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‘To be despised’: Discourses of Sexual-Economic Exchange in Nineteenth-
Century Jamaica, c. 1780-1890

by

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Declaration	vi
Abstract	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
 Chapter One: Situating Sexual-Economic Exchange in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Jamaica	 1
Local Administration and Political Control	3
Jamaica's Population	5
Local and Global Economy	8
Race, Difference and Social Order	11
Creolization and Deviations	15
Chapter Overview	19
 Chapter Two: Sexual-Economic Exchange in Caribbean Historiography	 24
Gender and Sexuality in Slave and Post-Emancipation Caribbean Society	25
Sexual Labour and Terminology	37
Archives and Absences	44
Conclusion	56
 Chapter Three: Bodies, Sex and Politics in Jamaican Slave Society, c. 1780-1833	 57
African Bodies, Sex and Racialization	61
Female Bodies, Interracial Sex and Ownership	65

Narratives of Prostitution and Concubinage	72
Concubinage as a Political Platform	93
Conclusion	110
 Chapter Four: The ‘Common Prostitute’ and the Legislation of Poor Urban Women	 112
Anxieties and Urban Disorder	115
Regulating Freedom: Legal Responses to Urban Disorder	130
Disorderly Behaviour and Spaces of Disorder	142
Conclusion	151
 Chapter Five: Sex, Black Bodies, and the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica	 153
Venereal Disease, Prostitution and the African Body	161
Socio-political Transformations and the ‘Civilising Mission’	166
Contagious Diseases Legislation in Britain and Empire	175
Implementing the Contagious Diseases Act: Institutions for Unruly Women	183
The ‘Negro Character’, Extension Movement and Repeal	202
Conclusion	212
 Chapter Six: Continuities and Changes of Sexual-Economic Exchange	 215
The Continuities of Disorder and Danger	216
Glimpses and Agency	220
Concluding Thoughts	226
 Bibliography	 230

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: James Gilray, ‘Philanthropic Consolations, after the loss of the Slave-Bill’ (1796), The British Museum	61
Figure 3.2: William Holland, ‘Johnny Newcome in Love in the West Indies’ (1808), British Museum	75
Figure 3.3: Agostino Brunias, ‘A West Indian Flower Girl and Two other Free Women of Color’ (1769), British Museum	90
Figure 4.1: John Lodge, ‘A Draught of the Harbours of Port Royal and Kingston Jamaica with the Fortifications Correctly Laid Down, Also all the Keys and Shoals Adjacent’ (1782), Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division	120
Figure 4.2: James Hakewill, ‘Kingston and Port Royal from Windsor Farm’, <i>A Picturesque Tour in the Island of Jamaica</i> (London, 1825)	129
Figure 5.1: Percentage of White and Black Troops Infected with Venereal Disease and Admitted into the Hospital in Jamaica Between 1862 and 1866	183
Figure 5.2: Number of Women Accused of Being a ‘Common Prostitute’ in Kingston and Port Royal, and St. Andrew Between 1879 and 1886	186
Figure 5.3: Number of Women Examined in Kingston Lock Hospital and Percentage of Who Volunteered or Were Served Magistrate Orders Between 1879 and 1886	197

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Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree, apart from small sections of the background material in Chapter One and Chapter Two, which was previously submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts at the University of Victoria in 2010.

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the changes and continuities in the discourses surrounding sexual-economic exchange in colonial Jamaica in the ‘long’ nineteenth century. More specifically, it explores the shifting relationship between representations of concubinage and street-based sexual labour amongst women of African ancestry and broader socio-cultural and political developments in Jamaica from the 1780s to the 1890s. The central argument of the thesis is that heightened discussions about sexual-economic exchange amongst local and imperial elites reflected concerns about race, labour, disease and civilization in the colony. Further, as Jamaica transitioned from a slave society to free and modern nation, the operation of sexual-economic exchange became an increasingly regulated and stigmatized form of sexual praxis amongst poor, subordinate women.

Drawing on the theoretical framework developed by feminist scholars in the emerging subfield of Caribbean Sexualities, this thesis examines practices of sexual-economic exchange in nineteenth-century Jamaica as a form of women’s labour. While it recognizes the centrality of sexual violence and rape in the lives of poor, subordinate women, particularly during the period of slavery, this thesis seeks to broaden the discussions of black and brown women’s sexual experiences within the historiography of slave and post-slavery Caribbean societies. Thus, one of the central premises of this thesis is that despite the confines of slavery, patriarchy, and colonialism, some women engaged in transactional sex as a means of achieving financial stability and social mobility. In this way, this thesis contributes to emerging research on the centrality of sexual praxis to the developments and transformations in Jamaican society.

List of Abbreviations

JA	Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town
NLJ	National Library of Jamaica, Kingston
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
PP	Parliamentary Papers

Chapter One: Situating Sexual-Economic Exchange in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Jamaica

A key issue for governments and societies throughout the Caribbean today is the issue of sex work. In several Caribbean countries, sex workers are stigmatized, criminalized and denied equal access to the medical and social resources available to other citizens. Of particular concern is the operation of prostitution, that is, the sale of sexual services in exchange for monetary or material gain. An online search of the *Gleaner*, one of Jamaica's longest running and most popular newspapers, produces over one hundred results for articles discussing 'prostitution' in the last ten years. Investigative reports, letters to the editor, and lead stories document heightening debate around the operation of sex work in Kingston's downtown area, legalization of prostitution, and the increasing numbers of 'pickney prostitutes', among other issues.¹ A common theme in many of these articles is the notion that prostitution is a moral problem, an issue lodged in the island's history of colonialism, and thus a form of degradation, violence, and criminality that threatens the social fabric of society. Those that have adopted this position, including members of religious organizations and some feminists, have argued for the need for more stringent laws to address what they often discuss as an increasing problem in Jamaica. However, there is another voice within these discussions. For several years, health workers and sex-work activists, including organizations such as the Caribbean Sex Workers

¹ For instance, see *Gleaner*, 'Legalising Prostitution: Social Implications', 4 September 2005; 'Police Struggle to Arrest Child Prostitute on "Back Road"', 25 November 2009; 'Male Prostitution a "Harsh Reality"', 7 October 2013; 'Legalising Prostitution is not the Answer', 11 January 2014.

Coalition, have called for the decriminalization of sex work in all of its forms.²

Moreover, many of these advocates demand that the government provides better access to social services for the men and women engaged in this activity.

The debates and discussions around prostitution, its impact on individuals and collective society are not unique to recent public (and political) discourse in Jamaica. There were similar discussions and debates in the nineteenth century around the sale of sex and associated concerns around morality, disease, law and society. Yet, sexual-economic exchange has not always held the same discursive meanings or incited the same responses from various members of society. This study explores the changes and continuities in discourse around the sale of sex from 1780 to 1890. I am interested in how sexual-economic exchange and the women involved in this practice were discussed in relation to political and socio-cultural changes in Jamaica and the larger British Empire. Using newspaper reports, court records, official local and metropolitan government documents, journals and diaries, this project will highlight the ways in which attitudes around gender, race, class and sexuality intermingled to shape discourses of sexual-economic exchange throughout the period.

This study begins in late eighteenth-century Jamaica as debates around Britain's continuation in the slave trade and the system of slavery increasingly came to the forefront of colonial and metropolitan politics. During this period discussions around black and brown women's sexuality and the sexual deviance of the wider

² See Caribbean Sex Workers Coalition, *Montego Bay Declaration*, 28-30 August 2013; Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 'Sex Workers in Jamaica Hold a Conference Demanding Rights', 6 September 2013.
<<http://www.nswp.org/news-story/sex-workers-jamaica-hold-conference-demanding-rights>> (4 December 2013).

slave society became a contentious issue with larger implications for the current and future state of the colony. I have chosen to end this dissertation during the early 1890s as this period marked the materialization of philanthropic organizations concerned with the ‘common prostitute’ and the hardening of moral attitudes around the commercialization of sex and sexual services that have persisted into the twentieth century. These organisations are the forerunners of the contemporary position within Jamaica that sees sex work primarily through a ‘moral’ lens. The discourses surrounding sexual-economic exchange in Jamaica developed and altered as a result of local dynamics within the colony and from the island’s changing colonial relationship with Britain. In the periodic scope of this study there were dramatic shifts in the economic, political, and socio-cultural organization of Jamaica. While each chapter includes contextualization and a summary of these changing dynamics, here I lay out a brief overview of Jamaican society just prior to the ‘age of abolition’, the period just preceding the focus of this study. The point here is to provide some context for the discussion of discourses surrounding sexual-economic exchange.

Local Administration and Political Control

The English took control of Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655. Six years later, a political body was established to oversee the local administration of the colony. From its inception, the Jamaican House of Assembly was given ‘constitutional

parity' with the House of Commons in Britain.³ It was comprised of representatives from the different parishes in the island and elected from among white property owners.⁴ Each parish had two representatives in the Assembly, except for Kingston, Port Royal and Spanish Town, the main political and commercial centres of Jamaica, which each had three. Only men with the rights of an English citizen, twenty-one years old or more, and in possession of a freehold worth at least £300 annually or a personal estate worth at least £3000 could be elected to the Assembly. As a result, membership to the Assembly and access to political authority in the island was limited to elite white males.⁵ The Crown appointed a governor, usually from Britain, and twelve Assembly members were chosen to sit on the governor's advisory council. Through the control of taxation in the colony, the Jamaica House of Assembly was able to negotiate with the House of Commons. However, the colony's power was limited and it was always at the mercy of the British government.⁶ Any legislation passed by the Assembly in the colony had to be cleared in Westminster, including laws relating to slavery. As a result, beginning in 1682, the Assembly employed agents in London to represent their interests in the metropole, as did other colonial governments in the Caribbean and North America. These agents were employed to track political trends in London, to provide representation of the colony independent of the governor, and to organize lobbies on issues of importance to the

³ Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1781-1834* (Chicago, 1982), p.1.

⁴ The number of parishes in the colony fluctuated throughout the eighteenth century; for instance, between 1770 and 1813 there were twenty parishes.

⁵ Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford, 1971), p. 44.

⁶ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp.1- 2.

colony, such as the maintenance of protected markets for West Indian sugar.⁷ For most of the eighteenth century the primary concern of the ‘West India interest’, as these agents and other pro-planter actors were known, focused on various commercial policies. However, in the final quarter of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, issues relating to slavery and the slave trade came to dominate their discussions.⁸

Jamaica’s Population

Jamaica was not a settler colony, like those found in parts of North America, Australia or Canada. From the time the island came under English control, it functioned primarily as a source of raw materials, mostly sugarcane, that were then transported to the metropole. The production of sugarcane relied upon the enslaved labour of men, women and children brought to the island from various parts of Africa. Thus, slavery formed the economic basis of the colony. As Edward Kamau Brathwaite put it, if the Jamaica Assembly could be seen as ‘the head, arms, and legs of the body politic’, then ‘slavery was certainly its back, guts and thighs’.⁹ Indeed, the majority of Jamaica’s population was both black and enslaved. The number of enslaved people in the colony steadily increased throughout the eighteenth century as the demand for sugar grew in the metropole. By 1748 the enslaved population had risen to approximately 116,000—eighty times larger than when the island first

⁷ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, p. 2.

⁸ For more on the ‘West India interest’, see Lillian M. Penson. ‘The London West India Interest in the Eighteenth Century’, *The English Historical Review*, 36 (1921), pp. 373-392.

⁹ Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 179.

became an English possession the mid-seventeenth century. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Jamaica had the largest enslaved population in British America.¹⁰ By 1815, there were approximately 339,000 people enslaved in the colony.¹¹

The island's free white population during the eighteenth century is difficult to ascertain. As Richard S. Dunn states, the fragmentary and missing records on Jamaica's white population are both 'contradictory and confusing'.¹² Although there are no exact figures for the number of whites settled in Jamaica during the eighteenth century, scholars have been able to draw upon fragmentary data and contemporary accounts to build estimates of European settlement during the century. According to Trevor Burnard's study, there were approximately 8230 whites in Jamaica in 1730, approximately ten per cent of the population. This number gradually increased throughout the century, although the increase of African peoples transported to the colony meant that whites comprised a smaller percentage of the population. By 1788 both Brathwaite and Burnard estimate just over 18000 white people were resident in the island.¹³ According to Christer Petley, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were between 20,000 and 25,000 white people resident in the island.¹⁴ The sex ratio is even more elusive to ascertain. Besides one

¹⁰ Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 8-9.

¹¹ J.R. Ward, 'The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748-1815', in William Roger Louis, Elaine M. Low, and Peter James Marshall (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 433.

¹² Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, 1972), p. 325.

¹³ Trevor Burnard, 'European Migration to Jamaica, 1655-1780', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 53 (1996), p. 772; Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 105.

¹⁴ Christer Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica: Colonial Society and Culture During the Era of Abolition* (London, 2009), p. 6.

figure in 1730, which showed that there were approximately 2.61 white men to every one white woman in the colony and the 1844 census which showed 143.2 males per 100 females, determining the number of white women in the colony between these years is difficult.¹⁵ Instead, based on the writings of contemporary observers and statistics collected by several parishes for the purpose of tax assessment or militia counts¹⁶, historians such as Burnard, Dunn and Lucille Mathurin Mair, have determined that there was never a balanced sex ratio in the island, and the proportion of white women in the colony remained small.¹⁷

Most of the whites settlers in Jamaica emigrated from the British Isles—England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. There was also a small number of other non-Protestant Europeans, particularly Jews and French refugees from Saint-Domingue. These settlers held a variety of occupations and socio-economic positions in Jamaica. According to estimates by Burnard and Brathwaite, the majority of the white population in the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century were ‘lesser whites’—poor artisans, bookkeepers, overseers, small pen keepers, servants, and other white people with little property or wealth. The late eighteenth century also saw an influx of white settlers arrive as missionaries, as well as British troops (approximately 3000 men in total) stationed permanently in the island from 1774.¹⁸ Many of Jamaica’s wealthiest plantation owners did not make Jamaica their permanent home. Instead, absenteeism—the voluntary removal of

¹⁵ Cited in Trevor Burnard, ‘Inheritance and Independence: Women’s Status in Early Colonial Jamaica’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 48 (1991), p. 98; Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 105.

¹⁶ Mair cautions that data collected in these records likely underestimated the presence of women. Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁷ Burnard, ‘Inheritance and Independence’, p. 98; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, pp. 326-327.

¹⁸ Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 135.

wealthy Jamaicans to Britain—was commonplace during the slavery period. Attorneys and bookkeepers were hired to oversee the day-to-day operation of the plantations and to keep the absentee planter informed. The few planters that settled in the island, along with merchants, attorneys and other wealthy white men, formed the ‘upper class’ and the oligarchy that controlled Jamaica’s local administration. These men often had strong familial and political ties to elites in Britain.¹⁹

Local and Global Economy

The primary motivation for white migration to the colony was economic. Orlando Patterson discusses the period of Jamaica’s history between 1700 and 1774 as the ‘golden period of prosperity’, characterised by large-scale agricultural production and wealth.²⁰ In 1739, the island exported approximately 33,155 hogsheads of sugar.²¹ By 1774, the quantities of export peaked. Nearly 80,000 hogsheads of sugar, plus substantial quantities of other commodities, were exported.²² By this point in the eighteenth century, the export of sugar made up nearly ninety per cent of the commodities being sold in external markets.²³ Although it had a slow start, by the late eighteenth-century Jamaica accounted for two-thirds of the total trade from all fourteen British West Indian colonies.²⁴

¹⁹ Trevor Burnard, ‘Passengers Only: The Extent and Significance of Absenteeism in Eighteenth Century Jamaica’, *Atlantic Studies*, 1 (2004), pp. 178-195; Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p.135.

²⁰ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Rutherford, 1967), p. 16.

²¹ Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery*, pp. 23-24.

²² Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery*, p. 24.

²³ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Volume I (London, 1774), p. 496.

²⁴ Richard B. Sheridan, ‘Sugar Tycoon of Jamaica, 1740-1813’, *Agricultural History*, 45 (1971),

Many of the wealthiest individual Britons of the eighteenth and nineteenth century made their fortunes in the sugar colonies of the Caribbean. In 1774, the average per capita wealth of Britons or British Creoles in Jamaica was £2201, with men averaging approximately £4403. These sums were dramatically more than in England and Wales, the average was £42.1 sterling and in the thirteen American colonies where the average was around £60.2 (in New England the average per capita income was £38.2). The average white person in Jamaica was thus 36.6 times wealthier than the average free white person in America and 52.2 times wealthier than the average white person in England and Wales.²⁵ This startling discrepancy in individual incomes between Jamaica and other British colonies is partly explained by the fact that a large proportion of wealth in Jamaica was derived from the value placed on enslaved people. In 1812, the 320,000 people of African ancestry enslaved in Jamaica were valued at approximately £19,250,000—thirty-four per cent of the total wealth of the colony.²⁶ In this way, members of Jamaica's plantocracy were some of the richest people in the British Empire in the eighteenth century.²⁷ Jamaica emerged by the late eighteenth century as the most lucrative sugar-producing colony in the West Indies, not only for individual Britons, but also for the larger British Empire. As a result, the colony, along with the other Caribbean colonies, had a key place in the functioning and prosperity of Britain. As one mid-century observer

p.286.

²⁵ Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, 2004), p. 15.

²⁶ According to Burnard's calculation, private wealth in Jamaica in 1812 totaled £57,130, 000. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, p.15.

²⁷ Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, p.15.

commented, Jamaica was ‘not only the richest, but the most considerable colony at this time under the government of Great Britain’.²⁸

In principle, as a plantation society, Jamaica was organized with clear divisions between the ruling classes of colonists, and those required to labour on the estates, the enslaved.²⁹ The ruling classes, and to a lesser extent the poor whites, were the sole beneficiaries of the colony’s commercial trade, and the enslaved their property. In reality the involvement in and contributions of the enslaved to the internal market reflected a ‘flagrant exception’ to the ideals of the plantation system.³⁰ Slave owners encouraged the enslaved to be self-subsistent, producing their own foodstuff as a means of offsetting the cost of importing food. By the eighteenth century it was common practice for slave owners to allocate small plots of land near the plantation on which the enslaved could cultivate their own provisions in their free time.³¹ As several scholars have shown, this small-scale production allowed enslaved people to produce a surplus of goods that they could sell to free and other enslaved people on the plantation. In addition, many enslaved people sold their excess produce at local Sunday markets and on the streets of the towns.³² In this way, the cultivation of produce served as a part of, and helped fuel, a thriving internal market system in which the enslaved were active participants.

²⁸ Patrick Browne cited in Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 9.

²⁹ Sidney W. Mintz, ‘Caribbean Marketplaces and Caribbean History,’ *Radical History Review*, 27 (1983), p. 111.

³⁰ Mintz, ‘Caribbean Marketplaces,’ p. 113.

³¹ Richard B. Sheridan, ‘Strategies of Slave Subsistence: The Jamaica Case Reconsidered’, in Mary Turner (ed), *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves: The Dynamic of Labour Bargaining in the Americas* (London, 1995), p. 49.

³² Lorna Elaine Simmonds, ‘The Afro-Jamaican and the Internal Marketing System: Kingston, 1780-1834’, in Kathleen E.A. Monteith and Glen Richards (eds), *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom: History, Heritage and Culture* (Kingston, 2002).

Despite their theoretical position as property, the enslaved were able to accumulate ‘liquid capital’ that they saved, used to purchase goods, and even bequeath to family. Indeed, as Edward Long commented in the late eighteenth century, twenty per cent of capital in Jamaica at that time was in the hands of slaves.³³

The internal market system also allowed poor free people access to capital accumulation. According to Mintz, through the retailing of goods and imports in the ‘negro’ markets, an ‘intermediary class’ of free people, particularly those of the ‘lower orders’, emerged and developed in the late eighteenth century.³⁴ Women were described in contemporary literature, as well as in recent historical studies, as a distinguished feature of Jamaica’s market system. As higglers and retailers, slave and free women of colour, soon developed a reputation as clever and manipulative traders and entrepreneurs, a reputation that, as I will discuss in the following chapters, became a contributing factor in the discursive constructions of black and brown women as ‘dangerous’.³⁵

Race, Difference and Social Order

Jamaica’s slave society was predicated upon careful racial ordering and hierarchy.

Discussions of race, as many scholars have argued, are geographically and

³³ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Volume II (London, 1774), pp. 410-411.

³⁴ Mintz, ‘Caribbean Marketplaces’, p. 113. I discuss the Kingston markets and women’s involvement in them more in detail on page 133.

³⁵ Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (London, 1990); Lucille Mathurin Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica, 1655-1844* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2006); Henrice Altink, *Representations of Slave Women in Discourses of Slavery and Abolition, 1780-1838* (New York, 2007); Melanie Newton, *The Children of Africa in the Colonies: Free People of Color in Barbados in the Age of Emancipation* (Baton Rouge, 2008).

temporally specific and need to be historicized and studied within context. Stuart Hall refers to 'race' as 'a floating signifier'—a socially constructed category of difference whose meaning is always in flux, challenged, and negotiated.³⁶ In her study of colonial Virginia, Kathleen Brown describes the ways in which lawmakers worked to subsume a heterogeneous population into a 'template of binary difference' that created categories of white and black correlating with freedom and slavery—thereby making 'white' an exclusive category of identity.³⁷ Such binary categorizations of race were more complex in Jamaica, both legally and in custom.

Colour and racial mixture was a significant social, if not legal, categorization in the colony. At the bottom of the caste or colour-based hierarchy were those of pure African ancestry, either born in Africa or on the island, who were often referred to as African or black Creoles.³⁸ The children of a black person and a white person were described as *mulatto*. The children of a mulatto person and a white person were described as *quadroon*; and the children of a quadroon and a white person were described as *mustee* or *octoroon*. If a mustee had a child with a white person that child, a *mustifino*, was considered legally white in Jamaica and granted the legal rights of an English-born citizen.³⁹ In addition, although the term *mulatto* was used to describe a person of half African and half European ancestry, it was also often used to speak broadly of anyone of mixed racial ancestry. There were also specific terms used to describe a mulatto, quadroon, or mustee person who had a child with a

³⁶ Stuart Hall, *Race, the Floating Signifier* (Media Education Foundation, 1997).

³⁷ Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1996), p. 213.

³⁸ 'Creole' generally meant to be island born and was used to describe people regardless of race.

³⁹ According to a 1733 law, a person four generations removed from African ancestry was deemed white and given all the rights of English citizen. See Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Volume II, p. 261.

black person. For instance the term *sambo* was used to describe the offspring of a mulatto and black person; however, they were often placed within the same caste or category as a black person.⁴⁰

The free coloured population remained fairly small in the eighteenth century. According to Mathurin Mair, in 1722 the total population stood of free people of colour in Jamaica was 800. Long estimated the free coloured population to be around 5400 in 1768. Free coloured and black people in the island in 1768 numbered around 3700. According to an account submitted to the ‘Commissioners of Legal Enquiry’, by 1795 there were approximately 9600 free people of colour in the island—1600 men, 3200 women and 4800 children. By 1825, the free coloured population was estimated around 29,000, children accounting for fifty per cent and women accounting for thirty-four per cent of the population. According to the same record, by 1825, the free black population in Jamaica was between 9000 and 10,000.⁴¹

The racial and legal categorization in which a person belonged had numerous implications for everyday life in Jamaica. Although distinctions between ‘negroes’ and ‘mulattoes’ were not generally recognized under the law—at least not until the turn of the nineteenth century by which time antislavery rhetoric and activity lessened discriminatory laws against free people of colour—in practice, blacks and people of colour were regarded and often treated differently. There were clear correlations between a person’s colour and his or her class and status in the colony.

⁴⁰ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Volume II, p. 261.

⁴¹ Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica 1792-1865* (Oxford, 1981), p. 7; Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 268; CO 318/76 Commissioners of Legal Enquiry in the West Indies, 1822-1828, p. 49.

For instance, although there were only two legal categories of persons—free and enslaved—not all enslaved people were treated the same in practice. Those of mixed ancestry were less likely to work in the more strenuous jobs on the plantation, such as in the fields or in the processing of sugar.⁴² As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Three, they were also more likely to be freed, educated abroad, enjoy economic prosperity, inherit property, and be given acts of privilege— an act granted by the Jamaican Assembly which gave to a select number of free people of colour many of the rights allocated to whites in the colony.⁴³ Evidence suggests that even when differences between free blacks and free people of colour were not recognized in law, they were recognized in custom.⁴⁴ What played out in practice was not necessarily encoded in law.

The legal category of ‘white’ was equally complex. In seventeenth-century British Caribbean, ‘white’ was used to describe only those of English ancestry and excluded Catholic Irish people. Long-standing antagonisms between the (Protestant) English and the Catholic Irish continued unabated in the colonies.⁴⁵ As Roxann Wheeler argues, many of these antagonisms were transplanted to the Caribbean, despite the change in location.⁴⁶ In the eighteenth century, as the enslaved population in the Caribbean rose, the term ‘white’ came to encompass the Irish and

⁴² Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*. The term ‘privilege’ is problematic because it does not recognize the vulnerable position many domestics were in or the frequency of rape or ‘petty violence’ against them by members of the white household. See Beckles, *Centering Woman* for discussion on the problems with the term.

⁴³ Arnold A. Sio, ‘Race, Colour and Miscegenation: The Free Coloured of Jamaica and Barbados’, *Caribbean Studies* 16 (1976), pp. 7-9; Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*.

⁴⁴ Aggrey Brown, *Color, Class, and Politics in Jamaica* (New Brunswick, 1979), p. 32.

⁴⁵ For more on discussion of ‘whiteness’ and English and Irish antagonisms in the Caribbean, see Hilary Beckles, ‘A “Riotous and Unruly Lot”: Irish Indentured Servants and Freemen in the English West Indies, 1644-1713’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 47 (1990), pp. 503-522.

⁴⁶ Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexions of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 9.

even Jewish settlers, although the English continued to discriminate against them and regarded them as ‘lesser whites’ in the island. Despite the class or religious antagonisms, the racial hierarchy and nature of slavery put a ‘premium’ on whiteness.⁴⁷ Thus, in eighteenth-century Jamaica, along with complexion and physiognomy, race was also constructed based on a number of contradictory notions of difference, such as ‘racialized nationality’, as well as being ‘defined by origin, descent, and religion’.⁴⁸ The hierarchies of race were integral to the social organization of the colony. How individuals were racialized situated them within the complex hierarchy in Jamaica and in theory determined their opportunities and their everyday lives. However, in practice, such borders were porous and regularly transgressed.

Creolization and Deviations

Jamaica was, by the eighteenth century, a ‘Creole society’, a society with a distinctive local culture that included elements of both British and African cultures. Brathwaite defines creolization as a ‘cultural action—material, psychological and spiritual—based upon the stimulus/response of individuals within the society to their environment and—as white/black, culturally discrete groups—to each other’.⁴⁹ Several scholars have written on the process of cultural creolization in Jamaica. According to Richard D.E. Burton, the cultural practices of the enslaved population

⁴⁷ Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*.

⁴⁸ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003), p. 148.

⁴⁹ Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 296.

in late seventeenth-century Jamaica were ‘thoroughly wedded to its African origins’.⁵⁰ However, through a process of acculturation and as greater numbers of Africans born within the colony adapted to the plantation society, the cultural practices amongst the enslaved population increasingly took on British influences. For instance, according to Michael Craton, the gradual shifts in naming practices amongst the enslaved in Jamaica over the course of the eighteenth century was indicative of the changing culture amongst black Jamaicans and the effects of European ideas. While previously the majority of the enslaved held African names, as the century progressed, the use of English single names and the adoption of surnames increased amongst this population. According to Craton, naming practices ‘provides a telling index of the decline of African influences and the increasing influence of Creole, Christian, and status norms’. However, Barry Higman cautions against the complete reliance on naming practices to indicate shifts in slave culture. Despite Craton’s assertion that naming was ‘almost certainly voluntary’, he argues that it is unclear how or if the names listed in the plantation ledgers were used by the enslaved.⁵¹ The changes in popular cultural attitudes should not be understood as a complete devaluation of African cultural practices and adoption of British ones amongst the enslaved. Instead, as Higman asserts, these changes should be viewed

⁵⁰ Richard D.E. Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean* (Ithaca, 1997), p. 19; In his study of Worthy Park plantation in 1730, Michael Craton found that eighty per cent of the 240 enslaved people on the plantation were African born. See Michael Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 54-55.

⁵¹ Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, p. 156; Barry Higman, ‘Terms for Kin in the British West Indian Slave Community: Differing Perceptions of Masters and Slaves’, in Raymond Thomas Smith (ed), *Kinship Ideology and Practice in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1984), p. 61.

as an amalgamation of British and African cultural attitudes shaped and reshaped to form a local and creolized culture.⁵²

The local culture that emerged out of a synchronization of both African and European (and possibly indigenous Caribbean) cultures in eighteenth-century Jamaica did not only occur amongst blacks. As Burton writes, the process of creolization also spread ‘upward’ amongst white Creoles and long-term British residents.⁵³ British visitors to Jamaica in the eighteenth century often commented on the cultural deviation and differences they observed amongst the local white population. For instance, local colonial dialect was often a point of observation in British contemporary writings. Creoles were said to speak a ‘drawling, dissonant gibberish’, a ‘kind of Gypsy Gibberish, that runs smoothest in swearing’.⁵⁴ The way white Creoles spoke, different from the dialects and ways of speaking found in Britain, marked one difference in their culture. However, their cultural deviations were pronounced in other ways. John Atkins wrote in 1736 that white Creoles had become ‘half Negroish in Manners’ from their residence in Jamaica, while Edward Long described white Creoles as having ‘vulgar manners’.⁵⁵

The cultural differences that several contemporary British observers noted about the white Creoles and long-term white residents of the colony were most commonly attributed to two separate but interrelated causes: the hot tropical climate of the Caribbean, and the close and intimate proximity to which whites lived with

⁵² Higman, ‘Terms for Kin’, p. 61.

⁵³ Burton, *Afro-Creole*, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁴ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Volume II, p. 278; For more on white Creole anxieties and difference see Christer Petley, “‘Home’ and ‘this country’: Britishness and Creole Identity in the Letters of a Transatlantic Slaveholder”, *Atlantic Studies*, 6 (2009), pp. 43-61.

⁵⁵ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Volume II, p. 278.

blacks. With the rise of natural history in the eighteenth century, climate theory—the belief that the climate affected all bodies, minds and emotions, and that some environments were better suited to the advancement of people—and the associated theory of humours were applied to geographic spaces in order to explain human difference British peoples encountered throughout the empire.⁵⁶ Armchair philosophers argued that climate not only determined skin colour and behaviour, but also morality. What David N. Livingstone calls ‘moral climatology’ was a ‘widespread tendency to deploy moralistic language in depicting climatic conditions *and* a conviction that it is entirely reasonable to read moral order straight off patterns of global climate’.⁵⁷ The influence of ‘moral climatology’ on how white Creoles were represented was evident in eighteenth-century writings.

Although theories around the impact of climate on manners and morals were very prevalent in the eighteenth century, one of the most common causes of white Creole difference was held to be the close and intimate proximity to people of African ancestry. Many British observed believed that white Creoles had adopted the customs and culture of the enslaved population, including ostensibly ‘African’ sexual customs. As I will discuss more in Chapter Three, African and African Creoles were racialized as hypersexualized and debased. Their sexual practices were seen as a contaminating force; their ‘gross mannerisms, savage temperament and promiscuous appetites irreversibly infected’ white Creoles.⁵⁸ John Fothergill, an English physician and philanthropist, wrote in 1765 that because white Creoles were

⁵⁶ Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, p. 28.

⁵⁷ David N. Livingstone, ‘Race, Space and Moral Climatology: Notes Toward a Genealogy’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28 (2002), p. 160.

⁵⁸ Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 145.

‘bred...at the Breast of a Negro slave’, they became accustomed, through the ‘precept and example’ of their black wet nurses, nannies and other enslaved domestics, to the ‘sensuality, selfishness, and despotism’ that characterized the Caribbean islands and those who lived there. Such habits set them apart from the more refined manners and behaviours of their British cousins, a point that I will discuss more in depth in Chapter Three.⁵⁹ Thus, as J.B. Moreton wrote, whites were born or settled in the islands would soon, ‘like wax softened by heat,’ melt into the depraved ‘manners and customs’ of the island.⁶⁰

Chapter Overview

This dissertation is focused on several key research questions: how did racialized discourses of black female bodies and sexuality influence how colonial authorities and local elites represented the organization and practice of commercialized sexual labour in Jamaica? How did these discourses around sexual labour change and what were the continuities as Jamaica transitioned from a slave to ostensibly ‘free’ society? What did understandings of sexual-economic exchange and the way it operated, within the context of slave and post-slave society, reveal about the way those in power engaged with marginalised women within a colonial urban capitalist market? What role did the image of the ‘illicit’ and sexualized black woman and the operation of commercialized sex play in key political moments that shaped local and

⁵⁹ John Fothergill, *Considerations Relative to the North American Colonies* (London, 1765), pp. 411-412.

⁶⁰ J.B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners* (London, 1793). Cited in Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, p.33.

imperial histories? What challenges did women who sold sex, individually and collectively, represented as posing to government, institutional and community attempts to control the public behaviour of poor populations, specifically women? Although not the primary focus, this dissertation also raises questions around sexual agency. More specifically, it asks how can we track assertions of (sexual) autonomy in the archives in which poor black and brown women are marginalized and often silenced?

These key questions will be addressed throughout the three substantive chapters that form the main body of this dissertation. Although each chapter is arranged chronologically, these chapters are mainly organized thematically. In Chapter Three, I explore the discourses surrounding sexual-economic exchange within local struggles over slavery and the political movement for equal civil rights. I focus in this chapter on the most visible form of sexual-economic exchange: the non-marital relationships black and mixed-race women had with white men. This chapter will show that up until the 1820s, interracial concubinage was discussed by elites as a customary form of transactional sex during the slavery period. Both enslaved and free women understood to be engaged in these (sometimes coercive) relationships. However, elites were also very cautious of the relative wealth and, in several cases, an elevated social position that such relationships granted black and brown women. While such women, and their mixed-race offspring, were a source of anxiety for colonial authorities, the lack of white women in the colony and the inherent rights of British men to the bodies of colonized and enslaved women ensured little legislative measures were enacted to curb such practices. This chapter

will also discuss how from around the 1820s interracial concubinage began politicized in the discourses. Antislavery rhetoric and the emergence of an organized political movement to eliminate the race-based civil inequalities by the free community of colour in the last decades of slavery ultimately lead to the economic and social marginalization of these women, particularly free women of colour. While such relationships may have once been normative under the system of slavery, changes in the cultural values and the adoption of British Christian notions of respectability, gender and sexuality altered the meanings of such relationships, marking them as transgressive not only amongst British metropolitan observers, but within the locale as well.

In Chapter Four, the focus shifts from discourses on domestic and more private forms of sexual-economic exchange that occurred on plantations and homes, to discourses of female sexual labourers on the streets and public spaces of Kingston and Port Royal, two of the busiest commercial towns in the colony. This chapter argues that despite legislation enacted between 1833 and 1853 that targeted the ‘common prostitute’, colonial authorities rarely put this legislation in force. However, because the ‘common prostitute’ was articulated as a woman who transgressed gendered and respectable notions of sexuality, behaviour and space, on the occasions when the legislation was put into practice, it was used to criminalize poor women behaving in certain public ways understood as ‘unruly’ and ‘disorderly’. These behaviours included drinking, fighting, gambling and socializing in the masculine spaces of taverns and the streets. Thus, in the post-slavery period,

colonial authorities were not really concerned with regulating sexual-economic exchange, but instead maintaining public order.

In Chapter Five, I draw upon but also extend themes from the fourth chapter by exploring the enactment, practice and eventual repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica from 1867. I argue that representations of prostitution and venereal diseases as ‘rampant’ in the colony, representations supported by the gathering of statistical data and official reports, sounded alarm bells for respectable society and colonial administrators. Sexual-economic exchange was no longer articulated as just an issue of public disorder, but was discussed as threatening the viability of the colony as a whole. As a result, many of those who may have opposed contagious diseases legislation in Britain and other parts of the Empire, particularly religious bodies at the forefront of repeal movements in the metropole, favoured its continuation and expansion throughout Jamaica. By the turn of the century, for the first time in Jamaica, there emerged philanthropic and humanitarian organizations specifically targeting the ‘social evil’ of sexual-economic exchange.

Through these chapters, this dissertation seeks to reinsert sexual-economic exchange and the women understood to be involved in this practice within the historiography of nineteenth-century Jamaica. However, as Sherene Razack states, ‘inclusion...is not as important a goal’ as an exploration of ‘the multiple systems’ that uphold, produce and sustain prostitution.⁶¹ To this end, this study will also explore the discursive constructions of sexuality, race, gender and respectability that informed how colonial authorities and elites discussed and addressed the operation

⁶¹ Sherene Razack, ‘Race, Space, and Prostitution: The Making of the Bourgeois Subject’, *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law*, 10 (1998), p. 340.

of sexual-economic exchange. Throughout the period of this study, there remained a fairly consistent association between uncontrolled sexuality, the sale of sex and black female bodies. However, these ideas around black women and sexual praxis incited changing degrees of anxiety, legislation and control throughout the nineteenth century.

Chapter Two: Sexual-Economic Exchange in Caribbean History and Caribbean Studies

The focus of this dissertation is twofold: I am interested in the ways discourses surrounding sexual-economic exchange shifted, or remained unaltered, over the nineteenth century in Jamaica in relation to broader local cultural, political and social changes, but also in tandem with imperial imperatives. While the primary focus of this project is on discourses around sexual-economic exchange and women understood to be involved in this practice, where the sources are available, this dissertation is also interested in highlighting how women responded to various efforts to control, regulate, or criminalize sexual praxis and bodies. In addressing these themes, this study is indebted to the multitude of historical studies on women, gender and sexuality in the nineteenth-century Caribbean, but also studies situated within (post) colonial and ‘New Imperial History’. Although principally a historical study, this project draws heavily upon a multitude of other disciplines, including anthropology, human geography, cultural and literary criticism, and sociology. As is the case with other historical studies focused on marginalized and subaltern groups of people, the historical archives that speak to the realities of women who engaged in sexual-economic exchange in slave and post-emancipation society are both scarce and fragmentary. Consequently, as Edward Brathwaite states, ‘history becomes

anthropology and sociology, psychology and literature and archaeology, whatever else is needed to make the fragments whole'.¹

Drawing on a number of works outside history, this study argues that sexual-economic exchange was a formative element in the operation and development of Jamaica. By examining sexual-economic exchange throughout the nineteenth century, this thesis seeks to resituate the centrality of black and coloured female sexuality to the cultural, political and social development and organization of the colony, and through that, the larger British Empire. I begin this dissertation by setting out the main theoretical arguments that frame and inspire my work. These arguments revolve around three separate, but interrelated, ideas—the centrality of sexual praxis to Caribbean socio-political formation; an understanding of sexual-economic exchange as a form of labour; and the importance of (sexual) autonomy to discussions of sexual-economic exchange. These are the main themes focused on in this chapter and are threaded throughout the dissertation.

Gender and Sexuality in Slave and Post-Emancipation Caribbean Society

Over the last several decades, Caribbeanists have centred the discursive constructions and practices of gender and sexuality as integral to the development and organization of the Caribbean colonial state, as well as to the social, economic and political structuring of individuals within society. Drawing on these works, this dissertation argues that sexual praxis—a term Kamala Kempadoo defines as the

¹ Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford, 1978), p. 22

visible manifestations of sexuality through ‘behaviours, activities and interactions between people, in relations, and in the ways in which desires are actualized’—was significant to the political and cultural developments throughout nineteenth-century Jamaica. Furthermore, sexual behaviour, and its intersections with gender, race, colour, status and class, was integral to the ways women were discursively constructed and to their lived experiences throughout this period.² As Mimi Sheller states, sexuality and gender ‘were not peripheral concerns; they were central to the practice of slavery, to antislavery movements, and to the reorganization of post-slavery societies’.³ In this section I will examine some of the scholarship that has been particularly useful in highlighting the significance of gender, but more importantly, sexuality, to understandings of Caribbean slave and post-emancipation society.

The use of ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ as an analytical framework within studies of the Caribbean has had significant impact on the kinds of questions historians have been able to ask and the kind of histories they have been able to write. However, the adoption and integration of these key concepts has been a gradual process. The 1970s marked a significant shift in the kinds of histories of the Caribbean being written: from male-focused nationalist narratives to studies that placed women at the centre of historical inquiry. Influenced by feminist, cultural and postcolonial movements locally and internationally, scholars began resituating women within the male-dominated historiography of the Caribbean. One of the first works to do this

² Kamala Kempadoo, ‘Caribbean Sexuality: Mapping the Field’, *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies: A Journal of Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism*, 3 (2009), p. 2.
<<http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/november2009/journals/Kempadoo.pdf>> (accessed 12 October 2013).

³ Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, 2012), p. 26.

was Lucille Mathurin Mair's 1974 PhD dissertation. Through meticulous archival research with legal documents, estate records, and personal documents, Mair challenged previous historical works that viewed women's history as marginal and unimportant to larger Caribbean historiography. In her study, Mair asserts the need to problematize the category of 'women' and examine the ways in which women experienced slave society differently depending on their class, race, and colour. Put another way, in Jamaican slave society, she argues, white women consumed, coloured women served and black women laboured.⁴ Later published in 2006, Mair's study located women in the history of Jamaica as key players in slave society and encouraged historians of the Caribbean to engage with the nascent field of women's history.⁵ Mair's work also set the stage for numerous studies focused on women and the development of gender as a central tool of analysis within studies of slave and post-emancipation society. Historical studies, such as works by Barbara Bush, Rhoda Reddock, and Trevor Burnard have focused on 'reclaiming' narratives of enslaved and poor women.⁶

By the early 1990s, Caribbean historians began moving beyond simply re-inserting women in narratives of slave and post-emancipation society, but had

⁴ Lucille Mathurin Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844* (Kingston, 2006), p. xvi.

⁵ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*. Elsa Goevia's published work, but also her position as the first female historian at the University of the West Indies was also central in the development of women's history in the Caribbean. Indeed, Goevia supervised Mathurin Mair's 1974 dissertation.

