest, she said:

> West India houses are so thin, that one hears every word, and it is laughable, in the midst of the clamour, to walk out of my room, and see nothing but smiles and good humour, restored to every countenance in an instant. The old gentleman and lady are really diverting. They never agree upon any point; but she generally gets the better, from her extreme volubility; and always, when she stops to catch breath, she exclaims, "But now, Mr. Rose, let me speak;" then off she sets again with as much vivacity as ever. The daughter seems perfectly worthy of such a mother;[56]

Nugent also admonished one of her acquaintances for the way this woman spoke to her husband, thinking it lacked respect (and reasoning that she did not wish her own

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[54] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.52.
[55] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.54.
[56] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.80.

daughter to be influenced by such behaviour).[57] She also mentioned that the white ladies had some kind of directory in which they had discovered that one of them had a father who was a slop-seller.[58]

Lloyd also commented on negative characteristics, which she viewed as coming from too much association with the slaves. She said:

> For strict discipline, there is perhaps too much familiarity between the master and the slave....The white children are very fond of their black nurses....The negroes, however, are for the most part very injudicious managers; for though they certainly understand the art of putting a child into good humour, they do so at the hazard of spoiling his temper....from this constant intercourse with the negroes, the children contact that disagreeable Creole drawl which few every entirely lose.[59]

Mrs Carmichael also made similarly negative comments about her fellow plantation mistresses:

> The constant domestic drudgery of a female's life in the West Indies, married or unmarried (for the latter, although not occupied with the menage, are engaged in dress-making and mending – negro servants being wretched needle women), leaves them no time for improving the mind, - and in society, the ladies are too generally found distinguished for that listlessness, and meagreness of conversation, which arise from an uninformed mind.[60]

Thus such comments showed that whilst the 'lady,' or 'angel in the house,' was the ideal-type, too many women could not attain the perfect behaviour needed for this position, due to their lack of education, charm or grace.

The male texts, indeed, made similar comments with regard to white women. Stewart wrote:

> It is remarked, that the very manners and barbarous dialect of the negroes are apt to produce, through the force of early habit, an involuntary imitation on the part of the natives of this country, educated and brought up at home; and that there is often, in consequence, an awkward and ungraceful sort of affectation in their language and

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[57] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.199.
[58] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.203.
[59] Lloyd, *Sketches*, pp.168-169.
[60] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, p.39.

> manner, which strongly indicates ignorance and untutored simplicity; or, to use an expression in common use here, many of them....exhibit much of the Quashiba....It is also sometimes happens, that they contract domineering and harsh ideas with respect to their slaves – ideas ill suited to the native softness and humanity of the female mind; so that the severe and arbitrary mistress will not infrequently be combined with the affectionate wife, the tender mother, the dear friend, and agreeable companion[61]

Interestingly, Stewart then went on to narrate a 'warning' story of the impact of such female behaviour, which came from one of the novels of the Caribbean, by Mrs Charlotte Smith:

> A young officer, of liberal education and genteel connections, being in the West Indies with his regiment, fell in love with a young lady, the daughter of a respectable planter, and offered her his hand; which, with the consent of her parents, she accepted. The day of the marriage was accordingly fixed, and every thing previously settled. Early in the morning of this wished-for day, the impatient youth hurried to his mistress's apartment, that, out of a frolic, he might surprize her in bed. On entering it he found she was up, and he was charmed with the neat and elegant appearance of every thing around: every part of the apartment was decked and perfumed with garlands and festoons of various coloured flowers. He inquired of a female slave where her young mistress was, and upon her pointing to the back area of the house, he flew thither on the wings of love! But what was his astonishment – to behold the charmer of his soul very coolly and deliberately superintending the punishment of a little mulatto girl, who was suspended by one hand, while a negro whipped her. Her piercing cries sufficiently testified the agony she endured, and sunk deep in the heart of the thunder-struck lover, who stood aghast, not offering to advance. At length he recollected himself, and springing back abruptly, drew out a slip of paper out of his pocket, and hastily pencilled upon it – an eternal adieu![62]

Such novels and stories clearly carried a warning to white females; if they were to play lady then this behaviour was something they had to maintain at all times. A popular novel of this period by Barbara Hofland, *The Barbadoes Girl*, concerned a young girl who was sent to a family in England to be educated and cared for. The family were appalled by her bad manners, temper, cruel treatment of her black slave, and general lack of feminine ideal behaviour. It was only through their kindness and example that she changed, became 'good,' and got married as a result.[63] Of course,

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[61] Stewart, *Journal*, p.160.
[62] Stewart, *Journal*, pp.162-163.
[63] Barbara Hofland, *The Barbadoes Girl. A Tale for Young People*, (London, 1830).

the only known testimony from the perspective of a female slave showed the cruelty that mistresses would inflict upon their slaves as a norm. Mary Prince told that one of her mistresses, Mrs I.:

> Caused me to know the exact difference between the rope, the cart-whip, and the cow-skin, when applied to my naked body by her own cruel hand. And there was scarcely any punishment more dreadful than the blows I received on my face and head from her hard heavy fist. She was a fearful woman and a savage mistress to her slaves.[64]

Whilst such cruel and aggressive behaviour may have been a norm on many plantations, it is a side to their character that most white women would not admit to. Despite evidence to the contrary even within the texts themselves, the overwhelming image of white women in Caribbean travel accounts remained that of the mythic plantation lady, the benevolent matriarch who took her place in slave society as the kind and gentle supporter of the white patriarch. In this sense of supporting the system, white femininity was the cornerstone of patriarchal slave society.

Fox-Genovese has also argued that white women's feminine role was essential to the patriarchal slave system. She says:

> The ideal of the lady constituted the highest condition to which women could aspire....The lady, like less privileged women, accepted the dominance of men but cultivated her own sense of honor, which depended heavily on her embodiment of the privileges of her class.[65]

She added that:

> For a slaveholding woman, the self came wrapped in gender, and gender wrapped in class and race. From her earliest consciousness, when a slaveholding girl thought of herself as "I," she thought of herself as female. As her earliest consciousness grew into a personal identity, she naturally thought of herself as a privileged white woman - a lady. Everything in her society conspired to reinforce her identity as a woman. Everything discouraged her from thinking of herself as an individual in the abstract.[66]

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[64] Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave Related by Herself*, edited by Moira Ferguson, (London, 1987; original London & Edinburgh, 1831).
[65] Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, p.203.

Thus, whilst Fox-Genovese acknowledges the importance of the ideal of the 'lady' for white women in slave society, she implied that this was something constructed and forced upon them. Whilst I would agree with this argument, I wish to take it further by suggesting that women not only accepted their gender roles, but even colluded in them, since self-representations in their texts show that they spoke of ideals of white femininity in the same way as men. My work also suggests differences in emphasis from that of Deborah White, another researcher on North American slavery. White suggests a quite deep-seated rejection of gender roles by plantation mistresses in the United States, and suggests a degree of feminist consciousness on the part of white women. She quotes

> Mary Boykin Chestnut, [who] with a hint of envy, wrote: "These negro women have a chance here that women have nowhere else. They can redeem themselves - the impropers can. They can marry decently and nothing is remembered against these colored ladies."[67]

Whilst, then White, working on the United States, found some degree of feminist consciousness, the female writing from the Caribbean shows no such consciousness, and if anything, illustrates acceptance of gender roles.

NOVELS

Some of the fiction by women also put forward the same ideals of white femininity. Of course, a key characteristic of novels of this period was their representation of ideals of femininity. With regard to the Caribbean authors, Theodora Lynch's novels in particular, with their 'Jane Austen' themes, spoke a good deal about ideal gender characteristics, whereas the other novelists, concentrating on attacking slavery on religious grounds, dealt much more with the slaves themselves and with the cruelties

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[66] Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, p.372.
[67] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* p.97.

of the system. Lynch's *Years Ago*, is a good example of her work. It was very evident throughout the novel that plantation society was heavily patriarchal, and that both women and men accepted their conventional gender roles. The novel was narrated by a fifteen year old, Dorothy, and concerned her courtship and marriage, as well as those of her two sisters. One of her sisters secretly married an unsuitable man of a lower class, while Dorothy married the hero of the tale. The girls' father, and master of the plantation, was described as a man of education, 'civilisation' and intelligence:

> We have all been educated at home. With such a father it would have been absurd to burden the house with a governess. My mother always said that nineteen out of twenty of them would have been seeking husbands, and have left us to go on with our lessons as best we might. Besides, too, my father had plenty of leisure; and instead of feeling it a toil to instruct us, it was his great delight. Mamma saw that we prepared our lessons for him, and he encouraged us by rewards and sundry unexpected indulgences when we acted so as to please him.[68]

The status of their father as plantation master and patriarch was clear in this passage.

It was Dorothy's father who secretly arranged for her to marry the hero, Hugh Granville. When she first discovered this 'plot' Dorothy was very disturbed and said of her father, 'He would not surely wish to lose me....He could never get on without his little amanuensis. Never, never!'[69] She also said that Hugh 'is so superior to any of us girls, that we can do nothing but fear him.'[70]

In illustrating the luxurious life of women and girls in Caribbean plantation society, Lynch's character Dorothy commented that:

> Certainly, ladies in the West Indies have no money cares; not that they do not sympathize with their husbands in pecuniary difficulties, but they have no purchases to make concerning eating and drinking; they have no pestering cares, such as bow down the spirit of an English housekeeper, to buy good things, and yet keep within

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[68]Theodora Elizabeth Lynch, *Years Ago: A Tale of West Indian Domestic Life of the Eighteenth-century*, London, 1865),, p2. Mrs Carmichael also referred to such problems with governesses when she said 'Some few families have tried a governess, but it has been found not to answer; for they almost invariably marry soon after coming out,' (Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 1, p.26).
[69] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.6
[70] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.12.

