

**CHILDREN OF UNCERTAIN FORTUNE: MIXED-RACE MIGRATION  
FROM THE WEST INDIES TO BRITAIN, 1750-1820**

by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APS	American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia
BL	British Library, London, England
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, England
GROS	General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh
HL	Huntington Library, San Marino, California
ICS	Institute of Commonwealth Studies Library, London, England
IRO	Island Record Office, Central Village, Jamaica
JA	Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town, Jamaica
LOS	Libres Old Series
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library, London, England
MBP	Sir William Macpherson of Blairgowrie Private Papers, Blairgowrie, Scotland
MCP	Maclean-Clephane of Torloisk and Carslogie Private Papers, Newby Hall, Ripon, England
MFP	Montgomery Family Private Papers, Scotland
NAE	National Archives of England, Kew
NAS	National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh
NLJ	National Library of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NLW	National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth
NRAS	National Register of Archives for Scotland

OPR	Old Parish Registers
SOASL	School of Oriental and African Studies Library, University of London, England
UESCL	Special Collections Library, University of Edinburgh, Scotland
WCL	William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan
WMQ	<i>The William and Mary Quarterly</i>

## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation shows that the migration of mixed-race individuals from the Caribbean to Britain between 1750 and 1820 helped to harden British attitudes toward those of African descent. The children of wealthy, white fathers and both free and enslaved women of color, many left for Britain in order to escape the deficiencies and bigotry of West Indian society. This study traces the group's origin in the Caribbean, mainly Jamaica, to its voyage and arrival in Britain. It argues that the perceived threats of these migrants' financial bounty and potential to marry and reproduce in Britain helped to collapse previous racial distinctions in the metropole which had traditionally differentiated along class and status lines and paved the way for a more monolithic racial viewpoint in the nineteenth century.

This study makes three major contributions to the history of the British Atlantic. First, it provides a thorough examination of the West Indies' elite population of color, showing its connection to privileged white society in both the Caribbean and Britain. Those who moved to the metropole lend further proof to the agency and influence of such individuals in the Atlantic world. Second, it expands the notion of the British family at the turn of the nineteenth century. Through analyses of wills, inheritance disputes, and correspondence, this project reveals the regularity of British legal and personal interaction with relatives of color across the Atlantic, as well as with those who resettled in the metropole. Third, it allows for a material understanding of Atlantic racial ideologies. By connecting popular discussions in the abolition debate and the sentimental

novel to biographical accounts of mixed-race migrants, British notions of racial difference are more strongly linked to social reality. Uncovering an entirely new cohort of British people of color and its members' lived experiences, this dissertation provides crucial insight into the tightening of British and Atlantic racial attitudes.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1840, the Reverend Donald Sage completed his memoirs. Reflecting on the meandering twists and turns of life, he wrote extensively on his education and the different schools he attended as a youth. One of these institutions, where he stayed only briefly between 1801 and 1803, was located in the small seaside town of Dornoch, in the Scottish Highlands. Sage described the village as a “little county town” which had been “considerably on the decrease” by the time his family had arrived. As one would do in such a journal, Sage thought back on his boyhood friends, and noted that while at Dornoch he and his brother became close companions with the Hay family. Like Sage, the three Hay brothers were not originally from the village; they had instead been born in the West Indies. In fact, Sage revealed that they were “the offspring of a negro woman, as their hair, and the tawny colour of their skin, very plainly intimated, [and] [t]heir father was a Scotsman.” Sage became particularly good friends with Fergus, the eldest of the three, of whom he gave a very qualified endorsement: “Notwithstanding the disadvantages of his negro parentage, Fergus was very handsome. He had all the manners of a gentleman, and had first-rate abilities.”<sup>1</sup>

It may seem out of place for three West Indian children, the offspring of an interracial couple, to be living in a small village at Scotland’s northern tip in 1801. Historians tend to think of an Afro-Caribbean presence in Britain as a phenomenon of the

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Donald Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica; or, Parish Life in the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Menzies & Co., 1889), 149-60.

last sixty-plus years, and one localized around major urban centers. At the same time, only recently has the topic of inter-racial unions been addressed in the “new” multicultural Britain. The story of the Hay children in Dornoch, however, was not at all unique at the turn of the nineteenth century. Rather, the Hays were members of a regular migration of mixed-race West Indians who arrived in the home country during the period. Facing intense discrimination, few jobs opportunities, and virtually no educational options in the colonies, West Indians of color fled to Britain with their white fathers’ assistance. Once arrived, they encountered myriad responses. While some white relatives accepted them into their homes, others sued to cut them off from the family fortune. Equally, even though a number of fictional and political tracts welcomed their arrival, others condemned their presence and lobbied to ban them from landing on British soil. Regardless of these variable experiences, mixed-race migrants traveled to Britain consistently during the period. The Hay children may have turned heads on the roads of Dornoch, but they would not have been a wholly unfamiliar sight.

This study examines the movement of mixed-race individuals from the Caribbean to Britain at the end of the long eighteenth century. It argues that the frequent and sustained migration of these children of color produced a strong British reaction, at both the personal and popular levels, against their presence, and helped contribute to the simplification and essentialization of British racial ideology in the nineteenth century. A number of personal histories are followed through the various stages of this transplantation, and are compared to published accounts of the phenomenon in general. White patronage and parental ties were vital in the colonies if a mixed-race individual was to leave for Britain. Connected through these kinship and business associations, elite

West Indians of color maintained their own Atlantic networks. Once in Britain, they had to monitor their finances vigilantly against rival claimants to Caribbean fortunes. Family attempts at disinheritance were a frequent problem, and demonstrated an increasing British disgust at colonial miscegenation, along with mixed-race resettlement. With the advent of the abolition movement in the 1770s and 1780s, the issue took on greater political importance. Rich heirs of color now in Britain seemed to herald the cataclysmic prophecies of slavery supporters. Certain that abolition would destroy the racial and class barriers between black and white, many Britons recoiled at those of hybrid descent now resident in the metropole. If class distinctions had restrained racial prejudice in the early years of the eighteenth century, they no longer produced the same moderating effects at the century's close.

Throughout this study, the terms "mixed race," "of color," "colored," and "brown" are used to refer to individuals of joint African and European ancestry. Typically, scholars employ "of color" and "colored" to denote both black and mixed-race people. However, for clarity, this study will use the terms only in reference to the latter. The language of race is clearly fraught with semantic and signifying pitfalls. Scientists have disproven race as a biological category, and discussions of the term are bound to reinforce its illusory existence. While this study does not seek to reify biological notions of race, it uses these terms to understand early modern conceptions of human difference. Such categories held real meaning for eighteenth-century observers, and have unfortunately continued to live on into the present. By studying the lack of scientific and rational underpinnings behind these classifications, we may better counter their resilience.

As a transatlantic story, this investigation considers mixed-race individuals in two geographic contexts. Examinations of biracial colonists in the Anglophone Caribbean have been relatively rare. While the issue of interracial relations has not escaped scholarly notice, sustained critiques of mixed-race lives are limited.<sup>2</sup> Gad Heuman and Sheila Duncker have provided two excellent considerations of the social and political empowerment of mixed-race Jamaicans in the nineteenth century, as has Jerome Handler for Barbados.<sup>3</sup> However, these studies center primarily on the islands' poorer classes struggling to free themselves from the bonds of enslavement. There has not been a focused account of elite individuals of color in any great detail. In failing to track this privileged group, scholars have limited the Caribbean's mixed-race community to a colonial geography, without considering its broader connection to the Atlantic world.

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<sup>2</sup> For discussions of miscegenation in the British islands, see: Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society: 1650-1838* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990); Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42-53; Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves In the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Henrice Altink, "Forbidden Fruit: Pro-Slavery Attitudes Towards Enslaved Women's Sexuality and Interracial Sex," *Journal of Caribbean History* 39, no. 2 (2005): 201-35. This is part of a larger literature on colonial miscegenation in general. For examinations of relations between European and Native American inhabitants, see: Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lake Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994); Thomas Ingersoll, *To Intermix with Our White Brothers: Indian Mixed Blood in the United States from Earliest Times to the Indian Removals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005). For such considerations in the East Indies, see: Christopher John Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773-1833* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1996); William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (London: Harper Collins, 2002); Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Gad J. Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); Sheila Duncker, "The Free Coloured and their Fight for Civil Rights in Jamaica 1800-1830," (M.A. thesis, University of London, 1956); Jerome S. Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). See also: Winthrop Jordan, "American Chiaroscuro: The Status and Definition of Mulattoes in the British Colonies," *WMQ*, Third Series, XIX, no. 2 (April 1962): 183-200; Arnold A. Sio, "Marginality and Free Coloured Identity in Caribbean Slave Society," in *The Slavery Reader*, eds. Gad Heuman and James Walvin (New York: Routledge, 2003).

Instead, those of mixed blood have been viewed only in light of their contribution to island history. By following those who traveled to the metropole, this study uncovers the wider global, and imperial, impact of West Indians of color.

Accounting for the arrival of mixed-race migrants in the metropole also helps to provide a fresh perspective on the African presence in eighteenth-century Britain. Without exception, examinations of Britain's population of African ancestry during the period lump all individuals into the totalized category of "black." James Walvin, Folarin Shyllon, Peter Fryer, and more recently Gretchen Gerzina, have each uncovered a number of early-modern residents of color on Britain's shores.<sup>4</sup> When analyzing Afro-British influence, however, each author groups together diverse members of society. From this, a standard analysis emerges in which poor and enslaved blacks, celebrated black authors like Olaudah Equiano, mixed-race children of working whites, and West Indian students of color, are understood to be a uniform racial bloc subject to the same discriminations and racial ideologies. Issues of class, gender, family, and racial hybridity have not sufficiently informed these writings. Additionally, few scholars have expanded on the usual coterie of biographies. As Ian Duffield grumbles, "constant reference in the historical literature to the same few individuals reduces them, despite their importance, to the status of old chestnuts."<sup>5</sup> This study introduces many new individuals of color and provides an innovative methodology by which to study the influence of African heritage in Britain. At the same time, it provides the first systematic account of racially-mixed

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<sup>4</sup> James Walvin, *The Black Presence: A documentary history of the Negro in England, 1555-1860* (London: Orbach & Chambers, 1971); Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro and English Society, 1555-1945* (London: Penguin Press, 1973); Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain 1555-1833* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: Black People in Britain since 1504* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1984); Gretchen Gerzina, *Black England: Life before Emancipation* (London: John Murray, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Ian Duffield, "Identity, Community and the Lived Experience of Black Scots from the Late Eighteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Centuries," *Immigrants & Minorities* 11, no. 2 (July 1992): 105.

people in the metropole. As wealthy relatives of white Britons, these migrants posed much more complicated racial questions to a British audience. In order to understand the complexities of Atlantic racial thought in this period, those of hybrid ancestry must be thoroughly examined.

More recently, scholars have begun exploring notions of racial mixture in greater detail for both the colonies and the metropole. Vincent Brown has provided a new lens through which to view Jamaican slavery: the experience of death. In particular, he puts a much different emphasis on the island's various castes of color and their respective influences on white society, such as in testamentary dispensation.<sup>6</sup> In perhaps the most riveting account of colonial-American social relations, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, Annette Gordon-Reed has demanded a more complex reading of racial mixture. She not only explores the legal and institutional structures influencing mixed-race individuals in Virginian society, but also interrogates the elaborate family dynamics which affected their lives.<sup>7</sup> Similar considerations for Britain have come primarily from literary scholars. Roxann Wheeler has shown the ways in which perceptions of complexional difference shifted dramatically during the eighteenth century, including fictional portrayals of mixed-race individuals.<sup>8</sup> Focusing more intensely on biracial subjects, Felicity Nussbaum contends that this more pointed racism evolved from concerns over miscegenation in Britain – fears imported directly from the colonies.<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Wilson expands upon these themes to argue that England developed its national identity in

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<sup>6</sup> Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Felicity Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

reaction to such perceived racial threats from the imperial peripheries.<sup>10</sup> Building upon these two trends in eighteenth-century scholarship, this dissertation seeks to link both together through a material investigation of the lives of mixed-race migrants.

By chronicling the experiences of, and attitudes toward, mixed-race individuals, a more grounded and comprehensive assessment can be taken of racial perceptions in the metropole. Scholars of British racial ideology have painted the abolition period as a crucial moment in the development of conceptions of difference, but have not thoroughly explained the specifics of that transition. The notion that “scientific racism” emerged in part through the discourse surrounding abolition is accepted by many theorists. The mechanics of that shift, however, are still relatively obscure. Both Wheeler and Nussbaum, for instance, comment more on the movement’s engagement with ideas of race, rather than on the ways in which it simplified and altered them. Others, such as Wilson and Douglas Lorimer, question the premise that Victorian attitudes were not equally complex.<sup>11</sup> This study contends that racial ideology did indeed shift between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While Victorian conceptions may not have been any less complicated, they did not countenance a racial spectrum to the same degree as society did a century before. Scholars have been right to point to the abolition movement in explaining this change, but have limited their focus to its polarized depictions. By considering only reactions toward slaves and free blacks, the intricacies of British racial ideology are buried under abolitionism’s most exaggerated rhetoric. Examining the place

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<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003). See also: Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Lorimer, “Reconstructing Victorian Racial Discourse: Images of Race, the Language of Race Relations, and the Context of Black Resistance,” in *Black Victorians/Black Victoriana*, ed. Gretchen Gerzina (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 187-207. For a rebuttal to the notion that abolition engaged substantively with questions of race, see: Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment*, 75-88.

of mixed-race individuals reveals an open window of British racial tolerance, and the process by which it was subsequently closed.

The abolition movement's essentialization of race can thus be traced through the issue of mixed-race migration. Prior to the movement's popularization in the 1770s and 1780s, class and upbringing soothed anxieties over individuals of mixed heritage. Even if one was a "mulatto," a good education and large fortune could reduce the amount of discrimination experienced. The movement to end the slave trade, however, redirected racial perceptions. Concerns over the arrival of fugitive slaves in the metropole, were abolition to occur, fueled ancillary worries over black and white sexual pairings amongst the working classes. This threatened Britain's racial purity in the midst of new national and ethnic discourses over both its domestic and imperial identities.<sup>12</sup> As abolitionism incorporated larger considerations of slavery, race, and sexual unions between blacks and whites, it wrestled with the issue of mixed-race migration as well. Elites of color resident in Britain appeared to be the manifestation of the worst facets of both the pro- and anti-slavery ideologies: predation on enslaved women, familiarity between races, hybrid heritage, and African influence in the metropole. Indeed, both sides of the debate condemned sending mixed-race children to Britain. After the slave revolution in St. Domingue, the issue took on political importance as Britons railed against the possibility of English-educated radicals of color sowing similar rebellion in the Anglophone islands. Advanced schooling and a deep purse were now no longer enough to eliminate notions of difference. The political threat posed by mixed-race migrants, along with their potential to marry within Britain's upper ranks, reflected the same concerns as those over black

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<sup>12</sup> Wilson, *The Island Race*, 11-16; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Eliga Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 208-214.

and enslaved migrants. As class distinctions lost their force, racial gradations also collapsed under a banner of ethnic segregation. Elite West Indians of color were therefore vital to the changing discourse of race in Britain, and helped to cement metropolitan bigotry along complexional lines.

Tied to this public debate, personal opinions also drifted toward a more hardened ideological stance. Individuals living, or corresponding, with mixed-race relatives in Britain often had an interest in the slave trade generally. Most white fathers of these children were either planters or merchants trading in slaves. British kin back home, then, followed the abolition debate for its potential impact on the family fortune. Their sense of unease over mixed-race migration developed in step with abolitionism. Moreover, increasing inheritance lawsuits between Britons of color and white relatives reinforced the financial threat of illegitimate claimants to colonial wealth. Personal struggles mirrored public argument, and those mixed-race colonists who came to Britain frequently found familial interactions more strained as the years progressed.

To begin this story, Chapter 1 looks at the colonial setting for individuals of color. With a large enslaved population, and generally few white women, cross-racial pairings became a frequent, if not ubiquitous, presence in West Indian society. The children who sprang from these unions were often relegated to slavery, their fathers unconcerned with providing for them. However, a number of white parents chose to care for mixed-race offspring. The first chapter follows several children of color, through family correspondence, who were brought up as privileged colonists. It also shows the ways in which mixed-race individuals were a daily presence in island life. Even whites without such progeny frequently interacted with them in both professional and personal ways.

Equally, Britons back home came into contact with these illegitimate offspring as well. Absentees and British merchants routinely freed mixed-race children on colonial estates at the request of a white father willing to pay the manumission fees. Metropolitan relatives of white colonists also came to learn of mixed-race kin from personal letters. Imperial networks linking Caribbean whites to British colleagues and family included mixed-race children as well. Through their fathers' connections, West Indians of color took a firm place in the wider Atlantic world. Those ties were essential for an eventual migration to Europe.

Chapter 2 charts the push and pull factors driving mixed-race colonists to Britain, and uncovers the characteristics of their migration. Colonial laws, grounded in regulations against slaves, discriminated heavily against those of hybrid ancestry. Jamaica and Barbados – Britain's dominant Caribbean possessions – passed the most draconian legislation against their communities of color, but other islands codified legal apartheid as well. Along with the region's general lack of schools, and few employment opportunities for non-whites, elites of mixed race had little incentive to stay in the West Indies. Indeed, a frequent and sustained outmigration occurred through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Examining Jamaican wills, the chapter gives a rough estimate of the numbers of mixed-race people who traveled to Britain for an education or apprenticeship. As many as a quarter of rich Jamaicans with children of color sent them abroad by the end of the eighteenth century. At the same time, a significant number of those migrants eventually returned to the islands, buoyed up by a metropolitan education, to try and build their own colonial fortunes. Many West Indians of color were therefore

not static members of an oppressed society, but rather mobile residents of a larger Atlantic community.

Shifting focus to Britain, Chapter 3 considers inheritance disputes between white and mixed-race relatives in the metropole. Having fled island inequities, individuals of color often arrived in similarly vulnerable positions. Britons frequently lodged inheritance challenges against Caribbean wills that included mixed-race beneficiaries. This chapter examines such suits from Jamaica's courts of Ordinary and Chancery, along with trials involving Barbadian and Floridian families. By claiming that a successor had not been properly manumitted, or was not entitled to inherit under colonial law, whites could easily disinherit rival legatees. Heirs of color, though often mingling in Britain's upper circles, could thus be reshackled with colonial slavery. Others were re-stamped with the legal status of "mulatto." Legal ambiguities between colony and metropole facilitated this litigious response by white relatives, and tapped into parallel concerns over the legal soundness of slavery in the British Empire. These cases reveal the financial weakness of mixed-race migrants in Britain, while also showing the reluctance of white families to accept colonial kin. Even the most generous British relatives used the courts to prevent the full economic independence of mixed-race kin. At the same time, however, mixed-race defendants could also use colonial decrees to their own advantage, carving out a space of legal agency in a highly imbalanced system.

Chapter 4 details the lives of nearly two dozen mixed-race migrants in Britain through family correspondence, in order to understand the personal component of racial attitudes. West Indians arrived under a variety of circumstances, and at radically different historical moments. Their experiences therefore diverged sharply. While Jane

Harry could live relatively free from racial castigation in the 1750s, socializing with Samuel Johnson and London Quakers, Eliza Williams took a tenuous position as a “moonlight shade” in her grandmother’s Scottish house in the 1810s.<sup>13</sup> Many, like the Tailyour children, found Britain to be a temporary stopping point in their career advancement. James Tailyour, along with young men from the Ross and Morse families, traveled on to the East Indies in the hope that their racial heritage would be less distinct in a new colonial setting. Approaching the issue of British discrimination from this biographical perspective, it appears that racism hardened in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Families were less inclined to welcome relatives of color into their homes, and the success rate of West Indian migrants decreased. By 1820, Robert Wedderburn and William Davidson, both mixed-race Jamaican offspring, began speaking openly about their distance from high society. They experienced difficulties in their respective professions and in response turned to religious and political radicalism. In their own words, Britain was not a bastion of freedom, but a mirror of the Caribbean islands in both prejudice and oppression. Public demands to end the slave trade, along with the slave Revolution in St. Domingue, undoubtedly helped to transform public opinion of mixed-race migrants, as well as help those migrants reconceptualize their place within the Atlantic world.

Chapters 5 and 6 shift the perspective from the personal to the public. The movement to abolish the slave trade – one of the most important popular discussions in the eighteenth century – incorporated fears over mixed-race migration. Disgust at colonial miscegenation, which was thought to undercut slave reproduction and thus lead to more slave imports, transitioned into fears over the mobility of mixed-race children.

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<sup>13</sup> Eliza Macpherson to William Macpherson, December 25, 1816, Bundle 112, NRAS 2614, MBP.

The subsequent revolt of slaves in St. Domingue in 1791 heightened these concerns, particularly as many blamed French-educated children of color for inciting rebellion in the colony. These two issues brought the subject of mixed-race resettlement to an interested British public, and helped popularize the relatively small-scale migration. While Chapter 5 engages political tracts, Chapter 6 discusses literary works characterizing mixed-race migrants. A large number of novels and short stories included such migrants in their plots. Often these characters merely served to heighten the dramatic portrayal of a white protagonist, but they increasingly came to be depicted as malevolent or pathetic figures. As abolitionist themes permeated literature, authors illustrating mixed-race migrants excoriated their excessive wealth and potential to unseat British racial purity.

By the time of the popular emancipation and reform movements of the 1820s and 1830s, Britain's mixed-race residents had come under intense scrutiny. Family members were less hospitable and more litigious. Political and fictional writers were increasingly dubious of them upon their arrival. And events in the colonies only reinforced this about-face. As Jamaica's mixed-race community became more endogamous, and consequently further removed from white patronage, it turned more to itself for political enfranchisement. In 1823, the island's free people of color appointed their own lobbying agent in England. This enflamed a smoldering civil rights struggle that would last until 1830, and would turn Britons further against mixed-race migrants.<sup>14</sup> When the chains of slavery, suffrage, and religious intolerance started to crumble, British reactions toward racial difference took a more hardened stance.

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<sup>14</sup> Mavis Christine Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society: A Sociopolitical History of the Free Coloreds of Jamaica, 1800-1865* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1976), 93-94; Heuman, *Between Black and White*.

## CHAPTER 1

### **The World They Left Behind: Family Networks and Mixed-Race Children in the West Indies**

#### **Introduction**

Several months after leaving Jamaica for his native Scotland, John Tailyour received a number of letters congratulating him on the birth of his daughter in the island he recently departed. Peter Ballantine, one of Tailyour's business partners in Kingston, broke the news of her arrival, and warmly welcomed the addition to Tailyour's family.<sup>1</sup> That same day, John McCall, Tailyour's Jamaican clerk and soon-to-be brother-in-law, also gave a report. Writing back to his employer, McCall relayed: "Polly . . . has got a Daughter of which she is not a little proud, they are both well, her name is to be Catherine, in features she resembles my namesake (John: one of Tailyour's sons with Polly)."<sup>2</sup> Both men acted as informal guardians over Tailyour's Jamaican family, not only because its members had lost their patriarch, but also because they had only recently been freed from the shackles of slavery. As newly free persons, Polly and the children depended on Tailyour for their economic well-being. This, in turn, brought them closer to his business network in Jamaica, upon which Tailyour relied to ensure his family's success on the island. Eventually, he would draw on these contacts again to send his mixed-race children to Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Ballantine to John Tailyour, October 14, 1792, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>2</sup> John McCall to John Tailyour, October 14, 1792, in *ibid.*

The story of Tailyour's family was one repeated regularly throughout Britain's West Indian colonies in the long eighteenth century. The social conditions and skewed racial demography of the Caribbean resulted in frequent interracial liaisons that produced a growing population of color. Often the children of wealthy planters and merchants, these mixed-race colonists stood at a tenuous position in West Indian society. With both European and African blood, they fit uneasily into the islands' idealized racial dyad that sought to separate free whites firmly from enslaved blacks. At the same time, kinship to elite whites enmeshed them in the Caribbean's most distinguished social and business networks reaching far across the ocean. These transatlantic connections facilitated the migration of mixed-race individuals to Britain in the late eighteenth, and early nineteenth, centuries.

This chapter argues that despite public castigation of their miscegenous roots, West Indians of color maintained strong positions in Britain's imperial networks. This argument will be laid out in several parts. First, colonial conditions will be examined to illustrate and explain the West Indies' rampant culture of interracial unions. General condemnations against the Caribbean climate and people attended ubiquitous observations of interracial relationships, and West Indian sexual practices often confirmed such stereotypes. Second, a more personal focus will demonstrate the dynamic position of individuals of color within this West Indian society. Mixed-race individuals took a prominent place within the day-to-day life of the Caribbean, as well as in the business transactions of Britons across the sea. Finally, several families of color will be introduced in order to analyze the parental backgrounds of these kinship groups, and the connections between European and colonial families. While public opinion often

maligned mixed-race colonists for their illegitimate origins, Britons interacted and dealt frequently with them, ultimately helping to carry some across the Atlantic.

### **Discourses on Miscegenation**

Early in its colonial history, the British West Indies were seen as troubled and immoral. Reputed to have a stifling climate, to be rife with disease, holding a motley population of pirates, convicts, refugees, and unscrupulous entrepreneurs sitting atop a large, enslaved population, the Caribbean was not highly regarded, to say the least.<sup>3</sup>

Travel accounts reinforced these impressions. Upon arriving in Jamaica at the end of the seventeenth century, Edward Ward – in his typically sensational form – described the island as

The Dunghill of the Universe, the Refuse of the whole Creation, the Clippings of the Elements, a shapeless pile of Rubbish confus'dly jumbld into an Emblem of the *Chaos* . . . The Receptacle of Vagabonds, the Sanctuary of Bankrupts, and a Close-stool for the Purges of our Prisons.<sup>4</sup>

The seeming anarchic foundations of West Indian society, combined with the perception of its inhabitants' ruthlessness, inspired this antipathy. Scholars have attempted to rehabilitate these early colonists' reputations, despite long-standing academic sympathy with such characterizations.<sup>5</sup> For those of the period, however, the perception of unchecked Caribbean vice became the reality.

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<sup>3</sup> Vincent Brown gives a compelling analysis of the importance of death in the formation of colonial society, both to the free and the enslaved: *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Edward Ward, *A Trip to Jamaica: With a True Character of the People and Island*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1698), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Arguing that Britain's early colonizers in the West-Indies were part of the same Puritan migration as those to North America, Karen Kupperman's *Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) reveals a religious idealism in early Caribbean colonization that had escaped scholarly attention. For the more entrenched opinions on early West Indian debauchery, see: Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590-1642* (New York: Oxford University Press,

Such intense disgust with the West Indian population stood alongside acute anxieties over the Caribbean environment. Meteorological extremes, combined with the area's frequent natural disasters, made the West Indies a lightning rod for imperial scorn – one which easily discharged responsibility for these disasters onto the resident population. Sensing a providential correlation between Jamaican behavior and the island's natural forces, Hugh Totterdell wrote in 1712, “it is very wonderfull to me that a people to whome God Speaks so frequently in Thunder, Lightening, fire and Earthquakes sho'd be so unmindfull of his power and Judgement as to Committ those horrid Abominations that they are daily Guilty of.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Ward characterized Jamaica as “[s]ubject to Turnadoes, Hurricans, and Earthquakes, as if the Island, like the People, were troubled with the *Dry Belly Ach*.”<sup>7</sup> After the decimation of Jamaica's primary trading city, Port Royal, in a 1692 earthquake, it is not difficult to understand why such comments were made. Known for its vice-ridden history as a pirate's den, Port Royal's destruction reinforced the common belief that the Caribbean was an inherently corrupt place, filled with immoral people taunting God with their wicked behavior.

While imperial observers were quick to blame West Indian residents for their depravity, many attributed this degeneracy to the subtropical climate as well. Humoral theories still dominated eighteenth-century medicine, insisting that changes in heat and atmosphere could imbalance the body, thereby significantly altering one's health and mental state. Caribbean-specific medicine developed during the period in an effort to understand these effects. Richard Towne's 1726 tract, *A Treatise on the Diseases Most*

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1968); Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line: The English in the Caribbean, 1624-90* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Totterdell to P. Castleman, May 17, 1712, Hugh Totterdell Papers, MS 2050, NLJ.

<sup>7</sup> Ward, *A Trip to Jamaica*, 14-16.

*Frequent in the West-Indies* warned that humid air reduced activity among colonial whites.<sup>8</sup> Many islanders supported this view. Drawing up suggestions for English travelers to the West Indies, Benjamin Vaughan advised, “As to exercise, it must never be too violent. European manners will here be of disuse, for exercise requires more than those common means of restoration that answer in Europe.”<sup>9</sup> Vaughan’s warning against the physical dangers of regular activity gave license to the very indolence attacked by metropolitan observers. It also deflected responsibility for West Indian vice onto the tropical environment.

Much more problematic than lethargy, fears of sexual immorality, also stemming from the colonial climate, consumed public opinion. Early-modern corporeal theories generally argued that increases in temperature caused arousals in passion. These conjectures flew into the debate surrounding West Indian morality. Abbé Raynal supported this view, arguing that “the torrid zone, irresistibly excites men to the pleasures of love.”<sup>10</sup> As Felicity Nussbaum asserts for eighteenth-century Britons, “the torrid zone exist[ed] in an eternal past, permeated with sexual passion.” Indeed, the idea held such purchase that parallel discourses emerged on the “torrid” and “temperate” zones on the female body, in tandem with broader constructions of gender and sexuality in the burgeoning Empire.<sup>11</sup> Heightened sexual indiscretion posed serious risks to social stability in the West Indies, especially in light of the islands’ growing population disparities between blacks and whites.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Towne, *A Treatise on the Diseases Most Frequent in the West-Indies, And Herein More Particularly of Those Which Occur in Barbadoes* (London, 1726), 12.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Vaughan, “Hints drawn up for the use of a gentleman on the point of making a tour through the West India Islands,” Benjamin Vaughan Papers, Series III, AMs, APS.

<sup>10</sup> Abbé Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh, 1782), 53.

<sup>11</sup> Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 8-10.

The sugar boom of the seventeenth century, which brought over large numbers of enslaved Africans, did little to encourage an equally significant white migration. The slave trade had a pronounced impact on West Indian demography. By 1690, Barbados's African population had risen to 47,000, outnumbering whites almost three to one.<sup>12</sup> Jamaica's ratio was even more skewed: in 1750, there were more than ten times as many slaves as whites.<sup>13</sup> Compounding this racial imbalance was the notable absence of white women on the islands. After the initial wave of English colonization that brought many families to the eastern Caribbean, the emergence of the plantation system in the 1650s encouraged mostly bachelor, rather than family, migration. Commonly perceived to be an unsuitable environment for women or young children, the West Indies subsequently developed a gender imbalance alongside a racial one. While Barbados would achieve white gender parity by 1730, Jamaican whites were still more than sixty percent male by the end of that century.<sup>14</sup> Despite the island's gender deficits, Jamaican authorities never seriously undertook to correct the problem. Lucille Mathurin Mair argues that colonial officials showed little concern with the white female population during the eighteenth century, substantially diminishing women's social role.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the whole of the British Caribbean, white women were often few in number, and the scores of young white men who annually came to the islands naturally looked elsewhere for sexual partnership.

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<sup>12</sup> John McCusker and Russell Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 153.

<sup>13</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 1981), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Verene Shepherd, ed., *Women in Caribbean History: The British-Colonised Territories* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 1999), 21.

<sup>15</sup> Lucille Mathurin Mair, "A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica from 1655 to 1844" (Ph.D. diss., University of the West Indies, Mona, 1974), 55-57.

Under such a high racial imbalance, a culture of miscegenation arose across the islands. At its most basic and barbaric level, enslavement allowed for intensive sexual predation on bound women. Thomas Thistlewood recorded some four thousands acts of rape and forced relations in his Jamaican journal. If island whites were not directly assaulting enslaved women, they could rely upon a dependable market of enslaved prostitutes. This sexual traffic frequently involved whites auctioning off their enslaved children. While travelling to the island of St. John in 1788, John Luffman was shocked to find “persons sold here, as fair as Englishmen . . . having blue eyes and flaxen-hair. . . . There are persons in this island who let out [these] female slaves for the particular purpose of fornication.”<sup>16</sup> Prostitution also caught up many free blacks and women of color. With little employment in the islands, many free women depended upon social links to white men – links generally forged along sexual lines. As Verene Shepherd argues, free women of color were primarily limited to three occupations: mistress, healer, and inn-keeper.<sup>17</sup> The latter profession commonly traded on sexual vice. Describing his travels to Trinidad in 1805, Pierre McCallum explained the inn-house’s function: “The taverns where you lodge (with few exceptions) are kept by coloured females, and, would be properly called houses of ill fame in any civilized part of the world.”<sup>18</sup> Sexual relations between blacks and whites took a central place not only in the demographic reality of West Indian society, but also in its day-to-day commerce.

Interracial relationships thrived throughout the British West Indies, unhampered by any significant legal restrictions. While many whites preyed upon enslaved women, others took black and mixed-race lovers into their homes. None of the islands barred

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<sup>16</sup> John Luffman, *A Brief Account of the Island of Antigua*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1789), 114-15.

<sup>17</sup> Shepherd, *Women in Caribbean History*, 73-6.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre McCallum, *Travels in Trinidad* (Liverpool, 1805), 75.

mixed unions, nor did they hold any provisions against mixed marriages. A number of islands, such as Barbados, St. Kitts, and Montserrat passed legislation against clandestine weddings, but none of these acts contained stipulations about race. After arriving in Jamaica, John Thistlewood contemplated this nuptial freedom with several plantation overseers: “the Subject of our discourse at Dinner was about getting of a Wife when it was Determined that it did not signify what Coller a Woman was of provided shee had a Good fortune.”<sup>19</sup> This contrasted sharply with Britain’s North-American colonies. Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Massachusetts all held strict laws against miscegenation, and none of the mainland colonies allowed interracial marriage.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, British law in the West Indies mirrored Spanish and French Caribbean codes much more closely than North-American ones.<sup>21</sup> Despite its legality, however, J. B. Moreton warned “[i]t would be considered an indeniable stain in the character of a white man to enter into a matrimonial bondage with one of them (a woman of color); he would be despised in the community and excluded from all society on that account.”<sup>22</sup> Although most colonial whites would not go so far as to marry mixed-race lovers, they continued protracted relationships with them nonetheless.

As the plantation system developed, black and brown mistresses became *de rigueur* for West Indian whites. Interracial pairings were, according to Ann Laura Stoler,

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<sup>19</sup> John Thistlewood, February 23, 1765, Journal of John Thistlewood, Thomas Thistlewood Papers, APS, microfilm, Reel 11, No. 38, f. 131.

<sup>20</sup> Carter Woodson, “The Beginnings of Miscegenation of the Whites and Blacks,” *The Journal of Negro History* 3, no. 4 (October 1918): 335-53.

<sup>21</sup> Spanish colonial law was the most tolerant of interracial coupling and marriage in the Western Hemisphere. See Verena Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974). For an analysis of French law in the seventeenth-century Caribbean, see Dorris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 197-218.

<sup>22</sup> J. B. Moreton, *Manners and Customs in the West India Islands* (London, 1790), 125.

“sometimes subversions of the prevailing order of [colonial] society – but as often expressions of it.”<sup>23</sup> The lack of social and legal barriers against mixed relations, even among married men, meant that bachelors could enter into quasi-normative relationships with women of African descent without being stigmatized. These “West Indian wives” took a central and visible place in their lovers’ lives. In Jamaica, James Stewart observed:

Every unmarried white man . . . has his black or his brown mistress, with whom he lives openly; and of so little consequence is this thought, that his white female friends and relations think it no breach of decorum to visit his house, partake of his hospitality, fondle his children, and converse with his *housekeeper* – as if that conduct, which they regarded as disgraceful in their own class, was not so in the female of colour.<sup>24</sup>

For Stewart and many others the openness of these relationships was troubling, primarily because it violated British standards of sexual and familial behavior. According to Henrice Altink, British attitudes toward colored women’s sexuality at the end of the eighteenth century were “framed in terms of the metropolitan model of female sexuality.”<sup>25</sup> British travelers commented on these relations, not as ethnographic curiosities, but as absolute violations of European standards.

With such pervasive racial intermixture, discourses of sexual longing pervaded the British Caribbean. Demonstrated male lust for enslaved women ran parallel with a simultaneous abhorrence of miscegenation. In his history of the British West Indies, Bryan Edwards condemned those who slept with nonwhites as “a violation of all decency and decorum; and an insult and injury to society.” Yet, his account also included Isaac

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<sup>23</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 46.

<sup>24</sup> James Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica* (Edinburgh, 1823), 173-74.

<sup>25</sup> Henrice Altink, “Forbidden Fruit: Pro-Slavery Attitudes Towards Enslaved Women’s Sexuality and Interracial Sex,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 39, no. 2 (2005): 205-6.

Teale's 1765 poetic ode "The Sable Venus." Teale's poem effusively praised the beauty and affection of the black female form in Jamaica: "O sable queen! thy mild domain/ I seek, and court thy gentle reign,/ So soothing, soft and sweet;/ Where meeting love, sincere delight,/ Fond pleasure, ready joys invite,/ And unbought raptures meet." Teale even alluded to the equivalence between black and white women. Comparing the sable lover to the ivory one, he wrote "The loveliest limbs her form compose,/ Such as her sister Venus chose,/ In Florence, where she's seen;/ Both just alike, except the white,/ No difference, no – none at night."<sup>26</sup> By eliminating rather than enhancing racial difference in his poem, Teale alluded to the islands' normative sexual practices. Edwards's inclusion of the ode speaks to his own complex sentiments regarding black women. Fellow commentator Richard Dallas included the poem "On the amour of a young Creole and his sable goddess" in his own account of the West Indies: "Her ebon skin, her country cuts,/ Her bushy curls, and slender guts,/ Her pouting lips, which Cupids lurk in,/ All join to set his blood a working."<sup>27</sup> With so few white women in the Caribbean, island men fetishized black women intensively. Social circumstances may have produced these matches, but Caribbean culture normalized and promoted the practice.

If West Indian whites had a penchant for black women, then their attraction to mixed-race women was almost universal. Many travel writers believed that interracial pairings produced beautiful children; primarily because it "Europeanized" African features. After an 1824 voyage to Jamaica, one journalist commented: "The African Slaves are exceedingly ugly [however] I have seen some of the sable Creole Lasses

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<sup>26</sup> Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1793), 22-30.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Dallas, *A Short Journey in the West Indies*, vol. 1 (London, 1790), 138.

whose features are very handsome.”<sup>28</sup> Observers often contrasted the “Creole Lasses” – mixed-race women – with blacks when comparing their beauty. For James Stewart, the further women of color stood from African ancestors, the more beautiful they became:

Many of the Quadroon and Mestee females are comely, if not beautiful, as they partake chiefly of the European feature; but the Mulattos and Sambos, as less removed from the negro stock, retain something of their thick lips and flat noses. . . . As for the Africans, their ideas of beauty in the human countenance are almost the reverse of those of an European. They have no idea that the finest Grecian contour is more beautiful than their large and gross features.<sup>29</sup>

Due to such complexional preference, increased sexual mixture heightened male desire for women of color. Miscegenation, therefore, engendered its own increase. As the population of color grew, island whites became more inclined to cross racial barriers in their sexual lives.

Artists also drew stark comparisons between black and brown women in depictions of West Indian life. Agostino Brunias’s portraits of mixed-race women in Barbados presented them in highly sexualized ways (see Figure 1.1). At the same time, his portrayals contrasted the women with black figures in the periphery. Both Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show females of color flanked by black women, emphasizing class distinctions between the two.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, both figures show the mixed-race women’s full faces, while those of the black women are obscured and diverted to the sides. These illustrations reinforced West Indian notions of complexional superiority in both class and aesthetic forms. It was also part of a larger tradition of fetishizing mixed-race women, one that would continue in numerous printed books, most famously in William Blake’s

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<sup>28</sup> Journal of a Voyage to Jamaica, MS 17956, f. 24, NLS.

<sup>29</sup> James Stewart, *An Account of Jamaica, and its Inhabitants* (London, 1808), 304.

<sup>30</sup> For more on Brunias’s West Indian portraits, see: Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 139-73.

illustration of John Gabriel Stedman's lover Joanna in his *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition* (see Figure 1.3).