⁶ Barbara Bush, 'Defiance or Submission? The Role of the Slave Woman in Slave Resistance in the British Caribbean', *Immigrants & Minorities* 1 (1982), pp. 16-38; Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (London, 1990); Rhoda Reddock, 'Women and Slavery in the Caribbean A Feminist Perspective', *Latin American Perspectives* 12 (1985), pp. 63-80; Rhoda Reddock, 'Freedom denied: Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago, 1845-1917', *Economic and Political Weekly* (1985), pp. 79-87; Bernard Moitt, 'Behind the Sugar Fortunes: Women, Labour and the Development of Caribbean Plantations during Slavery', *African Continuities* (1989), pp. 403-426; Trevor Burnard, 'Family Continuity and Female Independence in Jamaica, 1665-1734', *Continuity and Change*, 7 (1992), pp. 181-198.

adopted ‘gender’ as a key analytical tool. Scholars such as Bridget Brereton, Verene Shepherd, Barbara Bailey, Hilary Beckles, Catherine Hall, Henrice Altink, Melanie Newton, Christer Petley, Diana Paton, and Cecily Jones, among many others, situate gender as a key mode of inquiry and explore the ways constructions of femininities and masculinities intersected with conceptions of class, race and power.⁷ Studies of gender in slave society have allowed historians to get at discussions that may not have been possible previously. For instance, Newton focuses on the political consciousness of free people of colour in Barbados and how the abolition of the system of slavery impacted their political engagement. She reveals the ways emerging Christian ideals of respectability and domesticity in the nineteenth century influenced gendered identities of masculinity and femininity, but also women’s demands to be included in the body politic as free and respectable women.⁸ Thomas C. Holt provides another analysis of gendered processes of emancipation,

⁷ Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey (eds), *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (New York, 1995); Hilary Beckles, *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society* (Oxford, 1999); Diana Paton, ‘Decency, Dependence and the Lash: Gender and the British Debate Over Slave Emancipation, 1830–34’, *Slavery and Abolition* 17 (1996), pp. 163–184; Cecily Jones, ‘Mapping Racial Boundaries: Gender, Race, and Poor relief in Barbadian plantation Society’, *Journal of Women's History*, 10 (1998), pp. 9–31; Melanie Newton, ‘“New ideas of correctness”: Gender, Amelioration and Emancipation in Barbados, 1810s–50s’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 21 (2000), pp. 94–124; Patricia Mohammed, ‘But most of all mi love me browning: The Emergence in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Jamaica of the Mulatto Woman as the Desired’, *Feminist Review*, 65 (2000), pp. 22–48; Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago, 2002); Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780–1870* (Duke, 2004); Cecilia Green, ‘Between Respectability and Self-Respect: Framing Afro-Caribbean Women’s Labour History’, *Social and Economic Studies*, 55:3 (September 2006), pp. 1–31; Cecily Jones, *Engendering Whiteness: White women and Colonialism in Barbados and North Carolina, 1627–1865* (Manchester, 2007); Henrice Altink, ‘“I Did Not Want to Face the Shame of Exposure”: Gender Ideologies and Child Murder in Post-Emancipation Jamaica’, *Journal of Social History*, 41 (2007), pp. 355–387; Henrice Altink, *Representations of Slave Women in Discourses on Slavery and Abolition, 1780–1838* (New York, 2007); Christer Petley, ‘“Home” and “this country”: Britishness and Creole Identity in the Letters of a Transatlantic Slaveholder’, *Atlantic Studies*, 6 (2009), pp. 43–61; Juanita de Barros, *Reproducing the British Caribbean* (Chapel Hill, 2014).

⁸ Melanie J. Newton, *The Children of Africa in the Colonies: Free People of Color in Barbados in the Age of Emancipation* (Louisiana, 2008).

demonstrating an intersection between notions of ‘respectability’, gender and the body politic in Jamaica that is similar to Newton’s study of Barbados. He reveals how the supposed failure of freedmen to bring women into line with ‘respectable’ notions of domesticity, gender and sexuality was used by the metropolitan state to demonstrate the inability of black and coloured men to function as citizens. This failure was then used to solidify British paternalistic rule in the colony and the denial of black and coloured men in political citizenship from the mid-nineteenth century.⁹ Altink’s most recent study adds to the discussion of the interplay of gender and claims to citizenship and freedom later in the nineteenth century. She argues that from the mid-nineteenth century middle class Jamaicans actively encouraged lower-class women to adopt and conform to their ideals of marriage and motherhood as a means of ensuring the ‘progress’ and development of Jamaica and to strengthen Afro-Jamaican claims to full and equal citizenship. Lower-class women’s mating patterns, often refusing to be married or to marry men of their own ‘race’, was a matter of national concern.¹⁰ These works illuminate the significance of gender in the claims that freedmen and women made to citizenship and freedom during and after the slavery period.

The study of sexuality as a central theoretical framing—as opposed to the study of women or gender per se—has been a less significant feature of studies of nineteenth-century Anglo-Caribbean society. The vast majority of works that have

⁹ Thomas C. Holt, ‘The Essence of the Contract: The Articulation of Race, Gender, and Political Economy in British Emancipation Policy, 1838-1866’, in Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca Jarvis Scott (eds), *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill, 2000), pp. 33-59.

¹⁰ Henrice Altink, *Destined for a Life of Service: Defining African-Jamaican Womanhood, 1865-1958* (Manchester, 2011), pp. 40-71.

discussed sexuality in the Caribbean have focused on enslaved women, including reproduction or the sexualized constructions of racial difference.¹¹ Very few have explored the sexual praxis of black and coloured women as integral to the political operation and structuring of colonial society.¹² Indeed, the study of sexual praxis, along with erotic desire and agency, as several scholars within the subset of Caribbean sexualities have recently argued, has for the most part ‘remained subsumed in discussions of gender relations’.¹³ As a result, the diverse range of sexual behaviours that men and women engaged in during and after emancipation, particularly those that fall outside the bounds of heteronormative or procreative sex, such as ‘sodomy’ and prostitution, have been silenced in the history of Jamaica.

The work of Michel Foucault and the elaboration of his arguments by Ann Laura Stoler have been particularly helpful in understanding discursive constructions of sexuality and sexual behaviours (distinct though interrelated to gender) and its associations with power and colonial governance. Foucault has also been foundational in situating sex as political, a point that Stoler later elaborates upon by exploring how race and sexuality converged in colonial politics. His conceptualizations of sexuality have been helpful in identifying and situating sexuality as central to nineteenth-century Jamaica. Foucault argued that there is nothing natural or biological about sex or sexuality. The meanings society attaches

¹¹ For instance, Marietta Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* (Lawrence, 1989); Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society*.

¹² There have been more extensive studies of the intersections of sexuality and race in colonial state formation and politics amongst historians of Latin America. One very good example is Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham, 1999).

¹³ Kamala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race and Sexual Labor* (New York, 2004), p. 24.

to sexual practices and desires are culturally produced, and specific to both times and places. The way society understands and engages with sexuality is the result of organizing systems that have evolved over time. From as early as the seventeenth century, sex has been constituted by a 'deployment of sexuality', which 'exists to proliferate, innovate, annex, create, and penetrate bodies in a detailed way'. Beginning in the eighteenth century, 'population' emerged as an economic and political problem, a problem that needed to be understood and regulated by government. Central to the problem of population was sex.¹⁴

Sexuality— behaviours, orientations and erotic desires—was neither natural, nor neutral. Foucault argues that various techniques of control were deployed by the state and other institutions, such as the church, schools, and the law, to regulate and enforce constructed normative sexual meaning and behaviour within the population. What he calls 'governmentality' involved the use of 'techniques of control' as a means to exert social and political power over the bodies of the population. In correlation with governmentality was what Foucault called 'biopower', that is, 'a new regime of discourses' or 'techniques of power' aimed at the management of individual bodies that comprised the nation, as well as the life of the body politic. This concept not only linked power and the individual body, but also in tandem with this, sought to explain the 'subjugation of bodies and the control of populations'.¹⁵ As Stoler put it, biopower is both 'the micromanagement of the individual body and the macrosurveillance of the body politic.'¹⁶

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York, 1990), pp. 25-26.

¹⁵ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 140-141.

¹⁶ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, 1995), p. 150.

One of Stoler's main contributions is to address the absence of colonialism in Foucault's work by extending and exploring the convergence of sex and race in the management of colonial populations and the discursive constructions of the colonized. For instance, in her study of colonial Dutch East Indies, she argues that colonial authorities feared that some European men would hold 'sympathies and sensibilities' towards the colonized 'out of order and out of place' from the larger colonial project.¹⁷ Moreover, colonial administrators were concerned that the intimate (sexual) relationships white men had with colonized women would cause men to align themselves based on sentiment (and sex) rather than race or nation and in doing so blur the boundaries between colonizer and colonized that were important in maintaining Dutch colonial authority. Colonial administrators thus wielded various 'technologies of power' to manage the raced and sexed bodies of the colonized as a means of controlling individual desire and sexual behaviour. Stoler's work has been integral in resituating sex and sexuality as central within the field of colonial history, not just as 'compelling flourishes to historical narratives' or 'distractions from the "realpolitik" of empire', but as formative elements in how colonies were organized, populations controlled and the boundaries of citizenship defined.¹⁸ She argues that the regulation and control of not only sex, but also race, was a central preoccupation of the colonial government and policy.¹⁹ Further, as Foucault argues and Stoler demonstrates of colonial Indonesia, sexuality was 'an

¹⁷ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, p. 6; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, 2002).

¹⁸ Ann Laura Stoler, 'Affective States', in Joan Vincent (ed), *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics* (Oxford, 2004), p. 6.

¹⁹ Stoler, 'Affective States'.

especially dense transfer point for relations of power' and thus central to colonial politics.²⁰

There have been several studies published in both 'New Imperial History' and Caribbean studies that have illuminated the politics of sex that Stoler explores.²¹ In addition to Stoler's works, Anne McClintock, Kathleen Wilson, Philippa Levine, Durba Ghosh, Phillip Howell, and several others have examined sexuality (and its interrelations with race and class) as central to understandings of colonial governance, state formation, citizenship and power.²² For instance, in her study of prostitution in colonial India, Philippa Levine argues that the racial constructions of Indian women as 'sexually lax' and 'promiscuous' provided colonial administrators an excuse in maintaining the institution of prostitution. This allowed British men continued access to the colonial women's bodies, but also justified Britain's 'imperial mission' in the colony. As Levine states, notions of native women's sexuality 'was integral to imperial politics, and by focusing on a form of sexuality regarded in the West as an index of brutalization and degradation [prostitution], imperialism could, in a sense, have its cake and eat it too'.²³

Within Caribbean historiography several historians have also explored the dynamics of sex and politics. Studies by Trevor Burnard and Christer Petley, for

²⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p.103.

²¹ 'New Imperial History' seeks to resituate the histories of empire and colony within metropolitan histories. Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), p.15.

²² Anne McClintock, *Imperial leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, 1995); Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*. (New York, 2003); Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge, 2006); Phillip Howell, *Geographies of Regulation: Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the Empire* (Cambridge, 2009).

²³ Philippa Levine, "'A Multitude of Unchaste Women:' Prostitution in the British Empire', *Journal of Women's History*, 15 (2004), p. 162.

instance, focus on the politics of interracial sexual relationships between black and coloured women and white men, and the mixed-race children that resulted. Drawing on theorizations of ‘intimacy’ and colonial sexual politics put forth by Stoler, several of these works, including my own, have demonstrated that the interracial sexual relationships black and coloured women had with white men and the mixed-race children they produced challenged, though not necessarily deconstructed, boundaries of race that were dear to the functioning of Caribbean slave society.²⁴ Black and coloured women’s sexuality was a source of apprehension for the colonial state. For instance, as I will discuss more in Chapter Three, eighteenth century Jamaican legislators enacted laws to limit the bequest white men left to their black and coloured mistresses and mixed-race children.

The centrality of sexuality to Jamaican society continued into the post-emancipation period, as Mimi Sheller shows in her most recent study. Similar to the work of Newton, Holt, and Altink that focuses on the gendering of citizenship and freedom, Sheller explores the correlations between sexuality, the embodiment of freedom and the practice of citizenship in post-emancipation Jamaica and Haiti. In her study of ‘citizenship from below’, she discusses the multiple ways in which the formerly enslaved, indentured labourers, and their descendants made claims to citizenship and freedom. In making such claims, these ‘second-class or noncitizens’

²⁴ Examples include, Hilary Beckles, *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society* (Kingston, 1999); Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, 2004); Christer Petley, “‘Legitimacy’ and Social Boundaries: Free People of Colour and the Social Order in Jamaican Slave Society”, *Social History*, 30 (2005), pp. 481-498; Daniel Alan Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-race Migration From the West Indies to Britain, 1750-1820*. Diss. The University of Michigan, 2010; Meleisa Ono-George, ‘Coloured Women, White Men and Sexual Deviance: Jamaica, c. 1780-1830’ in W. Jackson and E. Manktelow (eds), *Deviance and Empire* (London, forthcoming 2015).

enacted forms of gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality as a means of asserting the validity of their inclusion. Sheller argues that in claiming citizenship and ‘in taking up positions as free subjects, freed men and women at times had to (indeed, wanted to) perform normative scripts of sexual citizenship such as the good mother, the respectable woman, the worthy Christian, or the father of a family’.²⁵ As she demonstrates, the normative Christian practices of masculinity and femininity that some women and men embraced allowed them ‘to position themselves in liberal Christian political discourse and competently enter public spheres from which their bodies generally were barred’.²⁶ However, these normative performances ‘effectively delimited freedom to particular embodied forms and shaped sexualities in relation to race, ethnicity, class, and gender in ways that continue to resonate today’.²⁷ Sheller establishes, quite convincingly, that the racial and ethnic politics that shaped the boundaries of citizenship in the post-emancipation period were not just about gender, but also about sex.

These studies of sexuality (or sexual praxis) in both the Caribbean and the larger British Empire have been quite useful in understanding the political nature of sex in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century and the correlations between sexuality and colonial politics. Within this dissertation, I draw on these works in my examination of sexual-economic exchange, one form of sexual praxis that fell outside the limits of procreative (normative) sexuality, as well as the anxieties that these sexual behaviours caused for colonial legislators and ‘respectable’ members of

²⁵ Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, 2012), p. 10.

²⁶ Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, p. 11.

²⁷ Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, p. 241.

Jamaican society. Though all women in nineteenth-century Jamaica were marginalized, they were not all marginalized in the same ways. Sexual praxis, particularly its operations in public spaces, made certain women, poor and most often black or brown, the target of control and colonial concern. As Kempadoo convincingly argues, the colonial state ‘deploys a notion of difference that is lodged in sexual behavior and expressions of erotic desire’.²⁸ Though sexual praxis and formulations around femininity and masculinity often conflate and intersect, there are still ‘conceptual and legal distinctions between sexuality and gender’.²⁹ In nineteenth-century Jamaica, it was the ‘sodomite’ and the ‘common prostitute’—categorizations formulated on the basis of sexual behaviour—that were the target of colonial legislation and moral approbation. This is not to say that sexual behaviour should or even can be separated completely from gender. After all, it was integral to notions of femininity and masculinity in the organization of the colony. However, the sexual praxis of some women set them outside the already restricted boundaries of freedom and made them increasingly targets of criminalization, exclusion and critique throughout the nineteenth century. Women who engaged in sexual-economic exchange or represented to do so were, as Shannon Bell writes, ‘the other of the other: the other within the categorical other “woman”’.³⁰

²⁸ Kamala Kempadoo, ‘Sexuality in the Caribbean: Theory and Research (With an Emphasis on the Anglophone Caribbean)’, *Social and Economic Studies*, 52 (2003), p. 63.

²⁹ Kempadoo, ‘Sexuality in the Caribbean’, p. 63.

³⁰ Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (Bloomington, 1994), p. 2.

Sexual Labour and Terminology

Another organizing theme of this dissertation is an understanding that, within nineteenth-century Jamaica, the exchange of sex or sexual services for monetary or material gain was a form of labour. I have found Thanh-Dam Truong's definition of sexual labour useful in this regard. She defines this as 'the use of the body as an instrument to produce a service'.³¹ For some women, particularly those in the urban towns, using their bodies as an 'instrument to produce a service' provided a valuable source of financial support and independence, as well as a means of survival for both themselves and for the families they may have maintained. One of the primary inspirations for this project in this respect has come from the recent works of feminist scholars who have argued that 'prostitution' should be reconceptualised as 'an income generating activity'. Scholars such as Kamala Kempadoo, Martha Nussbaum, Amalia L. Cabezas, and Jo Doezema have argued that prostitution holds no distinction from 'other forms of female or low-status labour, such as cleaning or food-serving, however exploitative they are'.³² Moreover, what is for sale is not women's (or men's) bodies, but sexual (or emotional) services.³³

While contemporary studies of sexual-economic exchange have been useful in thinking about how to conceptually frame sexual labour historically, these contemporary conceptualizations do not necessarily fit completely within the

³¹ Thanh-Dam Truong, *Sex, Money and Morality: Prostitution and Tourism in South-East Asia* (London, 1990), p. 65.

³² Amalia L. Cabezas, *Economies of Desire: Sex and Tourism in Cuba and the Dominican Republic* (Philadelphia, 2009); Jo Bindman and Jo Doezema, 'Redefining Prostitution as Sex Work on the International Agenda', 1997. http://ftp2.allianceantitrafic.org/alliancea/Docs_prostitution_exploitation_trafic/Prostitution%20as%20sex%20work.htm (21 April 2014); Wendy Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor* (New York, 1997).

³³ Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts*.

historical framework of the nineteenth-century Caribbean. Instead, as several of these feminist scholars also point out, the operations and cultural, social and political meaning of prostitution is temporally and geographically specific. In line with Foucault's theorization of sexuality, Cabezas writes that the exchange of sex for monetary and material gain is a 'discursive construction that is contested and in motion, changing across time and space'.³⁴ Despite the cliché that the sex trade is 'the oldest profession in the world', it requires historical contextualization that is attuned to the specificities of time and place.³⁵ Attempts by British and European observers to conflate prostitution in its operation in Europe to the sexual praxis they witnessed in the nineteenth-century Caribbean failed to encapsulate the multiple, nuanced and complex forms of sexual-economic exchange and the localized meanings of such exchanges. This pattern of misrecognition is evidenced in other parts of the empire.³⁶ Out of its historic context, the sale of sexual services becomes automatically associated with immorality, while the changing, often ambiguous, meanings of sexual-economic practices becomes obscured.

In this dissertation, I have chosen to primarily use the term 'sexual-economic exchange' to describe the 'exchange of sexual acts or services for money, material goods, or security'.³⁷ In contemporary studies on Caribbean sexualities this exchange is described in three separate, though often interrelated, ways: sex work or

³⁴ Cabezas, *Economies of Desire*, p. 4.

³⁵ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, 1988), p. 195. Pateman associates the 'prostitutes contract' and the 'marriage contract' with private and public, respectively. One serves male's sexual access privately, the other publically. Such a binary dichotomy is too simplistic for the Caribbean and again reflects the need for geographic and temporal contextualization of sex work.

³⁶ Luise White also discusses the ways the diverse operations of sexual labour have been conflated into a singular category of prostitution in twentieth-century Nairobi. See Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago, 1990).

³⁷ Kamala Kempadoo, 'Caribbean Sexuality: Mapping the Field', *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, 3 (2009), p. 3.

commercialized sex work; ‘romance’ or ‘tourist-oriented prostitution’; and, ‘transactional’ or tactical sex. The first and last categories described are of particular relevancy to the study of sexual-economic exchange in nineteenth-century Jamaica. Kempadoo identifies traditional conceptions of ‘prostitution’ as ‘sex work’ or ‘commercial sex work’ and defines it as ‘the sale of sexual labour from the street, brothels, bars, clubs, hotels, mining camps, and so on, as well as exotic dancing, stripping and escorting’. Transactional sex involves the ‘deliberate exchange of sex for some form of ‘betterment’—material goods, clothes, accommodation, social status, and so forth’.³⁸ Similarly, in her study of present-day sex tourism in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, Cabezas, uses the term ‘tactical sex’ to describe commercialized sex that was at times complicated by bonds of affection.³⁹ Though used to describe current trends in Caribbean sexual tourism, ‘sexual-economic exchange’ and ‘transactional/tactical sex’ encapsulates the ways intimate and sexual relationships that were deliberately economic, but at times included emotional bonds. The term ‘sexual-economic exchange’ is of course itself a discursive construction of a particular set of sexual practices informed by second and third-wave feminism. However, I have found this term preferable to ‘prostitution’, which carries with it a long history of moral baggage that this dissertation seeks to move away from and problematize.

While I draw upon some of the terminology and conceptual framework found in contemporary studies of sex work, this dissertation builds upon a vast body of historical literature that situates female labour as integral to Caribbean slave and

³⁸ Kempadoo, ‘Caribbean Sexuality: Mapping the Field’, pp. 3-5.

³⁹ Cabezas, *Economies of Desire*, pp. 129-130.

post-emancipation society. For several decades, and in numerous studies of the Caribbean, historians have pointed to the gendered and sexualized nature of labour. Historians such as Orlando Patterson, Michael Craton, and Rhoda Reddock, among others, have asserted the centrality of women's labour to the economic growth and wealth of slave society. There is a general consensus among these authors that enslaved women were just as likely to be found labouring in the fields on plantations as men. In fact, in some colonies, women made up the majority of field gangs. As Patterson states, 'the [black] woman was expected to work just as hard, she was as indecently exposed and was punished just as severely. In the eyes of the master she was equal to the man as long as her strength was the same as his'.⁴⁰ These scholars point to the essential nature of women's labour to the economic success and viability of Caribbean slave society.

Despite the immensity of literature on women and labour during slavery, discussions of sexual labour figures only marginally in these studies. Historians such as Hilary Beckles, Barbara Bush, Arlette Gautier, Paulette A. Kerr, Marietta Morrissey, and Barry Higman have discussed the sexual services enslaved women provided, particularly to white men, as an extension of the labour extracted from as enslaved bodies.⁴¹ Beckles argues convincingly that the sexual services provided by enslaved women, along with the full integration of black and coloured mistresses in white households, formed a part of an established 'sex industry' in Bridgetown,

⁴⁰ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Rutherford, 1967), p. 67.

⁴¹ Paulette A. Kerr, 'Victims or Strategists? Female lodging-house keepers in Jamaica' in Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey (eds), *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (Kingston, 1995): pp. 197-212; Marietta Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* (Lawrence, 1989).

Barbados that was inextricably tied to the colonial (white) power and control. Similarly, as Morrissey argues for late eighteenth-century Saint Domingue, the overwhelming majority of mixed-race women were engaged in sexual-economic exchange, as either prostitutes or the ‘housekeepers’ of white men.⁴² As these scholars show, it was not long before the sexual services of both free and enslaved women became linked to and an important part of the internal market in the Caribbean, particularly in urban port towns where the presence of sailors and other transient men increased the demand for such services.⁴³

As these studies also demonstrate, women were able to utilize sexual forms of labour for their own economic advancement. Though circumscribed by the structures of slavery and white heteropatriarchy, some women were able to benefit financially (and socially) from the sexual services they provided, particularly in comparison with women who laboured on plantations. For instance, in his discussion of employment in urban towns compared to rural plantations, Pedro L.V. Welch argues that prostitution in the towns of Barbados allowed for ‘wide departures from the typical master/slave relationship associated with the rural areas’.⁴⁴ According to Morrissey, prostitution was among the areas of production and services in Saint Domingue from which enslaved women were able to derive some personal economic benefit.⁴⁵ Likewise, Kerr argues that women were able to use their sexual relationships with white men to establish lodging homes in Kingston, Jamaica which

⁴² Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, p.146.

⁴³ Hilary Beckles, *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society* (Kingston, 1999), p. 25; Pedro L.V. Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados, 1680-1834* (Kingston, 2003).

⁴⁴ Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, p. 80.

⁴⁵ Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World*, p. 63.

allowed them relative economic security and independence.⁴⁶

Historical studies of sexual labour in the immediate post-emancipation period are even more rare than in discussions of slave society. Historical studies by Denise Challenger, David Trotman, and Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson are some of the very few works that discuss the sale of sex in the post-emancipation nineteenth-century Anglo-Caribbean in any length. In addition to these studies, Kempadoo has written briefly on sexual-economic exchange in the nineteenth-century Anglo-Caribbean. However, she relies on the historical studies referred to above in order to provide background to a more extensive study of sexual economic exchange and the politics of sexuality in the contemporary Caribbean.⁴⁷ These studies, which all focus on the last decades of the nineteenth century, show that sexual labour continued to be an accessible form of employment for poor, predominately black, women in the colonies. The increasing levels of poverty in the island, plus the establishment of regulations and ordinances limiting the economic opportunities available to women, meant that larger numbers turned to prostitution for their livelihood. According to Moore and Johnson's 'preliminary study' on prostitution in Jamaica, by the end of the nineteenth century an organized sex industry had developed in Kingston.⁴⁸ Though few in number, these works have done much to highlight the continued presence and negotiations of sexual labour in

⁴⁶ Kerr, 'Victims or Strategists?'.
⁴⁷ Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, "'Fallen Sisters'? Attitudes to Female Prostitution in Jamaica at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Caribbean History*, 34 (2000), pp. 46-70; Denise Challenger 'A Benign Place of Healing?: The Contagious Diseases Hospital and Medical Discipline in Post-Slavery Barbados' in Juanita De Barros, Steven Palmer, and David Wright (eds), *Health and Medicine in the Circum-Caribbean, 1800-1968* (New York, 2009), pp. 98-120; David Trotman, *Crime in Trinidad: Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society, 1838-1900* (Knoxville, 1987).

⁴⁸ Moore and Johnson, "'Fallen Sisters'?", p. 47.

the late nineteenth-century period. Still, there remains a complete silence in the historiography of sexual-economic exchange for the period of emancipation in the 1830s, and the half-century after. The result is that there is a discontinuity between the practices of sexual labour during slavery, most often associated with coercion, and the development of an organized industry in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

This dissertation seeks to remedy these absences by tracking sexual-economic exchange from the slave period into the late nineteenth century. In focusing on the way this particular set of practices were discussed in colonial discourses in Jamaica, I argue that the way colonial authorities represented and addressed sexual labour changed throughout the century. This project further argues that the sale of sex was only set out as deserving the attention of colonial authorities at times of political or social transformation, at times when anxieties around slavery and labour, public order, and public health were of issue. Women represented as engaging in sexual-economic exchange epitomized the social disorder and potential threat in society and thus became the target of various government efforts to manage, criminalize and regulate them. Sexual-economic exchange was a practice through which enslaved and poor women may have been able to achieve varying degrees of economic, material and social advantage under structures that attempted to marginalize and oppress them, however, this particular kind of sexual practice was not a consistent source of colonial concern, nor did it incite public discussion consistently throughout the period.

Archives and Absences

One of the main challenges in writing a historical study of sexual-economic exchange has been finding and engaging with archival sources that speak to the experiences and lives of the people who engaged in these practices. Since the late 1980s, historical scholars have questioned our commitment and reliance upon the archives as the source of historical ‘facts’ and the ‘truth’ of past events and have dismantled the notion of neutral or natural archives. Postcolonial and feminist scholars such as Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ann Laura Stoler, Antoinette Burton, and Durba Ghosh, among others, have provided stimulating critiques of the archival records.⁴⁹ Around the same time, archivists have also engaged with and challenged the idea of the archives as a neutral repository of knowledge and objects, instigating an ‘archival turn’.⁵⁰ Collectively, these scholars have shown that the archival document and the repository in which they are housed,

⁴⁹ John Beverly, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham, 1999); Antoinette Burton, ‘Archive Fever’, in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham, 2005), pp. 1-24; Durba Ghosh, ‘National Narratives and the Politics of Miscegnation: Britain and India’, in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham, 2005), pp. 27-44; Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance’, *Archival Science*, 2: 1-2 (2002), pp. 87-109; Laurent Dubois, ‘Maroons in the Archives: The Uses of the Past in the French Caribbean’, in Francis X. Blouin, Jr. and William G. Roseberg (eds.), *Archives, Documentation and Institutions of Social Memory* (Ann Arbor: 2006), pp. 291-300; Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, 2009). For examples of discussions about the archives in the Subaltern School, see Bernard Cohn, ‘History and Anthropology: The State of Play’, *Comparative Studies in Social History*, 22 (1980), pp. 198-221; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, 1988), pp. 271-313; Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for “Indian” Pasts?’, *Representations* (1992), pp. 1-26; and, Ranajit Guha, ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’, in Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner (eds.), *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 336-371.

⁵⁰ For example, see Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power: The Making of the Modern Memory’, *Archival Science* 2: 1-2 (2002), pp. 1-19; Verne Harris, ‘The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa’, *Archival Science* 2: 1-2 (2002), pp. 63-86.

should be seen, discussed and engaged with not only as sites of colonial knowledge and knowledge creation, but also more explicitly as sites of (colonial) power.

I have encountered two main challenges as I have engaged with the archival records. The first challenge has to do with the authorship of the archives. Elite members of society authored the majority of the sources that I have been able to locate and access for this dissertation. Secondly, there is a paucity of archival records that actually discuss sexual-economic exchange. As such there are silences in the records that have made it difficult to answer certain questions and construct a historically narrative based on archival documents. At the same time, the silences in the archival records have raised questions around the reasons for the lack of documentation on sexual-economic exchange at different periods in the nineteenth century. The problems and the solutions that historical scholars have utilized in addressing these two separate but related issues have been integral to the way I have framed and approached the historical study of sexual-economic exchange in nineteenth-century Jamaica.

Historical studies of subaltern and marginalized communities and individuals—the enslaved, the colonized, women, and the poor for instance—are often forced to rely upon records authored by the elite and powerful members of society. In the case of nineteenth-century Jamaica, this has often been colonial authorities; planters; white, and to a lesser extent brown, elites; and, European and American visitors to the island. As the creator of records, these colonial elites exercised power over memory and archives. As several scholars point out, what is present in the sources or archives are ‘neither neutral or natural’ but instead are

‘created’.⁵¹ Thus, the act of creating records is an exertion of power—power that, although not necessarily hegemonic, has determined how certain events are interpreted and remembered, as well as whose voices are privileged in the records. They determine what stories get recorded and which get left out, as well as who are the ‘legitimate subjects of history’ and what events, praxis and people warrant ‘archivization’.⁵² Thus, the archives do not represent a complete repository of historical documentation. Instead, the archival documents that have been created and preserved reflect the political, social and cultural concerns of the colonial authorities and the elite, the creators of those documents. When the concerns of the marginalized become apparent in these records, it is most commonly recorded not in the voices of the marginalized, but those of the elite. Thus, the discourses and experiences of the marginalized are filtered through the colonial and elite gaze. For instance, in his study of insurgency in India, Guha argues that the problem with discussing subaltern rebellions against colonial authority is that the facts of such rebellions within the records are recorded from the perspective of the native and colonial elites. The facts are recorded in the language and from the cultural position of those the rebellions targeted.⁵³ Thus, as Guha and several other authors have shown, historical scholars must be wary of taking the archival record as unproblematic truth-claims in writing history of the marginalized.

Historians have provided many practical suggestions at how to approach the writing of marginalized history based on archival records. In an effort to address the

⁵¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995); Beverly, *Subalternity and Representation*; Burton, ‘Archive Fever’.

⁵² Burton, ‘Archive Fever’, p. 2.

⁵³ Guha, ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’.

problem with the archives, scholars have engaged a series of techniques to get at the voices of the subaltern and marginalized. In his work on resistance of the marginalized and the historical record, James C. Scott argues that scholars must examine the ‘hidden transcripts’, the ways in which the marginalized, out of sight and hearing of their oppressors, engage in resistance. By paying close attention to the records, he argues, scholars can engage with and view the resistance of the oppressed.⁵⁴ Pamela Scully also encourages historians to pay ‘attention to practices’ of the marginalized that may be found within the archival records. Along with engaging oral history, Scully argues that through a ‘skilful reading between the lines’ scholars can retrieve the perspectives of the subaltern.⁵⁵ Antoinette Burton has called for historians to reveal the ‘archive stories’—to be open about our engagement with the archives, but ‘above all, its power to shape all narratives which are “found” there.’⁵⁶ In addition to revealing the ‘scaffolding’ of archival research in order to discuss the marginalized, in her work on women in colonial India, Burton also challenges the meaning of archives, advocating for wider expansion on the kinds of archival records scholars access.⁵⁷

Scholars of Caribbean slave society have also engaged creatively with the archives in attempts to, as Laurent Dubois writes, ‘uncover the voices and actions of slaves and ex-slaves...to understand their struggles’.⁵⁸ To recover the voices of

⁵⁴ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990).

⁵⁵ Pamela Scully, ‘Masculinity, Citizenship, and the Production of Knowledge in the Postemancipation Cape Colony, 1834-1844’, in Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (eds), *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham, 2005), p. 41.

⁵⁶ Burton, ‘Archive Fever’, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford, 2003).

⁵⁸ Dubois, ‘Maroons in the Archives’, p. 292.

Maroons in the French Caribbean, Dubois engages with and makes creative use of historical fiction and novels. Similarly, Mimi Sheller also engages with other kinds of ‘unofficial’ records, such as poetry, novels, and bawdy songs, in order to ‘press the limits of the evidence’ found in traditional archives. However, her object is not to recover the voices, but instead ‘to recover the experiences...of the subaltern.’⁵⁹ All of these scholars engage with techniques of ‘reading against the grain’—that is, engaging with the archival material in ways that it was not intended to be read or between the lines of the dominant narrative.⁶⁰ By doing so, these scholars have sought to move beyond the limitations of the archives in order to capture glimpses of the experiences, if not the voices, of marginalized peoples in the records.

While the technique of ‘reading against the grain’ has been utilized widely within recent Caribbean historiography, several historical scholars have critiqued the objective of recovering the ‘voices’ or experiences of the marginalized within the colonial archives. Trouillot, Burton, and Spivak, amongst others, have raised important questions around the way scholars engage with the sources and the desire of historians to ‘recover’ from the archives the ‘voices’ of the subaltern and marginalized. In seeking to retrieve subaltern ‘voices’, scholars risk the fetishization of the marginalized, attributing meaning and purpose where there may not be any. Indeed, as Spivak has argued, the subaltern ‘cannot speak’, at least not in a way that scholars today can interpret. Subaltern voices are subaltern precisely because of the relations of power/knowledge intrinsic in the creation of colonial

⁵⁹ Scully, ‘Masculinity, Citizenship, and the Production of Knowledge’, p. 41.

⁶⁰ Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Concept of History’, in Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (eds), *Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 389-400.

records.⁶¹ The voices of the subaltern are subaltern because of their inability to ‘speak’, the power dynamics that make them subaltern. Thus, our objective should not be just the ‘recovery’ of ‘voices’, but in understanding the relations of power intrinsic in the creation of archival records.

One of the most useful discussions of the colonial archives and power has come from Ann Laura Stoler. Stoler argues for the need to approach the colonial archive not only as the source of ‘contested colonial knowledge’ as ‘reading against the grain’ suggests, but also as the subject of colonial enquiry, as a ‘cultural artefacts of fact production, of taxonomies in the making, and of disparate notions of what made up colonial authority.’⁶² For instance, in her study of the nineteenth-century Dutch Indies, Stoler examines the use of commissions and statistics, not just for the information they may provide, but as ‘prescriptive and probabilistic tools’ used by the colonial state to maintain power over the colonized population. As she demonstrates, it is not just a matter of ‘reading’ the archival records ‘against the grain’, but reading them instead ‘along the archival grain’ by treating the archival record not solely as ‘source, but as subject’. By examining these tools, as subject, she is able to get at how the state produced ‘knowledge’ and attempted to consolidate power. I have found this concept particularly useful in understanding and analyzing why there were more or less records on sexual-economic exchange in the colonial archives at different periods throughout the nineteenth century. For example, in Chapter Five I argue the increase in discussion in the local Kingston newspapers was at least partially a reflection of publication of the *Governors Blue*

⁶¹ Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’

⁶² Stoler, *Colonial Archives and Arts of Governance*, p. 91.

Books, statistics and reports on the numbers of ‘common prostitutes’ in the colony. This documentation was then used by other colonial officials and ‘respectable’ members of the public as scientific proof Jamaica’s moral state. Thus, the reports themselves, their creation, context, and so on, are just as useful to understanding elite discourses on sexual-economic exchange as the numbers of ‘common prostitutes’ recorded in these reports. Moreover, making use of the reports in this way brings to the forefront, as Stoler puts it, ‘the power in the production of the archive itself’.⁶³

Engaging with the archival records as subject and sources of archival power/knowledge production also provides insight in the vast and very resounding silences in archival sources. In the period following the abolition of slavery in 1833 and the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Act in 1867, I have found very few official documents, including Colonial Office correspondence and criminal records, and ‘unofficial’ records, such as newspapers, that discuss sexual-economic exchange. Such silencing, as scholars have shown in other areas of study, is not necessarily a reflection of the absence of sexual labour or discourses during the period. The absences, what is not said or discussed, are just as integral to the creation of the sources and archives as what is present. As Trouillot asserts in his study of San Souci and the Haitian Revolution, silences are not just integral to creation of sources and archives, but are indeed ‘inherent in history’.⁶⁴ Like that which is present, the silences are ‘active, dialectical counterparts of which history is

⁶³ Stoler, *Colonial Archives and Arts of Governance*, p. 101.

⁶⁴ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, p. 49.

the synthesis'.⁶⁵ History is indeed only a fraction of a story, a 'sliver of a silver,' as Verne Harris puts it.⁶⁶ On multiple stages of the creation of the sources and archives, actors speak of some things and do not speak of others. As Rodney G.S. Carter writes, 'inevitably, there are distortions, omissions, erasures, and silences in the archives'.⁶⁷ Like the records that are present within the archives, the silences also speak of power and marginalization.

Trouillot's detailed discussion of silences and historical production has been particularly useful in thinking through my own engagement with the silences on sexual-economic exchange in the archival records and in framing this study. He identifies three different moments of 'historical production' at which point the unequal relations of power create silences or absences within the archival documents. In this section, I will focus particularly on what Trouillot calls the first and third moment of 'historical production'. At the first moment, the 'chronicler'—in the case of this dissertation this is commonly colonial authorities and the elite and middle-class residents and visitors to Jamaica—reports upon or takes account of an event.⁶⁸ The documents they created include travel journals, commission reports, and newspaper articles. Similar to Stoler's assertion that we must read the documents 'along the archival grain', as discussed above, Trouillot argues that we must also understand what the chronicler choose to be silent about, what details in their 'play-by-play' description they determined was inconsequential to the narrative

⁶⁵ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, p. 48.

⁶⁶ Verne Harris, 'The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa', *Archival Silence* 2 (2002), pp. 63-86.

⁶⁷ Rodney G.S. Carter, 'Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence', p. 216.

⁶⁸ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*,

they were creating and thus, what was absented from the documents. The silences should not be read as ‘products of ideology’, that is we should not read the silences as necessarily intentional. Instead, we should engage with the silences for what they can tell us about those who authored them, what they found to be of importance and of concern and what they did not.⁶⁹

The silences are thus another way in which those in power were able to create ‘facts’ and direct historical discourse through archival records. However, dynamics of power, though unequal, are rarely static or hegemonic, even in the power of archival ‘fact production’. On occasion, marginalized people become the authors of the archival documents and, indeed, the silences. As feminist historians of African-American history argue, we must consider the role that black and brown women may have played in the silencing of certain topics, both as the authors of certain documents, but also on a level that precedes that of the creation of the documents. For instance, in the US during the period of slavery, the racialization of black men and women, which included the characterization of black women as innately sexually lascivious, was used as a means of denying non-enslaved blacks access to civil rights and citizenship.⁷⁰ In response to this, at the beginning of twentieth century black female reformers engaged in a ‘politics of silence’—a kind of ‘silence, secrecy, and a partially self-chosen invisibility’ of their sexuality in

⁶⁹ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*,

⁷⁰ Paula Giddings, ‘The Last Taboo’, in Toni Morrison (ed), *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas and the Construction of Social Reality* (New York, 1992), p. 445.

public.⁷¹ ‘Respectable’ women adopted ‘silence’ and ‘proper Victorian morality’ as a means of demonstrating their modesty in opposition to the stereotype of ‘uncontrolled’ sexuality.⁷² But this enforced silencing also may have implications for the kinds of records that were produced or not produced. Although this dissertation is predominately focused on elite and colonial discourses, in discussing sexual-economic exchange and the paucity of records it makes sense to consider the possibility that the women involved in the practice may have been strategic how, when or even if they discussed their own sexual praxis. Considering the role of women in the creation of silences within archival records suggest the possible agency that some women may have exerted, denying specific aspects of their lives to the elite and colonial chronicler. A consideration of women’s agency in supplying or denying access to their intimate lives provides another possible explanation for the paucity of records on sexual-economic exchange.

Trouillot identifies the second moment of historical production as the point at which the ‘facts’ by the ‘chronicler’ become collected, assembled and preserved as archives—a moment of fact-assembly. At this moment, those who create the records are not the only ones who exercise power in the archives. Archivists given the task of organizing and maintaining the records are also complicit in the way power is exercised in the archives. The way archives are collected, assembled and stored is not a passive act, but an active one that determines which documents are to be preserved and which are not, as well as how the collection of sources will be ordered

⁷¹ Evelyn M. Hammonds, ‘Toward a Genealogy of Black Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence’, in M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (eds), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York, 2012), p. 171.

⁷² Hammonds, ‘Toward a Genealogy of Black Sexuality’, p. 175.

and made accessible. It is at this stage that ‘facts’ are made ‘historical intelligibility’.⁷³ While the process of that occurs at this stage provides some insight into another possible explanation for the paucity of archival documents on sexual-economic exchange, it is the third and final moment of historical production that I want to turn to now.

Trouillot states that the final stage of historical production occurs when the chronicled events, given credibility in the archives, are retrieved and used to construct narratives of the past. In Caribbean historiography this has meant the continued marginalization of certain sexual praxis and members of society from constructions of the historical past. The silences in the archives explains, in part, the silencing of certain kinds of discussions in history writing, a silencing that this dissertation seeks to address and make productive in understanding discourses of sexual-economic exchange. However, the marginalization has also been more strategic. As I discussed above, there is a general paucity in Caribbean historiography of discussions of women’s involvement in sexual labour throughout the nineteenth century. However, within this discussion, particularly that focused on the period of slavery, historians have most commonly discussed women involved in this sexual praxis in one of three ways; as resisters or rebels, victims, or accommodators. Sexual agency, a fourth possible way I think we can view women involved in sexual-economic exchange, is silenced. Thus, on multiple levels there is the potential complicity in silencing the practice of sexual-economic exchange, of

⁷³ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, p. 52.

obscuring it from view or detection and thereby keeping it out of histories. In this final stage the historical production is complete.

Understanding why certain marginalized groups or topics are absent in the records is useful in getting at possible shifts and continuities in ideas around specific topics, namely sexual-economic exchange. Sexual-economic exchange, as this dissertation will show, was spoken about during specific periods in relation to larger events, however, was also silenced and made absent in others.⁷⁴ The silences in the archives around sexual-economic exchange are indicative of moments in the nineteenth century when the women involved in this practice, and the ‘evils’ that were associated with them, were not a prominent concern for colonial or metropolitan officials and authorities. Moments of heightened archival records, I argue, corresponds with moments of colonial upheaval—the abolition of slavery, the Morant Bay Rebellion, and the social and political restructuring that occurred after. This is not to argue that prostitution necessarily decreased between these periods or that it increased. Instead, this dissertation argues that sexual-economic exchange appears prominently within the archival records at times with the practice, associated with moral and social disorder, was articulated as part of wider socio-political issues, such as slavery or public health.

⁷⁴ Trouillot’s definition of what it means to ‘silence’ is useful here. He defines ‘silence’ as ‘an active and transitive process: one “silences” a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun.’ See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, p. 48.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have situated this study of nineteenth-century sexual-economic exchange in Jamaica within a larger literature of women's history, gender, and sexuality. I have argued that despite significant scholarly attention to women's sexuality in the history of the Caribbean, there is a general absence of how sexual praxis and sexual-economic exchange figured in colonial discourse in the nineteenth century, particularly in the post-slavery period. This dissertation is also engaged with conceptualization of sexual labour posited mostly by scholars of contemporary studies of sexuality in the Caribbean. Situated within the field of gender and sexuality studies, this dissertation will examine the ways the socio-cultural, political and economic changes in Jamaica impacted discourses of women and sexual-economic exchange and where the evidence exists, the lived experiences. This dissertation will also attempt to make use of the silences present within the archival records on sexual-economic exchange. Making use of the silences serves two purposes; first to ask what the lack of discussion around sexual-economic exchange in the archival records tells us about the elite discourses of this practice in society; but also as a way of problematizing the continued silencing of this sexual praxis and the women involved in historical studies of nineteenth-century Jamaica. The objective here is not simply to reclaim the 'voices' of the marginalized, but instead to insist that a social-cultural history of the island is incomplete without some level of engagement with one form of sexual praxis and female labour, even if this engagement is significantly limited by the records to a discussion of elite discourses and their cultural, judicial and legislative responses.