> the bounds of, perhaps, very restricted means. And the doubloons...are spent much in the same way, or perhaps with less care than a school-girl spends her pocket money.
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> For with regard to clothing for herself and all of us, papa give my mother access to two or three of the principal stores in Kingston, and payment for the things received is not her part of the matter.[71]

Thus, the women in the novel did not have any responsibilities other than looking and behaving like 'gentlewomen' (which was quite a contrast to Mrs Carmichael's view of the domestic drudgery for plantation mistresses) and were not allowed a voice in political or financial matters. Indeed, when the author entered into anti-slavery or other political debates, she did so through the medium of male characters. She stated that male conversations always turn to politics 'when there are not ladies enough in the company to keep the discourse on lighter matters,'[72] and at a later point, said that she did not understand politics.[73]

Lynch's other novels contained similar themes and views. *The Story of My Girlhood,* was also a novel about a young girl and her marriage. The protagonist, Annie, was also fifteen years old. Her parents' marriage was not a happy one, and Annie's ill mother, fearful of her impending death, secretly arranged a marriage between Annie and Lynn Forrester. The marriage quickly broke down due to the youth of the couple and the fact that a friend informed Annie that Lynn only married her for her money. However, much later in the novel after her mother's death and father's remarriage, Annie's husband returned in the guise of a Mr Warren, who won her heart. Gender roles were highly conventional, and summarised in Annie's comment, 'my mother was good, gentle, and true, and my father benevolent and high-minded.'[74]

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[71] Lynch, *Years Ago*, pp.9-10.
[72] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.156.
[73] Lynch, *Years Ago*, p.260.
[74] T. E. Lynch, *The Story of My Girlhood* (London, 1857), p.7.

The Cotton Tree concerned a young girl, Emily, who was sent to England for her education, via a friend of the family. The friend, Mrs Wilson,

> was an English lady, who had estates in our little island, and was now arranging about their sale, purposing, in a few months, to return to England. She was tall, thin, and pale, with an elegant figure, and a stylish manner which caused her society to be much sought after; but she lacked the smile of kindness, the gentle look of forbearing affection, to which I had, through life, been accustomed. She laughed unmercifully at my Creole accent; for, although my mother had taken pains to keep me from called amongst the West Indians, "talking negro," yet, there was a languor and drawl in my manner of speaking, which drew from her the most cutting sarcasm.[75]

Most travel accounts referred to this manner of speaking in the same way. Like *Jane Eyre*, Emily had an unhappy time at boarding school in England, till a newcomer, who had recently been orphaned, befriended her. Thus, both characters were 'outsiders' together; also like in *Jane Eyre*, this girl died at the school, before Emily returned to Jamaica. At school, the girls learnt 'feminine' accomplishments that enabled them to return to the West Indies ready for the marriage market. There are some problems in directly comparing the travel accounts and fiction. Significantly, however, the novels of the Caribbean, like the travel accounts, usually tended to portray plantation society as heavily patriarchal, to show female acceptance of this situation, and to indicate an acceptance of typical feminine gender characteristics and roles.

Interestingly, a few novels did contain 'feminist' comments regarding the position of women and the supposed spheres of interest of men and women. Charlotte Smith, in the preface to *Desmond*, wrote:

> But women it is said have no business with politics - why not? - Have they no interest in the scenes that are acting around them, in which they have fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, or friends engaged! - Even in the commonest course of female education, they are expected to acquire some knowledge of history; and yet, if they are to have no opinion of what is passing, it avails little that they should be informed

[75] T. E.Lynch, *The Cotton-Tree*, (London, 1847), pp.16-18.

> of what has passed, in a world where they are subject to such mental degradation; where they are censured as affecting masculine knowledge if they should happen to have any understanding; or despised as insignificant trifles if they have none.[76]

Thus, here, Smith challenged the conventions that separated women from the public life of politics and action, and ridiculed the idea that women should only be taught a limited education defined by men. Smith's perspective was, perhaps critical and challenging due to her life circumstances. Her husband had been imprisoned for debt and she had joined him for a time, and then had to financially support herself.

Conclusion

Plantation ladies were praised for conventional feminine qualities approaching an impossible ideal of womanly perfection. They were ideal-types of modesty, gentleness, temperance and gentility. They stood as the cornerstone of femininity and womanhood in contrast and opposition to black women who were constructed as masculinised objects who were the very antipathy of 'natural' womanhood and motherhood. Thus it was in this position that white women supported and defended white male patriarchy, which was the essence of the system, and white women's place within it. In maintaining this position of the lady, white women had a special role in constructing the ideology and images of slavery, and in defending patriarchy as the mainstay of the system. The next chapter will continue the theme of gender, in focusing on gender differences between male and female travel writing and fiction, since the thesis has so far concentrated on gender similarities.

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[76] Smith, *Desmond*, pp.iii-iv.

CHAPTER 10:

GENDERED GAZES: DIFFERENCES IN FEMALE AND MALE WRITING FROM THE CARIBBEAN

So far in the thesis, I have stressed similarities between male and female writing, especially in terms of racial images and colonial images of the landscape. As well as broad patterns of similarity, there were however, as the present chapter will show, significant differences between male and female texts. An examination of differences, as well as similarities, will contribute to the growing academic debate over the value and perspectives of travel narratives. In the specific context of the Caribbean it will also allow us to examine the claim made by Bridget Brereton that female travel accounts for the West Indies were distinctly gendered. A direct comparison of male and female texts for comparable locations and periods will allow more solidly-based conclusions to be made. Moreover, these comparisons will be valuable in the broad task of exploring the role of white women in constructing 'race' and empire.

First of all, I shall consider the broadly-based debate about gender and travel texts, paying attention particularly to the contribution that Sara Mills has made. Then I shall look at specific areas of difference between male and female writing from the Caribbean, and shall consider the implications of these differences. Key differences which emerge are the frequent focus of male writing on discussions of profit and of politics, themes which were largely absent in female writing. I shall also consider the extent to which reference to 'key slaves' was a male phenomenon; and whether male writing displayed a stronger imperial voice and a tendency to write in terms of 'exploration' rather than 'travel', and whether men more overtly constructed self-conscious self-images. With regard to novels, I shall suggest that those by men had

stronger themes of action and adventure. Novels by women were perhaps more political than was the case with female travel writing: significantly, though, contemporary gender conventions meant that female authors 'spoke' through male characters.

With regard to female travel writing I shall argue that women used more religious and moral arguments than men did. Also, women travellers were far more involved in philanthropic concerns. Female writing tended to emanate from the private domestic sphere, and tended to take the form of letters to friends or diaries to be written as journals. I shall also argue that women's themes could reveal differences from male texts since women concentrated more on the family and domestic setting, talking of their husbands and children and concerns over health. Lastly, I shall argue that so far as novels are concerned, female works tended to be more sentimental, religious and moral than was male fiction. Clearly, these observations involve quite wide generalisations, which do not apply to all texts. Additionally, many of the differences I shall illustrate were determined by the strong gender conventions of appropriate behaviour in the societies in which the authors wrote.

Debates about gender in travel writing

Sara Mills put forward quite strong arguments against writers such as Edward Said, by suggesting that he had neglected important differences between male and female imperial writing. She did not ascribe to white women the same role of 'imperial conqueror' that post-colonial authors have given to white men. Instead, Mills suggests that women struggled to reconcile discourses of imperialism with those of femininity.

As a result, she argues, women did not have a strong imperial voice.[1] The most widely discussed aspects of colonialism, Mills suggests, were ethnography, racial superiority and savagery (including the 'noble savage'). For Mills, however, these images were not so readily utilised by women writers, who had to work within the confines of acceptably 'feminine' topics.[2]

Mills argues that in response to such constraints, women often chose to produce sentimental narratives, which concentrated on the private domestic sphere. Also, Mills argues that another way in which women could assume a powerful narrative role without contravening 'feminine' conventions was to root their accounts in philanthropic and religious concerns.[3] Many women, she says, wrote their accounts in the form of letters or diaries, which enabled them to touch upon many different, personal, topics. Thus, Mills concludes that women ended up writing very different forms of knowledge about 'other' countries. She suggests that in particular, women showed strong interest in native peoples, and did not write with the strong imperial voice of European men:

> These women writers are undoubtedly part of the colonial project, and yet colonialism is more notable by its absence in many of the accounts; the addressing of large-scale issues, such as the role of the journey in relation to colonial expansion or description of potential colonial sites, is notably absent. Instead, their accounts demand a recognition of the importance of interaction with members of other nations, not as representatives of the race, as in male-authored accounts, but as individuals.[4]

Mills does not go so far as to suggest that women did not contribute to the imperial discourse, but rather ascribes women a very different (and lesser) role than men. Whilst I would agree with part of Mills' argument, about women's philanthropic and religious concerns and their fixed presence in a domestic setting, I do not agree with

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[1] Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p.3.
[2] Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p.62.
[3] Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, pp.68-72.

her views about women's interest in native peoples. As the discussion in all the preceding chapters has illustrated, I would argue that women contributed to the imperial discourse just as much as men, but in slightly different ways, and their views of 'native' peoples (in this case, of slaves), was not significantly different from those found in male texts. Indeed, in this area, rather than gender, I would argue that perspective (pro-slavery or anti-slavery) was more important. In the sections that follow, I shall pursue some of Mills' assertions, although, I shall also reflect on many differences which are not examined in her study.

CONCERNS OF MALE TEXTS

Profit

One outstanding issue in male texts, which was absent from female texts, was a concern with profit. As I shall show below, male concern about profit was the case not only in planter accounts (where perhaps one would expect worries over profit as a major concern) but also in general travel accounts, published histories, and newspapers. I shall consider examples of each of these types of writing in turn.