**Figure 1.1: "The West-India Washer-Women," by Agostino Brunias, 1779**

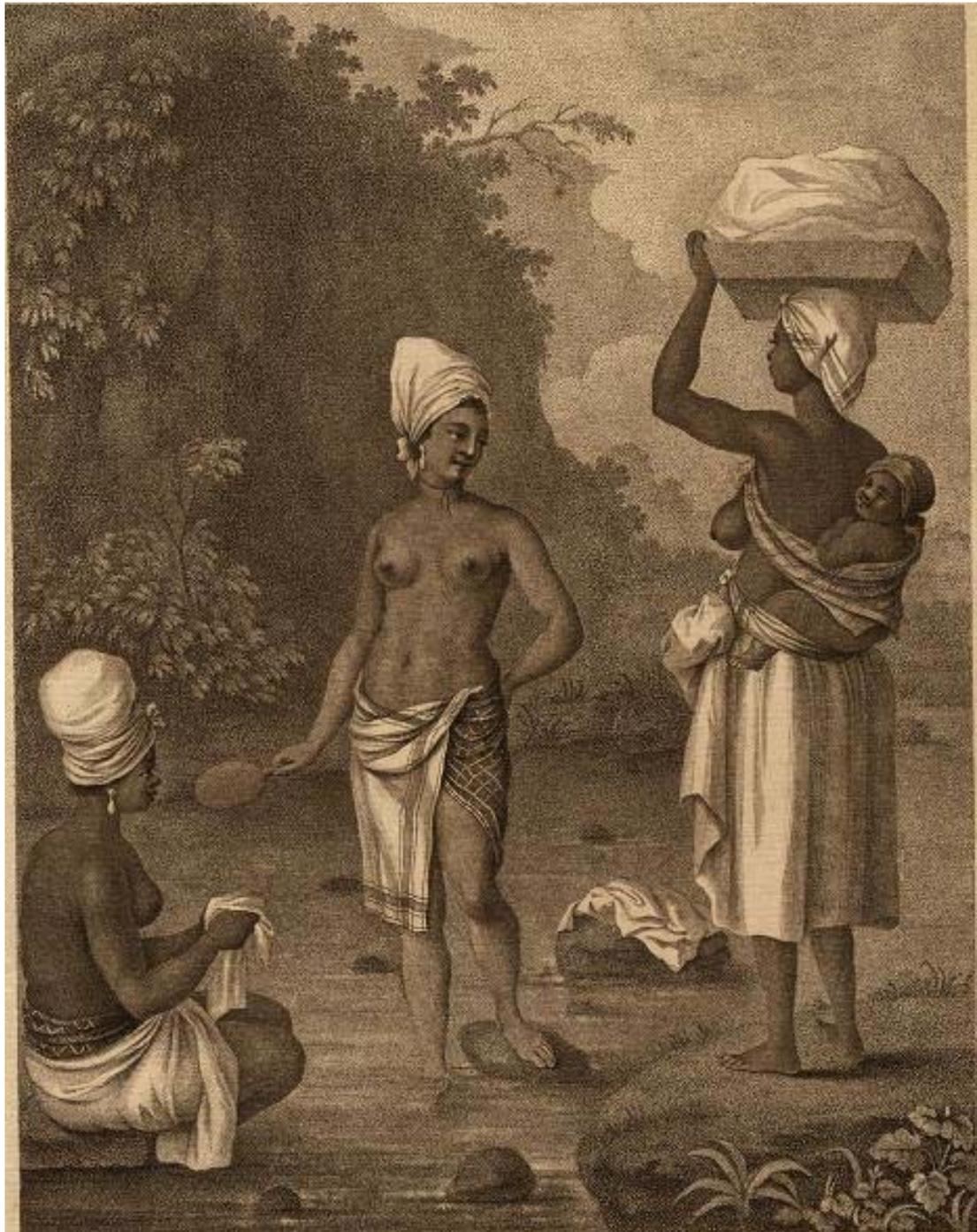


Image courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica, Kingston.

**Figure 1.2: “The Barbadoes Mulatto Girls,” by Agostino Brunias, 1779**

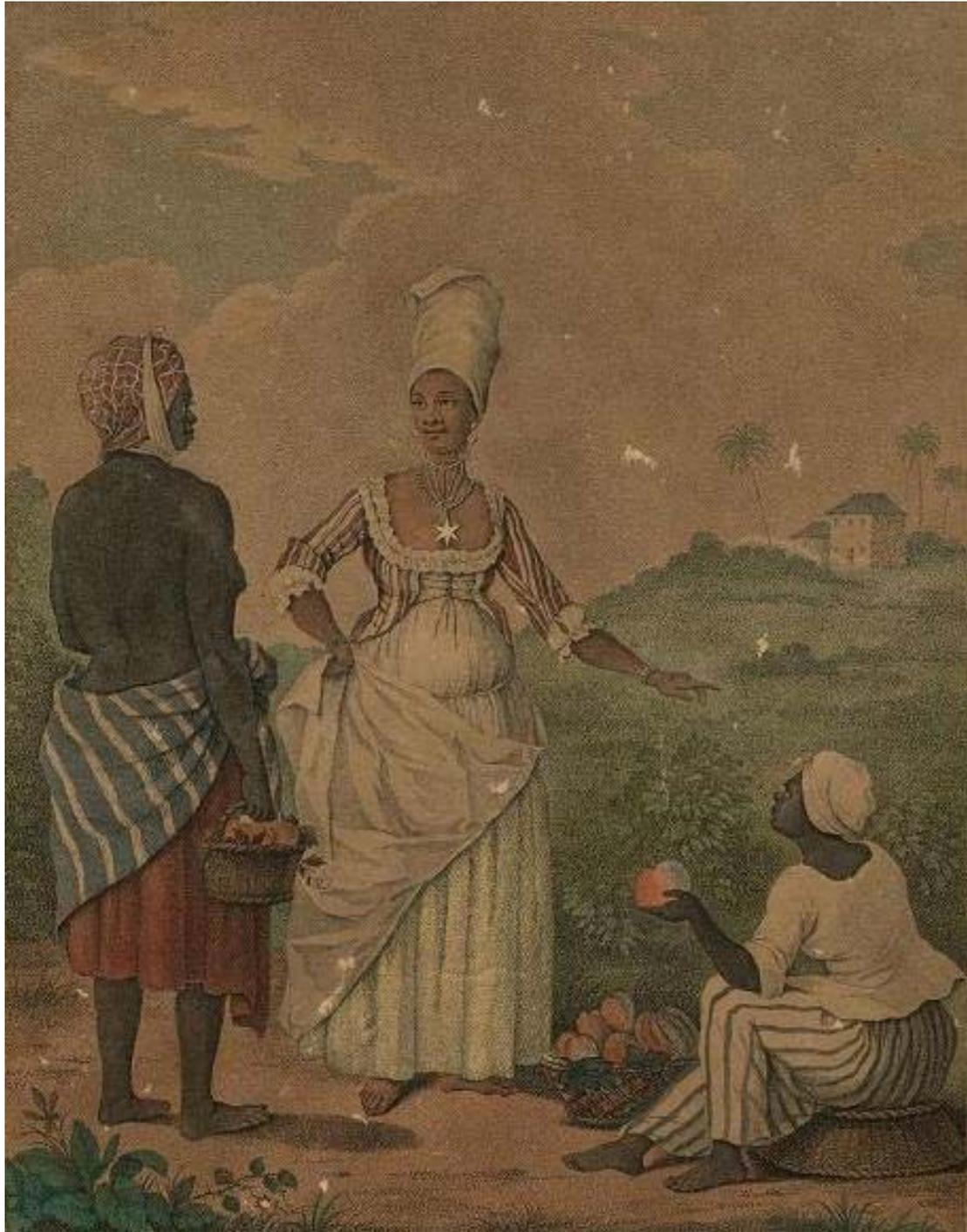


Image courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica, Kingston

Figure 1.3: “Joanna,” by William Blake, 1796<sup>31</sup>



This amplified attraction to mixed-race women became a common feature of West Indian accounts. Narrative conventions developed throughout the Western Hemisphere casting women of color as highly sentimental objects of love, as well as helpful assistants to European colonizers. Mary Louise Pratt contends that “the colonized heroes and heroines of European sentimental literature . . . are typically mulattoes or

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<sup>31</sup> From John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (London, 1796).

mestizos who already have European affiliations.” This trope of the mixed-race lover, she argues, assuaged colonial guilt by substituting the shackles of slavery for the bonds of passion.<sup>32</sup> Written in 1819, Henry Senior’s *Charles Vernon* replicated this narrative convention. At a Jamaican masquerade, the titular protagonist spots a difference between white and mixed-race women: “The pale languid looks of the European ladies, their stiffer manners, and lack of conversation, were strongly contrasted with the health and vigour and vivacity of mind and body which animated their brunette rivals.” At the ball, he meets Julia: “Her complexion was so very slightly tinged with brown, that the mixture of African blood would not have been detected in any other society. He even thought that this shade of colour softened down and improved the expression of her features.”<sup>33</sup> *Charles Vernon*, like the many travel accounts and works of fiction that came before it, capitalized on an established trope that elevated women of color in the colonial imagination. As both sexual partners and benevolent aides, the West Indian mulatta took on heavy cultural importance: one that both dominated British perceptions of the colonies, as well as legitimated West Indian sexual practices.

Black and white sexual pairings, therefore, became a widespread phenomenon that originated from a demographic imbalance, but expanded and developed through a cultural fetishization of women of color. The islands, built upon complex systems of violence and sexual control, promoted and legitimated interracial relationships.

Caribbean visitors certainly held this impression. Pierre McCallum emphasized the importance of finding a lover of color in Trinidad: “On the arrival of the European, his

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<sup>32</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 97-100.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Senior, *Charles Vernon: A Transatlantic Tale*, vol. 1 (London, 1849), 50. Although published in 1849, the novel was completed in 1819.

first object is, to look out for a mistress, either of the black, yellow, or livid kind.” “As for the native creole,” McCallum continued, “a female companion is provided for him from among the slaves of the family, at an early age, to prevent his going astray to increase the stock of his neighbours.”<sup>34</sup> McCallum’s account indicates the ubiquity of West Indian miscegenation, its role as a measure of status, and its sanction by all members of society, including relatives. Not only did family members support such behavior, but they promoted it within a plantation endogamy to increase further slave holdings – albeit enslaved kin. Such descriptions reveal a West Indian system perfectly at ease with interracial pairings, if not encouraging of them. This sexual tolerance dramatically grew the islands’ population of color.

Considerations of the mixed-race women themselves confirm the social dependency of these associations. There was something of a symbiotic relationship between white men and women of color. If white men gained a certain level of status with a mistress, then women of color could benefit socially and materially by white partners. Effective agents of their own advancement, women of color used white benefactors to obtain manumissions, gifts, and inheritances.<sup>35</sup> One Grenadian resident complained that “they seek no higher destination than to become the W[hore] of a White Profligate, Whose situation & means will make him to support them.”<sup>36</sup> More sympathetically, Stephen Gainsford declared these women to be “the most compassionate mothers, and virtuous wives. . . . [W]hites, the exalted superiors in these colonies, have generally admitted such people no honourable way to their countenance, affiance, and

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<sup>34</sup> McCallum, *Travels in Trinidad*, 73-78.

<sup>35</sup> Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society: 1650-1838* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 115-16.

<sup>36</sup> August 19, 1817, MS 1834, NLJ.

favour.”<sup>37</sup> Interracial unions were as much a response to Caribbean social realities for black and brown women as they were for white men. They dominated, and in turn stabilized, a West Indian society that could not properly reconcile racial apartheid with its demographic imbalance.

The culture of miscegenation that developed in the British West Indies came from demographic conditions, as well as customary promotions of common practice.

Although white men grossly outnumbered white women in most Caribbean islands, white families still survived. Indeed, white islanders’ seemingly universal engagement with women of color belied actual gender imbalances within their populations. Cross-racial relations became a part of West Indian culture; married and single men alike had their mistresses of color. For imperial observers, this confirmed long-standing associations between the West Indies and anarchic morality. The mistress of color, so often portrayed in travel accounts and expositions, visibly embodied island vice. British commentary condemned her, her lover, and West Indian society as a whole. The men in these relationships were, after all, not simply colonial “others,” but friends and relatives of Britons back home.

### **Individual West Indians of Color in Atlantic Society**

#### *Social and Sexual Monitoring in the West Indies*

In order to understand the impact of these sexual partnerships on families in both the Caribbean and Britain, one must look at historical examples outside popular discourse. In personal correspondence and private journals, West Indian whites regularly

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<sup>37</sup> Stephen Gainsford, *An Essay on the Good Effects which may be Derived in the British West Indies in Consequence of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade* (London, 1811), 152.

logged daily interactions with mixed-race people, as well as the common sight of interracial pairings. Colonists thus became well aware of the sexual lives of neighbors and friends. With their small population, whites closed ranks and maintained a tight social cohesion. Such insularity heightened social monitoring and fed gossip. It also put the majority of whites into personal contact with interracial relationships – be it their own, or those of someone they knew quite well. By investigating individual examples of mixed partners, and the families they produced, a clearer picture of West Indian society will emerge.

Public instances of miscegenation made obvious targets for social scorn. Colonists openly discussed the mixed families of island officials. As the most powerful of the white elite, it came as no surprise that they kept mistresses of color. In letters from Demerara, George Pinckard wrote of a free mulatto woman, well-known to be “the favored *dulcinea* [sweetheart] of a person high in office.”<sup>38</sup> Such relationships generally aroused little concern, unless the mistresses were thought to be encroaching upon the corridors of power. Nowhere was this more problematic than with the islands’ governors. Colonel William Fullarton openly denounced the female companion of Trinidad’s top bureaucrat. He charged her with making back-handed deals with military contractors, as well as improperly using soldiers to harass her enemies.<sup>39</sup> John Poyer made similar accusations against the mixed-race lover of Barbadian Governor George Ricketts. After a jury convicted the free mulatto Joseph Denny of murdering a white man, the judge opted to transport Denny off Barbados, rather than execute him. A well-publicized verdict, the decision enraged local whites who believed that Rickett’s lover

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<sup>38</sup> George Pinckard, *Notes on the West Indies*, vol. 2 (London, 1816), 245-46.

<sup>39</sup> William Fullarton, *A Statement, Letters, and Documents, Respecting the Affairs of Trinidad* (London, 1804), 192-93.

had orchestrated the deal. Poyer reported that she had not only made the arraignment, but also fomented social unrest: “[t]he influence which she was known to possess, produced a visible change in the manners of the free coloured people.”<sup>40</sup> Such power for women of color clearly stood against the interests of West Indian whites who did not wish to see sexual libertinism degrade the tenuous health of the body politic.

More startling were the indiscretions of island ministers. Colonial churches constantly struggled with pastors’ sexual lives. The Methodists had particular difficulty with a Mr. Bradnack in Jamaica. Sometime around 1807, a parishioner caught the minister with a woman of color who was “rubbing Mr. B’s naked body” as he lay in bed. Bradnack countered the charge of miscegenation, as many did, by asserting that the woman acted only as a nurse. His mistress gave a more candid and witty reply: she was, she responded, only “catching her graces.”<sup>41</sup> The Jamaican Assembly eventually became involved, charging Bradnack with unchristian activity. Confronted later by a witness who testified to seeing “Mr. B in bed with Suckey Wirn a Coloured Woman,” he finally confessed. The Assembly admonished Bradnack and advised him to end the relationship immediately. Bradnack, however, “could not do so, for his feelings were like other men” and asked “for the punishment of the offender.”<sup>42</sup> The whole ordeal traumatized Kingston’s Methodist community, and members wrote extensively to each other on the subject. Some came to Bradnack’s defense, but the investigations into his sexual life ultimately led to his dismissal from the pulpit.

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<sup>40</sup> John Poyer, *The History of Barbados* (London, 1808), 639.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Smith, August 15, 1807, FBN 1, West Indies Correspondence, Methodist Missionary Society Papers, SOASL.

<sup>42</sup> “Charges against the Methodist Missionaries in Jamaica By the Common Council and Assembly,” February 10, 1811, FBN 1, Fiche 16, in *ibid.*

Clerical liaisons could haunt ministers for their entire careers. On the island of Tortola, a Reverend Turner became embroiled in a controversy with one of his servants. Church elders investigating the matter determined that the pair had not crossed into sexual congress. However, the elders interrogated him on other suspicions stretching back years before. Hoping that the church in London would grant him a pardon, Turner confessed to committing, “[a]bout Sixteen or Seventeen years ago . . . the Foul crime of Fornication with a black woman now in society” and “[a]bout the same time . . . laying with the wife of a black man.”<sup>43</sup> The demands on Turner’s extended personal history reflected his parishioners’ expectations of moral rectitude, as well as a full awareness of his sexual life. Indeed, rumors abounded in colonial society. One Jamaican minister, responding to a question on a fellow pastor’s offspring, stated, “[H]e had none . . . except . . . a mulatto child, for mulatto Girls had been seen coming out of his house at unseasonable hours of the night, and that he was [now] dead and gone to Hell.”<sup>44</sup>

Newcomers to the islands, arriving at the invitation of colonial kin, often struggled to accept these multiracial unions. In 1802, William Titford landed in Jamaica to join his father. Looking to purchase a house in Spanish Town, Titford noted “A Brown Girl,” known by his father Isaac, who “offered her house for £80.”<sup>45</sup> In fact, the woman was Isaac’s mistress, and had not been his only one. Prior to marrying William’s mother, Isaac Titford had a daughter, Ann, by a “free mulatto woman” named Sarah Waller. Ann was born nearly ten months after Isaac’s nuptials with Mary Jowett, a white Jamaican creole. Sarah and Ann both died the following year. Soon afterward, the

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<sup>43</sup> W. Coultas to Rev. Dr. Coker, October 11, 1812, FBN 1, Fiche 19, in *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Clarke to Mr. Whitworth, c. 1813, FBN 1, Fiche 22, in *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> William Titford to Richard [Titford], January 14, 1803, William Jowett Titford Letter Book, MS 1900, Letter No. 2, NLJ. Unless otherwise noted, all amounts are in pounds current.

Titfords left for England, although Isaac eventually returned to be followed by his son. In the interim, Mary Titford died, leaving Isaac free to indulge himself in Jamaica.<sup>46</sup> William's encounter with his father's mistress seems to have turned him off from island life. He admitted to a relative in Britain that there were too many "temptations & snares here for young men to form disagreeable connexions." Nevertheless, William remained thankful that he had been "preserved from domesticating, but would wish to domesticate in an honourable way to preserve me from so sinful & disgraceful a course" that his father had trod.<sup>47</sup> Family indiscretions were the most intimate examples of miscegenation, providing a stark, moralizing tale about island dangers.

Others could be more explicit in condemning relatives' miscegenous activities. The King sisters, of St. George, Jamaica, became fully engaged with their brother's relations with women of color. Both wrote to a sister-in-law in New York, complaining about Richard's dalliances. One sister denounced the "parcel of Mulattoes" to which Richard had given over a thousand pounds as a token of esteem.<sup>48</sup> The other sister complained that Richard's charity came at the expense of his family's well-being. As executor of their parents' will, Richard controlled the family estate, and his sisters could do nothing but watch him spend the family fortune on mistresses. They believed themselves unable to survive on their own.<sup>49</sup> "I fear we are from the Frying Pan into the Fire in respect of our Legacies," one sister agonized. "[W]ere We Mulattoes," the other retorted, "there would be no need of consanguinity to induce him to the tenderest acts of solicitude, and to spend thousands on us. I do not wish ever to mention his name

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<sup>46</sup> A. R. Titford, Biography of his family, MS 2165, f. 10, NLJ.

<sup>47</sup> William Titford to Mary Titford, December 1806, Letter No. 59, f. 25, in *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> E. B. Forbes to Isabella King, April 26, 1817, King Papers, MS 93, NLJ.

<sup>49</sup> Louisa King to Isabella King, March 3, 1817, in *ibid.*

again.”<sup>50</sup> Family thus became engaged with interracial connections on a number of levels. Not only did they present a social impropriety, but they upset family finances when men allocated money to mistresses of color. Considering the great weight placed upon the soundness of Caribbean fortunes, the presence of relatives of color signaled a great threat to those riches. Knowledge of these relationships was the key to managing and mitigating their effects.

Sexual monitoring extended to the community as a whole. In small, close-knit groups, whites grew astonishingly familiar with one another, particularly where interracial relationships were concerned. Some of the most revealing examples of this type of surveillance are found in the pages of Thomas Thistlewood’s diary. A young man from Lincolnshire, England, Thistlewood came to Jamaica in 1750 and maintained a daily log of his activities until his death in 1786. The journal stands out for its frank descriptions of sex with black and brown women; Thistlewood preyed upon enslaved women on nearby plantations, as well as on his own, in an unscrupulous display of tyranny. Douglas Hall and Trevor Burnard have both deftly analyzed the sexual politics and power systems behind Thistlewood’s behavior, but much less has been said about his quotidian accounts.<sup>51</sup> For over thirty years, Thistlewood chronicled the sexual habits of his neighbors with nearly as much zeal as he did for himself. His observations reveal a white Jamaican community fully connected to, and intertwined with, the island’s population of color.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> See Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

At their most basic level, Thistlewood's observations recorded general information on the sexual experiences of those in his parish. Forming a small community, whites spread gossip quickly and widely about the various mistresses taken by their peers. Having called at a friend's house one evening, Thistlewood learned about the dalliances of prominent local William Beckford. The man drafting Beckford's will revealed the complications of such an exercise, as Beckford had "Children by Thirteen different Women." Having to care for these offspring meant that few men's sexual pasts could escape detection. As many whites lived openly with mistresses of color, much of this information was simply common knowledge, devoid of any surprise. After a visit by "Mrs. Chambers . . . a Mulatta," Thistlewood casually remarked that she was "kept by Mr. Keith the Taylor."<sup>52</sup> Thistlewood directly tied these mistresses' identity and status to the men with whom they cohabited. This dragged many women of color from the vicious system of slavery, into conspicuous positions within the white community.

Individuals of mixed race accordingly endured intensive examination. Throughout his journal, Thomas Thistlewood displayed a sustained fascination with appearance, especially visible signs of African heritage. Immediately after his arrival, Thistlewood took an interest in the island's racial map. He noted that a future employer had "the Whitest Mulatto Son I ever Saw, very fair and has long hair."<sup>53</sup> Descriptions of such phenotypic peculiarities became routine in Thistlewood's early diary entries. In his first months on the island, he recorded another curiosity: "In the Evening Walked to Capt. Cornish's . . . he keeps a Genteel Mulatto girl, tho Some Say She is from White parents

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Thistlewood Papers, Reel 5, No. 17 (1766), f. 445; Reel 10, No. 36 (1785), f. 290.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Reel 1, No. 2 (1750), f. 283.

of both Sides, Which I can Scarce believe.”<sup>54</sup> Thistlewood’s incredulity reveals an inherent problem in colonial attempts to categorize race. The exponential growth of Jamaica’s population of color propelled the Assembly to provide residents phenotypically white, yet still descended from Africans, a biological escape-route from legal repression. The island’s Assembly allowed individuals more than three generations removed from an African ancestor to become legally white. Jamaica was the only British island in the West Indies to provide such a path to whiteness.<sup>55</sup> This effort intended to maintain the façade of a free/white, enslaved/black society in the face of a vastly more complex racial landscape. Racial categorization, then, proved important at both the cultural level, as well as the legal one. In this way, continued sexual pairings between whites and islanders of color enfranchised a select group of Jamaicans with African ancestry. Despite colonists’ best efforts, however, “scientific” attempts to categorize individuals never achieved the desired level of success, and phenotype could often exert undue influence on one’s racial standing. Jamaica’s population of color could use their appearance, therefore, as leverage against the island’s legal restrictions. Thistlewood’s suspicion of Capt. Cornish’s mistress may have been as much a concern about fraud as it was of proper social decorum.

The preference of Thistlewood’s neighbor for a light-skinned mistress was conventional among colonists. White sexual preferences can be tracked in family records. Table 1.1 shows the racial classification of women who had mixed-race children with white fathers, according to the baptismal registers of four Jamaican parishes. Each baptism was recorded for various periods, based upon the quality of extant records: St.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Reel 1, No. 1 (1750), f. 149.

<sup>55</sup> Anyone more than three generations removed from an African ancestor was legally white: Jamaica, Great Britain. Laws, Statutes, etc. 21 Geo. II, xv. 20.

Catherine (1770-1808), St. Andrew (1770-1820), St. Ann (1792-1820), and Kingston (1809-1820).<sup>56</sup> Only those children whose parents had a listed racial designation were analyzed. The results show a large degree of pairings with women at least one generation removed from an African ancestor. This was particularly true for Kingston and St. Catherine, which held Jamaica's two largest cities: Kingston and Spanish Town, respectively. With few mixed-race laborers finding employment in the countryside, these two urban centers filled with individuals of color looking for work. According to the data, both cities' mixed-race communities became whiter than the rural parish of St. Ann, and Kingston's suburban parish of St. Andrew. These results are somewhat speculative: they come from a large section of culled data as many baptisms failed to contain the racial classifications of both parents. One must also be careful to accept parish records' racial classifications at face-value. Estimations were often made and labels applied haphazardly. Authorities never had an ironclad knowledge of ancestry. Nonetheless, given the diversity of labels used and large sample sizes taken, one gets a sense of white men's complexional targets.

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<sup>56</sup> The baptismal registers for the various parishes have not survived fully intact for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They are often spotty and non-consecutive until the mid-1800s.

**Table 1.1: Racial Classification of the Mothers of Mixed-Race Children with White Fathers, by Percentage, 1770-1820<sup>57</sup>**

<b>Classification<sup>58</sup></b>	<b>St. Catherine (1770-1808)</b>	<b>St. Andrew (1770-1820)</b>	<b>St. Ann (1792-1820)</b>	<b>Kingston (1809-1820)</b>
<b>Negro</b>	24	21	30	8
<b>Sambo</b>	3	1	0	1
<b>Mulatto</b>	46	17	21	27
<b>Quadroon</b>	25	10	16	48
<b>Mestee</b>	3	2	0	10
<b>Colored (unspecified)</b>	0	49	33	5

Thistlewood’s interest in the racial designation of his neighbors’ mistresses led him to speculate about the lineage of enslaved children. An overseer before he purchased his own plantation, Thistlewood closely monitored the slaves on those plantations, including the children. His accounts were very matter-of-fact: “Hanah brought to bed of a girl (a Negroe).” As information, they helped gauge the reproductive health of enslaved women, in addition to providing clues about their sexual partners. Thistlewood never lost his interest in such puzzles. After buying his own plantation, he began observing women on adjacent estates as well: “Mr. [H]ayward’s Mary brought to bed of a Mulatto Boy”; “Mr. Laplay’s girl, Jemmy, brought to bed of a Boy (a Mulatto).”<sup>59</sup> White islanders not only brutalized the women of color around them, they also ensured that the sexual lives of those women whom they did not assault were still firmly within their purview.

Close sexual monitoring could often result in severe jealousies between white men and mistresses of color. In 1765, Thistlewood recorded some gossip about a Major

<sup>57</sup> Baptismal Registers: Kingston (1B/11/8/9/3-4), St. Catherine (1B/11/8/3/48), St. Andrew (1B/11/8/1/1a-2), and St. Ann (1B/11/8/2/1-2), JA.

<sup>58</sup> The classification system works thusly: Negro = African + African; Mulatto = White + African; Sambo = African + Mulatto; Quadroon = White + Mulatto; Mestee = White + Quadroon; Colored = with an African ancestor, but the specific genealogy is unknown.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Thistlewood Papers, Reel 3, No. 7 (1756), f. 30; Reel 7, No. 23, f. 160 (1772); Reel 8, No. 27 (1776), f. 142.

Clarke who had attacked his mistress. Thistlewood noted that the Major disfigured “his Mulattoe Sweetheart, in Jealousy because he said a Negroe Should never use those Eyes she had.” In fact, she had “brought a Child rather too dark.”<sup>60</sup> A child’s complexion could be an obvious sign of alternate partners, and such news did not escape Thistlewood’s circle. The extensive amount of predation on enslaved women often produced children by white men who had little or no connection to the estates on which the women resided. Thistlewood himself, only purchasing his first plantation in 1767, regularly attacked women from nearby estates; frequently they were women he barely knew. This chaotic sexuality easily fostered intensive jealousy, particularly when it involved a white resident’s favorite. Thistlewood himself maintained a protracted and meaningful relationship with an enslaved woman named Phibbah, who lived on the estate of John Cope. With some degree of bitterness, Thistlewood wrote that Phibbah had “deliver’d of a Child, dead, a fine Boy (a Mulatto) . . . Suspect Mr. J[ohn] C[ope] Junr. . . . [with] seemingly a Resemblance to [the child].”<sup>61</sup> Thistlewood and his fellow Jamaicans vigilantly monitored the bodies of enslaved women. Just as these women were treated as something of a communal asset, so too was the history of their sexual activities a matter of public reckoning.<sup>62</sup>

Such interest in these sexual relations familiarized white Jamaicans with the mixed-race children who slowly began to populate the island. In Thistlewood’s case, he almost universally noted the father of a mixed-race individual, if he knew it, whenever mentioning an interaction with one. After buying a bookcase from “a Mullatoe girl,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., Reel 5, No. 16 (1765), f. 314.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Reel 2, No. 6 (1755), f. 412.

<sup>62</sup> This seems to conform to the arguments about European fascination with African female sexuality and reproduction in Jennifer Morgan’s *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

nam'd Jenny," Thistlewood concluded by noting, "She is free, and a Daughter of old Ned Stevens."<sup>63</sup> When "a Mulatto Boy Nam'd Billy" was hired out to John Cope, Thistlewood described him as a "Brother to Peggy by the Mother's Side, & Captain Marshall was said to have been his Father."<sup>64</sup> It is difficult to understand the purpose of these addenda, other than to keep tabs on white fathers, or to adjust perceptions of their children. Reporting on the crimes of two mixed-race Jamaicans, Thistlewood took care to reference their white parents. When a "Mulatto Girl" named Rachael stole money from a Mr. Mason, Thistlewood added that Rachael was the daughter of John Foot and his black mistress. Similarly, he indicated that a mixed-race man, alleged to have killed two runaway slaves, was the son of Layton Smith.<sup>65</sup> The near universality of Thistlewood's lineal descriptions indicates a strong interest in the background of his parish's mixed-race population. Generally suspicious of people of color – particularly in regards to their loyalties – Thistlewood may have worked so diligently in order to discern between those whom he thought trustworthy, and those he suspected of rebelliousness. Regardless, his attention demonstrates the detailed understanding he had of the local mixed-race community and the family connections at its core.

While Thistlewood scrutinized the population of color around him, he also interacted with them quite regularly. When white friends came to work or visit, they often brought their mixed-race children. On one occasion, a Mr. Mordiner came to work at the estate where Thistlewood acted as overseer, and "brought his Mulatto Son Tom with him." Tom stayed for a week, as did his brother, Jimmy, at another date.<sup>66</sup> Social

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<sup>63</sup> Thomas Thistlewood Papers, Reel 1, No. 2 (1750), f. 354.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, Reel 3, No. 8 (1757), f. 109.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, Reel 6, No. 20 (1769) f. 337; Reel 7, No. 23 (1772), f. 203.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, Reel 3, No. 7 (1756), f. 88; Reel 3, No. 8 (1757), f. 104.

visits were also common and Thistlewood seems to have had no qualms fraternizing with his friends' children of color. One evening in 1762, he was visited by a party of friends, including the mulatto son of a Mr. Senior. The young man presented Thistlewood with one of the ducks he shot earlier in the day. On another occasion Thistlewood gambled with "one Mr. Kudd a Mulatto, & Kudd's Son" who ended up with some of that night's winnings.<sup>67</sup> These instances reveal a society not nearly as segregated as the colonial government would have wished. With so many white men siring and caring for mixed-race offspring, social interactions between whites and people of color were frequent. As with his other observations on this mixed-race population, Thistlewood was diligent in noting the kinship of those with whom he socialized.

Family backgrounds were vital to these mixed-race individuals' elevated standing. Their presence could not be ignored, and if whites showed a degree of toleration, it was most likely founded upon connections to their families. Empathy may also have been a contributing factor. Thistlewood's trusted lover Phibbah bore him a son, John, whom he cared for deeply. In a number of journal entries, Thistlewood recorded their regular walks to John's tutor, as well as his constant concern for the boy's education. When John died suddenly in 1780, Thistlewood grieved alongside Phibbah. His own experiences with a child of color most likely emphasized the familial and social bonds connecting Jamaica's mixed-race community to its white forbearers. Showing a degree of tolerance, if not respect, to the mixed-race children of one's neighbors became a social necessity, especially if there were offspring of color in one's own home.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Reel 4, No. 13 (1762), f. 218; Reel 2, No. 4 (1753), f. 190.

<sup>68</sup> Daniel Livesay, "All in the Family: Mixed-Race Jamaicans and their Imperial Networks in the Eighteenth Century," in *(Re)Figuring Human Enslavement: Images of Power, Violence and Resistance*,

*Mixed-Race Children in the Atlantic Economy*

Sexual surveillance extended far beyond the Caribbean Sea, as the normal business of colonial enterprise brought many Britons into regular contact with these children of color. If a white man did not own his enslaved mistress, he had no legal claim to any of their children. Plantations throughout the Caribbean regularly manumitted slaves for anxious fathers who wished to purchase their children's freedom. These transactions required the consent of absentees, or their heirs, back in Britain. Through these business dealings, ordinary Britons became fully engaged in the sexual lives of West Indian colonists. At times, the transactions were straightforward. Liverpool's Thomas Mosley dealt with a request by William Littlewood to secure the freedom of his Jamaican mistress, Phibbah, and their two children. Mosley simply asked Littlewood to pay the estate £100, rather than provide substitutes, as there were "slaves Enough upon the plantation without having any more."<sup>69</sup> Other times, the process could take prolonged periods of time due to the slow speed of communication across the Atlantic, as well as normal delays in negotiation. On John Wemyss's Hermitage plantation, in southwest Jamaica, attorney William Adlam had difficulty resolving one such manumission. Explaining the holdup to Wemyss, he commented, "I have not seen Mr. Bonthorn concerning the purchase of his Mulatto Daughter." Adlam hoped that Bonthorn could substitute slaves for his child, as the estate needed more laborers, but he added, "I once mentioned this circumstance to him but he did not seem inclined to do it."

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eds. Ulrich Pallua, Adrian Knapp, and Andreas Exenberger (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2009), 149-66.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Mosley to Sarah Smith, January 17, 1755, MS 230, f. 71, NLJ.

Nine months later, the issue still had not been resolved, and Adlam continued to complain of Bonthorn's delays.<sup>70</sup>

Britons involved with West Indian plantations also confronted the complex racial realities intersecting miscegenation and enslavement. Attorneys charged with completing manumissions often commented on the peculiarity of enslaved children who had white complexions. In Jamaica, Francis Graham wrote to Thomas Milles about the possibility of freeing an enslaved child of a Mr. Reed. Graham believed it best to let Reed pay for the child because “[t]he Girl is nearly white . . . and if she should grow up she will be so near white that she will not be of use to the property.”<sup>71</sup> An Englishman with little knowledge of the West Indies, Milles learned intimately of the family dynamics in the Caribbean that went beyond strict boundaries of racial delineation. Fellow Londoner Thomas Lane received a similar note from his attorney in Barbados. Robert Haynes hoped to manumit Polly Williams, daughter of Captain Thomas Percival of the Royal Navy. “Since her Birth she has never so much as turned over one straw for you,” Haynes wrote to Lane: “she is as white as either of us and in fact I could not find an occupation for her.”<sup>72</sup> Although Lane and Milles may have had little understanding of the West Indian system, their financial stake in the colonies put them firmly in the middle of the complex racial and sexual politics that defined the islands. Mixed relations were not an abstract concept to these imperial businessmen, nor were the children who populated their plantations.

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<sup>70</sup> William Adlam to John Wemyss, February 1, 1820 – November 7, 1820, MS 250, Hermitage Plantation Estate Book, NLJ.

<sup>71</sup> Francis Graham to Thomas Milles, December 10, 1807, Georgia Estate Letter Books, MS 132, vol. 1, NLJ.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Haynes to Thomas Lane, March 24, 1815, Newton Estate Papers, MS 523/745, Senate House Library, University of London.

More frequently, manumissions involved family connections, either to the correspondent in Britain or to agents in the West Indies. Although not professionally tied to James Stothert's estate in Jamaica, Isaac Grant became intimately involved with Stothert's mixed-race daughter. Stothert had since returned to Scotland, and Grant appealed to the absentee for his daughter's freedom. Hoping to negotiate a settlement with his mistresses' father in Scotland, Grant wrote, "I took the liberty of writing you some time ago respecting your daughter Rebecca, at present my housekeeper. I have now only to observe in case you have not already given her her freedom that I'll give you a good & picked new negro [for her]."<sup>73</sup> Grant's appeal presents an interesting case of reintroducing a white father to his presumably abandoned child. Many white men assaulted slave women with little or no consideration of the children they might sire. Although Stothert had taken no pains to free his daughter before leaving for Scotland, Grant's letter demonstrates the degree to which these children could easily reappear in their fathers' lives. Other family connections also undergirded these manumissions. When Thomas Hamilton wrote to a Mrs. Dickson regarding "a Mulatto Child belonging to your Estate named Peggy Young," he noted that the girl's white father had not provided an adequate replacement for her liberty. Hamilton promised to correct the deficiency himself: "as her Father was a relation of mine I am willing to put a new Negroe boy or girl . . . on your Estate as an equivalent for her."<sup>74</sup> Thus, family connections could maintain some level of protection for mixed-race children. For Mrs. Dickson, who undoubtedly inherited the Jamaican estate from a relative, these letters served as a lesson in the complexities of island society.

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<sup>73</sup> Isaac Grant to James Stothert, June 10, 1799, James Stothert Letters, WCL.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Hamilton to Mrs. Dickson, February 3, 1808, MS 2008, NLJ.

British absentees concerned at the financial impact of mixed-race children on their estates could also receive a rude schooling on colonial conduct, even those with direct West Indian experience. Charles Angus, having retired to Liverpool, depended upon his brother William to take care of his Jamaican affairs. He told William about several rogue slaves on his estate, including “a Female Quartroon [living] with a Gentleman in Spanish Town . . . she and two others are the Children of a Mr. Taaff.” Charles did not wish to have a slave, to whom he had legal claim, cohabiting with a man in Spanish Town if he were not to receive any compensation: “how dare they keep our slaves without either paying for their services or discharging the Colonial Taxes.” Having no interest in the domestic arrangements of these women, Charles implored his brother to have them sold. William, however, struggled to enforce his brother’s orders. When neither the man cohabiting with the woman, nor her father agreed to pay for her, Charles commanded, “if their Parents will not buy them, as they said they would, sell them to those who will buy and Pay their Value.” The demands continued for years, as William proved unable to obtain compensation. Five years after his first instructions on the matter, Charles ridiculed William, “they must think you a fine easy fellow, not to exercise that Power for my Interest, but sacrifice it for theirs who have done the Property all the injury they could.”<sup>75</sup> The intransigence of Mr. Taaff and his mixed-race daughter’s lover provided enough social pressure to disarm William and effectively block Charles from trading his slaves freely. Under such circumstances, the lovers of enslaved women could successfully combat the power of plantation owners. These men’s social

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<sup>75</sup> Charles Angus to William Angus, April 10, 1802, March 3, 1804, December 17, 1805, February 12, 1807, 7/352/3, ff. 21, 45, 65, 82, Charles Angus Letter Book, Gifts and Deposits, JA.

weight in the community could prevent their mixed-race families from becoming separated, effectively rendering their lovers free in all but name.

The management of family issues could also result in open pronouncements against Caribbean social practice. Anna Eliza Elletson had inherited the Jamaica plantation of her late husband, Governor Roger Hope Elletson, upon his death in 1775. She returned to England where she married the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, but she kept abreast of the running of her Hope Estate.<sup>76</sup> At least two men employed at Hope had sired mixed-race children, and both made appeals to the Duchess on the subject of their offspring. After manumitting the child of the estate's distiller, Lady Chandos desired "that [the] Black Lady will not engross too much of his attention from his business."<sup>77</sup> As with Charles Angus, West Indian sexual interactions created economic problems, but Lady Chandos's correspondence also reveals a more generalized disgust of involvement with slave women.

Absentees, like the Duchess of Chandos, could be particularly harsh when attorneys had less colonial experience than they did. When a Mr. Cameron asked to buy the title to his mistress and their four children, the Jamaican plantation's attorney, Adam Fergusson, pushed as hard as he could to unite the family. Hugh Hamilton, the estate's absentee owner, refused the request, demanding replacement slaves rather than money. Fergusson wrote back: "Now though I own it is not desirable to part with Slaves from an Estate underpeopled, I confess I should be much inclined to gratify a Man with respect to *his own children and their Mother*. . . . But in this I shall acquiesce in what you . . . shall

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<sup>76</sup> P. G. M. Dickson and J. V. Beckett, "The Finances of the Dukes of Chandos: Aristocratic Inheritance, Marriage, and Debt in Eighteenth-Century England," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 64, no. 3/4 (2001): 344-45.

<sup>77</sup> Anna Eliza to Messrs. Pool and East, January 17, 1776, MS 29, Roger Hope Elletson Letter Book, NLJ.

determine” [emphasis mine].<sup>78</sup> Fergusson’s deference to Hamilton reveals the degree to which absentees could remain involved in estate management. Hamilton and other Jamaica grandees in Britain maintained a constant link with the Caribbean, which kept them fully aware of its mixed-race community. Through their day-to-day business, they still exercised a degree of control in the well-being of that population.