Chapter 3: Bodies, Sex and Politics in Jamaican Slave Society, c. 1780-1833

Altho' a slave me is born and bred,
My skin is black, not yellow:
I often sold my maidenhead
To many a handsome fellow.

My massa Keep me once, for true,
And gave me clothes, wid busses:
Fine muslin coats, wid bitty too,
To gain my sweet embraces.

J.B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, 1793

Whatever may be the customs and laws of a country, the women of it decide the morals. Free or subjugated they reign, because they hold possession of our passions. But their influence is more or less salutary, according to the degree of esteem, which is granted to them. Whether they are our idols or companions, courtezans [sic],

slaves, or beasts of burden, the reaction is complete, and they make us such as they are themselves.

Falmouth Post, 25 January 1837

One of the most common visual and literary images of the Caribbean region that proliferated in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain and Europe was that of the lascivious, sexualized black and brown woman. As much as the tropical climate, exotic species of animals or plants, disease, death or sugar, the brown or black female ‘prostitute’ constituted a formative part of the imagery representative of Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.¹ In the many travel narratives, journals, paintings, etchings, newspaper articles and pamphlets describing the people and society of the region, the black and brown woman was always present, predominately in a way depicting a shameless and overt sexuality that differed from white European women. Black enslaved women supposedly sung the bawdy song quoted above to white men they encountered in Jamaica and is illustrative of the popular imagery of black women. Another example is the James Gilray print, ‘Philanthropic Consolations after the loss of the Slave-Bill’ (1796), depicting William Wilberforce and Samuel Horsley, the Bishop of Rochester, frolicking with two half-naked black women, presumably prostitutes, in an elaborately decorated room filled with erotic and exotic connotations (figure 3.1). In these and other

¹ Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America* (New York, 2000), pp. 163-171.

depictions that circulated in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Caribbean was a place of sex, of loose sexual morals and even looser women. It was a place where the sexual services and bodies of black and brown women were for sale and could be easily bought. Images of the sexual lascivious woman of African or partial African ancestry remained embedded in popular discourses of the Caribbean throughout the nineteenth century. Such imagery was not static, however, and altered in response to social-cultural changes in the island.

This chapter is concerned with the discourses around sexual-economic exchange, particularly interracial concubinage, in Jamaica from around 1780 to 1833. I begin by discussing the way African female bodies were racialized and sexualized in white colonial discourse in order to highlight some of the ideologies that informed depictions of the Caribbean islands and of black female sexuality in the colony in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. I will show that sexual-economic exchange during slavery was inextricably linked to the commercialization of bodies and integral to slave society. A brief discussion of interracial concubinage, one very visible form of sexual-economic exchange, will illustrate how customary and prevalent sexual labour in Jamaica was seen to be during the period of slavery. In much of this discourse, black and coloured concubines were cast as debased women, but also as threatening to white men and the society as a whole. Colonial administrators and white men responded to the potentially dangerous nature of interracial sex and the offspring that resulted, by creating colonial structures to restrict the progress of mistresses and mixed-race children, including legislation on

the rights of people of colour in the colony, while simultaneously providing limited access to privileges.

The second part of this chapter will explore the politicisation of sexual-economic exchange in the last years of slavery. The work of Henrice Altink has explored how the sexuality of enslaved women figured within both anti- and proslavery discourses around slavery.² However, in this chapter I want to expand on her work by exploring not only the way concubinage was represented by white men and women debating slavery, but also within local debates around civil equality and amongst free people of colour, I argue here that during the period leading up to the ending of slavery in Jamaica, the concubine took centre stage within both metropolitan discourses, but also local discourses as well. This chapter will show that the way sexual-economic exchange, particularly interracial concubinage, was articulated was not static, but changed throughout the period 1780 and 1833 in line with the the social, cultural and political transformations that occurred in the colony.

² Henrice Altink, *Representations of Slave Women in Discourses on Slavery and Abolition* (New York, 2007),



Figure 3.1: James Gilray, 'Philanthropic Consolations, after the loss of the Slave-Bill' (1796), The British Museum.

African Bodies, Sex and Racialization

The ways Europeans racialized the African people they encountered were integral to discourses that developed around the practices of (interracial) sexual-economic exchange in the colony, as well as how such exchanges operated in the colony. Early English travel writers and explorers drew on both ancient and medieval depictions within writings of 'monstrous races' and 'female devils' the lived beyond the knowable spaces of England. The female body was significant in English

conceptions of difference and the way the ‘other’ was racialized.³ One of the more enduring images of the female ‘other’ within travel literature was that of the wild women with breasts so long they resembled the udders of a goat and which could be flung behind her in order to suckle the child she carried upon her back.⁴ Such imagery was evident in English conceptions of the Irish women they encountered when English colonization of Ireland was at its height and Irish people still constituted the ‘unknown’ and ‘other’.⁵ For instance, in a sixteenth-century travel journal of Ireland, an English man named Fynes Moryson, described the Irish women he saw as having ‘very great duggs, some so big as they give their children suck over their shoulders’.⁶

Like sixteenth-century depictions of Irish women, African female bodies encountered in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century imperial endeavours were identified through the image of the ‘monstrous physiognomy’, unwomanly behaviour and sexual deviance. As Jennifer L. Morgan shows in her very insightful study, the English gaze was one of both ‘desire and repulsion...both [her] shape and sexuality evidenced her savagery’.⁷ The African women’s sexual deviance was apparent through the polygamous relationships she had with men and through her

³ Jennifer L. Morgan, “‘Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder’: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (1997); Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 234-287. See also Sander Gilman, ‘The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality’, in Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca, 1985), pp. 76-108.

⁴ Morgan, “‘Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder’”, p. 5.

⁵ Mary J. Hickman and Bronwen Walter, ‘Deconstructing Whiteness: Irish Women in Britain’, *Feminist Review*, 50 (1995), pp. 5-19; Kathleen M. Noonan, “‘The Cruell Pressure of an Enraged, Barbroous People’: Irish Identity in Seventeenth-century Policy and Propoganda’, *The Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), pp. 151-177.

⁶ Fynes Moryson, ‘The Itinerary of Fynes Moryson’, in C. Litton Falkiner (ed), *Illustrations of Irish History and Topography, Mainly of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1904), p. 301.

⁷ Morgan, “‘Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder’”, p. 39.

exposed body, most commonly her breast or ‘dugs’, that were so large and droopy, they resembled ‘udder of a goate’. According to these narratives, she held ‘no shame’ in exposing her body or in her promiscuity. However, it was not only her sexual deviance that struck early European travellers, but also other physical differences. That African women laboured in work thought too physically demanding for English women and were able to reproduce ‘withoute payne’, further contributed to the notion that the African female body was animal and savage, completely opposite to the delicate female bodies of ‘civilised’ Europe. By the mid-eighteenth century, black female bodies became the markers of the ultimate difference within a discursive field of ‘otherness’ authored by white men. Thus, English observers used long-standing gendered and racialized tropes of the female body, depicted as both sexually and physically deviant, to demarcate English women from those they encountered in the empire. The African female body came to mark ‘both metaphorically and symbolically the boundaries of European nationality and white supremacy.’⁸ It was sexually lascivious but was also a labouring body. The constant ‘sexually titillating’ detail by which travellers described both African women’s physiognomy is indicative of the function, as bodies of labour, reproduction, and sex that these women would come to occupy within slave society.⁹

Within Jamaica, discourses on the black and coloured female body drew on these earlier tropes of difference and ‘otherness’. In the late eighteenth and very early part of the nineteenth century, women’s bodies were regularly described as having ‘gross mannerisms, savage temperament and promiscuous appetites [which]

⁸ Morgan, “‘Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder’”, p. 39.

⁹ Morgan, “‘Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder’”, p. 46.

irreversibly infected' their white amours.¹⁰ The language of 'infection' is rife within the discourse, as were metaphors of poisonous reptilians and animals. For instance, J.B. Moreton, a temporary resident in Jamaica, described black and brown women as 'yellow, or a black snake[s]' whom 'have a wonderful ascendancy over men, and have injured many, both powerful and subordinate.'¹¹ Maria Nugent, the wife of the Governor, used a similar metaphor in her journal. Upon her arrival in Jamaica in 1801, Nugent was warned by two of her female dinner guests of the custom within the island. Nugent wrote, 'the ladies told me strange stories of the influence of the black and yellow women, and Mrs. Bullock called them serpents'.¹² Like Moreton, Nugent's dinner guest also perceived black and brown women as having mythical (or demonic) control over white men. We can imagine the 'strange stories' these women related, however, their reference to black and coloured women as serpents, immediately draws to mind an analogy of the biblical story of the Garden of Eden. Moreton and Nugent were not the only ones to use metaphors of poison and danger to describe black and brown women. Edward Long, a contemporary historian and Creole, described the 'African mistress' as using 'tricks, cajolements, and infidelities' to attract a white man so that both she and her family could be 'fastened upon her keeper like so many leeches; while she the chief leech conspires to bleed him usque ad deliquium'.¹³ In these, and within other texts that dominated and shaped metropolitan imagery of the Caribbean in the eighteenth and very early nineteenth century, black and coloured women are described as poisonous threats to

¹⁰ Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 145.

¹¹ Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, p. 52 and p. 127.

¹² Lady Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* [1839], Philip Wright (ed), (Kingston, 2002), p. 12.

¹³ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, pp. 331-332.

white men, 'leeches', 'serpents' and 'snakes', conspiring to suck the wealth, health, manhood, and eventually, the very blood, from their white male victims. Discussions of black and coloured women as 'serpents' and 'snakes', like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, cast them as both evil and dangerous. These women were described as seductive figures that white men were unable to resist and that would ultimately lead to their moral destruction and fall from grace.

Female Bodies, Interracial Sex and Ownership

The ownership and commercialization of the body stood at the very heart of slavery. The extraction of labour from the enslaved was the prerogative of the slave master. The enslaved had no rights over their bodies, but within both colonial statutes and slave codes, as Hilary Beckles notes, all rights were 'consolidated...within the legal person of slave owners'.¹⁴ The complete ownership over the body was nowhere more evident or valuable than over enslaved women. The enslaved female body could potentially provide income to the slave master in three ways: from the extraction of physical labour, reproduction, and sexual/domestic services.¹⁵

Slave women laboured on plantations in a similar capacity to enslaved men. However, since some enslaved men were trained to do more skilled jobs in the production of sugar, women were most often the dominant labourers in the fields

¹⁴ Hilary Beckles, *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society* (Oxford, 1999), p. 23.

¹⁵ Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick, 1989), p. 144.

cutting cane, one of the most physically demanding roles on a plantation.¹⁶ Enslaved women's bodies were also valued for their reproductive potential. The laws of Jamaica made all children born of enslaved women slaves, no matter what the status of the father. Thus, at least theoretically, an enslaved woman's capacity to produce children could provide the Masters with additional generations of enslaved labourers. In addition, black and coloured women provided white men with both domestic and sexual services that formed part of the economic benefits extracted by slave owners, both male and female. As Beckles has shown in his study of Barbados, sex with black and coloured enslaved women, was 'another way in which slave owners extracted surplus value' from their property. To quote Barbara Bush, 'the appropriation of [enslaved] women's sexuality "redoubled women's exploitation as workers"'.¹⁷ More than enslaved male bodies, the female enslaved body provided its owner and others who could afford it, a vast and varied source of wealth, exploitation and pleasure. The commercialization of the enslaved women's bodies, thus, formed an integral part of the formal and informal economy in the colony.

It was through the treatment of women's bodies that slave owners exercised power and, as Altink notes, the 'horrors of slavery' were conveyed.¹⁸ However, as Foucault argues, power is not static or unidirectional, but 'exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations'.¹⁹ Sexuality, in particular, serves as 'an especially dense transfer point for relations of

¹⁶ Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (London, 1990), pp. 36-37.

¹⁷ Arlette Gautier quoted in Barbara Bush, 'Hard Labour: Women, Childbirth, and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies', in David Barry Gasper and Darlene Clark Hines (eds), *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington, 1996), p. 194.

¹⁸ Henrice Altink, "'An Outrage on All Decency': Abolitionist Reactions to Flogging Jamaican Slave Women, 1780-1834", *Slavery and Abolition*, 23 (2002), p. 109.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York, 1990), p. 94.

power' and in their sexual relationships with white men, some women were able to exercise agency and negotiate relations of power.²⁰ Within the confines of a patriarchal and race-based slave society, women likely experienced sex with white men in multiple and complex ways, as both an extension of and a challenge to the demands and restrictions placed on their bodies. As several historians have already shown, the sexual abuse and coercion of enslaved women on plantations was a regular occurrence that had widespread negative effects on the lives of these women and within the larger community. However, as more recent research has also shown, enslaved and free black and coloured women cannot only be characterized as the victims of predatory white men. Many brown and black women negotiated the sexual demands placed on them by engaging in transactional sex in which they could achieve some benefit.²¹

By the end of the eighteenth century, sex between white men and black women was regularly discussed and was represented as customary within the island of Jamaica. As Bush shows in her study of slave women in the Caribbean, interracial sexual-economic exchange was 'inextricably woven into the social fabric' of the colonies.²² On the rural plantations and in the towns of the Jamaica, the pervasiveness of interracial sex was a regular and frequent topic of discussion in the textual narratives that found audience in the metropole. Long wrote extensively about the frequency of interracial sex on the island:

²⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 103.

²¹ Beckles, *Centering Woman*; Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, 2004). For an example in the American context, see Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York, 2008).

²² Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society*, p.111.

On first arriving here, a civilized European may be apt to think it impudent and shameful, that even bachelors should publickly avow their keeping a Negroe or Mulatto mistresses...Habit, however, and the prevailing fashion, reconcile such scenes, and lessen the abhorrence excited by their first impression.²³

Bryan Edwards, a peer of Long, similarly wrote that black and coloured females 'are universally maintained by White men of all ranks and conditions, as kept mistresses'.²⁴ In 1802, Nugent commented in her journal that 'white men of all descriptions, married or single, live in a state of licentiousness with their female slaves'.²⁵ Robert Rennie noted that 'almost every householder, for a few of them are married, keeps his *miss*, without being at all thought guilty of any breach of morality or decorum'.²⁶ The prevalence of interracial intimacies was also noted by John Stewart less than twenty years later when he wrote that at least nine-tenths of mixed-race women were 'in the situation of housekeepers, as they are here styled, to white men'.²⁷ Whether Stewart's estimate is accurate we cannot know. However, like Long, Edwards, Nugent, Rennie, and so many other white commentators on Jamaican society, his observation does speak to the visibility and customary nature of such matches in the colony.

²³ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Volume II (London, 1774), p. 328.

²⁴ Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies*, Book IV (London, 1793), pp. 21-23.

²⁵ Philip Wright (ed), *Lady Nugent's Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* [1839], (Kingston, 2002), p. 88.

²⁶ Robert Rennie, *A History of Jamaica* (London, 1807), p. 328.

²⁷ John Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica* (London, 1823), pp. 326-7.

According to many metropolitan observers, white Creole men in Jamaican slave society seemed to prefer sexual relationships with black and brown prostitutes and mistresses to marrying white women. In his study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jamaica, Trevor Burnard shows that marriages between white men and women were uncommon. Although in 1745, eighty per cent of the white population in Jamaica consisted of adults of marriageable age, in Kingston only three to four per cent of men actually married and for fifty per cent of these cases it was a second marriage.²⁸ Unlike the American colonies where British familial patterns were more widely recreated, in Jamaica such households were a rarity. As Long explained in the 1770s, many white Creole men and long-term residents preferred to ‘riot in...goatish embraces’ with black and brown women, than to enjoy the ‘pure and lawful bliss’ of marriage with women of their own colour.²⁹ Though British men may have been reluctant to engage in interracial relationships at first, they soon adjusted to the cultural norms, including the sexual culture, in the island. An episode in the fictional story, *Tom Cringle’s Log*, speaks to the process of sexual acculturation that was often discussed amongst white men. In the novel, based on the experiences of the author Michael Scott during his stay in Kingston between 1806 and 1822, the main character records a ditty sung by a player during a John Canoe festival:

But Massa Buccra have white love,

Soft and silken like one dove.

To brown girl—him barely shivel—

²⁸ Trevor Burnard, “‘Rioting in goatish embraces’: Marriage and improvement in early British Jamaica’, *The History of the Family*, 11 (2006).

²⁹ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, p. 331.

To black girl—Oh, Lord, de Devil!

But when him once two tree year here

Him tink white lady wery great boder;

De coloured peoples, never fear,

Ah, him lob him de morest nor any oder

....

So always come—in two tree year,

And so wid you, Massa—never fear

Brown girl for cook—for wife—for nurse;

Buccra lady—poo—no wort a curse.³⁰

This ditty encapsulates what was often described as a common process of interracial sex that occurred in the island. White men newly arriving in the Caribbean soon adopted the sexual practices prevalent in the island. These practices were often both interracial and non-marital or monogamous. Interracial sex and other forms of sexual-economic relationships were customary among all classes of white men, including respectable members of Jamaica's white ruling elite. As Thomas C. Holt notes, elite members of Jamaican society were often involved in interracial sexual-economic relationships. Holt found that in the 1833 wills of forty-two out of sixty-four members of the Jamaica Assembly, men who could be seen as representing the white ruling elite in Jamaica, included bequests to black or brown mistress and

³⁰ Michael Scott, *Tom Cringle's Log: Second Series, Volume 2* (Philadelphia, 1833), pp. 67-68.

mixed-race offspring.³¹ Non-marital sex was not just prevalent among the non-white and enslaved populations, but was an island-wide custom, that all engaged in, no matter class, race or status. Within the narratives of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it was normative sexual behaviour in the island.

Several studies have shown that, like the discourses around the customary nature of interracial sex in Jamaica, such patterns of interracial sexual and domestic relationships between colonized women and white male colonizers was prevalent in other parts of the British Empire throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Historian Sylvia Van Kirk argues that relationships between European fur traders and Aboriginal women were widespread and an integral part of the development of the British colonial presence in Canada's west coast from the 1670s into the nineteenth century. Such relationships 'constituted an important contribution to the functioning of the [fur] trade' and the political organization of fur-trade society.³² Durba Ghosh makes similar claims regarding interracial sex and domestic partnerships in her study on sex and family life in India under the East India Company. As she notes, interracial sex and its regulation was a 'transnational phenomenon during the long centuries of European imperialism'.³³ In line with Ghosh's summation, black and coloured women in Jamaica that formed sexual relationships with white men, whether these intimacies were short or long term, were a part of larger pattern of sexual relations throughout the Empire. The prevalence of

³¹ Thomas C. Holt, *The problem of freedom: race, labour, and politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore, 1992), p. 93.

³² Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), p. 14.

³³ Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 26.

sexual-economic relationships in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century meant that Jamaica was not unique. However, the local operations of slave society and the particular tropes and discourses that informed racialized understandings of black and brown female bodies and their sexuality, and what such sexuality meant to the white male bodies, *did* make it distinct from other parts of the empire. The commercialization of black enslaved bodies that fuelled the colony in terms of labour, trade and capital accumulation also structured many of the sexual relationships prevalent in the colony.

Narratives of Prostitution and Concubinage

The sexual culture in eighteenth-century Jamaica featured regularly in many pamphlets, diaries, journals and other texts. In these various accounts, women of African descent were regularly portrayed as ‘prostitutes’ or ‘whores’, women who, without shame or regret, exchanged sex for material or monetary gain. British and other white observers regularly used the terms ‘prostitute’, ‘concubines’, ‘mistress’, or ‘housekeeper’ to describe any non-marital sexual relationship, particularly when such relationship involved black or coloured women and a white man, whether that relationship was coercive or consensual. As Moreton so crudely put it, ‘Mongrel [and black] wenches from their youth up are taught to be whores’.³⁴ All black and coloured women, whether they were free or enslaved, partnered in a non-Christian

³⁴ J. B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners* (London, 1793), p. 130.

based marriage or single, were regularly discussed narratives produced mostly by European men as potential prostitutes.³⁵

Sexual-economic relationships in Jamaica were most commonly described by two separate but interrelated terms: 'prostitution' and 'concubinage'. The short-term sexual services women provided men, white, black and brown, in exchange of money or goods was most often referred to in contemporary literature as 'prostitution'. The term 'concubinage', on the other hand, was most often applied to interracial relationships that lasted for a longer period of time, involved domestic or medical services, such as nursing, and was likely to be more financially and socially beneficial for the women involved. In this respect, concubines were regularly referred to as a 'kept mistress' or 'housekeeper', a local term that indicated the domestic nature of the relationship. In his discussion of late nineteenth-century Jamaica, Patrick Bryan argues that there was a distinction between concubinage among black people and interracial or 'interclass' concubinage. According to Bryan, interracial concubinage, what he refers to as 'elite concubinage', was 'qualitatively different' from 'faithful' or 'peasant' concubinage between persons of the same race and class in Jamaica.³⁶ This distinction was particularly important during the slavery period, as it was black and brown women's involvement with white men that was most commonly used as an example of 'prostitution'.

Although interracial relationships based on sexual-economic exchange could be relatively stable, long term, and maybe even monogamous, they were rarely ever

³⁵ Cecilia A. Green, 'Between Respectability and Self-Respect: Framing Afro-Caribbean Women's Labour History', *Social and Economic Studies*, 55, 3 (September 2006), p. 3.

³⁶ Patrick Bryan, *The Jamaican People, 1880-1902: Race, Class, and Social Control* (Kingston, 2000), pp. 97-98.

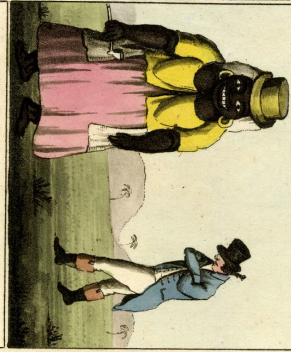
permanent.³⁷ Cynric R. Williams provides some insight into a common pattern of such relationships in Jamaica. ‘A young woman of colour perhaps attaches herself to a white man for life, perhaps for a few years only. He leaves the island; the female associates with a second, a third, who all contribute to her wealth’.³⁸ An etching published 1808 by William Holland illustrates well the custom of interracial concubinage in Jamaica (figure 3.2). In the illustration, ‘Johnny Newcome in Love in the West Indies’, a white English man named Johnny Newcome arrives in a fictional Caribbean island and meets an enslaved black woman, named Mimbo. With the assistance of an ‘oby man’, Newcome secures Mimbo as his mistress. In one of the next illustrations, Mimbo is depicted in an elevated position within his house. She no longer works in the fields, but has become the ‘Queen of the Harem’. The relationship ends when Newcome leaves Mimbo and their mixed-race children and returns to his ‘Native Land’. This print, like Williams’ description, speaks to what was likely a common pattern of interracial sexual-economic exchange in Jamaica during the period of slavery.

³⁷ The relationship between Grace Donne and Simon Taylor provide an example of an interracial non-marital relationship that was relatively permanent. They were together for over thirty years until Donne died in 1804. See Meleisa Ono-George, ‘Coloured Women, White Men and Sexual Deviance: Jamaica, c. 1780-1830’ in W. Jackson and E. Manktelow (eds), *Deviance and Empire* (London, forthcoming 2015).

³⁸ Cynric R. Williams, *A Tour Through the Island of Jamaica from the Western to the Eastern End in the Year 1823* (London, 1826), p. 307.

JOHNNY NEWCOME IN LOVE IN THE WEST INDIES.

Smitten with the charms of Minbo, Minbo, a noble Venus daughter of Minbo, Minbo, King of the Silver Sand Hills in Congo.



Mr Newcome happy - Minbo made Queen of the Harem.



Directly, during his love to the amiable Minbo, Minbo, while she is picking his doggoe.



Mr Newcome taking leave of his Ladies & Ecclesiastics, previous to his departure from Plying Pan Island, to gaze a while in his Native Land.



Consulting Old Minbo, Minbo, the Old Man, how to get possession of the charming Minbo, Minbo.



A few of the beautiful young Newcomes

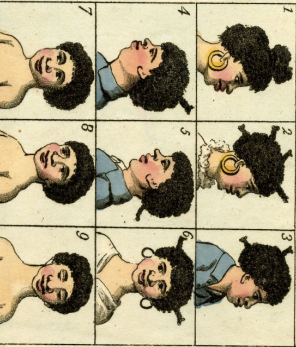


Fig 1. Lucinda, Diana, Newcome, a delicate girl very much like her Mother, only that she has a great antipathy to a pipe, and cannot bear the smell of Rum. - 2. Parolope, Minbo, Newcome, a Quaker, Dutch Newcome, predictably, like his father - a curly top, Newcome. - 3. Cassio, Eagle, Newcome, - African Quakerish Newcome. - 4. Shadish, Minbo, Newcome, a Healer, Sunny Newcome, a shell of great spirit, an admirer of Liberty and Equality, and promises her to be the Regent of the Country. - 5. Harriot, Plying Pan, Newcome. - 6. Harriot, Plying Pan, Newcome. - 7. Harriot, Plying Pan, Newcome. - 8. Harriot, Plying Pan, Newcome. - 9. Harriot, Plying Pan, Newcome.

Published April 1808, by William Holland, Colaport Street, London.

Figure 3.2: William Holland, 'Johnny Newcome in Love in the West Indies' (1808), British Museum.

Several white men maintained long-term relationships with black and brown women that were both financial and socially beneficial. Although some mixed-race children returned with their white fathers to Britain, the relationships between concubines and white men very rarely continued once he left the colony.³⁹ Thus, while affections may have certainly developed in such relationships, many of these women likely regarded relationships with white men as similar to a business transaction, their intimate relationships as a contract between two parties and a case of ‘mutual advantages negotiated’.⁴⁰ This was certainly the way these relationships were constructed in elite discourses. According to several observers, black and brown women were not involved in sexual non-marital relationships with white men because sanctified marriage was not open to them as a couple, but because the women were selling sexual services. While affection could and sometimes did develop in these relationships, during the period of slavery both prostitution and interracial concubinage were economically driven non-marital practices.⁴¹

Discourses on how sexual-economic exchange operated was frequently distinguished based on its operation on rural estates or in the urban towns. On the slave plantations and pens throughout the colony, several white male observers claimed to have witnessed the regular prostitution, as they understood it, of enslaved

³⁹ Daniel Alan Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-race Migration From the West Indies to Britain, 1750-1820*. Diss. The University of Michigan, 2010; Ono-George, ‘Coloured Women, White Men and Sexual Deviance’. I have come across only one possible example of a mixed-race concubine returning to Britain with her Irish partner. However, further research is required in this area.

⁴⁰ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 282.

⁴¹ These relationships were also distinguished from the ‘irregular’ marriages found in Scotland at the time, women who engaged in sexual-economic exchange, whether they were long-term or short, held no rights in law or in custom. For more on ‘irregular marriages’ in Scotland, see Leah Leneman and Rosalind Mitchison, *Sin in the City: Sexuality and Social Control in Urban Scotland, 1660-1780* (Dalkeith, 2001).

⁴¹

women. According to Moreton, who worked in a low-level position on a plantation in Jamaica, when an attorney or other ‘dissipated gentlemen’ visited plantations, the manager was ‘obliged to procure some of the finest young wenches’ for them. After washing and dressing themselves, the women were then brought to the ‘great-house’ to entertain the white guest. What Moreton described as the ‘pimping-like action’ of managers was something he claimed to have regularly observed in his travels throughout Jamaica.⁴² Similar accounts of managers ‘pimping’ slave women to visiting gentlemen was attested to by witnesses in front of the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery in 1832. When asked by the Committee ‘speaking from your own observation, or from what you have heard from brother officers, is it not common when an English gentleman visits a planter’s estate to have offered to him black girls?’ Captain Charles Smith answered in the affirmative, ‘yes’. He then went on to explain that the women were ‘not constrained to come, but it is a custom’.⁴³ Fictional accounts of plantation life similarly suggest that it was common for white men to acquire enslaved women as sexual partners in exchange for monetary or material gifts during their stay or employment on a plantation. For instance, the anonymously written *Marly, or, a Planter’s Life in Jamaica* describes one such interaction. After a short time employed on a plantation in Jamaica, a young Scottish man named George Marly was ‘incessantly importuned’ by some of the black women ‘to take a wife’. As the author wrote:

Such recommendations were perpetually sounded in his ears. “Why massa Marly, not take him one wife, like oder buckras? Dere is him little

⁴² Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, pp. 77-78.

⁴³ PP, 1831-32 (721). *Report from Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions*, p. 305.

Daphne, would make him one good wife—dere is him young Diana—
dere is him little Venus—dere is him Mary Magdalene, and dere is him
Phoebe,” besides many others, who were all specially recommended.⁴⁴

This fictional account of Marly’s experience, like the other examples above, do not discuss that as the property of another, these women had limited choices and may have been threatened with violence or other repercussions if they refused or did not make themselves available to the sexual advances of white men.⁴⁵ However, this example does show how enslaved women acting as ‘one wife’ to white men in exchange for monetary or material gifts was often represented within discourses of sexual-economic exchange on the rural plantations.

Sexual-economic exchange in urban spaces was most commonly represented in a different way. In the urban space, enslaved women involved were regularly represented as engaging in the practice of their own volition, and not from the direction of planters, overseers or from other sources of authority. In the urban and port town of Kingston, like in other West Indian port towns such as Bridgetown, enslaved women were regularly ‘hired out’ to transient white men, which included merchants, travellers, and soldiers. In this case, enslaved men and women were sent out by their owners to work for another in need of their services. According to one British traveller, enslaved people were permitted by their owners to ‘employ themselves as they think fit, and to work for whom they please’ in ‘consideration of

⁴⁴ *Marly, or, A Planter’s Life in Jamaica*, p. 133.

⁴⁵ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Rutherford, 1967), p. 160; Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford, 1971), p. 160; Darlene Clark Hines, ‘Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West’, *Signs*, 14 (1989), p. 919; Bush, *Slave Women*, p. 113.

a weekly or monthly payment of money'.⁴⁶ While both male and female slaves were rented out in this way for a variety of jobs, the sale or exchange of sexual services was commonly associated with the temporary letting out of slave women.⁴⁷

According to Lucille Mathurin Mair's extensive study of women in Jamaican slave society, free coloured and poor white women were highly prevalent among those slave owners who earned a living by hiring out their enslaved women for sexual services.⁴⁸ Further, the influx of tradesmen, soldiers, sailors, clerks and other transient white (and non-white) men in the towns provided a ready market for domestic/sexual services that enslaved female bodies could provide.

Enslaved women in the urban towns were often portrayed in discourse as actively seeking out work providing sexual (and domestic) services. Indeed, it is very likely that sexual-economic exchange was one of few income-generating avenues open to women, including enslaved women, in the urban space. In and around Kingston, like in several other Anglo-Caribbean colonies, the 'sea-ports and garrisons' were popular sources of income from enslaved women willing to engage in sexual-economic exchange.⁴⁹ Reverend Barry testified that the 'great Number' of prostitutes he observed in Kingston were enslaved women.⁵⁰ These women were depicted as so numerous that a notice had to be put in the paper regarding their

⁴⁶ Gilbert Mathison, *Notices Respecting Jamaica in 1808, 1809, and 1810* (London, 1811), p. 8.

⁴⁷ I have not come across any evidence to suggest that men were 'hired out' for sexual services. However, this is certainly an area of research that requires more attention.

⁴⁸ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women*, pp. 132 and 279; Fernando Henriques, *Children of Caliban: Miscegnation* (London, 1974), p. 98; Mathison, *Notices Respecting Jamaica*, pp. 8-9; Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, p. 126.

⁴⁹ James Makittrick Adair, *Unanswerable Arguments Against the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London, 1790), pp. 192-193.

⁵⁰ Testimony of Rev. J. Barry, *Report from the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions with Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index* (London, 1833), p. 465.

presence in a local barracks. In November 1813, the Commander Officer of Fort Augusta, a garrison guarding the western entry to Kingston Harbour, thought it necessary to warn slave owners through a notice in the *Royal Gazette* that if enslaved prostitutes were found in the garrison without a pass they would be immediately placed in the Workhouse.⁵¹ According to Moreton, securing an enslaved woman for one night was a particularly easy endeavour for a white man in Kingston. 'When a white man is inclined to get a mongrel or black girl for the night', wrote Moreton, 'the usual mode is to hire a boy or old woman to procure one'.⁵² As Beckles argues, the sale of sexual services formed part of the 'urban labour market in which slaves had some autonomy.... these worked formally as nannies, nurses, cooks, washerwomen, hucksters, seamstresses, and general labourers. The hiring-out of enslaved women specifically for sex ran parallel to this market'.⁵³

Discourses on sexual-economic exchange, particularly in urban and port towns of the colony such as Port Royal and Kingston, also included discussions of free women's involvement in the trade. In Jamaica, free women, particularly mixed-race women, tended to gravitate towards urban centres in search of economic opportunities not often found in the rural districts of the colony. Many did not find the improved financial situation they sought. As Burnard explains, most of these women, along with other free people, lived 'so near the borderline of poverty' that

⁵¹ *The Royal Gazette*, 13 November 1813.

⁵² Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, p. 132.

⁵³ Beckles, *Centering Woman*, p. 28.

they were often ‘buried at the expense of their Church’.⁵⁴ Despite the economic struggle, some were able to form businesses that garnered them the reputation as ‘economically active and viable’.⁵⁵ Many free women of colour worked as higglers and owned retail shops. Some also owned taverns, grog shops or lodging homes, in addition to jobbing or hiring out slaves they may have inherited or purchased. These lodging homes, as well as the taverns and grog shops, served, among several other functions, as spaces of gambling, entertainment and solicitation and, as I will discuss more in the following chapter that focuses on the post-slavery period, were associated and targeted by legislators as spaces of ‘varying repute’.⁵⁶ More than black women, women of colour were described in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century texts as ‘leading domestic entrepreneurs of accommodation’ and, in this capacity, deeply associated with the trade of sex in Kingston.⁵⁷

Despite the commercial interactions that allowed for some transgression of racial or colour boundaries in Kingston, social life in the port town remained fairly segregated between blacks, whites and people of colour.⁵⁸ Shut out from the general society of the whites and often unwilling to socialize with black women, women of colour ‘form[ed] a separate society of themselves’.⁵⁹ These women were said to be very active in organizing a variety of social events and entertainments in Kingston

⁵⁴ Trevor Burnard, ‘Prodigious Riches: the wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution’, *Economic History Review*, 54 (2001), p. 518.

⁵⁵ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, pp. 277-79.

⁵⁶ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 278; See also Paulette A. Kerr, ‘Victims or Strategists? Female lodging-house keepers in Jamaica’, in Verene A Shepherd, et al (eds), *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (Kingston, 1995).

⁵⁷ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 278; and, Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 174.

⁵⁸ According Brathwaite’s study, only theatres were not segregated, although blacks and people of colour had to sit in the upper boxes or gallery. Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society*, p. 186.

⁵⁹ Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present*, pp. 329-330.

and Spanish Town, including ‘mulatto balls’, as a means of making money, but also meeting possible lovers. According to Moreton, these parties often occurred on a Saturday evening in Kingston and were frequented by a number of respectable men, including merchants, clerks, and lawyers, who each paid three or four dollars to attend the ball. These men were then entertained by ‘bands of music’, and dined on ‘an elegant supper, with sweetmeats, wines. &c. &c’.⁶⁰ Men of colour, and white and black women were often excluded from these parties and other social events organized by women of colour.⁶¹

The reputation of women of colour, and black women to a lesser extent, as entrepreneurial extended beyond their involvement in spaces of accommodation and entertainment. These women were not only commonly characterized as ‘prostitutes’ and ‘whores’, but also as ‘madams’, soliciting and negotiating sexual relationships between younger women of colour and white men. This trope was particularly salient in discussions of black and brown mothers selling their daughters to white men. According to numerous accounts in Jamaica, but also in other parts of the Anglo-Caribbean, mothers often encouraged and assisted their mixed-race daughters in soliciting white men for temporary and long-term sexual relationships. In 1793, Moreton wrote that white men wanting to procure sexual services in Kingston would have to pay the mothers of mixed-race women, in addition to the woman they were soliciting.⁶² He records in his text a bawdy song commonly sung in the town by many prostitutes:

Come, carry me in a room;

⁶⁰ Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, p.128

⁶¹ Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present*, p. 330.

⁶² Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, pp. 126-127.

Come, carry me in a room;
And give them five pound piece.
Come, carry me in a room;
Come, carry me in a room;
And lay me on the bed.⁶³

The ‘five pound piece’ was paid to mothers, many of whom had made the arrangements, while another price was negotiated and given to the daughter, the prostitute. In his memoir of Richard Merrick, John Clarke, a member of the Baptist Missionary Society, described Port Royal in 1815 as ‘abdominable and unclean’. To illuminate this point to his readers, he pointed out that black and brown mothers, women he referred to as ‘whore-mongers, in the form of parents,’ held no shame in prostituting their daughters. As he stated, they ‘made it no secret and that it is no disgrace, to sell their daughters to naval and military officers, for the purpose of prostitution’.⁶⁴ This pattern of mothers assisting daughters in soliciting white male partners for short- (and long-) term sexual relationships was often criticized by white observers as a clear indication of the debased nature of slave society, and black and brown women in general—though many white men clearly paid for such sexual services. a characterization that was discussed throughout the period of slavery.

This characterization of the debased black or coloured mother selling her daughter to a white man was also evident in representations of society in the 1830s and authored by brown middle-class and elite men and women. In one letter to the

⁶³ Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, p. 126.

⁶⁴ John Clarke, *Memoir of Richard Merrick [Followed By] Memoir of Joseph Merrick* (London, 1850), p. 26. See also James A. Thome and Joseph H. Kimball, *Emancipation in the West Indies: A Six Months' Tour in Antigua, Barbados, and Jamaica in the year 1837* (New York, 1838), pp. 97-101.

Watchman in 1830, a woman of colour – ‘Constantia’—who identified herself as ‘an unfortunate young female, destined by an unfeeling parent, for the sake of lucre, to an ignominious vassalage’, articulated the pressures she faced from her mother to engage in sexual-economic relationships with white men. According to Constantia, she was the child of a white father, but did not know him. Despite this, she ‘was sent at an early age to England’ to be educated. Upon her return, her mother insisted that she seek a relationship with a white man. For, as she quotes her mother, ‘so long as the Barracks contain soldiers’ she and her sisters ‘should never be married’.⁶⁵

Another correspondent in the same newspaper asked, ‘what must the heart of the parent be, who could sell her child for the purposes of prostitution! —who could throw her to the dregs of society at once, and put her down among a class of debased beings, from which she can never rise to that appellation of a virtuous and an honourable women’.⁶⁶ While these representations from the free community colour must be situated within the context of the movement for civil equality in order to be fully appreciated, as I will discuss more below, they do demonstrate the perniciousness of the representation of black and brown motherhood and sexual-economic exchange,

This narrative of women’s involvement in soliciting on behalf of their daughters may have broader implications on how black women and families were constructed within elite discourse. I have located only a very small number of references to black or brown fathers ‘selling’ his daughter to the ‘highest bidder’.⁶⁷

The absence of male family members, such as a brother or father, in discussions

⁶⁵ *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 17 April 1830.

⁶⁶ *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 24 April 1830.

⁶⁷ *Marly, or, A Planter’s Life in Jamaica*, p. 190.

around the solicitation and negotiation of sexual-economic exchange could be indicative of representations of the community of colour as feminized in colonial discourse. It may also reflect the matriarchal nature of brown families during this period. Mair shows in her seminal study of black, white and brown women in Jamaica, the ‘original creole matriarch may not have been black but brown’.⁶⁸ Free women of colour in the urban towns tended to live in families dominated by women and headed by older women. Though the women in these family units may not have been blood kin, the matriarch served as a mother figure, uniting these women and seeking out the best economic options for her ‘children’ and the larger family unit.⁶⁹ For some, this likely meant engaging in sexual-economic exchange as an income-generating activity. Indeed, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, one of the most popular nonconformist churches for free people of colour, created rules directly targeting mothers who benefitted from their daughters engagement in sexual-economic exchange.⁷⁰ According to the admission and exclusion rules, ‘mothers receiving support from daughters living in concubinage with white, coloured or black or countenancing them in anyway in their iniquity, cannot be in Society’.⁷¹ It was not only the support that the Wesleyan Church cautioned its members against, but also, as the quote states, mothers who encouraged (or otherwise solicited) such relationships on their daughters behalf. This trajectory of acquiring a suitor for many poor free women may have been one means by which mothers or elders could assure the economic and social safety of their daughters and larger family unit, but it

⁶⁸ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 292.

⁶⁹ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, pp. 2-3 and p. 292.

⁷⁰ Heuman, *Between Black and White*, pp. 13-14.

⁷¹ Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, MMS/03. Jamaica 1833-1840 ‘On the Admission and Exclusion of Members’, 1829, Box 129 Sheet 1.

was certainly a mode of generating income that was critiqued within discourse and by ‘respectable’ members of society as debased.

The archives provide little evidence of how sexual-economic exchange was actually practiced during the period of slavery. However, the archives do provide ‘glimpses’ into the social meaning for white men and brown and black women. In her work on race and nationality in the eighteenth-century British Empire, Kathleen Wilson discusses how colonists often engaged in the ‘performances of difference’—what she defines as the ‘non-referentiality constituting the imagined internal difference of character it was supposedly expressing, that separated white from black, English from Irish, and so on’. Wilson argues that white Creoles took part in displays of ‘conspicuous consumption, extravagant hospitality and notorious brutality’ in order to enact and maintain their social power in the colony and the distinctions between rank, class, and race in the colony.⁷² This ‘enactment of difference,’ allowed white Creoles to distinguish themselves from the enslaved, lesser whites and from the non-British with whom they shared their geographical space.⁷³ The way they dressed and socialized, what they ate, and the grand feasts they prepared for elite visitors were all markers that served to validate their position of power in the colony.⁷⁴

Another way that white Creole men were able to validate their power was through the sexual-economic relationships they had brown women. In addition to the sexual and domestic benefits these women provided white men—as companions,

⁷² Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxon, 2003), p. 151.

⁷³ Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 152.

⁷⁴ Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 152.

nurses, mothers to their children and managers of their households (figure 3.2)—they may have also served as symbols of status. The complicated racial hierarchy observed within the colony meant that women of colour, those described as ‘mulatto’, ‘quadroon’ or ‘mustee’, were elevated above the racial class of black women. A free woman of colour then, a woman almost white, may have been a marker of status and wealth, much like an elaborate house, expensive furniture from England, or ostentatious feasts. According to some observers, on rural estates only planters had free, often mixed-race, women as mistresses. Those below this rank, such as bookkeepers, usually formed attachments with enslaved women.⁷⁵ Keeping a ‘mulatto’ mistress was frequently discussed as an expensive endeavour for white men. As one young white man wrote about mixed-race women, ‘[g]irls of this description are frequently to be procured at a monstrous expense, far exceeding what frail ones in London cost’.⁷⁶ In this way, relationships with women of colour were not necessarily social elevators for white men; however, such relationships could serve as a visible indicator of a man’s wealth, place and mastery in colonial society.

White men were not the only ones who seemed to have taken part of these kinds of performance. By the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, concubines and their mixed-race children were often the recipients of bequests, which included property, houses, land and slaves.⁷⁷ With the wealth they were able to accumulate, some women of colour and their mixed-race offspring also took part in these ‘performances of difference’ for a similar purpose as white members of

⁷⁵ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 270.