The absentee planter, Matthew Lewis, on his visits to Jamaica in 1815 and 1816, expressed many comments about profits. As the following quotations illustrate, Lewis incorporated different aspects of concerns over profit into his journal. These ranged from comments over slave marriages and childbirth to slave deaths and bad weather. He wrote, for example, about one of his slave carpenters:

> Now John Fuller is in great disgrace with me in one respect. Instead of having a wife on the estate, he keeps one at the Bay, so that his children will not belong to me...I have assured him, that if he does not provide himself with a wife at Cornwall, before my return from Kingston, I will put him up to auction, and call the girls together to

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[4] Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p.99.

> bid for him, one offering half a dozen yams, and another a bit of salt fish; and the highest bidder shall carry him off as her property.[5]

Thus, even though Lewis saw himself as an enlightened and benevolent ruler, and indeed both contemporaries and historians alike have exalted him as an example of a kind and liberal master, this quotation illustrated his concern with profits over humanity. other similar quotations also showed where his primary interests lay:

> The accounts of the general behaviour of my negroes is reasonably good, and they all express themselves satisfied with their situation and their superintendents. Yet, among upwards of three hundred and thirty negroes, and with a greater number of females than men, in spite of all indulgences and inducements, not more than twelve or thirteen children have been added annually to the list of the births. On the other hand, this last season has been generally unhealthy all over the island, and more particularly so in my parish; so that I have lost several negroes, some of them young, strong and valuable labourers in every respect; and in consequence, my sum total is rather diminished than increased since my last visit.[6]

Lewis was, of course, writing after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, yet what was important in the piece was that Lewis was supposedly one of the kindest planters who was keenly interested in slave welfare. Here, however, his concern was not so much about the well-being of the slaves, but about whether they were reproducing new slaves for him in sufficient numbers. Another planter, Sir William Young, made similar comments in his visits to his several estates in the Caribbean, in 1791 and 1792. He said:

> I passed the morning in seeing various of my negroes, particularly the women and their Creole children. This last year I have had an increase of thirteen children, of whom only one has died.[7]

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[5] Lewis, *Journal*, pp.142-143.
[6] Lewis, *Journal*, p.320.
[7] Sir William Young, 'A Tour Through the Several Islands of Barbadoes, St. Vincent, Antigua, Tobago, and Grenada, in the years 1791, and 1792;' in Bryan Edwards, *A History of the West Indies*, (London, 1794), p.295.

Such comments clearly revealed the attitude in which black women were merely reproductive units, and children a source of future profit. This contrasts with a related comment by a female author. Mrs Nugent wrote:

> Had a learned conversation of the cultivation of sugar-canes, the population of the negroes, &c. Mr C. told me he gave two dollars to every woman who produced a healthy child; but no marriages were thought of![8]

Clearly Mrs Nugent's comment had a totally different emphasis than the male examples. Where male texts only saw profit as the driving force, Mrs Nugent was more interested in the fact that female slaves were encouraged to bear children but not within marriage. Nugent had earlier referred to a black woman as 'producing' children, but this comment was not at all linked to the role of the children as capital assets, and instead merely represented Nugent's objectification of black women.

William Beckford's anti-slavery book about Jamaica also contained some suggestions for increasing the slave population. As was typical in male texts, his comments were written in an 'instructional,' authoritative tone:

> A negro woman has very little encouragement in general, to become a mother....The proprietor who wishes to encourage population, should...indulge the mother with time appointed to the number of her children.[9]

Although Beckford's comments were written with the view of ameliorating slavery, his recognition of the appeal to planters of profits was clear in his argument.

Matthew Lewis also revealed his interest in profit in his 'distress' over the death of Nelson, one of his 'best labourers':

> This is the sixth death in the course of the first three months of the year, and we have not as yet a single birth for a set-off. Say what one will to the negroes, and treat them as well as one can, obstinate devils, they will die![10]

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[8] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.26-7.

As was typical in Lewis's account, he used humour to detract from the merciless theme, yet his real sentiments remained clear. He also mentioned profits (or rather, fear of losses), when discussing the weather:

> To-day there was a shower of rain for the first time since my arrival; indeed, not a drop has fallen since the 16th of November; and in consequence my present crop has suffered terribly, and our expectations for the next season are still worse.[11]

These themes did seem to be typical in male accounts, but were not mentioned at all in any of the female texts I have examined. Women occasionally discussed sugar plantations and the production process, on estate tours, or even mentioned, as Lady Nugent did, that most estates were in debt; but such comments were not framed in the same context of finances or profit and loss, as in male accounts.

other male sources showed similar concerns. John Luffman, in his travels around Antigua in 1788 said:

> This country is poor, most of the landholders being impoverished, from a series of bad crops, previous to the last three years. In fact, the greater part of the estates, in this island, are in trust, or under mortgage tot he merchants of London, Liverpool, and Bristol.[12]

Luffman, like many of the female writers, was a traveller to the islands, yet he still commented on financial issues, unlike female writers. General Haynes, who was also a planter, spoke at length on profits. In writing about his father's marriage, he said:

> This day my Father married a second time to Ann Walker...this being her third venture in matrimony....Begin to assist my father in the management of Newcastle. This marriage has proved most unfortunate for the Haynes family, particularly for myself. The Estate is a fair way to be ruined by her indolence and extravagance, her total neglect of all domestic concerns, and allowing her favourite slaves to rob and plunder to an unlimited extent.[13]

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[9] William Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica*, (London, 1788), p24.
[10] Lewis, *Journal*, p.388.
[11] Lewis, *Journal*, p.177.
[12] Luffman, *Brief Account*, p.49.
[13] Everil Cracknell, (ed), *The Barbadian Diary of General Robert Haynes 1787-1836*, (Hampshire, 1934), pp.17-18.

As well as such comments, Haynes also spoke of bad weather, and volcano dust ruining crops, and wrote at length about his personal finances. The only comparable female text was that of Mrs Fenwick, who, in desperate financial circumstances, frequently mentioned money. Yet the manner was not the same. Fenwick was in dire trouble, and spoke to her friend about her worries. In the male texts, even among planters who also faced financial difficulties, the tone was more 'detached' and appeared more as a reckoning of figures rather than as the personal plight described which Mrs Fenwick described when she wrote of 'the dearness of living & the hideous expence of servants create fears in my mind.'[14]

Henry Bolingbroke, another traveller to the Dutch and British Caribbean, also spoke of finances. He wrote:

> The Dutch planters are clear and strict accountants, very regular in their mercantile transactions. They deserve credit for their industry and perseverance, and according to the old adage, they are slow but sure. They would be better planters than the English, were they to make an equal point of increasing progressively their cultivation; but they cling to the maxims of their native land; they aspire only to a competency, not a fortune; and they waste labour, under the idea of having their estates look like gardens.[15]

William Young made similar comments when he stated that Tobago, in his opinion, had not been cultivated to its maximum potential,[16] and Renny in his history said that Jamaica could be further cultivated.[17]

Women's texts tended not to make such comments. Indeed, they only spoke of the landscape in terms of describing its appearance, and commenting that the cultivation was attractive, rather than seeing potential for further development. This

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[14] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, p.165.
[15] V. Roth (ed), Reprint of Henry Bolingbroke, *A Voyage to the Demerary,1799-1806*, (British Guiana, 1947), p.23.
[16] Young, 'Travels', p.296.
[17] Renny, *History*, p.85.

was in contrast to male texts, where most things were linked to profit. For example, Stewart, in describing the landscape and rich soils of Jamaica, said, 'All these are considered as excellent sugar soils, and are also well adapted for coffee.'[18] Female texts also, of course, commented on bad weather and ruined crops, or mentioned that soil had been destroyed by over-cultivation. Yet their descriptions of the land and produce tended to be more 'poetic.' Compare, for example, the following male and female descriptions of trees. John Stewart wrote:

> The native woods here abound with a very great variety of the most valuable timbers, and woods for dying, and ornamental cabinet work....The mahogany...is a tall handsome tree, and sometimes grows to a great size....There can hardly be a doubt that, if the woods were carefully explored, many other species, fit for various purposes besides those already discovered, might be found....Among the various delicious fruits which this island yields in such inexhaustible abundance, my be mentioned the pine, or anana, the orange, the shaddock...the pomegranate, the grandillo, the musk melon, the neesberry; &c. &c.[19]

Stewart's book was a natural history. By contrast, in her natural history of the Leeward Islands, Maria Riddell wrote:

> The *mangifera mango*, or mango tree, is one of the most beautiful in the American world. The foliage is extremely shady and verdant, and it bears the most delicious fruit imaginable. The taste is highly aromatic, and it exhales a charming perfume.[20]

And Susette Lloyd said:

> I was much pleased with our walk; some of the trees are really beautiful; the Arabian jesamine (*nyctanthes*) with its ample foliage and profusion of fragrant pink blossoms, - the splendid scarlet blossom of the Barbados flower-fence, - the graceful crown of the date palm, - the fantastic forms of the papaw with its leafy coronets, - the banana with its long shiny leaves, relieved each other in pleasing variety, and gave a tropical character to the scene.[21]

Female comments, I would argue, still represented a form of 'landscanning,' and as pointed out in previous chapters, many female comments in this area were very similar to those of males. Women, like men, tended to see controlled and cultivated

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[18] Stewart, *Account of Jamaica,* p.19.
[19] Stewart, *Account of Jamaica,* pp.95-98.
[20] Riddell, *Voyages*, p.94.
[21] Lloyd, *Sketches*, p.28.

land as beautiful, and in their descriptions, they adopted a 'stock taking' approach to the abundance and wonder available for Europeans, as well as using the various European classification schemes that had been devised to name things. Yet subtle differences did occur, and as pointed out here, many male texts tended to make very overt comments or references to profit, whereas comments were not so directly profit-related in female works.