### *Mixed-Race Children in the Atlantic Family*

Although British absentees could shape mixed-race individuals’ futures, family relations were much more important to their overall security. White fathers generally had little regard for their families of color. Anglican missionaries in Jamaica observed that they “seldom do more for this spurious Brood than give them their Freedom and teach them a Trade; oftentimes not so much.”<sup>79</sup> The matrilineal descent of status meant that many mixed-race children were born enslaved, and many fathers made no effort to rescue them from bondage. Benjamin Vaughan claimed that most Jamaicans could “neither patronize, educate, nor enrich [their children]; and must see their own blood and substance grovelling in low insensibility or shame.”<sup>80</sup> R. C. Dallas agreed: “A father parts for life with his child, whom in its very birth he consigns to slavery, with as much indifference as with his old shoes.”<sup>81</sup> Sheila Duncker estimates that between five and eight percent of all Jamaican slaves were of mixed race, which would make the numbers

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<sup>78</sup> Adam Fergusson to Hugh Hamilton, June 12, 1800, GD 142/35/9, NAS.

<sup>79</sup> John Venn to Bishop Sperlock, June 15, 1751, Fulham Palace Papers, vol. XVIII, f. 45, LPL.

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin Vaughan to Charles Vaughan, October 24, 1777, Benjamin Vaughan Papers, Series II, APS.

<sup>81</sup> R. C. Dallas, *The History of the Maroons* (London, 1803), 127.

of free and enslaved persons of color roughly equal.<sup>82</sup> Not all fathers took care of illegitimate children, if, at the very least, they freed them at all.

Despite such frequent abandonment, whites regularly intervened on the behalf of people of color whom they felt had either been neglected, or were in an unstable social position. After his death, the family of George Barclay had some difficulty in settling his colonial estate. Nearly thirty years after first traveling to Jamaica, Barclay returned to Britain a bachelor, but soon wed his Scottish housekeeper. The alliance scandalized the planter's family, coming only a few months before his death. As the family sorted out George's finances, his brother James, still residing in Jamaica, made an appeal for part of the inheritance. Hoping to pass a message onto the estate's executor, James wrote to an intermediary: "You know my Brother has three Children here: Sukie & two Lads. I think 'tis hard they should have been forgot in his Will & something should be done for them. I wish you would mention them to [the executor]."<sup>83</sup> James Barclay's connection to his mixed-race niece and nephews was strong enough that he lobbied for them after receiving nothing from their father. Family ties stayed strong while one remained in Jamaica.

British associates were often only vaguely aware of mixed-race relatives in the colonies. White colonists frequently hid their existence from family in the mother country. Those in Britain discovered such relationships only upon the relatives' deaths. Nathaniel Phillips, for example, broke the news of James Mailhet's mistress to his sister in England when reporting the specifics of Mailhet's will: "I must here observe to you

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<sup>82</sup> Sheila Duncker, "The Free Coloured and their Fight for Civil Rights in Jamaica 1800-1830" (M.A. thesis, University of London, 1956), 7-8. Gad Heuman estimates Jamaican's enslaved population to be 250,000, and its free-colored population to be 10,000, in 1789. If five percent of slaves were mixed race, then their numbers would be roughly equal to those who were free: Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 7.

<sup>83</sup> James Barclay to John Thompson, May 23, 1757, MS 1160/5/9, Gordons of Buthlaw and Cairness Estate and Family Papers, Special Collections Library, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

that soon after he was taken ill, he assigned a Bond . . . to Miss Mary Evans, who lived with him for some years past as an Housekeeper.”<sup>84</sup> Some in Britain knew only the basics of their relatives’ colonial families, and sought after whites in the islands who could provide assistance. Living in Jamaica, John Wedderburn helped Glaswegian George Oliphant Kinloch to find a school for his four mixed-race nieces and nephews. George’s brother, John Kinloch, had sired the children. While it is uncertain what happened to John, his brother assumed the children’s affairs in 1774. John Wedderburn not only arranged for their education, but also offered Kinloch advice about the most proper course for the children’s lives once they completed school.<sup>85</sup> With little knowledge of his relatives of color, and even less understanding about the best ways to care for them, Kinloch depended upon Wedderburn to ensure that the children were put into a stable situation. Family and business networks on both sides of the Atlantic, then, were crucial in maintaining the livelihood of mixed-race Jamaicans in the colonies. Those helped were not hidden from view, but took a visible, if not precarious, place within their fathers’ networks.

Relatives on the other side of the Atlantic could also step in to assist relatives’ lovers as well as their children. After Alexander Johnston died in 1799, his brother and uncle sorted out his affairs in London. The two learned that Johnston had taken a mixed-race lover, Marinette Le Riche, while Deputy Paymaster in St. Domingue. Johnston had brought Le Riche with him to Jamaica, where the couple lived until his death. His brother, Peter, wrote to one of the executors of Alexander’s will about supporting Le

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<sup>84</sup> Nathaniel Phillips to Esther Gregg, January 11, 1760, Nathaniel Phillips Letter Book, Slebech Collection, 11485, f. 3, NLW.

<sup>85</sup> John Wedderburn to George Oliphant Kinloch, December 22, 1774, Grange Estate Papers, GD 1/8/35, f. 115, NAS.

Riche. Peter hoped to give her £1,000 for her actions: “I do it with the greater pleasure because I have been informed that the attention of the lady gave to my brother in his last illness all the comfort his state of mind and health could receive.”<sup>86</sup> Alexander’s uncle made a similar ovation, maintaining that there had simply been an error in his nephew’s will which omitted Le Riche. “I understand her attention to him was great,” the uncle wrote from London, “and from several letters that I have received from her, I judge she must be in want of the Money.”<sup>87</sup> Such aid speaks to the concern that some had for their relatives’ associations in the colonies. For the Johnstons, this stemmed more from an appreciation of Le Riche’s companionship in a difficult environment than from any sense of moral obligation. That Johnston’s uncle maintained a correspondence with his nephew’s lover demonstrates the conspicuous presence of mixed-race individuals within British Atlantic networks.

Such contacts were crucial for mixed-race families, even those diligently cared for, when fathers were away. John Tailyour’s Jamaican network proved important to the well-being of his colonial family in the absence of a patriarch. Before returning to Britain in 1792, Tailyour enrolled the help of David Dick and John McCall, clerks at his Kingston counting house, to oversee the family in his stead. Both Dick and McCall acted as mediators between Tailyour and his erstwhile Jamaican partner, Polly. McCall passed on messages between the two, including Polly’s hope to have Catherine sent to Britain quickly, as Polly was “not capable of bringing her up as she would wish.”<sup>88</sup> Polly also pushed McCall to lobby Tailyour for a new home. McCall worked alongside Tailyour’s

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Johnston to John Wigglesworth, December 14, 1799, Alexander Johnston Letter Book, MS 128, NLJ.

<sup>87</sup> [Alexander Johnston’s uncle] to William Mitchell, August 8, 1800, in *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> John McCall to John Tailyour, May 12, 1793, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

former business partners Peter Ballantine and James Fairlie to settle her into a better house.<sup>89</sup> Whether through Polly's insistence or their basic generosity, Tailyour's Jamaican contacts also helped to manage her finances. David Dick supervised the hiring out of Polly's slaves, left to her by Tailyour, which would "enable her to live comfortably hereafter."<sup>90</sup> Empathy may have inspired Dick's help: he later had a child of his own by a free woman of color named Margaret Halbert.<sup>91</sup> Tailyour, for his part, seems to have washed his hands of Polly once he left for Scotland, focusing instead on the upbringing of their children. After another volley of letters from McCall about Polly's finances, Tailyour replied, with some degree of annoyance: "I think the negroes & house I left her (for her life) is quite sufficient to keep her very comfortably if well managed & I leave it entirely to you to do with the whole what you see best."<sup>92</sup> Tailyour's Jamaican family, then, depended heavily upon its patriarch's business and social ties on the island. The personal connections with Tailyour's network lasted for years, putting family members into stronger positions from which to negotiate for better lives within Jamaica's oppressive society.

The advancement of mixed-race individuals in Jamaica depended upon both of these active and passive forms of struggle through white relatives. Women of color who became sexual partners of white men regularly used their relationships as tools for social advancement, especially for the benefit of their children.<sup>93</sup> As we have seen with John Tailyour's lover, Polly, such lobbying often required persistence in the face of a reluctant benefactor. Her position in Tailyour's Jamaican social circle, however, allowed greater

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., July 14, 1793 – March 2, 1794.

<sup>90</sup> David Dick to John Tailyour, October 23, 1797, in *ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Baptism Register, St. Andrew Parish, February 23, 1805, 1B/11/8/1/1a, JA.

<sup>92</sup> John Tailyour to John McCall, November 25, 1807, John Tailyour Letter Book, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>93</sup> Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society*, 115-16.

access and a more noticeable presence to his familial patronage, even with the Atlantic as a divide. Conversely, Jamaicans of color were so embedded in white commercial and social networks that white colonists often felt the urge to lobby on their behalf when problems arose. The presence of mixed-race Jamaicans within white society, both colonial and metropolitan, permitted more frequent, and more successful, acts of resistance against an extraordinarily powerful system of racial oppression.

Family ties were not easily maintained, however. As the mixed-race community grew throughout the Caribbean, it slowly lost its close, filial connections to whites, both in the islands and in Britain. Part of this stemmed from the reduction in white numbers that occurred during the late eighteenth century. Gad Heuman has estimated that the white population of Jamaica in 1844 was lower than it had been in eighty years. Disease, war, the abolition of the slave trade, declining sugar profitability, and the final slave emancipation in 1834 drastically slowed white migration to the West Indies. Simultaneously, mixed-race numbers increased nearly tenfold.<sup>94</sup> This meant that cross-racial unions contributed much less heavily to the growth of Jamaica's population of color than the unions of two mixed-race parents.

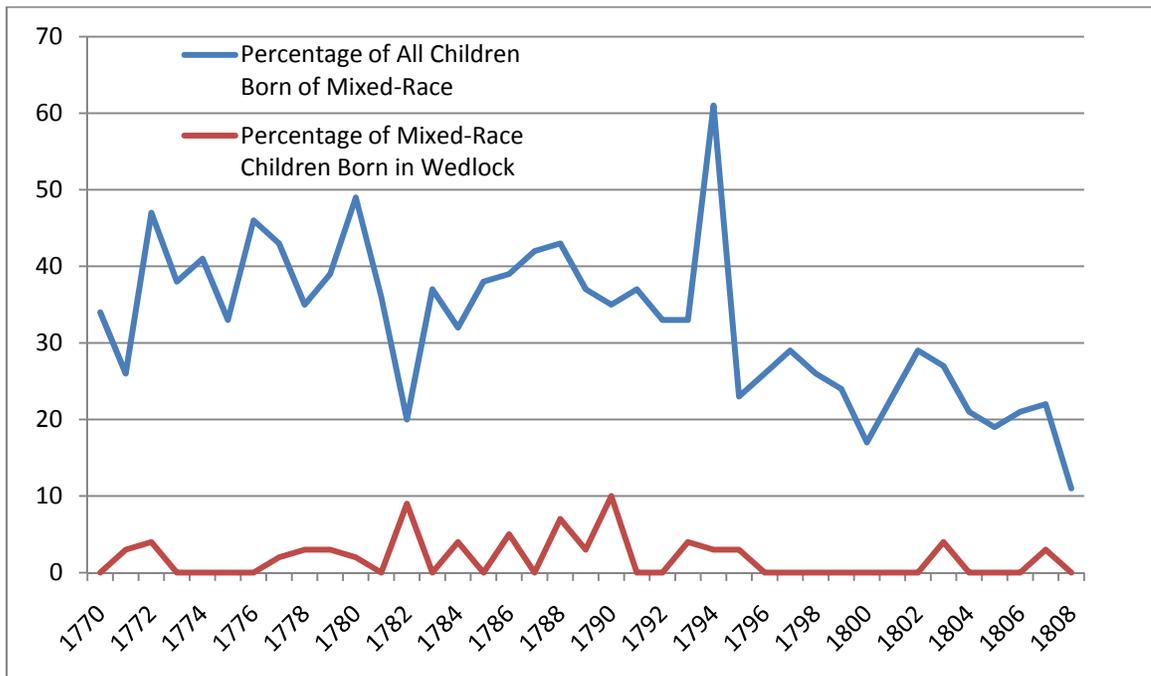
Between 1770 and 1808, increasing numbers of mixed-race children were born from such relationships between two parents of color. Figure 1.4 shows the percentages of mixed-race children amongst all free people baptized in St. Catherine, Jamaica. It also includes the percentage of those free children of color who were born in wedlock. The decrease in the overall percentage of children born of mixed-race was due not to a parallel influx of white births, but to a surge in enslaved baptisms starting in the late eighteenth century. Legitimacy rates amongst free children of color, as the table shows,

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<sup>94</sup> Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 7.

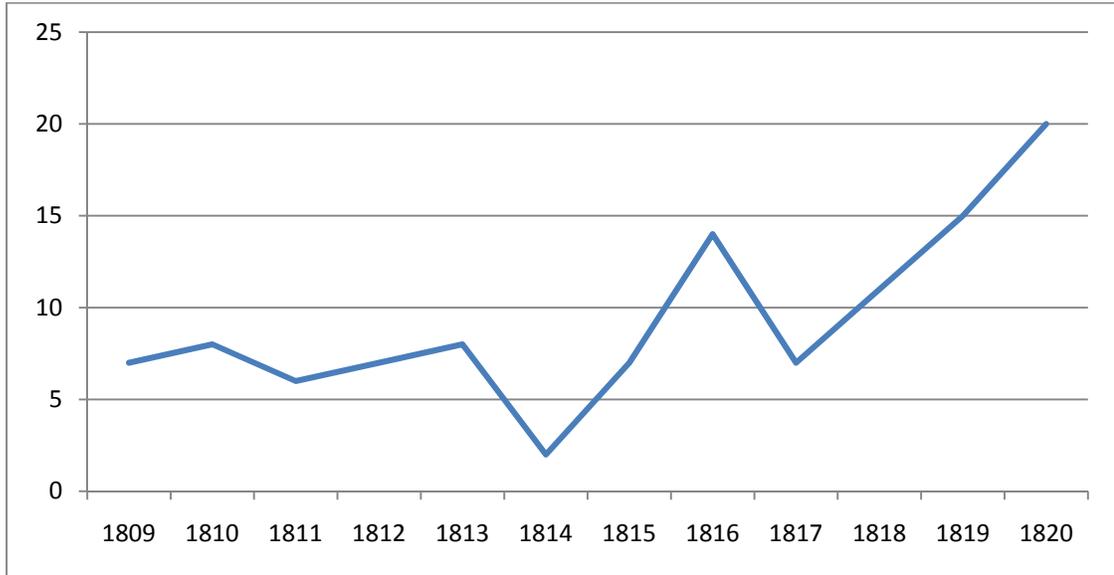
stayed low for the century in St. Catherine. Figure 1.5 paints a different picture for nineteenth-century Kingston. It shows the legitimacy rates of free mixed-race children rising in the island’s urban mecca. With only a handful of records showing marriages between whites and free people of color, these legitimate mixed-race children almost universally had two married parents of color. This meant that intermarriage between people of color increased, at least in Kingston, the epicenter of Jamaica’s mixed-race community.

**Figure 1.4: Percentages of Children Born of Mixed Race, and the Percentage of Mixed-Race Children Born in Wedlock, St. Catherine, Jamaica, 1770-1808<sup>95</sup>**



<sup>95</sup> St. Catherine Baptism Records, 1B/11/8/3/48, JA.

**Figure 1.5: Percentage of Mixed-Race Children Born in Wedlock, Kingston, Jamaica, 1809-1820<sup>96</sup>**



A more complete picture emerges from examining the frequency of interracial parents versus that of two parents of color in these baptism registers. Data from the four parishes of Kingston, St. Catherine, St. Andrew, and St. Ann were culled to include only those entries which identified both parents' racial classification. Table 1.2 shows the percentages of interracial parents and two parents of color amongst those truncated records. Although a large number of entries were eliminated, one nonetheless finds a remarkable uniformity between three of the four parishes in overall parentage. In general, three-quarters of all free children of color had a white father. St. Andrew, a burgeoning suburb of Kingston, may not have had a substantial enough population of color to increase the number of pairings between non-whites.<sup>97</sup> Only Kingston's register

<sup>96</sup> Kingston Baptism Records, 1B/11/8/9/3-4, JA.

<sup>97</sup> Although Trevor Burnard describes St. Andrew as "the largest area of settlement" in Jamaica in 1662, its population stagnated, and never kept pace with its neighbor to the south, Kingston, in the eighteenth century: Burnard, "Inheritance and Independence: Women's Status in Early Colonial Jamaica," *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, XLVIII, no. 1 (January 1991): 97. See also: Burnard, "A Failed Settler Society: Marriage and Demographic Failure in Early Jamaica," *Journal of Social History* 28 (Fall 1994): 65-66.

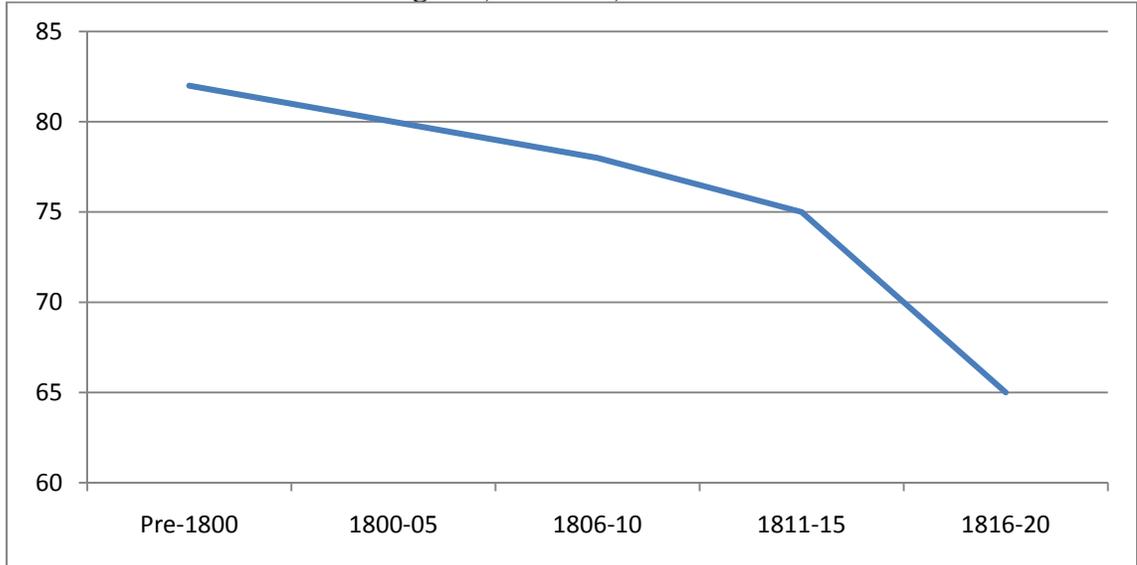
was complete and consistent enough to offer an analysis of changes in these numbers over time. Figure 1.6 shows the percentage of free, mixed-race children in Kingston who had a white father and a mother of color. As the nineteenth century progressed, the percentage of children with interracial parents steadily decreased. With its heavy concentration of mixed-race inhabitants, Kingston could support many more pairings between colored individuals. By 1820, the numbers of mixed-race people in Kingston with both a father and mother of color approached those who had a white parent. At the inception of the nineteenth century, then, Jamaica’s free population of color started to evolve away from the white community. These new residents of color had less connection to the white populace, and their financial livelihood became increasingly divorced from whites as well.

**Table 1.2: Percentages of Interracial Parents vs. Two Parents of Color Amongst Mixed-Race Children in Jamaica, 1730-1820<sup>98</sup>**

	<b>St. Catherine (1731-1807)</b>	<b>St. Andrew (1741-1820)</b>	<b>St. Ann (1785-1820)</b>	<b>Kingston (1809-1820)</b>
<b>Interracial Parents</b>	73	93	76	73
<b>Two Parents of Color</b>	27	7	24	27

<sup>98</sup> Baptism Registers for Kingston (1B/11/8/9/3-4), St. Catherine (1B/11/8/3/48), St. Andrew (1B/11/8/1/1a,-2), and St. Ann (1B/11/8/2/1-2), JA.

**Figure 1.6: Percentage of Free, Mixed-Race Children with Interracial Parents, Kingston, Jamaica, 1750-1820<sup>99</sup>**



The differences in parentage amongst various individuals of color reflect an important point about group cohesion. West Indians of mixed-race did not form a unified mass in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>100</sup> People of color could be born free or enslaved: an obviously crucial distinction of social standing. At the same time, free people of color could fall into a range of class positions as well. Some had little support from a white parent; others could receive massive inheritances and advanced rights over their fellow subjects of color.<sup>101</sup> Jerome Handler argues that Barbados's population of color retained strong, internal divisions along class and phenotypic lines throughout its colonial history.<sup>102</sup> Travelers and residents alike certainly noticed these variations. If

<sup>99</sup> Kingston Baptism Registers, 1B/11/8/9/3-4, JA.

<sup>100</sup> David Cohen and Jack P. Greene, "Introduction," in *Neither Slave Nor Free: The Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World*, eds. David Cohen and Jack P. Greene (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 1-23.

<sup>101</sup> Gad Heuman also makes this point, but does not think that it necessarily divided Jamaica's free population of color: *Between Black and White*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> Jerome Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 209.

there were major divisions they tended to come from these dissimilarities of class and freedom.

Yet another prominent distinction emerged amongst people of color in the nineteenth century – one based on individuals’ parentage. The lack of a white parent pushed mixed-race West Indians further away from the islands’ white populace. Such a development allowed for greater social cohesion amongst mixed-race people, rather than less. Arnold Sio argues that free colored identity in the Caribbean was much more unified than scholars have traditionally believed. He surmises that this came from extended networks across the islands, as well as from a common African culture.<sup>103</sup> Such factors may have caused some convergence in identity, but they ignore the demographic changes that affected free coloreds’ social standing. Without white patrons, individuals of color came to depend upon one another for financial and social well-being, if not for self-identification. This eliminated many of the original divisions prominent in the eighteenth century, and allowed mixed-race West Indians to form a group dependent less upon associations with whites, and more upon self-organization.

In developing this self-reliance, West Indians of color found a much stronger and more wholly unified political voice. The 1820s saw a flourishing of protests for equality in the Caribbean. Jamaica, in particular, experienced prolonged periods of dissent from mixed-race individuals. The group also began pressuring Westminster, appointing their own lobbyist in England in 1823.<sup>104</sup> Scholars have looked to a variety of causes for the emergence of this political energy. Gad Heuman sees its genesis in the spirit of reform

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<sup>103</sup> Arnold Sio, “Marginality and Free Coloured Identity in Caribbean Slave Society,” in *The Slavery Reader*, eds. Gad Heuman and James Walvin (New York: Routledge, 2003), 670-73.

<sup>104</sup> Mavis Christine Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society: A Sociopolitical History of the Free Coloreds of Jamaica, 1800-1865* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1976), 93-4.

following both the American and Haitian Revolutions, particularly after enduring years of protracted civil rights.<sup>105</sup> Examining the effects of abolitionism in Jamaica, Nigel Bolland alternatively believes that the end of slave imports in 1807 diminished African influence amongst people of color, leading them to articulate a more Eurocentric form of political demands.<sup>106</sup> Mavis Campbell gives a thorough account of the basic factors enabling the rise of this political agitation: “humanitarian ideas, new political and economic ideologies, increased acculturation of the subordinate groups, and the beginning of economic and political decline of the white dominant group.”<sup>107</sup> All of these contributed significantly to increased protests, yet none of these theories squarely addresses demographic change in mixed-race parentage. Lacking kinship and personal connections to whites, both in the Caribbean and in Great Britain, people of color had to depend more upon themselves. This meant appealing for greater rights as a group, rather than at the individual level – as the “privilege bills” allocating advanced rights to wealthy petitioners of color had done in the eighteenth century. It also forced them to appoint an agent to lobby for their interests in Britain, as many no longer had personal Atlantic connections. Intermarriage and sexual pairings between mixed-race individuals transformed the group’s status and identity, demanding greater self-sufficiency, rather than dependence on white patronage and paternalism.

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<sup>105</sup> Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 23-29.

<sup>106</sup> O. Nigel Bolland, “Creolisation and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist View of Caribbean Social History,” in *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Glen Richards (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2002), 23.

<sup>107</sup> Campbell, *Dynamics of Change*, 27.

## West Indian Lives of Those who Traveled Abroad

The growing autonomy of Jamaica's mixed-race population gave the group more independence from white patronage. However, these parental connections were initially crucial to mixed-race success. Entrenched, as many were, in their father's networks, many West Indians of color took advantage of these imperial ties, and left the islands for greater opportunities in Britain. While this study analyzes the movement of mixed-race people to Britain broadly, it also details the experiences of individuals who made the trek. Before concluding this chapter, three families will be introduced to show their origins in the West Indies, and the conditions which precipitated migration to Britain. Each one will be followed more closely in subsequent chapters. The stories of Jane Harry and her father Thomas Hibbert of Jamaica, the Tailyour family of Jamaica, and the Macphersons of Guyana, all unveil the realities of West Indian life, and the struggles involved with moving to Britain. Snapshots taken of their lives at various stages in the migration across the Atlantic will develop a more complete picture of mixed-race experience in Britain.

### *The Harry Family of Jamaica*

Jane Harry came from a highly distinguished Jamaican family. Her father was Thomas Hibbert, a prominent Kingstonian who served as a judge in the island's Grand Court, as well as a member of the Assembly for the parish of Portland on Jamaica's northern shore. Hibbert arrived in Jamaica in 1734, having been raised in Manchester, England by Robert and Margaret Hibbert.<sup>108</sup> Like many British migrants to Jamaica, Hibbert took up the mercantile trade and achieved tremendous success in his profession.

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<sup>108</sup> Joseph J. Green, "Jenny Harry, Later Thresher (circa 1756-1784)," *Friends Quarterly Examiner* XLVII (1913): 559.

He became one of the island's wealthiest men, and not ashamed to flaunt it. At one point, he entered into a contest with three of his fellow merchants to build Kingston's most beautiful house. Hibbert's submission, erected in 1755 above the Parade Square on Duke Street, still stands; it is now the headquarters of the Jamaican National Heritage Trust (see Figure 1.7).

Jane's mother was Charity Harry, a free mulatto woman also from Kingston. Little is known about Charity's early life. However, it is evident that her relationship with Thomas Hibbert propelled her into the upper ranks of Jamaica's society of color. Although details are murky, Hibbert granted Charity Harry a substantial allowance. In 1775, she applied to the Jamaican Assembly for privileged rights – a legislative exemption which allowed elites of color to obtain all the rights of white subjects, save the ability to hold office or to vote in elections. Harry's application recited that she had been baptized, practiced Christianity, and regularly took communion. Additionally, it reported her in possession "of lands, Houses and Negroes in the Town of Kingston in this Island to a very Considerable Amount and Value so as to put her above the Common level of Free Negroes and Mulattoes."<sup>109</sup> Not surprisingly, given her wealth and connection to Hibbert, the Assembly granted the application on December 22, 1775. Charity Harry's 1793 will speaks more fully of her large estate, for she was able to bequeath hundreds of pounds to her family, as well as several plots of land and rather large amounts of silverware, china, and jewelry.<sup>110</sup> These riches, along with her privilege allocation, put Charity Harry at the top of Jamaica's population of color. Thus, Jane Harry came from the island's elite, both white and colored.

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<sup>109</sup> Jamaica, Acts, 1774-75, CO 139/31, NAE.

<sup>110</sup> Will of Charity Harry, November 13, 1793, Wills, LOS 58, ff. 71-73, IRO.

**Figure 1.7: Thomas Hibbert’s House, Kingston, Jamaica, 2008 (erected 1755)  
(photo by the author)**



Together, Hibbert and Harry had two daughters before their relationship ended: Jane, born in 1756; and Margaret, 1765. News of the latter’s birth made it across the Atlantic to the pages of *Rider’s British Merlin*, an almanac published in London, which recorded that Margaret, named after Hibbert’s mother, was baptized in her father’s Kingston house on April 12. Hibbert asked three of his friends – Charles Hall, Sally Gordon and Henry Croasdaile – to act as her godparents. Each agreed and attended the baptism.<sup>111</sup> That Hibbert would ask his friends to serve as godparents for his illegitimate daughter of color, and that news of this baptism would reach a British publication, reveals the prevalent and banal nature of mixed-race families in the Caribbean. Whites on both

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<sup>111</sup> *Rider’s British Merlin* (London, 1765), as quoted in Green, “Jenny Harry” (1913): 560.

sides of the Atlantic accepted the routine occurrence of these relationships and the children they produced. This was particularly true in the middle of the eighteenth century, prior to the political uproars over abolition and the Revolution in St. Domingue, which would plague the public discourse on miscegenation. Jane Harry came of age at a less volatile time in Atlantic racial ideology.

Despite the public acknowledgement, Hibbert's relations with his children may not have been incredibly compassionate. Although he would eventually send them to Britain to escape Jamaica's restrictive laws, Hibbert did not also bequeath much affection. In a letter from Hibbert's nephew to Jane Harry after her father's death in 1780, the cousin declared, "[Your father] never claimed the *parental* Relation; for how freely soever *you* may have used the Word 'Father,' you will not find, that in speaking of you, *he*, ever used the word 'Daughter'."<sup>112</sup> While such invective may have originated more from her cousin's prejudice – or fear that she would make extravagant claims on her father's fortune – than from any reality, Jane Harry may not have had pleasant consanguinities with her father. Still, while they may have been distant, they were not disconnected.

### *The Tailyour Family of Jamaica*

A generation after Jane Harry's birth, John Tailyour set out for the Americas. Having just celebrated his twentieth birthday at his new home in Virginia, Tailyour received a long and encouraging note from his father back in Scotland, asking about the business. It was April 1775, and strained relations between Britain and its North-

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<sup>112</sup> Thomas Hibbert to Jane Harry, December 15, 1780, in Joseph J. Green, "Jenny Harry, Later Thresher (circa 1756-1784)," *Friends Quarterly Examiner* XLVIII (1914): 45-46.

American colonies had undercut the tobacco trade in which John acted as a factor. “Inform yourself,” his father urged him, “of the number of Negro slaves that are computed to be in Virginia,” as well as of the population of native people in the region, just in case a rebellion were to break out in the colony. Moreover, he advised remaining temperate in the colonies by avoiding gambling and alcohol. Above all else, though, John’s father insisted that he stay friendly with his commercial contacts.<sup>113</sup> Such associations had eased his arrival in America, and were central to any future success.

John Tailyour was born on February 29, 1755 on his father’s estate of Kirktonhill, Forfarshire, in northeast Scotland.<sup>114</sup> The Tailyours had risen in prominence in the seventeenth century, owing to a connection with Scottish royalty prior to the union of crowns. Originally, as the name implies, tailors to the King, the family moved into commerce in the eighteenth century, when they solidified their place in the Scottish gentry. John continued in trade, apprenticing with George McCall of Glasgow. The port functioned as Britain’s most important link to the Chesapeake tobacco trade, and McCall’s house specialized in it. At the conclusion of John’s apprenticeship, McCall sent him to Virginia as a merchant factor for the firm in 1775. From there, John Tailyour would begin a long and tumultuous career in the Americas.

Tailyour’s timing could not have been much worse. Having arrived in Virginia in 1775, during a period of robust agricultural output, he had to leave soon afterward as the first shots of revolution rang out. He came back to North America in 1777, this time to manage the trade between New York and the West Indies, only to return to Glasgow a year later after British defeats in the northern theater of war. Despite setbacks, however,

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<sup>113</sup> Robert Tailyour to John Tailyour, April 15, 1775, Robert Taylor’s Commonplace Book, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>114</sup> He was baptized on June 18, 1755 in Montrose, Forfarshire, Scotland, Ref. No. 312/00, GROS.

Tailyour never lost hope in colonial trade, eventually returning, once again, to New York in 1781. This time he came to trade in sugar, but his expectations were dashed three days after his arrival, when news of Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown reached Manhattan. Undaunted, Tailyour attempted a trade in food and clothes for prisoners-of-war in Cornwallis's surrendered army, but the Pennsylvanian government confiscated his goods and forbade the transaction. Fortune and the American war for independence had worked against him once more.

With few commercial prospects remaining in North America, and not wanting to return to Scotland, Tailyour turned to his family for help. The closest and most obvious connection was Tailyour's cousin in Jamaica, Simon Taylor. Deemed the wealthiest man on the island, Simon was born there in 1740 to Patrick and Martha Taylor.<sup>115</sup> Patrick had left the Tailyour<sup>116</sup> family in Scotland as a young man, settled in Jamaica, and married a creole white woman named Martha Taylor. Patrick standardized the spelling of his name, adopting that of his wife's, and they had several children. When it came time for their education, each were sent off to Britain. Simon first attended grammar school in Scotland, but later travelled south to matriculate at Eton. Although he spent most of his boyhood in England, he longed to return to Jamaica, and arrived back home in 1760. He began to build a fortune by acting as an estate attorney for several absentee planters, most notably Chaloner Arcedeckne.<sup>117</sup> Eventually, he would acquire plantations of his own, growing tremendously affluent as well as politically powerful. He sat as a member of the

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<sup>115</sup> Lady Maria Nugent claimed that Taylor was the richest man in Jamaica in his journal: *Lady Nugent's Journal of her residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*, ed. Philip Wright (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1966), 65. Richard Sheridan believes this to have been true: "Simon Taylor, Sugar Tycoon of Jamaica, 1740-1813," *Agricultural History* 45, no. 4 (October 1971): 285-96.

<sup>116</sup> There was no uniformity in the spelling of the family name. Patrick originally spelled his surname "Tailzour." His father, John, was the great uncle of John Tailyour.

<sup>117</sup> The correspondence between Taylor and Arcedeckne can be found in Betty Wood and Martin Lynn, eds., *Travel, Trade, and Power in the Atlantic, 1765-1884* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Jamaican Assembly for all but three years between 1763 and 1810, as well as served, at various times, as a magistrate, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and Lieutenant Governor of the Militia. Thus well connected, Simon offered to help Tailyour establish himself in 1781. John was more than eager to accept the invitation: “I have long had thoughts of trying to settle in Jamaica and the Manner in which you write has very much encouraged me to it. Under your protection I think there is little doubt of my doing well.”<sup>118</sup> So, at the beginning of 1783, John set sail for Jamaica, arriving in Kingston on March 19. His future in the West Indies would be shaped by the tutelage and influence of his older cousin.

John Tailyour quickly capitalized on his cousin’s name by taking it. John standardized the spelling of his surname to “Taylor” in 1784 – although he will be referred to throughout this dissertation as “Tailyour” for easier distinction. The name change came after Tailyour formed the business partnership of McBean, Ballantine and Taylor: “I have changed the spelling of my name having reason to think it might be of use to me & knowing it could not do any harm.”<sup>119</sup> His kinship with Simon allowed Tailyour easier access to Jamaica’s commercial markets. Although his firm initially dealt in plantation supplies, it would not be long before the partners entered into slave trading. Imports of enslaved Africans spiked in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and Tailyour chased after these substantial profits. He would eventually alter the partnership with Peter Ballantine and James Fairlie, re-launching his house as Taylor, Ballantine and Fairlie. Tapping into his own Scottish commercial networks, as well as those of his cousin Simon, Tailyour built up a lucrative import/export business.

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<sup>118</sup> John Tailyour to Simon Taylor, January 3, 1782, Letterbook I, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>119</sup> John Tailyour to George Carnegie, March 20, 1784, in *ibid*.

Relying heavily upon Simon's connections, John Tailyour also seems to have emulated his cousin's domestic habits. Arriving in Jamaica, Tailyour lived in Simon's Kingston house and corresponded with him constantly – Simon living on a plantation to the north of town. Knowing little about the area, John depended upon Simon for commercial and social information. Tailyour may have paid particular attention to Simon's domestic arrangement as well. Never marrying, Simon Taylor was a notorious bachelor, with a well-developed, well-publicized taste for women of color. Indeed, Lady Nugent remarked on both topics. When visiting Simon's home in Liguanea towards the end of his life in 1802, she described Taylor as "an old bachelor, [who generally] detests the society of women." However, she also met one of Taylor's "mulatto girl[s]." Expressing surprise at the young girl's presence, Nugent inquired of her to Taylor's housekeeper, who informed Nugent that the girl was "his own daughter, and that he had a numerous family, some almost on every one of his estates."<sup>120</sup> In fact, Simon Taylor had kept mistresses of color for the entirety of his adult life.

Three years after returning to Jamaica, Simon Taylor drafted a will in 1763, a necessity for a young man in the West Indies owing to the unhealthiness of the climate. In the will, Taylor included a substantial provision for his housekeeper, Grace Donne, whom he described as a "free Quadroon Woman," as well as for one of his children of color. Donne lived in Taylor's house on Orange Street, in East Kingston, having moved in soon after Taylor returned to the island. Simon gave her his land and house in Kingston, nine slaves, a horse, a £150 gift, as well as his furniture, bedding, and silverware, in return for her "Faithful Services." The bequest was a large sum, especially considering his relatively recent return and the infancy of their apparent relationship. As

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<sup>120</sup> Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 68.

he confessed to his brother John, “You will say I have made a great Provision for the Woman who Lives with me. I own it, but She has been a Faithful Servant To me, & I never had occasion to call twice for any thing, or awake her in any of my Severe Fitts of Illness.” Taylor also gave an allowance to his “Natural Quadroon Daughter” Sally Taylor, including ten slaves and an annuity of £20.<sup>121</sup> Sally’s mother was never identified; most likely she was not the daughter of Grace Donne, as both were labeled “quadroons.” Thus, even by the young age of 23, Simon Taylor had had multiple relationships with women of color.

By the time Lady Nugent visited him at the end of his life, Simon Taylor’s family had grown, and his female companions had changed. Soon after the death of Grace Donne, Taylor revised his will in 1808. The revisions included a £500 bequest to Donne’s niece Grace Harris. Sally Taylor’s inheritance remained unchanged. In the years between the wills, Taylor had taken up residence with Sarah Blacktree Hunter, a “free Mulatto woman” who replaced Donne as his housekeeper sometime around 1778. Hunter bore him at least one child, named Sarah Taylor. When amending his will, Simon gave Sarah Hunter a £500 gift, in addition to several pieces of furniture. Sarah Taylor initially received £1,000 but he increased the amount by £1500, along with a thirty pound annuity, in an 1813 codicil. Taylor also allocated a £500 lump sum, a £50 annuity, and a slave to his granddaughter Sarah Hunter Taylor Cathcart, the child of Sarah Taylor.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Simon Taylor to John Taylor, January 27, 1763, Simon Taylor Letters, ICS 120 II B, no. 36, ICS.

<sup>122</sup> Simon Taylor’s Will, PROB 10/7400/7, ff. 2-4, 58-59, NAE. For more on Simon’s relationship to these mistresses, see: Christer Petley, “‘Home’ and ‘this country’: Britishness and Creole identity in the letters of a transatlantic slaveholder,” *Atlantic Studies* 6, no. 1 (April 2009): 43-61; *Ibid.*, “‘Legitimacy’ and social boundaries: free people of colour and the social order in Jamaican slave society,” *Social History* 30, no. 4 (November 2005): 481-98.

Despite such seeming concern, Simon Taylor did not take care of all of his natural children equally. He mentioned only a handful of his mixed-race progeny in his will, and even then distributed his fortune disproportionately. One codicil records that he gave £700 to an enslaved woman named Charlotte Taylor – “a Quadroon” – which she was to divide among her children as she saw fit. Taylor did not, however, manumit any of these children himself, claiming, “I prefer this mode of providing for [her] to the purchasing [of their] freedom.”<sup>123</sup> He did not specify the reasons for limiting his largesse. Perhaps he had less contact with Charlotte Taylor than with other mistresses, or he simply did not wish to assume any responsibility for their children’s upbringing. Simon Taylor’s responses to his mixed-race offspring came less out of a sense of universal familial piety than a basic administration of his personal preferences.<sup>124</sup>

In his extensive relationships with women of color, Simon Taylor provided a model for his cousin John on the sexual politics of Jamaican life. Living in Simon’s house and drawing as he did on Simon’s connections, John was fully aware of his cousin’s miscegenous activities. John would monitor Simon’s plantations while Simon was off the island. Such supervision gave him full view of Simon’s colonial family, whom he had to manage. During one of these absences in 1785, for example, John informed Simon that one of his mixed-race children, Jack, had acquired a fever.<sup>125</sup> Several years later, in 1789, he wrote Simon a short, ambiguous letter about Simon’s mistress Grace Donne. John reported that Donne had slept with another man, and

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<sup>123</sup> Simon Taylor’s Will, f. 59.

<sup>124</sup> Daniel Livesay, “Extended Families: Mixed-Race Children and the Scottish Experience, 1770-1820,” *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, no. 4 (Spring/Summer 2008): 1-17.

<sup>125</sup> John Tailyour to Simon Taylor, January 22, 1785, Simon Taylor Letters, ICS 120 XIV/A/1/17, ICS.

admitted that he may himself have been to blame.<sup>126</sup> Such interactions with Simon's mixed-race mistresses and children gave John a firm understanding of the sexual status quo in Jamaica.