⁷⁶ William Hickey, *Memoirs of William Hickey: Volume II, 1775-1782* (London, 1782), p. 28.

⁷⁷ Christer Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica: Colonial Society and Culture During the Era of Abolition* (London, 2009).

society—to distinguishing themselves from the large enslaved and poor free population. One of the most visible ways that black and brown women engaged in this ‘performance of difference’ was by the clothing they wore.⁷⁸ According to several travelogues, some of these women used their monetary and social gains ‘to dress finely, and dash about in style in...carriages, attended by servants in livery’.⁷⁹ As Stewart notes, these women were able to consistently outdo white women ‘in splendour, taste, and expensiveness of dress, equipage, and entertainment’ in Kingston.⁸⁰ Slave owners provided those they enslaved with oznabrig cloth, a cheap and coarse linen, from which men’s shirts and trousers and women’s gowns, petticoats, shifts, and other articles of clothing were made. According to Martha B. Katz-Hyman, in eighteenth-century Virginia, oznabrig was often referred to as ‘Negro cotton’ and clothing made from the material as ‘slave clothing’. In Jamaica, oznabrig was similarly visible as the clothing of the enslaved and poor.⁸¹ On occasion, enslaved people received second-hand clothing given to them by ‘benevolent’ whites.⁸² Clothing was a means through which women could show their elevated monetary and social status (figure 3.3). As one visitor wrote, ‘the brown female who has the good fortune to live with a white man, never fails to deck herself

⁷⁸ For more on the politics of clothing and women in Jamaica see Steve O. Buckridge, *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica 1760-1890* (Kingston, 2004).

⁷⁹ Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present*, p. 326.

⁸⁰ Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present*, pp. 330-331.

⁸¹ Martha B. Katz-Hyman, “‘In the Middle of this Poverty Some Cups and a Teapot’: The Material Culture of Slavery in Eighteenth-century Virginia and the Furnishing of Slave Quarters at Colonial Williamsburg”, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1993.

<<http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/View/index.cfm?doc=ResearchReports\RR0350.xml>> (Accessed 4 June 2014); Richard D.E. Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power Opposition and Play in the Caribbean* (New York, 1997), p. 29; Thistlewood records distributing between 2-6 yards of oznabrig to the enslaved. He also records exchanging sex with many enslaved women, including his long-term mistress Phibbah, for articles of clothing and shoes, suggesting that clothing was a valued form of payment for sex. See Douglas Hall (ed), *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86* (Kingston, 1999), p. 271.

⁸² Burton, *Afro-Creole*, p. 29.

out with abundance of fine clothes, lace, and trinkets, at his expense.’ Frederick Bayley explained that such women ‘grow fat upon the bread of prostitution, and draw their finery and their support’ from that ‘source of shame’.⁸³ That some black and coloured women could wear ‘fine dresses’, and clothing made from expensive materials could indicate their intimacy with white men, but it also served as part of their ‘enactment of difference’ and their clear financial and social distance from poor and enslaved people. The way they dressed and behaved in public may have served as a bodily expression of their elevated social status and mobility.⁸⁴ Although they were often criticized for such ostentatious displays—Nugent found these displays in bad taste and referred to mixed-race women as ‘unfortunate’ and pitiful—in Creole society, such elaborate displays exhibited by some brown and black women served as a very clear and visible marker of their wealth and ‘state of near-equality’ with affluent whites in Jamaica and elevated status amongst other black and brown people.⁸⁵ For white, brown, and black Creoles, elaborate displays of wealth were common, acceptable and very evident means of expressing one’s social status and adherence to a Creole, if not British, form of gentility.⁸⁶

⁸³ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, January 1825, p. 6; see also, Frederic William Naylor Bayley, *Four Years’ Residence in the West Indies: During the Years 1826, 7, 8, 9* (London, 1831), p. 405.

⁸⁴ Buckridge, *The Language of Dress*, pp. 43-45.

⁸⁵ Nugent, *Lady Nugent’s Journal*, p. 214; and, Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 283.

⁸⁶ Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 3.



Figure 3.3: Agostino Brunias, 'A West Indian Flower Girl and Two other Free Women of Color' (1769), British Museum.

The monetary wealth that some, likely very few, women were able to achieve through sexual relationships with white men was a source of anxiety for some members of Jamaican society and as such, The financial benefits women could derive from interracial sexual labour did not go uncontested. Despite the customary nature of interracial sexual-economic exchange, legislators enacted measures in the colony that limited the capital accumulation that women involved in interracial transactional sex could achieve. For instance, the Devises Act, enacted in 1761 and repealed in 1813,⁸⁷ put limits on the value of assets or property that could be bequeathed to black or coloured mistresses or mixed-race children by their white parent.⁸⁸ According to the findings of a committee set up by the Jamaican Assembly to examine this ‘problem’, the combined holdings among fifty free black and coloured people in Jamaica, twenty-eight of whom were women, equalled over £230,000, excluding real estate. Of those twenty-eight women, fifteen (four enslaved and eleven free) had been known concubines of the testators.⁸⁹ The same committee also found that the devises, or the real estate bequeathed in last wills, to mixed-race children was between £200,000 and £300,000, including four sugar estates, seven pens, and thirteen houses in addition to other lands.⁹⁰ According to the act, ‘Negroes’ and ‘mulattoes,’ including children of interracial unions born out of

⁸⁷ According to Sio’s study, some free people of colour began to gain exemption from the *Devises Act* and other restrictive legislation as early as 1796. See Sio, ‘Race, Colour, and Miscegenation’, p. 9. Devises Act of 19 December 1761 was repealed on 4 December 1813.

⁸⁸ Devises Act of 1761 cited in John Henry Howard, *The laws of the British colonies, in the West Indies and other parts of America, concerning real and personal property, and manumission of slaves: with a view of the constitution of each colony, Volume I* (London, 1827), pp. 58-60.

⁸⁹ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, pp.89-90.

⁹⁰ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, p. 323.

wedlock, could not inherit property or cash exceeding the total value of £2000 local currency, thereby limiting the financial growth of the free population of colour.⁹¹

Not all white colonists supported the Devises Act. Some saw it as an infringement on their rights to dispose of their property as they saw fit (as their equivalents enjoyed in Britain). However, for supporters of the law, the system of slavery and racial hierarchy unique to the colonies required laws that were at times at odds with those in the metropole.⁹² As such, it was the duty of ‘good Government to restrain individuals from disposing of property’ in a way that could potentially disrupt colonial power and lead to the ‘injury and damage of the community in general’.⁹³ Legislation, such as the Devises Act, was used to reconcile the contradictions between colonial policy and the actual lived experiences of individuals—the ‘discrepancy between prescription and practice’.⁹⁴ While such laws around inheritance certainly slowed the economic growth within the community of colour, it could not stifle it completely.

The operation of sexual-economic exchange in Jamaica between 1780 and 1820 was complex, nuanced and varied, dependent on whether women were black or mixed-race, free or enslaved, lived in towns or rural areas, whether the white men involved were wealthy or poor, and the relationships were short or long-term. For all of these women, as Kamala Kempadoo writes, the sexual services they provided ‘was lodged at the nexus of at least two areas of [their] existence: as an extension of sexual relations (forced or otherwise) with white men and as an income-generating

⁹¹ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 95.

⁹² Long, *The History of Jamaica*, p. 323.

⁹³ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 95

⁹⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, 2002), p. 2.

activity’.⁹⁵ The multiple discursive constructions of brown and black women engaged sexual-economic relationships are best described, during this period, as ambiguous. Some women utilized the entrenched discourses around race and sex in order to create spaces for themselves that were financially and socially advantageous. Sex with white men was one of the very few avenues women could engage in to support themselves and their families. Despite some criticisms amongst metropolitan observers of the disreputable sexual practices prevalent during the period of slavery, sexual-economic exchange as practiced in this period in Jamaica was not necessarily a position of shame, but instead could be a source of social elevation and respect for women involved.

Concubinage as a Political Platform

Between the 1820s and the abolition of slavery in 1833, women who engaged in sexual-economic exchange, particularly women of colour, were increasingly criticized in local public discourses for the relationships they had with white men. These criticisms emerged in tandem with the cultural and political transformations that occurred in the colony and the larger Empire during this period. Supporters of slavery, including absentee planters, white Creoles, West Indian merchants, colonial agents and military and naval men who served in the island, jostled with antislavery advocates to depict the ‘truth about the system of slavery’. Using various sites in both the metropole and the colony, both pro and antislavery advocates engaged in

⁹⁵ Kamala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race and Sexual Labor* (New York, 2004), p. 53.

what Catherine Hall calls, the ‘war of representation’, utilizing propaganda to influence public opinion on the matter of slavery.⁹⁶ However, it was not only those explicitly involved in the abolition debates that took part in this ‘war’. Free people of colour, an increasingly politicized community in Jamaica with ties to Britain and other unified communities in the Caribbean, also occupied a space in this struggle. Though many of the members of the community held antislavery sympathies, the community as a whole did not take an explicit position on the issue, but instead used the heightened conflicts over slavery to voice their own demands for the elimination of the civil and legal inequalities they suffered. In the midst of these debates, the sexualized body of the black and brown woman became one of the main sites over which abolitionist, proslavery advocates and free people of colour jostled for political authority. Examining the varied place that the sexuality of brown and black women, particularly in relationship to white men, occupied within these debates highlights the efforts metropolitan and local groups made to enforce varied conceptions of gender relations and sexuality. It also serves to reveal how the moral dysfunctions of the island’s black and brown women were articulated among colonial and metropolitan elites, as well as the discourses around sexuality and gender that shaped the cultural turn in the ‘new’ post-slavery Caribbean.

The year 1823 marked a critical moment in the abolition movement. In that year, abolitionists such as William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, and Thomas Fowell Buxton founded the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions, while the Baptist and Wesleyan

⁹⁶ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago, 2002), pp. 107-115.

churches in England, encouraged by missionaries in the Caribbean, abandoned their neutral position and declared their ‘full support’ of abolition.⁹⁷ Antislavery advocates used various vehicles for their propaganda sentiments—including pamphlets, fiction, poetry, newspapers, visual arts, and public lectures—to attack the institution of slavery. More specifically, the attack on slavery was essentially an attack on the predominately white men that benefited from the system of slavery. At the heart of this attack were claims that white men involved in slavery had deviated from British conceptions of respectable masculinity.⁹⁸ Further, slave owners, managers and overseers were accused not only of preventing the Christian education of slaves, and discouraging and actively blocking blacks from marrying, but also using their power and authority to sexually abuse black and coloured women. According to antislavery rhetoric, all of this contributed to the demoralization of Jamaican society and promoted deviation from normative gender practices—as evident in low levels of marriage, and the ubiquity of promiscuous and interracial intercourse throughout the colony. White Creoles were increasingly characterized as the prime agents in the moral corruption widespread in the colony. As Reverend John Barry, a Wesleyan missionary who had lived in Jamaica, testified in front of the committee set up to discuss the extinction of slavery, the ‘great degree of immorality’ and ‘general demoralization’ that continued to prevail in Jamaica was prevalent amongst all classes in the colony, but ‘among the whites of all grades it is

⁹⁷ Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834* (Kingston, 1982), pp. 102-104 and 70.

⁹⁸ David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge, 2005); Christer Petley, “‘Home’ and ‘this country’: Britishness and Creole Identity in the Letters of a Transatlantic Slaveholder”, *Atlantic Studies*, 6 (2009), pp. 43-61.

nearly universal'.⁹⁹ Thus, the prevalence of the sexual immorality in the colony was not the result of the inherent deviance within black and coloured women, but the result of the actions of corrupt white men.

As Altink shows in her study of enslaved women in Jamaica, in the midst of the abolition debates, those opposed to slavery argued that enslaved women were not the 'scheming Jezebels' as they had so long been portrayed by Creoles. Instead, the concubine and prostitute of Jamaica were 'potentially virtuous slave women'.¹⁰⁰ Free women who took up with white men were similarly regarded as victims. However, unlike enslaved women who were prostitutes by force, free women suffered because of a system that was based on the idea that 'bodies were for sale'.¹⁰¹ As Barry put it, 'the general profligacy pervading all ranks' of Jamaican society 'has had its origins in slavery, and especially in the *Master's unlimited power over the body of his female slave*'. Moreover, 'it is true he has not the same power over free women; but the example and influence of the whites are so corrupting' that it pervades even this class of women.¹⁰² In both characterizations, black and coloured women were cast as potentially virtuous women who, as a result of outside forces and white men's coercion, engaged in sexually immoral acts. According to missionary and abolitionist rhetoric, with the correct religious education both enslaved and free black and coloured women could be reformed.¹⁰³ However, as evidenced by the brutal treatment of missionaries at the hands of slave owners in the first decades of the nineteenth century, such Christianization and

⁹⁹ Barry, *Report from the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery*, p. 343.

¹⁰⁰ Altink, *Representations of Slave Women*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁰¹ Altink, *Representations of Slave Women*, p.84.

¹⁰² Barry, *Report from the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery*, p. 343. Italicization mine.

¹⁰³ Barry, *Report from the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery*, p. 345.

moral uplift could only happen once the institution of slavery, including the authority and power of the planter, was dismantled.¹⁰⁴

As increasing numbers of missionaries in the island began relating alternative representations of slavery and the black and brown people they encountered through letters back to England, pamphlets and testimonies in front of government commissions, Creoles could no longer claim to hold specific access to ‘colonial knowledge’—that is, authority on the nature of Africans and the workings of slavery.¹⁰⁵ With the vehement attacks from antislavery advocates and the turning of opinion among the general metropolitan public on the issue of slavery, individual planters in Jamaica, and those who supported them, had little option but to respond to the accusations made against them. Thus, as Altink shows, from the 1820s, proslavery rhetoric increasingly began to discuss the absence of prostitution in the colony and to claim that interracial relationships adhered to acceptable British domestic practices. Within proslavery narratives, black and brown women were recast as beacons of fidelity and respectable domesticity, and the sexual and domestic services they provided to white men as necessary to the stability of the colony. In response to abolitionist claims that prostitution and sexual degeneracy was prevalent in the colony, sympathizers sought to identify the nuances between urban street prostitution and domestic versions found in the colony, a distinction mostly ignored in earlier discourses. Instead, black and coloured women, they asserted, acted as ‘wives’ to their white partners. Although without the sanctity of

¹⁰⁴ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp.12-14.

¹⁰⁵ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 107-115; David Lambert uses the term ‘captive knowledge’ to discuss the politics surrounding the accumulation of colonial knowledge and representation. See David Lambert, *Mastering the Niger: James MacQueen’s African Geography and the Struggle over Atlantic Slavery* (Chicago, 2013), pp. 88-118.

religious marriage, these women treated their white partners as their ‘husbands’ and their relationships ran parallel to the acceptable domestic bonds formed in Britain.¹⁰⁶ For instance, James Hakewill, a proslavery observer, drew comparisons between prostitution, as it operated in the ‘public theatres and streets’ of Europe and that in Jamaica. According to Hakewill, the ‘exhibition of lewdness, misery and shame’ that characterized that life of women ‘living by the prostitution of charms’ in Europe, were absent in colony:

Let us now turn to Jamaica, where we shall find none of these horrors; where the eye is not shocked by the sad spectacle of female debasement... On his arrival, a young man looks in vain for the indulgence of his English habits; he finds no opportunity of indiscriminate gratification; and he is soon taught, that the only means of securing to himself the comfort of female attention, is by forming a connexion nearly as binding as matrimony...¹⁰⁷

Hakewill’s reference to a ‘connexion nearly as binding as matrimony’ undoubtedly refers to the practice of interracial concubinage or taking a ‘housekeeper’ (opposed to prostitution in brothels or in the streets of urban and port towns). Proslavery advocates and sympathizers could not deny that marriage was uncommon in the island or that sexual-economic exchange, particularly concubinage, was prevalent, but they did challenge representations of white men as being ‘un-English’. They argued that although ‘marriage’ in the colony looked different, it still adhered to normative British domestic and gender practices.

¹⁰⁶ Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies*, pp. 21-23.

¹⁰⁷ James Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica* (London, 1825), pp. 6-8.

The struggle to define the state of slavery and the conditions of the enslaved was not isolated from other political movements occurring in the colony and metropole. The free communities of colour, in Jamaica and other West Indian colonies, used the tensions emanating from the abolition debates to make their own claims around civil and political inequality in the colonies. As with the anti- and proslavery representations of slave society, free people of colour in Jamaica also used the bodies of female sexual labourers as sites of political and cultural engagement. While the free community of colour in Jamaica did not take an official stance in opposition to slavery, they did join in challenging the authority of the white ruling elite in the colony. Men of colour were very vocal in their criticisms of white men in the colony. However, these criticisms were also directed towards the coloured women who traded sex for money or material gain, especially concubines. Thus, the free community engaged in political attacks on the white male elites of the colony, via the bodies of, mostly brown and free, concubines. By doing so, prominent coloured men shared in and contributed to the changing meanings attached to sexual-economic exchange in the post-1820 period.

One of the main and most popular sites of public discourse among the free community of colour in Jamaica was the *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, a local newspaper that ran between 1829 and 1836 and was edited by Edward Jordan and Robert Osborn, two well-educated and prominent men of colour. The paper was widely read throughout the colony and served as a politically engaged public forum for the middling and elite class of the community in the island, particularly those involved in the fight for civil rights. As the major paper among the free community

of colour in the period under study in this chapter, the *Watchman* provides valuable insight into how the upper echelons of coloured community viewed and represented concubines and prostitutes in the colony.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, free people of colour in Jamaica struggled for civil and political equality in the island. One of the primary factors within this struggle was in contradicting the community's image represented by the women of colour and concubines, an image deemed as a major hindrance to the progress of the community. As Gad Heuman argues, those at the forefront of the movement, predominately well-educated men of the middling and elite class, sought to highlight their socio-cultural and moral affinity to a British Christian and middling class respectability.¹⁰⁸ While in the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century, the 'performance of difference' was commonly enacted by women of colour through the visible and ostentatious displays of wealth, for the emerging respectable coloured middle class such displays became symbols of slavery, debased and disreputable. Instead, in order to lay claim to civil and political rights, free people of colour engaged in a different kind of 'performance of difference' that aimed to set them apart from the increasingly demonized white Creole elites and the imagery of the community as represented by the sexually immoral coloured women. As Mimi Sheller notes in her rich study of political consciousness and agency in early nineteenth-century Jamaica, middling class members of the community performed gendered roles of respectability and domesticity that resonated with prevailing evangelical ideals in Britain and local

¹⁰⁸ Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Westport, 1981), pp. 13-14.

missionaries: '[t]he rights and privileges of freedom also entailed duties and obligations for men: to earn a living, to support a family, to marry, and to take an active part in politics'.¹⁰⁹ As an article in *The Watchman* put it, '[s]uperior sobriety, industry, activity, though accompanied with but a moderate portion of knowledge, command respect, because they have great and visible influence'. Thus, 'sober and industrious habits' were a man's 'source of power'.¹¹⁰

For women, respectability meant the enactment of modesty, participation in religious activities and sexual reservation—chastity prior to marriage and restraint throughout. Newton's study of women in Barbados shows that in the years leading up to emancipation and after, philanthropy became the 'platform' from which women could gain authority and respect in the 'eyes of the community'.¹¹¹ In Jamaica, free women, particularly women of colour, engaged in similar modes of respectability. Women expressed their adherence to respectable Christian modes of gender through their active participation in the British Nonconformist church. Indeed, religion, much like sexual-economic exchange, was a means by which free women of colour could access some social mobility. As Mair puts it, '[i]f interracial sex was in creole society one approved means of brown upward mobility, religion, as the other end of the moral spectrum, was frequently another'.¹¹² Many free women of colour found organizational and leadership roles in these churches,

¹⁰⁹ Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, 2012), p. 103.

¹¹⁰ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 20 January 1830.

¹¹¹ Melanie Newton, *The Children of Africa in the Colonies: Free People of Color in Barbados in the Age of Emancipation* (Baton Rouge, 2008), pp. 238-240.

¹¹² For instance, under the 1796 law, free people of colour had to prove that they were Christian and baptized in order to give evidence in court. See Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 286.

particularly the Wesleyan Methodist church. In 1825 and 1826 of the 142 leaders and stewards in the Wesleyan church in Kingston and Port Royal, 88 (or approximately sixty-two per cent) were women.¹¹³ Active participation in the church garnered these women respect and social elevation in the community. Related to church participation were church institutions, baptism and marriage, which marked women as ‘respectable’. According to recent historical research, women of colour were increasingly marrying men of their own class and colour. Daniel Livesay’s study of mixed-race offspring in Jamaica shows that from the early nineteenth century children of white fathers and black or coloured mothers steadily decreased, so that by the 1820s, the number of children born of two coloured parents equalled those born of interracial parents.¹¹⁴ Women’s creation and organization of local charities, in addition to active participation in Church, were among the very few respectable but public activities in which women could engage. Thus, philanthropy amongst women of colour in Jamaica, as in Barbados and other British Caribbean islands, became ‘a stage for parading the domesticity of the nonwhite elite, illustrated by the conformity of many privileged women of colour to new standards of “respectable” femininity’.¹¹⁵

Thus, at the heart of middle-class respectability in the years leading up to emancipation in Jamaica was the domestic unit in which the husband, the head of the family, operated in the public sphere as the breadwinner, and the wife, the centre and symbol of domestic unity, remained within the home or if economic circumstance

¹¹³ *Votes of the Assembly of Jamaica* (1828). Cited in Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, p. 287.

¹¹⁴ Daniel Livesay, ‘The Decline of Jamaica’s Interracial Households and the fall of the Planter Class, 1733-1823’, *Atlantic Studies*, 9 (2012), p. 115.

¹¹⁵ Newton, *The Children of Africa*, p. 240.

did not allow that, participated in respectable income-generating activities, such as needlework.¹¹⁶ Behaviours that fell outside or challenged performances of respectability were heavily criticized and those who engaged in such activities ostracized from the community. The large number of women who engaged in transactional sex—the concubine in particular—was deemed as a particular challenge to the performance of citizenship and thus bared the brunt of criticism from politically-active members of the community. Coloured concubines were a clear and particular affront to the respectable domesticity and patriarchal order in which the claims to citizenship lodged by the free men of colour were based. As Sheller put it, ‘to act and make claims as a free citizen, political subjects must first position themselves as raced, gendered, national, and sexual subjects of particular kinds (i.e., as free men, or heads of patriarchal families, or good mothers, or British subjects, or loyal soldiers) in discursive performances that always rest on the exclusion or repulsion of others [women engaged in interracial sex]’.¹¹⁷

In the pages of the *Watchman*, correspondents from the free coloured community were unanimous in their discussion of the sale of sex as a debased custom that had wide-scale negative repercussions on the women involved, but also the larger community. ‘Concubinage is, and must be acknowledged as, an abomination,’ wrote one community member. ‘It has even been a stain upon our community, and will continue so until it is made to appear in its true colours, and its votaries held up to public execration.’¹¹⁸ The women of colour who engaged in

¹¹⁶ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinities and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, 2008), p. 17.

¹¹⁷ Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, p. 21.

¹¹⁸ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 12 February 1831.

sexual-economic exchange were characterized in multiple letters printed in the *Watchman* as ‘debased and demoralized females, who have, but their own acts, reduced themselves to a level with the brute’.¹¹⁹ These women were described as women without sentiment or sensibility, devoid of religion or respectability. They were ‘abandoned creatures living in voluptuousness and lost to all shame’— ‘prostitutes’ and ‘spectacles of woe’.¹²⁰ In line with abolitionist representations, and contesting earlier racialized constructions of African women as inherently debased, the discourse found in the *Watchman* characterized women driven to exchange sex for either monetary or material gain as symbols of the depravity inherent in slavery. For instance, Crabstick, a frequent commentator in the *Watchman*, noted that it was ‘the prevailing idolatrous devotion to extreme finery’ that compelled some women to abandon chastity and morality. Similarly, Constantia, one of the few women to wade in to the discussion present in the newspaper, wrote that it was the lack of ‘industrious habits’ among some coloured women that led to their downfall.¹²¹ In both of these commentaries, as in others found in the pages of the *Watchman*, coloured women had followed the path of moral dissipation for the potential wealth they could obtain from the sexual relationships with white men. While these women may have viewed such elaborate displays as markers of wealth as a way to perform their ‘state of near equality’ with whites in the colony (as discussed above), for the emerging respectable community of colour such displays and the means by which they were achieved were clear indications of the ‘fallen women’ amongst them. Moreover, while decades earlier the opportunity for material and social elevation

¹¹⁹ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 14 April 1830.

¹²⁰ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 3 September 1831.

¹²¹ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 30 April 1830 and 12 April 1830.

was embraced by large sections of the coloured community, as this community became more politicized and organized for political and civil rights such actions on the part of women were deemed disreputable.

However, it was the danger that these women posed to the movement for civil equality that seemed to be of primary concern for the predominately male correspondents rather than the life of these women per se. By engaging in transactional non-marital relationships with white men, women were not only degrading themselves, but were seen to be rejecting emerging notions of respectable gender order and domesticity, and especially the role of coloured men as their protectors and providers. For these men of colour, women's financial dependence on white—as opposed to coloured—men, and the resulting social mobility and independence some were able to achieve were seen as an insult to the men of colour and the movement they led. These women left coloured men to be 'held in little estimation' by the community, and more importantly, by the white men that held political power in the colony.¹²² Thus, as one correspondent quoted in his letter to the *Watchman*, “the people of colour never will be respected so long as the whites are permitted to take their mistresses from among them” and so long as that is the case [these women] cannot but be despised’.¹²³

The ‘respectable’ men of colour led the movement for civil equality in Jamaica. Twenty-one male members of the free community of colour headed the central committee that led the political movement for equal civil rights. Female suffrage was never on their agenda. Indeed, women were excluded from

¹²² *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 3 September 1831.

¹²³ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 3 September 1831.

involvement in the movement. Their exclusion may have been a strategic move by men of colour who sought to present the community as 'masculinized' and respectable, thereby distancing the movement from the image of the community as represented by women of colour and interracial concubinage. In one of the very few letters regarding the political challenges facing the community written by a woman at the height of the movement for civil equality, 'A Young Female of Colour' questioned this exclusion of women. 'Does the sin of illegitimacy rest upon the female portion of colour alone?' she asked, '[f]or I feel I am not answerable for the accidental circumstance of my birth.' She continued: 'I do not advocate the introduction into society of concubines, but I will assert, by the same parity of reasoning, that if the sons are admissible the daughters are equally so. And until this great barrier is broken, depend upon it that all attempts to amalgamate the interests of the free population will prove abortive'.¹²⁴ In this letter, 'A Woman of Colour' articulated the entrenched association between women of colour and sexual labour, and the double standard at the heart of the movement for civil equality.

Christian understandings of domesticity and gendered roles were a central part of the culture and values that developed within the free community of colour in the first decades of the nineteenth century. They saw themselves as a separate group within the colony, with their own culture and set of values that differed from the infamous representations of white Creoles as immoral, licentious, debased and 'un-English'. As declared in the *Watchman*, 'the people of Colour are now, comparatively speaking, as well informed as their oppressors; in point of number,

¹²⁴ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 5 January 1833.

they are superior, and what is of still greater consequence, they have become unanimous'.¹²⁵ A crucial part of the claim for equality made by respectable men of colour was their moral elevation compared with white Creole elites, and their affinity to Britain, both in terms of loyalty and in cultural and moral values.¹²⁶ This claim could only be made if free women of colour, *their* women, adhered to similar scripts of respectability. Only then could these men claim citizenship as natives to the colony, loyal British subjects, and maybe most importantly, as respectable Christian men, invested and committed to the success of the island as a part of the British Empire. Women of colour, especially those who engaged in transactional sex with white men, upset these performances of respectability and thus were the targets of the community's scorn and reprobation.

The first decades of the nineteenth century saw a gradual shift in ideas about race, sex, and respectability throughout the British Empire. While non-marital and transactional interracial sex had been customary and even encouraged in several colonies, the nineteenth century saw the growth of demands for moral consciousness and reform at home and in the Empire.¹²⁷ In Jamaica, antislavery advocates and missionaries, as well as elite free people of colour, were highly critical of the sexual culture that had been predominant in the island. By the 1820s, Jamaica's white male elite was increasingly attacked on two fronts. Both antislavery advocates and free

¹²⁵ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 31 March 1830.

¹²⁶ Sio, 'Race, Colour and Miscegenation'.

¹²⁷ Cornwallis and Wellesley reforms in India instituted administrative injunction against interracial sexuality—institutionalizing in law anxieties around interracial sex. Ghosh argues that these reforms were 'the building blocks of colonial ideologies about racial superiority and moral probity were in formation from the middle of the eighteenth century onward, prior to the development of scientific racism and biological claims about the genetic differences between Caucasians and others'. Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, pp. 9-10.

community of colour argued that these men were politically and morally unfit to rule. White men who openly engaged in non-marital relationships with black and coloured women, though they once received little or no condemnation from respectable members of society, were increasingly shunned. Stories in the local newspapers abound of men being publically shamed or ostracized because of such relationships. For instance, a minister in the Church of England refused to baptize the child of Dr. Robertson, as one of the 'sponsors', Mr. Jaquet, was openly involved in a non-marital interracial relationship and had multiple mixed-race children.¹²⁸ In another example reported in the *Watchman*, Mr. Fergusson, the Parish Clerk in Kingston, came under criticism from members of the Vestry when it was discovered that he was living in 'open concubinage'. According to the paper, 'on receiving this information', Rev. Mr. Leacock 'expostulated with Mr. Fergusson, and represented to him the impropriety of allowing a person living in the state he was to remain in the situation of Parish Clerk and then suspended him'.¹²⁹

Women who engaged in sexual-economic exchange with white men were caught between various competing claims to respectability and moral superiority, but were universally portrayed as symbols of impropriety. More than white men, black and coloured concubines, once respectable and acceptable members of the Jamaican society, were classed as disreputable and ostracized from the community. Repeatedly, correspondents in the *Watchman*, both male and female, coloured and white, urged that respectable women and men of colour should avoid the society of known concubines. 'A Man of Colour' advised respectable ladies to 'shun the

¹²⁸ *Public Advertiser and Jamaica Courant*, 27 July 1830; *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 28 July 1830.

¹²⁹ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 2 February 1831.

society' of concubines, 'shun them,' he wrote, 'as you would mad dogs—for it is only by so doing that yourselves will be respected'. 'Concubinage', he wrote 'is a *contagious* disorder' that required all women of respectability to 'insist upon the performance of strict *Quarantine*'.¹³⁰ In the rules for admission or exclusion to the Wesleyan Church, members were 'warned against visiting such persons, or being intimate with them'.¹³¹ Ministers of the Wesleyan and other churches also preached regularly about the immorality of concubinage and prostitution and the detrimental effects associations with such women had on 'respectable' society.¹³² While sexual-economic exchange may have once been a means of social mobility and community respect, in the years preceding the abolition of slavery women who engaged in this practice were increasingly shut out from the society of middling and elite classes of coloured and white people. Members of this moral and 'decent' society voiced the need to express clearly both by words and by actions what kinds of women were acceptable in the respectable community—chaste, modest and Christian; and those who were not—the prostitute and concubine. As one community member stated, 'by drawing this strict line of demarcation the profligate will be convinced of [her] degradation, and led to turn from the errors of [her] ways'.¹³³

¹³⁰ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 24 September 1831.

¹³¹ Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 'On the Admission and Exclusion of Members', 1829, Box 129 Sheet 1.

¹³² *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 17 September 1831.

¹³³ *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 1 October 1831.

Conclusion

The sale of sex in exchange for monetary or material gain was a highly contentious and political issue. The way in which black and coloured women who engaged in this exchange were characterized in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was shaped by early ideologies around black female bodies as sites of commercialization, sexual deviance and pleasure. The first part of this chapter has shown how Europeans and elites constructed sexual-economic exchange and women they understood to be engaged in this practice as a customary part of Jamaican slave society. According to these discourses, both enslaved and free women of colour participated in sexual-economic relationships with white men in various capacities—in short-term relationships of prostitution and in longer-term relationships of concubinage. The politicised nature of these relationships was demonstrated in the ways in which colonial administrators attempted to regulate what they discussed as ‘dangerous and deviant’ relationships that had become customary in the island. However, the contentious nature of interracial sex came exceedingly to the forefront of metropolitan, as well as local, political discourse because of the renewed efforts to abolish slavery and to remove the civil inequalities for free people of colour in 1820s. Antislavery advocates used the bodies of black and coloured women who engaged in what they constructed as ‘degraded’ sexual relationships with white men to attack slaveholders and the institution of slavery. Proslavery advocates responded by challenging the construction of prostitution in the colony and arguing that the sexual relationships white men held with these women were local forms of marriage, akin to respectable matrimony found in Britain—a significant divergence from

earlier discourses of black and coloured women as potential threats to the embattled white body. Free people of colour, in their efforts to secure civil and political rights in the colony, used the tensions between pro- and antislavery advocates to make their own political claims. In doing so, they too used the body of the concubine as a political platform, attacking both white men engaged in interracial sex, but also the black and coloured women. The cultural, political and social changes that occurred in Jamaica between 1780 and 1830 significantly impacted the ways in which concubinage and prostitution was represented and practiced. In the early slavery period, concubinage with white men was constructed as a source of social and financial elevation for black and coloured women and their families, and indeed may have been so in practice. However, by the 1820s to engage in such sexual practices was demarcated by various groups in the colony, including the free community of colour from which many of these women came, as a clear sign of degradation. Further, the widespread development of a culture of Christian respectability contributed to the marginalization of concubines, and transactional sex more generally, in the years leading up to emancipation. Changes in cultural and moral values in the colony ushered in a period in which sexual-economic exchange became discursively cast as the realm of women who were disreputable, poor and of the streets.

Chapter Four: The ‘Common Prostitute’ and the Legislation of Poor Urban Women

One of the few remaining archival records for the petty courts in the 1830s is the record of convictions for Port Royal. Amongst the list of convictions documented on 10 December 1834 is an entry of a woman charged with making ‘use of the most obscenely and beastly language on the 9 instant and of being a common prostitute’. The charge appears to have been a clerical error. Consequently, either at the time or later on, the records were amended and ‘being a common prostitute’ was crossed out and the offense was recorded as ‘using obscene language’. Using obscene language was not an unusual offense in the Port Royal records. However, what was peculiar about this case was how the charge was recorded. Although only the year prior the term ‘common prostitute’ had entered Jamaica’s legal books for the first time, ‘being a common prostitute’ was not illegal in 1834.

Why this clerical error was made and corrected was down to the person being charged as much as to any mistake by the clerk. The offender in this case, Eliza Holmes, had stood before Jacob De Pass and William H. Williams, Magistrates for the Parish of Surrey, before and was likely well known to them. Only three months prior she was charged with using ‘obscene and infamous language’ towards a constable.¹ This was not the last time she appeared in the petty courts. In addition to this case, and her appearance in the courts in December, Holmes was charged three more times between 1834 and 1837. For example, on 16 August 1836 she was charged with using ‘obscene language’

¹ JA 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions (Record of Convictions), 1834-1837, 24 September 1834.

and fined twenty shillings or ten days incarceration. Eight months later, Holmes, along with Sarah G. Mckew and Elizabeth Frances, was charged with ‘use of most beastly and disgusting language in HM Naval Yard and creating a riot’. According to the record, the victim of Holmes’ abuse was [Nathaniel] Allen, possibly a dockyard worker or seaman. In this case, Holmes was fined forty shillings or fourteen days in the House of Correction. Further, the justice of the peace stipulated she was to be confined in solitary every evening at four o’clock for her behaviour.² Thus, it is likely that when the clerk originally recorded the charge, he perhaps knew Holmes as a ‘common prostitute’, even though her sexual behaviour was not legally relevant. The clerical error provides a fracture in the creation of the archival record that reveals the associations that colonial authorities and elites made between the ‘common prostitute’, public urban behaviour and the law in the immediate post-slavery period. This fracture allows us to read the records not just ‘along the archival grain’, but against them as well.

This chapter is concerned with legislation targeting prostitution between 1833 and 1853. I argue that the ‘common prostitute’ emerged as a separate category of person in the law as a result of colonial anxieties around maintaining labour and, more specifically, public order in the post-slavery period. Legislators understood the urban street culture in places like Kingston and Port Royal as disorderly and threatening to their control over labouring bodies. Major elements of this disorder were the presence and behaviours of poor women working and socializing in public spaces. Thus, anti-prostitution legislation, when enforced, was applied broadly to criminalise these women, whether or not they engaged in sexual-economic relationships, and maintain public order. I begin this chapter by discussing changes in the legal, political and economic structures in the colony

² JA 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 9 December 1834, 16 August 1836, n.d April 1837.

following the introduction of the *Slavery Abolition Bill* in 1833. For the plantocracy and colonial elite, the ending of the slave system raised serious concerns around the future financial prosperity of the plantation economy and their ability to rule. The urban disorder, particularly in Kingston, the commercial centre of the colony, and Port Royal, contributed to these anxieties.

Next, this chapter explores the legislative responses to concerns around labour and public order in both the rural and urban areas of Jamaica. Amongst these measures were specific laws that sought to regulate and control what elites saw as the disorderly behaviour of poor urban people and the way such people used public space. Consequently, three pieces of legislation enacted between 1833 and 1853 targeted the ‘common prostitute’. Using limited and fragmentary archival records on offenses committed by women between 1833 and 1860 in Kingston and Port Royal, I argue in the final section of this chapter that despite the presence of anti-prostitution legislation, such laws were rarely enforced. Moreover, when the law was enforced, it was applied quite broadly to criminalise the general population of poor urban women operating in specific spaces, namely the streets, taverns and lodging homes, and behaving in certain ways articulated as threatening to public order. Both the lack of enforcement and the broad application of anti-prostitution legislation suggest that in the immediate post-emancipation period colonial authorities were more concerned with controlling and regulating public order than eliminating sexual-economic exchange on the urban streets. By examining anti-prostitution legislation enacted, this chapter will demonstrate the way the legal category of the ‘common prostitute’ emerged and how such category was used to regulate the public behaviour of poor urban women.

Anxieties and Urban Disorder

On 20 August 1833, the British Parliament passed the *Slavery Abolition Bill* ending the system of slavery throughout the British Caribbean. However, the abolition of slavery did not affect immediate freedom for Jamaica's population. Instead, as part of the emancipation scheme, a system of apprenticeship was established in the colonies to act as transitional period for both the formerly enslaved and the former masters. According to the new system adopted in Jamaica, those above the age of six were obligated to continue working for their former owners for 45 hours per week without wages, but paid for any additional hours of work. In return, former masters were to provide customary allowances, such as food, clothing, housing and medical care. In their 'free time', the formerly enslaved were expected to work for wages, either for their former enslavers or on another plantation.³

Under apprenticeship, many of the freed men and women suffered similar inhumane conditions and harsh punishments they had endured under slavery. As part of the 'emancipation scheme', special magistrates, those without an invested interest in the plantation system, were sent from England. In addition, a plantation constabulary made up of free black men was also created. Together the magistrates and the police were established to enforce discipline and punishment, but also to mediate between the workers and employers.⁴ As Diana Paton argues, the magistrates formed the basis of a new 'rational and rule-bound' justice system that colonial authorities hoped would foster

³ Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore, 1992), p. 49.

⁴ Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 49.

in the formerly enslaved a feeling of trust and respect for the rule of law.⁵ However, as several contemporary critics and commentators noted, the apprenticeship operated in a ‘contrary way’ than the imperial government had intended. Former masters continued to treat apprentices as enslaved labour, inflicting ‘greater cruelties, in some cases’ than during slavery.⁶ As a result, apprentices responded fiercely to the new system of apprenticeship. There were a series of strikes and confrontations with plantation authorities. Amongst those who protested were a considerable number of women. As Thomas C. Holt shows, women formed the largest body of field labourers on plantations and were thus most directly affected by what they viewed as a re-inscription of slavery.⁷ The conflicts were made more volatile as planters withheld many of the customary allowances they were obligated to provide workers as part of the apprenticeship system and attempted to use coercive tactics to keep workers in line.⁸

Two years after apprenticeship began a commission of enquiry was established to investigate the workings of the system. Several apprentices testified to the abuses they endured. Abolitionist and local missionaries used the report to argue that apprenticeship was little better than the system of slavery and that the same coercive punishments used prior to August 1834 were still in operation. Abolitionist efforts, along with local protests by the formerly enslaved and anti-apprenticeship advocates in both the metropole and the colony, convinced the British government of the iniquities occurring in the island. The

⁵ Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780-1870* (Durham, 2004), p. 55.

⁶ James A. Thome and Joseph H. Kimball, *Emancipation in the West Indies: A Six Months’ Tour in Antigua, Barbados, and Jamaica in the year 1837* (New York, 1838), p. 344.

⁷ Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 64.

⁸ Mimi Sheller, ‘Quasheba, Mother, Queen: Black Women’s Public Leadership and Political Protest in Post-Emancipation Jamaica, 1834-1865’, *Slavery & Abolition*, 19 (1998), pp. 93-94.

apprenticeship system was thus abandoned two years earlier than planned and full emancipation granted on 1 August 1838.

The emancipation of enslaved people in 1838 became the ‘death warrant’ for planters.⁹ According to recent scholarship, the increasing momentum of antislavery activism and the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 marked the beginning of the end for Jamaica’s planter class. Without the ready supply of enslaved labourers from Africa, planters in Jamaica struggled to maintain production.¹⁰ The situation was made worse in the post-slavery period as increasing cultivation of beetroot sugar in Europe and the 1846 British Sugar Duties Act, which equalized sugar duties from the West Indian colonies into Britain, caused the price of Caribbean sugar on the world market to decline. For example, in the 1820s Jamaica contributed approximately twenty per cent of the sugar on the global market; however, by the 1840s, this amount had dropped to less than two per cent.¹¹ As a result, the profits of cane cultivation plummeted and increasing numbers of plantations folded under the financial pressures.¹²

By the 1830s planters were already apprehensive about the future prosperity of the island’s sugar economy. As Sidney Mintz writes, they were like ‘madmen’ scrambling to ensure a steady and controlled labour force.¹³ The plantocracy, and many other colonial elites, feared that without the institution of slavery, freedmen and women would relapse into a state of ‘idleness’ and ‘barbarism’. Their loss of control over

⁹ Sidney Mintz, ‘Labor and Sugar in Puerto Rico and in Jamaica, 1800–1850’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1 (1959), pp. 275–276.

¹⁰ Christer Petley, ‘Rethinking the fall of the planter class’, *Atlantic Studies*, 9 (2012), p. 7. See also David Beck Ryden, ‘Sugar, spirits, and fodder: The London West India interest and the glut of 1807–1815’, *Atlantic Studies*, 9 (2012), pp. 41–64.

¹¹ Christer Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica: Colonial Society and Culture During the Era of Abolition* (London, 2009), p. 157.

¹² Mintz, ‘Labor and Sugar in Puerto Rico and in Jamaica, 1800–1850’, pp. 275–276.