This was also the case in descriptions of the sugar making process itself. Whilst Mrs Nugent, for example, showed typical Euroimperialist and capitalist values in her delight in the countryside, gardens and houses, making comments which were similar to those of male accounts, her views on sugar estates differed markedly from most male accounts. While the male accounts were dominated by concerns with profit, and technical descriptions of the sugar process, Mrs Nugent was much more concerned with the aesthetics of the scene, and in explaining sugar processes from a more 'humanist' stance. Mary Louise Pratt has also pointed to this difference in the male and female travel accounts she looked at for a similar time period.[22]

On arriving at one estate, Mrs Nugent said:

> We took a cross road, through a sugar plantation, or rather cane-piece, as it is called; a negro man running before the carriage, to open the gates. The Hope estate is very interesting for me, as belonging to dearest Lady Temple, and I examined every thing very particularly. It is situated at the bottom of a mountain, and as the Hope river runs through it, the produce is more certain than on estates in general, which often suffer from the great droughts in this part of the world. A severe hurricane alone can affect it. It is said to be an old estate, and not further improveable than yielding, as it does now, 320 hogsheads of sugar. – They say that, though it is incapable of yielding more, it is better, as being a sure produce, than most estates in the island, which are liable to great vicissitudes. – As you enter the gates, there is a long range of negro houses, like thatched cottages, and a row of cocoa-nut trees and clumps of cotton trees. The sugar-house, and all the buildings, are thought to be more than usually

[22] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.161.

> good, and well taken care of. The overseer, a civil, vulgar, Scotch officer, on half-pay, did the honours to us; but when we got to the door of the distillery, the smell of the rum was so intolerable, that, after a little peep at the process, I left the gentlemen, and went to the overseer's house...[where] I talked to the black women, who told me all their histories.[23]

Clearly Nugent was aware of the capitalist enterprise of the sugar plantation, and knowledgeable about the likely amounts produced; nonetheless, she avoided the kind of technical language often found in the male accounts. There was not the same obsessive level of interest in profit and in how much could possibly be produced. Mary Louise Pratt cites Hoock-Demarle who also observed this trend in female writing. Hoock-Demarle suggested that this difference was because female writing was aimed at a wide audience and used the language of a realist novelist. For Hoock-Demarle, this represented female rejection of a masculine discourse.[24] Indeed, Nugent was little interested in the sugar process, and preferred to talk to the black women to discover their life histories. This is very gendered – she was more interested by a feminocentred discourse, and this represented one case where, as Sara Mills pointed out, women were more interested in 'people than places.'[25] Also, of course, the fact that Nugent disliked the smell of the rum was typical of a gendered expectation of what was or was not suitable for women in this period.

The gendered account was also evident in Nugent's description of the sugar-making process itself. In male accounts, this was frequently a tedious technical description, explaining both machinery and processes. John Luffman, for example, wrote:

> The cane holes, which, throughout this island, are dug with hoes, are four feet square, one foot deep, and about four feet asunder; at the distance of every eighty holes is an

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[23] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.27.
[24] Cited in Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p161.
[25] Mills, *Discourses*, p.106.

> interval or carriage way, from twenty to thirty feet wide, and these spaces are made to intersect each other at right angles, for the more free admission of air.[26]

Mrs Nugent, however, wrote:

> We then examined the whole process of sugar making, which is indeed very curious and entertaining...I asked the overseer how often his people were relieved. He said every twelve hours; but how dreadful to think of their standing twelve hours over a boiling cauldron, and doing the same thing; and he owned to me that sometimes they did fall asleep, and get their poor fingers into the mill; and he shewed me a hatchet that was always ready to sever the whole limb, as the only means of saving the poor sufferer's life! I would not have a sugar estate for the world![27]

Nugent preferred to skip the technical process, and instead focus on the human aspect of the demanding and dangerous work for the slaves. Her comment that she would not own a sugar estate revealed her disdain for the reality of slave labour on plantations, since her contact with slaves primarily consisted of only domestic slaves. It is, however, interesting to note, as we have seen, that Nugent had very little to say on the institution of slavery in her journal, and that her view overall tended to be very favourable towards slavery, based as her comments were, on the accounts of the white planters she spoke to.

Fear about profits was often expressed in newspapers. This was particularly the case in the years leading up to abolition, during which most expressed the view that abolition would destroy the wealth of the planters and, ultimately, of Britain. The *Antigua Free Press* in 1826, for example, said:

> In no place have we seen [emancipated slaves condescend to betake themselves of laborious work] ....In Sierra Leone, that great and boasted despot of freedom and industry, have any such advances been made, or even contemplated, although the place is under the protection of Great Britain? No! In Hayti, no such advances have

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[26] Luffman, *A Brief Account*, p.89.
[27] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.62-3.

> been made, nor have any such ever been offered or attempted amongst the multitudes of free coloured people in our West India Colonies.[28]

Such views rested on stereotypes of slaves as lazy, and these views even continued after abolition. The *St. Christopher Gazette* commented:

> The making of sugar is progressing fairly -- not, we apprehend, with very great activity -- the labourers are not killing themselves with work. On a few estates, indeed, we learn that they are doing next to nothing. There will be a miserable deficiency of the sugar crop on some properties which used to give most abundant returns.[29]

Thus, a variety of male texts illustrated direct concern with profits.

Politics

I have briefly touched upon the theme of political issues earlier in the thesis, in mentioning that according to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gender conventions, the public sphere of politics and work was dominated by men, and the private sphere of the home, by women. This is very clear in the travel accounts and novels, in which men made direct and open political arguments. Apart from in the novels, where women authors spoke through male characters, in the travel accounts, women's disapproval about slavery, or comments over the question of abolition, tended to be framed in religious and moral discussions. In male texts, by contrast political issues would be directly addressed in terms of 'philosophical' questions about the inhumanity of slavery, or economic arguments either for or against slavery.

Mr Bayley, for example, claimed that his text was an anti-slavery work. Yet, he dedicated many pages to expounding his view of why the slaves were not 'ready' for freedom, and therefore, should not be freed until they had been sufficiently

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[28] *The Antigua Free Press*, Friday 11th August 1826 'Britain and her colonies,' page 1, column 3. Colindale Newspaper Library, CMISC 209A.
[29] *The St Christopher Gazette*, 29 March 1839, p4. Column 4. Colindale Newspaper Library, C464.

prepared. Unlike in female texts, Bayley's comments concerned the slaves' physical well-being rather than their moral or spiritual conduct. He argued that

> The slaves, although in a degraded state, are not yet sufficiently capable of feeling their degradation; as they are well treated, they are for the most part happy and contented; at any rate, their wants are supplied; they have food for their bodies, and covering for their heads. But there are Englishmen, free born Englishmen, who have starving wives and starving families, with no food but their misery, no bed but the cold earth, no covering but the canopy of heaven; - first, then, look to such as these, and extend to them humanity and relief[30]

Bayley constructed a lengthy argument going through the material benefits the slaves enjoyed, as well as comments from slaves he had spoken to who were happy in their situation and did not want freedom. Thus his argument that slaves were not 'ready' revolved solely around the idea that 'if a slave be really happy in his slavery he is by no means fit for emancipation.'[31]

John Luffman's account of Antigua was also an anti-slavery text. Luffman, however, framed his argument in different terms from Bayley. Luffman dedicated many pages to describing the middle passage, slave punishments and the slave trade. Thus, he based his anti-slavery argument around the issue of the inhumanity of the institution. In his series of letters to a friend in England he wrote:

> What is it I hear from you?...that the British legislature have serious thoughts of reforming the abuses in, if not totally abolishing the slave-trade to Africa, and slavery in the West Indies? Is there not sufficient scope in the vast fields of Indostan, for the virtue and justice of a British senate to exercise its humane influence without extending the blessings of peace and brotherly love to the unfortunate Africans,[32]

These kinds of direct argument either for or against slavery simply did not appear in female writing. Female authors expressed 'sympathy' for slaves, by, for example, continually using the adjective 'poor' when referring to them, and commented on their lack of morals and religion, but avoided this kind of direct debate. Mrs Fenwick

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[30] Bayley, *Four Years' Residence*, p.94.
[31] Bayley, *Four Years' Residence*, p.372.
[32] Luffman, *A Brief Account*, pp.124-125.

saw slavery as a 'horrid and disgraceful system' since she felt it reduced female slaves almost to prostitutes.[33] Susette Lloyd said that slavery in Bermuda was benevolent but that slaves remained:

> bondsmen, and have long suffered the two heaviest ills of bondage, a political capacity to receive equal justice, and a spiritual privation of religious instruction and happiness.[34]

Mrs Nugent said that she reflected 'all night upon slavery, and make up my mind that the want of exertion in the blackies must proceed from that cause.'[35] Despite such comments, most female authors never explicitly got into discussions about slavery as an institution. As we saw in Chapter 7, women put forward images of slavery and slaves, but the kind of open political discussion that was a feature of male writing was not so clear in female writing.