More importantly, Tailyour began his own relationship with an enslaved woman on one of Simon's estates. Polly, born Mary Graham, was noted as "mulatto" in the birth certificates of her and John's children. This may not have been an accurate description of her racial background, as baptismal registers sometimes used "mulatto" as a blanket term for any person of mixed race. There are two entries for a Mary Graham in the Kingston parish records that correspond with her age: one Mary Graham was born on January 29, 1748 to Susan Ripley, "a mulatto woman" and William Graham; another was born to "a mulatto woman named Grace" on January 15, 1752, without any notation of paternity.<sup>127</sup> Yet, it is possible that Polly was born in one of the island's other parishes and was sold to Simon Taylor at a later date. Regardless of her origins, she met John Tailyour on one of Simon's estates and took a place in his home as many island women did: by acting as his nurse. Travelers to the West Indies usually became sick soon after their arrival, due to a climate with which they had no familiarity and to diseases with which they had no immunity. Tailyour complained constantly of his health during his stay in Jamaica, and Polly nursed him through each bout of sickness. She also took care of him after he sustained serious injury by falling from his horse.<sup>128</sup>

Although enslaved, Polly lived with Tailyour, and they soon welcomed children into their family. John and Polly had four children together between 1786 and 1792.

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<sup>126</sup> John Tailyour to Simon Taylor, August 1789, in *ibid.*, ICS 120/XIV/A/1/44.

<sup>127</sup> Kingston Baptisms, Copy Register vol. 1, ff. 99, 110, IRO.

<sup>128</sup> John Tailyour to John and Alex Anderson, January 30, 1791, Letter Book 3, Tailyour Papers, WCL. This incident also made the news, as reported in the *Cornwall Chronicle* (Montego Bay, Jamaica), January 22, 1791.

Their eldest son James was born on August 28, 1786, and baptized in November of that year.<sup>129</sup> Simon, the next child, arrived on October 11, 1788, but was not baptized until February 24, 1791.<sup>130</sup> He may have died quite young: there are almost no letters about him from any of Tailyour's personal contacts; and it would not have been unusual that Simon's late baptism arose out of a fear of impending death. Polly gave birth to the couple's third child, John on October 31, 1790, who was baptized on the same day as Simon.<sup>131</sup> The couple's only girl, Catherine, was born on September 22, 1792 and baptized two months later.<sup>132</sup>

Two of the children, James and Simon, were born enslaved. Because one's status of freedom in Jamaica was matrilineally determined, Tailyour's children were slaves along with their mother. Not long after Simon's birth, Tailyour resolved to emancipate his growing family. Without legal possession of them, he had to apply to his cousin Simon for their freedom. This required John to compensate Simon, as well as pay hefty manumission fees for Polly and each child. In his letter requesting their freedom, Tailyour's appeal revealed an affection for the young family. Addressing his cousin in early 1790, Tailyour wrote, "I take up the Pen to request a favour of you, which tho I have often wished to do verbally I have not been able. It is, that you would grant Polly her Freedom & that of her Children." Tailyour's inability to bring up the matter with his cousin, face-to-face, demonstrated his trepidation about Simon's response, or his reservation to discuss such delicate matters. Tailyour cared deeply about their fate:

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<sup>129</sup> Kingston Baptisms, Copy Register vol. 1, f. 371, IRO.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., f. 425.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., f. 454.

Having now for several years experienced [Polly's] care & attention both while I have been in sickness & health, I confess myself much attached to her, & I find myself very much so for her Children; which makes me very desirous of putting them in a more respectable situation.

Tailyour's letter uncovers the compassion that bound many interracial couples together. To him, Polly was more than a sexual partner, she was a companion and a nurse as he constantly struggled with his health. Tailyour wanted to offer Polly and the children an opportunity to rise out of slavery, and to obtain a more comfortable life. This affection may have grown out of codependence in a brutal colony, but it existed nonetheless. Indeed, Tailyour closed his appeal, "I feel my self more anxious to obtain this Favour than I can describe."<sup>133</sup> The plea worked and, by August of that year, Simon had set in motion the emancipation process. Polly and her children became free, and John and Catherine, who would come later, would enter the world without the shackles of enslavement.

#### *The Macpherson Family of Guyana*

Transatlantic experiences were not limited to mixed-race individuals from Jamaica. Families throughout the British Caribbean sent their children abroad in much the same fashion as Hibbert and Tailyour. For Britons, who saw the West Indies as an undifferentiated whole, the specific geographical origins of mixed-race migrants made little difference to the overall impressions of their presence. Social and legal similarities between the colonies also produced comparable behaviors amongst the white fathers of mixed-race families. The Macphersons of Guyana, for instance, underwent much the same process as their Jamaican counterparts. The family patriarch, William Macpherson,

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<sup>133</sup> John Tailyour to Simon Taylor, January 3, 1790, Simon Taylor Letters, ICS 120 XIV/A/50, ICS.

had come from a long line of peripatetic and unruly Scots. William's grandfather, after whom he was named, died at the Battle of Falkirk in 1746, fighting alongside Charles Edward Stuart in the "Forty-Five" rebellion. Allan, son of the slain rebel and father to William, reminisced that his first memory was one of throwing stones at English soldiers in the process of burning down his laird's residence. Allan grew out of his revolutionary phase and joined the military, which took him throughout the world. He fought in North America and Cuba during the French and Indian War and eventually obtained the position of Quartermaster-General in Bengal by 1782. While in India, his wife gave birth to sons William in 1784 and Allan in 1787. The family returned to Scotland in 1788, when the new son was just one year old. It was in Scotland that the family purchased an estate in the small Perthshire town of Blairgowrie, with father Allan becoming 1<sup>st</sup> of Blairgowrie, chief of the Macpherson clan.<sup>134</sup> Despite their gentrified status, both sons would follow in their father's roaming footsteps.

William set out for the West Indies at a young age, in the hopes of finding riches. His father had returned from India in a tenuous financial position, and the son wanted to reinforce and augment the family's wealth and standing. William sailed to Demerara in 1801, and upon arriving there left immediately for Berbice, in Guyana.<sup>135</sup> The dangers facing him were immense. Much like Robert Tailyour's letter to John, Allan's note to young William in advance of his departure instructed him to be civil and polite to everyone around him, including those in a lower station than himself. But, he also warned of the sexual vices that were sure to tempt. "Be circumspect and studiously upon your guard against the company of bad men or women" Allan advised: "[A]void any

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<sup>134</sup> W. Cheyne-Macpherson, *The Chiefs of Clan Macpherson* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1947), 125-7.

<sup>135</sup> Many thanks to Dr. Stephen Foster for his background information on the Macpherson family.

connection with women in London . . . if once you should be entangled with [them], you will be completely ruined.”<sup>136</sup> For those outside the metropolis, London gave something of a preview of life in the West Indies. The young sojourner also received advice on surviving the subtropical climate, and its effect on the libido. His friend William Dick counseled, “I would point out the great danger of a promiscuous intercourse with the female Sex . . . one half of the young men who go abroad are destroyed by the disease contracted from bad women, or by the mercury injudiciously taken to cure it.”<sup>137</sup> Prostitution may have been on William Dick’s mind, but he certainly directed these admonitions toward the women of color whom he knew would be a ready temptation to the young man.

Not long after arriving in Guyana, William Macpherson commenced relations with an enslaved black woman named Countess. He took his first position in 1802 as an overseer on James Fraser’s Golden Fleece Plantation, where Macpherson met Countess and began the affair. In 1803, he managed the Union Plantation, and the following year he moved to the Paradise Plantation. Countess stayed with him during his moves. Finally in 1807 Macpherson purchased her from Fraser. Her pregnancy with their first child may have provided the impetus for William to take over ownership. Eliza was born in 1807, with two children following not long after: Matilda in 1809, and Allan in 1810. Just one month after Allan’s birth, Macpherson manumitted his mixed-race family. On October 10, 1810, he submitted a deed to have them each emancipated, and asked his parents, two siblings, and several friends in Scotland to act as guardians of his lover (now

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<sup>136</sup> Col. Allan Macpherson to William Macpherson, October 15, 1801, Bundle 202, NRAS 2614, MBP. My thanks to Laird Macpherson for allowing me to read through his family’s papers, and for his generous hospitality while at his home.

<sup>137</sup> William Dick to William Macpherson, November 25, 1801, Bundle 763, in *ibid.*

going by “Harriot,” the name of Macpherson’s sister in Britain) and their children.<sup>138</sup>

Inviting his parents to act as guardians was a step forward for Macpherson, as he had long felt reluctant to discuss his colonial household.<sup>139</sup> This reticence ended once Macpherson freed his family and assumed responsibility for their lives. He would eventually have them sent to Britain, like Tailyour and Hibbert, but those measures ultimately met a slow progress.

Macpherson’s parents did not approve of their son’s domestic situation, even if they did not address it specifically. In fact, their correspondence with him contained very little discussion of his mixed-race children in the immediate years after they learned of them. Another situation with a woman of color in Berbice, however, did force William’s parents to offer some guidance. Although he had come to the Caribbean to restore his Scottish family’s wealth, William Macpherson had failed to acquire a fortune. By the time he left the region in 1813, he had fallen deeply into debt. This state of affairs forced him to consider some alternative propositions while still in Guyana. Macpherson had purchased his own estate, Plantation Rising Sun, in 1808, but he lost it in 1811 due to his own personal insolvency. A Barbadian named Mr. Tapin, to whom Macpherson owed a large amount of money, offered to return the estate if he would marry his daughter Betsy.

The proposal intrigued Macpherson, but as he wrote to his parents, he felt:

considerable repugnance, as she is a coloured girl (a mulatto) – I have never seen her but once, in 1806, since which time she has been in England, . . . but do not be alarmed my dearest Parents or think I would take any steps in such a measure without your fullest approbation – indeed I have not yet conquered my own strong disinclination to a match with a coloured girl; although she has been well educated and as I am told of irreproachable character.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Manumission Deed, October 10, 1810, Bundle 202, in *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> William Macpherson to Allan Macpherson, June 28, 1807, Bundle 203, in *ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> William Macpherson to Allan and Eliza Macpherson, July 19, 1811, Bundle 901, in *ibid.*

Macpherson's mother, Eliza, responded cryptically: "do not . . . bring your affairs to too sudden or hasty Execution in any way – it might hereafter more & more distress your Parents."<sup>141</sup> Interpreting disapproval of the match, William reassured his parents that he had given up the idea of marrying Betsy.<sup>142</sup> Having a colonial mistress of color was one thing, marrying her was another, and the proposition was certainly untenable in Britain. Despite Betsy Tapin's British education and cultured life in Europe, her ancestry was too problematic for Macpherson's matrimonial future.

### **Conclusion**

The story of the Harrys, Tailours, and Macphersons was replicated again and again in a large number of West Indian families. Caribbean dalliances with women of color were not easy to hide, particularly where children were involved. Yet many also made no effort to conceal their actions in a society which had grown accustomed to its practice. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Britain retained firm links to its Caribbean colonies. Regular travelers to the West Indies, as well as accounts from the islanders themselves, provided a steady stream of information to Britons about the tropical edges of their Atlantic empire. Although much of the discourse about the West Indies focused on immorality and miscegenation, personal links and financial interests in the Caribbean stayed strong. These included the connections between those in Britain and relatives in the West Indies who kept mistresses of color and sired whole families of mixed-race children. Kinship ties did not wholly erode due to geographic separation. Most Britons stayed in regular contact with colonial relations. At the same

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<sup>141</sup> Eliza Macpherson to William and Allan Macpherson, August 30, 1811, Bundle 210, in *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> William Macpherson to Allan and Eliza Macpherson, September 12, 1811, Bundle 901, in *ibid.*

time, white colonists expanded their families in the islands, which meant that they became intimately engrossed with populations of color. Fathering mixed-race children, many whites often cared for their progeny and ensured that they were not swept under by racial oppression. Whites and people of color, therefore, became closely interconnected groups, enough so that their links tied together mixed-race individuals to Britons across the ocean.

Whether through family attachments or financial executions, mixed-race West Indians were integrated into the networks of white Britons, and vice versa. As those connections withered, due to more endogamous pairings amongst people of color, the West Indies' mixed-race populations closed ranks to advance themselves as a unified group. The bonds between Britons and individuals of mixed-race, then, became central to the social organization of the West Indies in the period before this concerted push for political rights. They also served to help transplant elite West Indians of color from the colonies to the metropole. Tied, as many mixed-race families were, to kin and associates in Britain, children of color could exploit these connections to quit the islands. They were not an isolated group, nor was their social position wholly circumscribed within oppressive colonial restrictions. Plugged into the Empire's vast commercial and personal networks, West Indians of color could chart a new future abroad.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Patterns of Migration: Push and Pull Factors Sending West Indians of Color to Britain**

#### **Introduction**

When it came time for John Tailyour to decide upon his Jamaican children's fate, he sought out the advice and help of relatives in Britain. Tailyour had grown tired of the West Indies and hoped to return to his native Scotland, where he imagined his health would improve dramatically. However, he did not wish to abandon his four mixed-race children in the colonies. Instead, he wrote to his brother Robert about the prospect of having them educated in Britain. The eldest, James, would be sent over first, to which Robert opined that the "little Boy may be placed at some school in England where he may receive an education suitable to the manner you intend." In fact, Robert agreed to find a school for him while John settled his affairs in Jamaica. He even commended his brother on accepting the duties of fatherhood:

I approve very much of your sentiments respecting your little family & agree intirely with you as to the plan of Education, & the manner you Propose to bring them up in. It is surely incumbent on us to provide for our Offspring whether Black or White, in a manner the most likely to render their situation in Life comfortable to them, & your Sentiments on that Subject (in my Opinion) does you great honor.<sup>1</sup>

Despite their African heritage and pasts spent in enslavement, Tailyour's children still figured prominently in the father's life. They remained important enough for Robert to

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, August 27, 1791, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

insist on their continued care, even as their father began the process of leaving the islands permanently.

Tailyour's decision to send his children to Britain came in light of increased pressures against people of color in Jamaica. Colonial law restricted not only the civil rights of mixed-race individuals, but their financial prospects as well. At the same time, cultural and institutional prejudices practically eliminated educational access for people of color, making life exceptionally difficult for those hoping to achieve even a modicum of success. Robert Taylor<sup>2</sup> certainly recognized this situation when he wrote about his niece and nephews' education in Britain. If John Tailyour wished to see his children garner achievement in life, then their best chance lay in the metropole. The same was true for mixed-race people throughout Britain's West Indian settlements. Legislative constraints oppressed each of the colonies' populations of color, and white fathers were faced with an increasingly bleak picture for their children in the Caribbean.

This chapter argues that legal and cultural restraints in the West Indies produced a long-term and steady migration of mixed-race individuals to Britain throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Due to the tenuous social position between enslaved and free, mixed-race West Indians endured intense oppression from a variety of forces. In the first section of this chapter, the legislative restrictions levied against individuals of color by the islands' various assemblies will be considered for their material impact on daily life. Next, this chapter will detail the educational and employment deficiencies of the West Indies, and how the lack of schools and jobs pushed many young colonists to Britain, including those of African ancestry. All of these factors

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<sup>2</sup> Robert standardized his surname to "Taylor" as well, but, unlike John, he will be referred to as "Taylor" rather than "Tailyour."

will be considered in the final section of this chapter, which will show the frequency of mixed-race migration to Britain through data found in probate records as well as legislative “privilege bills.” Due to severe racial prejudice, large numbers of West Indian fathers sent offspring to Britain. These numbers were significant and sustained throughout the period, and they contributed to a regular pattern of migration between colony and metropole for mixed-race islanders.

### **Push Factors: Legal Restrictions in the Islands**

#### *Free People of Color in the Caribbean and the Law*

Life in the West Indies proved very difficult for free people of color throughout the years of legal enslavement. Intensive racial prejudice against people of African descent meant that mixed-race individuals would labor continually against oppression. Colonial subjugation often manifested itself through institutional measures, such as legal repressions and educational barriers, which codified dominant systems of prejudice. This was not an immediate development, however, as attitudes and legal responses toward people of color evolved over time, continually transforming and reconstituting the place of mixed-race people. Accordingly, reactions to people of color were bound up with a variety of conditions, such as the material realities and legal, cultural, and even national foundations of the islands themselves.

Colonies differed in their attitudes toward people of mixed descent. Scholars have proposed a number of explanations to account for such divergence. Generally, these theories fall into two camps. The first centers around Frank Tannenbaum’s canonical work *Slave and Citizen*. Tannenbaum sought to explain the perceived distinctions

between enslavement in the United States and that of Latin America. He posited that the legal and religious differences between Spain and northern-European countries (such as England and Holland), created radically divergent colonial systems of enslavement. This produced, Tannenbaum argued, a more tolerant form of slavery in the Iberian colonies that subsequently gave greater allowance for métissage and proved less repressive of mixed-race people.<sup>3</sup> Many scholars have used this theory as an analytical rubric for their own studies of people of color.<sup>4</sup> Robin Blackburn has recently expanded Tannenbaum's thesis, dividing colonial enslavement into two variants. According to Blackburn, the English/northern-European form of bald racism founded upon capitalist-Protestant motivations sought to divide white strictly from black, while the Spanish/French style of "baroque" rule developed under a more tolerant Catholic attitude toward intermixture and creolization.<sup>5</sup> A second camp emerged as a reaction against Tannenbaum's thesis, arguing that material conditions in the various colonies were better determinants of racial attitudes than European foundations. Marvin Harris fired the first salvo, noting that highland slave society in Latin America closely mirrored racial patterns in the United States. With different religious and legal traditions, Harris revealed the similarities in the two locations' economic and demographic makeup which accounted for their convergence in racial attitudes.<sup>6</sup> Others have echoed Harris's approach toward race

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<sup>3</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1946).

<sup>4</sup> For the Caribbean, generally, see: H. Hoetink, *The Two Variants in Caribbean Race Relations: A Contribution to the Sociology of Segmented Societies*, trans. Eva M. Hooykaas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). For Florida, see: Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999). For New Orleans, see: Kimberly Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (New York: Verso, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Marvin Harris, *Patterns of Race in the Americas* (New York: Walker, 1964).

relations, privileging material realities over European origins when accounting for reactions toward mixed-race people in the Americas.<sup>7</sup>

Similarities between British and French islands in the West Indies, in regards to their populations of color, seem to confirm Harris's hypothesis. Unlike its North-American colonies, Britain's West Indian settlements never explicitly banned interracial marriage. They also embraced a broader typology of race, allowing for categories of métissage to operate, as opposed to the predominant "one drop rule" of blackness which prevailed in most of North America.<sup>8</sup> The overwhelming black majorities in the West Indies naturally produced a culture of sexual commerce between racial groups that found no corollary in the heavily-white mainland colonies. As Winthrop Jordan argues, such demographic variation "made it inevitable that the West Indies and the continental colonies would develop dissimilar societies" despite their common background of British colonization.<sup>9</sup> Instead, Britain's West Indian colonies looked much more like France's, particularly in their countenance of these unions and mixed-race people. In many ways, their histories paralleled and intersected with one another, due to discursive, social, and legal connections.

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<sup>7</sup> See, in particular: Gwendolyn Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Frederick P. Bowser, "Colonial Spanish America," in *Neither Slave nor Free: The Freedman of African Descent in Slave Societies of the New World*, eds. David Cohen and Jack P. Greene (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 19-58; Guillaume Aubert, "'The Blood of France': Race and Purity of Blood in the French Atlantic World," *WMQ*, Third Series, LXI, no. 3 (July 2004): 439-78; Sue Peabody, "'A Nation Born to Slavery': Missionaries and Racial Discourse in Seventeenth-Century French Antilles," *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 113-26.

<sup>8</sup> F. James Davis, *Who is Black?: One Nation's Definition* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Winthrop Jordan, "American Chiaroscuro: The Status and Definition of Mulattoes in the British Colonies," *WMQ*, Third Series, XIX, no. 2 (April 1962): 196. Stephen Small presents an interesting contrast to this demographic theory. He interprets North-American racial ideologies as mimicking West Indian ones and that whites in continental America had a complex and detailed understanding of racial mixture and gradation: Stephen Small, "Racial Group Boundaries and Identities: People of 'Mixed Race' in Slavery across the Americas," *Slavery and Abolition* 15, no. 3 (December 1994): 17-37.

Cultural discrimination against mixed-race people evolved out of social reality. The ubiquity of interracial relationships and the offspring they produced evoked harsh reaction from colonial and metropolitan observers alike. Such bigotry, however, does not appear to have precluded the rise of a population of color in the Caribbean. Karl Watson maintains that Barbadian society discouraged the growth of a mixed-race group from the very beginning, but this reverses the chronology of events.<sup>10</sup> Doris Garraway rightfully portrays discrimination as a product of, and reaction to, long histories of interracial pairings. Examining the French Caribbean, she believes that West Indian discourses that imagined a secure divide between black and white were fabrications which emerged only after that ideal had been permanently obliterated. Indeed, she contends that such arguments about a firm black/white divide “goes awry in supposing a stable Manichaeian order of race and status that preexisted métissage and that it in turn upset.”<sup>11</sup> The same can be said of British perspectives in the West Indies. Cultural intolerance against mixed-race people surfaced not to *prevent* their social influence, but rather to *reverse* their emerging political and financial prominence. Most colonists took for granted the presence and social influence of mixed-race individuals. The increasing cultural, legal and educational prejudices against them developed in tandem with broader Atlantic ossifications of racial intolerance.

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<sup>10</sup> Karl Watson, *The Civilised Island, Barbados: A Social History 1750-1816* (St. George, Barbados: Caribbean Graphic Production, Ltd, 1979), 99.

<sup>11</sup> Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 31.

*Legal Oppression in the British West Indies*

The decision to send a child of color abroad was shaped by many different pressures. West Indian society maintained firm racial prejudices against free people of color. This discrimination could result in personal attacks, but it also severely hindered the group's legal and professional standing. Without institutional limitations against their mixed-race children, many white fathers would not have undertaken the enormous task and expense of dispatching them across the Atlantic. Britain, the hub of the Empire, had a substantial pull for elites of color, as it did for many other colonists. Restrictive factors subduing the West Indies' population of color, however, were more instrumental in pushing those residents out.

One of the most effective forces controlling mixed-race people was the law. In every Caribbean colony, across empires, legislation was used to delimit rights for people of color. This could come in the form of marriage restrictions, financial limitations, and disenfranchisement. Spanish law tended to be the least repressive, although institutional constraints on marriage in islands such as Cuba often reinforced racial divisions, even if phenotype was never explicitly attacked.<sup>12</sup> Londoner Lovell Stanhope feared the consequences were Jamaica to follow the Spanish model: "it is undoubtedly to the false policy of the Spanish Laws in America (which destroy all distinction of colour) that those unhappy People are now notoriously become the most degenerate and dastardly people upon Earth." The law stood out for Stanhope as the only tool to prevent such calamity: "keeping up [Jamaica] depends upon keeping up a distinction of Colour . . . to receive

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<sup>12</sup> Verena Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 5.

every Law, which is calculated for maintaining that Barrier.”<sup>13</sup> Though shunning the Spanish model, Britain’s West Indian schema did not diverge wholly from it. Indeed, when it came to dealing with Africans, “the English were *imitators* of Iberian theory and practice.”<sup>14</sup> French and English colonies more closely resembled one another, particularly in terms of the law. While French-Caribbean islands maintained a less strict approach than their English neighbors, they still followed a similar pattern of disenfranchisement and civil-rights incursion.

French and English legal approaches toward people of color mirrored one another closely throughout the eighteenth century. Although its policies did not act to prevent intermarriage, nor even miscegenation, France’s islands did mete out punishment for these sexual transactions. As Garraway deftly observes, “in prosecuting bastardy [French colonial] law displaced the site of illegality from interracial sex to reproduction, thus implicating both slave women and children in prescriptions of punishment ostensibly directed toward the father.” Legislation worked against children of color, not against white desire, allowing libertinage to continue without any serious consequences for white fathers.<sup>15</sup> English legal policy in the colonies operated in much the same fashion. While colonial law enacted no punishment against miscegenous behavior, it did restrict the rights of those produced from it. Stephen Gainsford’s observations from Jamaica in 1811 characterized the legal oppression of mixed-race people: “not as a punishment for the sins of the fathers upon these succeeding generations, but under the imperative notion of the

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<sup>13</sup> Lovell Stanhope, “Reasons in Support of the Bill to Restrain Exorbitant Grants to Negroes &c,” CO 137/33, ff. 34-36, NAE.

<sup>14</sup> Joyce E. Chaplin, “Race,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 155.

<sup>15</sup> Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, 203, 218.

salvation of the country being dependant on keeping humble the whole coloured race.”<sup>16</sup> Owing to cultural obsessions with women of color, colonial policy could not reprimand whites for sexual indiscretions; it had to displace that moral retribution onto their children.

Britain’s colonial assemblies imposed numerous restrictions on people of mixed-race, stifling those individuals in each phase of their lives. At the lowest level, transitioning from slavery to freedom could be both complicated and costly. Whites needed not only to hold possession of the person they wished to free, but also to pay a fee for the transaction. Barbados began imposing fees in 1739, slowly increasing the charge throughout the eighteenth century, so that by 1783 it cost a hefty £50 to manumit a bound person.<sup>17</sup> The price varied throughout the different islands, but it always remained steep to discourage emancipation. Amidst a flurry of manumissions in 1806, Dominica increased its fees by a whopping £83 in one year.<sup>18</sup> The assemblies introduced such exorbitant rates to reduce the number of free people in the colonies. It allowed them to control the growth of free populations of color, while attempting to link status more firmly to race. For those people of mixed race, born into enslavement, the law worked to keep them in a servile and controlled position. Matters would not improve dramatically, even in cases when freedom was obtained.

Official regulations against free people of color attempted to establish a similar series of controls as for those born enslaved.<sup>19</sup> Both Jamaica and Barbados began rolling

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen Gainsford, *An Essay on the Good Effects which May be Derived in the British West Indies in Consequence of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade* (London, 1811), 153-54.

<sup>17</sup> Jerome Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 45.

<sup>18</sup> Acts, Ordinances and Proclamations for Dominica, September 4, 1806, CO 73/11, f. 92, NAE.

<sup>19</sup> Most islands in the West Indies possessed their own representative bodies, which crafted laws to deal with their islands’ free populations of color. The Leeward Islands of St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, Montserrat,

back civil rights early in the eighteenth century. Beginning in 1711, the Jamaican Assembly barred the employment of all persons deemed “mulattos” from public offices.<sup>20</sup> A “mulatto” in Jamaican law was anyone less than four generations removed from an African ancestor.<sup>21</sup> Restrictions mounted, so that by 1733 the group had lost the right to vote; a decade later, the Assembly removed their ability to testify against whites in court.<sup>22</sup> Some Jamaicans wanted further punishments, directed squarely against miscegenation. Writing to the Bishop of London in 1733, William May noted his discussions with islanders on the topic, but thought it “wou’d be to no purpose to Propose to the Assembly a Law against Planters having unlawful conversation with their Negro Women.”<sup>23</sup> Just as Garraway theorizes, the penalty for interracial unions was not to apply to the perpetrators.

Barbados enacted similar legislation in a sweeping resolution from 1721. This bill limited the franchise, the ability to hold office, the right to serve on juries, and the testimony against whites in court solely to freeholders. The law specifically barred anyone “whose original extraction shall be proved to have been from a Negro” from

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and Antigua operated under one assembly, although each island had its own space for legislative control. Uncovering the legislative histories of these colonies can be difficult, as many of the smaller islands never passed harsh laws against people of color. A survey of printed legal tracts for Eastern Caribbean islands, for instance, found only regulations on manumission fees and, in some cases, requirements for free people of color to register with their parish: see the Colonial Office Records, NAE for Dominica: CO 73/3-12; for Grenada: CO 103/1-11; for St. Kitts: CO 240/4; for Nevis: CO 185/2; for Montserrat: CO 176/1; for the Leeward Islands (general): 176/1, 185/2. Edward L. Cox records that most of the laws in both St. Kitts and Grenada centered on manumission fees. Both islands allowed for free colored testimony, although they did not let them set on juries, either by law or by custom: Edward L. Cox, *Free Coloreds in the Slave Societies of St. Kitts and Grenada, 1763-1833* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 21, 35-37, 51-56, 93.

<sup>20</sup> Jamaica House of Assembly, Laws and Statutes, etc., 10 Ann. iv. 35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 Geo. III, xv, 20. This particular law was codified in 1780, but such an allowance for legal whiteness through generational removal from Africans had been in practice before that.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 Geo. II, ii.; *Ibid.*, 21 Geo. II, vii., 1.

<sup>23</sup> William May to Bishop Gibson, April 11, 1733, Fulham Palace Papers, vol. XVII, f. 258, LPL.

becoming freeholders.<sup>24</sup> That decree constituted the major piece of legislation operating against free people of color. Indeed, the island's mixed-race population maintained a somewhat static position of rights throughout most of the eighteenth century. The group did not win a single repeal of any restrictions until 1817, when the Assembly finally allowed mixed-race people to testify in court, provided they had been baptized.<sup>25</sup> This concession came after numerous petitions from the island's people of color.<sup>26</sup>

The disenfranchisement of Jamaicans and Barbadians of color was a damaging loss, but the proscription of their testimony in court proved even more injurious. On trial in 1797 for murdering a white man, Joseph Denny – a free mulatto in Barbados – lamented the ban on evidence. Although Denny could testify on his own behalf, he could not use the testimony of any other person of color in his defense. This turned into a considerable problem when the specifics of the case emerged. Denny alleged that he mistook the victim, John Stroud, for a robber when he shot the man on his property. He argued that his house had been burglarized numerous times before, prompting his hostile actions, and knew that his family could support such claims. In his petition to the court, Denny noted, “he had no white person in his Family, which consisted entirely of Coloured Persons, who alone could prove the circumstances but whose evidence is not allowed in the Courts here, and therefore as your Petitioner was a Mulatto he was prevented by the Law from prov[ing] his Innocence.”<sup>27</sup> Denny's predicament reveals the

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Hall and Richard Hall, eds., *Acts Passed in the Island of Barbados, From 1643, to 1762, inclusive* (London, 1764), 256; see also Handler, *The Unappropriated People*, 67-68.

<sup>25</sup> Neville Hall, “Law and Society in Barbados at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” *The Journal of Caribbean History* 5 (November 1972): 40.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the position that mixed-race people in Barbados took in winning these rights, see David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95-104.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Denny, M. Coalthurst and G. W. Jordan to Governor George Ricketts, January 16, 1797, CO 28/65, f. 161, NAE.

problem of denying testimony to free people of color; a problem that grew as communities of color became increasingly disconnected from white society due to greater intraracial pairings in the late eighteenth century. West Indians of color thus lost their personal and familial connections with whites. Such divides meant that children without a white parent became even more legally disenfranchised, as they lacked legitimate witnesses to support them in court. Jamaica and Dominica both relaxed testimony laws in the 1790s, but it would not be until 1813 that the former island would allow mixed-race people to give evidence freely in court.<sup>28</sup>

Jamaica passed yet another restrictive law in 1762, when it limited the amount of money that individuals of color could inherit. Fearing that mixed-race children had acquired too large a share of island wealth, Jamaica's Assembly undertook an investigation the year before into how much property lay in their hands. It examined a selection of wills lodged with the Island Secretary over a ten-year period, and found thirteen containing large bequests to children of color. The combined total of those gifts reached over £246,806 – an astonishing sum for any group. Moreover, these amounts constituted only the wills' personal property and did not include realty bequests, which were nearly £200,000 themselves.<sup>29</sup> These numbers significantly dwarfed Edward Long's estimate of £200,000-300,000 for Jamaica's combined mixed-race holdings.<sup>30</sup> Having the island's elite children of color inherit tens of thousands of pounds each

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<sup>28</sup> Sheila Duncker, "The Free Coloured and their Fight for Civil Rights in Jamaica 1800-1830" (M.A. thesis, University of London, 1956), 22-3. For Jamaica, see: CO 318/76, f. 50, NAE; for Dominica, see: CO 73/9, f. 140, NAE.

<sup>29</sup> Lovell Stanhope, "Reasons in Support," ff. 36, 41, 46, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2 (London, 1774), 323. It is unclear if Long simply took the £246,806 number from the Board of Trade, without considering its limited scope, in his estimation.

presented a real problem to Jamaica's ruling whites. They had to create a firmer divide between racial castes.

Jamaica's Assembly concluded that some limitation must be placed on such bequests. The Assembly crafted a bill which capped the amount that an illegitimate person of color could inherit at £2,000, including both real and personal estate. This legislation turned on two points: first, that the decree applied only to those less than four generations removed from an African ancestor; and second, that it only affected *illegitimate* people of color. The targets of the measure were not the offspring of two mixed-race parents – a relatively small population in 1762. Rather, the Assembly aimed to restrict the products of interracial unions, punishing children for the sins of their fathers. A preamble decried that these fathers disposed of property “to the particular prejudice and detriment of their [white] heirs and relations, and to the injury and damage of the community in general.” Such property allocation “destroy[ed] the distinction requisite, and absolutely necessary, to be kept up in this island, between white persons and negroes, their issue and offspring” and damaged the growth of the island's white population – presumably because it did not encourage white intermarriage.<sup>31</sup> By controlling the inheritances of mixed-race people, lawmakers believed they could wrest property from a group growing increasingly more wealthy and powerful, while reversing the demographic hybridization that had characterized island life since its inception.

Concern over the intention and effects of the inheritance cap provoked much debate between Jamaica and Britain. Lovell Stanhope noted that, after passing, “some people both of Kingston and Spanish Town . . . very few of any considerable fortune, but

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<sup>31</sup> Jamaica House of Assembly, *Laws and Statutes, etc*, 2 Geo. III, viii. 1, Alexander Aikman, ed., *The Laws of Jamaica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 2, (St. Jago de la Vega, Jamaica, 1802), 23.

yet white Men, petitioned the Council against it.”<sup>32</sup> That middling whites would protest the measure speaks to their sense that it violated colonial property rights – a sore subject on an island where property ownership was king. Additionally, the cap also passed without deliberation from absentees in Britain, who were more likely to favor unlimited bequests to children of color. If they could not provide parental guidance to their offspring in the colonies, then these absentees had to rely entirely upon estate allocations to care for them. Any legacy drawing on a Jamaican estate had to comply with the inheritance cap, even if all the parties were no longer resident on the island. The 1762 law, then, weakened the ability of white fathers to care for their children of color at the same time that it put those children into a more vulnerable position.

Britain’s Board of Trade worried that the inheritance cap might create problems. The bill would not only strain relations between white colonists and mixed people by alienating the latter, but also discriminate against a growing body of colored elites who had been coming to Britain. In particular, the Board worried that those who were “seven Eighths White, and not distinguishable from White Persons, and . . . may have been educated in Great Britain, in the most liberal manner” would become disqualified from further entering society’s highest ranks.<sup>33</sup> Sending children “not distinguishable from White Persons” to Britain had emerged as an efficient path toward laundering one’s racial history. Disbarring these essentially-white subjects from their phenotypic privileges would further complicate an already-puzzling racial landscape. The Board also feared the law would harm “any White Person, upon a bare Suggestion that his Ancestor or Relation had given real or personal Estates above the Sum limited to . . . a Negro or

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<sup>32</sup> Lovell Stanhope, “Reasons for Support,” f. 36.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 40.

Mulatto.”<sup>34</sup> Implicit within this critique was a concern that accusations of racial genealogy could either sully one’s biological reputation or, more ruinously, uncover miscegenation hidden in one’s past. Either way, the Board of Trade hinted that it wished to maintain a biological escape route for a portion of Jamaica’s population, allowing them to transition into whiteness. Eliminating this concession would create a more “honest” portrait of African heritage in both colony and metropole, but keeping it would sustain the charade of a firmly divided black and white society, as well as nominally simplify the Empire’s flourishing racial complexity.

In addition to limits put upon personal wealth, colonial laws severely hampered the potential employment of mixed-race people. This came by way of the so-called “deficiency acts,” passed by most of the British West Indies, which were meant to bolster the islands’ meager white populations. These measures, renewed annually, required each landowner or small businessman to employ a certain number of whites. The 1763 version of the law in Jamaica, for example, dictated that there be one white resident for every thirty slaves (and/or 150 head of cattle) on every plantation. Tavern owners and retailers had to employ one white per establishment. Violations could amount to over fifty pounds per year in some islands. Deficiency laws were meant to spur European growth in tandem with the booming African populace, although, as Neville Hall alleges for Jamaica, they eventually became more of a revenue act. He estimates that nearly one-quarter of the Jamaican government’s 1771 income came from deficiency fines.<sup>35</sup>

Edmund and William Burke noted in 1770 that plantation owners “find it more easy to

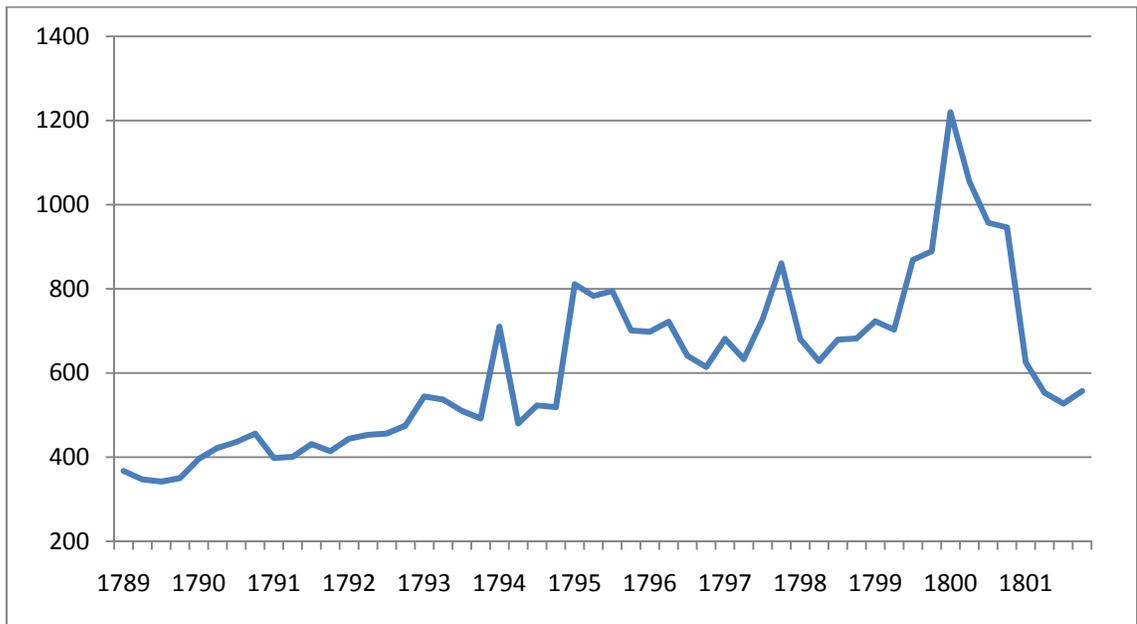
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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., ff. 38-39.

<sup>35</sup> Neville Hall, “Some aspects of the deficiency question in Jamaica in the eighteenth century,” *Caribbean Studies* 14, no. 1 (April 1975): 11-12.

pay the penalty . . . than to comply with the law.”<sup>36</sup> Figure 2.1 shows the amounts collected by the vestry of St. Thomas in the Vale for deficiency violations. It reveals a steady increase in the amount planters paid as the eighteenth century came to a close, before a sharp drop in 1800. Not surprisingly, Jamaica’s Assembly did not allow free people of color to “save deficiency,” that is, to serve as a white person on an estate or in a shop and thereby avoid the deficiency fine. Unable to save deficiency, their very presence in Jamaica became a taxable commodity.

**Figure 2.1: Deficiency Fines Collected, St. Thomas in the Vale Parish, Jamaica, 1789-1801**<sup>37</sup>



Preventing the island’s mixed-race population from saving deficiency had a tremendous impact on their lives. It dramatically reduced their employment potential in any capacity on Jamaica’s many plantations. Estate owners and overseers refused to employ them, due in part to assumptions about their labor ability, but also because they

<sup>36</sup> Edmund Burke and William Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, vol. 2 (London, 1770), 118.

<sup>37</sup> Vestry Minutes, St. Thomas in the Vale, 2/1/1, ff. 15-436, JA.

could not help estate managers avoid deficiency fines. The country was not an optimal employment space for people of color, and many fled to towns instead.<sup>38</sup> The deficiency laws also severely burdened free people of color who wished to start their own businesses and, in some cases, plantations. Mixed-race planters were not unknown in Jamaica, though still rare. Besides confronting inheritance restrictions, planters of color also had to pay a tax for their residence simply because they could not save deficiency on their own plantations. This practice could prove absurd: “thus the eldest son and heir of a West Indian planter is rendered legally incapable of superintending an estate that must ultimately be his own, except under the [deficiency] restrictions.”<sup>39</sup> The tax discouraged the growth of a prosperous class of color and further limited the options of a group already burdened by heavy legal weights.

Numerous lesser regulations also frustrated daily life. Jamaicans of color had to wear badges noting their freedom and carry tickets whenever they traveled long distances.<sup>40</sup> They also had to register with the Assembly if they wished to peddle goods legally – a common occupation of the free-colored “higgler.”<sup>41</sup> Additionally, free individuals of color received harsh punishments, including death, if they were found to have had prior knowledge of a slave rebellion, or even of the whereabouts of an enslaved runaway.<sup>42</sup> On other West Indian islands, similar restrictions prevailed. Free Antiguans of color needed a white sponsor to attest regularly to their character; otherwise, they could be re-enslaved. This requirement had the effect of making mixed-race Antiguans

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<sup>38</sup> Duncker, “The Free Coloured,” 88.