¹³ Mintz, ‘Labor and Sugar in Puerto Rico and in Jamaica, 1800–1850’, pp. 275–276.

freedmen and women would lead to greater levels of public disobedience and chaos.¹⁴ British policy makers held similar concerns in regard to working classes and drew connections between the working poor of England and the slaves of Jamaica. Holt shows how reforms discussed and proposed for the English working poor were similarly and simultaneously encouraged in Jamaica.¹⁵ As he points out, both British and Jamaican legislators were ‘anxious and uncertain of their ability to control or remake the lower orders’.¹⁶ The task at hand involved transforming the formerly enslaved into productive members of the working class, ‘to inculcate’ them with ‘various moral and economic virtues, so that workers would want to do what the emerging economy required’.¹⁷ The apprehensions around labour and the maintenance of public order was not reserved for plantation workers in the rural areas of the colony. For colonial legislators, the plantation economy depended as much upon their ability to control urban labourers as it did upon agricultural workers. Such control was particularly important in Kingston, arguably Jamaica’s most important town in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

At the time of abolition, the political seat of the colony was located in Spanish Town; however, Kingston had for decades rivalled the inland town as a potential capital. Indeed, Kingston served as the capital for a brief time between 1755 and 1758.¹⁸

Incorporated in 1801, the town was the capital county town of Surrey and the seat of the

¹⁴ Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, pp. 43-46; Anthony De V. Phillips, ‘Emancipation Betrayed?: Social Control Legislation in the British Caribbean (With Special Reference to Barbados), 1834-1876, *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 70 (1995), p. 1366.

¹⁵ Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, pp. 35-37

¹⁶ Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 39.

¹⁷ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Oxford, 1999), p. 242.

¹⁸ B.W. Higman, ‘Jamaican Port Towns in the Early Nineteenth Century’, in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (eds), *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850* (Knoxville, 1991), p. 117.

quarterly assizes court.¹⁹ Located on the south coast of the island, Kingston, along with Port Royal situated a short distance across the harbour and connected by a thin spit of land, was the main port of entry to the colony (figure 4.1). In fact, up until the mid-eighteenth century, it was the only port of entry, in terms of customs, in the island. Most vessels leaving from and arriving to the island in the early nineteenth century did so through Kingston Harbour.²⁰ Although only approximately six square miles, four of which was situated on the outskirts of the town, by 1820 Kingston was ‘by far the largest and most prosperous city in the British West Indies’ and the island’s commercial and maritime centre.²¹ For instance, in 1833 and 1834, most exports leaving the country, including sugar, rum, molasses and coffee, did so through Kingston.²² Moreover, most goods arriving from Britain, North America, and the Spanish mainland arrived at its port.²³ In the post-emancipation period, Kingston’s reputation as a commercial centre dwindled as the quantity of sugar exports declined and trade with Spanish America lessened; however, the continued import trade assisted in maintaining commercial activity in the town.²⁴

¹⁹ Higman, ‘Jamaican Port Towns’, p. 125.

²⁰ Higman, ‘Jamaican Port Towns’, p. 125 and 139.

²¹ Colin G. Clarke, *Kingston Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change, 1692-202* (Kingston, 2006), p. 49; Higman, ‘Jamaican Port Towns’.

²² Higman, ‘Jamaican Port Towns’, p. 127

²³ Higman, ‘Jamaican Port Towns’, p. 137.

²⁴ Douglas Hall, *Free Jamaica, 1838-1865: An Economic History* (New Haven, 1959), pp. 11-12.



Figure 4.1: John Lodge, 'A Draught of the Harbours of Port Royal and Kingston Jamaica with the Fortifications Correctly Laid Down, Also all the Keys and Shoals Adjacent' (1782), Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

Kingston and Port Royal were also the main sites of the British military forces in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁵ Its protected coastal location made the area a prized location for the British forces during conflicts with France and Spain in the late eighteenth century. Several military forts guarded Kingston Harbour and the surrounding areas, including Fort Charles in Port Royal and Fort Augusta in St. Catherine parish. The closet naval garrison to Kingston was located in Port Royal near the dockyard. The two main barracks near or in Kingston were Up-Park Camp and Newcastle. British West India Regiments, comprised mostly of black men, were stationed at Up-Park Camp, located on the outskirts of Kingston. Whilst the white regiments originally shared this

²⁵ Higman, 'Jamaican Port Towns'.

barracks, in 1841 most of them were moved to a new station in Newcastle, a base approximately 4000 miles above sea level in the mountains of St. Andrew Parish.²⁶

Besides the centrality of Kingston to the commercial and military functioning of the colony, it was also the most populated town in the island. Nearly fifteen per cent of Jamaica's population called it home, and it was the most inhabited parish in 1844.²⁷ In the years following emancipation, a combination of socio-economic and political forces made the overwhelming majority of black and coloured people in both rural and urban parts of the island 'desperately poor' and struggling to survive.²⁸ In the post-slavery period, many women migrated to Kingston.²⁹ According to the 1844 census, there were 14,285 men and 18,658 women living in Kingston. The large proportion of women to men found in Kingston was not replicated in any other parish in Jamaica. Like in other parishes in the island, a more equal ratio of men to women lived in Port Royal, men totalling 3335 and the number of women totalling 3521.³⁰ While some men were able to find positions in Kingston as artisans, tradesmen, or in other skilled work, just over 4200 were listed as having 'no occupation'.³¹ Women had far fewer opportunities open to them. In both Kingston and Port Royal, women were more likely to work as household servants, as labourers, market women or higglers, or in the retail or hospitality sectors.³² While the urban towns may have held the promise of economic mobility and prosperity,

²⁶ William Sir Gomm, *The Story of Newcastle, Jamaica* (London, 1864).

²⁷ *The Jamaican Censuses of 1844 and 1861* (Kingston, 1980), p. 2. As B.W. Higman, the editor of the reprinted census notes, the reliability of both the 1844 and 1861 censuses are questionable. The consistency of the enumerators from parish to parish, as well as the calculations by the tabulators is uncertain. However, the census does give a general overview of the island's social history. See pp. iv-vi.

²⁸ Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865–1920* (Kingston, 2004), p. 10.

²⁹ Clarke, *Kingston Jamaica*, p. 49.

³⁰ *The Jamaican Censuses*, p. 2.

³¹ *The Jamaican Censuses*, pp. 8-13.

³² *The Jamaican Censuses*, pp. 8-13.

very few actually found such promise realized. Some women were able to find ‘low-paying or odd jobs to eke out a living’. However, according to the census, most women in Kingston held ‘no occupation’, and in Port Royal forty per cent of women were unemployed.³³

The large populations in Kingston contributed to a very vibrant street culture. The town’s poor, both during and after slavery, made use of the streets for multiple purposes. In her study of Trinidad and Tobago, Rhoda Reddock argues that for impoverished urban communities, particularly for women, the public streets were ‘their arena of activity’. Both men and women ‘worked there, were entertained, quarrelled, fought, and even ate there’.³⁴ A similar engagement with public space occurred on the streets of Kingston.³⁵ As several scholars of post-slavery societies discuss, colonial legislators and elites often described the presence of the, formerly enslaved, poor in urban spaces as a ‘threat’ to public order and peace.³⁶ In Jamaica, the ending of slavery did not mean the ending of long-entrenched perceptions of blacks and urban disorder. As Holt points out, the ‘legend’ of Quashee—the perception of blacks as ‘morally degenerate, licentious, and heedless of the future’—continued to inform how Jamaica’s elite and middle classes discussed the urban poor.³⁷ Many feared that the large number of unemployed blacks and coloured people in Kingston were involved in dubious activities detrimental to the larger ‘respectable’ society. For instance, Richard Merrick, a ‘quadroon’ Baptist born in Port

³³ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 10; *The Jamaican Censuses*, pp. 8-13.

³⁴ Rhoda Reddock, *Women, Labour and Politics in Trinidad & Tobago, A History* (London: Zed Books, 1994), p. 81.

³⁵ Mimi Sheller, ‘Quasheba, mother, queen: Black women’s public leadership and political protest in post-emancipation Jamaica, 1834–65’, *Slavery and Abolition* 19 (1998), pp. 90-117.

³⁶ See, for example, Reddock, *Women, Labour and Politics*; Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*; and, Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham, 1999), pp. 79-81.

³⁷ Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 167.

Royal, described the ‘dubious activities’ he witnessed in the port town in the early nineteenth century:

Concubinage and polygamy were universal—harlots went publicly about to seduce the intoxicated sailor—swearing, quarrelling, gambling, drunkenness, and sabbath-breaking were common crimes...Such was Port Royal when I first knew it...and though a great change has been effected in the moral atmosphere of the place, it still contains much that is abominable and unclean.³⁸

If they could not find ‘legitimate’ work, authorities feared that both poor men and women would find other means of providing for themselves and their families. This included gambling, begging, engaging in various cons, pick pocketing, and other petty crime.

Amongst the people and activities colonial authorities identified as part of the urban disorder in Kingston were market women (or higglers) and the ‘obscene’ language used on the public streets. Residents and visitors to Kingston during the slavery and post-slavery period often commented upon the large number of blacks that congregated at the various ‘negro’ and ‘irregular’ markets in Kingston, the ‘hub of marketing activity’.³⁹ These men and women came to sell, but also to trade and purchase goods. At the turn of the century, the markets were particularly lively on Sunday mornings when, as Bryan Edwards noted, 10,000 black men and women had assembled.⁴⁰ The dominance of women involved in the markets was a particular source of apprehension for colonial

³⁸ John Clarke, *Memoir of Richard Merrick [Followed By] Memoir of Joseph Merrick* (London, 1850), p. 26.

³⁹ Lorna Elaine Simmonds, ‘The Afro-Jamaican and the Internal Marketing System: Kingston, 1780-1834’, in Kathleen E.A. Monteith and Glen Richards (eds), *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom: History, Heritage and Culture* (Kingston, 2002), p. 274.

⁴⁰ Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies*, Book IV (London, 1793), p. 162.

authorities and elites. According to Winnifred Brown-Glaude's study of higglers in Kingston, urban market women were often articulated as 'improper', according to gendered precepts of space and commercial activity, and a source of 'illegality'.⁴¹ From as early as the late eighteenth century, the Kingston officials made efforts to regulate these markets. Amongst these regulations were restrictions specifically targeting female higglers, most of whom were black or brown poor women. For instance, in 1815 and 1817 city officials passed by-laws restricting women from selling goods on the streets.⁴² Similar attempts at regulating the disorder associated with market women occurred in other towns in Jamaica. For instance, in 1817 Falmouth city officials petitioned the House of Assembly to have an act passed against the 'extended system of haggling of Dry Goods of every description about this country'. The petitioners feared that these 'negroes and others' would soon 'destroy the Establishments of the Regular Trader, and consequently ruin the Towns'.⁴³ Despite their best efforts, colonial officials were unable to outlaw or fully regulate the operation of market women or the unlicensed markets. As several scholars have shown, higglers and the 'negro' markets formed a significant part of Jamaica's internal marketing system. Much of the produce sold came from enslaved people's provisions grounds. Thus, during times of war, when imports were restricted, many people throughout the island, including elite whites, were dependent (though likely reluctantly) upon the goods and produce they could obtain from these black, often enslaved, people. As a result, both the markets and market women remained a part of

⁴¹ Winnifred Brown-Glaude, *Higglers in Kingston: Women's Informal Work in Jamaica* (Nashville, 2011), pp. 96-97.

⁴² Simmonds, 'The Afro-Jamaican and the Internal Marketing System', p. 279.

⁴³ Cited in Simmonds, 'The Afro-Jamaican and the Internal Marketing System', p. 283.

Kingston's bustling street life in the post-slavery period.⁴⁴ The early attempts at regulation in the towns were demonstrative of anxieties colonial authorities had around maintaining control of the town's 'disorderly' population.

Another regularly discussed source of apprehension for elites and officials in Kingston, and other towns in Jamaica, was the kind of language they often heard those of the 'lower orders' using. Local newspapers and court records regularly noted the 'obscene' or 'beastly and disgusting' language used by poor urban classes. Like in the case of higglers and the markets, colonial legislators attempted to regulate what they understood as public disorders by criminalizing those who used language considered 'disruptive' or 'disturbing' to the public peace. For example, in a case brought before local magistrates in Port Royal in August 1836, an unnamed witness testified that Sarah Doyle and Frances Golerake had called Elizabeth Williams 'a damn old black niggering horseface old bitch and other such expressions' on the public streets.⁴⁵ This kind of colourful language was likely very common. Thomas Witter Jackson, a Special Magistrate in Morant Bay, recorded in his diary the words of an apprentice he convicted with using obscene language. Jane Anne Paton testified that May Kennion said to her, 'You Janey, you are nothing but a slut, a slut is better than you, you are a damned common woman'.⁴⁶ These examples demonstrate the kind of language used in the public streets by the urban poor that respectable members of society associated with urban disorder. However, amongst those on the streets, the public use of 'obscene' language held a complicated function, rooted in African tradition, slave culture and reputation. In

⁴⁴ Simmonds, 'The Afro-Jamaican and the Internal Marketing System'; Brown-Glaude, *Higglers in Kingston*.

⁴⁵ JA 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 29 August 1834.

⁴⁶ JA 4/1/1 Diary of Thomas Witter Jackson, Special Magistrate 1863-1865, 4 July 1863.

his discussion of the criminalization of obscene language in nineteenth-century Trinidad, David Trotman writes that ‘the conflict over obscene language must be viewed in the context of the transfer and transformation of the African tradition of the social uses of language and the role of this reconstructed oral tradition in a situation of oppression’. Moreover, as he argues, ‘the oral tradition was an important cultural institution and in which highly developed oral skills were desirable assets’. The importance placed on oral dexterity, according to Trotman, continued in slave societies where Africans that spoke different languages had to communicate amongst themselves as well as with their European enslavers. For the men, women and children enslaved in Jamaica, being able to effectively communicate in English, the language of the master, was often key in obtaining any kind of benefits or possible social mobility. As Barbara Bush argues, language was ‘vital area of slave identity’.⁴⁷ The oral dexterity continued to be valued and used by both men and women on the streets in the post-slavery period. As Jean Besson argues, the use of obscene language was an important part of men and women’s engagement in street culture and reputation.⁴⁸ This may have been the case for Kingston’s urban poor, however, for the colonial elite, the use of obscene language, particularly amongst women, signalled their cultural distance from the lower orders and the general chaos that this class of men and women brought to the urban streets.

The disorder that many colonial authorities and elites associated with Kingston’s street culture was often reflected in the negative way they described the general state of the town. As Andy Croll argues, the perception of space was ‘vital to all late Victorians’

⁴⁷ Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society*, p. 158. See also Lucille Mathurin Mair, *The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies during Slavery* (Kingston, 1975), p. 18.

⁴⁸ Jean Besson, ‘Reputation & Respectability Reconsidered: A New Perspective on Afro-Caribbean Peasant Women’, in Janet H. Momsen (ed.), *Women & Change in the Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1993), pp. 15-37.

because it was ‘wedded to the concept of urban civilization’.⁴⁹ Urban and public spaces were sites on which large numbers of strangers gathered, thus ‘were extremely sensitive indicators of the condition of the population’.⁵⁰ In the early years of the nineteenth century in Jamaica, a similar association and preoccupation with space as an indicator of social order and ‘civilization’ seemed to have occurred. From a distance, Kingston was often represented as an ideal town (figure 4.2). However, once arrived, many visitors to Kingston were shocked by the physical state of Jamaica’s commercial capital. In 1834 Richard Robert Madden described his impressions of the town from Kingston Harbour:

From the sea, as you enter the harbour on one side, you have the fort and the remnant of that proud and opulent city of Port-Royal...On the opposite side you have a range of undulating country of about seven miles in extent, from the Apostle’s Battery to Kingston, with a background of lofty mountains clothed with luxurious verdure, and rising gradually from the verge of the shore, on which the city of Kingston is situated.⁵¹

The impression of tropical paradise was short lived for Madden. Once he landed upon the shores of the town, ‘the glory of the prospect’ was ‘soon forgotten’:

[T]he distant beauty of the varied buildings vanishes before the sight of streets without a plan, houses without the semblance of architecture, lanes and alleys without cleanliness and convenience, and the principal thoroughfares ploughed up into water-courses, and the foundations of the

⁴⁹ Andy Croll, ‘Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame: Regulating Behaviour in the Public Spaces of the Late Victorian British Town’, *Social History*, 24 (1999), p. 252.

⁵⁰ Croll, ‘Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame’, p. 252.

⁵¹ Richard Robert Madden, *A Twelvemonth’s Residence in the West Indies, Volume I* (London, 1835), p. 97.

houses literally undermined, or the level of the streets on which they are situated lowered from two to four feet below the foundation...' ⁵²

Kingston, wrote Madden, 'dilapidated and desolate as it is', appears 'a ruined city that has been recently abandoned'. ⁵³ Other visitors and colonial authorities supported Madden's impressions of Kingston. In 1860, Anthony Trollope wrote, 'Kingston on a map—for there is even a map of Kingston—looks admirably well. The streets all run in parallels. There is a fine large square, plenty of public buildings, and almost a plethora of places to worship. Everything is named with propriety, and there could be no nicer town anywhere'. However, like Madden, once Trollope arrived in the town his impressions soon changed. He found the streets of Kingston to have a 'ragged, disreputable, and bankrupt appearance'. The main 'disgrace of Jamaica', wrote Trollope, 'is the causeway of the streets themselves. They never was so odious a place to which to move'. ⁵⁴ The neighbouring town of Port Royal incited similar negative representations. In 1840, Lord Dundonald, an officer in the British Navy, wrote, 'Never have I seen a place so disgustingly filthy, or which could give so bad an opinion to foreigners of British Colonial Administration'. ⁵⁵ These reflections on the state of Kingston (and Port Royal) were not exceptional, but very common amongst white visitors, as well as residents, to the island.

⁵² Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence*, pp. 97-98.

⁵³ Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence*, p. 98.

⁵⁴ Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (New York, 1860), p. 16.

⁵⁵ Cited in David Howard, *Kingston: A Cultural and Literary History* (Oxford, 2005), p. 48.



Figure 4.2: James Hakewill, 'Kingston and Port Royal from Windsor Farm', *A Picturesque Tour in the Island of Jamaica* (London, 1825), p. 25.

Kingston's (and Port Royal's) spatial disorder was indicative of the apprehensions that many colonial authorities felt towards the town's large poor population and the maintenance of public order. As Philippa Levine writes, 'space, and the need to order it, [was] of constant concern in colonial settings where "crooked natures" inhabited "crooked lanes"'.⁵⁶ Thus, despite their political and economic dominance in the colony, colonial elites remained relatively precarious about their ability to not only ensure labouring population, but also to reform the 'crooked natures' of the formerly enslaved urban population. Without the system of slavery, Jamaica legislators enacted new laws

⁵⁶ Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York, 2003), p. 256.

and recreated old ones in a bid to ensure the prosperity of the island and control over Kingston's poor and working classes.

Regulating Freedom: Legal Responses to Urban Disorder

Despite the change in legal status for the majority of Jamaica's black and coloured population in the post-slavery period, they continued to be excluded from the formal ruling institutions in the island. The political power to restructure legislation in the colony remained in the hands of the small number of predominately white colonist who had a vested interest in maintaining the success of the plantation-economy. While the imperial government had set out specific policies in the Slavery Abolition Bill, which the colonies had to adhere to, the actual implementation of those policies were left to the local legislatures and laws. White elite dominance of the Jamaica Assembly, the island's ruling political institution, was ensured through high property and monetary qualifications that limited the number of brown and black men able to gain membership. As Holt shows, within a decade of emancipation the numbers of non-white men in the assembly steadily increased; however, they remained a relatively small group in the political running of the colony.⁵⁷ In addition, through high income and property qualifications, most of the formerly enslaved were denied the right to vote for representatives in the Assembly. Thus, not only were the vast majority of the population without the franchise, they were also not represented within Jamaica's government. The white plantocracy that had political and financial dominance during slavery remained in power in the post-slavery period. They dominated the Jamaica Assembly and maintained control over legal reforms

⁵⁷ Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 219.

instituted in colony. Through these legislation, Jamaica's white elites attempted to maintain a 'captive labour' force to support the plantation economy at the centre of Jamaican society.⁵⁸

In the same year the Slave Abolition Bill was passed, the Jamaica Assembly set about creating new laws and amending old ones to address what they thought would be the particular local challenges around labour and public order in post-slavery society. The Assembly, similar to many local legislators across the Caribbean, instituted acts and policies aimed at regulating the bodies of labourers on the plantation. A number of coercive labour measures were passed, including the 'Master and Servants' legislation, which laid out the terms of contract between workers and planters.⁵⁹ Legislators in Jamaica, and several of the other Anglo-Caribbean islands, also instituted a system of indentureship. Under this system, labourers from India (and later China) were brought to the colonies for fixed-term contracts to labour on the plantations. While the system began in other parts of the British Caribbean in 1838, the first wave of Indian indentured labourers arrived on the shores of Jamaica in 1845. From this year until the system's eventual abolition in 1917, approximately 37,000 Indian workers were brought to labour on plantations of Jamaica.⁶⁰

These legislative measures, and others like it, were reinforced by a system of discipline and punishment. While prior to emancipation the discipline of labourers was the responsibility of individual slave masters, in the post-slavery period the legal

⁵⁸ Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in the Jamaican State Formation, 1780-1870* (Durham, 2004), p. 9.

⁵⁹ Micheal Craton, 'Continuity not change: The incidence of unrest among ex-slaves in the British West Indies, 1838-1876', *Slavery and Abolition*, 9 (1988), p.157.

⁶⁰ Verene A. Shepherd, 'The Dynamics of Afro-Jamaican-East Indian Relations in Jamaica, 1845-1945', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 32 (1986), p. 15. For more on indentureship in the Caribbean see Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918* (Baltimore, 1993).

responsibility and right to punish labouring bodies was placed in the hands of the state.⁶¹ The stipendiary magistrate adjudicated on cases involving workers and employers, while local magistrates, usually white planters, judged offenses that formed part of the wider colonial legislation.⁶² As Colonial Secretary Edward Stanley stated, ‘it is emphatically necessary that a submissive obedience to the law should be inculcated by the highest authority in the state, and enforced, if necessary, by the most decisive measures’.⁶³ These decisive measures included fines and terms of imprisonment. One of the fundamental goals of imprisonment, at least in theory, was to reform the prisoner so that they acted ‘in appropriately gendered ways’ and, after the term of their confinement, were ‘adjusted to their “station” in society’.⁶⁴ Thus, using local laws and modes of discipline and punishment, the colonial government attempted to ensure their control over the labouring bodies of freedmen and women. For it was only through this control that they could ensure a reliable, obedient labour force to support the plantation system and sustain public order.

Coercive legislative measures were not only enacted to address the issue of rural labour. The Jamaica Assembly also established and reformed a number of social institutions and laws to manage the large numbers of non-plantation bodies in the towns.⁶⁵ Amongst the reforms that occurred in the immediate post-slavery period were changes in the way poor relief was administered; the restructuring of the island’s goals, house of corrections, asylums and hospitals; and, funding for the establishment of a

⁶¹ Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, p. 54.

⁶² Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, p. 59.

⁶³ Quoted in Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, p. 53.

⁶⁴ Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, p. 122 and p. 87.

⁶⁵ Anthony De V. Phillips, ‘Emancipation Betrayed?: Social Control Legislation in the British Caribbean (With Special Reference to Barbados), 1834-1876, *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 70 (1995), p. 1367.

number of schools.⁶⁶ The Kingston city council further adopted reforms, including the establishment of a police force in order to provide more ‘security than [any] other Police regulation yet in operation in this city’.⁶⁷ Several new laws were also enacted across the colony to regulate various kinds of public behaviour that legislators considered disruptive to public order. Some of these laws, such as in 1843 ‘An Act to Make Provision for the Maintenance of Good Order in Towns and Communities’, were enacted to criminalize a number of behaviours that legislators viewed as contributing to urban disorder. For instance, according to the 1843 law ‘every person who shall, in any town conduct himself in a loose, idle, noisy, and disorderly manner, thereby disturbing the peace and good order of the community, or to the annoyance, discomfort, or obstruction of the inhabitants or passengers shall be deemed violators of the public peace’. This act also criminalized persons ‘driving furiously’, ‘feeding horses’, and ‘indecently exposing his or herself’ in any ‘thoroughfare or public place’.⁶⁸

Amongst the number of reforms adopted in the immediate post-slavery period to control public behaviour and urban disorder was the 1833 law, ‘An Act to Restrain and Punish Vagrancy’. The Jamaican 1833 Vagrancy Act was adopted word for word from the 1822 English vagrancy legislation. Implemented in response to growing concerns around the rise of beggars and paupers on the streets and the spread of casual street prostitution in London following the Napoleonic Wars, the English law was the first to include the ‘common prostitute’ as a separate legal category. However, when Jamaica implemented its 1833 vagrancy legislation, the 1822 British law was no longer in

⁶⁶ The *Laws of Jamaica* (Kingston, 1835); Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, p.28.

⁶⁷ Lorna Elaine Simmonds, ‘That Little Shadow of Property and Freedom: Urban Slave Society in Jamaica, 1780-1834’. Diss. University of West Indies (Mona), 1997, pp. 99-100.

⁶⁸ ‘An Act to Make Provision for the Maintenance of Good Order in Towns and Communities’, *The Laws of Jamaica* (Kingston, 1844).

operation. After several ‘respectable’ women were arrested and accused of being common prostitutes and thus vagrants, British legislators ruled that the wording of the 1822 law was too vague and thus they amended it in 1824.⁶⁹ Instead of adopting the amended vagrancy law, the one actually in practice in Britain at the time, Jamaican legislators resorted to the earlier 1822 Act, which may be suggestive of how legislators intended to use it in the colony.⁷⁰ As several contemporary critics of the legislation pointed out, within the context of post-slavery society, ‘the real operation’ of the Jamaican Vagrancy Act was to ‘add unnecessary restraints to the apprenticeship system so long as it lasts’, and to ‘establish after its expiration a class of restrictions on the free labourer [that would] amount to little short of a perpetuated system of slavery’.⁷¹ These critics, who included local and metropolitan abolitionists and British MPs, were particularly critical of the vague definitions contained in the legislation. For instance, according to the first clause of the legislation, any persons on the streets without ‘visible employment’ may be deemed an ‘idle and disorderly person’. They were equally critical of the level of power the vagrancy law gave the stipendiary and local magistrates charged with administering the act. As another critic of the legislation pointed out, this person ‘may happen to be the most wealthy and independent and well-conducted part of the negro population’ and yet still ‘be punished at the discretion of the Justice a months imprisonment with hard labour’.⁷²

The Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, shared similar concerns around the Vagrancy Act. In an 1836 dispatch to the Governor of Jamaica, the Marquis of Sligo,

⁶⁹ M.J. D. Roberts, ‘Public and Private in Early Nineteenth-Century London: The Vagrant Act of 1822 and its Enforcement,’ *Social History*, 13: 3 (1998), pp. 273-294.

⁷⁰ TNA, CO 137/207/16/92 Joseph Bildame to Thomas F. Buxton, 25 November 1835.

⁷¹ TNA, CO 137/207/16/92 Joseph Bildame to Thomas F. Buxton, 25 November 1835.

⁷² TNA, CO 137/207/16/92. Letter from Joseph Bildame to Thomas F. Buxton, 25 November 1835.

Glenelg highlighted the vagueness of the legal categories laid out in the Vagrancy Act. As he pointed out, ‘the terms are so large as in effect equivalent to an enumeration of all persons whatever whose account of themselves is not good’.⁷³ Glenelg also expressed concerns around the level of discretion given to the local magistrates in Jamaica, as in the other British Caribbean colonies that enacted similar vagrancy legislation. As he articulated in a letter to the Governor of Barbados, ‘The large powers which [in England] are confided to the magistracy for the punishment of vagrants, are kept in check by many circumstances which have no existence in the West Indies’. Instead, in the Caribbean ‘justices of the peace who are personally engaged in the agriculture and manufactures of the colony, and who have so recently stood in relation to the labouring class, which must for a time tend to produce in the mind of that class some degree of distrust and suspicion’ were given complete power to punish those deemed as ‘vagrant’.⁷⁴ Sligo agreed with Glenelg’s assessment of the legislation. ‘I confess myself to be alarmed at the power over the apprentices which will thereby be acquired by the local magistracy... This law is very loosely worded’.⁷⁵ In consequence, Glenelg disallowed the 1833 Vagrancy Act and instructed the Sligo to advise the Assembly to amend the legislation. The Jamaica Assembly reluctantly complied and made some minor revisions to the Vagrancy Act to appease the imperial government. The amended 1839 vagrancy legislation, as in the 1833 law, organized the ‘vagrant’ into three classes: ‘idle and disorderly persons’; ‘rogue and vagabonds’; and ‘incorrigible rogues’. However, the 1839 measure stipulated the exact

⁷³ PP, 1836 (166-I) (166-II). Papers Presented to Parliament, by His Majesty’s command, in explanation of the measures adopted by His Majesty’s government, for giving effect to the act for the abolition of slavery throughout the British colonies: Part III. Letter from Lord Glenelg to the Marquis of Sligo, 21 January 1836, pp. 216-217.

⁷⁴ PP, 1847-48 (419). West India colonies and Mauritius. (Vagrancy laws, &c.) Copies of Any Acts for the Suppression of Vagrancy. Letter from Lord Glenelg to Governor Sir E.J. M. MacGregor, Bart (Barbadoes), 31 August 1838.

⁷⁵ TNA CO 137/211 Vagrant Act. Letter from Marquis of Sligo to Lord Glenelg, 17 June 1836.

terms of punishments, thereby removing the summary jurisdiction of the local magistrates. The amended legislation also provided a more precise definition of 'idle and disorderly person'. An 'idle and disorderly person' became defined as those able but unwilling to work in order to support his or her family; and, any person receiving parochial aid and begging on the streets.⁷⁶

Amongst the categories of individuals identified as 'idle and disorderly' and criminalised under both versions of the vagrancy legislation was the 'common prostitute'. Whereas the 1833 legislation stated that 'every common prostitute wandering in the public streets or highways' could be deemed a vagrant, according to the 1839 legislation, a women could be arrested and charged under the vagrancy not only for 'wandering the public streets or highways', but also 'in any place of public resort'. In addition, the 1839 Act added that she also had to be 'behaving in a riotous or indecent manner' in order to be 'deemed an idle and disorderly person, within the true intent and meaning of this act'. Women convicted of this offense were sentenced to 'hard labour' in house of corrections or put to work 'on the public streets and highways' for 'any time not exceeding one calendar month'. As was the case for other categories of 'idle and disorderly persons', if a 'common prostitute' was convicted again, she was classified as either 'rogue and a vagabond' or 'an incorrigible rogue' and sentenced to a term of hard labour for up to sixty days.⁷⁷ Anti-prostitution legislation was reinforced by harsh punitive measures aimed to both punish and reform women who engaged public forms of transactional sex.

⁷⁶ 'An Act for the Punishment of Idle and Disorderly Persons, Rogues and Vagabonds, and Incorrigible Rouges', *The Laws of Jamaica* (Spanish Town, 1850).

⁷⁷ 'An Act to Restrain and Punish Vagrancy', *The Laws of Jamaica* (Kingston, 1834); 'An Act for the Punishment of Idle and Disorderly Persons, Rogues and Vagabonds, and Incorrigible Rouges', *The Laws of Jamaica* (Spanish Town, 1850).

The Vagrancy Acts were the first piece of legislation in Jamaica to use the term ‘common prostitute’, but it was by no means the only one. Besides the vagrancy legislation, the Jamaican legislature passed two additional laws between 1833 and 1853 that included clauses targeting the ‘common prostitute’. Five years after the first vagrancy law was passed and the year before it was amended in 1839, ‘An Act to Amend the Criminal Law’ was introduced, which made keeping a ‘common bawdy house’ or ‘a common ill-governed and disorderly house’ a punishable offence ‘of a degree below felony’. Those convicted of this offense were sentenced to prison with or without hard labour for a term that was at the discretion of the local magistrate.⁷⁸ The fourth and final piece of legislation that targeted the ‘common prostitute’ was ‘An Act Regulating the Granting of Licenses for the Retailing of Brandy, Gin, Rum, and Other Distilled Spirits’ that came into operation in 1853. This licensing law made it an offense for any tavern or shop that sold alcohol to allow their establishment to be used as ‘the resort of prostitutes’ or to be ‘frequently the scene of loose, disorderly, or immoral proceedings’. Tavern or shop keepers convicted of these offenses lost their license to sell alcohol and were forced to pay a fine.⁷⁹

According to several historians of Jamaican slave society, including Hilary Beckles and Edward Kamau Brathwaite, prostitution was illegal in the colony from its

⁷⁸ ‘An Act to Amend the Criminal Law’, *The Laws of Jamaica* (Spanish Town, 1850).

⁷⁹ ‘An Act Regulating the Granting of Licenses for the Retailing of Brandy, Gin, Rum, and Other Distilled Spirits, and For Appropriating the Revenue to Arise From Such Licenses to the Maintenance of Paupers’, *The Laws of Jamaica* (Kingston, 1854). None of the laws passed in the immediate post-slavery period made solicitation of sexual services illegal. Solicitation was made illegal by the 1864 ‘An act to amend the Offences against the Person Law’. This act, based on the 1861 British legislation, was also the first legislation in the colony to criminalize ‘sodomy’, and abortion, among other sexual practices.

early settlement.⁸⁰ I have been unable to locate any colony-wide legislation that addressed street-based forms of transactional sex prior to the 1833 Vagrancy Act. Indeed, versions of both the 1838 ‘An Act to Amend the Criminal Law’ and the 1853 ‘An Act Regulating the Granting of Licenses for the Retailing ... Spirits’ were in operation prior to the abolition of slavery, but the versions of these laws in operation during the slavery period did not include ‘common prostitute’.⁸¹ While I have been unable to locate any documents that state explicitly why the ‘common prostitute’ did not enter the legal books prior to abolition, there are some likely explanations.

The reason for the lack of anti-prostitution legislation in Jamaica may be attributed to the size of its enslaved population, as well as to long-standing ideologies around sexuality and gender. The majority of Jamaica’s female population were enslaved and black. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the slave owner, and white men in general, held complete power over enslaved women’s bodies and thus could, by right, do with it as they saw fit. In addition, Jamaica, like the other Caribbean colonies, was often represented as ‘beyond the pale’ of British social norms and respectability.⁸² White men who aspired to make their fortunes in the colony could do so while enjoying patriarchal autonomy and sexual freedoms. Plantations and pens were like little independent ‘kingdoms’ where owners and managers could rule as ‘sovereign lords’ living, for the

⁸⁰ Hilary Beckles, *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society* (Kingston, 1999), p. 25; Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford, 1971), p. 167.

⁸¹ It would not have been unusual for a slave society to pass laws prohibiting prostitution amongst enslaved women. As Camillia Cowling shows in her study of slave laws in Brazil and Cuba, colonial authorities made attempts to prevent owners from prostituting enslaved women. In Rio de Janeiro this involved punishing slave owners with the loss of ownership of any children that may have resulted from such encounters, and, at times, the mothers of those children. See Camillia Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom: Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro* (Chapel Hill, 2013), p. 53.

⁸² Cecilia A. Green, ‘Between Respectability and Self-Respect: Framing Afro-Caribbean Women’s Labour History’, *Social and Economic Studies*, 55, 3 (September 2006), p. 3.

most part, free from the laws of the church or the rule of law.⁸³ Connected to this were pervasive ideologies around sexuality and gender in Britain, as well as among elite sectors of Jamaican society. It was widely accepted by many in both the metropole and the colonies that men were naturally sexual beings, and thus required a certain amount of sexual freedom. Meanwhile, a women's honor lay in her virginity if she were single, and her chastity if married. As Keith Thomas points out, within this dichotomy, a class of 'fallen women' was necessary in order to protect 'respectable' women from men's natural lust. Thus, the prostitute was a 'necessary evil'.⁸⁴ Perhaps for these reasons sexual-economic exchange, in and of itself, was not illegal in the colony either during or after slavery. Indeed, the only time legislation related to sexuality was passed in the colony prior to the 1833 Vagrancy Act was when interracial relationships were deemed potentially dangerous, as discussed in the previous chapter.⁸⁵ The post-slavery inclusion of the 'common prostitute' did not signify a change in ideology around male sexuality and access to women's bodies, but instead likely indicated a growing concern among legislators around the potential disruption to public order the 'common prostitute' may cause. Thus, it appears that it was only with the approach of emancipation, as the controlling mechanism of slavery was about to be abolished, that colonial legislators adopted British laws that included the 'common prostitute' and that defined women engaged in such acts as a specific legal category of person stipulated, but not wholly defined, in law.

⁸³ Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, 2004), pp. 20-1.

⁸⁴ Keith Thomas, 'The Double Standard', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20: 2 (April 1959), p. 197-198.

⁸⁵ For instance, the Devises Act, which limited the amount white men could bequeath to their black or brown mistresses and mixed-race children. See pp. 92-93 of this dissertation.

Although all three pieces of anti-prostitution legislation enacted in Jamaica between 1833 and 1853 made use of the term ‘common prostitute’, none of them defined who was included within this category. According to the 1839 Vagrancy Act, based on the offender’s confession ‘or by the evidence on oath of one or more credible witness or witnesses’, any woman ‘wandering in the public streets or in any place of public resort’ and ‘behaving in a riotous or indecent manner’ could be labelled as a ‘common prostitute’ and punished as an ‘idle and disorderly person’. The vagueness of the term left it up to the police and the courts to decide who was a ‘common prostitute’, a particular problem later in the century when enforcing the Contagious Diseases Act, the subject of Chapter Five.⁸⁶

The prostitution-related laws were all aimed at protecting ‘respectable’ members of society from women seen as threatening to the public peace and the gendered boundaries of space. All three pieces of legislation, like many of the other laws enacted during this period that address public order, were informed by nascent understandings of gender, respectability and public/private space. Such understandings highlight why laws targeting ‘common prostitutes’ were used on poor women occupying the streets. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the notions of respectability and domesticity that emerged in Jamaica during the early nineteenth century held that the proper place for respectable women was in the home, not on the public streets.⁸⁷ For many women of the ‘lower orders’, the domestic model promoted by missionaries where wives could stay home and dedicate all her time to the management of her household and family may have

⁸⁶ See Walkowitz for discussion of the vagueness of the term ‘common prostitute’ within England. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 2

⁸⁷ Lucille Mathurin Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica: 1655-1844* (Kingston, 2006), pp. 297-303.

been an ‘index of [the] status’ of respectability they aspired to achieve; however, it was by no means a widely held reality.⁸⁸ As Brereton notes, not all freed people were either willing or able to fully adopt respectable models of domesticity on sale by British Christians, but instead ‘declined to buy the whole package’.⁸⁹ Thus, as Reddock states, ‘the strict division between public and private life was not yet instituted among the working classes’ in the immediate post-slavery period.⁹⁰ Women continued to be a ‘permanent presence in the public spaces of the towns’ and ‘dominated the life of the streets’ in Kingston.⁹¹

Although emancipation theoretically made the streets accessible to all persons, in practice this was not the case. As Gary V. Dubin and Richard Robinson write, laws targeting public order, like the vagrancy legislation, were ‘a manifestation of the right of the state to recognize social sensibilities and to protect ‘decent citizens of the community’ from contact with undesirable elements of the general population’.⁹² The ‘common prostitute’, and all other working-class and poor women subverting respectable spatial boundaries, formed a part of the ‘undesirable elements’ that violated ‘the demarcation of public/private or separate spheres that were supposed to prescribe the boundaries of gender’.⁹³ For instance, the wording used to describe the offenses of

⁸⁸ Bridget Brereton, ‘Family Strategies, Gender, and the Shift to Wage Labor in the British Caribbean’, in Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (eds), *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham, 2005), p. 156-7.

⁸⁹ Brereton, ‘Family Strategies’, p. 157.

⁹⁰ Rhoda Reddock, *Women, Labour and Politics in Trinidad & Tobago, A History* (London: Zed Books, 1994), p. 81.

⁹¹ Mimi Sheller, ‘Black Women’s Political Protest in Jamaica, 1834-1865’, p. 113 and p. 103.

⁹² Gary V. Dubin and Richard H. Robinson, ‘Vagrancy Concept Reconsidered: Problems and Abuses of Status Criminality,’ *New York University Law Review*, 37, 1962, pp. 102-137.

⁹³ Brian L. Moore and Michelle A. Johnson, “‘Fallen Sisters’? Attitudes to Female Prostitution in Jamaica at the Turn of the Twentieth Century’, *The Journal of Caribbean History*, 34 (2000), p. 64: Eileen Suárez Findlay shows that in post-slavery Ponce, similar concerns over the crossing of gendered and spatial boundaries resulted in regulations to remove ‘scandalous women’ from the sight of ‘respectable folk’. See Findlay, *Imposing Decency*, p. 81.

women charged with disrupting public order reflects their spatial transgression and the threat they were seen as posing to public order. Some of these women were charged with behaviour considered ‘disgusting to the morality and good order in Society’ and ‘disturbing to the public peace’.⁹⁴ Other women were charged with ‘caus[ing] a great riot and noise in the public streets and greatly annoy[ing] and disturb[ing] the Congregation then assembled at worship’.⁹⁵ As these examples demonstrate, maintaining the public order, including gendered notions of private and public space, was an important part of the laws targeting the ‘common prostitute’. Women who transgressed the boundaries of space and disturbed the respectable public, whether or not they were actually ‘common prostitutes’, were seen as disruptive and threatening to public order and criminalized.

Disorderly Behaviour and Spaces of Disorder

Anti-prostitution was created to target the ‘common prostitute’; however, there is very little evidence that these laws were regularly enforced. However, when the laws were enforced it appears that they were used to criminalise poor urban women occupying public spaces and demonstrating behaviours considered ‘disorderly’ or ‘morally detrimental’ to the respectable elite and middle-class public. Mimi Sheller cautions, in discussions of legislation and marginalized people ‘it is not sufficient to look at the letter of the law alone...without also understanding its situated practice’.⁹⁶ An examination of how anti-prostitution laws were enforced on the ground demonstrates Sheller’s point. A closer look at the charges against women available in the archival records reveals how

⁹⁴ JA 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 23 April 1837 and 29 August 1836.

⁹⁵ JA, 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 25 April 1837.

⁹⁶ Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, 2012), p. 21.

poor urban women were criminalized as ‘common prostitutes’. These women were charged under anti-prostitution laws, not because they were necessarily known ‘common prostitutes’ or there was any evidence that they engaged in sexual-labour, but because colonial authorities viewed their behaviour and their transgression of gendered spatial boundaries as indicative of their sexual praxis.

The offenses laid out in anti-prostitution legislation were primarily prosecuted in either petty sessions or quarter sessions courts. To my knowledge, one of the few relatively complete records of either of these courts is the petty court records for Port Royal that spans the years between 1834 and 1837. Of course, only the 1833 vagrancy legislation was in place during this period. However, an examination of how this particular anti-prostitution law was put into practice will illuminate the kind of public behaviours that were criminalized and marked women as ‘common prostitutes’ under the later anti-prostitution laws. In addition to Port Royal records, I will use the very few newspaper accounts and contemporary observations available to discuss the specific spaces targeted under anti-prostitution legislation and instances of women charged under these laws. These records, though fragmentary, provide a glimpse of how prostitution-related legislation was enforced, and how poor women engaged with such legislation in Kingston and Port Royal.

The Port Royal records document 146 cases of minor misdemeanour offenses committed between 1834 and 1837. Of the 146 cases documented in the records, approximately seventy-two cases (or forty-nine per cent) brought before the court listed one or more women as the defendant. The records do not give a complete account of the circumstances surrounding the offense. Most of the records provide only the most basic

information, such as the charge, the name of the offender and when the offense took place. Some of the records also list the name of the ‘victim’, as well as the location and time of the offense. The crimes listed in the petty court records range from larceny and assault, to giving false evidence in court, throwing offensive matter on to the public streets, trespassing and indecent exposure of one’s body.