Some male writers spoke overtly of punishments they had witnessed, and thus contributed to the anti-slavery debate in that way. An anonymous visitor to Barbados in 1790 wrote, for example:

> I was at breakfast with Mr. F____. Devil take his breakfast! His servant, a negro, was standing at the table with a peacock's tail in his hand to brush away the flies, had negligently suffered one to pass and alight on the butter. Mr. F___, as a matter of course, darted at once a frown and an enormous blow across the poor fellow's face, who receiving it with the utmost submission, and without the least surprize, only cried out, as impelled by pain, "Oh, Massa!" and redoubled his diligence against the flies. This is the first living picture I had of slavery.[36]

It would seem that this author was male, by the language he used. Again, however, while expressing anti-slavery sentiments, as we have seen throughout the thesis, it was typical for writers also to implicitly accept slavery, since after some time in the colonies, the same author stated that 'the horrors of slavery depend upon the

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[33] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, p.168.
[34] Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, p.94.
[35] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.14.

possessors of slaves,' rather than being 'inherent in the idea of slavery, no more than cruelty is inherent in the idea of power.'[37] Mrs Flannigan, somewhat unusually for a female author, documented some legendary punishments from the earlier period of slavery, but her book extended to an unusually wide range of explicit topics for a work by a female writer. Also, she wrote just after the abolition of slavery, and thus perhaps more overt discussion of the institution was then acceptable. Even so, her discussion about slavery was not couched in the same terms as the male texts I have examined. After documenting some of the eighteenth-century 'legends' of cruelty to slaves, she wrote:

> I am happy to say, I have never met with any ocular demonstration of the successive cruelties I have been describing. It has been my good fate to reside in Antigua when a milder spirit in general seemed to actuate men; or if, in some of their bosoms, the demon of persecution still kept his abode, shame prevented its making its appearance. I have, it is true, heard the sound of the driver's whip, when the gang have been working; but it seemed to be used as a kind of stimulant, like the crack of the carter's whip, when he drives his team to urge on his horses.[38]

Flannigan's language, with its religious undertones, was typical of female writing and clearly illustrated differences from male writing. Also, again, Flannigan's work was supposedly anti-slavery, and yet, once again, we can clearly see that even in anti-slavery writing slavery was not depicted as a completely monstrous institution.

Almost all male texts made some kind of direct comment on the institution of slavery. Bolingbroke, for example, wrote:

> Being transported to a new soil, and a more civilized country, these people become more humanized, more enlightened; their minds undergo a new formation, and they are enabled to distinguish the good treatment they receive here, from the arbitrary and unrelenting mandates of the petty kings and princes in their own country, where they are subject to be butchered like a parcel of swine. Better, sure are the Africans under the West Indian planters, protected as they are by the colonial laws, transplanted into a settlement, where their industry and talents will make them useful members of the

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[36] Anon., *A Short Journey to the West Indies, in which are Interspersed Curious Anecdotes and Characters*, (London, 1790), pp.10-12.
[37] Anon., *A Short Journey*, p.121.
[38] Flannigan, *Antigua and the Antiguans*, 1, p.39.

> community, than abandoned to the cruel and rude tyranny of an uncivilised master in their own country.[39]

William Young daily documented his failure to see any evidence of cruelty against slaves, Renny argued that abolition would lead to 'frightening consequences,'[40] and that the first step towards civilising the slaves would be to inculcate in them a desire for property, which he viewed as the essence of civilised nations.[41] These kinds of overt discussion were not a feature of female writing.

When female texts did overtly make 'political' comments on the institution of slavery, such comments tended to be moral condemnations of white male sexual relations with female slaves. We have already seen that Mrs Fenwick argued that slavery reduced female slaves to 'prostitutes.' Mrs Nugent also said:

> it appears to me, there would be certainly no necessity for the Slave Trade, if religion, decency, and good order, were established among the negroes; if they could be prevailed upon to marry; and if our white men would but set them a little better example.... but white men of all descriptions, married or single, live in a state of licentiousness with their female slaves; and until a great reformation takes place on their part, neither religion, decency nor morality, can be established among the negroes.[42]

Whilst Nugent dabbled here in quite open political discussion, it was couched within acceptable female concerns over morality, religion and worryingly 'licentious' behaviour.

Key Slaves

On the whole, in both male and female published travel accounts, diaries, journals and letters from the Caribbean there was a distinct lack of reference to close personal

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[39] Young, 'Travels,' pp290-298; Bolingbroke, *A Voyage*, p.70.
[40] Renny, *History*, p.164.
[41] Renny, *History*, p.185.

relations, even with 'favourite' or 'key' slaves. In all texts, as outlined, domestic slaves and elite slaves such as drivers, or carpenters, or other important skilled slaves, made occasional entrances in white writing. It is surprising that so many authors asserted that slaves were treated as part of the white family, when they were hardly mentioned in personal documents such as diaries, journals and letters. Perhaps what is even more surprising, given the current debates over female travel writing, which suggest that women showed more interest in 'native peoples,' is that where slaves were discussed in terms of personal relations, it tended to be in male texts.

Matthew Lewis spoke of some of the slaves on his plantation, who could be classed as favourites. One of these was his carpenter, Nicholas, about whom he said:

> This Nicholas whom I mentioned, is a very interesting person, both from his good looks and gentle manners, and from his story. He is the son of a white man, who on his death-bed charged his nephew and heir to purchase the freedom of this natural child. The nephew had promised to do so; I had consented; nothing was necessary but to find the substitute (which now is no easy matter); when about six months ago the nephew broke his neck, and the property went to a distant relation. Application on behalf of poor Nicholas has been made to the heir, and I heartily hope that he will enable me to release him.[43]

Lewis only visited his estates for a short time, and it was thus unlikely that he would have formed the kind of close relations that whites said they had with slaves. Yet, Lewis's journal was notable for the amount of slaves it described and mentioned by name, references which were quite rare in Caribbean writing. Indeed, one of the small number of other authors to mention particular slaves and his relation with them was Bayley, who spoke a good deal about his personal servant Mat. Many such stories were anecdotes, which constructed Mat in stereotypical ways, yet there was at least some personal contact and mention of a slave as a 'real' person.[44]

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[42] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.p86-7.
[43] Lewis, *Journal*, p.76.
[44] Bayley, *Four Years Residence*, pp.140-150.

Personal references to slaves in male texts is in contrast to the female texts, none of which mentioned personal relations with slaves. In the female texts, such as the Brodbelt letters, individual slaves, such as Tabby, were mentioned, but not in terms of them being real people, or even of providing descriptions of them.[45] This is perhaps, quite surprising, especially since women were more likely to write the kind of texts, such as diaries or letters, in which it would be quite normal to mention such things.

Constructions of Self

Another area of difference in some male texts, was that men tended to give much more self-conscious and explicit constructions of themselves, particularly as benevolent paternalists. This was only the case in the kind of text that lent themselves to such discussions, namely journals and letters. Matthew Lewis's journal read almost as an entire treatise elaborating his paternalism and kindness to his slaves. This was achieved through several means, including his narration of gift-giving to slaves, his 'over-indulgence' of them, and kind acts to his slaves.

Before he even arrived in Jamaica it was quite clear that Lewis saw himself as playing the role of some kind of 'benevolent sovereign.' On board ship, as Jamaica became visible, there was a heavy rainstorm; and Lewis wrote:

> I remember my good friend, Walter Scott, asserts, that at the death of a poet, the groans and tears of his heroes and heroines swell the blast and increase the river; perhaps something of the same kind takes place at the arrival of a West India proprietor from Europe, and all this rain and wind proceed from the eyes and lungs of my agents and overseers, who, for the last twenty years, have been reigning in my

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Mozeley, *Letters to Jane*, p.iv.

> dominions with despotic authority; but now "Whose groans in roaring winds complain, whose tears of rage impel the rain;" because, on the approach of the sovereign himself, they must evacuate the palace, and resign the deputed sceptre.[46]

Lewis was clearly using humour here, and the tone of the piece was very much 'tongue-in-cheek.' He was, however, being somewhat reticent, since there was plenty of other evidence in the narrative to suggest that he did see himself in this role.

Another key way that Lewis illustrated his benevolence was in is his repeated expression of the 'gifts' he gave to his slaves. Often these 'gifts' took the form of parties and extra days' holidays, or clothes and extra food. Upon his arrival at the plantation a party immediately commenced, and Lewis said of the slaves:

> Altogether, they shouted and sang me into a violent headach (sic). It is now one in the morning, and I hear them still shouting and singing. I gave them a holiday for Saturday next, and told them that I had brought them all presents from England; and so, I believe, we parted very good friends.[47]

On another occasion he gave the slaves a festival and orders two heifers to be slaughtered for them, and as much rum, sugar, dancing and noise as they wished. About this party he said:

> At twelve, my agent wanted to dismiss them; but I would not suffer them to be interrupted on the first holiday that I had given them; so they continued to dance and shout till two; when human nature could bear no more, and they left me to my bed, and a violent headache.[48]

Indeed, the frequency with which Lewis went to bed with a 'violent headache' would suggest to the reader that parties were the predominant activity on Lewis's plantation. Yet the humour masked a clever device. It suggested that Lewis was not only kind to his slaves, but he was almost over-indulgent. Lewis also achieved this effect when he related stories of other benevolent acts.

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[46] Lewis, *Journal*, p. 47.
[47] Lewis, *Journal*, p. 63.
[48] Lewis, *Journal*, p. 81.

This was particularly evident with slaves who were ill or injured. Throughout the journal, Lewis, narrated many incidences in which he sent food, as he said, from 'his own table' to sick slaves. Indeed, at one point he commented:

> Perhaps an English physician would have felt every hair of his wig bristle upon his head with astonishment, at hearing me ask, this morning, a woman in a fever, how her bark and her barbecued pig had agreed with her. But, with negroes, I find that feeding the sick upon stewed fish and pork, highly seasoned, produces the very best effects possible.[49]

Of course, the idea that illness may have been caused in the first place by inadequate diet, poor living conditions or overwork never seemed to occur to Lewis. He clearly saw himself as giving the slaves gifts or indulgences which would have seemed extraordinary to most non-colonial contemporaries.