<sup>39</sup> Nathaniel Henley to Lord Bathurst, September 22, 1823, as quoted in Duncker, “The Free Coloured,” 89.

<sup>40</sup> James Knight, *History of Jamaica*, manuscript, Add. MS 12416, vol. 2, ff. 171, 179, BL; November 24, 1766, Roger Hope Elletson Letter Book, MS 29, NLJ.

<sup>41</sup> Jamaica House of Assembly, *Laws and Statutes, etc.*, 8 Geo. II, vi. 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 Geo. III, xviii, 1; 29 Geo. III, xviii., 1; 32 Geo. III, xxiii. 25.

more dependent upon white patronage for their survival.<sup>43</sup> All such laws and checks on mixed-race independence pushed many fathers to look outside the colonies when considering their children's futures. With no sense of security in the islands, Britain stood as a prime destination.

### *Avenues of Redress*

To rectify these grievances, free people of color had several options. The first was to petition their assemblies and, barring that, the government in Westminster for changes in the legal code. Generally these demands fell on deaf ears, and it was not until the early decades of the nineteenth century that island politicians began addressing these civil rights infractions. The second path toward correcting these wrongs was open only to Jamaicans: petitioning the Assembly for privileged rights.<sup>44</sup> Wealthy individuals of color could apply for equal rights with white colonists, with the exception of holding office or voting. While taking this tact could result in near-legal parity with whites, it was an option only reserved for the most elite. Both of these methods sought to make life better in the colonies, but they also both drew upon the experiences of mixed-race people in Britain to justify their claims. Grievances to colonial authorities regularly invoked the figure of a British-educated child of color returning to the prejudiced islands. By juxtaposing the experiences of mixed-race colonists in the metropole and periphery, West Indians of color were able to collapse distinctions between the two locales and push more forcefully for equal rights.

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<sup>43</sup> Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua with Implications for Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

<sup>44</sup> Cox notes that several free people of color petitioned the authorities in St. Kitts for exemptions from legal restrictions, but this occurred in only a handful of cases. It was not until 1830 that the island began allowing for a more systematic form of privilege petitioning to proceed: Cox, *Free Coloreds*, 96, 149-50.

Free people of color petitioned strongly against the deficiency fines. The penalties for avoidance were harsh. In 1773, a decade after Jamaica raised its fines significantly, a number of free people of color lobbied the Assembly for an end to deficiency discrimination. They railed against the treatment given them by poor whites who they hired to evade penalty. Moreover, they had formerly held the right to save deficiency, and decried changes in the law which violated this customary right.<sup>45</sup> Their concerns echoed contemporary European argument over enclosures and markets. The petition did not take, but Jamaica's population of color refused to concede. Protests at the beginning of the nineteenth century resurrected earlier appeals. In 1816, John Campbell, a free man of color in western Jamaica who had been trained as a lawyer in England, petitioned the Assembly for a repeal of the deficiency acts. The laws particularly degraded the island's population of color, he argued, because many had "received their education in Great Britain, and consequently on their return to their native country, the more poignantly feel the miseries to which they are exposed."<sup>46</sup> Contrasting conditions in colony and metropole highlighted legal discrepancies while also demanding greater recognition for the advanced state of migratory colonists of color. The Assembly read another petition the same year, hoping that "the white deficiency law, as far as . . . his Majesty's subjects of free condition, born in other British Colonies, and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or elsewhere, whose right to freedom cannot be doubted, should also be repealed."<sup>47</sup> Those mixed-race individuals born in Britain, they argued, should not have to suffer the degradations of colonial racial prejudice, particularly after experiencing the more freedom-minded metropole. Visiting Britain,

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<sup>45</sup> *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. VI (Jamaica, 1800), 467.

<sup>46</sup> John Campbell to the Earl of Bathurst, c. 1816, CO 137/45, f. 271, NAE.

<sup>47</sup> "A petition of certain free persons," November 19, 1816, CO 137/148, f. 148, NAE.

and more importantly being educated there, became a badge of honor, one that gained political currency in the more restrictive colonial environment.

Highlighting one's past in Britain also gave weight to privilege petitions for mixed-race people in Jamaica. Among Britain's West Indian colonies, Jamaica was the only one to allot special privileges to people of color. Although the first petition was granted in 1707, the practice became regular in 1733, after the Assembly officially disenfranchised nonwhites. Privilege bills allowed elites of color to maintain an advanced status within this now-constrained community. The petitions were exclusive endeavors, costing an extraordinary £90 just to file.<sup>48</sup> Only the wealthiest of Jamaica's mixed-race people could attempt to win such special rights. In petitioning, one had to give a family background, which traditionally included the names of white lovers and fathers, evidence of Christian belief, and a general account of one's finances to demonstrate economic independence. After filing the petition, the Assembly would form a committee of three members to investigate the veracity of its claims.<sup>49</sup> If corroborated, the Assembly would vote on the measure three times before bestowing privileged rights, to be confirmed later by the Board of Trade in England.<sup>50</sup> Due to the exclusiveness of lodging a petition, the Assembly rejected privilege appeals only a handful of times. In most cases, privileges gave one the same legal allowances as whites except the rights to vote or hold office.<sup>51</sup> After imposing the inheritance cap in 1762, the Assembly began

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<sup>48</sup> For more on the specifics of privilege petitions in Jamaica, see: Samuel J. Hurwitz and Edith F. Hurwitz, "A Token of Freedom: Private Bill Legislation for Free Negroes in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica," *WMQ*, Third Series, XXIV, no. 3 (July 1967): 423-31.

<sup>49</sup> The National Library of Jamaica holds a letter from Zachary Bayly to Josiah Sharp, dated January 25, 1769, in which Bayly vouches for the legitimacy of a privilege petition lodged by his friend, William Patrick Brown, in favor of his children of color: MS 525, NLJ.

<sup>50</sup> The Board of Trade's correspondence includes a discussion of passing one of these privilege bills in England for the Clifford family, see PC 1/59/5/1, May 20, 1763, NAE.

<sup>51</sup> See also: Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 320; Duncker, "The Free Coloured," 38-39.

granting privilege exemptions to this restriction as well, although with much less frequency. Between 1733 and 1802, over 650 Jamaicans of color petitioned for privileges.<sup>52</sup> Of those, seventy-one noted in their petitions that they had been educated in Britain, and used that fact as an argument for their advanced position in Jamaican society. Two additional individuals filed for privileges from Britain, although they did not record having been educated there.<sup>53</sup>

Drawing on common language, most petitioners argued that without privileges they would not be sufficiently distinguished from the island's common population of color. With the importance placed upon complexion and biological reputation in determining social category, one's features could mask affluence and cultural refinement. Attesting to the extremity of these prejudices, Robert Cooper Lee submitted a petition for children who were already legally white. In fact, the children's mother was just within the generational bounds of legal whiteness. Due to his fear that some "Evil or mischief, that may attend such Children, by attempts" to cast them as legally of color, he asked that they be granted privileged status in case they found themselves at odds with the law.<sup>54</sup> Because Jamaica's mixed-race population was not a uniform body, other elites of color pushed to differentiate themselves in as many ways possible, including their legal standing. Nervous that his children would be confused with the mass of mixed-race colonials, Stephen Lost submitted a privilege petition in 1756. He boasted that he had "already sent three of his said Children to the Kingdom of Great Britain . . . and will . . . send [the other children] also to the Kingdom of Great Britain where he intends to bestow

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<sup>52</sup> The Assembly stopped granting privilege rights in 1802 after continued protest from white residents. It revived the practice in 1823.

<sup>53</sup> These privilege petition statistics come from the Jamaica Assembly records of CO 139/22-51, NAE.

<sup>54</sup> November 16, 1776, CO 140/56, NAE.

on them a liberal education and also to give them Considerable Fortunes.”<sup>55</sup> When John William Hicks petitioned for himself, he indicated the size of the fortune he had received from his father, as he had been, “in his infancy, sent to England by his said reputed father, and there brought up, educated, and instructed . . . at great expence.”<sup>56</sup> A defined line between elites and commoners of color was crucial in Jamaica, for social as well as legal reasons. Including one’s history in Britain went far to ensure the success of a request. It also meant that those individuals of color who hoped to make a living in Jamaica could benefit greatly from spending at least part of their youth across the ocean.

### **Push Factors: Lack of Education and Employment in the Islands**

#### *Employment Scarcity in the West-Indies*

Legal restrictions were enough to spur some individuals of color to look toward Europe, but the islands’ institutional deficiencies added an even greater impetus. Seen principally as an agricultural factory, the West Indies lacked many of the basic facilities of everyday life. Roads were seldom built or properly maintained, adequate medical care was difficult to find, churches were scattered, and civil defense was constantly in shambles. Education also suffered from a lack of investment and concern. Half-hearted attempts were made to establish schools in the West Indies, but they lacked the full backing of the islands’ plantocracy, which insisted on sending its white children to Britain’s top institutions. Without such basic amenities, the West Indies’ monocultural economy became entrenched further, stifling the islands’ middling classes. Free people of color, even the most privileged and wealthy of them, had few prospects of employment

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<sup>55</sup> October 13, 1756, CO 139/18, NAE.

<sup>56</sup> December 18, 1764, CO 140/40, f. 481, NAE.

and little chance at an education in this environment. Opportunities in Britain provided an obvious solution.

Work outside the plantation was difficult to find. Sugar had long dominated the Caribbean economy and, although other crops existed, the most successful and widespread agricultural practices were plantation based. This left little room for free people of color to maneuver in the region's boom economy. There were mixed-race planters, but they were few in number with relatively small plantations; sometimes they inherited portioned estates from their fathers. With a £2,000 inheritance ceiling, a mixed-race farmer's plot was much smaller than the average white planter's. In his 1805 will, Thomas Mathews Hemsly devised a modest five-acre plantation to his "reputed natural Son Bryan Hemsly (a Lad of Colour)" to help start him on his professional path.<sup>57</sup> Hemsly's small plot was part of a coffee plantation, an emerging crop in nineteenth-century Jamaica that provided a boost to the island's sagging economy. With less initial investment required than sugar, coffee plantations became a springboard for many people of color to enter Jamaica's planter class.<sup>58</sup> They also found success in the market as pen keepers – livestock farmers – as yet another alternative to sugar production.<sup>59</sup> Pursuing an agricultural career was risky, however, with many of the legal impediments against planters of color. As mentioned earlier, deficiency fines actively worked against mixed-race planters. Many West Indian islands also barred people of color from working as overseers, and the deficiency laws also reduced their appeal to white employers.

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<sup>57</sup> Will of Thomas Mathews Hemsly, MS 1500, NLJ.

<sup>58</sup> Michelle Craig McDonald, "From Cultivation to Cup: Caribbean Coffee and the North American Economy, 1765-1805" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 2005).

<sup>59</sup> Verene Shepherd, "Questioning Creole: Domestic Producers in Jamaica's Plantation Economy," in *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Literature*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Glen Richards (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2002), 167-180.

Those who found work in the cities faced intensive discrimination. Merchants and counting houses in the Caribbean struggled to keep white clerks, particularly as most young men soon left to purchase their own plantations or firms. This created some opportunities for mixed-race individuals, but they still posed a risk to businesses: “the free coloured people are so generally employed as book-keepers . . . by merchants and planters, [but] their inability to give evidence in civil cases . . . might sometimes be ruinous, to their white employers.”<sup>60</sup> While a welcome opportunity, such jobs were not always comfortable. Race relations within houses that employed individuals of color could often become strained. Stephen Gainsford declared, “It has been known that white clerks in a counting house have refused to sit at the same desk with a free man of colour, and they would feel themselves further degraded upon the plea of complexion if deprived of a priority of consideration in respect to wages.”<sup>61</sup> The same held true for civil positions. The author of *The State of Slavery* recalled the case of one Mr. Skerritt in Montserrat:

so violently does prejudice there oppose the elevation of the African race by any civil employment, that when a free mulatto, of good education and an excellent private character, was lately appointed to the subordinate station of waiter or searcher in the Custom house at Montserrat, it . . . produced such strong remonstrances to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, that they thought fit to revoke his commission. Meantime, the local authorities contumaciously resisted the appointment of the Crown, by refusing to swear him in.<sup>62</sup>

Those people of color lucky enough to secure a position with a mercantile house or the colonial government did not benefit from a stable working environment. Little willing to accommodate people of color in middle-rank positions, whites sent less than subtle signals that mixed-race workers might better find employment elsewhere.

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<sup>60</sup> *The State of Slavery, in the British West Indies, Delineated and Considered*, nd, ICS.

<sup>61</sup> Gainsford, *An Essay on the Good*, 130.

<sup>62</sup> *The State of Slavery*, 232n.

### *Absence of Schools in the Caribbean*

While finding and holding jobs was difficult in the Caribbean, locating a school was even harder. In no other sector of West Indian society was there such an institutional deficiency than education. Establishing schools was something of an afterthought for those who colonized the islands. After the family migrations of the early seventeenth century transitioned into a more male-dominated influx during and after the sugar boom, Caribbean colonization changed dramatically. The islands were no longer intended for large-scale permanent settlement, but for transitory life as residents shuttled back and forth between the Caribbean and Britain. Without a growing population of young, rich, white children to educate, school-building became a low priority. Absenteeism and infrequent residency diminished the various assemblies' motivation to erect expensive schools.<sup>63</sup> The islands' most wealthy whites sent offspring to Britain anyhow, which left poor whites and children of color with few options for their own instruction.

The want of educational institutions was evident early in the colonial period. Travelers and observers regularly commented on the West Indies' dearth of schools in the first half of the eighteenth century. Anglican missionaries often wrote back to Britain about this specific problem, inasmuch as it damaged their ability to minister. Recounting his struggles in the 1720s, Rev. Henry Husband of Antigua complained: "We labour very much under a want of schools & equally for want of small usefull books & Catechisms."<sup>64</sup> Illiteracy, springing from a lack of education was a major obstacle for evangelization. Metropolitans often combined critiques of West Indian immorality with

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<sup>63</sup> This lack of infrastructure in the West Indies, due to absenteeism and elite greed, is chronicled in great detail by Lowell Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean* (New York: Century Co., 1928). See also: Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves; The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1972).

<sup>64</sup> Henry Husband to Bishop Gibson, April 10, 1729, Fulham Palace Papers, vol. XIX, f. 181, LPL.

comments on island erudition. After a military expedition to the Caribbean in the 1730s, Vice-Admiral Edward Vernon chastised Jamaican intellect: “Learning is here at the lowest Ebb; there is no publick School in the whole Island, [yet] neither do they seem fond of the thing . . . To talk of a *Homer*, or a *Virgil*, of a *Tully*, or a *Demosthenes*, is quite unpolite.”<sup>65</sup> William Patterson found a similar brand of anti-intellectualism in his 1749 survey of Barbados. Planter conversation, he observed “turns for the most part on Windmills, Cattlemills, Canes, Sugar boiling distilling Cockfighting &c.” Antiguans were the one exception, he claimed, due to the practice of “send[ing] home their Children for Education.”<sup>66</sup> Social conditions on the islands, then, could receive just as much blame as educational deficiencies for West Indian civility.

The effect of this lack of schools was pronounced. Analyzing affidavits from the Leeward Islands at the end of the seventeenth century, Richard Dunn determines that nearly half of them were signed with an “X” – a common indication of illiteracy, although it may have only signified an inability to write.<sup>67</sup> Compared to the British population at this time, this may not have been an outrageously low figure: David Cressy’s analysis of early-modern literacy in England shows that while seventy-eight percent of all Londoners could read and write, less than a third of those outside of the capital could do the same. These figures varied along class and social positions, however, as nearly all the nation’s clergy and gentry, and half of its yeoman and tradesmen, were literate.<sup>68</sup> Some have challenged these numbers; however most would

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<sup>65</sup> Edward Vernon, *A New History of Jamaica, From the Earliest Accounts, to the Taking of Porto Bello*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1740), 35-36.

<sup>66</sup> William Patterson, July 29, 1749, Yester Papers, MS 14426, no. 49, NLS.

<sup>67</sup> Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 139.

<sup>68</sup> David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

agree that literacy in the British Isles greatly surpassed that of the Caribbean by the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>69</sup> Regardless of the overall rates, Dunn's findings on West Indian elites are startling. Examining compensation claims in 1706 for St. Kitts, Dunn discovered that nearly half of the island's wealthy planters could not sign their names. Of the island's small planters, seventy percent were unable to perform the task.<sup>70</sup> Despite the influx of well-educated and wealthy Britons into these islands, elite whites were grossly undereducated. Having received little by way of schooling, many white natives simply perfected the planting craft without much concern over scholarship. This may have contributed heavily to British perceptions of West Indian vice and degeneracy.

With such intellectual deficiencies, it became clear that West Indians needed to establish institutions of learning. Schools had been proposed numerous times for the Caribbean in the seventeenth century – all to no effect. By the next century, however, a new fervor took hold. Wealthy patrons began to consider funding schools. Bermudan officials took steps to establish a college in 1727, and the English government set aside land in St. Kitts for a school the same year.<sup>71</sup> One of the most successful attempts was made in Barbados. Provisions in Christopher Codrington's 1710 will called for the formation of a college, drawn from the profits of his sugar plantations. The will's

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<sup>69</sup> The best responses to Cressy's figures come from a theoretical perspective. Two strong challenges note that literacy was not a uniform skill, and that it could depend both upon typeset and vernacular translation. In addition, these refutations have noted that the ability to read and the ability to write were not coterminous. See: Keith Thomas, "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England," in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd Baumann (New York: Clarendon Press, 1986), 97-131; Margaret Spufford, "First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest Seventeenth-Century Spiritual Autobiographers," *Social History* 4, no. 3 (October 1979): 407-435. For more on eighteenth-century Britain, see: R. S. Schofield, "Dimensions of Illiteracy in England, 1750-1850," in *Literacy and Social Development in the West*, ed. Harvey Graff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 201-13; Michael Sanderson, "Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England," *Past and Present*, no. 56 (August 1972): 75-104.

<sup>70</sup> Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 339-40.

<sup>71</sup> Warrant from the Attorneys General and Solicitor, July 15, 1727, Add. MS 36126, f. 241, BL. Cox notes that St. Kitts had only one public school in the eighteenth century, and that it was only for whites (Grenada had none whatsoever): Cox, *The Free Coloreds*, 123.

executors established Codrington College twelve miles outside of Bridgetown, with an annual stipend of £3,000 sterling per year.<sup>72</sup> Despite such auspicious beginnings, it took thirty years for the College to open officially, and it flourished for only a decade before falling into disrepair for the rest of the century. During these ten years, the College educated only eighteen Barbadian students, and thirty foreigners. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, George Pinckard discussed its failure:

The profits intended for this best of purposes have been squandered away . . . [I]f the building had been completed upon this plan, Barbadoes might have boasted a college, vying in grandeur, and elegance of structure, with the greatest ornaments of the celebrated universities of the mother-country.<sup>73</sup>

Indicative of West Indian education as a whole, Codrington College is still reputed to be “the only notable school in the British West Indies in the eighteenth century” even with such disappointing results.<sup>74</sup>

Even if schools in the Eastern Caribbean did not flourish, the Empire’s most populous West Indian colony made a strong effort to build a credible education system. Jamaica suffered from the same want of schools as the rest of the islands, but a number of prominent residents took steps to establish centers of learning in the eighteenth century. This may have been part of a general education revival in the Empire’s periphery, as North-American colonists endowed a number of their own academies and schools during this period.<sup>75</sup> Jamaican efforts emerged almost entirely from the people, rather than from the Assembly. Sometime in the late 1730s, whites in St. Catherine took up subscriptions to establish a free school. As Jamaica’s capital, Spanish Town, stood within St.

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<sup>72</sup> George Frere, *A Short History of Barbados, from its First Discovery and Settlement, to the End of the Year 1767* (London, 1768), 117-18.

<sup>73</sup> George Pinckard, *Notes on the West Indies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1 (London, 1816), 191-93.

<sup>74</sup> Frank Wesley Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies, 1700-63* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1917), 10.

<sup>75</sup> Lawrence Cremin, *American Education; The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783*, Book II (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

Catherine's borders, parish members held some of the island's most influential positions. They believed "a Freeschool is very much wanted in this Parish where poor Children might be Educated Gratis, in Reading Writing & other parts of Practical Learning whereby they might be rendered more Useful to the Publick."<sup>76</sup> Their inchoate educational drive was not targeted at elite children, but rather at those who could not afford to be sent to Britain. Consequently, the original spirit of educational reform in Jamaica was one of philanthropy, rather than outright need.<sup>77</sup>

As the eighteenth century progressed, Jamaicans made greater efforts to establish schools that would firmly root white society in the island. A number of wealthy benefactors began funding schools from their plantations. Endowments for free schools sprung up in many of Jamaica's parishes: St. Andrew's (1695); Drax's in the northern parish of St. Ann (1721); Wolmer's in Kingston (1735); Vere (1739); Manning's in the western parish of Westmoreland (1737); the free school of St. Jago de la Vega in Spanish Town (1743); Rusea's in the western parish of Hanover (1773); and Titchfield's in the northern parish of Portland (1785).<sup>78</sup> Some of these either failed to materialize, or became bogged down in lawsuits. St. Andrew's school, to be built at Halfway-Tree, never got beyond the planning stage. The free school in St. Ann's rural hills also never

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<sup>76</sup> Add. MS 22676, ff. 147-48, BL.

<sup>77</sup> In many ways the establishment of schools in both the colonies and the metropole was a philanthropic exercise before the rise of the modern secular school at the end of the nineteenth century. However, there was not a clear public/private divide in education during the eighteenth century; at least not in the North American colonies. Many institutions were founded that ultimately had to depend upon public taxation for their survival, even before the Revolution. This appears to have been the case in the West Indies – Jamaica in particular – as well: Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

<sup>78</sup> These endowments are recorded in the Jamaica House of Assembly, Laws and Statutes, etc.: St. Andrew: 7 Gul. III. i. 1; Drax's: 38 Geo. III. xxvii. 1; Wolmer's: 9 Geo. II. vi. 1; Vere: 13 Geo. II. x. 1; Manning's: 11 Geo. II. ix. 1; St. Jago de la Vega: 17 Geo. II. x. 1; Rusea's: 14 Geo. III. cap. X; Titchfield's: 26 Geo. III. vii. 1.

emerged, as Charles Drax's heirs fought the bequest for decades after his death.<sup>79</sup> Several of the other institutions took years to organize and build, much like Codrington College. Vere's school did not begin to arrange its finances until 1768, nearly thirty years after the original endowment. Manning's did not organize until 1780 and Rusea's until 1795, well after their initial grants.<sup>80</sup> Irrespective of its intentions, Jamaica's school-foundation craze did not produce substantial educational reform.

With such slow progress, a flurry of new schemes emerged across the West Indies at the end of the eighteenth century to address this problem. Residents of Bermuda made plans for a new college in 1771.<sup>81</sup> Bahamians petitioned for a school in 1794, and its Assembly passed an act the following year to create one. Five years later, residents established a library society there as well.<sup>82</sup> Even as late as 1807, well after the floundering of Codrington College, some resuscitated the call for an institution which could serve the entire Caribbean, and which would double as both a seminary, and a college of instruction.<sup>83</sup> Jamaicans, too, clamored for more schools, particularly after most of the early-eighteenth century endowments had not borne fruit. "It at once excites our pity and regret," Edward Long complained in 1774:

that Jamaica, an island more valuable and extensive than any other of the British sugar-colonies, should at this day remain unprovided with a proper seminary for the young inhabitants to whom it gives birth. This unhappy defect may be looked upon as one of the principal impediments to its effectual settlement.

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<sup>79</sup> The numerous lawsuits lodged against the construction of the school can be found in J 90/831, NAE.

<sup>80</sup> Minute Book of Vere Trust, 4/133/1, Private Archives, JA; Minute Book of Manning's Trust, 4/137/1, Private Archives, JA; Minute Book of Rusea's Free School, 4/138/2, Private Archives, JA.

<sup>81</sup> Governor George La Bruere to Thomas Lyttleton, October 8, 1771, Fulham Palace Papers, vol. XVII, f. 34, LPL.

<sup>82</sup> John Wells to George Chalmers, October 27, 1794, Add. MS 22900, vol. 1, ff. 264-65, BL; Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Papers, vol. 17, f. 224, LPL; Add. MS 22901, vol. 2, f. 103, BL.

<sup>83</sup> *Observations on the Necessity of Introducing a Sufficient Number of Respectable Clergymen into our Colonies in the West Indies* (London, 1807), 8.

He suggested establishing one major seminary to service the whole island.<sup>84</sup> James Stewart believed that three large schools were needed, one for each of Jamaica's major counties, that could teach a classical education similar to that found in Britain.<sup>85</sup> This flurry of interest caught official attention. As Simon Clarke wrote to Jamaican governor Eyre Coote, "There seems to exist a most extraordinary rage and rivalry for the establishment of Seminaries of Education [here] . . . . In my opinion one School is enough for the whole Island."<sup>86</sup> Once again, strong views sharply divided public and official opinion on colonial education.

#### *Education in the West Indies for People of Color*

While parents struggled to find adequate schooling for children in the colonies, whites with mixed-race families were doubly hampered by racial restrictions in those institutions that did exist. Most endowments for schools, particularly those in Jamaica, specified that institutional funds were to go toward the education of whites, and especially poor whites. This precluded most people of color from consideration for admission. One Anglican missionary lamented life for mixed-race people in Jamaica. "[R]efused admission into Schools" and kept from equal civil rights, he proclaimed, "no wonder that from A broken spirit they should be worthless or Idle."<sup>87</sup> Jamaica's most prestigious institution, Wolmer's, did not officially allow children of color within its walls during the eighteenth century. In fact, when Manning's free school sought advice from Wolmer's trustees about letting children of color into their institution, Wolmer's

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<sup>84</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 246-50.

<sup>85</sup> Stewart, *An Account of Jamaica*, 167-68.

<sup>86</sup> Simon Clarke to Eyre Coote, June 16, 1807, Eyre Coote Papers, Box 10, Folder 51, WCL.

<sup>87</sup> W. Stanford to Bishop Porteus, July 22, 1788, Fulham Palace Papers, vol. XVIII, f. 68, LPL.

confirmed that it did not allow it, declaring that “No mixtures whatever were to be in future received.”<sup>88</sup>

The social realities of Kingston life, however, demanded leniency when some students applied to the academy. Although Wolmer’s charter did not state so explicitly, Patrick Bryan suggests that, until 1798, the school allowed children of color to attend if they paid their own way. Only white children could receive scholarships under Wolmer’s original endowment. Considering the great wealth of mixed-race students’ fathers, it would not be difficult for them to afford the annual £60 tuition.<sup>89</sup> The termination of this indulgence came in 1798 as the result of rumors swirling about the school’s admission policy. Such gossip had always plagued the school, and in 1777 the Wolmer’s trustees reaffirmed their vow not to allow in any children of color on scholarship.<sup>90</sup> After appointing a committee to analyze the school in 1798, though, the trustees were admonished for letting in children of color altogether. They wrote in their minutes: “The Committee have heard it suggested that Children of Colour are admitted into the School as private Scholars, and they having cause to apprehend . . . how far it may be right to allow such descriptions of persons to be received in that manner.” Immediately after the report, the trustees resolved that “no person or Children of Colour after the 16<sup>th</sup> February next be taught by the Masters of this School in any of the Apartments.”<sup>91</sup> This prevented students of color from entering Wolmer’s entirely until 1815, when the school opened its

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<sup>88</sup> Wolmer’s Minute Book, March 25, 1779, MS 97a, f. 221, NLJ.

<sup>89</sup> Patrick E. Bryan, *The Legacy of a Goldsmith: A History of Wolmer’s Schools 1729-2003* (Kingston, Jamaica: Arawak Publications, 2004), 20. The tuition costs come from Wolmer’s Minute Book, March 25, 1779, MS 97a, f. 225, NLJ.

<sup>90</sup> Wolmer’s Minute Book, November 9, 1777, MS 97a, f. 123-24, NLJ.

<sup>91</sup> Minute Book of the Trustees of Wolmer’s Free School, March 23, 1798, MS 97, vol. 2, f. 131, NLJ.

doors to all free people. Twenty years later, free black and mixed-race students outnumbered the school's whites five to one.<sup>92</sup>

Without official sanction to attend Jamaica's free schools, most students of color relied on private instruction. Mostly this came in the form of hired personal tutors or group teaching. A number of Jamaican whites started private schools in their houses, and advertised in newspapers to attract students. In Montego Bay, a Mr. and Mrs. Tetley taught "Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Drawing and Dancing, Needle work and Tambour" in their home, and provided boarding for £60 each year. However, these houses could be just as exclusionary as free schools. The Tetley's advertisement warned, "None but children of white parents will be received."<sup>93</sup> Even so, a number of private tutors took in children of color. Thomas Thistlewood's mixed-race, John, went to the house of Sarah Bennett for schooling. Bennett, who may have been a woman of color herself, lived near Thistlewood's plantation in Savannah-la-Mar, and Thistlewood often accompanied John to her house. John even boarded with her during certain periods of the year.<sup>94</sup> Bennett possibly had a reputation for teaching students of color. Writing from Scotland, George Kinloch sought a school for his mixed-race nieces and nephew who lived near the tutor. His correspondent in Jamaica, John Wedderburn, proposed to "send them to a school near Savanna la Mar . . . to a Woman I have spoke to who Boards several children of the same sort."<sup>95</sup> He may have been referring to Sarah Bennett, as his letter was contemporaneous with Thistlewood's journal. Regardless, reputation and referrals were vital if one wished to seek out private instruction for a child of color.

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<sup>92</sup> Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harway Sandon, *The West Indies in 1837; being the Journal of a visit to Antigua* (London, 1838), 280-81.

<sup>93</sup> *Cornwall Chronicle* (Montego Bay, Jamaica), April 12, 1777, M. Misc 219, BL.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Thistlewood Papers, Microfilm, Reel 6, No. 19 (1768), f. 165.

<sup>95</sup> John Wedderburn to G. O. Kinloch, December 22, 1774, Grange Estate Papers, GD 1/8/35, f. 115, NAS.

Much like Wedderburn, associates within West Indian networks were vital for securing an education for mixed-race individuals. Finding a school required social and business ties within white island society. Prior to leaving Jamaica for Hertfordshire, England, George Graham emancipated his son John and daughter Nelly, whom he sired with a slave named Eve. Hoping to have John educated in Jamaica, he wrote to his friend John Somerville in London, who was soon to travel to the colony. Somerville revealed that a mutual friend, David Finlay, had sent his mixed-race child Jamie to a private school in Savannah-la-Mar – perhaps Sarah Bennett’s – and believed the institution would also work well for John. Upon arriving in Jamaica the next spring, Somerville affirmed that his first order of business would be “to put both Nelly & John to school.” Interestingly, Graham wrote back to Somerville insisting that John’s education came first, and that he had little interest in Nelly’s development. “I think she had better continue under her [mother’s] protection,” Graham instructed: “as to the Boy I wish him put to School and to a business.” Graham may have felt little compulsion to provide for his daughter, as whites commonly believed that mixed-race women could care for themselves by becoming mistresses. His son faced more limited employment prospects, and virtually no chance of alternate white patronage. Such gendered responses to children of color reinforced the constant cycle of interracial pairings and illegitimacy that dominated colonial relations. Indeed, five years after putting John to school, Nelly fell out of her father’s social network altogether: “I have heard nothing either from Nelly or her mother lately,” Somerville wrote to Graham. As to Graham’s son, Somerville reassured: “John can read and write pretty well . . . I shall [soon] put him with a good Tradesman.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> John Somerville to George Graham, June 10, 1778 – March 14, 1779; George Graham to John

The difficulties of educating a mixed-race child in the colonies would not subside until the second decade of the nineteenth century. Wolmer's began admitting children of color openly in 1815. A Colonial Office report that same year noted that the numbers of schools for children of color in Barbados had been on the increase.<sup>97</sup> Two factors were key. First, appeals from people of color to the assemblies established the need for more desegregated schools. Mixed-race petitioning had escalated dramatically at the end of the eighteenth century, particularly in Jamaica and Barbados, demanding civil rights redress and increased educational opportunities.<sup>98</sup> It was not always successful. As late as 1821, the vestry of St. James, Jamaica rejected one appeal to fund education for poor children of color.<sup>99</sup> However, the pressure put upon local assemblies by mixed-race individuals broke down many barriers, and schools for black and brown children increased markedly, particularly after 1820.<sup>100</sup> Secondly, evangelizing efforts in the West Indies, aided by humanitarian movements of the early nineteenth century, pushed for the establishment of more schools for the enslaved. This emerged out of the belief that education was vital to prepare slaves for their eventual freedom. By the time that a full-scale emancipation lobby emerged in 1823, local schools for students of African descent had blossomed.<sup>101</sup> Such schools became crucial to the budding civil rights movement of free people of color in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

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Somerville, December 13, 1779; John Somerville to George Graham, February 16, 1784, Montgomery Family Papers, NRAS1115/21/6, MFP.

<sup>97</sup> Colonial Office (Great Britain), *Papers Relating to the West Indies* (London, 1815), 1.

<sup>98</sup> See Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 23-29; Lambert, *White Creole Culture*, 98-109.

<sup>99</sup> CO 318/76, f. 50, NAE.

<sup>100</sup> For a good summary of education for people of color after 1820 in Jamaica, see: Duncker, "The Free Coloured," 156-69.

<sup>101</sup> Olwyn Mary Blouet, "Slavery and Freedom in the British West Indies, 1823-33: The Role of Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 625-43.

The absence of education and employment for most of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries proved to be the most instrumental factors in pushing fathers to send children of color to Britain. Fathers who requested that their offspring be sent abroad did so overwhelmingly to allow them to attend school or pursue a profession. Without such options in the colonies, wealthy West Indians of color had little choice but to move, at least temporarily, to Europe. If the institutional barriers against free people of color were not enough to propel them off the islands, then the general racial intolerance of the Caribbean could provide the *coup de grâce*. With so many factors working to push wealthy individuals of color out of the West Indies, it is not surprising that so many boarded vessels bound for Britain.

### **Migration to Britain**

All of these factors operating against people of color produced a steady stream of migrants to Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. More than any other issue, education was the primary motivation for parents to send children abroad. Enduring racial oppression, by itself, would not have been incentive enough for fathers to transport their offspring across the Atlantic. The costs required were enormous: passage to Britain, school fees, room and boarding, all of which was paid from colonial currency converted into the more expensive pounds sterling. Accordingly, only the wealthiest children of color could attend British schools, and their fathers were almost universally white. Yet these costs were not so prohibitory as to prevent a large number of children from leaving the islands. In his analysis of Jamaica's free colored population, James Stewart divided the group into three: those whose fathers had little means to care for them, those whose

fathers had enough to educate their children and give them a bit of property, and those who were “the offspring of men of fortune and station . . . who are sent to Great Britain to be liberally educated, and are destined to inherit independent fortunes.”<sup>102</sup> Sending a child of color to Britain was not only common, it was accepted as part of the general migration of all West Indian students to the metropole.

### *White, West Indian Schooling in Britain*

The lack of educational institutions in most West Indian islands left many parents with no choice but to send their children abroad. This included those with white offspring. From the early years of colonization, West Indians depended upon British schools. With first-rate institutions in the metropole, and fortunes deep enough to fund a transatlantic education, the West Indian elite bid adieu to offspring for much of their childhood. This had long plagued the colonies: “from their first Settlement there has been little Means of Education for the Masters themselves, but that Expensive one of sending their Children to *Europe*.”<sup>103</sup> By 1730, this exodus was seen as a symptom of a broken colonial system. Others saw it as the only solution to a basic problem. There was also the matter of growing up in the colonial environment. Writing from the small island of St. Eustatius in 1757, Elinor Roth asked her brother to set up her son in an Irish school. Roth had no choice, she argued, as her son “will be Ruined if he Stays here where he has nothing but Negro boys to play with & no School that’s fitt to send him.”<sup>104</sup> Many West Indian parents shuddered, like Roth, at the thought of children developing alongside black peers.

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<sup>102</sup> Stewart, *A View*, 333-34.

<sup>103</sup> Robert Robertson, *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London* (London, 1730), 13.

<sup>104</sup> Elinor Roth to John Roth, June 1757, MS 329, NLJ.

The numbers of white children who went to Britain in the eighteenth century were quite large. Enormous expenses were incurred to send over a child, so only those primarily from the planting and mercantile classes could afford it. Andrew O'Shaughnessy estimates that a full three-quarters of all Jamaican planters put their children in schools, or with tutors, in Britain. Of those so educated, one third never returned to the colonies.<sup>105</sup> Originally they received instruction from private scholars, but increasingly throughout the eighteenth century they attended Oxford and Cambridge. Roughly thirty percent of the Jamaican Assembly graduated from Oxbridge schools after 1753, compared to forty percent of Westminster MPs. Others sought out the prestigious universities of Scotland. Colleges at St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Edinburgh had grown in prominence by the end of the eighteenth century, and attracted large numbers of West Indians.<sup>106</sup> Figure 2.2 shows the percentage of West Indian students at the University of Edinburgh and Aberdeen's King's College from 1750 to 1820. Although these statistics are somewhat crude – only half of the names on the registers record the students' place of origin – they do indicate the regular attendance of West Indians in Scottish schools. The notes of Professor James Gregory at the University of Edinburgh confirm this. He lists roughly five percent of his students from 1790-1795 as West Indian in origin.<sup>107</sup> Sharp drops in attendance rates correspond to periods of warfare which kept students in the Caribbean.

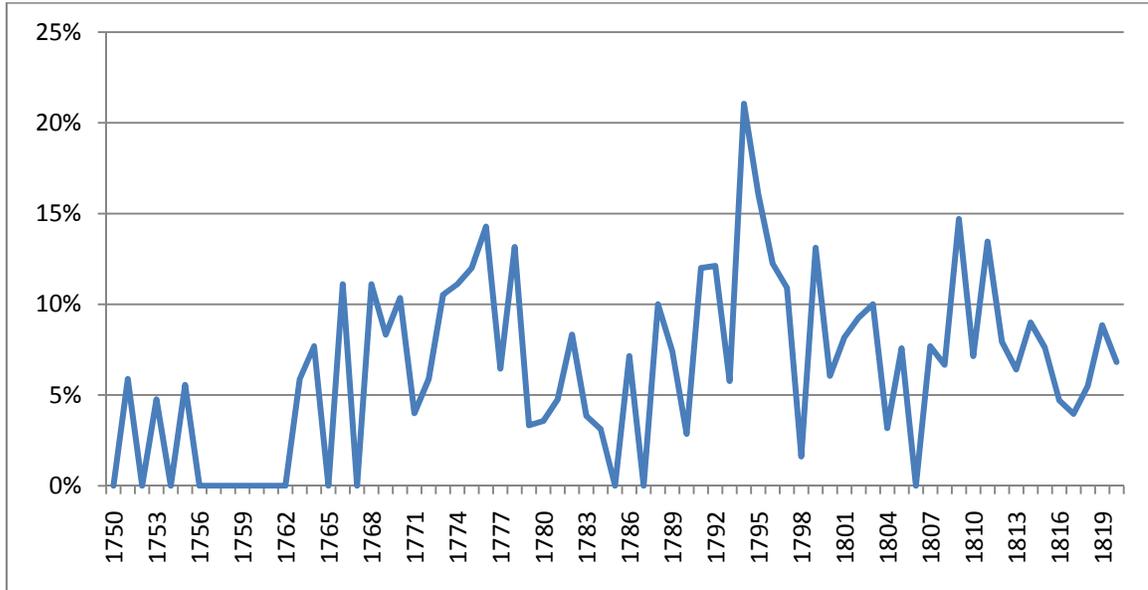
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<sup>105</sup> Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 19-27. Edward Long's notes for his *History of Jamaica* contains this original estimate: Add. MS 18270, f. 38, BL.

<sup>106</sup> Richard Sheridan, "The Role of the Scots in the Economy and Society of the West Indies," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 292 (1977), 96.

<sup>107</sup> See the bibliography in Whitfield J. Bell Jr., "Some American Students of 'That Shining Oracle of Physic,' Dr. William Cullen of Edinburgh, 1755-1766," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 94, no. 3 (June 1950): 275-81, which is also posted in the Edinburgh University Matriculation Records, GD300/46, NAS.

**Figure 2.2: Percentage of West Indians in Student Body  
(University of Edinburgh Medical School and King's College, Aberdeen),  
1750-1820<sup>108</sup>**



For many, a British education was not just a luxury, but a requirement for their return to the Caribbean. Anyone wishing to practice law had to attend school in either England or Scotland, even if they came back to the colonies. The islands' lack of an episcopacy forced seminary students to cross the Atlantic as well.<sup>109</sup> With such limited educational opportunities in the islands, and strict professional codes demanding British instruction, large numbers of children left for the metropole.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Based on the matriculation registers in *List of Graduates in Medicine in the University of Edinburgh from 1705 to 1866* (Edinburgh: Neill & Co., 1867); Peter John Anderson, ed., *Officers and Graduates of the University & King's College Aberdeen, 1495-1860* (Aberdeen: New Spalding Club, 1893), 120-175.