Amongst these offenses were charges that came under the Vagrancy Act. At times, the Port Royal records indicated explicitly when the cases being tried came under the 1833 vagrancy legislation. For instance, the case involving Eliza Holmes on 9 December 1834, discussed above, was tried under the ‘Special Sessions held under the Vagrant Act’.⁹⁷ Approximately four other cases involving different women were tried explicitly ‘under the Vagrant Act now in force’ in the Port Royal records. However, this does not seem to have always been the case. It appears that the clerk recording the conviction did not always indicate under which specific law women were charged. As such, a more accurate indication of how the vagrancy act was applied can be determined by the length and type of punishment that the women received. For instance, on 17 March 1835 Eleanor Harris was charged explicitly under the Vagrancy Act for using the ‘most beastly and disgusting languages in the public streets’ and ‘sentenced to one month hard labour in the House of Corrections’.⁹⁸ On 20 March 1835, Mary Hemmings was charged with fighting in the streets with Eliza Holmes. According to ‘several witnesses’, Hemmings was the ‘aggressor’ in the fight, attacking Holmes. In addition to being charged with assault, Hemmings was also charged with being an ‘idle and disorderly

⁹⁷ JA, 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 9 December 1834.

⁹⁸ JA, 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 17 March 1835.

person' and sentenced to a month hard labour in the House of Corrections.⁹⁹ There were similar instances of women being charged under the vagrancy legislation for behaviours that were not explicitly stated within the Act. On 22 June 1835, Eliza Holmes, the woman discussed in the introduction of this chapter, was charged with 'assaulting an apprentice' and thus, 'being an incorrigible rogue and vagabond'. On this occasion she was sentenced to '3 months hard labour in the House of Corrections'.¹⁰⁰ On two separate occasions Elizabeth Hitchens was sentenced to three months hard labour: in June of 1835 for 'indecently expos[ing] her persons in the public streets' and again the following year for being 'drunk and exposing her person, being a vagrant'.¹⁰¹ These are just a few examples from the Port Royal records that demonstrate a general pattern of how anti-prostitution legislation was used to criminalise a broad range of offenses not specified within the vagrancy legislation, but criminalized under the Act nonetheless. These samples discussed also highlight the ways certain public behaviours allowed legislators to criminalize women, who may or may not have been known as 'common prostitutes', using prostitution-related legislation. In addition to their behaviour, the spaces in which these and other women from a similar class and urban space occupied were also targeted using anti-prostitution legislation.

Amongst the public spaces targeted in anti-prostitution legislation were taverns, as well as the 'ill-governed and disorderly house', a space that was ambiguously defined and, as I will discuss more below, often included lodging homes. Although both the tavern and the 'ill-governed and disorderly house' were not directly in the public gaze, colonial legislators feared that from these spaces the 'common prostitute' and the

⁹⁹ JA, 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 20 March 1835.

¹⁰⁰ JA, 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 22 June 1835.

¹⁰¹ JA, 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 9 June 1835; 26 October 1836.

disorder she carried would spill out onto the public and respectable streets.¹⁰² In a sense, their fears are understandable. The tavern, along with the lodging home, served as centres of entertainment and sociality for many members of the poor urban community in Kingston.

Although primarily a space designated for the sale and consumption of alcohol, the taverns in Kingston and other port towns provided a much wider array of services. Taverns were known to sell food and provide short-term accommodation to its clients. For instance, Sheena Boa shows that many of Kingston's taverns provided catering services for local Vestry meetings, and other local government events.¹⁰³ According to the 1844 census, there were only eleven taverns operating in Kingston and none in Port Royal.¹⁰⁴ These figures are likely only representative of licensed establishments.¹⁰⁵ Many tavern keepers were unwilling (or unable) to license their establishments. Between 1833 and 1853, several women were charged with selling alcohol in unlicensed taverns or shops. For instance, in June 1835, Mary London was charged with 'retailing spirituous liquors without a license'. She was fined twenty pounds or one month's hard labour in the house of correction.¹⁰⁶ On 24 July 1837 Ann Miller was charged with 'retailing rum without a license'. According to the arresting constable, Myer Benjamin, Miller had 'sold rum at 12 o'clock in the day to John Dillion'. Miller admitted to the crime and was fined ten pounds or one month in the House of Correction.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Razack, 'Race, Space, and Prostitution', p. 361.

¹⁰³ Sheena Boa, 'Urban Free Black and Coloured Women: Jamaica 1760-1834', *Jamaican Historical Review*, 18 (1993), p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ *The Jamaican Censuses*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ To obtain a license, tavern keepers had to pay a fee to the local Vestry and, in some cases, obtain recommendations from householders resident in the parish. In addition, tavern owners had to pay an annual fee. See Boa, 'Urban Free Black and Coloured Women', p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ JA, 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 25 June 1835.

¹⁰⁷ JA, 2/19/31 Port Royal Petty Sessions, 24 July 1837.

Some taverns may have catered to the more respectable members of society, such as the colony's legislators and merchants. Other taverns had less respectable clientele. According to Moreton, in the late eighteenth century many of the 'petty ones, called grog shops', owned and operated by women and men of colour on the outskirts of Kingston were frequented by 'people of the vilest characters, (rogues and whores) who, like syrens, attract and delude poor thoughtless sailors'.¹⁰⁸ Undoubtedly, gamblers, thieves and prostitutes made up the 'people of the vilest characters' Moreton described.¹⁰⁹ However, a more transient, but equally 'disreputable' population, also likely frequented these establishments. The commercial and naval activity present in nineteenth-century Kingston, and nearby Port Royal, likely provided a steady flow of clients to these kinds of taverns, including sailors from both the Royal and the merchant navy and those working on the dockyard in Port Royal. In addition, soldiers and crews of foreign naval vessels also probably frequented these establishments.¹¹⁰ For many of Kingston's transient population, as well as the poor and working classes that made the town their home, the tavern was a place to gather, drink, gamble, dance, and socialize. These were community spaces of sociality, pleasure and entertainment.

Lodging homes, spaces closely affiliated to taverns, also served as a 'kind of community centre', a place where guests and non-guests gathered.¹¹¹ According to Paulette A. Kerr's study, nineteenth-century lodging homes in Kingston were often

¹⁰⁸ J. B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners* (London, 1793), p. 35.

¹⁰⁹ Paulette A. Kerr, 'Jamaican Female Lodging House Keepers in the Nineteenth Century', *Jamaican Historical Review*, 18 (1993).

¹¹⁰ The relationship between American soldiers and the local population was not always amicable. Incidences of 'riots' and 'brawls' occurred. For example, see *Colonial Standard and Jamaica Despatch*, 27 January 1852.

¹¹¹ Kerr, 'Jamaican Female Lodging House Keepers', p. 9.

‘indistinguishable’ from taverns, at least in terms of the services they offered.¹¹² Indeed, many lodging house owners also obtained licenses to sell alcohol on their premise as a means of increasing profits.¹¹³ However, the lodging home provided a broader array of services than the tavern. Lodgers and non-lodgers could obtain medical care, postal services, and catering services.¹¹⁴ These establishments, similar to many taverns, were also spaces of entertainment. They were often sites of social dances and parties, including the ‘mulatto balls’ that frequently occurred in Kingston prior to (and possibly after) emancipation.¹¹⁵

Lodging homes were not listed explicitly in anti-prostitution legislation; however, evidence suggests that these spaces were often associated with and criminalized under the 1838 legislation targeting brothels and the ‘ill-governed and disorderly house’. According to the 1844 census, women ran 62.5 per cent of lodging houses in Kingston, many of whom, according to Kerr, were women of colour.¹¹⁶ However, as Kerr argues, there is little evidence that the lodging houses that lined the streets and lanes of Kingston and Port Royal operated solely as ‘brothels’, but instead they may have provided ‘paid-for sexual services’.¹¹⁷ Very fragmentary evidence on the criminalisation of brothels, lodging houses or ‘ill-governed and disorderly houses’ suggests that it was lodging homes in Kingston and Port Royal, particularly those geared towards a poor and working class clientele, that were often targeted by anti-prostitution legislation, at least in the way the

¹¹² Kerr, ‘Jamaican Female Lodging House Keepers’, p. 8.

¹¹³ Boa, ‘Urban Free Black and Coloured Women’, p. 2.; Kerr, ‘Jamaican Female Lodging House Keepers’, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ Paulette A. Kerr, ‘Victims or Strategists? Female lodging-house keepers in Jamaica’, in *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, eds. Verene A Shepherd, et al (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 1995), pp. 205-206.

¹¹⁵ Kerr, ‘Victims or Strategists?’, p. 204. I discussed ‘mulatto balls’ more on page 82.

¹¹⁶ *The Jamaican Censuses*, p. 10; Kerr, ‘Victims or Strategists?’, p. 202.

¹¹⁷ Kerr, ‘Victims or Strategists?’, p. 208.

law was put into practice. Indeed, the predominance of brown women as owners of lodging homes, as well as the ingrained association of these women with sexual-economic exchange in colonial discourse, likely solidified the associations between lodging house and brothel. As one visitor to Kingston in the 1830s stated, free black and brown women ‘have fixed themselves in different parts of the city, and particularly about the suburbs, where they keep very disorderly houses, principally for the reception and entertainment of sailors’. At these establishments, ‘all kinds of drunkenness and debauchery are practiced’.¹¹⁸

Although I have been unable to locate any charge of keeping a ‘common bawdy house’ in the archival records, there are several references in the local newspapers of women being charged with keeping a ‘disorderly’ or ‘ill-governed house’. While most of these references are both brief and incomplete, they do speak to the entanglement between a boarding or lodging house and ‘disorderly and ill-governed house’ or brothel, at least when courts enforced the 1838 law. For example, in May 1850, Ann Cephas was brought before the magistrate and charged with ‘keeping a disorderly house’. The prosecution sought to prove that despite her claim that the two houses on Temple Lane were ‘lodging homes’, they operated as brothels, as spaces of prostitution, and were a ‘nuisance’. Temple lane, along with several other back streets in Kingston’s downtown core, was notorious during this period and later in the century for its lively taverns and gatherings of women of questionable repute. The prosecution called upon two neighbours to act as witnesses. Both witnesses testified before the magistrate that Cephas’ house was not just a lodging home, but a ‘house of ill fame’. According to one of the neighbours, Emanuel Perez, ‘several women reside in Cephas’s house who make their living by

¹¹⁸ Bernard Martin Senior, *Jamaica, As It Was, As It Is, and As It May Be* (London, 1835), p. 122.

prostitution' and for the past two years gatherings at the houses had been a source of nuisance. Perez claimed that the American steamers that came into Kingston Harbour to refuel and restock brought with them an increased traffic of men to Cephas' home. At all times of the day and night you could hear 'fiddling, drumming, dancing, and getting drunk, making use of indecent language, swearing &c', he asserted, all to the annoyance of respectable neighbours.¹¹⁹ Another neighbour also testified against Cephas. Maryann Smith stated that the 'nuisance' had begun the previous year when the women of the house had quarrelled and abused her 'on various occasions'. 'Men and women generally go in there', and 'on the arrival of the Steamers from California there is always a great noise in her house'. Based on the testimony against her, the magistrate deemed that 'the evidence was very contradictory' and the prosecution was unable to prove the charges against Cephas.¹²⁰ The case against Cephas was the most complete case of a woman (or man) charged with keeping a brothel that I have been able to locate within either the court records available or newspapers for the period under study in this chapter. Without further evidence it is difficult to determine why the evidence was 'very contradictory' and why Cephas was not charged. The prosecution was unable to prove that what Cephas claimed was a lodging house, was indeed a brothel where sexual services were obtainable. Perhaps, because the 'brothel' was not clearly defined in law, nor seemingly defined by precedence, the magistrate presiding over this case felt unable to make a judgement. It is also possible that the magistrate decided that the houses on Temple Lane were not primarily spaces of sexual labour and where indeed 'lodging homes', as Cephas claimed. Either way, this case does illuminate how elite and 'respectable' members of

¹¹⁹ *Colonial Standard and Jamaica Dispatch*, 30 May 1850; *Morning Journal*, 30 May 1850.

¹²⁰ *Colonial Standard and Jamaica Dispatch*, 30 May 1850.

society represented such women and establishments. The behaviour of the women that lived at this home, the way they socialized with men from the steamers, and the nuisance they created for other presumably 'decent' members of society, indicated that they were of loose moral and sexual character. Even if they could not prove it in court, within discourse these women were 'common prostitutes'.

Conclusion

The 'common prostitute' emerged in law as a part of larger concerns over labour and public order in the post-slavery period. The vagrancy legislation was the first colony-wide legislation to include the 'common prostitute' as a legal category, but others would follow. In the immediate post-slavery period, legislators passed two other measures that included clauses targeting the operation of sexual-economic exchange and spaces of public entertainment frequented by poor urban men and women. I have shown that gendered ideas of public and private sphere and notions of respectability informed these laws. Although these laws were implemented to target the 'common prostitute' the lack of court records or accounts in newspapers suggest that they were rarely enforced. However, when they were enforced, the application of these laws seemed to have depended less on whether or not a woman was engaged in sexual-economic exchange or was a 'common prostitute', but instead were applied as a means of criminalizing poor urban women thought to be a nuisance or disruptive to public order. Women who transgressed respectable boundaries of public sociality and public space were represented as disreputable and threatening to 'decent' members of society. Thus, laws enacted to

address women understood to be engaged in sexual-economic exchange seemed to have been applied quite broadly to women in public that authorities found to be disorderly, whether or not they were selling sex. In the case of Eliza Holmes and the other women discussed in this chapter, we cannot know for certain whether or not they actually engaged in transactional sex. Based on the archival records available, there is no way to completely disentangle those who engaged in sexual-economic exchange from those who did not. Such entanglements reflect the lack of distinction colonial authorities made between the ‘common prostitute’ and other poor urban women. It is also indicative of the complex interplay in colonial discourse around sexual labour, space and behaviour. The anti-prostitution legislation associated specific behaviours, beyond solicitation or the sale of sex, with sexual labour. Women engaging in these behaviours and in certain spaces, also indicated in the legislation, were thus marked as ‘common prostitutes’. Meanwhile, the presence of women thought to be ‘common prostitutes’ in certain spaces, such as taverns and lodging homes, became indicative of these locations as spaces of prostitution. Women found within these marked spaces were thus assumed to be ‘loose’ women. Thus, while the records do not reveal much about the specific operations of sexual labour, they do divulge the way poor urban women were understood by colonial authorities, as potential prostitutes and sources of ‘disorder’.

Chapter 5: Sex, Black Bodies, and the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica

In 1893, Enos Nuttall, the Bishop of Jamaica, wrote to the General Synod of the Church of England and members of the Committee of Social Purity Society in London about ‘a serious danger’ that had engulfed the colony of Jamaica: venereal disease.¹ In 1885, the Synod had established a branch of the Social Purity Society in Jamaica, under Nuttall’s leadership, in order to promote moral ‘purity’ amongst both men and women.² In a collective effort by the local branch and the Dissenting churches in the colony, a memorial was submitted to the Legislative Council and Colonial Office. The memorial raised several points related to the sexual immorality that they understood to be prevalent in the island that was of ‘great importance as affecting the moral condition of Jamaica’. However, it was the demand for the re-establishment of colony-wide contagious diseases legislation that Nuttall feared would raise controversy in England and therefore required the greatest explanation. In 1886, religious and feminist bodies in Britain had successfully lobbied to have the Contagious Diseases Acts—legislation that regulated sexual labour—repealed both at home and subsequently in the colonies. Seven years later the Bishop of Jamaica was calling for the re-enactment of legislation that targeted the operation of sexual-economic exchange and the spread of disease in the colony because it was based on ‘different principles’ to the infamous Contagious Diseases Acts.³ As he wrote, ‘[t]he instance of the question

¹ NLJ, MS 209. Letter from Enos Nuttall to Rev. R. Wheler, 18 March 1893.

² Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, “‘Fallen Sisters’? Attitudes to Female Prostitution in Jamaica at the Turn of the Twentieth Century’, *Journal of Caribbean History*, 34 (2000), p. 122.

³ NLJ, MS 209. Letter from Enos Nuttall to Rev. R. Wheler, 18 March 1893.

here lies in the fact that, if the medical reports be true, there is (having in view our social conditions) a serious danger threatening a large section of our population which however could not with any clear understanding of the facts, be recognized as belonging to what is known as the prostitute classes of that nature'.⁴ Unlike in Britain and other parts of the Empire, in Jamaica the spread of venereal disease could not be attributed only to the 'prostitute classes'.⁵ Instead, Nuttall argued that the sexual practices of the black women and men of the island, particularly those of the lower order, had created a scourge throughout the island. For this reason, although his counterparts in Britain supported the repeal of the legislation, Nuttall felt that in Jamaica such legislation was necessary in order to address the sexual immorality and disease in the colony.

This chapter uses the Contagious Diseases Act as a means of exploring discourses on sexual-economic exchange, race and venereal disease in Post-Morant Bay Jamaica. Contagious disease regulations have been the focus of several very important studies in the historiography of sexual-economic exchange. Since Judith Walkowitz's seminal study on the operation of regulationist measures in the Britain, several scholars have explored the Contagious Diseases Act at 'home' and in the 'colonies'.⁶ There is a large body of works that have explored the development, implementation and repeal of contagious diseases legislation in

⁴ NLJ, MS 209. Letter from Enos Nuttall to Rev. R. Wheler, 18 March 1893.

⁵ NLJ, MS 209. Letter from Enos Nuttall to Rev. R. Wheler, 18 March 1893.

⁶ Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge, 1980); Constance Backhouse, 'Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law: Reflection of a Discriminatory Society', *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 18 (1986), pp. 387-424; Francis B. Smith, 'The Contagious Diseases Acts Reconsidered', *Social History of Medicine*, 3 (1990), pp. 197-215; Miles Ogborn, 'Law and discipline in nineteenth century English state formation: the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 6 (1993), pp. 28-55; Elizabeth B. Van Heyningen, 'The Social Evil in the Cape Colony, 1868-1902: Prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Acts', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10 (1984), pp. 170-197.

India.⁷ The application of the legislation in other British colonies has also received attention amongst historians.⁸ Drawing on recent efforts within ‘New Imperial History’ to examine both colony and metropole within a single analytical framework, Philippa Levine and Philip Howell have taken a trans-imperial approach to their explorations of contagious diseases regulation.⁹ In her 2003 monograph, Levine explores contagious diseases ordinances in four different British colonies—Hong Kong, India, Queensland, and the Straits Settlement. Using a comparative approach, she argues that the application of contagious diseases legislation in these four colonies was informed by racial and gendered assumptions of the colonized. The regulation of venereal disease and prostitution may have been the focus of contagious diseases legislation, but as Levine argues, it serves also as ‘a valuable lens through which to examine many of the presuppositions on which Britain’s political and moral assumptions of colonial power rested’.¹⁰ Within her study, Levine centres race as a primary element in the variations of the contagious disease ordinances throughout the British Empire. Howell also explores the management and control of prostitution in several different sites, in Britain and in the Empire. Similar to Levine’s text, Howell argues that in their application in the metropole, as in the colonies, contagious disease regulations were ‘imperial

⁷ For example: K. Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905* (London, 1980); David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley, 1993); Ratnabali Chatterjee, ‘Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Bengal: Construction of Class and Gender’, *Social Scientist*, 21 (1993), pp. 159-172.

⁸ Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing venereal disease in the British Empire* (New York, 2003); Philip Howell, *Geographies of Regulation: Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the Empire* (Cambridge, 2009).

⁹ Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, ‘Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda’, in Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), p.15.

¹⁰ Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics*, p. 3.

legislation’ in that the ‘practical and discursive context’ was bound up with ideas of race, gender and imperialism. However, as Howell argues, though race was important, it was not equally fundamental for the application of these measures in all colonies. Instead, attempts to regulate commercialized sexual labour in the Empire ‘produced distinctive local landscapes, microgeographies of managed sexuality dependent on micro-tactics of localisation, containment and segregation’.¹¹ Thus, the Contagious Diseases Acts played out in different localities in variable ‘piecemeal’ ways. ‘There was no single blueprint’, Howell argues, ‘only located and localised practices’.¹² Inspired by both Levine’s emphasis on the race in the operation of the contagious diseases legislation and Howell’s assertion that ‘spatiality’ was integral to how such legislation was put into practice, this chapter explores the particular nuances, the ‘located and localised practices’, of contagious diseases legislation in Jamaica.

In these and other studies of the Contagious Diseases Acts, the application of the legislation to the colonies in the British West Indies has received little more than a brief mention, often within a footnote.¹³ The only study of the contagious diseases ordinance in the British Caribbean is a chapter by Denise Challenger. She provides an empirically rich study of the lock hospital established as a part of the Contagious Diseases Acts in Bridgetown, Barbados, and shows how women and girls incarcerated in the hospital negotiated sites of power in order to exert their agency, freedom and opposition to the

¹¹ Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, p. 232.

¹² Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, p. 21.

¹³ For instance, Levine states in a footnote that the ‘Caribbean colonies...had generally used the regulation less vigorously’ and therefore did not receive much attention from British campaigns for its repeal or extension in the colonies. See Philippa Levine, ‘Rereading the 1890s: Venereal Disease as “Constitutional Crisis” in Britain and British India’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 55 (1996), p. 588, n. 6. This is one of the few mentions of the Contagious Diseases Act in Levine’s work or Howell’s study.

coercive tactics that formed part of the medical discipline used in the lock hospital. Although only a chapter within a larger monograph, Challenger's work provides insight of how imperial legislation operated in a post-emancipation slave society. However, her study is limited to the operation of the Acts in relation to the Contagious Diseases Hospital. My chapter attends to a broader discussion of the political discourses surrounding the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica, as well as the local discourses surrounding the repeal of this legislation.

This chapter contributes to this growing body of literature on contagious diseases legislation by exploring how imperial legislation was 'located and localised' in the post-emancipation colony of Jamaica. The contagious diseases legislation was in operation in Jamaica for only twenty years. However, in this short period the implementation, operation and repeal of the legislation brought the issue of sexual-economic exchange, and sexual culture in the island more generally, once again within colonial political and public discourse. The intensified frequency with which prostitution was discussed in the local newspapers, the development of humanitarian organizations specifically targeting the 'fallen women', and the creation of laws directly addressing prostitution that emerged after the enactment of Contagious Diseases Act in 1867 speaks to the significance of this legislation in bringing to the public attention the operation of sexual-economic exchange. Indeed, the contagious diseases legislation has also provided another moment, the first since the abolition of slavery, in which discourses on sexual-economic exchange is readily available within official archival records.

In this chapter, I argue that contagious diseases legislation was used locally to control the operation of sexual-economic exchange and the spread of venereal diseases,

not only as a means of protecting the imperial forces, but also as a way of saving the black civilian population morally and physically from the ‘social evils’ of non-marital and transactional sex. Although the Act was instigated for the benefit of naval and military forces in the southern part of the colony, it was also used to address local issues amongst the civilian population. The management of venereal disease and sexual-economic exchange, a practice associated with the moral corruption of society, as well as venereal disease, were part of the ‘civilising mission’.¹⁴ Couched within language of disease, the legislation marked a renewed effort on the part of colonial legislators and authorities to bring the sexual proclivities of the island’s poor black women—and men—into line with Anglo-British ideals of gender and sexual morality. Although race was not central in the construction or implementation of the legislation, in discourses surrounding the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act local authorities drew upon preconceived notions of the ‘negro character’, sanitation and sexuality. Legislators and colonial authorities interpreted the resistance to the legislation in the subjugated areas, plus the prevalence of venereal disease amongst the civilian population across the island, as evidence for the need for the expansion of the Contagious Diseases Acts. Despite the moral concerns around the legislation from various organizations in Britain and India, colonial officials and religious leaders, including the Bishop of Jamaica, argued that such legislation was necessary to address the sexual praxis of not only the ‘common prostitute’ but the larger black public.

In the years following the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica, there was intensified discourse around the ‘common prostitute’ in the colony’s urban spaces. This noticeable increase in both official records and newspapers coincided with

¹⁴ Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics*, p. 9.

the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Act and the systematic enumeration of the ‘common prostitute’. The reports on how women behaved in public and in spaces of ‘ill-repute’ differed little from that articulated in the fragmentary Port Royal records from the 1830s. However, the statistical documentation, surveillance, and regulation of the public forms of sexual-economic exchange allowed colonial officials to back up claims that prostitution and the spread of venereal disease was prevalent. The reports, which were not just shared amongst colonial and metropolitan officials but were made publically available within *The Governor’s Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (*Blue Books*), were published annually. It is unclear how much of this information informed or influenced wider public opinion in the colony. However, local officials, religious leaders, such as Nuttall, and newspapers referred to these reports in their discussions of sexual labour and disease. As quoted above, Nuttall referred to the ‘medical reports’ as evidence of the prevalence of venereal disease in Jamaica in his letter to London. Moreover, there was a noticeable rise in the number of newspapers articles discussing the common prostitute in the period after the introduction of the contagious diseases legislation. Both the *Gleaner* and the *Colonial Standard* produced less than fifteen articles between them discussing either women engaged in sexual-economic exchange or venereal disease from 1834 to 1867. However, between January and June 1880, there were at least seventeen articles describing the public behaviour of ‘depraved women’ or the prevalence of venereal disease in Kingston in the *Colonial Standard* alone.¹⁵ The reports published in the *Blue Books*, on which this chapter relies heavily,

¹⁵ This assessment is based on the examination of *The Gleaner* for the years 1834, 1837, 1858, and 1865 to 1867; and the *Colonial Standard* for the years 1844 to 1853, 1858 and 1864 to 1867. While the fragmentary nature of newspapers available for this period of study has made it difficult to do any systematic calculation of the numbers of articles, an examination of these two newspapers covering years from 1834 to 1867 has

goes a long way in explaining why there was an intensification of discourse, and archival material, on the ‘problem’ of prostitution in late nineteenth-century Jamaica.

This chapter is divided into three interrelated sections. The first is concerned with the political, social and ideological shifts that occurred in Jamaica from the 1850s. I argue that widespread poverty, disease and protest, particularly the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865, negatively impacted attitudes towards the ‘lower orders’ of society. Colonial authorities and elites, including missionaries who had previously advocated on behalf of the ‘negro’, now viewed legislatively driven efforts to civilise the colony as the only means of ‘uplifting’ the island’s poor black population. The introduction of the contagious diseases legislation was a part of this renewed ‘civilising’ mission.

The second section focuses on the ‘Prevention for Better regulation of Contagious Diseases’ or the Contagious Diseases Act, for short. I begin this section by discussing discourses in Europe and Jamaica on venereal disease and its associations with sexual-economic exchange and race—the foundations of the contagious diseases legislation. Next, I explore some of the similarities and differences between the legislation enacted in parts of the Empire, Britain and the Caribbean. I argue that the legislation introduced in Jamaica held many similarities with legislation in the metropole and other parts of the Empire. However, it also included and omitted specific clauses that made it distinct and set it apart from legislation enacted in other colonies.

The final section of this chapter focuses specifically on the application of the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica. I explore the specific tactics developed by local

provided the ability to make a reasonable assessment of the discourses found within them prior to the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica in 1867. Moreover, compared with the frequency of newspaper reports in the *Colonial Standard* alone between January and June 1880, it is fair to argue that newspapers in Kingston discussing the ‘common prostitute’ and venereal disease was more frequent in the post-1867 period.

legislators to enforce the legislation and the way ‘common prostitutes’ responded to the policing of their bodies and freedoms. I go on to examine the discourses that developed amongst local officials regarding venereal disease and the ‘negro character’. Motivated by racial understandings of black sexuality, understandings that were supported by statistics gathered on the ‘common prostitute’ and venereal disease under the dictates of the contagious disease law, local religious and colonial officials advocated for the extension of the Contagious Diseases Act, even after it had been repealed in 1887. This anti-repeal position was reflective of the discourses around the sexualized racialization of poor black Jamaicans during this period. By examining the discourses around the operations of the contagious diseases legislation within the context of Jamaica, this chapter will show the way efforts to regulate and manage sexual-economic exchange and disease contributed to representations of black bodies and sexual immorality in the colony.

Venereal Disease, Prostitution and the African Body

Contagious diseases legislation enacted throughout the empire were informed by understandings of venereal disease, prostitution, and racial difference. The implementation of the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica in 1867 drew upon similar discourses, as well as local understandings of African bodies and sexual culture.

Associations between female bodies and disease were made in early medical discourses and stemmed from widely held understandings of the inferiority and abnormal nature of the female body in relation to male bodies. According to Thomas Laqueur’s study on

shifting understandings of sex and the body, up until the late seventeenth century Western conceptions were predicated on understandings of a 'one-sex model'. This model owed its development to the Greco-Roman physician Galen who, writing in the second century AD, argued that women were in fact 'imperfect men', their difference only in likeness, but not in kind. In Galen's theorization, the female reproductive organs had simply been retained within the body because of a lack of 'vital heat'. Thus, the vagina was imagined as an interior penis, the labia as foreskin, the uterus as scrotum, and the ovaries as testicles.¹⁶ The two-sex model eventually replaced the one-sex model in the eighteenth century after cultural shifts in understandings between masculinity and femininity. It was only after this time, Laqueur contends, that science 'fleshed out...categories "male" and "female" as opposite and incommensurable biological sexes'.¹⁷ Within this oppositional model, the masculine body was conceived as the natural and healthy body, while the female body was its opposite, abnormal and diseased. Accordingly, within widely held discourse that circulated among medical physicians, but also the general public, men were repeatedly represented as the 'victim of disease' and 'women as its source'.¹⁸

The oppositional model of sex contributed to medical advances in understandings of the symptomatology and the spread of venereal disease, particularly gonorrhoea. Until the early nineteenth century, understandings among medical authorities as to the spread and symptoms of venereal diseases remained 'vague' and 'confused'. As Mary Spongberg argues, a main source of this confusion rested on what appeared to be differing effects of gonorrhoea on the male and female body. Gonorrhoea seemed to have

¹⁶ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 126.

¹⁷ Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 154; and Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse* (New York, 1990), pp. 1-14.

¹⁸ Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 3.

a more severe effect on the male body, while the female body appeared often ‘asymptomatic’. Recent theorizations on sexual difference along with advances in medical theories of viruses, including the realization that gonorrhoea infected internal organs, ‘radically’ transformed the confused and muddled understandings of venereal disease.¹⁹ Instead of focusing on the outward appearances of syphilis and gonorrhoea, specifically ‘the scabs, sores, chancres and pustules that graced the penis’, doctors began paying more attention to vaginal discharges. The focus on the natural secretions of the female body led many medical authorities to argue that it was possible for all women to carry the ‘taint’ of venereal infections. Thus, by the 1830s, the female body had become pathologized as site of disease and (hidden) danger for men.²⁰

While all women were constructed as potential carriers of the disease, it was the female body that was most closely associated with promiscuous and uncontrolled sex—the prostitute’s body—that emerged at the forefront of concerns around the spread of the disease and the focus of regulatory measures aimed at stopping its spread in the nineteenth century. Medical and scientific studies produced in the first decades of the century in Britain regularly pointed to the particular danger that the prostitute’s body posed. Within these discourses, prostitutes were often represented as distinct from other women. Their degeneration was read on their bodies as medical and anthropological studies pointed to the physical differences that could distinguish the diseased from the non-diseased female body. As several scholars have argued in studies of venereal disease, prostitution and the body, by the mid nineteenth century, medical authorities began asserting that women infected with venereal disease could be distinguished by the way

¹⁹ Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 5.

²⁰ Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 6.

they looked. Their outer bodies revealed the hidden disease within. By reading the female body, women who were sexual promiscuous or prostitutes and therefore infected could be identified and exposed.²¹

Developments in medical understandings of venereal disease and the pathologization of prostitutes in Europe did not happen in a vacuum, but was informed by encounters and the accumulated ‘knowledge’ of venereal disease and ‘other’ women encountered in the colonies, specifically the black female body. As Sander Gilman has shown in his study of ‘difference and pathology’, European medical authorities associated the diseased prostitute to that of the body, specifically the buttocks and genitalia, of black women. What became ‘scientific’ fact in the mid-nineteenth century medical literature likely drew on ingrained understandings of racial difference, which posited that black men and women held uncontrolled passions and were promiscuous.

Developments within medical discourse in Britain occurred simultaneously with cultural understandings of disease and sex in Jamaica and the (tropical) Caribbean colonies. From as early as 1780, venereal infections were associated with moral corruption and ‘otherness’. White Creole men were implicated in the contraction and spreading of the disease and were thought to pose a threat to the stability and morality of the colony. As Trevor Burnard and Richard Follett argue, the medicalisation of venereal disease changed its cultural meaning in the colony from a sign of virility and masculinity to a stigmatized disease in the late eighteenth century. Abolitionists used this changing meaning to discredit Creole planters as debauched, sexually licentious, and fundamentally un-British, ‘divorced from new currents of British masculinity favoured

²¹ Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 1; and, Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca, 1985).

by evangelical reformers'.²² Thus, as notions of respectability began to shift in the colony in the first decades of the nineteenth century, venereal disease and its associations with sexual promiscuity became a marker of degradation and immorality.

In Jamaica, medical manuals, mostly written for slave owners, regularly discussed venereal disease as affecting enslaved bodies differently than white bodies. For instance, in his manual *The Medical Assistant* published in 1819, Dr. Thomas Dancer, a prominent and long-time resident and physician in Jamaica, stressed to his readers the differences in the strain of 'lues venerea' found amongst the enslaved in Jamaica.²³ According to Dancer, although less severe, the way the disease manifested in the 'negro' made it more difficult to detect and to treat.²⁴ This was particularly true for the black female body. While the manual, like others of a similar description, provided pages on how to cure syphilis in slave men, there was a complete absence of discussion on cures for enslaved women. Instead, Dancer warned his readers that an enslaved woman 'may have all the symptoms' of the disease 'without being really affected...whilst it sometimes happens that, without any apparent symptoms of distemper, she may be capable of giving infection to those connected with her. Of this, however extraordinary it may seem, there are, among negro women, many and indubitable instances'.²⁵ Syphilis was described as holding many of the same 'invisible' properties associated with gonorrhoea in British and European medical discourses. Like in the bodies of women infected with gonorrhoea, syphilis in black female bodies in Jamaica was represented almost as an agent, elusive

²² Trevor Burnard and Richard Follett, 'Caribbean Slavery, British Anti-Slavery, and the Cultural Politics of Venereal Disease', *The Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), p. 430.

²³ Thomas Dancer, *The Medical Assistant, or Jamaica Practice of Physic: Designed Chiefly for the Use of Families and Plantations* (Kingston, 1801).

²⁴ Dancer, *The Medical Assistant*, p. 208.

²⁵ Dancer, *The Medical Assistant*, p. 221.

and unseen, disguising itself as something else, making it difficult to diagnose and cure.²⁶ Instead of providing a remedy for women, medical manuals of the early nineteenth century provided warnings to white men as to the danger of the black female body. Thus, both medical discourses in Jamaica and in Europe were built on highly gendered and racialized notions of difference as a means of distinguishing diseased female bodies, the prostitutes and the black woman. By the mid-nineteenth century, the pathologization of prostitution and associations with the spread of venereal infections had become ingrained and widespread in medical, public health and legal discourses. As Miles Ogborn writes, from the 1850s ‘medical and legal knowledge and power’ had become so inextricably linked that public health officials, including physicians, had become ‘increasingly involved in formulating legislation’.²⁷ Thus, it was only in relation to sexual labour that legislation addressing venereal disease was encapsulated, even as its application was broadly applied. Associations between venereal disease, race and the ‘common prostitute’ were foundational in the formulation of contagious diseases legislation that began appearing across the British Empire from the 1850s. However, equally important in understanding the adoption of this legislation in Jamaica was the local socio-political and cultural context.

Socio-political Transformations and the ‘Civilising Mission’

The introduction of the contagious diseases legislation in Jamaica in 1867 occurred amidst social and political upheaval and strife in the colony. These conditions affected

²⁶ Dancer, *The Medical Assistant*, pp. 207-215 and p. 221.

²⁷ Miles Ogborn, ‘Law and Discipline in Nineteenth Century English State Formation: The Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869’, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 6 (1993), p. 29.

colonial legislation and attitudes towards the ‘lower orders’ of society, including women engaged in sexual-economic exchange. The ‘common prostitute’, while always an annoyance to ‘respectable’ members of society and colonial officials, as discussed in the last chapter, became a central target within efforts to ‘civilize’ the population.

By the 1850s, Kingston had become a space of congestion, malnutrition, disease, violence, crime and endemic poverty. The lack of sanitation and overcrowding in town caused a series of outbreaks in quick succession in the early years of the 1850s. In 1850 the cholera epidemic resulted in 32,000 deaths and was followed by a smallpox epidemic two years later. In 1853, typhoid fever and cholera wreaked havoc on the people of Kingston. An estimated quarter of the population died from the latter epidemic, most of whom were buried in mass graves.²⁸ As a result, the Colonial Office sent out a medical inspector, Dr. Gavin Milroy, in 1853 to investigate and write a report on the cholera epidemic and the state of health and sanitation in the island. Evidence given as part of the inquiry from ‘medical men, from different parts of the island, as to the sanitary measures which they might deem most necessary for the public health’ revealed that most of these officials blamed the poor conditions on abject poverty amongst the black population throughout the island, but particularly in the urban towns.²⁹ According to a statement given by Dr. Chamberlain regarding Kingston, ‘the amount of pauperism is very great’ and nearly ‘half the number of the inhabitants do not know how to provide for themselves with subsistence, and they shift among themselves from morning to night as they best

²⁸ Health Sector Task Force, *A Health Jamaica is a Healthy World* (Kingston, 2007), p. 23. <<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/rha/rhareport.pdf>> (23 April 2012).

²⁹ Gavin Milroy, *Report on the Cholera in Jamaica and on the General Sanitary Condition and Wants of the Island* (London, 1853), p. 79.

can'.³⁰ For Milroy, the dismal living conditions found in slums of Kingston had caused 'the retrograding' of 'the bulk of the people...both in morals and in enlightenment'. As Milroy stated in his report, '[t]here is certainly no subject which more urgently demands immediate attention than this. The domiciliary condition of the mass of the people in Jamaica is wretched in the extreme; it is scarcely possible for it to be worse'.³¹ Despite Milroy's scathing report on the living condition of Jamaica's poor, it was not until the upheaval in the rural town of Morant Bay, just under sixty kilometres east of Kingston, that colonial authorities took notice and enacted reforms in the island to address these conditions and the question of progress in the colony.

The endemic poverty and deplorable living conditions found in the slums of Kingston by mid-century were representative of the poor living conditions of the majority of the population throughout Jamaica. From Spanish Town to Morant Bay, Savanna-la-Mar to Annatto Bay, the formerly enslaved struggled to provide for themselves and their families. Even as some attempted to exercise citizenship, writing letters and petitions to the governor and Queen and other tools to express their grievances to colonial authorities and demand social reforms, racial and class hierarchies of power long established during slavery hindered any real progress. As Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson so aptly note, the formerly enslaved struggled to 'translate the legal freedom won' with emancipation into 'the language of equality—social, political and economic—and to share the same civil rights and privileges that white inhabitants of the island had always enjoyed'. Meanwhile, the elites struggled to maintain the 'status quo of white dominance

³⁰ Milroy, *Report on the Cholera*, p. 92.

³¹ Milroy, *Report on the Cholera*, p. 102.

and black servitude’ established in the years of slavery.³² A series of protest and riots in various parts of the island in the early 1850s should have been a warning to colonial authorities of the heated tensions arising throughout the colony, tensions that eventually boiled over in the small rural town of Morant Bay.³³

After emancipation, what Philip D. Curtin calls the ‘two Jamaicas’—that is, two distinct classes of the population polarized by poverty and wealth—‘were set on a collision course’. The collision finally occurred on 11 October 1865 when the Black Baptist leader Paul Bogle, along with other members of the black peasantry, marched to the courthouse in Morant Bay in protest of the widespread and appalling economic conditions and injustices they faced.³⁴ When the group of protestors arrived, they were met by a small number of volunteer militia and police. The protesters demanded the release of several members of the community that were being held prisoner for protesting a few days before. The demonstrators, faced by the inexperienced militia, began throwing rocks and sticks. The militiamen responded by opening fire on the crowd killing seven people before being overwhelmed by the protestors. In the chaos, a total of eighteen people, including white officials and militiamen, were killed and the courthouse burned to the ground. The governor at the time, John Eyre, declared martial law in St. Thomas, and sent in government troops to hunt down those who had engaged in the disturbance and put out any further protest. The troops found little fight amongst the poorly armed peasantry. Still, they were brutal in their attempts to round up all the demonstrators;

³² Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865–1920* (Kingston, 2004), p. 1.

³³ For a more detailed account of the Morant Bay rebellion and its aftermath, see Gad Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* (London, 1994).

³⁴ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 2; also Philip D. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830–1865* (Westport, 1968).

killing poor black people indiscriminately, many of whom had not been involved in the confrontation at the courthouse. When all was done, the soldiers had killed 439 blacks. Summary trials resulted in an additional 354 executions, including that of Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, a man of colour and opponent of Eyre blamed for inciting the protest. Over 600 people, including pregnant women and children, were flogged and thousands of homes destroyed.

As news of the protest and its suppression reached London, many politicians and influential public figures voiced shock and horror at the extreme measures used by Governor Eyre to put down what by this point was labelled ‘a riot’. While Eyre received support from some in the metropole, when he returned to England the following year he was tried for murder, although he was eventually acquitted. While Morant Bay incited serious debate in Britain and raised many questions around colonial rule, the reverberations of the protests and its aftermath in the lives of the working class and poor in Jamaica, in addition to changes that occurred in the political and social structuring of the island, were astounding. As several historians have shown, the Morant Bay protest marked a key moment in Jamaican history and one of the most important in the post-emancipation period. It was the ‘high point of a struggle’ that had endured since slavery between the formerly enslaved and colonial elite.³⁵ For many whites in the island, the riots reaffirmed the notion of what Patrick Bryan calls ‘black combustibility’, that is that blacks were inherently unruly and needed the strong-arm of white rule to keep their

³⁵ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 2; see also Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*; Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore, 1992); and, Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Oxford, 1981).

‘combustibility’ from erupting.³⁶ Further, the riots demonstrated to both colonial and metropolitan authorities that the white oligarchy were unfit to continue ruling the island. What resulted was a complete political overhaul in the island and renewed efforts to bring civilization to the colony and amongst the unruly black population.

For many whites in Jamaica and the metropole, the behaviour of the black peasantry, as demonstrated at Morant Bay, left them ‘shocked and disillusioned’. It reignited anxieties and fears of ‘black rebellions’ and massacres that had been so prevalent amongst the small white minority during slavery. It also signalled for many whites, including missionaries, the failure of the abolitionist project to Christianize and ‘civilize’ the black population of Jamaica. As Catherine Hall shows, during the period preceding emancipation the missionary was regarded as the ‘friend of the “negro”’. Many blacks and browns received religious instruction, attended church services regularly and were married. However, by the 1850s the influence of the English dissenter churches became to wane and black participation decreased.³⁷ In 1861 and 1862, there was renewed enthusiasm for Afro-Creole religious doctrine. As Thomas C. Holt notes, it was ‘of a kind the regular denominations disdained and feared’.³⁸ The combination of religious revivalism, in addition to increases in crime and unemployment, the decline in legal marriages that had followed the immediate post-slavery period and the steady increase in illegitimacy rates, was a clear indication for many that blacks required harsher legal, social and cultural mechanisms if they were to become civilized.³⁹

³⁶ Patrick Bryan, *The Jamaican People, 1880-1902: Race, Class, and Social Control* (Kingston, 2000), p. 22.