William Young, another absentee planter, although not quite as verbose as Lewis, also wrote about similar activities. On his arrival at his plantation, he wrote of the joy his slaves expressed at seeing him:

> A number of my negroes met me on the road, and stopped my horse, and I had to shake hands with every individual of them. Their joy was expressed in the most lively manner, and there was an ease and familiarity in their address, which implied no habits of apprehension or restraint[50]

Perhaps such comments represented the patriarchal role that white men held in contemporary society. Women tended to not make such overt self-constructions.

Women *indirectly* constructed their kindness, and other appropriate female characteristics in narration of their activities, such as teaching the slaves Christianity, or in other philanthropic concerns, but never openly asserted that they were benevolent.

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[49] Lewis, *Journal*, pp. 151-2.
[50] Young, ' A Tour,' pp.264-265.

WOMEN'S WRITING: GENDER CHARACTERISTICS

Private Domestic Sphere

As discussed in Chapter 9, female writing was often clearly located within the domestic setting. This was the case in terms of the female 'gaze,' which often emanated from the home and involved women looking at scenes from their windows, and also in terms of suitable subjects for discussion. Mrs Nugent's journal represents a good example of this kind of female writing. While her journal began in the classic tradition of a travel account, with the narration of the journey at sea, like male accounts, in Jamaica itself, the structure of the narration changed to take on a 'circular' form, unlike classic travel accounts, which tend to use a linear form. This change was due to the text being entrenched in domestic settings. As was common in such female writing, the author only saw Jamaica through the windows of her house, or in making journeys to other residences on the island. The circular format thus came from Nugent's continual visits to other residences and back home again. Pratt saw this as one major distinction between the travel writing of men and women at this point in history.[51]

The vast majority of Mrs Nugent's observations were made from within a domestic setting, when she looked out at scenes from windows. This was clear from her earliest entries. Soon after her arrival in Jamaica, for example, she observed a slave market from her window:

> The negroes seemed very happy, selling their yams, cocoa-nuts, plantains, &c. and salt fish. When we shewed ourselves in the piazza, they laughed, danced, bowed,

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[51] Pratt makes this distinction. She defines 'linear' travel books as those which were goal-directed narratives, often of conquest. Pratt noted a difference between male and female travel accounts in terms of structure. The female authors Pratt analysed wrote in what Pratt called a 'centripetal' fashion 'around places of residence from which the protagonist sallies forth and to which she returns,' whereas male travel accounts had a tendency towards a linear structure. See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp.157-9.

> curtsied, and grinned, and used every possible grimace to express their happiness in seeing us. I took a fancy to an immense water-melon, which my maid secured for me, and I devoured it all while I was dressing.[52]

Thus, she was only a casual observer from within the house, and anything she required from 'the outside,' her servants obtained for her.

Not long after her arrival in Jamaica, Nugent was informed of the beauty of the island. She said, 'I am told that the scenery of the interior is quite beautiful, and this I can well imagine, from the lilac-coloured mountains, and the variety of ground and tints, that I see from my window.'[53] Then, with regard to the wider landscape, Nugent later gave a more detailed description from her room:

> As soon as I could get away from the party, I went to my own room, the better to enjoy the landscape, as from my windows it is enchanting indeed. Imagine an immense amphitheatre of mountains, irregular in their shape and various in their verdure; some steep and rugged, others sloping gently, and presenting the thickest foliage, and the most varied tints of green, interspersed with the gardens of little settlements, some of which are tottering on the very brinks of precipices, others just peep out from the midst of cocoa-nut trees and bamboos, the latter looking really like large plumes of green feathers. The buildings are like little Chinese pavilions, and have a most picturesque effect. In front is a view of the sea, and the harbours of Kingston, Port Royal, Port Henderson, &c. and then the city of Kingston, the town of Port Royal, all so mixed with trees of different sorts, and all so new to an European eye, that it seemed like a paradise; and Clifton, where I stood, the centre of the blissful garden.[54]

The vast majority of the landscapes that Nugent saw, by definition (since her views were primarily from domestic settings) were ordered, cultivated and organised. The sight, as we saw in Chapter 8, was comforting and beautiful to her since, whilst there was thick foliage, forests and unknown trees, this was tempered, since the primal nature was really under European control as the settlements and building testified. The trees she had never seen before served merely as examples of what was expected in tropical and exotic settings of the empire.

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[52] *Lady Nugent's Journal,* p.84.
[53] *Lady Nugent's Journal,* p.17.

Family Concerns

Another key way in which Mrs Nugent's text was gendered and showed a marked difference from the male accounts was in the constant attention and worry Mrs Nugent gave to her spouse. Her husband was a key protagonist in the journal and the difference in their two lives between public and private roles was very clear. Mrs Nugent's world was that of the domestic setting – she was constantly in her own home or garden, or those of others, or travelling between the two. Mr Nugent by contrast was extremely active in the journal and was seldom at home, being always away on business. In this situation, Mrs Nugent's key concerns became keeping the house in order and problems with domestic servants, worrying about the health and welfare of her husband (and later her children too), and discussing how she could be a better wife.

The journal was full of references to General Nugent's health, and Mrs Nugent's fears that he over-exerted himself and worked too hard. Every time he had a headache or fever, or got wet, or was tired, was documented, and Mrs Nugent's worries were expressed on almost every page. The extent to which her life revolved around her husband was clearly illustrated when he was too busy to see her, or was away on business: 'A melancholy day for me; my dear N. so full of business, and so surrounded with visitors, and people coming for orders, that I can scarcely speak to him.'[55] At another point, during a visit to an island plantation, she said:

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[54] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.25-7.
[55] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.149.

> At breakfast General N. received an express, and set off for Spanish Town....I am really unhappy at this, for various reasons; the fatigue he must undergo, and the risk he must run, from mountainous bad roads, in crossing the island, as well as from the great heat of the climate. Another reason is, my being left alone...Passed the greatest part of the day in my own room, crying and reading, till 6 o'clock, when I joined a large party at dinner. I ate little, and talked less.[56]

This kind of comment was unique to the women's accounts and must be seen as part of a rigid structure of gender roles. The dictates of femininity and ideal womanhood at this point in history were (and to a great extent still are) confined to concerns about home and family. One got little sense in the journal of Mrs Nugent's own life, since it was to such a great extent shaped by the actions and decisions of her husband.

As well as expressing concerns over her husband's demanding workload, Mrs Nugent also expressed many concerns over his political situation, particularly during times when he was under attack in the House of Assembly. She helped him in both. She frequently copied and wrote letters and speeches for him, and she used all of her feminine tactics for helping to solve political problems. The fact that Mrs Nugent recognised her role was shown in several comments and situations. On one occasion she said: 'Try to rally my spirits, for my dear N.'s sake whose greatest comfort is to find me cheerful when he returns to our apartments, after the business of the day.'[57] Later, during fears of impending French attack, she said:

> I shall now, I trust, resume all my courage and cheerfulness, and be a comfort, rather than a burthen, to my dear husband, whose mind is at present sadly harassed.[58]

The dictates of ideal womanhood were such that she must mask her real feelings, and put on a front to her husband. Rather than 'create problems' she must be a source of

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[56] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.80.
[57] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.136-7.
[58] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.235.

comfort and support. As well as constantly being away on business, General Nugent's leisure activities took him outside, unlike his wife. She said:

> General N. and H. Rogers ... off at daylight, to fish and shoot. Returned at 4, having been all day coasting, and a great risk I am sure they have run, by having been so long out. They brought home immense sport, having shot two pelicans, and a variety of other birds. The pelican is indeed a curious bird; the bill is very long, and the sides of it as sharp as a razor. The chest is of an elastic texture, and stretches to an enormous size. General N. talks of getting some of is day's sport stuffed and preserved, to take home with us.[59]

Thus gender roles were very clearly defined. It was interesting to notice that at one point in the journal, Mrs Nugent made a direct comment on gender roles. With regard to her two children's behaviour (a girl and a boy) when their father left on business, she said:

> I could not help remarking the difference between the feelings of a boy and of a girl. George did not shed tears, but kept calling for the black horse, on which his papa rode, while Louisa covered her dear little face, and sobbed, Papa, Papa for a length of time, before we could pacify her.[60]

Of course, for Mrs Nugent, such behaviour reflected a biological difference in feeling in the two children, rather than learned gendered behaviour.

Mrs Fenwick also expressed many concerns over her family. When she arrived in Barbados, she said of her daughter:

> I was shocked at the alteration in Eliza. She had been very ill. Her strength, her flesh, were wholly gone, her cheeks as colorless as the paper on which I write, & the hue of her skin changed from its brown to a ghastly yellow.[61]

She also had many worries over her son, Orlando, especially regarding her fears that he may have adopted the 'habits' of the white men of the island. Fenwick never openly mentioned sexual matters, but from some of her other comments about slavery, her fears were probably in that area as well as in drinking:

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[59] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.196.
[60] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.223.

> When we first arrived, he was cautioned against the water of the Island....For my part I cannot believe that the pure, unadulterated water, which agrees so well with the females, who generally drink nothing else, can be solely injurious to the male community. It is however generally credited & even Mr Rutherford, who is restless in all physical enquiries, dashes off his glass of water with a very small portion of rum. Orlando was advised to do the same, & that which at first he murmured at, became pleasing....I remonstrated, perhaps too angrily, & not aware himself how the fatal habit was encroaching, he thought me captious & unreasonable....I have asked you to write to him on the subject, but now I beg you will not notice my having spoken of it, for we had one evening of cool conversation in which he promised to leave if off, & for three weeks past he has not tasted rum, mixing his water with sugar in lieu of it.[62]

Also, Mrs Fenwick's anguish over the loss of her son, perhaps, also demonstrated more feminine open expressions of feeling:

> The heaviest Calamity of my life has fallen upon me! Ah, my dear friend, pardon my abruptness. I know not how to seek for terms of alleviation. - Orlando is dead! Lost! Gone for ever! - A cruel, malignant fever, which spares the aged & devours the young, has made me wretched.[63]

Male texts, of course, also mentioned the ill health of whites in the tropical islands, and discussed yellow fever, but remarks were always made in an objective sense, in simply discussing the illnesses that were common and in deliberating over why such illnesses affected the white population more than the black population, rather than discussing concerns over close friends or family.