<sup>109</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 26.

<sup>110</sup> Many also went to North America. A perusal of Harvard graduates shows a number of West Indians who attended the university in the seventeenth, and early eighteenth, centuries: Clifford K. Shipton, *New England Life in the Eighteenth Century: Representative Biographies from Sibley's Harvard Graduates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); John Landgon Sibley, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates: Biographical Sketches of Those who Attended Harvard College with Biographical and Other Notes*, by Clifford K. Shipton, 5 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933). There was also a push on the part of North-American schools to attract West Indians students. As president of Princeton, John Witherspoon appealed directly to Jamaicans in a pamphlet, *Address to the Inhabitants of Jamaica* (Philadelphia, 1772), which argued that the morality problems that beset West Indian students in Britain were not an issue in North-American institutions. An anonymous response to Witherspoon's address countered that British universities were not only better, but far less corrupt than those in the thirteen

Such a practice was not limited to the West Indies. Although more schools had been established in North America, parents from the mainland also sent children to Britain's elite institutions. One British officer noted of Charleston residents: "It is the fashion indeed to send home all their Children for education."<sup>111</sup> Until the Revolution, student travel to the metropole became an important cultural link between Britain and its North-American colonies.<sup>112</sup> Family and business connections brought many young colonists back to Europe, reaffirming personal ties in the Empire.<sup>113</sup> Throughout Britain's imperial fringe, wealthy colonists depended on metropolitan institutions for their children's education. The West Indies had a greater need for these schools, but North Americans still chose institutions across the Atlantic, even with more educational options in their home colonies.

Those who sent children to Britain justified the practice as both necessary and noble. Discussing Robert Gordon's son, Archibald Sinclair recommended that the young man come to Britain: "I think Jamaica (Like other Hott Climats) a very improper Place to Studie the Theory of any Science, for the heat so Innervates us Europeans that we are not capable to give the Attention & Application thats necessary to Books."<sup>114</sup> Climactic dissipation was not the only issue. Many wished to see young families brought up outside the West Indies' wicked environment. Such prejudice saturated West Indian

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colonies: *Candid Remarks on Dr. Witherspoon's Address to the Inhabitants of Jamaica* (Philadelphia, 1772).

<sup>111</sup> Journal of an Officer who Travelled over a part of the West Indies, and of North America in the course of 1764 & 1765, King's MS 213, f. 26, BL.

<sup>112</sup> Julie M. Flavell, "The 'School for Modesty and Humility': Colonial American Youth in London and their Parents, 1755-1775," *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 2 (1999): 378-79; Paul Nash, "Innocents Abroad: American Students at British Universities in the Early Nineteenth Century," *History of Education Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (June 1961): 32-44; Bell, "Some American Students."

<sup>113</sup> For personal letters between Scottish migrants in Virginia and the children that they sent back to North Britain, see James McLeod Papers, MS 19297 and the MacMurdo Family Papers, Acc. 7199, Box 3, Folder 1, Box 4, Folders 2-3, NLS.

<sup>114</sup> Archibald Sinclair to Robert Gordon, June 25, 1760, La. II. 498, UESCL.

culture to such an extent that in the moralizing tale *Montgomery* the protagonist dismisses the possibility of raising his children in Jamaica: “it is not the region in which it would be desirable to rear up and educate a young family. Add to this, that the society in Europe is in general better, the morals purer, and the amusements more liberal.”<sup>115</sup> Britain’s social institutions were as much a draw for West Indian parents as its scholarly ones. Indeed, the cultural education of a time spent in Britain was seen to fill important personal deficits. Robert Renny argued that by “sending children to England and Scotland for their education” West Indian youth could “acquire a portion of that manliness and hardihood of character, for which the natives of these two countries are so honourably distinguished.”<sup>116</sup> Fearful of the effeminizing effects of a tropical climate, and with a metropolitan discourse associating the British Isles with virtuous masculinity, many West Indian parents saw a British education as a key step in their children’s proper development.<sup>117</sup>

Alongside the praises of metropolitan instruction emerged a counter-discourse discouraging parents from sending children abroad. Much of the concern centered on the young students’ morals. In an attack on white planters, James Ramsay summarized the issue succinctly: “A young West Indian . . . educated at a distance from his father . . . makes expensive connections, acquires habits of dissipation . . . and seldom learns to turn out usefully in life.”<sup>118</sup> Edward Long made similar claims in his *History of Jamaica*, arguing that West Indian youth in Britain “acquired a taste for pleasure and extravagance

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<sup>115</sup> *Montgomery; or, the West-Indian Adventurer*, vol. 3 (Kingston, Jamaica, 1812), 510.

<sup>116</sup> Robert Renny, *An History of Jamaica* (London, 1807), 211.

<sup>117</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 250-53.

<sup>118</sup> James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London, 1784), 267n.

of every kind, far superior to the ability of their fortunes” and that “[t]he education they usually receive in Great-Britain does not qualify them for useful employment in Jamaica.” Having experienced the grand life in London, Long believed that young Jamaicans either did not come back, or grew to hate the West Indies after returning.<sup>119</sup> Such perceived problems gave added justification for education at home. In 1776, Jamaica’s colonial agent in England, Stephen Fuller, wrote a glowing letter to the treasurer of Wolmer’s on this point. Fuller extolled the importance of Wolmer’s “at a time when the Expences of an English Education are so enormous, and what is worse the Son of a Man of small Fortune is educated with the son of a great one, & is sure to emulate him in his Expences & follies.”<sup>120</sup> As Jamaicans pushed harder for colonial schools, the practice of sending children to Britain became more problematic.

### *Mixed-Race Schooling in Britain*

The education of mixed-race students in Britain came under the same scrutiny as its white equivalent. While Britons would eventually come to find the migration threatening, West Indians tended to view it simply as a waste. William Dickson advised Barbadian whites not to send children of color abroad. A metropolitan education was too much of an indulgence: “a mistaken generosity might induce you to allow them more money than is absolutely necessary for their support, and which . . . would effectually frustrate your end in sending them to England.”<sup>121</sup> Edward Long, as he claimed of white education in Britain, believed that it could only harm the mixed-race students. This was all the more true when they returned to the colonies: “however well this yellow brood

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<sup>119</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 248-49.

<sup>120</sup> Stephen Fuller to Paul Phipps, March 5, 1776, Wolmer’s Minute Book, MS 97a, f. 99, NLJ.

<sup>121</sup> William Dickson, *Letters on Slavery* (London, 1789), 176.

may be received in England, yet here so great is the distinction kept up between white and mixed complexions . . . it is impossible but that a well-educated Mulatta must lead a very unpleasant kind of life here.”<sup>122</sup> West Indian observers imagined little use of a British education to a mixed-race colonist. Despite public castigation, however, whites continued the practice.

For John Tailyour, the process of educating his children in Britain began by revealing them to Scottish relatives. Unlike some, Tailyour did not hide his mixed-race offspring. His mother, Jean, learned of Tailyour’s first child, James, immediately after his birth. “[T]ell me what has becom of your Baby that you mentiont to me, is it alive or not,” she asked her son in Jamaica, including some grandmotherly interest: “belive me I would be very happy to have it under my Car[e].” She maintained this concern throughout her son’s stay in Jamaica, and regularly inquired about James. Tailyour, however, did not appear to provide enough information to his curious mother, and so she scolded him: “why have you not in your last two letters Sead one word of My Young Friend James if he is Still doing well, lett me know in your next.”<sup>123</sup> Indeed, although Tailyour may have divulged the existence of his Jamaican offspring, Jean often received news of her grandchildren of color from extended family. She learned of Tailyour’s second and third children, for example, through her daughter’s in-laws, the Foulertons: “Mr. Foulerton told me that you had two fine Boys & another on the way.” The Tailyour’s Jamaican kin, then, became well known within the Scottish family, and even into their extended network. While British writers may have harangued the fathers of

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<sup>122</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 329. Stephen Gainsford made the same claim for mixed-race women educated in Britain: *An Essay on the Good*, 152.

<sup>123</sup> Jean Tailyour to John Tailyour, August 14, 1787, February 21, 1789, November 20, 1789, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

mixed-race children in the colonies, families back home were not necessarily so dismissive.

Although John Tailyour had long made clear his intention to leave Jamaica, he received encouragement from family to return – and to bring his children with him. Jean Tailyour, hopeful of meeting her Jamaican grandchildren, regularly implored her son to return to Britain with offspring in tow. She consistently entreated her son to quit Jamaica, worried that he had grown too obsessed with riches and too indifferent to marriage. Tailyour confirmed his own interest in coming back to Scotland, but did not want to leave before building a sizeable fortune. Regardless, he began making plans for his mixed-race children’s voyage to Britain – perhaps inspired, once again, by cousin Simon’s example.<sup>124</sup> His mother was glad to hear the news, reassuring him that “if I am alive at the time you propos Sending [James] you may depend on me giving him a kind reception.” She worried, however, “I am afraid if you Stay long [in Jamaica] & have many Children that you will never think of retourning to this Country again.” Jean may have forgiven her son for having children with an enslaved woman, but she still feared further additions to the colonial family. After Tailyour informed her of his more concrete plans to send his eldest child to Britain, Jean replied: “I shall be very glad to See James, but I would wish you to have no more till you have a Wife.”<sup>125</sup> Jean Tailyour may have sensed that by sending his mixed-race children to Britain, her son was renouncing his improper behavior and taking on his responsibilities. She could allow the products of

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<sup>124</sup> Simon Taylor had an illegitimate son named John in Jamaica who spent some time in Britain. Although details are few about the trip, John wrote his father a letter soon after his return: “The Cloaths I brought from England with me are now either entirely wore out, or threadbare & quite too small so that I need a fresh supply.” John Taylor to Simon Taylor, January 22, 1785, ICS 120/XX/A/2, ICS.

<sup>125</sup> Jean Tailyour to John Tailyour, August 14, 1787, April 21, 1788, November 20, 1789, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

Tailyour's colonial indiscretions to come to Britain, but their arrival had to accompany her son's domestication in the metropole.

Finding a proper place for his children of color also required Tailyour's dependence on British family. Robert Taylor became his brother's most trusted advisor on the subject. Knowing that John wished to have his children educated in Britain, Robert believed that a school should be found in England, rather than in the family's native Scotland. For James, an English school would serve best, as he would "in the end be much happier [there], than if he was put under our Mother's care at Montrose." Robert did not wish to shield James from his Scottish grandmother, as he was certain she would "treat him with the same Kindness and attention as if he had been born in [wed]lock." Rather, he believed that if James were to live amongst the white Tailyours, he would naturally feel out of place. Exposing his own prejudices, Robert averred that

as soon as [James] has Sense to know the disadvantages with which he has been ushered into Life, & by keeping him at a distance from his own Relations I think there is the greater chance of concealing from him his Inferiority and preventing the Mortification of being slighted by relations who from early habits he might consider himself perfectly upon a footing with.<sup>126</sup>

At once both considerate and damning, Robert demarcated the tenuous boundaries separating James from his white family. Robert worried that James's British kin would reject him out of hand as inferior, even as he reified and reinforced that very notion.

Determined to settle his nephew in England, Robert sought advice on appropriate schools south of the Tweed. Just two months after offering his original suggestions to Tailyour, Robert discovered several prospective institutions. In a postscript to a 1791 letter, Robert noted: "I have heard of a School in Yorkshire which I think will answer for your Young ones." He did not specify if the institution had a reputation for teaching

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<sup>126</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, August 27, 1791, in *ibid.*

children of color, but he had certainly asked his correspondents for guidance: “from what [Jasper] Hall mentioned of it to [Simon] Taylor & myself I have no doubt it Will answer the Purpose you Wish.” Jasper Hall had originally recommended the school because his own son attended it. Robert eventually settled on the institution, run by John Bowman just outside of Durham.<sup>127</sup> He also recommended another Yorkshire school, kept by the Reverend James Milner, once James became a little older.<sup>128</sup>

Yorkshire schools may have been an attractive option for parents with mixed-race children. In 1763, a Jamaican attorney wrote to a colleague in Britain about his son’s education in England: “I have taken the liberty of troubling you with the Case of a Molato Boy who comes in the Prince George Capt. Blake, when he arrives youl be pleased to send the said Boy down to School at Knayton near Thyrsk in the North part of Yorkshire.” The attorney placed his son in this particular institution because there were “several Boys from this Island now at that School.”<sup>129</sup> John Fletcher noted in his 1785 will that his mixed-race son John Harriott was attending a school in Thirsk as well.<sup>130</sup> These Yorkshire schools had a reputation for educating West Indian children. The area may have provided a convenient location for children of color from Scottish families. As Robert Taylor indicated, Britons might have been wary about relatives of color. Near to Scotland, but still at a distance, Yorkshire may have best suited Scots with a mixed-race charge. Similarities between the Scottish and northern-English educational systems may

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<sup>127</sup> During this period Durham fell into the county of Yorkshire.

<sup>128</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, October 5, 1791, October 26, 1791, January 4, 1792, February 1, 1792, Tailyour Papers, WCL. Milner kept his school at Scorton, near Catterick, charging sixteen pounds per year for each student: *Diary or Woodfall’s Register* (London), April 1, 1791.

<sup>129</sup> JF to [More?] and Bayly, April 28, 1763, Attorneys Letter Book, MS 14280, f. 28, GL.

<sup>130</sup> Will of John Fletcher, December 5, 1785, Wills, LOS 51, f. 114, IRO.

have also worked to convince West Indian Scots to send children of color to Yorkshire schools.<sup>131</sup>

When word came to Jean Tailyour that her grandchild would be educated in England, she lamented his future distance from the family. Robert broke the news to his mother, who wrote to Tailyour: “Bob told me that you was to Satel James in Inland as he had wrot you that he thought it much better then in this Country.” Jean understood, but grew anxious that James, only five years old at the time, would be too young on his own. Unlike Robert, Jean did not wish to push James to the periphery of their family circle. Indeed, she hoped that Tailyour would “let him Stay Some time with Ketty (Tailyour’s sister) as he is So very young & not proper to go to a publick School.” Under the guidance of his aunt, James could transition more easily from Jamaica to Britain. For her own part, Jean offered a hypothetical invitation: “had I been living in the Country I would Sertenly have kept him with me – but this Town (Montrose) is not So proper.”<sup>132</sup> Jean had moved to the small town on Scotland’s northeastern shore after the death of her husband in 1780. The family had been forced to sell both of its large estates in the wake of his passing, and Jean took up residence in nearby Montrose.<sup>133</sup> It is unclear if she believed that James would suffer less discrimination in the countryside, or if she simply did not wish to have the neighbors commenting on her mixed-race grandson in the more compact environs of Montrose.

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<sup>131</sup> R. A. Houston believes that socio-economic similarities, particularly in terms of agricultural and apprentice labor, between lowland Scotland and northern England, produced similar educational systems: *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy, and Society in Scotland and Northern England, 1600-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>132</sup> Jean Tailyour to John Tailyour, September 24, 1791, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>133</sup> Those two estates were Kirktonhill, upon which the family house was built, and Balmanno. Colonel David Gairdner purchased Kirktonhill and Alex Smith purchased Balmanno, after Robert Tailyour’s death. See: Andrew Jervise, *Epitaphs and Inscriptions From Burial Grounds & Old Buildings in the North-East of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1875), 134.

The Tailyours' experiences closely mirrored those of the Laings.<sup>134</sup> Jamaican attorney Malcolm Laing worked on the estate of William Perrin. During a stay on the island, Perrin appears to have had a relationship with the free mulatto woman Elizabeth Fickle. Consoling Perrin's London wife after his death, Malcolm Laing wrote that Elizabeth had "Served [William] faithfully and was about him during his Sickness and at his last moments."<sup>135</sup> Fickle may have only served as Perrin's nurse, but such language was generally code for acting as a mistress. More revealingly, Perrin provided Fickle with a large bequest in his 1758 will. He gave her ten slaves, a plot of land in Kingston, money with which to build a house upon it, twenty acres of plantation land in St. Andrews, his residence in Vere parish, and a fifty pound annuity for life.<sup>136</sup> This handsome endowment put Fickle in a comfortable social position. With her newfound fortune, she applied for – and won – privilege rights from the Assembly in 1766.<sup>137</sup> She also took a new lover on Perrin's plantation: none other than Malcolm Laing, the estate attorney. As Laing informed Perrin's son in England, "Elizabeth Fickle . . . has lived with me as a Housekeeper since your Father's death."<sup>138</sup> While together, Fickle bore Laing a son, Robert, before her own passing in October 1776.

When it came time for Robert's education, his father sought advice from an unlikely source: William Philip Perrin, the English son of Fickle's former lover. In London, William maintained close contact with Malcolm Laing as he oversaw the family's Jamaican estates. Laing asked for William's opinion on having his son trained

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<sup>134</sup> Many thanks to Ms. Lucy Richards for her information on the Laing family.

<sup>135</sup> Malcolm Laing to Frances Perrin, March 29, 1759, Fitzherbert Papers, D239 M/E 16579, DRO.

<sup>136</sup> Will of William Perrin, September 24, 1759, D239 M/E 16374, in *ibid*.

<sup>137</sup> August 12, 1766, CO 139/22, NAE.

<sup>138</sup> Malcolm Laing to William Philip Perrin, September 7, 1773, Fitzherbert Papers, D239 M/E 16773, DRO.

in Britain: “I am obliged to you for your kind offer in regard to her (Fickle’s) son’s Education . . . Your Advice & Assistance when he is of an Age to Judge of his disposition & bent will be laying me under great Obligations.” Laing knew virtually nothing about which schools to choose, and depended completely upon Perrin to guide his son through the educational process: “I have it entirely to your better Judgement to consult with little Robert & to know from him what way of life to fix him in.” Fickle had left behind an estate worth over £3,000, and because of the recent inheritance cap, Laing understood that he could allocate only two-thirds of it to Robert for his British upbringing.<sup>139</sup> Although limited, this amount would be more than adequate to transport Robert across the Atlantic.

One major consideration for both Laing and Perrin was the location of Robert’s school. Although Robert first stayed with his aunt in London, Laing did not want him to remain in the capital. From Jamaica, Laing wrote to Perrin that he wished Robert to be “kept as much out of London as possible, that place, being the ruin of all young people except where they have parents to give continual Attention to them.” In many ways, Laing’s concerns resembled those over the effects of metropolitan life on white, West Indian youth. Throughout his long correspondence with Perrin, Laing demonstrated an obsession with the morality of his son. He wished to ensure that Robert never followed “the road of Disipation & what is called high life” while he stayed in England. This goal could not be accomplished in the capital. In one of Laing’s only specific commands, he implored Perrin to put Robert “to some good School out of London where his Education

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., January 10, 1774, D239 M/E 16777; Ibid., January 1, 1781, D239 M/E 16897.

& Moralls will be taken proper care of, rather a private than a publich one.”<sup>140</sup> Unsure as he was about a British education, Laing did not wish his mixed-race son to endure too much temptation.

Robert Taylor expressed the same alarm about the capital for his nephew James. Finances, rather than morality, presented a greater threat in Robert’s mind. London’s schools had much higher tuitions; as Robert remarked to his brother, “had [James] been at a School in the neighbourhood of London the expence would have been infinitely greater.” Additionally, the metropolis’ numerous diversions and entrapments were not helpful to a child on a budget. Under the constraints of either the 1762 inheritance cap or a frugal outlook, Tailyour put James on a strict allowance. Robert reassured his brother that such parsimony was honorable, but that it would make life miserable for James: “the attentions of his friends . . . would only serve to make him unhappy some time hence, when upon a Comparison of their behaviour to him, he might have reason to think himself neglected.” While other West Indian boys might be able to keep up with the extravagance of London life, those of mixed-race often could not. Robert knew from experience. Economic ruin had been, “the fate of two thirds of the Young men who I have known of [James’] description.”<sup>141</sup> His account speaks to the regularity of mixed-race migration to the metropole. Robert Taylor was able to draw on the experiences of fathers known to have educated their children of color in Britain, as well as on his own regular observations of these students in London, to make general comments on the problems associated with sending them to the capital.

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., June 9, 1777, D239 M/E 16834; Ibid., November 4, 1776, D239 M/E 16827; Ibid., March 18, 1777, D239 M/E 16828.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, February 1, 1792, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

### *Mixed-Race Migration in Jamaican Wills*

Such were typical stories of fathers arranging for mixed-race children to travel to Britain. But what of the actual frequency of this migration? It is exceedingly difficult to gauge the numbers of mixed-race people who came to Europe at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the next. Those who may not have been legally white in the colonies but who could pass as such in Britain were careful not to reveal their African ancestry in the metropole, thus leaving little evidence of their lineage. Still, many others did make a mark. In order to estimate the trends of mixed-race migration to Britain, two types of sources will be consulted: Jamaican probate records and Jamaican privilege petitions. For a detailed, statistical account of migratory volume and characteristics, Jamaican wills will be examined first. These sources will show the frequency and regularity of mixed-race travel to Britain, as well as the more refined features of this phenomenon. Privilege petitions often contained evidence of Jamaicans having attended British schools as well. Those records will be analyzed for deeper revelations on migration, and remigration, between the colonies and the metropole.

Jamaican probate records provide quantifiable evidence of mixed-race migration to Britain. Large numbers of colonists – male and female, white and nonwhite alike – lodged wills with the Island Secretary. Drafting a will was an important step for travelers to the West Indies, considering the unhealthiness of the climate. Abraham James’s pictorial biography of a stereotypic white settler in the West Indies, “Johnny New-Come in the Island of Jamaica,” devotes one whole panel to the act of a young, sickly Johnny drafting a will (see Figure 2.3). Islanders revised wills multiple times before their deaths,

with new children born, new associations formed, and new laws passed.<sup>142</sup> Wills were an important tool of communication with family in Britain as well, often breaking the news of mixed-race offspring that had previously been hidden from view. Those who did acknowledge children of color in their wills often asked British families to help raise them in the metropole.

**Figure 2.3: “Johnny New-Come in the Island of Jamaica,” by Abraham James, 1800 (Caption reads: “John sends for Mr. Codicil & bequeaths his Kit”)**



Image courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica, Kingston.

<sup>142</sup> Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 92-128.

A survey of 2,245 wills executed in Jamaica between 1773 and 1815 reveals the regularity of those endeavors.<sup>143</sup> All executed wills for the years 1773-75, 1783-85, 1793-95, 1803-05, and 1813-15 in Jamaica were counted, averaging 150 wills per year.<sup>144</sup> Tables 2.1 and 2.2, below, display the results of that survey. Two types of bequests were recorded: explicit references to mixed-race children, either being sent to Britain or currently living there; and implicit references to the same. Clarifying this latter category, some wills contain bequests to individuals who, although not explicitly listed as such, were almost certainly of mixed race. Examples of this occurrence include notations for beneficiaries who were the “natural” or “reputed” sons of a white father in the island. The terms “natural” and “reputed” denoted illegitimacy, which almost universally meant children of color in the case of Jamaica. Most of these bastards were also the sons and daughters of housekeepers, who were, with little exception, free or enslaved women of color. Those who fall into the “implicit references” category, then, were most certainly mixed-race individuals.

The totals were next split between all wills executed for white men, and only those white men’s wills that contained a bequest for a child of color. The inclusion criterion for this latter group was quite broad. Individuals not listed explicitly as the benefactors’ children were still included due to their mothers’ status as the testators’ housekeepers, or due to significant bequests that exceeded five pounds. Therefore, the percentages in Table 2.2 may be lower than their true value. The wills of women and people of color were not included in the data analyzed, below, for two reasons. First,

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<sup>143</sup> Parts of this statistical analysis are reprinted from Daniel Livesay, “Extended Families: Mixed-Race Children and the Scottish Experience, 1770-1820,” *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, no. 4 (Spring/Summer 2008): 1-17.

<sup>144</sup> This survey was conducted through the volumes of Wills, LOS 41-42, 49-51, 57-58, 60-61, 70-75, 87-91, IRO.

eighty per cent of all executed wills in this survey were those of white men; including the other twenty per cent does not significantly alter the results. Secondly, white men were the principal agents in sending mixed-race individuals to Britain. Testators of color with bequests for relatives in Britain will be considered later.

**Table 2.1: Percentage of white men’s wills, proven in Jamaica, with bequests for mixed-race children in Britain (either presently resident, or soon to be sent there), 1773-1815<sup>145</sup>**

	1770s	1780s	1790s	1800s	1810s
<b>Explicit References</b>	3.0	1.2	4.1	4.4	3.8
<b>Explicit and Implicit References</b>	6.4	3.8	7.4	7.1	7.8

**Table 2.2: Percentage of white men’s wills with acknowledged mixed-race children, proven in Jamaica, that include bequests for mixed-race children in Britain (either presently resident, or soon to be sent there), 1773-1815<sup>146</sup>**

	1770s	1780s	1790s	1800s	1810s
<b>Explicit References</b>	9.7	4.5	12.2	9.6	9.1
<b>Explicit and Implicit References</b>	17.2	13.6	22.0	15.5	18.9

These data demonstrate a significant migration of mixed-race Jamaicans to Britain. As Table 2.1 indicates, at the opening of the nineteenth century, over seven per cent of all white male testators gave bequests to mixed-race individuals who were either in Britain or on their way there. Not every Jamaican drafted a will, so those in this survey had greater means at their disposal. Still, members from all aspects of Jamaican society left wills, so the overall percentage of bequests for children of color in Britain is

<sup>145</sup> Wills, LOS 41-42, 49-51, 57-58, 60-61, 70-75, 87-91, IRO.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

impressive. Looking only at those with children of color in their wills, Table 2.2 demonstrates that in the 1790s nearly a quarter of them held out some inheritance to mixed-race children in Britain. While these wills do not give an accurate estimate of overall mixed-race birth, they do reveal the desires of those whites who provided some degree of care for children of color. Among those who helped mixed-race offspring to even a small degree, a substantial portion wished to see them brought up in the metropole, rather than in Jamaica. The migration of people of color from Jamaica to Britain was thus sizeable and sustained throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While there does not appear to have been any substantial increase during the period, the percentages did rise somewhat at the turn of the nineteenth century. These numbers mirror those of Anglo-Indian children sent to Britain. Examining several hundred wills in the early nineteenth century, Durba Ghosh finds that twenty-two percent of all British men who allocated money to native women in India between 1805 and 1807 also gave bequests to mixed-race children in Britain, and that roughly ten percent of all wills did the same.<sup>147</sup> Considering the expense incurred in sending a child to Britain and remitting enough money for their maintenance while there, this was a costly undertaking not all could afford. That so many chose to do so, in spite of these hurdles, speaks to the importance they attached to the endeavor.

An analysis of the individual testators' professions reveals just how cost-prohibitive the practice could be. If Andrew O'Shaughnessy's estimate is accurate that three-quarters of Jamaica's planters sent white children to Britain, then a similar pattern

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<sup>147</sup> Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126.

of planter behavior emerges when looking at the migration of mixed-race children.<sup>148</sup>

Table 2.3 shows the professional breakdown of Jamaican testators who listed an occupation. Of all wills with bequests for children of color in Britain, only 16.7% of them did not include the testator's profession. So the data below gives some sense of the costs in sending a child abroad. Similar to O'Shaughnessy's claim, most fathers who sent mixed-race children to Britain were also planters. Next in line were those holding the statuses of "Esquire" and "Gentleman." It may be assumed that many in these two groups were actually planters in their own right. Tradesmen comprised the next largest professional group, with most of these being carpenters. There is only one testator listed as a clerk, and only one listed as a retailer. So, it may be said that most fathers of British-bound children of color were either in Jamaica's landed aristocracy, held a highly-skilled trade, or enjoyed some other kind of lucrative profession. These fathers may have given so generously simply because they could. Exorbitant costs may have prevented many fathers from sending their children of color across the Atlantic, even if they so desired.

**Table 2.3: Professions of testators sending mixed-race children to Britain, by percentage, 1773-1815<sup>149</sup>**

Profession	Percentage
Planter	30.7
Esquire	20.2
Tradesman	15.8
Merchant	7.9
Gentleman	3.5
Physician	2.6
Attorney	0.9
Clerk	0.9
Retailer	0.9

<sup>148</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 19.

<sup>149</sup> Wills, LOS 41-42, 49-51, 57-58, 60-61, 70-75, 87-91, IRO.

In addition to the fathers' professions, these wills also reveal clues about the children's future lives in the mother country. When discussing their children's stay in Britain, most fathers did not specify with whom they would lodge. Indeed, seventy percent of the wills made no mention of the children's residency in the metropole. Considering that two-thirds of those who left went for an education, most likely boarded at school, or with a tutor. In fact, ten percent of these wills explicitly stated that the children were either boarded at school, or asked that they be. Of the remaining wills, 12.3% noted that they were to stay with white relatives, while 6.1% were to stay with family friends. Only two wills in this sample asked for the children's mothers to go with them to Britain. Considering that white men ubiquitously kept lovers of color in the colonies, these are quite unusual requests. Roughly one-quarter of those wills with bequests for offspring of color in Britain did not indicate what they planned once the children arrived. Amongst the rest, as mentioned, exactly two-thirds noted that the children were to receive some kind of schooling. Another 34.2% were to be brought up in a trade (with a good deal of overlap with those at school). Almost all of those asking for children to take on a profession did not specify which trade to learn; most simply requested that the child apprentice in whichever trade they preferred. One testator did hope that his son would join the army once in England. However, this was the only mention of a future plan outside of joining a trade or receiving an education.<sup>150</sup>

At times, those wishing for British family to look after their children of color did so with some remorse. Most wills contain little emotional language, stating instead the terms by which the estate was to be divided. However, several wills reveal a sense of reluctance to unite British and West Indian families. George Malcolm worried that his

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<sup>150</sup> Will of Alexander Grame, July 28, 1785, Wills, LOS 51, f. 75, IRO.

white son in Jamaica would sabotage his two mixed-race daughters' education in Yorkshire and Scotland. Malcolm warned his son against interfering with the bequests: "I trust that he will not tarnish my memory or Stain his own character by any deviation from a recommendation urged with such feeling and affection for two destitute orphans."<sup>151</sup> The threat of inheritance challenges was real, and white family members often took mixed-race relatives to court. Others, less nervous about legal complications, used their last wishes to seek absolution. Nathaniel Milward admitted regret in relation to his "three quadroon children" at school in Yorkshire:

For the trouble I have here given my good friend Mr. George Bush by thus taking the liberty to appoint him Guardian and Trustee to these swarthy Illegitimates, I am at a loss what apology to make in their behalf (who are blameless) I must rely on his humanity, in my own, I have to hope his good nature will excuse the follies of youth, and to consider the provision here made as the most eligible atonement to render them usefull to Society, and for which it was really intended.<sup>152</sup>

The process of sending mixed-race children to Britain, in Milward's mind, was as much an act of redemption as it was a response to the social and legal inequalities that faced his offspring in the colonies. Couched in this way, many in Britain accepted these children into their homes, to complete the redemptive process.

Such atonement, in general, did not stem from an immediate need to manumit these children. Most of those traveling to Britain were either born free or their fathers had manumitted them prior to crafting a will. In only five wills of Jamaicans sent abroad (4.4 percent) did the fathers stipulate that the child first had first to be freed. Although an enslaved child could legally travel to Britain, he or she could not make any legal claim to an inheritance if they were still under another's ownership. White fathers, then, had to emancipate their children if they wished to educate or train them in Britain. Many more

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<sup>151</sup> Will of George Malcolm, June 16, 1813, Wills, LOS 87, f. 152, IRO.

<sup>152</sup> Will of Nathaniel Milward, June 15, 1775, Wills, LOS 42, f. 132, IRO.

children were most likely born enslaved, but had become free prior to the drafting of their fathers' wills. Most mothers in the sample were free, and therefore the fathers did not need to manumit the children.

An interesting disparity arises when one considers the migrants' gender. Amongst wills with bequests for mixed-race children traveling to Britain, 56.1% made provisions only for boys to be sent abroad. Another 26.3% made stipulations only for girls, and a final 17.5% included both in plans for Europe. More revealingly, fourteen percent of all wills asked that a son of color be sent abroad, while a daughter of color stayed behind. Only five percent made the reverse stipulation. Whites with children of color, then, often paved the way for their sons to receive an education in Britain, while their daughters remained in the colonies. There may be some inaccuracy in these statistics, primarily because fathers did not provide equally for all children. Some wills may have sent a daughter of color to Britain while a mixed-race son was not listed, due to the father's negligence. However, the trend favoring young men over women in these data seems clear. In absolute numbers, sixty-five percent of all individuals listed in these wills as either traveling to or currently in Britain were boys. The numbers speak to pronounced gender divisions within mixed-race migration. Even if both the sons and the daughters of a white father went to Britain, they could still experience separate and unequal treatment: four of the wills gave much greater bequests to mixed-race boys in Britain compared to their sisters.

Popular accounts confirmed these gender biases. George Pinckard's travels through the Caribbean provided evidence that many white parents treated children of color very differently. He believed that if a father did not lay out the costs of "sending

them to Europe to be educated,” then he would generally help his sons to train in an artisanal profession. However, the same man had no qualms about “giving out the daughters, in keeping, to his friends . . . [as] the best provision the parent can make for his daughter [is] to place her with a respectable man as his *bonnie amie*.”<sup>153</sup> James Walker made similar claims about the treatment of mixed-race children in 1818. While “the cruelty to sons [of color] is much less when they are sent to Europe for education,” mixed-race girls received little support from fathers. Indeed, Walker asked, “How few men have any higher views for their coloured daughters than that they shall be concubines, and shall run all the risks of being thrown from that state into prostitution?”<sup>154</sup> Part of this discrimination stemmed from general attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic which privileged male over female inheritance. At the same time, colonial employment, albeit as sexual labor, was much better for mixed-race women than men. As mistresses and domestic partners, women of color could draw on white patronage beyond immediate family in a way that mixed-race men could not. Such racial divisions in sexual coupling also made free men of color less ideal partners for mixed-race women who hoped to draw on white influence.<sup>155</sup> As Simon Taylor wrote to a friend, Jamaica’s mixed-race women “never will have any commerce with their own Colour but only with White People.”<sup>156</sup>

Several wills speak to parental concerns about sexual pairings, albeit in Britain rather than Jamaica. Fathers who asked that mixed-race children travel to Britain

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<sup>153</sup> Pinckard, *Notes on the West Indies*, vol. 2, 136-37.

<sup>154</sup> James Walker, *Letters on the West Indies* (London, 1818), 170.

<sup>155</sup> Hector McNeill claimed that “the brown lady considers it as a step *derrogêr a noblesse*, to descend to any thing darker than her own complexion”: *Observations on the Treatment of Negroes, in the Island of Jamaica* (London, 1800), 42.

<sup>156</sup> Simon Taylor to George Hibbert, January 14, 1804, Simon Taylor Letters, ICS 20, Letter Book F, no. 42, ICS.

frequently did so with the desire that subsequent generations would become phenotypically white. They implored the children's guardians to keep vigilant watch over their sexual behavior and marriage prospects in Britain to aid social integration. Fathering two children with a black slave, John Ferrier sent his offspring to friends in Britain. Ferrier specifically demanded that the guardians help choose his children's spouses. He worried that they might "marry without Consent or go astray to strange men or women after such marriage or cohabit with worthless persons *as their Mother has done*" [emphasis mine].<sup>157</sup> Clearly, racialized anxieties about his children's sexual behavior wracked Ferrier's nerves. He may have enjoyed his relationship with a black woman in the colonies, but fearful that his children would take the same steps as their mother – a worry encouraged by cultural claims about African hypersexuality – Ferrier regulated his children's marriage prospects intensely. The same held true for George Hall. He demanded of his "mulatto son Francis" in Britain that, "if he will marry a white woman he shall be intitled to one third of my said property . . . but in case he should live in a lewd way with any woman he shall only be intitled to [a few slaves]." Hall set the same stipulations for his daughter.<sup>158</sup> This matrimonial prerequisite reflected Hall's strong interest in the racial heritage of his British descendants. Mixed-race men in particular, had little or no chance of marrying white spouses in the colonies. Moving to Britain increased the prospect of a biological whitening of the family line.

Probate records also reveal the destination of children sent abroad. White migrants to the West Indies came from locations throughout the British Isles. When it came time for them to send mixed-race children across the ocean, they often directed

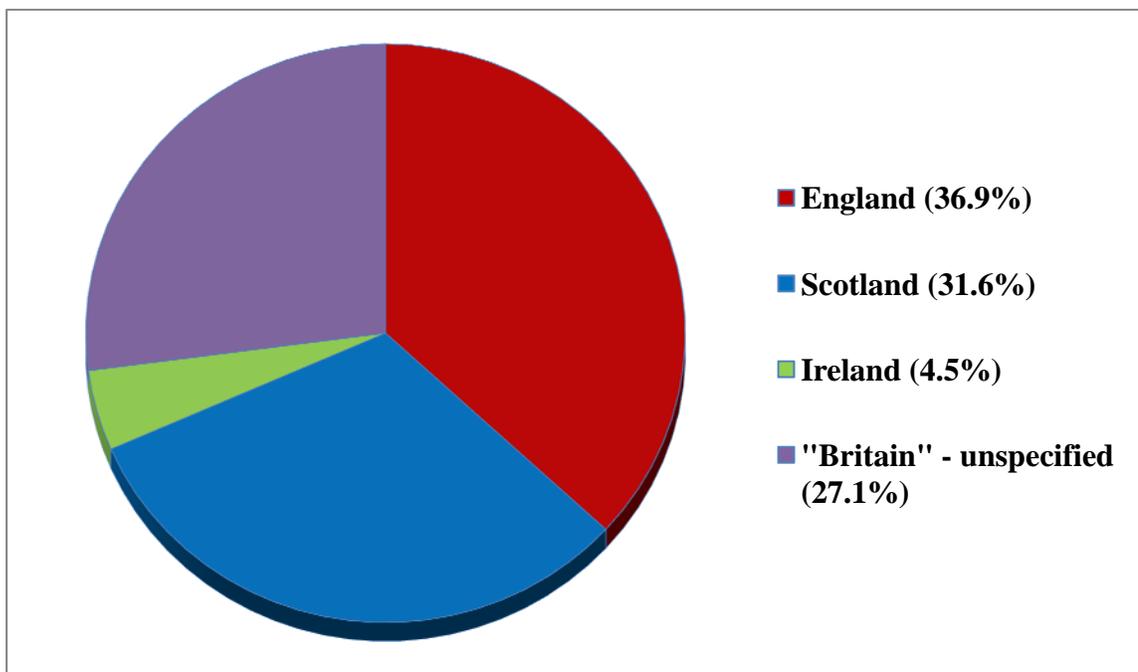
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<sup>157</sup> Will of John Ferrier, June 8, 1805, Wills, LOS 75, ff. 104-5, IRO.

<sup>158</sup> Will of George Hall, October 21, 1773, Wills, LOS 41, ff. 169-70, IRO.

them to their places of origin. Table 2.4 shows the destinations intended for, or current residences of, mixed-race children in Britain. A near equal number of mixed-race children went to Scotland as to England. Rough calculations estimate that a third of Jamaica's population was Scottish by the late eighteenth century.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, a disproportionate number of Scots, compared to English and Irish settlers, sent mixed-race children back to Britain. The percentage may have been even higher, as some of those listed as traveling to England, like John Tailyour's family, were perhaps children of Scots sent to English schools. If some Jamaicans felt the need to remove their mixed-race children from the island, then those of Scottish heritage felt the urge more strongly.

**Table 2.4: Destinations of mixed-race Jamaicans, by percentage, 1773-1815<sup>160</sup>**



<sup>159</sup> This comes from Edward Long's claim of 6,000 Scottish inhabitants (out of 18,000 total white inhabitants) in Jamaica in 1770: *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 287. Without adequate extant data, scholars must accept this estimate: Douglas Hamilton, "Transatlantic Ties: Scottish Migration Networks in the Caribbean, 1750-1800," in *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities Since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Angela McCarthy (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 52; O'Shaughnessy, *Empire Divided*, 8.

<sup>160</sup> Wills, LOS 41-42, 49-51, 57-58, 60-61, 70-75, 87-91, IRO.

Why Scottish West Indians should be more willing to transport mixed-race children to Britain is unclear. Investigations into illegitimacy in early-modern Britain have revealed some evidence that Scotland experienced higher levels of bastardy than the rest of the Isles, and might therefore have been more tolerant toward illegitimate children.<sup>161</sup> Rosalind Mitchinson and Leah Leneman contend that, while the Kirk maintained a stricter attitude toward illegitimacy than the Church of England, Scottish law did not recognize marriage as a sacrament, but as something more akin to a verbal contract. Those who promised marriage could consummate their relationships before a wedding. Frequent broken promises, generally the result of increased economic dislocation, resulted in more illegitimate children. English custom held the same allowance, though it was not legally codified. Mitchinson and Leneman argue that this exception in Scottish law, along with the Kirk's relative toleration of "irregular marriages," may have fostered increased illegitimacy.<sup>162</sup> It may have also inured Scots to bastard children to a greater degree than their southern neighbors. If Scottish families had grown accustomed to bastard children in the eighteenth century, then Scots in the Caribbean may have been more willing to introduce illegitimate children of color to British kin. Religious and legal customs, then, could have inspired more Scots to send their children home.