³⁷ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago, 2002), p. 206.

³⁸ Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 290.

³⁹ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 5.

For several missionaries, the events of 11 October 1865 showed that the black population had regressed morally back into a state of ‘barbarism’.⁴⁰ According to Curtin, a gulf subsequently developed between missionaries and the formerly enslaved. Catherine Hall draws a similar conclusion in her study of Baptist missionaries in Jamaica before and after emancipation. According to Hall, missionary’s convictions that without the institution of slavery and with the right Christian education they could make the formerly enslaved into black British subjects, that is, ‘Black people living in the image of the middle-class English people’, and a new society in which they provided the leadership, was shaken by Morant Bay. As she states, ‘[b]y 1866 none of the Baptist missionaries left on the island had the same hopes or dreams as they had in the late 1830s’. While some missionaries, such as James Phillippo, remained hopeful that ‘civilization’ could be achieved amongst the poor blacks, for others, ‘what had once been pity, with its paternalistic connotations, became antagonism and a defence of white superiority’.⁴¹ Many white missionaries began increasingly aligning themselves politically with white Creoles. Although in the previous decades missionaries and the colonial elite had shared a tense and antagonistic relationship, following Morant Bay missionaries joined with mainstream churches and elite society in consolidated efforts to civilize and Christianize the island’s majority black population. The sympathies they may have once held for the island’s poor blacks were replaced by hardening attitudes around racial difference and the need for stringent laws if ‘progress’ was to occur in the island. Thus as Moore and Johnson put it, Morant Bay became a ‘critical watershed in the changing cultural landscape of Jamaican society’. Missionaries, secular whites and

⁴⁰ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 171.

⁴¹ Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, p. 172 and pp. 199-200; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 137 and pp. 263-4.

colonial authorities became united in their determination to 'enlighten' Jamaica, 'to drag it, if need be, out of its darkness towards the light' through legislation that would bring to the colony 'law order, justice and civilization'.⁴² The regulation and suppression of sexual-economic exchange and immoral sexual practices became central within these renewed concentrated efforts. As Levine so eloquently puts it, '[I]ike the crumbling civilizations or "primitive" social structures to which she was compared, the prostitute was a throwback, a reminder of why imperial expansion was a "civilizing mission"'.⁴³

In the year following the protests at Morant Bay, the Jamaican constitution was suspended, the Assembly disbanded and Crown rule instituted. Sir John Peter Grant, a former administrator in India and Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was asked to take up the post as governor. Known for his liberal policies and as 'friend of an oppressed race' to colonial administrators in Bengal, upon his arrival in Jamaica, Grant implemented a series of social, cultural and economic reforms in an effort to bring peace, stability and prosperity to the island.⁴⁴ The new government resorted to methods of 'coercion and control on the one hand and consent and cooperation on the other'.⁴⁵ Under Crown rule, the Queen-appointed governor held complete executive and legislative control, although officials appointed by the Colonial Office advised him as part of the Legislative Council. The governor elected persons of 'substance' and 'influence' (essentially wealthy white planters and merchants) to sit in the new Legislative Council; however, it was not long before the local ruling elite realized their opinions carried very little weight in the

⁴² Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 171.

⁴³ Philippa Levine, "'A Multitude of Unchaste Women:' Prostitution in the British Empire', *Journal of Women's History*, 15 (2004), p. 160.

⁴⁴ Iltudus Thomas Prichard, *The Administration of India from 1859-1868: The First Ten Years of Administration Under the Crown, Volume 1* (London, 1869), p. 148.

⁴⁵ Henrice Altink, 'Deviant and Dangerous: Pro-Slavery Representations of Jamaican Slave Women's Sexuality, c. 1780-1834', *Slavery and Abolition*, 26 (2005), p. 272.

decisions made by the Governor.⁴⁶ The Crown Government took the official stance of being an impartial government in which race was not a factor in politics. However, as Patrick Bryan argues, race was instrumental in the Colonial Office and in the reforms and legislative measures enacted in the colony. The reforms instigated by Grant, soon referred to as ‘paternal despotism’ by the colonists, ensured that black and people of colour had only ‘a rigidly circumscribed participation’ in colonial politics.⁴⁷

Both the reforms and the reorganization of the colony’s political and social system held the goal of stabilizing the economy and decreasing the anxieties and tensions that fractured the diverse population of the island.⁴⁸ While the reforms were based on the failure of the elites to rule the ‘disorderly’ black population, it was the notion that progress and civilization could hardly be detected among the formerly enslaved that shaped the kinds of reforms instituted.⁴⁹ Thus, the goal of the government was to ‘devote itself impartially to the interests of both races, and which, in the interest of the negro, shall charge itself with the triple functions of protection, guidance, and control’.⁵⁰ Among the many reforms brought into operation was the reorganization of the revenue department, the building of new infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and an irrigation system, the complete overhaul and expansion of the education system, and revisions in the legal system, amongst many others.⁵¹

Concerns over the poor health and living conditions of the black poor in Kingston and other parts of Jamaica were addressed in legislation through the establishment of a

⁴⁶ Bryan, *The Jamaican People*, pp. 12-14.

⁴⁷ Bryan, *The Jamaican People*, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Vincent John Marsala, *Sir John Peter Grant: An Administrative History* (Kingston, 1972), p. 11.

⁴⁹ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Charles Savile Roundell, *England and her Subject-races, With special Reference to Jamaica* (London, 1866), p. 29.

⁵¹ Marsala, *Sir John Peter Grant*, p. 11.

Central Board of Health in 1867, composed of the principal medical officers of Her Majesty's Army and Navy, the Medical Superintendent of the Public Hospital, the Inspector-General of the Constabulary, and Dr. Campbell, a physician living in Kingston.⁵² Other medical reforms included a sanitation bill to improve the poor sanitary conditions that plagued the island and to address the growing spread of diseases throughout the colony. Amongst these reforms was the establishment of the Contagious Diseases Act, a legislation enacted not only to curb the prevalence of venereal disease, but also to address growing concerns amongst respectable members of society around crime and disorderly women, specifically the 'common prostitute'. Although the Contagious Diseases Act was only applied to a limited area surrounding Kingston, it served as a legislative experiment to address prostitution and venereal disease across the colony. As I will discuss more below, colonial officials discussed the legislation as a possible solution to what they described as widespread sexual immorality throughout the island.

Contagious Diseases Legislation in Britain and Empire

The associations between venereal disease, race and the 'common prostitute' were foundational in the formulation of contagious diseases legislation that began appearing across the British Empire from the 1850s. Contagious Diseases Acts were introduced in a number of British colonies to regulate the operation of prostitution, viewed as the main agent in the spread of the diseases, although there were other less formal regulations

⁵² Marsala, *Sir John Peter Grant*, p. 48.

implemented in some colonies from an earlier date.⁵³ The introduction of contagious disease legislation in Jamaica thus formed a part of a larger effort across the Empire to eliminate venereal disease amongst British imperial naval and military forces.

The health of the British imperial forces had come under close scrutiny following several imperial crisis' in the 1850s and 1860s, including the 'Mutiny' in India in 1857. However, it was the losses experienced by forces in the Crimean War (1854-1856) that initiated legislative measures in Britain and its expansion in parts of the Empire that had previously lacked regulations around prostitution and venereal disease. During the war, more British soldiers died in hospitals as the result of disease than injuries sustained on the battlefields. According to the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army, established just after the war to investigate the large number of disease-related fatalities, venereal diseases were prolific amongst enlisted men. The Commission did not recommend any form of regulations related to venereal disease. It did, however, encourage reforms to improve the efficiency of the British armed forces, including the organization of the army statistical department, which produced annual reports on the health of the army and the improvement of the navy's statistical department. Moreover, the Commission brought the attention of the general public and politicians to the dismal health and unsanitary conditions experienced by rank and file men in the military. The increasing awareness of this issue spurred the appointment of a committee in 1862 to investigate the prevalence of venereal disease amongst enlisted men. Despite growing concerns amongst some medical authorities around the increasing prevalence of syphilis

⁵³ Through the early nineteenth century legislators in various areas of India used a variety of methods to regulate prostitution and venereal disease, including expulsion. Lock hospitals and cantonments formed parts of various schemes to address the issue in these parts. See Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*.

within the British civilian population, as Judith Walkowitz notes, it was the impact the disease had on the troops that motivated the establishment of the first Contagious Diseases Act in Britain in 1864.⁵⁴

The Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica mirrored the legislation implemented in the metropole in its general principles and clauses. Both in Britain and in the colonies, the Acts served as ‘instruments of control, surveillance, and violence’, specifically of bodies deemed diseased, disorderly and ‘other’. The British Contagious Diseases Acts were enforced in eleven garrison and port towns in the south of England and Ireland. Under the 1864 British law, women identified as ‘common prostitutes’ by the police could either voluntarily submit or be brought before the magistrates and ordered to undergo examinations by naval or army surgeons acting as the examining doctor. If the woman was infected with syphilis or gonorrhoea, she was detained in the hospital for up to three months.⁵⁵ Two years later, the 1866 Contagious Diseases Act extended the jurisdiction of the legislation to two additional areas and incorporated recommendations of the Skey committee established in 1864 that a ‘system of periodic fortnightly inspection or examination of all known prostitutes be made compulsory, under a well organized system of medical police’.⁵⁶ The additional clauses which allowed ‘known prostitutes’ to be kept under the close surveillance of police was largely based on the Contagious Diseases Act established in Malta in 1861, demonstrating a relationship of ‘symbiosis’ between colonial and domestic contagious disease legislation.⁵⁷ Five years later, despite

⁵⁴ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 72 and pp. 74-5.

⁵⁵ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 76.

⁵⁶ PP, 1867-8 (4031) XXXVII. Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Pathology and Treatment of Venereal Disease with the View to Diminish its Injurious Effects on the Men of the Army and Navy, p. 29.

⁵⁷ TNA, Adm 1/6418, *History and Operations of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the Home Ports*, 1 April 1873. Quoted in Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 78

increasingly heated debates and contestations over the legislation, Parliament renewed the contagious diseases legislation. Following the 1869 Contagious Diseases Act, eighteen towns across Britain came with the jurisdiction of the legislation. In addition, the 1869 Act extended the incarceration of women in lock hospitals to nine months and required them to receive ‘moral and religious instruction’ while there. Finally, the acts were made effective for an indefinite period of time.⁵⁸

Legislation in Jamaica drew heavily on the 1866 Contagious Diseases Act in Britain, but also relied on experiences of regulation in other parts of the Empire. Several years before British contagious diseases laws were enacted, colonial administrators in Hong Kong, India, Malta and Corfu, had already articulated their concerns through a series of regulations related to prostitution, venereal disease and the British military. In Hong Kong, a colonial-wide ordinance was put in force in 1857, followed by formalized legislation in Malta and Corfu in 1861. India’s contagious diseases legislation, in the form of a cantonment act, came into force in 1864, the same year the Contagious Diseases Act was adopted in selected military areas in Britain. By the 1870s, a large number of colonies in the British Empire, in addition to treaty and selected military ports in Britain, had contagious diseases legislation in place, although some colonies were exempt, including several colonies in the Caribbean.

Several historians have argued that the British colonies held ‘shared characteristics of colonial regulationist regimes’, particular in colonies in which racial difference served as an organizing principal of the colonial hierarchy.⁵⁹ Generally speaking, colonial contagious diseases legislation tended to be, in Howell’s words, ‘more

⁵⁸ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 86.

⁵⁹ Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, p. 189.

ambitious, more thoroughgoing and more extreme' than legislation in the Britain.⁶⁰ They often included clauses that legalised brothels and operated a system of registration for prostitutes. The purpose of the legislation in these colonies was to protect embattled white soldiering bodies, thus moral reform was not included in the regulatory efforts. Moreover, unlike contagious diseases legislation in Britain, colonial legislation was most often applied not only to military stations, but also across wide areas of civilian communities.⁶¹ These shared characteristics of 'colonial regulationist regimes' are not wholly applicable in the case of Jamaica. However, they are helpful in illuminating distinctions in the operation of the legislation in Britain and the colonies. Moreover, they are also useful in teasing out the differences and nuances between legislation in Jamaica and other parts of the empire.

Jamaica was the first Caribbean island to enact a Contagious Diseases Act, with Barbados and Trinidad following suit in 1868 and 1869, respectively. That these three islands were the only ones in the British West Indies where white troops were permanently stationed reflects the primary concern of the Act with the protection of not all members of the imperial forces, but those of the white soldiering body. Jamaica and Trinidad were Crown colonies at the time legislation was passed, while Barbados retained representative government. The regulatory measures in Jamaica shared many similarities with legislation enacted in both Trinidad and Barbados, as it did with Britain and other colonies. However, the Jamaica legislation also differed in several ways. According to the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica police were required to issue a certificate to any woman believed to be a 'common prostitute' living within specified

⁶⁰ Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, p. 189.

⁶¹ Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, p. 189.

subjugated areas. The Jamaican legislation allowed the Governor to designate which areas of the country would come under the legislation, a stipulation that was not included in the British legislation, or that in Barbados or Trinidad. Once a certificate was issued, the ‘common prostitute’ was legally required to report to the visiting surgeon for a pelvic exam in order to determine whether she was infected. During this initial examination, the visiting surgeon could then order the woman to report to the hospital at specific times for periodical examinations ‘for any period not exceeding one year’. Upon inspection, if the surgeon found the women to be infected, she was detained in the lock hospital for a period of time not exceeding one year. If she refused to comply with the act, she was charged with being disorderly and incarcerated with or without hard labour for a period ranging from one to three months, the standard prison term for disorderly conduct under the Vagrancy Act discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, Jamaica’s Contagious Diseases Act, similar to that in Britain and Barbados but different from many other colonies, included provisions for moral improvement and education.⁶²

Contagious disease legislation implemented in Jamaica shared many qualities with legislation enacted in Britain, other overseas colonies, including those in other Caribbean islands. Yet, while regulatory measures were used in Britain and most parts of the Empire to address venereal disease and prostitution, there were local particularities that made the legislation in each colony distinct. Indeed, as Howell points out, British authorities encouraged colonial legislators to adjust the legislation to suit local circumstances.⁶³ Jamaica’s history of slavery, abolished only twenty-nine years prior to the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Act in the colony, set it apart from other

⁶² Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics*, p. 56.

⁶³ Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, p. 188.

colonies outside of the Caribbean region. Moreover, the recent social and political upheavals fostered attitudes towards sexual labour, and the poor in general, that were particular to Jamaica and differed from other parts of the Caribbean region.

The introduction of the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica came at the recommendation of both the recently established Sanitary Board and from the War Office in London. The move towards the implementation of this law was supported in part by ‘empirical’ evidence that statistics on venereal disease garnered. While official statistics on the rate of venereal disease amongst the civilian population prior to 1879 are not, as far as I am aware, available, the *Gleaner*, a local newspaper in the colony, claimed that venereal disease was ‘both serious and widespread in almost every district and parish of this unhappy country’. ‘The alarming effect [of] our social evil [prostitution and the spread of venereal disease]’ left the Sanitary Commissioners with little choice but to press the Governor for the adoption of some forms of regulatory and sanitation measures.⁶⁴

At the same time, imperial authorities directed Governor Grant to enact contagious diseases legislation to address the prevalence of venereal disease amongst the naval and military troops. There were several military stations dotted throughout Jamaica. In the north of the island the stations included Falmouth, Maroon Town, Lucca Montego Bay, and Port Antonio.⁶⁵ However, the majority of troops were located in the south of the island at Up-Park Camp in Kingston, Port Royal, Fort Augusta in St. Catherine, and Newcastle in the Blue Mountains. There were also detachments located in Spanish Town and other areas in the southern parishes. By 1867, the Royal Navy made use of the

⁶⁴ *Gleaner*, 9 May 1867.

⁶⁵ W. Gomm, *The Story of Newcastle, Jamaica* (London, 1864), p. 53.

garrisons and dockyards located in Port Royal. Black men of the West India Regiment were based at Up-Park Camp, a barracks located approximately four kilometres from Kingston Harbour. The white British regiments in the south of the island were stationed at Newcastle, a military base established in 1842 approximately 4000 miles above sea level in the mountains of St. Andrew Parish. Newcastle was established as a means of protecting white troops from contracting tropical diseases, such as yellow fever.⁶⁶

As was the case in other parts of the British Empire, the rate of venereal infection amongst the naval and military troops in Jamaica was high. According to the army medical reports, just over 54 per cent of black troops in the West India Regiment in 1866 was infected with venereal diseases, while only 18.4 per cent of white troops were infected. Although the number of black troops infected with venereal diseases was substantially higher, the rate of increase amongst white troops in Jamaica was staggering. From 1862 to 1866, the rate of contraction amongst the black troops went from 29.9 per cent to just over 54 per cent, less than a two-fold increase in four years. However, the percentage of white troops admitted to the hospital with venereal diseases quadrupled from 4.7 per cent in 1862 to 18.4 percent four years later, a four-fold increase (figure 5.1).⁶⁷ Thus, although more black troops may have been infected with venereal diseases, the rate of contraction was more rapid amongst the white troops. These statistics likely raised alarms for legislators and members of the Jamaican public. As an article in the *Gleaner* pointed out, ‘the injuries attained by the Soldiers and Seamen after a visit to Kingston had become known to the authorities at the War Office’.⁶⁸ Thus, for the Sanitary Board and the War Office the adoption of contagious diseases legislation

⁶⁶ Gomm, *The Story of Newcastle*.

⁶⁷ TNA, CO 137/428/525. Letter from Sir John Pakington to Sir John Peter Grant, 24 December 1867.

⁶⁸ *Gleaner*, 9 May 1867.

Jamaica was a matter of course, particularly as a way of slow down the rate of increase amongst the white troops.

YEAR	WHITE TROOPS	BLACK TROOPS
1862	4.7	29.9
1863	9.69	46.96
1864	15.8	40.26
1865	15.5	52.7

Figure 5.1: Percentage of White and Black Troops Infected with Venereal Disease and Admitted into the Hospital in Jamaica Between 1862 and 1866.
(Calculated based on proportion per 1000 white and black troops found in CO 137/428/525 Transmitted to the War Office from The General Officer Commanding the Troops Jamaica, 24 December 1867)

Implementing the Contagious Diseases Act: Institutions for Unruly Women

Local legislators likely recognized the haphazard and mobile nature of sexual-economic exchange in the colony when the Contagious Diseases Act was first introduced. As stated above, a clause in the legislation allowed the Governor to determine which areas of the colony would come under the Acts. The subjugated area could be altered at any time as the Governor, with the advice of his legislative council, saw fit. Gathered together at King's House in January 1868 to discuss how best to put the Act into practice, Governor Grant sought council from Senior Naval and Army Officers and doctors, as well as local doctors with experience with 'fallen women' in the colony. At this meeting Governor

Grant confirmed the areas where the legislation would be applied. He decided that the Act should encompass ‘a circle of 5 miles [of Kingston], taking in the military cantonment of Up Park Camp, the several small villages adjacent, haunts of well known recognised Prostitutes, and Port Royal’.⁶⁹ Newcastle was initially excluded from the subjugated area. Isolated in the mountains, far from the concentration of prostitutes, filth and contagion in ‘squalid Kingston’, the colonial officials believed the very location of this white enclave would protect the white troops from the high rate of contraction that was reflected in the statistics gathered by the War Office. Further, the distance of Newcastle from Kingston would mean that the colonial government would have to pay for an additional Visiting Surgeon to attend to the mountain barracks, an added expense they were weary of taking on. However, in September 1879 the Governor extended the acts to include the Newcastle Barracks located in the Blue Mountains after the War Office complained that ‘neither Newcastle nor any place in its vicinity comes within the operation of the Act, so that the White Troops who are stationed there and who rarely visit the plains are practically excluded from its benefits’.⁷⁰ The Act was also extended for a short period to Spanish Town in St. Catherine, but was discontinued in 1875 once the small deployment of soldiers was no longer stationed there.⁷¹ Although the Act was extended to Newcastle, it was never extended to the northern military stations.

In 1867, Dr. Bowerbank, a local doctor, Custos of Kingston⁷² and long-time resident of Jamaica, estimated that there were between 300 and 400 prostitutes resident in

⁶⁹ TNA, CO137/438/413. Letter from LS O’Conor to Sir John Pakington, 24 January 1868.

⁷⁰ TNA, CO 137/485/15. Letter from J.W. Cox to Sir Anthony Musgrave, 22 March 1877.

⁷¹ PP, 1887 (347). Contagious diseases ordinances (colonies.) Copies of correspondence, or extracts therefrom, relating to the repeal of contagious diseases ordinances and regulations in the Crown colonies’, H.W. Norman to Sir Henry Holland, 29 January 1887.

⁷²In Jamaica, the custos was the Queen’s representative in the local parish.

Kingston, St. Andrew and Port Royal.⁷³ Bowerbank did not reference any official documents or empirical evidence when he provided this estimate. However, statistical information gathered by the Inspector-General under the dictates of the Contagious Diseases Act supported Bowerbank's early assessment of the prevalence of prostitution. The number of women accused of operating as 'common prostitutes' in Kingston and Port Royal remained fairly consistent between 1879 and 1883, but increased dramatically between 1883 and 1886. Reports for St. Andrew show that there was a fairly consistent number of women accused of prostitution throughout this period, though the numbers dropped slightly between 1885 and 1886 (see figure 5.2). These reports show that sexual-economic exchange was and remained prevalent in Kingston and Port Royal. The systematic gathering of statistics on the 'common prostitute' coupled with the information gathered on the rate of venereal infection amongst the general public allowed officials to construct and empirically validate claims that both prostitution and venereal disease were prevalent in the colony.

⁷³ TNA, CO137/438/413. Letter from LS O'Connor to Sir John Pakington, 24 January 1868. According to this record, Bowerbank did not provide any reference for the number of 'common prostitutes' he thought resident in Kingston. His estimation may have been based on police records of arrest. The collection of statistical data on the state of the population, including attendance in schools and churches and the number of people in the parish goals, began in Jamaica around the mid-1820s on the orders of the Colonial Office. Although colonial officials in Jamaica were required to provide this information in the form of reports, by the 1840s they had made little efforts to do so. Robert Montgomery Martin, the civil servant and founding member of the Statistical Society of London charged with organizing the reports from the different British colonies, noted in his 1843 publication that the statistical reports received from Jamaica were the 'worst returns in the Colonial Office.' According to Martin, officials in Jamaica, as well as Barbados, saw little importance in 'statistical science' and thus made little effort to collect this data. See Robert Montgomery Martin, *History of the Colonies of the British Empire* (London, 1843), p. 17 and p. 68.

YEAR	KINGSTON AND PORT ROYAL	ST. ANDREW	TOTAL NUMBER OF WOMEN ACCUSED OF PROSTITUTION UNDER THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACT
1879-1880	229	N/A	229
1880-1881	286	36	322
1881-1882	no data	no data	no data
1882-1883	269	36	305
1883-1884	367	44	411
1884-1885	355	37	392
1885-1886	364	28	392

Figure 5.2: Number of Women Accused of being a ‘common prostitute’ in Kingston and Port Royal, and St. Andrew Between 1879 and 1886.
(The Governor’s Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports (Kingston, 1880, 1881, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886)

The information these officials were able to gather also allowed them and members of the public, who had access to these published reports, to map out the areas of Kingston in which prostitution was thought to operate. According to these reports, the operation of commercialized sexual labour did not keep to any set geographical boundaries within the colony. Although the southern part of the island, Kingston and Port Royal in particular, had had military stations for several decades, the island had never developed cantonments or brothel districts. There was not a single area where street-based prostitution or brothels were contained. The practice operated in various streets,

lanes and neighbourhoods across the town and beyond. Even before the introduction of the contagious diseases legislation, several areas in Kingston were well known to authorities and members of the public as spaces where women of ‘ill fame’ operated. In the downtown core, Peter’s Lane ‘with its environs’ was described in one newspaper report as ‘a den of iniquity’.⁷⁴ After several complaints from residents living in that ‘part of Orange Street, Barry Street and the Parade, adjacent to Peter’s Lane’ about the presence of ‘lewd women’, several residents, including ‘Mr. Curphey, the Reverent Mr. Nieto and two ladies’ drew up and presented a petition to the Police Magistrate. In response, extra constables were directed to police that area.⁷⁵ In 1879, the Inspector-General placed extra Special Sub-officers at Allman Town (an area between downtown Kingston and Up Park Camp), Fletcher’s Land, and Port Royal ‘for the protection of the soldiers and sailors’.⁷⁶ Pink Lane, Beeston Street, Water Lane, Luke and Matthew Lane, East Queen Street, and Tower Street—all located in downtown Kingston—were also sites frequently discussed in the local newspapers as areas you could find women engaged in sexual-economic exchange.⁷⁷ However, other parts of Kingston were also noted. Rae Town in the east and Hannah Town in the west were marked out as sites where lewd and disreputable women operated.⁷⁸

Colonial officials did not just report on the operation of the ‘common prostitute’ where the CD Act was in operation. Officials reported on the movement of these women outside the legislated areas and the operation of sexual-economic exchange in port towns across the colony upon the arrival of steamers and sailors. According to one naval

⁷⁴ *Colonial Standard*, 15 June 1880.

⁷⁵ *Colonial Standard*, 9 February 1880.

⁷⁶ *The Governor’s Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (Kingston, 1881), p. 251.

⁷⁷ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 152.

⁷⁸ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 152.

surgeon, the arrival of the transitory men to the colony was in part to blame for the increasing rise in venereal disease. In an 1867 report on the health of the Navy, Dr. W.H. Lloyd, argued that ‘since the year 1863, when steamers from New York, bound for Colon, had commenced to call for coal at Port Royal, and the passengers, generally a rough set of Californian emigrants, had been landed during the coaling, a bad form of chancre was becoming common in Port Royal and Kingston’. The arrival of these steamers coincided, Lloyd argued, with an increase in the number of prostitutes in the port town. By 1866 ‘prostitution [was] more or less open’ and ‘carried on by a overwhelming majority of a swarming coloured female population’, which had caused a ‘rapid downward progress of this little town, from a state of almost absolute immunity from venereal disease, to that of one of the most dangerous spots (as far as this class of disease is concerned) to the health of the Navy, in the world’.⁷⁹ In 1868, the Inspector of Army Hospitals in Jamaica reported that venereal diseases were ‘mainly spread by Established prostitutes coming from Kingston to Port Royal immediately after a vessel of War anchored, and thereby disseminating the disease’. The number of women known by the military and naval authorities to be ‘established prostitutes’ in Port Royal amounted to about 16 women; however, when the vessels of War arrived, an additional 35 to 40 women travelled from Kingston to gain clients.⁸⁰

Similar migrations were reported in other parts of the colony. For instance, in November 1880, Inspector Rivett reported that ‘great benefit would arise from the enforcement of the Contagious Disease Act in this town, [Savanna-la-Mar, Westmoreland]... There are now on an average four Steamers per month in the harbour

⁷⁹ PP, 1867-68 (170-I). Health of the navy. Return to an order of the Honourable of the House of Commons, 26 March 1868, pp. 125-126.

⁸⁰ TNA, CO137/438/413. Letter from LS O’Conor to Sir John Pakington, 24 January 1868.

and during the shipping time as many as twelve sailing Ships; these bring a larger number of sailors into the Town'. With the arrival of the sailors, large numbers of 'idle loose women' descended upon the town and 'venereal Disease is very prevalent'.⁸¹ 'Loose women' engaged in sexual-economic exchange similarly plagued other port towns. Inspector-General Hartwell noted that commercialized sexual labour operated in the 'following Shipping Ports: St. Ann's Bay, Falmouth, Montego Bay, Black River, Port Antonio and Port Maria'. Like in Rivett's report of Savanna-la-Mar, Hartwell reported that the extension of the contagious diseases legislation would assist in controlling the women operating in these shipping ports.⁸² These migrations were not limited to port towns. Dr. Beckwith reported that syphilis (and by extension the number of women spreading the disease) 'has been greatly on the increase during the last year owing to the influx of labour on the Railway Extensions'.⁸³ In these cases, women migrated to various areas of the colony to accommodate labouring and soldiering men.

As these examples demonstrate, based on the systematic collection of statistics, officials and members of the public could assert that sexual-economic exchange, and the diseases associated with it, was widespread throughout the colony. Colonial authorities claimed that it operated from Kingston and Port Royal to the port towns of Port Antonio and Black River. Although they were aware that sexual-economic exchange was widespread throughout the colony and thought venereal disease prevalent beyond the military stations, the cost of implementing the legislation limited the extent of the subjugated areas. In this way, Kingston, Port Royal and Newcastle served as a test case

⁸¹ *The Governor's Report* (1881), p. 249.

⁸² *The Governor's Report* (1881), p. 249.

⁸³ *The Governor's Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (Kingston, 1892).

on the effectiveness of the legislation to control the operation of sexual labour and the spread of venereal disease.

Both the migratory nature of sexual-economic exchange, as well as its scattered operation in the subjugated areas, increased the difficulties of actually controlling it. The Contagious Diseases Act was the first piece of legislation that required the official regulation of prostitution in Jamaica. Even prior to the introduction of contagious diseases legislation in the 1860s, several British colonies already had official policies and institutions in place to regulate and manage sexual-economic exchange. For instance, lock hospitals were constructed and haphazard measures to regulate sexual labour instituted in British India as early as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By 1810, all three Indian presidencies had some form of lock hospital, though they were all short-lived.⁸⁴ From 1857 in Hong Kong, Governor Sir John Bowring, with the support of the Colonial Office, instituted a system of brothel registration and the forced hospitalization of prostitutes infected with venereal diseases.⁸⁵ Jamaica did not have any such regulatory measures or lock hospitals prior to the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Act. Consequently, colonial authorities had to find the funds and make the arrangements to establish such institutions, in line with the dictates of the Contagious Diseases Act, for controlling venereal disease and to address the operation of sexual-economic exchange. In order to put the legislation into practice, the government created two institutions: a police force able to identify the women and bring them before the

⁸⁴ D.M. Peers, 'Soldiers, surgeons and the campaigns to combat sexually transmitted diseases in colonial India, 1805-1860', *Medical History*, 42 (1998), p. 139; Philippa Levine, 'Venereal Disease, Prostitution, and the Politics of Empire', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 4 (1994), p. 583; and, Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, pp. 191-192. See Sarah Hodges, 'Looting the Lock Hospital in Colonial Madras during the Famine Years of the 1870s', *Social History of Medicine*, 18 (2005), pp. 379-398; K. Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905* (London, 1980) for more on lock hospitals and the regulation of sexual labour in British India.

⁸⁵ Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, pp. 200-201.

magistrates, and, a lock hospital where infected women could be incarcerated, inspected and cured.

As part of the legal reforms following the institution of Crown colony, Governor Grant established the Jamaica Constabulary in Kingston. He also established a unified rural police force to control the rural areas of the colony and to support the Jamaica Constabulary.⁸⁶ Both the Jamaica Constabulary and the Rural Police Force were put under the direct supervision of the governor-appointed Inspector-General. Besides the Inspector-General, the constabulary consisted of fifteen inspectors, fifteen sub-inspectors, fifteen sergeants-majors, thirty-four sergeants, sixty-eight corporals, 200 constables first class, and 600 constables second class. While the inspectors were white, most of the rank and file men of the Constabulary were black men and men of colour. Detailed returns of the constabulary in 1888 show that the majority of the second-class inspectors, the men that enforced the law on the streets, were black men between twenty-one and thirty years old.⁸⁷ Along with volunteer militias and the West India Regiments based in Kingston, St. Andrew and Port Royal, the reorganized Constabulary became the strong-arm of the colonial government. In the day-to-day policing of the Kingston streets, it was the mostly black constables who were ‘symbols of civil authority’.⁸⁸

In the years immediately following the implementation of the Contagious Diseases Act, colonial officials and members of the public saw the constables as ineffective. For example, in an article published in the *Gleaner* on 11 August 1871, J.E. Henderson, a ‘minster of the gospel’, complained about the incompetence of the

⁸⁶ Marsala, *Sir John Peter Grant*.

⁸⁷ *The Governor's Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (Kingston, 1889), p. 168.

⁸⁸ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, p. 155.

constabulary in policing prostitutes and ‘loose’ women. As he fervently argued in the pages of the *Gleaner*:

Prostitution has largely increased since the formation of the Constabulary Force. With very few exceptions, indeed, Inspectors and men are a disgrace to the country, and their unblushing immoralities are working mischief in all directions...the Constabulary as at present constituted the intimate associations of the loose women of the country...are altogether unfitted to perform the important duties[,] which belong to them.⁸⁹

Not only were the constables accused of consorting with the ‘loose women’ they were supposed to police, but their own sexual morality, as black men, was also called into question. In March 1877, J.W. Cox, the Commanding Officer in Jamaica articulated similar criticisms around the ability of black constables to properly implement the contagious diseases legislation. He wrote, ‘[u]ndoubtedly in many parts of the world an act of this nature is attended with very beneficial results, but it is questionable whether amongst Negroes, and with Negro policemen, it can be so efficiently worked as to produce results commensurate with the expenditure or be productive of any sensible reduction in these contagious diseases’.⁹⁰ Both the members of the public and colonial officials negatively assessed the ability of the Jamaica Constabulary, most of who were black, to effectively enforce the Contagious Diseases Act. In their assessment, the racialized nature of these men made the enforcement of the legislation unlikely.

⁸⁹ *Gleaner*, 11 August 1871.

⁹⁰ TNA, CO 137/485/15. Letter from J.W. Cox to Sir Anthony Musgrave, 22 March 1877.

Despite these initial criticisms, as time progressed, other officials began praising the constables. In 1880, Inspector-General Hartwell described the constables' 'behaviour in the performance of their public duties, as well as their amenability to discipline as most exemplary'.⁹¹ The constabulary received praise from other colonial officials. As mentioned above, increasing numbers of women were brought before the magistrate as 'common prostitutes'. It is important to note that the rise in the number of women criminalised may not have actually reflected an increase in the prevalence of sexual-economic exchange in the subjugated areas, but instead an increase in the policing and identification of women as 'common prostitutes'. As the Inspector of the Kingston Lock Hospital stated in 1880, the growing number of women being arrested as prostitutes was likely 'due to many causes, but I am inclined to attribute it principally to increased energy on the part of the Constabulary in carrying out the provisions of the Contagious Diseases Act'.⁹² By at least 1880, the Jamaica Constabulary had improved in their ability to monitor and regulate the 'common prostitute'. Thus, they became important tools in the criminalisation of sexual-economic exchange, the control of venereal disease, and the enforcement the Contagious Diseases Act.

In addition to the Jamaica Constabulary, the establishment and operation of a lock hospital was also vital to the functioning of the Contagious Diseases Act. The number of women engaged in street-based prostitution in the colony was important in determining not only the financial expenditures to establish a lock hospital, but also its location. The cost of implementing the contagious disease legislation had always been a point of contention between the local and imperial governments. When the act was first

⁹¹ *The Governor Reports* (1881), p. 252.

⁹² *The Governor's Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (Kingston, 1882), p. 266.

introduced, one member of the Legislative Council, Mr. McDowell, ‘objected to the expense of carrying out the object of the Bill being borne by the island’. The colonial purse was already strained.⁹³ The Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, shared this concern. In June 1868, he wrote to Governor Grant that ‘it would be probably impossible for Jamaica, under its present [circumstances], to take upon itself the [main] proportion of the expense’. In order to establish a lock hospital and effectively implement the contagious diseases legislation, the Colonial Secretary advised that they would have to seek financial support from both the War Office and the Admiralty.⁹⁴

The War Office and the Admiralty had a stake in the success of the legislation in Jamaica. However, the Act had to be enforced in a way that was not only efficient, but also cost effective. Following a series of discussions between both departments and Governor Grant, it was agreed that the War Office would ‘undertake the duties connected with the Establishment of such a Hospital at Jamaica, whilst the Admiralty would provide the requisite accommodation at Hong Kong’. Further, the War Office, under the leadership of Secretary Sir John Pakington, would contribute ‘£1000 towards the expense of the Hospital at Jamaica, in addition to the Allowance of £25 per annum for 20 beds (or such number as may be considered proportionate to the Forces) the latter allowance to be subjected to reconsideration after 10 years’.⁹⁵ All other expenses connected with building and the operation of the lock hospital and enforcing the contagious diseases legislation would come out of the local government funds.⁹⁶

⁹³ *Gleaner*, 27 June 1867.

⁹⁴ TNA, CO 137/438/438. Letter from Duke of Buckingham and Chandos to Sir John Peter Grant, 27 June 1868.

⁹⁵ TNA, CO 137/438/453. Letter from Sir John Pakington to Sir John Peter Grant, 15 October 1868.

⁹⁶ There were also disagreements amongst local officials, some of whom felt it was wrong for the whole colony to shoulder the cost of legislation that only applied to a Kingston, Port Royal and the surrounding area.

Various areas were put forth as possible sites for the establishment of the lock hospital. While several locations across Kingston, St. Andrew and Port Royal were suggested, local and colonial authorities eventually agreed on converting the former leper's hospital on East Water Lane for the Kingston Lock Hospital. Running east to west in the very south of central Kingston's commercial district, Water Lane frequently appeared in the newspapers as a street where public disturbances, disorderly behaviour and sexual-economic exchange occurred. The former leper's home required considerable improvements in order for it to be fit for use. Once completed, however, it was beneficial for multiple reasons. With modifications, it was able to provide an adequate number of beds to accommodate the number of prostitutes expected to undergo treatment at the facility; and, the site was also large enough to accommodate staff, including the general surgeon, the dispenser and the matron. Moreover, located at the far end of Water Lane, almost beside the General Penitentiary, any noise or disruptions from the inmates would not disturb middling-class 'respectable' citizens, who, by this point, had moved to newly developing suburbs surrounding the downtown core.⁹⁷

Several studies of lock hospitals show that these spaces were sites of discipline and reform. In her study of the Contagious Diseases Hospital or lock hospital in Bridgetown, Denise Challenger shows how 'coercive discipline' was increasingly used in order to ensure the hospital functioned as 'an effective imperial and colonial tool for sexual regulation'.⁹⁸ Harsh punitive measures were used to punish 'disreputable' behaviours, such as the use of obscene language, fighting, and 'bad conduct'. By 1878

⁹⁷ *Gleaner*, 11 April 1872.

⁹⁸ Denise Challenger, 'A Benign Place of Healing?: The Contagious Diseases Hospital and Medical Discipline in Post-Slavery Barbados', in Juanita De Barros, Steven Palmer, and David Wright (eds), *Health and Medicine in the Circum-Caribbean, 1800-1968* (New York, 2009), p. 106.

inmates of the lock hospital began receiving harsher disciplinary measures, including being sent to the town's prison and sentenced to solitary confinement.⁹⁹ As Challenger concluded the increase in 'coercive discipline' transformed the 'women and girls' confined within the lock hospital 'from patients to prisoners'.¹⁰⁰ I have been unable to find documentation on the day-to-day operation within the Kingston Lock Hospital. However, it is more than probable that similar methods of discipline were used in Kingston as in Bridgetown. The decreasing percentage of women willing to submit to an examination in the hospital may speak to the poor or harsh conditions they encountered there. Between 1879 and 1885, the number of women who volunteered for examinations decreased from 48.7 per cent in 1879 to 13.5 per cent in 1885. Increasing numbers of women were served with Magistrates Orders, which meant they would be imprisoned in the House of Corrections if they did not attend their examination (figure 5.3).

⁹⁹ Challenger, 'A Benign Place of Healing?', pp. 106-111.

¹⁰⁰ Challenger, 'A Benign Place of Healing?', p. 107.

YEAR	NUMBER OF WOMEN EXAMINED	VOLUNTEERED FOR EXAMINATION	SERVED WITH MAGISTRATES ORDERS
1879-1880	156	76 48.7	80
1880-1881	206	119 57.8	87
1881-1882	no data	no data	no data
1882-1883	no data	no data	no data
1883-1884	300	70 23.3	230
1884-1885	321	62 19.3	259
1885-1886	281	38 13.5	243

Figure 5.3: Number of Women Examined in Kingston Lock Hospital and Percentage of Who Volunteered or Were Served Magistrate Orders Between 1879 and 1886. (*The Governor's Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (Kingston, 1880, 1881, 1884, 1885, 1886))

The archival documents on the Kingston Lock Hospital that I have been able to locate do suggest, however, that beyond discipline, this was also a site for moral reform. As noted briefly above, the Contagious Diseases Act implemented in the colony provided a clause by which any lock hospital established in the colony had to include a program of moral reform if it were to be certified. Yet, by 1874, two years after the Kingston Lock Hospital had been established, the provisions for moral reform had yet to be implemented, something that led to public criticism of the Acts. The government quickly remedied this. By at least 1884 the incarcerated women were receiving regular moral

instruction.¹⁰¹ According to the report filed by the chaplain of the Parish Church, in 1884 ‘Divine Service was performed in the Lock Hospital on 52 occasions’ and well as ‘visited on several occasions by two or more of the District Visitors connected with the Parish Church’.¹⁰² The Kingston Lock Hospital was used not only as a space to cure venereal disease but, akin to the General Penitentiary located beside it, was also a space of discipline and moral reform for the women incarcerated within its walls. The lock hospital and the Jamaica Constabulary served as tools to control and regulate the operation of sexual-economic exchange, eliminate venereal diseases and enforce the Contagious Diseases Act.

Despite these instruments of control, women exerted their agency and opposition to the colonial state’s attempt to govern their bodies. ‘Common prostitutes’ avoided the legislation, but also posed direct challenges to those they likely viewed as oppressors. Women accused of being ‘common prostitutes’ took steps to avoid the constraints of the contagious diseases legislation. For instance, once arrested, if a woman accused of being of ‘ill fame’ agreed to submit to a voluntary examination and to report to the Medical Officer for examination she was issued a form and released. However, the form issued by the magistrate did not list the time or date of examination. Thus, women would often agree to the examination but not then show up. It was not long before authorities attempted to tighten the law by amending the act so that even those women who had volunteered could be rearrested if they did not turn up for their examination.¹⁰³ Even once

¹⁰¹ *Gleaner*, 27 May 1874.

¹⁰² *The Governor’s Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports*, ‘Annual Report of the Chaplain of the Lock Hospital’ (Kingston, 1886), p. 51.

¹⁰³ TNA, CO 137/476/29. Letter from Sir William Grey, 23 May 1874.

this change was made in 1874, women found ways of resisting the medical invasion of their bodies through other means.