The Brodbelt letters also contained lots of discussion about family members and their health. On returning to Jamaica after visiting her daughter Jane who was at school in England, Mrs Brodbelt wrote:

> We were amply repaid on our arrival by finding your dear Father, Mr Millward and the children well. You cannot think how pleased your little Cousins were with the Play things you sent them.[64]

Mrs Brodbelt then repeated the same sentiments in her next letter, 'I am safely arrived after the many unpleasant days I had at Sea....I had the happiness to find your very dear Father in good health, which made me forget in a moment the fatigues of my

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[61] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, p.163.
[62] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, pp.173-174.

long Voyage.'[65] Mrs Brodbelt, also had to write to her daughter with some bad news regarding the family:

> This is the first time My dearest Jane that I have ever felt a reluctance in writing to you, but it arises from the melancholy tidings this letter conveys to you of the death of your lovely little cousin Brodbelt Millward, and which I fear will be equally distressing to you to receive. He died on the 3rd of this month of a putrid sore throat, a complaint that has been fatal to very many children in the Town, the Country part of the Island having been altogether free of it.[66]

The letters also contained lots of information about the health of other family members and of family friends.

Janet Schaw also frequently mentioned the health of her brother in her journal. At sea during the voyage to Antigua, she wrote:

> My poor brother has passed another night, with as little comfort as the former. He finds himself worst in the Cabin, and for that reason, stays continually on deck, notwithstanding the constant Rains, the spray and even the waves that wet him thro' and thro'.[67]

Schaw feared for Alexander's health once in Antigua, because of the general ill health of the white population. She also spoke of being very close to her brother, and said: 'I enjoy all the felicity that the friendship and affection of the kindest and best of brothers can give me, and again repeat that I am perfectly satisfied.'[68] Indeed, one of the most marked features of female writing was the extent to which it was filled with people and descriptions of them, of dinners and balls, picnics and visits to other houses. Whilst Mills has suggested that this was common in female writing and has pointed to female interest in 'native' peoples, given the system of slavery and the

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[63] *Fate of the Fenwicks*, p.183.
[64] *Letters to Jane*, p.29.
[65] *Letters to Jane*, p.30.
[66] *Letters to Jane*, p.51.
[67] Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, p.31.
[68] Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, p.130.

enormous racial division on all islands, it is perhaps, not surprising that women's concern with people in the Caribbean texts was with whites rather than 'natives.'[69]

Women and Philanthropic Concerns

One of the most marked features of women's writing was female concern with spreading religion, and most texts mentioned this, with many women being actively involved in the global spread of Christianity. The early part of the Mrs Nugent's journal, for example, was full of making preparations to teach Christianity to the slaves. Some examples of her endeavours include: 'had a great deal of conversation with Mr Woodham, on the subject of the black domestics, whom I am instructing, previously to their being christened.'[70] The next day, she wrote:

> After church, studied an Exposition of the Catechism, that I might be able to explain more fully to the black servants, what they undertake in becoming Christians.[71]

Then later:

> Spend a comfortable morning; read and think a great deal. Religion is now my greatest source of happiness. – I thank God for the blessings I enjoy, and I pray ever to be resigned to his will.[72]

After the slaves have been christened she wrote:

> Delighted to see the black servants look so well, so orderly, and behave so properly during the Service. Assembled them all afterwards, and gave them each a dollar for a wedding present. – Their wish was, that General N. and I might live happy together, till our hair was as white as their gowns. They don't know what snow is, or I suppose they would have said snow, rather than their gowns; but their muslin was very clean and white.[73]

Mrs Nugent also frequently made prayers in her journal, asking for specific favours, if she proved vigilant enough in her duties. She said:

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[69] Mills, *Discourses*, p.160.
[70] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.17.
[71] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.18.
[72] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.23.
[73] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.39.

> This is the last day of the year, and I rejoice, as time passes, to think, that every day, now, will bring us, please God we live, nearer to England, and our domestic comfort there. I will endeavour to deserve that blessing from Heaven, by being more vigilant and active in my duties here. I will begin the new year, at the Penn, by instructing the poor negroes, and if I do but succeed in making them better understand their duties as Christians, I shall be happy indeed; and I pray for a blessing on my efforts for that purpose.[74]

When she finally left Jamaica, she said:

> we all went to the chapel, where Harry and Eve's child was made a Christian, and now I shall not leave one, belonging to this house, unbaptized.[75]

For Mrs Nugent, religion seemed a constant source of instruction for 'good' qualities, not only in terms of morality for the slaves, but also for herself and her children. At one point she asked:

> Oh my God! Grant [General Nugent] health of mind as well as of body, and enable me, as far as may depend upon my conduct and ability, to contribute to his welfare and happiness. Grant that I may conquer every propensity that may occasion him the smallest uneasiness, or make me less worthy of the blessings thou hast bestowed upon me. Teach me to suppress all sinful repinings, and to become entirely resigned to thy Divine will.[76]

For her son, George, who was born in Jamaica, she hoped:

> Endow him, oh my God! With such good and holy dispositions, as may render him always acceptable in thy sight. Grant that he may be a faithful servant to thee; a comfort to his dear, dear father, and myself, and an useful as well as amiable member of society, kind and compassionate to the poor, and that he may, in every action of his life, prove himself a faithful follower of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.[77]

There was the unquestioning assumption behind all of these expressions and actions that Christian faith was good and right, and was the only possible belief system, as well as being an essential part of ideal feminine behaviour.

Exploration or Travel

As pointed out earlier, Sara Mills argues that male travel writing displayed a tendency towards exploration and adventure rather than travel, which was not the case

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[74] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.49,
[75] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.243.

in female texts. I would agree that men tended to be 'out' more, visiting the interior of islands, visiting the militia, or engaging in pursuits such as hunting in the countryside, whereas women tended to stay at home or simply to visit other homes. Yet often, women's journeys to other plantations gave them an opportunity for adventure, as did the journey to the Caribbean itself. Thus, whilst Mrs Nugent's narrative was firmly fixed in the private domestic setting, journeys to other plantations gave her an opportunity for adventure, where the danger of road travel presented the most exciting part her narrative. In this regard, I would suggest that Mary Louise Pratt's emphasis is more appropriate than Mills'. Pratt pointed out that very often in travel writing of the early nineteenth-century, as opposed to earlier 'discovery' writing, travel became a 'triumph in its own right,' and what were overcome were 'not military challenges, but logistical ones. The travelers struggle in an unequal battle against scarcity, inefficiency, laziness, discomfort, poor horses, bad weather, delays.'[78] I would argue that this definition fitted both male and female travel writing from the Caribbean in this period. All accounts contained descriptions of a perilous journey at sea, of storms and discomfort, and in the islands, of dangerous journeys to plantations during storms. As noted in Chapter 8, Mrs Nugent's journal contained many stories of perilous conditions during storms. One such incident she recorded illustrates the point of interior travel as adventure:

> Just before we came to the river, we met the Speaker, and Mr. Redwood, and Mr. Blackburn, Members of the Assembly. They advised us to lose no time in fording the river, as the water was increasing very much, and, indeed, pouring down from the mountains, quite like a torrent. They kindly turned back with us, as not a moment should be lost, and they directed one of the black men to go before on horseback, as soon as possible, through the most shallow part of the river. They next ordered our sociable to follow, and the rest to proceed in the same line, as quietly as possible. The servant's horse could not well stem the torrent, and it stopped. Ours began to plunge,

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[76] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.27.
[77] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, pp.123-4.
[78] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.148.

and the traces were loosened on one side of the wheel horses. The roaring of the water, and the cry of the people, "Go on, go on," made it a most terrific moment. The carriage began to move up and down; the maids wrung their hands; and poor Sir J. Duckworth really turned black. I took the baby to myself, and sat upon the back of the carriage, with my feet upon the seat. All I could do was to call out for some one to take my precious child. Good Mr. Blackburn (I shall never forget him) threw himself into the water, and, by the help of the several carriage wheels, got to the side of the sociable, and held the dear baby above the water with one hand, and making his way with the other, got his precious charge safe to the land. I watched him with my eyes till all was safe, and then I felt as if all the danger was over, though I saw poor Clifford dragged out of the stream half drowned. – Just as I turned to Sir John Duckworth, to say that now we had all our senses about us, and we could save ourselves, good Mr. Blackburn plunged in again, and asked if I would trust myself with him. In an instant we were struggling with the stream, and I must have been a sad weight; but he kept my head above water, and we were soon safe with the dear baby. Sir John Duckworth mounted one of the carriage horses, behind my maid, and Kemble, I believe, behind the nurse; but the confusion was so great they themselves could hardly tell how they got out. It seems that poor Clifford threw herself into the water, and was saved by one of Mr. Blackburn's servants. The groom, &c. &c. were dragged out safe, about a hundred yards down the stream.[79]

Clearly, this scene was narrated with great drama and the different gender roles of men and women were clear: Mrs Nugent constructed herself as 'helpless' and as only fearing for her child, whereas the men took active heroic roles to save the day. Such narratives were extremely common in the travel writing of the British Caribbean at this time. Storms while crossing rivers were textualised as perilous and life-threatening situations. This is not to deny the danger of crossing rivers under the swell of floods, but one must remember the context of these tales. Mrs Nugent at this point was on a journey around the island, visiting the homes of all the white elites and planters. She took breakfast at one house, then moved on her journey to lunch at another and so on. To some extent this was an expected part of the duties of the new Governor and his wife, but the journeys, especially under such conditions, and with a small child in tow, were not absolutely necessary. Such events added drama to the lives of those involved (lives tediously full of formal dinners, balls, and constant attendance by servants), and became a narrative of success in their own right.