Educational and cultural differences between North and South Britain may have also contributed to this variance in mixed-race migration. Richard Sheridan asserts that Scots were often the Caribbean's most humane residents. As "the best-educated section

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<sup>161</sup> Andrew Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex and Society: Northeast Scotland, 1750-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Introduction.

<sup>162</sup> Rosalind Mitchinson and Leah Leneman, *Sexuality and Social Control: Scotland 1660-1780* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 33, 79-133.

of the white population in the West Indies,” Sheridan argues that Scots were more familiar with Enlightenment principles, and therefore more inclined toward humanitarianism in the colonies than their neighbors.<sup>163</sup> Considering that one of the patriarchs of the Scottish Enlightenment, David Hume, declared, “I am apt to suspect the negroes . . . to be naturally inferior to the whites,” and that, “there are Negroe slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity,” it is unlikely that this Scottish tradition naturally translated into greater tolerance toward children of color in Britain.<sup>164</sup> Still, Scottish privileging of education could have pushed harder on some fathers to insist that mixed-race offspring travel to Europe than those of an English or Irish extraction. The rise in prominence of Scotland’s universities at this time may have also contributed to the return.

Ultimately, sending children of color back to Britain may have proven an attractive option to Scottish migrants because they had the same desire for themselves. Scholars have noted that the Caribbean often served as a temporary home for Scottish travelers hoping to build wealth in the colonies before returning to Britain. As Alan Karras argues, this migration “became an aid to, if not a necessity for, upward mobility” for Scottish people.<sup>165</sup> The Empire offered adventurous individuals economic and profession opportunities unavailable in North Britain. For impoverished Scots, as well as those pushed off their land during the Clearances, the colonies were a last chance at

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<sup>163</sup> Sheridan, “The Role of the Scots,” 102-03.

<sup>164</sup> David Hume, “Of National Characters,” *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, eds. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green & Co, 1889), 252. June Evans believes that modern problems of racism in Scotland can be traced to the writings of Hume. She asserts that the Scottish intelligentsia, as well as Scottish missionaries, were instrumental in the propagation of racist thought towards Africans and West Indians (both in Britain, as well as in the colonies): “African/Caribbeans in Scotland: A Socio-Geographical Study” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995), 83-106.

<sup>165</sup> Alan Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 1, 21.

economic success. For those in the gentry, like John Tailyour, they provided the opportunity to build a large nest egg which might catapult them into the aristocracy. Refining this notion of Scottish remigration, Douglas Hamilton maintains that success in the colonies may have contributed as much to the decision to return as any resolution made beforehand. He notes that involvement in colonial governance and administration pushed many successful Scots to send children back to Britain for school, in order to solemnize their family's upward mobility.<sup>166</sup>

The migration of mixed-race individuals between Scotland and the Caribbean roughly follows the same pattern of white children during this period, with varying degrees of similarity between their aims. Both sets of parents wished to bestow an elite education and training unavailable to their children in the colonies. Both saw a life in Britain as a step toward social advancement. However, Scottish fathers who sent children of color abroad were motivated by much deeper concerns about their offspring's lives in the colonies. Wealth could only take those of mixed heritage so far in a society constructed around racial supremacy. Skin color precluded one from enjoying any of the advances that a Scottish father had made to the family status. As Douglas Hamilton argues, Scottish settlers succeeded so spectacularly in the Caribbean due to their assumption of a British identity, rather than fostering an isolated ethnic solidarity. "For Scots in the Caribbean to portray themselves as Britons was one thing," Hamilton rightly points out: "it was something else again for them to be accepted as such. But the institution of enslavement, and the perceptions of colour differences, helped to blur

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<sup>166</sup> Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 161-69.

divisions in white society.”<sup>167</sup> Kathleen Wilson concurs, positing that Englishness could easily be “performed” in the islands by non-English.<sup>168</sup> If a strict color line in the West Indies “whitened” the Scottish and eased their entry into the Caribbean elite, then it also immediately disqualified their mixed-race offspring from enjoying those same spoils. Sending these children back to Britain, then, was not simply an attempt to cover them in a patina of refinement, but an effort to confer a sense of Britishness and legitimacy on those who were barred from such statuses in the colonies.

At the same time, links that bound white society together across the Atlantic could also incorporate these children of color. If the social networks between Scotland and the Caribbean relied upon “fictive kinship” – ties that mimicked family relations in the absence of common ancestry – then the migration of mixed-race individuals to Scotland took advantage of these loose associations.<sup>169</sup> Family back in Scotland may have scoffed at the notion that these mixed-race children were of pure relation, but attachments to Caribbean kin provided the bridge upon which this group could cross the Atlantic. The Scots emphasized, more than anyone else in the islands, the acquisition of social legitimacy from an originally marginalized position. For some, attaining that social sanction for their children of color was an equally important ambition, and they depended upon family at home to obtain it.

One final consideration of this migration is afforded by individuals of color who also gave bequests for British-bound relatives. From the above sample of wills, seven

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 50. Hamilton argues specifically against Alan Karras’s notion of Scottish “ethnic solidarity” in Jamaica at this time: Karras, *Sojourners*, 120.

<sup>168</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, empire and gender in the eighteenth century* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 151.

<sup>169</sup> Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic World*, 25-27. Hamilton uses the term “fictive kinship” to describe links between Scots without firm family or clan ties.

were from mixed-race testators who gave money to people of color in Britain. Additionally, one will, from a free black man named Thomas Mills, gave an estate and several slaves to a black relative currently residing in the metropole.<sup>170</sup> Due to the small number, there are no obvious substantive trends. Four of the wills from these seven mixed-race testators gave bequests to extended family, rather than children. Interestingly, Charity Harry, mother of Jane Harry, appears in the sample. Her daughter having already died in England, Charity gave a plot of land to her nephew, Charles Cosans, who had also moved to Britain.<sup>171</sup> Three of the five wills which specified a location, noted that the mixed-race beneficiary had moved to England. The other two had traveled to Scotland. Two more important details are evident: all but one of these seven wills came from female testators; all seven were proven after 1793. On the former point, mixed-race men either lacked the colonial success or connections to Britain necessary to send a relative abroad. To the latter point, it appears that the growth of Jamaica's brown population at the end of the eighteenth century delayed the appearance of these wills until the early 1790s. Additionally, it was not until the turn of the nineteenth century that people of color began re-accumulating fortunes set back by the 1762 inheritance cap. Again, the small number of these wills makes firm conclusions difficult. Suffice it to say that their existence in the sample speaks to the growing power and financial independence of mixed-race Jamaicans by the early nineteenth century, and their own desire to provide a refined upbringing for children in the metropole as well.

While these probate records provide clues about the movement of mixed-race Jamaicans to Britain, they give little sense of remigration back to the colony. The vast

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<sup>170</sup> Will of Thomas Mills, June 8, 1775, Wills, LOS 42, f. 126, IRO.

<sup>171</sup> Will of Charity Harry, November 13, 1793, Wills, LOS 58, f. 71, IRO.

majority of wills do not specify whether the children were to stay in Britain or return to Jamaica. Of the seventeen that did, three requested that the children eventually come back to the island, and fourteen demanded that they stay in the metropole (with some threatening to invalidate the inheritance if they returned). William Anderson, for example, warned that if his mixed-race son Robert came back to Jamaica, he would lose his entire £500 bequest.<sup>172</sup> It may be assumed that many of those who made no mention of their children's future residence desired that they stay in Britain. With so many fathers wanting to bring them up in a trade, these children would undoubtedly have to remain in the metropole.

#### *Mixed-Race Remigration Patterns from Jamaican Privilege Petitions*

Most testators wanted their children to stay in Britain, but that does not mean that all remained there. Although only three of the above wills asked that the children return to Jamaica, it was not uncommon for individuals of color to come back to the colonies after finishing school in Britain. Privilege petitions from the Jamaican Assembly touch on this remigration movement. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Jamaican Assembly allowed individuals of color, beginning in 1707, to petition for privileged rights. If granted, these allocations gave privileged people of color the same rights as whites, except the abilities to vote or hold office. Generally, petitioners included a personal biography in their appeals which detailed the advanced positions that entitled them to special civil immunities. Of the more than 650 individuals who petitioned for privileges, seventy-one noted that they had been educated in Britain. Only eight of those who had crossed the Atlantic were still living in Britain at the time of their petitions –

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<sup>172</sup> Will of William Anderson, August 1, 1804, Wills, LOS 73, f. 17, IRO.

which were filed by parents in Jamaica – and only five from that subset were noted as permanent British residents.<sup>173</sup> It is not surprising that so few petitioners would either still be living in Britain, or determined never to return. The only colonial law that could have affected mixed-race Jamaicans in Britain was the 1762 inheritance cap, as it was tied to Jamaican property. However, only a handful of the hundreds of privilege petitions lodged with the Jamaican Assembly attempted to evade the inheritance legislation, perhaps owing to the difficulty in obtaining that particular exemption. Those who intended to stay permanently in Britain, then, had little need to secure privileged rights in the colonies.

The sixty-six privileged Jamaicans who had returned, or planned to return, to the colony from Britain provide some helpful evidence about mixed-race remigration. For one, the vast majority of privilege petitions filed by British-educated Jamaicans came after 1780. In fact, only eighteen percent appeared before that year. Sixty-five percent were lodged in the 1780s, and the remaining seventeen percent in the final years before 1802, when privilege petitions were banned. Much like the earlier discussion on mixed-race testators, this increase at the close of the eighteenth century may be attributable to the growth of Jamaica's population of color during that period, as well as to a delay in wealth accumulation following the inheritance act. It may also indicate, as the probate records do, something of an increase in mixed-race migration toward the end of the eighteenth century. Reflected in this data, increased restrictions against the island's population of color, both legally and financially, throughout that century pushed more fathers to send their children abroad.

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<sup>173</sup> These privilege petition statistics come from the Jamaica House of Assembly Minutes, CO 139/22-51, NAE.

Most interesting is the gender disparity between those who returned. Of the sixty-six mixed-race Jamaicans in the petitions who returned from Britain, forty-five (64%) were men. This corresponds perfectly with the percentage of boys who went to Britain (65%) in the probate records. While the gender disparity in remigration may simply reflect the initial disproportion of those sent in the first place, it may also indicate that mixed-race men believed that their advanced British education would serve them well in the colonies. If white Jamaicans did not take them seriously as workers, then perhaps a European upbringing could at least provide the necessary education to start their own plantations. Unfortunately, only five of the sixty-six individuals in the above data listed their occupations in Jamaica. One was a businessman, one a tradesman, and three were designated planters. Two of those planters noted that they had previously been overseers, and had recently transitioned into the planting line.<sup>174</sup> Another colored planter, Dugald Clarke, returned to Jamaica with a host of new ideas for island farming. His time spent in Britain had been quite useful. Clarke began studying in the 1760s, just at the time that James Watt started developing steam-power improvements in Scotland. While in Britain, Clarke patented a sugar mill, powered by a steam engine that was to improve sugar refinement dramatically. He returned to Jamaica in the hopes that his invention would revolutionize sugar production, and he boasted of the machine in his privilege petition.<sup>175</sup> For Clarke, a British education had been a stepping stone to enter Jamaica's planter class, not as a chance to flee the colonies. Employment opportunities were certainly diminished

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., November 22, 1804, CO 140/90, f. 86.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., December 3, 1771, CO 140/52. Veront Satchell's survey of sugar-mill technology in the late eighteenth, and early nineteenth century finds that nearly a quarter of all patents on sugar-mill improvements in Jamaica dealt with innovations based on steam power: "Innovations in Sugar-Cane Mill Technology in Jamaica, 1760-1830," in *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Verene Shepherd (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2002), 99.

for men of color in the island, but a British education could afford a chance at success that would have otherwise never come.

Despite the bold actions of some mixed-race men who returned to Jamaica, many believed that a British education could make things worse for a person of color in the colonies. After Robert Laing had already received his education in England, his British guardian, William Philip Perrin, considered his returning to Jamaica. New estate attorneys, however, advised against the prospect. “[T]he circumstance of Colour, which you seem to think will operate against him in England, will still be in greater force here,” the attorneys wrote back from Jamaica: “[it] would operate very forcibly, and be a strong objection against his success in this Country.”<sup>176</sup> In fact, a number of Caribbean travelers commented on the intense discrimination experienced by British-trained colonists of color upon their return. Robert Renny’s *History of Jamaica* includes a 1799 account of “a Mulatto, who had been sent to Europe for his education” and was on his way back to Jamaica. At a stop in a Barbadian tavern, the young man ordered drinks with several white passengers. A waiter “came rudely up to the young Mulatto, and, taking him by the arm, said, ‘Sir, you cannot come in here: You must not sit down with gentlemen.’” The young Mulatto literally started with indignation, followed the waiter to an empty room, and burst into tears.”<sup>177</sup> John Waller told of a similar occurrence in Barbados. Having met “a surgeon of a frigate who happened to be a man of colour, though brought up in England, and educated at the University of Edinburgh,” Waller dined with the man at Bridgetown’s local hospital. When the surgeon entered the mess hall, however, “all rose, highly indignant at this intrusion upon their dignity, at the instant when the

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<sup>176</sup> John Jacques and Ralph Fisher to William Philip Perrin, April 24 1783, Fitzherbert Papers, D239 M/E 16972, DRO.

<sup>177</sup> Renny, *An History*, 190n.

gentleman of colour sat down at one end of the room.”<sup>178</sup> Although the man outranked his fellow diners, none wished to acknowledge his superiority. Men and women of color, then, could migrate back to the West Indies, but white islanders did not necessarily hold their arms open for them.<sup>179</sup>

### Conclusion

The outmigration and remigration patterns of mixed-race Jamaicans speak to the frequency and volume of their travels to Britain. Although solid numbers are difficult, if not impossible, to discern, the data above reveal that substantial numbers of mixed-race Jamaicans left for Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Edward Long certainly believed that it was a booming practice. Having moved to Britain himself, he marveled: “Many of the good folks in England have entertained the strange opinion, that the children born in Jamaica of white parents turn swarthy, through the effect of the climate.” He laughed at this apparent illogic, and suspected that “The many Mulatto, Quateron, & other illegitimate children sent over to England for education, have probably given rise to the opinion.”<sup>180</sup> Long’s reaction indicates not only the conspicuous existence of these mixed-race students in the metropole, but also a British anxiety over their presence. Even if their absolute numbers were not large, mixed-race migrants made a significant impression.

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<sup>178</sup> John Augustine Waller, “A Voyage in the West Indies,” in *New Voyages and Travels*, vol. 3 (London, nd), Rare Books, HL, 95-96.

<sup>179</sup> Another example comes from the petition of John Campbell, a Jamaican of color trained as a lawyer in England, to the Earl of Bathurst (Secretary of State for the Colonial Department) circa 1816. He complained: “Many of the Free People [of color], My Lord, have received their education in Great Britain, and consequently on their return to their native country, the more poignantly feel the miseries to which they are exposed”: CO 137/45, f. 271, NAE.

<sup>180</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 274.

Regardless of quantity, the migration was sustained, lasting for decades. It was not a reactionary response to individual events, but rather an attempt to secure personal and financial success for children laboring under increasing colonial burdens. Though more akin to the French West-Indies, and not nearly as harsh as North America, Britain's Caribbean colonies still maintained firm legal, institutional, and cultural biases against their brown populations. With few legal protections, little employment, and virtually no schools which they could attend, mixed-race islanders had little hope of advance within the colonies. As one of the only methods of recourse for mixed-race families, sending a child of color to Britain became standard practice, one that many West Indians undertook and that they helped their friends to complete as well. Fathers who wished to send children abroad depended both on family at home and on contacts who had also educated their offspring in Britain. The business and personal networks within which West Indian people of color were enmeshed, became crucial to their transatlantic relocations. They would remain so for the duration of their lives.

## CHAPTER 3

### Inheritance Disputes and Mixed-Race Individuals in Britain

#### Introduction

In the closing months of 1774, Simon Taylor found himself tied up in the affairs of a mixed-race child traveling to Britain. This child, however, was not the son of his cousin John. Rather, it was William Cuming, an eight-year-old “mustee”<sup>1</sup> soon to move to Scotland according to the will of his recently-deceased father Duncan. The young boy’s uncle, William, would take care of him in Inverness until he reached his majority, inheriting the whole of his father’s Jamaican fortune.<sup>2</sup> As one of the estate’s two executors, Simon Taylor hoped to administer his friend’s last will and testament properly by first clearing Duncan Cuming’s debts. Nearly £500 of those debts, though, was due to Taylor himself. Simon had received no recompense and by March of the next year, young William had arrived at the foot of the Scottish Highlands. Taylor’s only recourse was in the courts. He filed a bill of complaint to the Jamaican Chancery Court on the first day of March, 1775 in an attempt to recover his money.<sup>3</sup> The suit targeted Kingston carpenter Thomas Walker, the other executor of Cuming’s estate. Taylor accused Walker of taking full control of the deceased’s assets and lying about the estate’s worth to avoid

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<sup>1</sup> In Jamaican racial taxonomy, a “mustee” was three generations removed from an African ancestor – still subject to the island’s laws against “mulattos.”

<sup>2</sup> Will of Duncan Cuming, September 15, 1774, Wills LOS 42, f. 21, IRO.

<sup>3</sup> *Taylor vs. Walker*, March 1, 1775, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/70 Lib. 58, ff. 369-72, JA.

paying its debts. Taylor insisted that Cuming's late-fortune totaled over £10,000, and that both Walker and the younger Cuming had conspired against him.

Simon Taylor was not alone in taking legal action against the inheritance of a mixed-race child in Britain. Whites on either side of the Atlantic worked strenuously to disinherit individuals of color, whether they traveled to Britain or not. Those who did cross over, though, often faced more strident opposition from white kin who did not wish to see them leading elite lives in the imperial epicenter. Employing both colonial and metropolitan law, these whites worked vigorously to excise relatives of color from the family fortune. At the same time, they used elaborate legal strategies to affix colonial categories of race and status onto their family in the metropole. Simon Taylor's suit centered solely on the repayment of debt, but it also reinforced the vulnerability of mixed-race children in Britain whose financial survival often depended entirely upon the legal integrity of their fathers' bequests. Unfortunately, the conclusion of the case is not easily traceable due to the condition of the Chancery Court records and the organization of their original transcription. Regardless of its outcome, the suit was only one of many experiences between Taylor and mixed-race Jamaicans abroad.

This chapter examines several court cases between mixed-race individuals in Britain and their white relatives over a disputed inheritance. Legal wrangling over probated estate was not unusual in Britain, but when such cases involved people of color, complex maneuvers were required to disinherit effectively. Discrepancies between metropolitan and colonial law, primarily centered around slavery and color barriers in the latter, provided the requisite legal ambiguity that whites could exploit in these transatlantic will resolutions. In the process, white litigants sought to re-impose both

legal and cultural categories of difference onto mixed-race relatives. First, this chapter will explore the legal dimensions of inheritance in both the colonies and Britain, as well as the difficulties in reconciling the two. Secondly, a number of cases from Jamaica's Chancery and Ordinary courts will detail the regularity of litigation between mixed-race individuals and white claimants to colonial fortunes. Finally, four case studies will be presented to reveal the range of legal difficulties facing West Indians of color who traveled to Britain. While Katharine Campbell of Jamaica was accused of swindling a white man of his Scottish estate, the Morse children defended themselves against claims that they were not legally entitled to their father's Jamaican assets. Joshua Steele's mixed-race children were scrutinized for the validity of their manumission after moving from Barbados to London, while the Fraser children from East Florida challenged accusations of being fictional claimants to a vast fortune. Each of these cases show various ways in which children of color could fall prey to British family. This chapter argues that inheritance lawsuits attempted to reduce the financial independence of mixed-race individuals in Britain, thereby eliminating their social mobility within elite society, while concurrently pushing to reassert colonial categories of difference onto their lives in the metropole.

### **Transatlantic Law**

Will disputes in early-modern Britain can present many analytical difficulties, particularly when examined on a systematic basis. For one, there was no single court, nor branch of law, that held exclusive right to inheritance regulation. Civil and common law procedures applied to both, and even though it had no claim over landed property,

ecclesiastical courts could oversee the dispensation of personal assets as well. Such variance has frustrated scholars' attempts to employ these sources, enough so that, according to John Addy, "secondary material on contested wills is virtually non-existent."<sup>4</sup> The problem is graver still for those studying disputed estates in the colonies.<sup>5</sup> There has been virtually no work completed on West Indian law in the eighteenth century, owing in large part to the quality of Caribbean records.<sup>6</sup> Agnes Butterfield's frank description of the early neglect shown to Jamaica's Chancery and Supreme Court records speaks to the challenges of utilizing these sources.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, attempts at positioning them within the larger Atlantic context have not been forthcoming. Complexities within British law, compounded with a West Indian legal system often in conflict with metropolitan procedure, makes such study immensely difficult. Still, these inheritance disputes are ripe for examination, not only for their legal implications, but also for their biographical and confrontational content.

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<sup>4</sup> John Addy, *Death, Money and the Vultures: Inheritance and avarice, 1660-1750* (New York: Routledge, 1992), ix.

<sup>5</sup> A refreshing and, for this study, relevant exception is Durba Ghosh's examination of an inheritance dispute over an Indian estate involving a Eurasian man who had moved to Britain: *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174-79. For work on antebellum U.S. will disputes and race, see: Ariela Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). Although not specifically focused on will disputes, Fiona Vernal has considered the challenges of reconciling colonial statutes with metropolitan interpretations of that law: "'No Such Thing as a Mulatto Slave': Legal Pluralism, Racial Descent and the Nuances of Slave Women's Sexual Vulnerability in the Legal Odyssey of Steyntje van de Kaap, c. 1815-1822," *Slavery and Abolition* 29, no. 1 (March 2008): 23-47.

<sup>6</sup> For an impressive examination of will disputes in Brazil (particularly as a counterpoint to Britain), and the place of illegitimate children in lines of succession, see: Linda Lewin, *Surprise Heirs, Volume 1: Illegitimacy, Patrimonial Rights, and Legal Nationalism in Luso-Brazilian Inheritance, 1750-1821* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Butterfield took on the task of moving the records, herself, from the Court House in Kingston to their current location at the Jamaica Archives in Spanish Town. Amongst other problems in the Kingston repository, loose pages from the records were piled "eighteen inches deep" in the room in which they were kept. Worse still, she notes, "More than once I found the evil-smelling remains of a meal wrapped up in a page of a libel, letter, or invoice from a prize vessel": Agnes Butterfield, "Notes on the Records of the Supreme Court, the Chancery, and the Vice-Admiralty Courts of Jamaica," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* XVI (1938-39): 88-89. Such neglect, combined with infestation and climate issues make many of the hundreds of volumes of the Supreme and Chancery Court ledgers too fragile for inspection. This makes a systematic survey of those records nearly impossible, and most individual cases cannot feasibly be followed in their entirety.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, British wills began taking on a modern form. Originally grounded in feudal custom, medieval wills followed a strict pattern: one-third of the estate went to the local lord, another third to the Church, and the final third to immediate family. Illegitimate children, such as those examined in this chapter, had no legal claim to their father's estates and could inherit nothing from it.<sup>8</sup> They were defined as "filius nullius," or "sons of nobody." As feudalism crumbled, the template for wills crumbled along with it, so that by 1540 the Statute of Wills allowed freehold land to be devised to anyone. This process continued under the Restoration Settlement of 1660, when knight's service was no longer required under the administration of a will. Finally, by 1692 one could freely allocate one's personal property to whomever he or she wished.<sup>9</sup> Bastards who had received bequests from parents now had legitimate claim to an inheritance, although they still possessed no legal recourse when fathers died intestate.<sup>10</sup> Erosion of feudal custom paved the way for greater testamentary freedom, although even as late as the eighteenth century most generally gave to immediate, rather than extended, family.<sup>11</sup> As Carole Shammas notes, "English inheritance was a confusing mixture of feudal rights, manorial traditions, ecclesiastical rules and parliamentary statutes," but by the eighteenth century, individual testators had, by and large, gained control over their bequests.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Rees, Welsh & Co., 1915), ch. 16, 459. See also: Jack Goody, *The development of the family and marriage in Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 75-76.

<sup>9</sup> Addy, *Death, Money*, 8-12.

<sup>10</sup> Blackstone, *Commentaries*, vol.1, Ch. 16, 459.

<sup>11</sup> Alastair Owens, "Property, gender and the life course: inheritance and family welfare provision in early nineteenth-century England," *Social History* 26, no. 3 (October 2001): 299-318; Ruth Perry, "Women in families: the great disinheritance," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 111-129.

<sup>12</sup> Carole Shammas, "English Inheritance Law and Its Transfer to the Colonies," *The American Journal of Legal History* 31, no. 2 (April 1987): 145.

How did these laws translate in the colonies? Secondary work on the development of North-American law is much more bountiful than that of the West Indies.<sup>13</sup> Scholars generally believe that continental America adopted English common law as its base of administrative procedure, allowing local variation to stray somewhat from the European model. This was the result not only of divergent experiences in each colony, but of the different localities from which the colonizers originated.<sup>14</sup> David Konig has challenged this theory, arguing instead that colonial appropriation of common law came only in the wake of an introductory period of despotic rule which allowed authorities to suppress local and indigenous rebellions.<sup>15</sup> Such individual variation, grounded as it may have (eventually) been in English common law, gradually grew closer to the British standard. Bruce Mann's analysis of Connecticut shows that informal laws and procedures in the colony's early history gradually gave way to an increasingly formalized process which followed English common law more strictly.<sup>16</sup> Reconciliation of North-American and British law created what Mary Sarah Bilder calls, "the Transatlantic Constitution": a system distinguishing colonial laws that were merely

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<sup>13</sup> Along with Shammass, "English Inheritance," one of the most relevant pieces on the transfer of English inheritance law to the colonies is Lee J. Alston and Morton Schapiro, "Inheritance Laws Across Colonies: Causes and Consequences," *The Journal of Economic History* 44, no. 2 (June 1984): 277-87. See also: Gloria Main, "Probate Records as a Source for Early American History," *WMQ*, Third Series, XXXII, no. 1 (January 1975): 89-99.

<sup>14</sup> Julius Goebel, "King's Law and Local Custom in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Columbia Law Review* (March 1931): 416-48; George Haskins, "Law and Colonial Society," *American Quarterly* (Autumn, 1957): 354-64; David Flaherty, "Law and the Enforcement of Morals in Early America," *Perspectives in American History* 5 (1971): 203-53; Shammass, "English Inheritance," 145. For an interesting account of the challenges in reconciling Virginian and English law on the issue of bastardy, see: John Ruston Pagan, *Anne Orthwood's Bastard: Sex and Law in Early Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Konig focuses on the Irish and Virginian colonization schemes: David Konig, "Colonization and the Common Law in Ireland and Virginia, 1569-1634," in *The Transformation of Early American History: Society, Authority, and Ideology*, eds. J. Henretta, Michael Kammen and Stanley N. Katz (New York: Knopf, 1991), 70-92.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Mann, *Neighbors and Strangers: Law and Community in Early Connecticut* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

“divergent,” and therefore acceptable, from England, from those which were “repugnant” to it and requiring elimination by the Privy Council. With the rise of the market economy in the eighteenth century, the need for a more uniform legal structure between colony and metropole demanded standardization, resulting in the anglicization of North-American law.<sup>17</sup> This included inheritance law as well. Although early procedures regulating inheritance differed sharply between the various colonies, particularly in regard to women, by the eighteenth century many of those distinctions had vanished.<sup>18</sup>

Much like its mainland neighbors, the West Indies developed its own specific variations of English legal tradition. Discrepancies between islands, especially around property law, sprung from dissimilarities in their founding. Michael Craton believes that Barbados’s royal charter created a feudal relationship between landowners and British authorities, enough so that islanders sided heavily with the Cavaliers during the English Civil War in hopes of maintaining the King’s assent to colonial property claims. Jamaica, on the other hand, came into English possession during the Interregnum and quickly established a land grant system which organized property ownership according to a more capitalist rubric, divorced from feudal/royal obligation.<sup>19</sup> Thus structured,

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Sarah Bilder, *The Transatlantic Constitution: Colonial Legal Culture and the Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). The British Empire’s development of an Atlantic law code in the Western Hemisphere was much easier than with its colonies in India and Africa – owing primarily to the native populations, who had not been decimated by disease and warfare, whose legal procedures the British had to respect to some degree. See also: Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Shammass, “English Inheritance,” 150; Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, “The Planter’s Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” *WMQ*, 3rd Series, XXXIV (1997): 542-71; Marylynn Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> Michael Craton, “Property and propriety: Land tenure and slave property in the creation of a British West Indian plantocracy, 1612-1740,” in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, eds. John Brewer and Susan Staves (New York: Routledge, 1995), 505-11. This more “modern” form of property ownership, however, stood alongside an anachronistic allowance of enslaved property. While Jamaicans defended their anti-feudal approach to land holding, they simultaneously used feudal notions of villeinage as a precedent to justify holding enslaved people.

Jamaicans obtained testamentary freedom much earlier than those in Britain, although most whites still favored primogeniture to keep large plantations wholly intact.<sup>20</sup> Like North America's colonies, however, the West Indies standardized legal practices to follow English law more closely by the eighteenth century. Although Westminster granted the Jamaican Assembly relative legislative independence in return for a steady revenue in 1728, protracted warfare in the islands, as well as a growing disproportion between blacks and whites, pushed officials to conform more fully to the English legal system.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, this compliance emerged as part of a compromise for British acceptance of the islands' primary legal peculiarity: mass enslavement. As Craton contends, planters

inherited a rich and useful array of customs, common laws and statutes from the mother country, which required minimal adaptation . . . Only in their pressing need to define the necessary Negro laborers as chattel slaves . . . were the British West Indian planters forced into inventing new law.<sup>22</sup>

Tension between distinctive slave codes and an increased conformity with English common law produced regular and pitched battles over West Indian estates.

Despite a higher degree of testamentary independence, West Indians hoping to pass their fortunes onto children of color were shackled by the islands' racially-targeted decrees. Colonial law had ultimate jurisdiction when probating a colonial estate; bequests violating island restrictions could not be enforced. If born enslaved and not

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<sup>20</sup> Trevor Burnard, "Inheritance and Independence: Women's Status in Early Colonial Jamaica," *WMQ*, Third Series, XLVIII, no. 1 (January 1991): 96; Craton, "Property and propriety," 513.

<sup>21</sup> See Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) for a description of the demographic and historical differences between the West Indian and North-American colonies that precipitated compliance in the former, and revolution in the latter.

<sup>22</sup> Craton, "Property and propriety," 512. See also: William M. Wiecek, "Somerset: Lord Mansfield and the Legitimacy of Slavery in the Anglo-American World," *University of Chicago Law Review* 42 (1974-75): 86-146; Robert Livingston Schuyler, *Parliament and the British Empire: Some Constitutional Controversies Concerning Imperial Legislative Jurisdiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 127-49.

manumitted, children of color had no recourse to any part of a father's fortune, not only because they were *de facto* illegitimate, but because they themselves were property within that very estate.<sup>23</sup> Barbadian law, in particular, strictly forbade enslaved inheritance in any amount. Questions surrounding one's freedom, then, could present real problems in estate resolutions. Interrogating a beneficiary's status of freedom provided the simplest method by which to challenge such bequests.

Those whose freedom was not in dispute also labored under inheritance law. As in Britain, if not listed explicitly in a will a free person of color had no claim to a white father's fortune by virtue of their illegitimacy.<sup>24</sup> Those in Jamaica suffered worse still. In 1762, the island's Assembly capped inheritances of illegitimate children of color at £2,000. Furthermore, it banned *inter vivos* bequests – gifts given during a testator's lifetime – that exceeded this limit as well.<sup>25</sup> Although not codified into metropolitan law, the act still applied to those who left for Britain. British courts administering wills of individuals dying overseas – the Prerogative Court of Canterbury for England and Wales, the Commissary Court of Edinburgh for Scotland, and the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Armagh for Ireland – had to abide by colonial law, and had no jurisdiction

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<sup>23</sup> This became a major problem in the antebellum United States, where some judges determined that even testamentary manumissions constituted a bequest, and therefore could not be given to an enslaved person: Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 371-423. For more on the occurrence of mixed-race beneficiaries in Jamaican wills, see: Christer Petley, "'Legitimacy' and social boundaries: free people of colour and the social order in Jamaican slave society," *Social History* 30, no. 4 (November 2005): 481-98.

<sup>24</sup> Interracial marriage was not prohibited in the Anglophone Caribbean, but it occurred so infrequently that the near entirety of the islands' mixed-race population, born from white fathers, was illegitimate.

<sup>25</sup> Jamaica House of Assembly, *Laws and Statutes, etc*, 2 Geo. III, viii. 3. Despite the Assembly's intention to reduce these gifts, it was not possible to regulate them. In fact, James Stewart scoffed at the provision, arguing that gifts were regularly given to avoid the limitation: *An Account of Jamaica* (London, 1808), 134-35.

over real property.<sup>26</sup> Probated estates were divided into realty (land and buildings) and personalty (everything else). While both were officially administered according to laws of colonial origin, disputes over the former had to comply firmly with colonial legislation, if they were not tried in colonial courts.<sup>27</sup> Matters were further complicated by declarations from many islands, including Jamaica, that enslaved people were real, and not personal, property.<sup>28</sup> Considering that most West Indian fortunes consisted of land and slaves, this reinforced colonial over metropolitan law when it came to inheritance resolution. Mixed-race people in Britain, therefore, fell subject to tight Caribbean estate regulations. Such restrictions opened a clear path for white family to litigate.<sup>29</sup>

### **Routine Litigation and Mixed-Race Fortunes**

This chapter considers a number of court cases between families with mixed-race relatives. Arising under feudal custom, wills could be administered by several different

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<sup>26</sup> Peter Wilson Coldham, *English Estates of American Colonists* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1980), v.; Peter Walne, *English Wills: Probate Records in England and Wales With a Brief Note on Scottish and Irish Wills* (Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1964), 19, 49-51.

<sup>27</sup> According to David Gauthier, John Locke exalted this system in his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*. Locke believed that the administration of wills in conquered lands should follow the custom of the conquered country, otherwise the colonizer claimed ownership of the land, which violated the civil compact: David Gauthier, "The Role of Inheritance in Locke's Political Theory," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science/Revue canadienne d'Economie et de Science politique* 32, no. 1 (February 1966): 38-45. Often claiming itself as a conquered territory, Jamaica and its officials supported this theory. British opinion differed, however, when it came to the administration of expatriate Britons' wills overseas in competing empires' territories. Muriel Nazzari notes that Britain demanded the ability to implement British inheritance law over its subjects living in Brazil: "Widows as Obstacles to Business: British Objections to Brazilian Marriage and Inheritance Laws," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 4 (October 1995): 781-802.

<sup>28</sup> Several of Britain's North-American colonies also defined chattel slaves as real property: Virginia from 1705-92; South Carolina in 1690 – although the Privy Council overturned that decision; Louisiana; and, after the Revolution, Kentucky from 1798-1852, and Arkansas from 1840-43: Morris, *Southern Slavery*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> This was true of France as well, in which colonial slave laws were frequently used to attack black and mixed-race metropolitans: Pierre Boule, "Racial Purity or Legal Clarity? The Status of Black Residents in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of the Historical Society* 6, no. 1 (March 2006): 19-46.

organizations. Before the Court of Probate Act standardized and centralized the system in 1857, wills “might have been undertaken by any one of a considerable number of courts competent in law to grant a probate.”<sup>30</sup> While several of the suits discussed in this chapter were argued in England, many arose in colonial courts. With ultimate jurisdiction over colonial property, these courts became hotbeds of transatlantic litigation over disputes estates.

Two principal courts examined in this section are the Jamaican courts of Ordinary and Chancery. As in England, the Ordinary Court’s sole function was to prove wills and resolve disputes over administration, according to common-law procedure. Its records contain a number of cases between white and mixed-race litigants in Britain. Jamaica’s Chancery Court, heard by the same judge, tried all manner of suits and passed down verdicts based on equity. Chancery was the premier court of equity in England, as well as Jamaica, hearing large numbers of cases throughout the early-modern period.<sup>31</sup> While often grounded in common law, equity judges could adopt a more common-sense approach to individual suits rather than adhere to strict legal precedent. Such haphazard decision making, adjudicated by often less-than-impartial judges, was not popular among North-American colonists who fled England because of such perceived corruption.<sup>32</sup> Only by the mid-eighteenth century did North America begin accepting chancery courts, although the West Indies had long used them by that point.<sup>33</sup> Due to the enormous volume, many probate suits were heard by Jamaica’s Chancery Court. Often it would

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<sup>30</sup> Walne, *English Wills*, 14.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Horwitz, *Chancery Equity Records and Proceedings 1600-1800: A Guide to Documents in the Public Record Office* (London: HMSO, 1995), 5.

<sup>32</sup> Salmon, *Women and the Law*.

<sup>33</sup> Stanley Katz, “The Politics of Law in Colonial America: Controversies over Chancery Courts and Equity Law in the Eighteenth Century,” *Perspectives in American History* V (1971): 485-518; Neville Hall, “Law and Society in Barbados at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” *The Journal of Caribbean History* 5 (November 1972): 20-45.

overrule the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in executing wills.<sup>34</sup> The suits discussed below come from a sample of the hundreds of volumes from Jamaica's Ordinary and Chancery Court records.

With the tremendous wealth extracted from enslaved labor, West Indian fathers often bestowed large fortunes upon children of color. As noted earlier, so much money was passed down to mixed-race individuals that in 1762 Jamaica's Assembly restricted their inheritance. Even after the law's enactment, however, large bequests to such children persisted. On a trip to Kingston in 1778, William Hickey met one father who managed to transfer nearly eight thousand pounds to an illegitimate son of color.<sup>35</sup> Soon after arriving at his post in Jamaica that same year, Rev. William Jones learned of a thirty-four thousand pound legacy left by one white local to several women of color and the various children whom he sired by them.<sup>36</sup> James Stewart summarized the prototypical white man in the islands succinctly: "His spurious issue he doats on with as parental a fondness as if they were the offspring of a more virtuous and tender union [and] he lavishes on them abundance."<sup>37</sup> Such parental largess put off many observers as it increased the fortunes of a growing population of color, and came at the expense of family back home. Lady Maria Nugent, after recording the death of a Captain Dobbin in her journal, lamented that "He died without seeing his children" in England: "it is said he has left all he is worth to his black mistress and her child. This is, I am afraid, but too

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<sup>34</sup> Coldham, *English Estates*, xi.

<sup>35</sup> William Hickey, *Memoirs of William Hickey*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. Alfred Spencer, vol.2 (New York: Hurst & Blackett Ltd, 1948), 24.

<sup>36</sup> William Jones, *The Diary of the Revd. William Jones 1777-1821*, ed. O. F. Christie (New York: Brentano's, 1929), 51.

<sup>37</sup> Stewart, *Account of Jamaica*, 200.

common a case in Jamaica.”<sup>38</sup> British relatives could lose out to a colonial family, but that did not mean that they were unable to act against their disinheritance.

Free people of color came into regular legal difficulty with whites, both in Britain and the colonies. Jamaica’s Chancery Court heard numerous cases in which executors failed to compensate mixed-race beneficiaries on the island. Generally, these executors were not related to the children but could still line their pockets by smuggling money away from a probated estate.<sup>39</sup> A free quadroon from the northern parish of St. Ann, Mary Burt had inherited an equal share of her father’s entire plantation, along with her brother and sister. Burt became sole beneficiary after both siblings’ deaths, but the estate’s executor, Henry Ferguson, had failed to allocate it. Ferguson claimed not only to have spent the money on educating Burt, but that her two siblings were still alive and each entitled to a third of the estate. She appealed to the court, complaining that Ferguson had “suffered her to be Treated and used both in Maintenance and Cloathing as a Negroe Slave.”<sup>40</sup> Similar problems arose for James Watson Austin, a mulatto slave manumitted after his father’s death. His patriarch’s will devised several slaves to Austin and his half-brother Thomas, a free mestee. After Thomas’s death, Austin asked the will’s executor, John Scott, for the whole share. Scott insisted that the estate was burdened with debt and refused payment. Austin countered that his father’s fortune still totaled several thousand pounds and that additional goods worth £1,000 sterling had already been sold.<sup>41</sup> Claiming that Scott had embezzled the money, Austin highlighted

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<sup>38</sup> Lady Mary Nugent, *Lady Nugent’s Journal of her residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*, ed. Philip Wright (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1966), 234.

<sup>39</sup> Vincent Brown documents the struggles between legatees and executors in Jamaica: *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 102-07.

<sup>40</sup> *Burt vs. Ferguson*, May 25, 1785, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/110 No. 90, ff. 184-85, JA.

<sup>41</sup> *Austin vs. Scott*, February 28, 1818, in *ibid.*, 1A/3/331 No. 308 Lib. 327, ff. 74-78.

the vulnerability of mixed-race children. If they were provided for at all, Jamaicans of color had to endure the depredations of unscrupulous executors.