Women frequently moved to other parts of the island, to the port towns and towns which fell outside the bounds of the Contagious Diseases Act, as a way of avoiding the examinations and incarceration in Kingston Lock Hospital. As discussed above, sexual labourers were very mobile throughout the island, often moving to shipping towns and other sites to obtain clients, but also probably to avoid the subjugated areas of the contagious diseases legislation. Some women may have even gone further afield, leaving Jamaica for other Caribbean islands that did not have the Act in place. For instance, in August 1874 Dr. Mauget, the colonial Surgeon-General in British Guiana, complained of an increase in the number of people infected with venereal disease. According to Mauget, the increase in disease corresponded with and was likely the result of ‘immigrants [who] left their native country to avoid the penalties of the Contagious Disease Act’. Though Mauget thought many of these immigrants from Barbados, women from Jamaica also could have been easily part of this inter-Caribbean migration. The Contagious Diseases Act was inept at preventing the spread of disease, as women moved from town to town, and from colony to colony, avoiding legislative measures to control their bodies.¹⁰⁴

Women accused of being ‘common prostitutes’ not only avoided legislative constraints to their freedom, but also directly resisted colonial officials and authorities. Women frequently challenged those personally assigned with enforcing the legislation on the streets, that is the men of the Jamaica Constabulary. It is of little surprise that the relationship police officers had with sexual labourers was often fractious. The vagueness of the term ‘common prostitute’ in the Contagious Diseases Act, as in anti-prostitution

¹⁰⁴ PP, 1875 [c.1335] [C.1336]. Papers Relating to Her Majesty’s Colonial Possessions. Part II, pp. 31-32.

legislation enacted earlier in the century, provided police with the legal sanction to harass women they decided were sexually loose or disruptive, whether these women were engaged in sexual-economic exchange or not. At the same time, the authority of the police was not recognized on the streets, nor did they receive respect amongst the lower-class communities they policed.¹⁰⁵ Constables, though at times they were called upon as a source of protection, were more often beaten and assaulted as they went about their duties in some of the poorer areas of Kingston. At the forefront of these attacks were women, often prostitutes, who were not afraid to lay hold of ‘officers of the state’ in defence of themselves and their rights.¹⁰⁶ Women often ignored, or fought with, the police constables. Stories of clashes between police and ‘disorderly’ women or ‘common prostitutes’ regularly made the local papers in the latter nineteenth century. These women did not just blatantly ignore the laws, but directly challenged constables charged with enforcing those laws. In one instance, Susan Duckett, ‘a woman of ill fame and a frequenter of some of the places of amusement in Tower street’ and the corner of Peter’s Lane, assaulted Constable Stuart as he attempted to remove her from a tavern where she was in ‘conversation with a soldier’ she had invited there. According to the newspaper report, an argument erupted between Duckett and the tavern keeper regarding the presence of Duckett’s client in the tavern. When Constable Stuart attempted to intervene and remove Duckett from the tavern, she turned on him, tearing his jacket and shirt off. During the court case, Duckett apologized to the constable and the courts, for ‘she was drunk at the time’ and then ‘offered to pay the officer for his clothes; and promised never

¹⁰⁵ Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The Story of the West India Regiments of the British Army* (St. Johns, 1997), pp. 244-247.

¹⁰⁶ See Mimi Sheller, ‘Quasheba, Mother, Queen: Black Women's Public Leadership and Political Protest in Post-Emancipation Jamaica, 1834–65’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 19 (1998), pp. 90-117.

to do the like again'. Despite her remorse, 'the Court said it could not allow assaults of the sort on constables' and she was sentenced to sixty days hard labour'.¹⁰⁷

Physical attacks on constables by 'common prostitutes' were not an uncommon occurrence. At times, members of the community supported women in their opposition. For instance, on Sunday 15 June 1880 tensions between women of the streets and constables erupted at an unlicensed tavern on Peter's Lane, possibly the same one featured in the example above. The conflict erupted when a sexual labourer, 'Ester Lindo, alias Mrs. Oliver, alias Mrs Whittaker', called the constables after Peter England, 'a seaman who had been drinking freely at one of these...“hulls”', became abusive. According to the news report, 'Constable Nehemiah Brown went to the woman's assistance and succeeded in removing England from the House'. However, once outside, England, along with 'a number of women of ill-fame and men of little or no occupation, men who hang about these women's houses', attacked Brown and his fellow constables. The mob 'belabored them with sticks; pelted them with bricks and batted them'. The constables were not only beaten, but Constable Brown's 'staff (Stamp's)' was taken from him and one of his assailants 'cut him over the eye with it'. As the article stated, the constables were fortunate that 'they did not lose their lives in the encounter'.¹⁰⁸ The conflict between the police constables, women of 'ill-fame' and the 'men who hang about these women's houses' suggests that there was a tense relationship, not only between women of the streets and the constables, but also between many men and women of the lower orders who challenged the police authority. These reports in the newspapers about

¹⁰⁷ *Colonial Standard*, 20 May 1880.

¹⁰⁸ *Colonial Standard*, 15 June 1880 and 22 June 1880.

women attacking men supported discourses of the 'common prostitute' as unruly and unfeminine, as criminals and in need of regulation and management.

For the first time since the ending of slavery the Jamaican government enacted measures to directly regulate the sexual praxis of some of the population. Through police aggression and forced and invasive bodily examinations, the Contagious Diseases Act re-inscribed on the bodies of 'common prostitutes' a kind of control and bondage. Women were arrested and examined not because they had done anything wrong, but under suspicions that they may have engaged in sexual labour, a practice that was not a crime. The local application of the Contagious Diseases Act in Kingston, Port Royal and the surrounding areas, and the 'empirical' evidence gathered as a part of it, contributed to the representation that sexual-economic exchange and venereal disease was rampant in the colony. Moreover, this legislation was used as a means of addressing the 'unruly' women that plagued the streets and 'respectable' members of society. However, their efforts were met with opposition from these women in both the avoidance of the legislation and direct challenges. Through the contagious diseases legislation, the colonial authorities made a concentrated effort to address a 'social evil' that plagued the colony and that they saw as comprising efforts to civilise the lower orders of the population.

The 'Negro Character', Extension Movement, and Repeal

For many colonial officials and respectable members of the community, sexual-economic exchange epitomized the debased sexual immorality prevalent throughout the colony. Prostitution was articulated as a disease, a moral contagion that threatened the

‘upliftment’ and civilization of the colony, just as venereal infections compromised the colony’s health. Although the contagious diseases legislation targeted ‘common prostitutes’ as sexually immoral and the spreader of disease, local legislators saw the benefit of the legislation in addressing the immoral sexual proclivities and unsanitary habits of the general population. The extensive operation of sexual-economic exchange in the subjugated areas of the colony and beyond, plus the growing epidemic nature of venereal disease, motivated colonial authorities in their demands for a colony-wide extension of the Contagious Diseases Act. From as early as 1877, colonial officials, such as the Surgeon-General, the Commander of Troops, and the Inspector-General, began petitioning the local government for a broader application of the contagious diseases legislation. According to these officials and many other colonial authorities, the spread of venereal disease in the colony was the result of distinctly Jamaican causes, or more specifically, the result of the ‘negro character’.

From the time the Act was first implemented, colonial administrators drew on both racialized and gendered understandings of black sexuality and culture, both male and female, in assessing the possible effectiveness of the legislation in the colony. When the Act was first passed in Jamaica, administrators relied on experiences in Malta in the hope it would be as effective in the West Indian colony at curbing instances of venereal diseases. In a letter of December 1867, the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty wrote to the Secretary of State for War, John Pakington, that ‘from experience gained at Malta it may be hoped that a stringent carrying out of the [contagious diseases law] would clear the island of Jamaica in [short] time of the Greater part of the disease’.¹⁰⁹ It was hoped that ‘if the act be effectively administered its operation ought to reduce the amount of

¹⁰⁹TNA, CO 137/428/40. Letter from W.S. Norman to Sir John Pakington, 10 December 1867.

disease to a minimum within three or four months'.¹¹⁰ However, the particularities of race set the island apart. As Pakington stated in response, 'In regard to the disease being speedily reduced to a minimum, though such a result may have been attained at Malta...the low state of morality common to the negro population in the West Indies...scarcely warrant the conclusion of so immediate a beneficial result being produced'.¹¹¹ Pakington drew on racialized discourse around black sexual practices in determining the effectiveness of eliminating venereal disease in the colony, but he was certainly not the only one.

Physicians charged with reporting on the prevalence of venereal disease in the colony similarly accounted its extensiveness to the sexual and cultural character of the 'negro'. For instance, several physicians in the colony commented that the poor sanitary and housing conditions as well as the close proximity to which men and women lived encouraged sexual promiscuity and the spread of disease.¹¹² Others attributed the spread of venereal disease to the reluctance of Afro-Jamaicans to seek treatment. For example, the Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Kingston's Public Hospital argued that superstition played a major role in the continuation and spread of the contagious diseases. In his report to the Governor, Dr. Mosse stated that those of the 'humbler classes...persistently omit to seek admission [to the hospital] in the earlier and curable stages of the disease', but instead frequently sought medical attention from 'quacks and the obeahman'. 'This painful perversity, which seems inherent in their nature, is the more

¹¹⁰ TNA, CO 137/428/519. Letter from Duke of Buckingham and Chandos to Sir John Pakington, 4 November 1867.

¹¹¹ TNA, CO 137/428/522. Letter from Sir John Pakington to Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, 24 December 1867.

¹¹² *The Governor's Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (Kingston, 1885), p. 124.

to be deplored seeing that they generally respond readily to treatment.’¹¹³ In Mosse’s summation, the superstition of the local blacks, an attribute ‘inherent in their nature’, was to blame for the continued spread of the disease.

Colonial officials not only attributed these behaviours to civilian portions of society. When asked to comment on the efficacy of the Contagious Diseases Act in reducing venereal diseases at Up-Park Camp in 1876, the surgeon Major stated that the continued high rate of the disease amongst the troops had nothing to do with the Act itself, but instead, the blame lay with the black soldiers. ‘Dirty in his habits, without morals, and constitutionally a liar, he does all in his power to obstruct the law by shielding the prostitute from the Police’, wrote the Surgeon Major. ‘Out of 100 admissions to hospital for Venereal Diseases barely 1 per cent have named a woman as the source of their infection and out of this small percentage, 5 out of 6 either name a wrong woman, or give a fictitious name and address altogether.’ This resistance to the demands of their commanding officers to reveal the women they were intimate with compromised the efficiency of the Act, but also demonstrates the camaraderie between the black soldiers and the women who serviced them. However, officials viewed their behaviour as evidence of the poor habits and low state of morality inherent in all blacks in the colony.

The Contagious Diseases Act was repealed in Jamaica in 1887, a year later than in Britain. For several years prior to the repeal in the metropole, the Contagious Diseases Acts were the subject of very intense debates. The main repeal advocacy organizations, the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act and the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, began protesting the

¹¹³ *The Governor’s Report* (1885), p. 226.

legislation in Britain from 1869.¹¹⁴ For just over fifteen years, anti-regulationists in Britain actively campaigned against the domestic Acts, as well as those implemented in the British colonies. They argued that the legislation sanctioned vice, violated the civil liberties of women accused of prostitution, and sanctioned gender inequalities. While several bodies, including medical authorities, argued for the continuation and extension of the Acts, it was the repeal movement in Britain and other colonies, such as India, that garnered public support and led to the eventual abolishment of the legislation.

The social protest that occurred in the metropole and in some other parts of the empire was not replicated in Jamaica.¹¹⁵ Religious and humanitarian organizations in the colony did not write petitions or submit memorials to the Legislative Council to have the legislation repealed. Nor were there any feminist movements arguing that the Acts breached civil liberties and promoted gender inequalities. Instead, public protest in Jamaica was fragmentary and unorganized. There were very few articles in the local newspapers that criticized the Acts. For instance, an article in the *Gleaner* argued that it was not the Contagious Diseases Act itself that sanctioned vice, but the way it was implemented in Jamaica. According to the article, the legislation would never have gained Her Majesty's assent without a clause that provided moral education for 'common prostitutes' incarcerated in the lock hospital: '[w]ill our readers believe that these clauses – the two first of which are a vital part of the Act, have been utterly ignored by the Government?' With these provisions in place, the editor wrote, 'the Act might perhaps fairly be construed as being in aid of Sanitary and Moral and Religious Reform'. However it had not been so. 'Worked as it has been...and worked as it now is in Jamaica,

¹¹⁴ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*.

¹¹⁵ See for instance, Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics*, pp. 85-109.

it is purely and simply an Act for legalizing vice, and rendering it safe. The thing is monstrous! Such *mala fides* is discreditable to a Government and insulting to the community.’¹¹⁶ For the few members of the public who opposed the legislation, it was not on the basis that the Act itself was problematic, but instead, on the lack of moral instruction and reform for the ‘common prostitutes’. Blacks required moral instruction in addition to legal control, if they were to change their sexual habits. However, without moral instruction the act served to encourage, not restrain the sexual proclivities of the island’s poor blacks.

This was one of the very few voices in the public forum that opposed the legislation. A much stronger chorus of medical professionals and local legislators called for the expansion of the Contagious Diseases Act. Medical and police reports circulated to members of the local legislative council and to the Colonial Office from as early as 1879 argued that the limited application of the legislation had caused the continued spread of venereal disease amongst the forces, as well as the labouring civilian population. According to Dr. Chas B. Mosse, the Senior Medical Officer of the public hospital, ‘the limited local action of the Contagious Diseases Acts does not afford much real protection’ from the prevalent and pernicious spread of venereal disease throughout the island.¹¹⁷ As another physician wrote in his report, ‘[i]t is somewhat astounding to find that the whole strength of the black population in Jamaica is being sapped by the same disease. I assert that in the part of Jamaica in which I practice [Black River, a town in the parish of St. Elizabeth in the southwest of the Island], ninety per cent of the working

¹¹⁶ *Gleaner*, 27 May 1874.

¹¹⁷ *The Governor’s Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (Kingston, 1884), p.104.

population suffer from Syphilis, if indeed the percentage be not larger'.¹¹⁸ Such figures recommended that the legislation be expanded to include port towns throughout the island, not just areas connected to the navy or military. As one local physician stated, 'in the absence of restrictive legislation, I see no hope of any early diminution under this head, as those who propagate the disease cannot be otherwise reached; they rarely apply for medical assistance, and then only when the disease is far advanced and their condition has been productive of much evil'.¹¹⁹

In the months after the repeal act in the metropole, Edward Stanhope, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, directed the recently appointed Governor of Jamaica, Sir Henry Wylie Norman, to introduce a bill to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act in the colony. In his letter, Stanhope asked Norman, along with the other Governors of the Crown colonies, if 'the interests of the Colony imperatively require the continuance of these laws' and if so, to provide him with 'any special reasons they may have for that opinion'.¹²⁰ The governor of Trinidad, Sir William Robinson, responded that the legislation was 'practically inoperative' and therefore 'should be repealed'.¹²¹ In Barbados, Governor Sir C.C. Lees relied upon the opinion of the chief Medical Officer of the lock hospital in Bridgetown and the officer commanding the troops in determining his answer to Stanhope. Both officials agreed that while the Acts had 'been an incalculable boon to the Army' and in keeping 'down the disease amongst a certain class of prostitutes', 'the powers are too limited'. Thus, Governor Lees acknowledged that 'there

¹¹⁸ *The Governor's Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports* (Kingston, 1888), pp. 121-147.

¹¹⁹ *The Governor's Report* (1886), p. 38.

¹²⁰ PP, 1887 (347). Contagious diseases ordinances (colonies.) Copies of correspondence, or extracts therefrom, relating to the repeal of contagious diseases ordinances and regulations in the Crown Colonies. Letter from Edward Stanhope to the Governors of the Crown Colonies, 25 October 1886.

¹²¹ PP, 1887 (347). Contagious diseases ordinances (colonies.) Copies of correspondence, or extracts therefrom, relating to the repeal of contagious diseases ordinances and regulations in the Crown Colonies. Letter from Governor Sir William Robinson to Edward Stanhope, 8 December 1886 and 21 February 1887.

are no special reasons why these Acts should be maintained' in the colony.¹²² Opposition to the repeal of the Act in Jamaica was more vigorous. Members of the Legislative Council, naval and military officers, and local physicians communicated to Governor Norman their opposition to the proposed Repeal Bill and advocated for the extension of Contagious Diseases Acts throughout the colony. Their opposition was transmitted to the Colonial Office. However, the recently appointed Secretary of the Colonies, Sir H.T. Holland, was unconvinced by the 'special reasons' raised by Governor Norman. He decided that continued application of the contagious diseases legislation had 'no special weight in reference to Jamaica'.¹²³ Although Norman supported the continuation and extension of the legislation, Holland instructed the elected Legislative Council to support the bill.¹²⁴

While they had been directed to support the repeal bill, six members of the Council formally contested the abolition of the acts and the closure of the lock hospital that was inevitable once imperial subsidies stopped in September of 1887. When they submitted the Contagious Diseases Repeal Act for royal assent, members of the Legislative Council took the opportunity to lodge a formal protest to the repeal act. On 3 May 1887, the six members of the Legislative Council, C.S. Farquharson, Robert Craig, William Malabre, Michael Solomon, Wellesley Bourke, and W. Baucroft Espeut, filed a petition. Drawing directly on the statistics gathered by physicians working in the lock hospital in Kingston and the public hospitals located in various districts across the

¹²² PP, 1887 (347). Contagious diseases ordinances (colonies.) Copies of correspondence, or extracts therefrom, relating to the repeal of contagious diseases ordinances and regulations in the Crown Colonies, Letter from Governor Sir C.C. Lees to Edward Stanhope, 29 November 1886; TNA, CO 137/530. Sir H.T. Holland to Governor Sir C.C. Lees, 19 March 1887.

¹²³ TNA, CO 137/530. Letter from Sir H.T. Holland to Sir H.W. Norman, 19 March 1887.

¹²⁴ TNA, CO 137/530. Letter from Sir H.T. Holland to Sir H.W. Norman, 19 March 1887.

colony, members of the Legislative Council argued that the abolition of contagious diseases legislation would have dangerous repercussions to the larger community in Jamaica, repercussions outlined in the memorial. The first point raised by the legislative members was the pervasiveness of the venereal diseases in the colony. 'A very large proportion of the lower orders of the people of this country suffer directly or indirectly from contagious diseases', they wrote in the memorial. Legislators had years of governmental reports to support their assertion that venereal diseases were spreading throughout the poorer communities. These reports provided them with empirical evidence, scientific proof, about the sexual nature of the black population. It was not just 'common prostitutes' that were being affected. They may have been the source, but the sexual proclivities of the 'lower orders' in the colony were causing the disease to spread. Whether it was the unsanitary and poor housing conditions in which they lived, superstitions, or sexual practices, across the island both 'expert' testimonies and the body of empirical data they collected allowed colonial authorities to conclude that the continued pervasiveness of venereal diseases in the colony was the result of uncontrolled sexuality of 'common prostitutes' and the 'lower orders' of society, the 'negro character'.

Further, the men of Her Majesty's military were also at risk. 'At a time when it has been determined to make this Island the Head Quarters of the Troops in the West Indies; when we look forward to the probability of more frequent visits from the Navies of the world, we deem the abandonment of the safeguards and protection afforded by a Contagious Disease Law, is ill advised and dangerous alike to the British Troops stationed here, to the men of the Naval and Mercantile Fleets who visit this Island, and to

the inhabitants of this country.’¹²⁵ Legislators, along with medical authorities and police, did not just protest against the repeal of the act, but also called for the extension of the contagious diseases legislation across the whole island. Their objection to the Repeal Bill was based on what legislators and colonial authorities identified as the specific local circumstances of the colony – namely the pervasiveness of venereal diseases amongst poor communities, and the troops and fleets stationed in and passing through the island.

Despite the formal reports filed by colonial officials that discussed venereal disease as rampant amongst civilian and military populations across the colony, Holland took little notice of the memorial sent by the Legislative Council. The movement to have the Acts repealed in Britain and the rest of the Empire had garnered too much support to be swayed by the objections of few colonial legislators. Further, while it could not be denied that venereal disease was epidemic throughout colony, the ‘partial application’ of the contagious diseases legislation had ‘not been instrumental in lessening the disease generally’. The colony had neither the finances nor the infrastructure to properly enforce the contagious diseases legislation throughout the colony.¹²⁶ Consequently, Holland determined that there was ‘no reason why the laws should be allowed to remain in force in Jamaica’. The Contagious Diseases Repeal Bill was introduced and the elected Legislative Council along with the Governor, instructed to support it.¹²⁷

Colonial officials and authorities in Jamaica were motivated to advocate for the extension of the Contagious Diseases Act because of the racial notions of black sexuality and Afro-Jamaican customs that they held, supported by the empirical evidence on the

¹²⁵ JA, IB/5/9/8. Minutes of the Legislative Council, 2 May 1887.

¹²⁶ TNA, CO 137/530. Letter from Sir H.T. Holland to Sir H.W. Norman, 19 March 1887.

¹²⁷ TNA, CO 137/530. Letter from Sir H.T. Holland to Sir H.W. Norman, 19 March 1887.

‘common prostitute’ and the spread of venereal disease. The sexual immorality identified with women engaged in sexual-economic exchange was symbolic of the sexual habits of people of the ‘lower orders’ in the colony. The Afro-Jamaican labouring poor were complicit in the spread of the disease and the sexual immorality throughout the island. Without regulation of sexual-economic exchange and the sexual culture predominant in the society, the colony could not advance.

Conclusion

This chapter began by examining discourses surrounding venereal disease, prostitution and the hypersexual African female body. I have argued that the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica in 1867 was informed by these associations, but must also be understood within the context of the social, political and economic transformations that occurred in the island following the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. Such social upheavals, along with the wide-scale poverty prevalent throughout the island lent support for the complete legal reform and renewed, combined effort of the colonial authorities to ‘uplift’ and civilize the population. Although the Contagious Diseases Act was originally initiated as an empire-wide legislation concerned with the health of (white) soldiers and seaman, the Act provided an opportunity for local authorities to address the spread of venereal disease and the sexual immorality they perceived amongst the ‘lower orders’ throughout the island.

Although racial discourses were not integral to the original introduction of the legislation, discourses around the extension of the legislation and opposition to its repeal

drew upon long entrenched ideas of the ‘negro’ character, but also on nascent medical and empirical knowledge of race and sexual behaviour that the statistically data on the ‘common prostitute’ and venereal disease provided. Within seven years of the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act in Jamaica, legislators, physicians, police, and other local authorities were unanimous in their efforts to have similar legislation re-implemented in the colony. Among the authorities that advocated for the reinstatement and extension of the contagious disease legislation were local members of religious bodies, including the Bishop of the Anglican Church in Jamaica and head of the local branch of British-based Social Purity Committee, Enos Nuttall. Nuttall’s support of these efforts was surprising since the SPC had been at the forefront of the movement to have the Contagious Diseases Acts in Britain and other parts of the empire repealed. In contradiction to widely held notions amongst British repealers that the ‘degraded class’ of women were the specific source of venereal diseases, in Jamaica many colonial officials and religious bodies, including Nuttall and the local branch of the Social Purity Society, perceived the wider population as complicit in the spread of the diseases. As Nuttall stated in his 1892 letter to the Social Purity Society in London, ‘any adequate discussion of the matter must take notice of the fact that we have to think here not merely of a prostitute class but of the serious questions of disease as likely to endanger a large section of our population not living morally but at the same time not to be classed with prostitutes’.¹²⁸ Contagious diseases legislation, that had been so vehemently opposed and protested in Britain and other parts of the empire between 1870 and 1886, was necessary in the Caribbean island. The spread of venereal diseases in the colony could not be attributed only to prostitution

¹²⁸ NLJ, MS 209. Letter from Enos Nuttall to Rev. W. Osbourne B. Allen, 18 March 1893.

and the black female body, but was a matter of the hypersexual behaviour of the 'negro' race as a whole. Without some form of contagious diseases legislation to regulate the sexual practices of the population, the colony had little hope of achieving moral and social civilization.

Chapter Six: Continuities and Changes of Sexual-Economic Exchange

At the turn of the twentieth century, heightened discussions of sexual-economic exchange emerged in public discourses. As early as the 1870s, there was a noticeable increase in the number of articles in the local newspapers discussing the public disturbances and the ‘social evils’ related to prostitution. Residents complained of the ‘lewd’ women who ‘assemble nightly’ upon the streets of Kingston and ‘annoy respectable persons’. As Mr. Bicknell, a Kingston magistrate, was recorded as saying in the *Colonial Standard* in 1880 when passing sentence on two women brought before him for ‘using the foulest language that tongue can utter’: ‘You are common prostitutes who are a pest to the country’. Another article in the *Gleaner* recorded the case of a woman who committed a supposedly ‘unprovoked assault’ on a ‘gentleman’ after he had rejected her ‘importunes’.¹ According to these accounts, and others like it, ‘common prostitutes’ were not just a nuisance, but could be dangerous. Stories like these, amongst many others in the late nineteenth-century, demonstrate the increased public concern over the presence of transactional sex in public spaces, as well as the threat this practice was thought to pose to both the moral fibre of the colony and the health of the population.

However, it was not only in the newspapers that the operation of sexual-economic exchange became more pronounced. In the first decade of the twentieth century, humanitarian organizations and religious groups that specifically focused on the ‘fallen woman’ emerged to address the ‘social evils’ described as plaguing

¹ *Gleaner*, 30 August 1898; *Colonial Standard*, 8 April 1880.

society. For instance, in 1901, representatives of the Salvation Army in Jamaica called upon humanitarians in the colony to regard these women as ‘fallen sisters’ in need of rescue.² A year later, Enos Nuttall opened the first rescue home in Kingston dedicated to these ‘fallen women’.³ At the turn of the century, the ‘prostitute’ emerged in discourses as an issue of morality and public concern. However, while there were certainly continuities in the rhetoric surrounding sexual-economic exchange, throughout the nineteenth century there were also many changes in the way colonial legislators and elites discussed and addressed this practice.

The Continuities of Disorder and Danger

The archival records have revealed a number of discourses about or involving sexual-economic exchange and the women understood to be involved in this practice that persisted throughout the nineteenth century. Among them was the perception of women involved in transactional sex as dangerous bodies and thus in need of management. These women were seen to cross, blur and at times challenge social, cultural, legal and economic boundaries that structured Jamaican society. However, the way this danger was articulated did not remain consistent throughout the century. During the mid- and late-eighteenth century, colonial legislators viewed the relationships that individual white men had with black and coloured sexual labourers as potentially dangerous to the racial-economic hierarchies that were intrinsic to the

² *Jamaica Times*, 20 April 1901. Cited in Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, “‘Fallen Sisters’? Attitudes to Female Prostitution in Jamaica at the Turn of the Twentieth Century”, *The Journal of Caribbean History*, 34 (2000), p. 54.

³ Moore and Johnson, “‘Fallen Sisters’?”, pp. 54-55.

slavery hierarchies. The financial benefits some women were able to achieve from these relationships, as well as the increasing number of mixed-race individuals and their politicisation, caused some colonial authorities anxieties. Intimate relationships with white men and the mixed-race children that resulted were visible reminders to colonial authorities of the porosity of the racial boundaries that structured Jamaican slave society. However, it was not only white colonial authorities that viewed women engaged in transactional sex as threatening. As the free community of colour began to become more politicized and advocated for full equality, the large number of free women of colour engaged in sexual-economic relationships with white men were seen as transgressing Christian notions of gender and domesticity. By lessening the image of the larger community as 'respectable', these women weakened free coloured people's claims to political and civil equality.

The danger that sexual labourers were described as embodying was articulated in other ways throughout the century. This included the transgression of gendered divisions of private and public space. Women who engaged in sexual-economic exchange were seen as taking a private act (sex) and commercializing it in the public space. In this way, they blurred the divisions between private and public space that were becoming increasingly important to notions of civility and respectability in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In addition, the presence of large numbers of women working and socializing in these public spaces, and the ways they behaved, further reinforced the perception of the disorder and danger they were seen to embody.

Sexual labourers were also described as bodies of disease and infection. As I showed in Chapter Five, in discussions of venereal disease, medical physicians from as early as the first decades of the nineteenth century pathologized the black female body as a source of infection for black and white men alike. This fear intensified in the latter part of the century as colonial authorities and medical professionals associated prostitution with the spread of venereal diseases not only amongst the white troops in Jamaica, but also amongst the larger labouring population of island. These women were described by colonial officials, physicians, constables and even religious officials, as conduits through which disease passed from poor to rich, from blacks to whites, from men to their 'respectable' wives.

The archival records and the silences in these records have also revealed some patterns in when and how sexual-economic exchange was discussed throughout the century. Sexual-economic exchange and the dangers that women involved in this practice was seen to embody became more evident in the archival records during periods of heightened social and political transformation in the colony. During the abolition debates in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, discussions of concubinage proliferated in local sources, such as newspapers and travelogues, but also in official records, such as commission reports and formal inquiries into the state of slavery in the society. However, in the immediate post-slavery period, there was relatively little discussion of sexual labour on either a local level or more broadly. Instead, the few records that appear about women engaged in sexual labour are fragmentary and limited to few criminal cases. As I have argued in Chapter Four, this silencing in the records is not necessarily

reflective of a decline in the occurrences of sexual-economic exchange in the colony; there is no evidence by which to measure such a decline. Instead, these silences are reflective of colonial concern. As I have shown, this may have been the period when anti-prostitution laws were first enacted; however, colonial authorities rarely put these regulation measures into practice. They were not concerned with regulating the public sale of sexual services per se. Instead, it was only when poor women caused a nuisance in public spaces, or there were complaints from 'respectable' members of society about the noise or other disruptions in taverns or lodging homes that laws targeting the 'common prostitute' were seemingly enforced. Following the Morant Bay Rebellion and the colonial reforms, there was a renewed effort to 'civilize' the Jamaican public. As the Contagious Diseases Act came into law, colonial officials made a more strategic effort to efficiently and effectively monitor, regulate and punish the 'common prostitute'. This included the gathering of statistical data on the numbers of women accused of being so, how many volunteered for inspection, the number infected with venereal disease and the number cured. Using the reports physicians and the Chief Inspector wrote based on these kinds of 'scientific fact', local politicians and officials claimed that prostitution was prevalent in throughout the colony. However, it was not just that the colony had a large number of 'common prostitutes', but that large sectors of the labouring population, both men and women, lived sexually promiscuous lives and had become infected with the disease. This meant that the health of the labouring population in the colony was at risk. Thus, by exploring the discourses around sexual-economic exchange during three key moments in the nineteenth century, this dissertation has

shown that official concern around sexual-economic exchange in Jamaica fluctuated with social, legal and political changes and upheavals in the colony. Moreover, this dissertation has shown that those women who exchanged sex for money or material gain were really only a concern to colonial authorities and ‘respectable’ members of the public during times of colonial upheaval and as a part of larger issues around slavery and equality, public order, and public health. Thus, it was only during periods of heightened anxieties around these other issues that the sexual praxis of women emerged within colonial, elite and public discourses.

Glimpses and Agency

While the primary focus of this dissertation has been upon colonial elite discourse of sexual-economic exchange, the archival records have offered up glimpses into how some poor and marginalized women may have experienced and understood such practices. Authorities and elites often determined a woman’s sexual morality based on her public presence and behaviour. Such an entanglement between sexual praxis and public behaviour suggests a need for further research on sexual and embodied agency and public performance, and may add to recent studies of Caribbean popular music, performance, carnival, and sexual agency.

Several scholars exploring the links between public behaviour and women’s sexual agency have made use of the concept of ‘vulgarity’. This concept revolves around the notion that women use their bodies in sexual ways that transgress patriarchal gender ordering and divisions of public/private spheres. Further, such

embodied erotic expressions are situated in opposition to notions of respectability and are indicative of women's sexual agency and freedom. Belinda Edmonson, Richard D. E. Burton, Natasha Barnes, Mimi Sheller, Pamela Franco, Rosamond S. King, and Carolyn Cooper have developed a rich collection of studies that explore these concepts.

Mimi Sheller's most recent study on erotic agency is particularly useful at getting at individual woman's embodied assertions of agency under and in response to systems of patriarchal, racial and class oppressions. Her central concern is 'how one deploys the body's sexual and erotic potential in a context of constrained freedom, social inequality, and state regulation of deviance'.⁴ Sheller uses the term 'inter-embodiments' to describe 'a kind of everyday politics' that identifies the ways in which 'freedom is exercised and enacted' through 'bodily assertion' and 'performative practices' that includes the ways individuals dance, the music they make and the way they worship.⁵ Collectively, these practices signal a form of 'erotic agency', a means of asserting one's freedom and 'citizenship from below'. As Sheller notes, 'insofar as freedom is an embodied performance that requires racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual boundaries to be marked and articulated in public ways, any exercise of autonomy or agency is always in tension with state efforts to control sexuality, reproduction, family formation, kinship systems, landholding, and labour systems'.⁶ Other scholars have also theorized women's public performance, such as in the streets and in the dancehall. For instance, work on the *jamettes*, men and women of the lower class who performed in carnival in Trinidad, has been

⁴ Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, p. 9.

⁵ Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, p. 17.

⁶ Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, p. 28.

useful in thinking about the body, sexuality, space and agency.⁷ Rosamond S. King writes that ‘for jamenttes, Carnival became an opportunity for men and women whose work was often hidden—in the dark, inside, or “underground”—to appear in public and in daylight, reminding others of their presence, “getting on bad” and shocking the middle class and elites’—a means of claiming public space and asserting freedom, citizenship and agency.⁸ Similarly, Carolyn Cooper uses the term ‘slackness’ as a particular kind of bodily agency accessed by women in Jamaica’s contemporary dancehall culture. In the lyrics and dance styles that encompass the dancehall scene, Cooper argues that women’s adoption of ‘slackness’—the sexually suggestive dance styles and sexually explicit lyrics—becomes a political charged stance in opposition and response to oppressive systems of patriarchal gender ideologies and morality found in conservative Jamaican conceptions of high/respectable culture. ‘A politics of subversion’, slackness is more than simply sexual ‘looseness’, but as Cooper defines it, ‘a metaphorical revolt against law and order, an undermining of consensual standards of decency’. For women involved, ‘slackness’ becomes a means of liberation from ‘the repressive respectability of a conservative gender ideology of female property and propriety’ and a way for women to ‘lay proper claim to the control of their own bodies’.⁹ The way women behaved, the movement of their body—the gyrations, suggests their ‘vulgarity’ and

⁷ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, 2002).

⁸ Rosamond S. King, ‘New Citizens, New Sexualities: Nineteenth-Century Jamenttes’, in Faith L. Smith (ed), *Sex and the Citizen: Interrogating the Caribbean* (Charlottesville, 2011), p. 215; also see Pamela Franco, ‘The ‘Unruly Woman’ in Nineteenth-Century Trinidad Carnival’, *Small Axe: Journal of Criticism*, 7 (2000); and, Natasha Barnes, ‘Body Talk: Notes on Women and Spectacle in Contemporary Trinidad Carnival’, *Small Axe: Journal of Criticism*, 7 (2000), p. 95.

⁹ Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender, and the “Vulgar” Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (Durham, 1993), p. 141 and p. 11.

‘slackness’, but also an exertion of agency and the freedoms to own their bodies and occupy space.

The way women performed—the way they used their bodies and moved, spoke and socialized—specifically in gendered public spaces, was one of the central factors in elite and colonial discourses that marked women as ‘concubines’ and ‘common prostitutes’. In much of the same way that Cooper, Sheller and King have described above, colonial authorities and ‘respectable’ members of society identified ‘immoral’ women by the way they moved their bodies and behaved in public spaces. Yet, by engaging with these records as text and ‘reading against the archival grain’, these sources also reveal at times an assertion of agency. As I discussed in Chapters Five, and to a lesser extent in Chapter Four, newspapers were quick to report on the ‘unruly’ behaviour of women and associated such public behaviours with women’s sexual praxis. The fact women were operating in public was one thing; however, the ways they behaved and moved were what designated them as sexually deviant. As the studies discussed here suggest, such behaviour in specific public spaces signalled a sexual autonomy and agency, not a complete rejection of gendered heteronormative behaviour, but a challenge to the hegemonic control of bodies that sought to possess it.

By raising the possibility of sexual agency in a discussion of sexual-economic exchange, I am not suggesting that such exertions of agency and claims to freedom can or even should be read as challenges to social or structural forms of power. Sexual agency can undermine systems of power and oppression, but can also reaffirm them. Sexual-economic exchange indeed accommodated and supported

heteropatriarchal structures, even as women who engaged in the exchange, by their public behaviours and economic independence, may have challenged and undermined them. Instead, the glimpses into the practices of sexual-economic exchange suggest that despite attempts to control and manage the behaviours of women through legislation, codes of morality, and discursive constructions of gender and race, these women were not passive victims, but neither were they necessarily ‘natural rebels’.¹⁰ Instead, women held complex subjectivities that were both in line but also in tensions with multiple conceptions of sexuality and agency.

The glimpses of autonomy evident in the official and elite discourses around sexual-economic exchange explored in this dissertation may also have implications for the way in which historians and other scholars have discussed women in nineteenth-century Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean. The dominant historical studies of black or coloured women and sexuality during the slavery and post-slavery periods are most commonly framed around discussions of sexual exploitation. As several historians of Caribbean and American societies have argued, sexual exploitation, including rape, was a widely shared experience for black and coloured women.¹¹ In the heteropatriarchal and racist society in which black and coloured women occupied the most marginalized and exploited positions, sexual violence or the threat of sexualized violence was a central component in the shaping of lived experiences, as well as discourses around black women and uncontrolled sexuality. For instance, in direct reference to black women’s involvement in sexual

¹⁰ Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick, 1989).

¹¹ For example, see Hilary Beckles, *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society* (Oxford, 1999); and, Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (London, 1990).

labour in America both during, but also after the ending of slavery, Darlene Clark Hines argues, that 'as long as [black women] occupied an enforced subordinate position within American society' the sale of sex amounted to 'rape'.¹² While there is no denying the intersections of sexual violence and sexual labour, a problem with this kind of analysis is that it tends to make obscure the diverse range of motivations, desires and impulses that may have influenced the (constrained) choices that women made. As Nell Irvin Painter reminds us, it is important for scholars to discuss difficult questions around enslaved women's agency, sexuality, and 'individual subjectivity' that complicate the picture of slavery and sexuality.¹³

Sexual agency provides a mode from which we can view the fractured nature of power and hegemonic discourse by making visible the ways in which individuals and communities, no matter their position, are constantly in negotiation with the state and structures of oppression, including the archival records themselves. M. Jacqui Alexander points out that sexual autonomy, particularly when expressed by women, has always been 'troublesome' for colonial/neo-colonial authorities.¹⁴ And while assertions of sexual agency were not necessarily an intentional challenge to these structures of dominance, nor motivated by a desire to dismantle patriarchal, racist or class structures, recognition of agency provides a more complex way of viewing individuals who made choices around desire, sex, and intimacy that may be

¹² Darlene Clark Hines, 'Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West', *Signs*, 14 (1989), p. 919.

¹³ Nell Irvin Painter, *Southern History Across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill, 2002), 4-5.

¹⁴ M. Jacqui Alexander, 'Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy', in M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (eds), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York, 2012), p. 64.

in contradiction to our understandings of slavery and power.¹⁵ By making space for narratives of agency beyond the binaries of oppressed and oppressor, powerless and powerful, we can illuminate the multiple techniques women used in order to negotiate structures of power within slave and post-slave society. The fragmentary glimpses into the practices of sexual-economic exchange in nineteenth-century Jamaica suggest that women who engaged in sexual labour were not just ‘passive victims’ of white patriarchy and sexual violence, but active agents. They engaged with, challenged and negotiated power in order to carve out advantageous spaces for themselves. In this sense, sexual agency should really be understood as a part of women’s general exertion of freedom and citizenship—their rights to live and occupy public space, to seek pleasures, and to make ends meet in any way they can. Thus, discussing women’s agency is not only about giving women ‘voice’ in historical studies, but recognizing these marginalized individuals as actors within the social, cultural and political developments that shaped nineteenth-century Jamaica.

Concluding Thoughts

This project opens up some interesting areas for future research beyond the study of discourses and practices of sexual-economic exchange. One area of research suggested, but not fully explored in this dissertation, relates to naval and military history. Imperial forces, including British and American soldiers and sailors, were among the men that sought out the services of sexual labourers in Jamaica. As commercial centres of Jamaica and major port towns, both Kingston and Port Royal

¹⁵ Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 28.

seemed to have large numbers of women engaged in sexual-economic exchange. Indeed, several contemporary accounts of the practice discussed in this thesis made reference to or were authored by men connected to this transient population. While this dissertation has highlighted the existence of these connections, further research into the sexual-economic relationships between men of the British imperial (and American) forces and local women may tell us more about the attitudes towards gender, sex and race within the forces. Such a study would contribute to recent trends in the cultural study of naval and military history in the Caribbean and Atlantic region.¹⁶

This dissertation has also highlighted another possible area of future research. I have focused exclusively on discourses, and somewhat on practices, of sexual-economic exchange. However, although I have suggested some overlap, this study has not explored in any depth the relationship between sexual-economic exchange and attitudes towards the Afro-Jamaican family. For instance, increased discussions around the ‘common prostitute’ in the late nineteenth century occurred in tandem with discussions of marriage, children and illegitimacy. As discussed in Chapter Three, women’s participation in sexual-economic relationships were discussed as detrimental to the family unit, an institution that was seen to have political implications around citizenship. As several studies of Caribbean masculinities and the Afro-Jamaican family show, the matrifocal households common amongst lower-class Caribbean women and their non-monogamous mating

¹⁶ Steven Gray’s study has also suggested that there were deeper connections between British naval personnel and the local population in Jamaica, including women engaged in sexual-economic exchange. See Steven Gray, ‘Black Diamonds: Coal, the Royal Navy and British Imperial Coaling Station, c.1870-1914’. Diss. The University of Warwick, 2014.

patterns were and continue to be used to explain the ‘inadequacies’ and failures of black men within the family unit.¹⁷ While many of these studies have deepened our understandings of (heterosexual) masculinities in relation to the family, women are often ‘pathologized... as sexually irresponsible and as producers of maladjusted boys and men’.¹⁸ Further discussion of sexual-economic exchange as an income-generating strategy for poor Afro-Jamaican families, as well as more in depth discussion of women’s sexual praxis in general, may provide interesting insights into the patterns of marriage and mating that are still relevant to Caribbean societies today.

Sexual-economic exchange was not the only form of sexual praxis that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as a source of legal and social concern. Colonial officials increasingly used legislation to criminalize other forms of sexual praxis considered threatening to the heteropatriarchal state. For instance, in 1864, the term ‘sodomite’, like the ‘common prostitute’ thirty years before, was introduced in laws as a special legal category of person. The law was integral in the creation of what M. Jacqui Alexander calls a ‘marginal underground of noncitizens’. This category has increasingly come to encompass other ‘sexual deviants’, including lesbians and the

¹⁷ Graham Dann, *The Barbadian Male: Sexual Attitudes and Practice* (London 1987); Barry Chevannes, *Learning to be a Man: Culture, Socialization and Gender identity in Five Caribbean Communities* (Kingston, 2001).

¹⁸ Kemala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race, and Sexual Labor* (New York, 2004), p. 20.

HIV-infected.¹⁹ Current legal regimes in the Caribbean, at the ‘discursive level’, as M.J. Alexander argues in the case of Bahamas, has created ‘a continuity between white imperial heteropatriarchy—the white European heterosexual inheritance—and Black heteropatriarchy’ that remains present’.²⁰ In addition to the civil equalities denied to the ‘marginal underground of citizens’, they are also subjected to increasing violence, from both the police and members of the public, and prevented from accessing the medical and social resources available to other citizens based on their sexual praxis. The study of sexual-economic exchange in nineteenth-century Jamaica suggests the need for greater historical analysis of the way sexual praxis, not just gender, class or race, has figured in conceptions of (sexual) citizenship that persist and remain pertinent to Jamaica and the wider Caribbean region today.

¹⁹ M.Jacqui Alexander, ‘Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy’ M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (eds.), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York, 2012), p. 66.

²⁰ M.Jacqui Alexander, ‘Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization’, p. 66.

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