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[79] *Lady Nugent's Journal*, p.151.

NOVELS

Clear differences emerged between male and female fiction from the slavery period. As we have seen, female writing tended to be extremely sentimental and religious. Even where female novels were anti-slavery, they usually also contained, as a key part of the plot, a courtship and marriage of heroic anti-slavery whites. In this sense, courtship and marriage were often the major themes, with slavery and an anti-slavery message acting as the background to the story.

Almost all of Theodora Lynch's novels concerned female protagonists and their courtship and marriage with the novels' heroes. Similarly, many of Charlotte Smith's novels concerned lovers and their courtships. In *The Wanderings of Warwick*, the hero discovered that his betrothed was viciously cruel to slave children and so he left her. In *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer*, the heroine was captured by maroons, but was rescued by her white suitor.

Another type of female sentimental anti-slavery novel constructed slaves as 'noble savages'. *The System* and *The Koromantyn Slaves* contained stories of cruelly treated slaves rebelling against the white tyrants, with heroic black characters acting to try to stop rebellions or to inform whites. This was also a theme of Elizabeth Helme's *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest*, where the novel told of the heroic actions of a slave, Felix, who saved his young master, Henry, from the wrath of rebelling slaves. A similar theme was the main idea for Maria Edgeworth's *The Grateful Negro*, where the heroic slave Caesar, told his master about a planned rebellion. He did this because his master was a religious benevolent paternalist, who bought Caesar and his wife from a cruel tyrannical master.

As well as these novels, which clearly had moral messages, there was also a series of female novels with more didactic moral messages. *The Rotchfords*, by Dorothy Kilner concerned a kindly Christian family who took in a runaway slave, much in the style of the 'good Samaritan' tradition. Charlotte Smith's *The Wanderings of Warwick* contained clear messages for women to adopt appropriate gendered behaviour if they wished to marry (as we saw in the case of the woman whose suitor abandoned her because of her cruelty). Also, Barbara Hofland's *The Barbadoes Girl* told the moral tale of a selfish and opinionated girl from Barbados staying with a religious and moral English family, and changing her ways to become good and kind, and finding a heroic husband in doing so.

The male slavery novels I have examined, by comparison, tended to be focused on action and adventure. William Earle's *Three Fingered Jack*, as the editors to the *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* collection suggest

> is the only text that can unequivocally celebrate a black rebel and 'justify' rebellion on the basis of a family revenge plot. The story unashamedly treats slave rebellion as heroic, inevitable and glorious.[80]

The novel concerned a Caribbean slave hero, Jack, who rebelled against his condition to revenge his family's sale into slavery. His father had been killed by a white slave trader in Africa, and his mother sold into slavery by the same man. The slave trader had, in fact, been helped by Jack's parents in Africa, but repaid them with betrayal. Jack was constructed as a proud character, initiated into obeah, and possessing superhuman strength. Despite the unusual theme of a slave rebelling with justification and without remorse (unlike in female novels), there was also an element of the 'white Moor' tradition in Earle's construction of Jack's speeches:

> Countrymen, ye that do espouse the cause we fight for, now throng around, and let the reverberation of liberty ascend to heaven.[81]

This echoed Elizabeth Helme's black hero Felix's speech to a group of rebel slaves: 'Friends, Countrymen, and fellow-sufferers.'[82] Where Earle's character was different from the female 'noble savages', however, was in the fact that Jack had no sympathy for whites and was on a heroic rampage of revenge to kill his oppressors. He said to one white who begged for mercy:

> "Wretch!" he replied, barbarous inhuman savage! What mercy canst thou expect from me? Me, whom thou hast robbed of his family? What mercy canst thou expect from the son of that man, whose injured blood cries aloud to his Maker for vengeance?[83]

Also, Earle's text included far more violence than female texts, and the violence was described in a tone of glorious rebellion:

> [Jack] lifted up his ponderous bar and struck the centinel who stood near him dead at his feet.[84]

Thus, clear differences can be seen here between Earle's book and comparable female fiction. The view of rebel and runaway slaves as heroic was also put forward in Michael Scott's novel, *Tom Cingle's Log*:

> I never saw finer men - tall, strapping fellows, dressed exactly as they should be and the climate requires; wide duck trousers, over these a loose shirt, of duck also, gathered at the waist by a broad leathern belt, through which, on one side, their short cutlass is stuck, while on the other hangs a leathern pouch for ball, and a loose thong across one shoulder, supports, on the opposite hip, a large powder-horn and haversack. This, with a straw hat, and a short gun in their hand, with a sling to be used on a march, completes their equipment - in better keeping with the climate than the padded coats, heavy caps, tight cross-belts, and ponderous muskets of our regulars.[85]

In female writing, by contrast, maroons tended to be constructed as fearful savages.

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[80] Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, p. xxii.
[81] William Earle, *Obi, or Three-Fingered Jack* (London, 1800) in Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, p.286.
[82] Helme, in Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, p.156.
[83] Earle, *Obi*, in Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, p.289.
[84] Earle, *Obi*, in Aravamudan (ed), *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, p.287.

[85] Michael Scott, Tom Cingle's Log (first published London, 1838), p.137, although it was earlier serialised in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1832.

Conclusion

This discussion has illustrated that whilst there were many similarities between male and female writing about Caribbean slavery, there were also important differences. Similarities have been documented throughout the thesis to show women's involvement in empire, and to show their acceptance and construction of racism. Yet, as the thesis has also demonstrated, subtle but clear gender differences are apparent between men's and women's writing. These differences stemmed from women's gender role in contemporary society, which dictated suitable topics and styles of writing for women. Despite these differences, and despite the confines of gender conventions, women contributed profoundly to the imperial discourse and to the discourse on 'race.'

CHAPTER 11:

CONCLUSION

This thesis has documented the racist images of slaves presented in white women's writing about the British Caribbean, 1770-1845, and explored women's contribution to discourses of racism and imperialism. Thus, a major theme has been white women's historical contribution to the development and continuance of racist thought and practices. I have argued that this has been a neglected topic. When female travellers from the colonial period have been discussed by researchers, it has tended to be in a manner that 'celebrates' women as adventurous explorers who had rejected 'traditional' contemporary female gender behaviour in leaving the domestic setting for travel to unknown continents.[1]

On the contrary, my thesis has shown that white women travellers adopted very traditional and stereotypical gender behaviour and roles. I have shown that white women in the British Caribbean supported white male patriarchy, and even colluded in women's gender oppression by their acceptance and glorification of traditional female gender behaviour. Amanda Vickery has also noted this tendency in her study of women's diaries and letters from the Georgian period in England. Vickery said 'the consciousness of doing right in the face of the most extreme provocation seems to have offered some women a near-mystical satisfaction in their matrimonial martyrdom.'[2] I have argued in this thesis that doing this gave white women a privileged position in slave society. By being put on a pedestal as 'lady,' white plantation mistresses could be constructed in opposite terms to slave women: as

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[1] Ware, *Beyond the Pale.*
[2] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.83.

angelic, as 'natural' mothers, as 'pure' and chaste and as guardians of the moral order. This, I have suggested, gave white women some form of 'compensation' for their husband's promiscuous sexual behaviour and use of slave women. In slave society white women could additionally derive power and prestige from their position over lower class whites, black men and black women.

As well as neglecting white women's contribution to racist thought historians and feminist researchers have also dealt inadequately with the issue of the intersection of gender and 'race' in slave societies. Black feminists have made some inroads in this area, but the topic needs further developing. Hazel Carby, for example, has written:

> The black women's critique of *his*tory has not only involved us in coming to terms with 'absences': we have also been outraged by the ways in which it has made us visible, when it has chosen to see us. *His*tory has constructed our sexuality and our femininity as deviating from those qualities which white women, as the prize objects of the Western world, have been endowed. We have also been defined in less than human terms.[3]

Here, however, Carby arguably neglects the role of white women in history and their contribution to the construction of black women 'in less than human terms.' Carby's article concerns problems with contemporary white feminist theory, which, she suggests, tends to universalise 'women,' thus ignoring important differences (particularly of 'race') among women. These allegations against white feminism are certainly well founded. Yet I would argue that until the historical contribution of white women to racism, to notions of racial differences between women, and to empire, are acknowledged (which this thesis has sought to do), there is little scope for contemporary white feminist thought to theorise the intersection of gender and 'race'.

Another major theme of this thesis has been its contribution to the debate over gender and travel writing. Whereas most previous research has focused on differences in male and female writing, I have suggested that there were also many similarities between the writing of men and women, especially with regard to racial images. Contrary to Sara Mills's argument, I have shown that white women made open comments about the racial 'inferiority' of slaves, and the savagery of Africans. Again, this has supported my concept of white women's historical contribution to the continuation and development of racism. Another key theme has been the idea that anti-slavery writing by women (and men) showed a good degree of continuity, in terms of racial images, to earlier pro-slavery writing. Thus in these three areas this thesis has added a contribution to gender and imperial history, as well as to the history of racist thought and of slavery in the British Caribbean islands.

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[3] Hazel V. Carby, 'White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood,' in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (London & New York, 1992), p212.

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