Further problems arose from guardians and family entrusted to protect charges of color on the island. Fanchine Brown filed a petition to the Chancery Court in support of two quadroon children, Mary Catherine and Justine Henrietta Brown: half-sisters who shared the same father, Henry Brown. Fachine, a free woman of color who had been one of Henry's mistresses, told the court that the children's guardian had treated them viciously. Not only had the guardian failed to educate and clothe both girls, but Fachine claimed to have seen him "beat[ing] the said Children wantonly and with undue severity." She hoped to revoke his guardianship to save the children personal injury, as well as preserve and allocate their inheritance.<sup>42</sup> The McDermott children of St. Catherine endured similar neglect. Given the right to live and board in their father's house according to his will, the four children of color found themselves at odds with a white uncle, Peter. Arguing that Peter had not allowed them to live peacefully, nor provided them with the requisite food and laundering services specified in the will, the McDermott children appealed to the Chancery Court. "[T]heir Situation [was] rendered so uncomfotabl and inconvenient" that they had to leave the family plantation.<sup>43</sup> Whites like Peter McDermott could easily avoid executing the final desires of relatives when it came to mixed-race bequests. Many children of color depended entirely upon white fathers for their subsistence. Without access to such financial paternalism, these individuals struggled to maintain their stations in colonial society.

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<sup>42</sup> Petition of Fanchine Brown, December 17, 1812, in *ibid.*, 1A/3/276 No. 253, ff. 159-60.

<sup>43</sup> *McDermott vs. McDermott*, July 15, 1805, in *ibid.*, 1A/3/220 No. 197 Lib. 209, ff. 109-15.

Similar legal disputes regularly incorporated mixed-race Jamaicans who traveled to Britain. Some of these were part of the daily business of estate maintenance and not efforts of expropriation. With large fortunes behind them, or at least tied to white family, these migrants fell into the whirlpool of litigation swirling around Atlantic business. While in Britain, Charles Wright depended upon his mixed-race mother in Jamaica to arbitrate his father's intestate fortune. She worked to secure authority over the property in order to ensure her son's continued financial well-being.<sup>44</sup> In a similar case, the trust supporting Alexander Lowes, a young man of color transplanted to Yorkshire, came under legal threat in 1815. Islander George May had lost £5,000 to Lowes mixed-race uncle, Isaac Ochterloney, in a verdict handed down by Jamaica's Supreme Court over an improper land expulsion. May pleaded to the Court of Error, which heard appeals against the Supreme Court, adjudicated by the House of Lords in Westminster. It was an extraordinarily exclusive court and legal refuge of the island's most rich: a £500 bond was required by both sides just to begin proceedings. That Ochterloney could utilize the elite court and also fund a nephew of color in Britain demonstrates the great wealth that some individuals of color had accumulated by the early nineteenth century. Ultimately the Lords rejected the appeal, and Lowes family kept their massive legal windfall.<sup>45</sup>

Many will disputes involving British residents of color could be equally benign. The Lyons children and the Angell children, both mixed-race families living in Britain, each became entangled in lawsuits between rival executors to an administered will. Neither family suffered under the suits, but the legal wrangling tied up their affairs for a

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<sup>44</sup> Grace Israel, April 28, 1809, Jamaica Caveats of Administration, 1B/11/16/1, JA.

<sup>45</sup> *Ochterloney vs. May*, August 19, 1815, Jamaica Court of Error Records, 1B/11/10/12, ff. 89-95, JA.

significant period.<sup>46</sup> Others became involved in cases that did not target them explicitly for disinheritance. Three quadroon women in northern Jamaica sued to have their estate properly divided, and acted as litigants on behalf of a brother who had left for Britain.<sup>47</sup>

Likewise, white plaintiffs regularly sought estate reallocations which could mutually benefit mixed-race relatives in the metropole. In 1801, the Tulloh family in Jamaica lodged a bill of complaint against the executors of their brother's estate. The Tullohs claimed that his will had not been complied with, including provisions for two mulatto boys, James and John McKenzie, who had gone to Britain. Although the Tullohs did not advocate for the boys, the two young men became central to the case when executors alleged that costs in sending them to Britain – plus two more children of color whom their father sired after he wrote his will – kept the executors from properly administering the patriarch's final wishes.<sup>48</sup> That same year, Sarah Young from Bermondsey, England, sued the executor of her brother's estate for taking similar control of a Jamaican property instead of dividing it between his heirs. She held an equal share of the estate with her brother and sisters, as well as her mulatto nephew, Isaac Young Jobling, now living in Britain. Her lawsuit, if successful, would have given Jobling full access to his colonial trust.<sup>49</sup> Both the Tulloh and Young families presented strong testamentary disputes which incidentally benefited relatives of color in Britain. While neither actively crusaded for mixed-race kin, such legal efforts ultimately helped secure their relatives' fortunes.

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<sup>46</sup> *Lyon et al. vs. Innes*, August 8, 1817, Jamaica Court of Ordinary, 1B/11/11/4, ff. 45-46, JA; *Webb vs. Angell*, March 17, 1818, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/331 No. 308 Lib. 327, ff. 117-18, JA. See also *Angell vs. Angell*, January 24, 1811, in *ibid.*, 1A/3/268 No. 245, f. 130.

<sup>47</sup> *Cunningham et al. vs. Williams et al.*, February 24, 1792, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/154 No. 132, ff. 1-6, JA.

<sup>48</sup> *Tulloh vs. Marshall*, May 30, 1801, in *ibid.*, 1A/3/190 No. 167, ff. 323-24.

<sup>49</sup> *Young vs. Kiddell*, May 2, 1801, in *ibid.*, ff. 167-71.

As frequently as Jamaicans of color benefited from inheritance litigation, they also suffered from it. Most often, bequests came under attack when litigants disputed which version of a will to use. Subjects throughout the British Empire drafted and redrafted wills, much as is done today, based on changes in family or finances. Such alterations regularly came under intense scrutiny. “Deathbed” amendments made to wills were the most obvious targets of legal disagreement.<sup>50</sup> Many white beneficiaries used the tried-and-true charge of *non compos mentis* (not of sound mind) to dispute last-minute codicils for children of color: a tactic with long historical precedent.<sup>51</sup> Other times, white patriarchs could accomplish such dispossession themselves. In 1807, Robert Tefler drafted a will asking that upon his death, his mixed-race daughter Jeany be sent to Britain with a small trust. Nine years later, he drew a line through that bequest and replaced it with a smaller provision for a different daughter of color. Later disputes over the will did nothing to compensate Jeany.<sup>52</sup> In another suit, two mestee half-brothers who had both moved to Britain “never to return to Jamaica or any part of the West Indies,” according to their father’s will, became entangled in a dispute which disinherited one of the mothers. John Whittaker’s will provided handsomely for both his sons and one of their mothers, Mary Graves. In a last-minute revision, however, Whittaker took Graves out of his will completely, substituting another woman of color in her stead. The

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<sup>50</sup> Emmeline Garnett presents an interesting case of a legal dispute over a codicil in Lancaster, England: *John Marsden’s Will: The Hornby Estate Case 1780-1840* (Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press, 1998), 99-122.

<sup>51</sup> Several such cases turned up in a survey of Jamaica’s Court of Ordinary records. See, in particular: *Rowe vs. Mitchell et al.*, 1811, Jamaica Court of Ordinary, 1B/11/11/2, 1811, JA; *Ash vs. Ratigan*, September 3, 1808, in *ibid.*, 1B/11/11/3, ff. 8-24; Dispute over the will of John Sleater, October 3, 1789, in *ibid.*, 1B/11/13/1, ff. 143-54. For more on *non compos mentis* charges in England, see: Addy, *Death, Money*, 113-18.

<sup>52</sup> *Ritchie vs. Tefler*, January 6, 1817, Jamaica Court of Ordinary, 1B/11/11/4, ff. 61-69, JA.

court decided against Graves and she received nothing from the estate.<sup>53</sup> Changes in the colonial family, albeit ones of sexual preference, could dramatically alter the fortunes of mixed-race individuals migrating to Britain, or for their relations who stayed behind.

Estate executors could also greatly complicate the finances of those in Britain. Dependent upon their fathers' fortunes, individuals of color could be left stranded in the metropole by an untoward administrator. After giving a number of bequests to white family, Samuel Smith divvied the remainder of his estate between his mixed-race children, whom he had with housekeeper Elizabeth Ford. His only son Samuel was to stay in Jamaica, but Smith sent his four daughters, Elizabeth, Grace, Lucy, and Mary to London. The daughters took up residence off Oxford Road and drew upon Smith's trust after his passing in 1775. Receiving the expected annuity, however, became a frequent problem. Nearly twenty years after Smith's death, his daughters sued estate executors for improperly allocating his will. Depending almost entirely on their legacies, they claimed that the amounts given them over the years had been "very inadequate to answer the purpose of their maintenance."<sup>54</sup> Similar troubles beset the Goodman children, who had also moved to England from Jamaica. Although legally white – their mother was a free mestee and their father was white, making them four degrees removed from an African ancestor and therefore "white" by Jamaican law – they also suffered at the hands of corrupt executors. Making a standard claim that the original estate had been burdened with debt, the executors never provided full payment to the Goodmans. Denied the entirety of their bequests and therefore unable to afford a British lifestyle, two of the

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<sup>53</sup> *Whittaker vs. Green et al.*, May 18, 1802, in *ibid.*, 1B/11/13/1, ff. 179-204.

<sup>54</sup> *Smith vs. Rodon*, July 30, 1791, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/93 No. 73 Lib. 82, ff. 467-76, JA.

children, Rebecca and Frances, were forced to return to Jamaica.<sup>55</sup> This case sheds further light on the vulnerability of West Indian children in the metropole. As illegitimate children, their rights in estate disputes were tentative at best. As the children of enslaved and free women of color, prospects outside their fathers' fortunes were not encouraging.

In the day-to-day business of estate resolution, mixed-race Jamaicans became principal agents. While those still on the island were more frequently caught in these affairs, individuals who left for Britain risked being pulled into comparable traps. With regular numbers of mixed-race Jamaicans traveling to Britain, those who left the island regularly appeared in testamentary disputes. From a sample taken of the records from Jamaica's courts of Ordinary and Chancery, an average of at least two will disputes emerged each year on the island involving mixed-race migrants in Britain.<sup>56</sup> Efforts at disinheriting relatives were ubiquitous in the British Empire, most especially for these illegitimate relatives of color. In the next section, four case studies from several different Caribbean outposts will explore the issue in greater detail.

### **Katharine Campbell of Jamaica**

Beginning these case studies is the dramatic story of Katharine Campbell. Unlike other families presented in this chapter, Campbell's suit did not primarily involve whites of blood relation, nor did it center on legal ambiguities between the imperial periphery and center. Yet, it mimicked many of the other cases through its ambition to burden the litigant of color with colonial-based aspersions. This section reveals that a lack of legal

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<sup>55</sup> *Goodman vs. Wright*, February 25, 1802, in *ibid.*, 1A/3/194 No. 172, ff. 138-41.

<sup>56</sup> Half the volumes from a given year were surveyed from Jamaica's Court of Ordinary and Chancery records. Those averaged one case each year involving a mixed-race migrant in Britain.

uncertainty forced white plaintiffs to use cultural attacks, founded in colonial discourse, against Campbell to effect her disinheritance.

The turmoil over Katharine Campbell's inheritance was exceedingly elaborate, and drove several individual lawsuits. Such complexity stemmed, in part, from Campbell's itinerancy and her connections to several white families. She was born "Daniel Katharine Campbell" on January 25, 1732 in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica to Hugh Campbell, a white Englishman, and Katharine Dormon, a free mulatto. In addition to their daughter, the couple also had a son, Hugh. Although the elder Hugh may have acquired his own fortune on the island, he came into greater riches under the will of his brother, Sir James Campbell, of Hounslow, England. Soon after his death in 1731, all of Sir James's Jamaican estate devolved to brother Hugh. Twelve years later, Hugh Campbell the elder set out for Britain on business and crafted a will in Jamaica as a precaution. He bequeathed £1,000 each to Dormon and Katharine, as well as a house and several slaves to Dormon. The remainder of the property went to his namesake. Soon after landing in Britain, Hugh Campbell died, followed closely by his son. Only a teenager, Katharine stood to inherit the majority of her late father's estate, totaling some £30,000.<sup>57</sup>

Immediately upon her father's death, Katharine Campbell became entangled in litigation. Problems arose when Sir James's sisters in England claimed the entire fortune for themselves. They pointed to their brother's will, which gave all Jamaican holdings to Hugh Campbell and his "lawful" heirs. As an illegitimate daughter, Katharine could not inherit under the terms of the original will. Her mother, however, did not concede to the

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<sup>57</sup> Representation for John McLauchlan of Greenhall, June 15, 1761, Bundle 380, NRAS 3283, MCP; "Information for Daniel Katharine Campbell Defender Against John McLachlan of Greenhall Pursuer," 1760, in *ibid.* Many thanks to Mr. Compton Mclean for permission to read his family papers.

point. Dormon hired an attorney, Niel McNeil, to settle her lover's will properly. McNeil had been an overseer and he filed a bill of complaint in the Jamaican Chancery Court on behalf of Katharine and her mother. After the bill failed, Dormon pressed the issue further by giving McNeil power of attorney over the whole of her and Katharine's disputed estate.

Finding no success in Jamaica, McNeil decided to try his hand in Britain. But, he did not travel alone. Possessing full legal control over Dormon and Katharine's inheritance, McNeil boarded a ship for London with Katharine at his side. None of the documents in Katharine's later legal cases specified McNeil's reasons for bringing her to the metropolis, but most likely he wanted to ensure that the estate's heir was not far away while he worked his way through the British courts. Katharine was still very young when she made the voyage, and, after their arrival, McNeil put her into a boarding school in the capital. He then returned to his native Scotland, where he ostensibly worked to get Katharine and her mother their money. No additional suits are mentioned, however, under McNeil's direction. Prior to his demise in 1749, McNeil appointed a Glasgow merchant, Alexander Campbell, and a naval captain from eastern Scotland, Alexander McLachlan, to administer his estate.

Alexander McLachlan's involvement as executor eventually led to a meeting between his brother and Katharine Campbell. Obtaining papers related to McNeil's estate from Alexander, Hugh McLachlan learned of Campbell and her substantial pending inheritance. He paid for Campbell to travel to Scotland, and they met at Stirling. It was there that the two wed in 1751, although no information is extant on the courtship. After a private wedding, the two held a public ceremony at McLachlan's residence in

Cameron, in the county of Fife. Though not a laughable sum, McLachlan's Cameron estate took in a modest £100 sterling per year: roughly five percent of the annual profits made by the disputed land in Jamaica. Hoping to secure his new bride's claim, McLachlan forced nineteen-year-old Katharine to sign a post-nuptial contract keeping these colonial riches within the McLachlan family, if ever they were retrieved. Now *femme covert*, Katharine lost her rights to the inheritance, the remainder of which belonged to her husband and any children the couple might have. That child arrived within a year of the wedding, when Katharine gave birth to daughter Margaret. For his part, McLachlan acted quickly to ensure his new family's title to the disputed estate. He contemplated sailing for Jamaica in August, 1752, barely a year after his marriage, to pull the legal strings necessary to gain possession of Sir James Campbell's original fortune. Katharine agreed to accompany him, as did his brother Archibald. McLachlan sent Margaret to live with family in the Scottish Highlands, and he sold his meager estate in Cameron to cover expenses. Sensing a sea of riches across the Atlantic, he abandoned almost everything he had in Britain.

Although it had taken nearly two years, by 1754 the McLachlan brothers, along with Katharine, had finally financed and organized the voyage. Arriving in Jamaica that summer, the group filed suit against the Campbell family for the remainder of Sir James's colonial estate. In the process, Hugh McLachlan either asked or forced Katharine to sign over one-quarter of the disputed inheritance to his brother, Archibald. This was to cover Archibald's travel expenses and efforts in wresting the Campbell fortune from English

hands. In later years, Katharine Campbell's attorneys would regularly complain about her compliance with this dubious contract.<sup>58</sup>

The group's legal adventure almost immediately hit a snag. Like many whites who traveled to the West Indies, the McLachlan brothers became seriously ill after arriving. Expecting the worst, Hugh drafted a will, which gave Katharine £20 sterling per year, and asked that she sail for Scotland. Hugh's mortal sense was justified; within a year of landing in Jamaica, both he and his brother were dead. Katharine survived the trip, and soon returned to Britain. When she landed in Edinburgh, her Jamaican attorneys informed her that a settlement had been reached with the Campbells, who agreed to give Katharine and her daughter £1,000 sterling to end the affair. The news, however, was bittersweet. Katharine also learned that Margaret had died during her stay in the Highlands. She mourned the loss of yet another family member and took the thousand pound settlement as the last and final heir to its fortune.

This long string of events laid the groundwork for a harsh legal battle between Katharine Campbell and her late-husband's relatives. John McLachlan, brother to Hugh, sued for the £1,000 settlement, arguing that Campbell had relinquished all rights to her inheritance under her post-nuptial contract. He demanded that stipulations outlined in Hugh McLachlan's will be used to divide this ample, yet highly truncated colonial trust. Under its terms, Katharine was to receive the twenty pound annuity allocated by Hugh, with the remainder passing on to British relatives. Katharine's brother-in-law also disputed the notion that her Jamaican attorneys had brokered the settlement, claiming instead that Hugh and Archibald had done all of the work. Campbell demurred, insisting that she held sole claim to the settlement after her daughter's death, and that it was only

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<sup>58</sup> John McLean to Daniel Katharine McLachlan, September 8, 1758, in *ibid.*

through the work of her colonial representatives that any money had materialized. In the meantime, she remarried, to Lieutenant Thomas Armstrong of Edinburgh's Regiment of Foot. After receiving news in 1761 of his unit's deployment abroad, he and Katharine pushed the courts to resolve the dispute quickly.

Approaching the case, both sides employed colonial caricatures to sway the British courts. While some debate focused on which imperial jurisdiction the inheritance fell under, character assessments dominated court petitions. John McLachlan took responsibility for prosecuting the case. He lodged a suit in the Court of Session, Scotland's highest court of civil law. Recounting Campbell's story, he made the requisite legal claims about his family's rights to her fortune owing to her husband's coverture and the couple's post-nuptial contract. However, he also painted Campbell as a scheming Jezebel, duping his brother into a doomed quest. He wrote of Hugh's stable life in Scotland, where "he might have past his Days very comfortably, had he not listened to the distinctive Project Suggeste'd to him by his wife of prosecuting her Claims in Jamaica." McLachlan insisted that Katharine had toyed with her husband's emotions and dreams by speaking often of the disputed inheritance. Continuing on, he suggested "the Captain being *dazzled* with the prospect of so rich a Succession was at last prevailed upon much contrary to his own Interest, and Indeed to the utter Ruin both of his health and fortune to give way to the Importunities of his Wife" [emphasis mine].<sup>59</sup> McLachlan's language echoed invectives commonly directed toward colonial women of color. By labeling Campbell a temptress, McLachlan drew on the common theme of mixed-race seduction. Although this supposed trap occurred in Scotland, Katharine's

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<sup>59</sup> Representation for John McLauchlan of Greenhall, June 15, 1761, in *ibid.*, ff. 7-8.

actions were framed within colonial discourses of colored-female sexuality and white-male vulnerability.

McLachlan continued this line of attack when describing Campbell's reaction to her husband's death. Acknowledging that Campbell had been a dutiful wife for most of the marriage, he claimed that she immediately removed this façade of love. "No Sooner was the Captain Seized with the Illness which carried him off," McLachlan protested, "than the Defender . . . broke open his Repositories, made herself mistress of all her papers Bills and money and immediately upon his death carried them to Scotland along with her."<sup>60</sup> This comment spoke to a genuine alarm that many whites had about relatives in the West Indies. Fears reigned that lovers of color maintained relationships with white men only to pilfer from their estates. Love was not considered an aspect of such unions, only financial predation on lonely men. McLachlan's petition to the court contained identical worries about Campbell's intentions toward his brother, though in a metropolitan rather than colonial setting. Moreover, it hammered the point home by calling Campbell a "mistress" of her husband's affairs. Campbell's connection to Hugh McLachlan, in his family's estimation, was one of prostitution rather than marriage. John McLachlan portrayed her as nothing more than a Jamaican concubine transported to Scotland. Unable to attack her on strict legal grounds, he resorted to impugning her character based on well-known stereotypes of mixed-race women.

Mounting a defense, Katharine Campbell drew on her own vulnerabilities as a woman of color in both the colony and metropole. She began by highlighting her mother's plight in Jamaica and the difficulty of securing a lover's fortune. Claiming that her aunts had "usurped the possession" of her and Dormon's inheritance, Campbell noted

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., f. 11.

that the two had no recourse to fight them. “[H]er Mother” was “a Woman of no Abilities and destitute of Friends,” because of her status as a free woman of color. This led, according to Catherine, to her mother’s reliance on attorney McNeil, who “got into Katharine Dormon’s confidence & grossly abused the exuberant trust which she reposed in him,” eventually “spoil[ing] her of all she had.”<sup>61</sup> Both comments reveal an opposing story of colonial oppression to McLachlan’s arguments. Rejecting the notion of any alluring powers, Campbell portrayed *herself* as a victim of seduction and deceit. Arguing that both she and her mother had no power against English opposition, they had to depend upon white creoles to retake their bequests. Not only did the man whom they trusted defraud them of this inheritance, but he also stole away Dormon’s daughter to London. This figured into a parallel British discourse on the depraved and dissipated nature of whites in the West Indies. If McLachlan could convince the court of Campbell’s colonial charms, then she could also convince them of her colonial vulnerabilities.

Adding to accounts of injury suffered in Jamaica, Campbell also cast her treatment in Britain as a mirror of island hardship. She recounted her husband’s initial intentions toward her in a highly unfavorable light. Claiming that he had brought her to Scotland only to exploit her frozen bequests, Campbell stated that McLachlan “formed the plan of becoming Master of her person & fortune,” rather than acting as a devoted husband.<sup>62</sup> In another suit lodged with the Court of Ordinary, Campbell petitioned:

being quite young, under age and without experience when she fell into Capt. McLachlan’s hands he easily got the Ascendant over her and . . . obligated her by

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<sup>61</sup> “Information for Daniel Katharine Campbell Defender Against John McLachlan of Greenhall Pursuer,” 1760, in *ibid.*, ff. 2-3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 3.

various methods to subscribe severall deeds & Writings the meaning or Import of which was wholly unknown to her.<sup>63</sup>

As with her characterization of life in Jamaica, Campbell painted her experiences in Britain as ones of exploitation and submission to power. In this version, Hugh McLachlan had no interest in any emotional or familial connection with his wife, but retained her solely to collect a colonial fortune. Many novels and short stories, such as *Constantia Neville* (1800), *Light and Shade* (1803), and *The Woman of Colour* (1808) drew on this trope of uncollected Caribbean wealth and its appeal for British suitors. Both sides rested on this popular notion, and its relevance to the litigants' actions. While John McLachlan portrayed it as a feminine snare for his naïve brother, Campbell cast it as a golden idol which reduced men to despicable acts of financial expropriation. One of her memorials to the court baulked

the Captain must have been a man of uncommon generosity & benevolence who hearing of a young helpless Stranger who was wholly thrown upon, not only became her Guardian but sent for her [from] London, brought her to his own Country and without any Ceremony made her his wife.<sup>64</sup>

McLachlan's intentions, in this account, were only to maintain complete control over Campbell without any added benefit to her. It was the well-rehearsed story of white colonial domination over mixed-race women, transplanted to the foot of the Scottish Highlands.

Unable to exploit any loopholes in colonial and metropolitan law, both sides in the Campbell case rested on prominent discourses grounded in West Indian life.

McLachlan's Scottish family sought to paint Campbell as a harlot who led a young man astray in Britain, ultimately guiding him to his doom in Jamaica. Campbell retorted that

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<sup>63</sup> "Minutes in the Process McLachlan of Greenhall Against Daniel Katharine Campbell," January 20, 1761, in *ibid.*, f. 1.

<sup>64</sup> "Memorial for Daniel Katherine Campbell," in *ibid.*

her nuptial experiences in Scotland had closely imitated the sexual and social mistreatment she experienced in the West Indies. Just as legal ambiguities existed between periphery and center in the Empire, there were also strong social and cultural differences dividing the two. While eliminating that gap generally benefited white relatives, each side in this case attempted its erasure. With increased social and economic interaction between the two locations, colony and metropole grew closer together; closer still when questions of inheritance arose.

### **The Morse Family of Jamaica**

A generation removed from Campbell's struggle, the Morse family of Jamaica endured a similar inheritance contest with a British relative. Unlike Campbell, the Morse children experienced greater success in the metropole, marrying Britons while there and entering the ranks of elite British society. Their accomplishments in England, and other parts of the Empire, will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Before achieving this social advancement, however, they had to battle an English cousin over their father's large Jamaican fortune. The Morses' suit centered on discrepancies between Jamaican and English law, rather than the cultural stigmas central to Campbell's case. Determined to claim his uncle's riches for himself, the Morses' cousin aimed to re-inscribe a West Indian legal status onto their lives in Britain.

John Morse's children came from elite stock on both sides of the family. As a Jamaican merchant, John had accrued a massive fortune (some estimates totaling it at

£140,000) prior to his death in London.<sup>65</sup> While in Jamaica, he met Elizabeth Augier, a free woman of color from Kingston. Augier had come from the island's privileged class of free coloreds. Her mother, Mary, had won a privilege grant for herself in 1747, along with her three children (Elizabeth, William, and Jane), two siblings, and a nephew. Mary's lover, and the father of her children, was a white creole named William Tyndall. Although little is known of his profession, Tyndall was quite wealthy. Under his will, Elizabeth received £200 at her majority, Jane £75 and a male slave, and William £50 and six slaves. Mary Augier had also accumulated a modest degree of affluence, possibly due to her connection with Tyndall. She possessed both land and a house in Kingston worth £60 of rent per year, as well as two other substantial homes. Added to this were fourteen slaves, and a large number of household goods. Mary's extended family also possessed financial security. Her sister's relationship with Richard Ashton netted her a near-equal fortune to Mary's, and her son came into an inheritance of £500 from his father's bequests.<sup>66</sup> Such an advanced financial position made the Augier family's privilege request easily executable. It also ushered Elizabeth Augier into the upper ranks of Kingston society, where she would eventually meet John Morse.

While together in Jamaica, Morse and Augier had five children. Elizabeth gave birth to two boys and three girls: John, Robert, Catherine, Ann, and Sarah. Morse had another daughter, Frances, with a different woman of color who may have lived with the family as well. He also opened his home to extended relations who came to Jamaica to make a fortune. Edward Morse, John's nephew, ventured to the island as a young man,

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<sup>65</sup> This comes from his nephew Edward Morse's claim that the family had not properly valued the estate, which he believed worth at least £140,000, although that may be an overestimation: *Morse vs. Royal et al.*, March 10, 1792, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/154 No. 132, f. 257, JA.

<sup>66</sup> Jamaica House of Assembly Minutes, CO 140/33, f. 66, NAE.

drawing on familial connections. Not only did his uncle help to place him within his colonial network, but Edward lived with Morse, Augier, and his mixed-race cousins in their Jamaican home. Edward Morse did not entrench himself fully, however, and he soon returned to England for a more permanent residence.

The entire Morse family led a similarly transient life. With business in both colony and metropole, John the elder frequently traveled back and forth between the two. He sailed to London in 1776, for instance, in order to secure a £51,000 loan for his Jamaican firm. Voyaging back to the West Indies soon after, Morse stayed for only a few years before deciding to return to Britain indefinitely. He died there in 1781.<sup>67</sup> Partly through their father's intentions, and partly through their own actions, Morse's children also left for Europe. With his offspring having already settled there by the time of his death, Morse's will did not specify his own desires for their residency across the Atlantic. From court documents related to his estate resolution, though, it appears that Morse sent his mixed-race daughter Frances to Amsterdam, where she boarded with her aunt Sarah Vanheelen.<sup>68</sup> His eldest daughter with Augier, Catherine, also traveled across the ocean, but not under the direction of her father. Catherine met the Englishman Edmund Green while he worked as an attorney in Jamaica, advising her father on his estates. The two married and moved to London where Green continued his law practice.<sup>69</sup> He stayed in regular contact with Morse, both as a new family member and also as legal counsel, eventually becoming the executor of his father-in-law's will. The other children soon left Jamaica as well. Although nothing is known of young John's emigration, Robert left for

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<sup>67</sup> *Morse vs. Royal*, April 12, 1792, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/154 No. 132, ff. 250, 401, JA.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 251.

<sup>69</sup> It is unclear if the couple wed in Jamaica or Britain, but the *London Evening Post* records the marriage, noting Edmund Green's origination from the Isle of Wight: *London Evening Post* (London), June 17, 1777.

Britain and later India. Ann and Sarah both went to Britain as well, soon following their brother to the subcontinent, where they met and married English husbands. By the time of their father's death, the Morse children had all effectively fled Jamaica and marked out new lives for themselves in the metropole.

Settling John Morse's estate became a long and expensive task for the family. Morse's will was probated on April 18, 1781 and soon ran into complications.<sup>70</sup> With property in both Jamaica and Britain, it underwent the usual scrutiny associated with transatlantic holdings. The estate came into dispute immediately after his death. Jamaica's Chancery Court records first became involved with Morse's will in 1785, when on May 3 Thomas Murphy filed a bill of complaint against the estate and the allocations of its executors.<sup>71</sup> Morse's property reached the courts again, though only tangentially, in another suit in the spring of 1788.<sup>72</sup> Then, several months later, a motion was filed against the primary beneficiaries of Morse's will. On August 4, 1788, seven years after his uncle's death, Edward Morse submitted his first bill of complaint to the Jamaican Chancery Court protesting his cousins' succession to their father's estate.<sup>73</sup> Yet another bill was filed on September 3, of 1788, to which Edmund Green and the estate's other executors issued a demurrer and later an appeal. They next submitted an appeal to Britain's Board of Trade, a move which Edward Morse complained was "calculated merely for delay and for the purpose of harassing and oppressing your petitioner and rendering it expensive and difficult to your petitioner to prosecute his just rights."<sup>74</sup> Multiple suits from each party in both the English and the Jamaican Chancery Courts

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<sup>70</sup> Will of John Morse, April 18, 1781, PROB 11/1077, NAE.

<sup>71</sup> *Royal et. al vs. Murphy*, May 3, 1785, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/110 No. 90, f. 1, JA.

<sup>72</sup> See *Rowe vs. Rowe*, April 21, 1788, in *ibid.*, 1A/3/134 No. 114 Lib. 123, f. 341.

<sup>73</sup> Noted in *ibid.*, 1A/3/166 No. 143, f. 205.

<sup>74</sup> *Morse vs. Royal et al.*, March 10, 1792, in *ibid.*, 1A/3/154 No. 132, f. 258.

attempted to wear down the other, a strategy typical in chancery cases.<sup>75</sup> By the time the suit was finally heard in 1792, Edward Morse had spent nearly four years trying to bring it to court and had returned to Jamaica to ensure its prosecution.

Edward Morse presented a simple legal argument pointing to a solitary colonial statute. Highlighting Jamaica's 1762 inheritance cap against illegitimate children of color, Morse protested that his mixed-race cousins' legacies exceeded the law's maximum allowance. Though he may have overvalued his uncle's estate at £140,000, John Morse's property certainly numbered in the tens of thousands of pounds. With most of that going to his bastard children, each individual inheritance would have gone well over the £2,000 limit. Officially "mulattos" according to Jamaican law, as they were no more than three generations removed from an African ancestor, the Morse children could not legally inherit over that amount. Edward Morse made his case plainly. None of his cousins were "born in Wedlock," and because they were "deemed mulattoes" they could not inherit the whole sum of their father's fortune. Edward went so far as to claim that his uncle's will had been drafted to "evade and elude the force and Effect of the said Act" of 1762.<sup>76</sup> As next of kin, Edward proclaimed that he and several other British family members stood to inherit the bulk of John Morse's estate, as the provisions for his children had violated colonial law and rendered the stipulations of the will null and void.

Taking this legal approach, Edward Morse sought to re-impose colonial law upon several British residents who had long since left Jamaica. As the only British-Caribbean island to draft such a financial sanction against individuals of color, Jamaica's mixed-race emigrants labored under added burdens when they arrived in Britain. While not

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<sup>75</sup> Horwitz, *Chancery Equity Records*, 9.

<sup>76</sup> *Morse vs. Royal et al.*, March 10, 1792, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/154 No. 132, ff. 253-54, JA.

subject to any laws of enslavement, their status, both as illegitimates and as people of color, precluded them from full access to their patriarch's fortune. Many of the wills tabulated in Chapter 2 honored the inheritance cap in their provisions, as nearly all of them allocated no more than £2,000 to each mixed-race child in the metropole.

Compliance with the law bequeathed a less secure financial position to children in Britain. Yet, those not taking this statute into account could either have their offspring's inheritance diminished or removed altogether as a violation of colonial decree. Edward Morse's tactic in selecting this statute reveals his intentions both to reassign the colonial category of "mulatto" to his cousins in the metropole, and to rebrand them as "bastards." Despite having lived with his cousins and their mother, Edward Morse did not wish them free reign in England. Ultimately, however, he did not ask the court to abandon his mixed-race kin completely. Instead, Morse requested that each child receive the maximum £2,000 from the estate, with the remainder devolving to white family in Europe. Not willing to disinherit his cousins entirely, Morse preferred to recreate the social, familial, and legal conditions of Jamaica for them in the metropole.

Rising to his in-laws' defense, Edmund Green fought Morse's attack by highlighting his own piece of the Jamaican legal code. Edward Morse had accused Green of a number of procedural delays, including the aforementioned appeals, failing to disclose documents, and the ubiquitous trick of improperly valuing the estate. Considering the number of years in which the suit sat dormant, such tactics had worked well and had cost Morse a great deal of money, of which he claimed to be in short supply. When it finally came before Chancery, however, Green mounted a clever defense which dragged out an even older decree in Jamaica's legal records: Elizabeth Augier's privilege

dispensation. He first charged, erroneously, that the children were too far removed from an African ancestor to be deemed “mulattos.” In fact, their mother was listed as a free mulatto in her privilege petition, putting the children within that legal category as well. Green found firmer ground when he next pointed to the terms of the privilege grant itself. After passing a privilege bill, the Jamaican Assembly recorded the petitioners’ names into a standard legal template. Each petitioner received the same rights as if they “were descended of and from white ancestors,” except holding the franchise or public office. According to Jamaican law, therefore, Elizabeth Augier was white despite her blood lines. Like the franchise and office-holding exceptions, though, privilege dispensations did not include automatic exemptions from the 1762 inheritance cap. One could apply to the Assembly for such immunity but it had to be done in a separate petition, one much more difficult to obtain. Indeed, only a handful of privileged Jamaicans went on to receive a release from the cap, and only four obtained full status as whites, without any exceptions.<sup>77</sup>

Although Elizabeth Augier’s privileged rights could not grant her immunity from the 1762 inheritance cap, Edmund Green argued that it did bestow such rights upon her children. Bolstering his case, he referred to the fine print within privilege allocations. Each privilege bill granted white status to the petitioners’ offspring, so long as the other parent was biologically white. This provision’s intention was to encourage increased relations so as to “wash the Blackamoor white.” Unlike these bills’ explicit statements against *full* legal status for privileged individuals, though, the language used to describe the rights of their children (born to white lovers) was less clear. Green pointed to this

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<sup>77</sup> Samuel J. Hurwitz and Edith F. Hurwitz, “A Token of Freedom: Private Bill Legislation for Free Negroes in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica,” *WM Q*, Third Series, XXIV, no. 3 (July 1967): 425.

ambiguity, claiming that Elizabeth Augier's privileged status made her children wholly *de jure* white, and therefore outside the boundaries of the 1762 restriction. This, it appears, is the only known case of someone challenging the law for children of a privileged Jamaican. It made for a convincing argument, one that the court struggled to reconcile with Edward Morse's complaint.

Edmund Green's legal strategy, exploiting colonial law in the same fashion as his opposing litigant, demonstrates his attempt to bring the racial complexity of Jamaica to individuals of color in Britain. If Edward Morse could re-impose colonial prejudices against the inheritance of mixed-race residents in Britain, then Green could apply Jamaica's more fluid racial structure to his extended family's status in the metropole. The 1762 inheritance cap reified notions of racial difference and restrained an advancing group with the specter of its legacy in slavery. By shackling them once again with this legislation in Britain, Edward Morse drew firmer connections between his elite, light-skinned relatives and their oppressed African ancestry. Green's tactic, on the other hand, was not to refute these origins, but to attack the notion of a firm racial dyad, in both Jamaica and England. Highlighting one of Jamaica's more progressive legislative features – the privilege bill – Green carved out a larger space of middle ground between black and white, both biologically and legally, within the British Empire. His mixed-race family could therefore be seen as descendants of subjugated Africans at the same time that their “whiteness” could be codified in terms of both class and law. With the Morse children having only a faint connection to black ancestors, Edmund Green asked the courts, as well as perhaps the children's British relatives, to consider this “alternative whiteness” as sufficient for metropolitan inclusion.

Pitted against a tough London lawyer fighting for his family, Edward Morse never achieved success in his lawsuit. The case dragged on for years, subject to the usual fits and starts which dogged chancery cases. According to the court's customs, added provisions, deaths amongst even the most peripheral individuals attached to the case, or changes in the estate caused suits to restart essentially from scratch.<sup>78</sup> By 1795, Edward Morse was dead, and Jamaica's Chancery Court moved to abate the suit. It did note, however, that Morse wished for his family to continue prosecuting the case even after his demise.<sup>79</sup> In his will, probated in February of that year, Morse recorded: "Whereas I am Intitled to a very large Estate real and personal in this Island as Nephew and heir at Law of John Morse . . . it is my Desire that my Executrix and Executors . . . do continue the said Suit."<sup>80</sup> It is difficult to follow the case from there on, but in January 1799 London's *True Briton* newspaper reported that Chancery had decided in favor of the mixed-race children.<sup>81</sup> Time and legal injunction kept Jamaican riches in the hands of mixed-race Britons who had effectively reestablished themselves in the metropole. Achieving success abroad was dependent upon their father's legacy, but they also received significant help from new contacts and relations in Britain.

### **The Steele Family of Barbados**

Traveling from Barbados to England, Joshua Steele's mixed-race children came under the legal eye of a British aunt. Having been improperly, if not fraudulently

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<sup>78</sup> Horwitz, *Chancery Equity Records*, 9-13. For more on the slow procedure of the Chancery court, see J. H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boston: Butterworths, 1990), 122-30.

<sup>79</sup> *Morse vs. Royal et al.*, April 23, 1795, Jamaica Chancery Court Records, 1A/3/166 No. 143, ff. 204-08, JA.

<sup>80</sup> Will of Edward Morse, February 28, 1795, Wills, LOS 61, f. 89, IRO.

<sup>81</sup> *True Briton* (London), January 26, 1799.

manumitted before the voyage, the mark of enslavement followed them to the metropole.<sup>82</sup> This not only compromised their inheritance, but also called into question their independence. While an injunction crafted by the aunt put the children into such a vulnerable position, her actions were not entirely opposed to their interest. The Steele children's fate reveals the further complexity of family relations in which a balance came to be struck between white self-interest and a duty toward mixed-race relatives.

Joshua Steele (1700-1796) fell into a large fortune in Barbados, much like his relatives in later years. He married Sarah Osborne, widow of Robert Osborne, who owned the Kendal plantation. After Robert's death, the couple's daughter Elizabeth inherited the estate's title. Young Elizabeth never took full control of the property, however, as she died before her majority. Control of Kendal plantation, as well as the other plantations of Guinea and Halletts, thus fell into the hands of Steele's new bride, who herself died shortly thereafter. Within several years of marriage, then, Joshua Steele had inherited a large Barbadian fortune. Having obtained Kendal through his step-daughter and wife, Steele's legal hold over the estate remained somewhat tentative and would later be challenged by Robert Osborne's other relatives in Britain. The family's claim never found a sympathetic ear in the colonies, however, and the Osbornes were reduced to asking politely for restitution from the estate's new owner.<sup>83</sup> Taking over the

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<sup>82</sup> Vincent Brown notes the regularity of difficulties which plagued those manumitted by will: *Reaper's Garden*, 107-13.

<sup>83</sup> In a letter from Henrietta Maria Hungerford to Phillip Gibbes (Robert Osborne's brother-in-law) from October 19, 1801, she told Gibbes that she had asked the beneficiary of Steele's estate "to do the honest thing, and give it back": as quoted in Philip Gibbes, *A Letter to John Beckles, Esq. Attorney General at Barbados* (London, 1802), 24.

Kendal plantation was no simple task, for Robert Osborne had burdened the estate with significant debt, from which it took years for Steele to recover.<sup>84</sup>

One of very few planters in eighteenth-century Barbados, Joshua Steele attempted to meld Enlightenment principles with slave-owning economics in the operation of Kendal. He wrote of the need for an ameliorative form of enslavement which would benefit both master and slave with increased agricultural output. Although British observers had made similar overtures, Steele's echo of these ideas from within the colonies put him at odds with his fellow islanders. Various planters had built, over time, a refined sense of paternalism toward their slaves which they used to justify stringent working conditions. By advocating for an overhaul of the system, Steele upset a delicate balance which sanctioned the utmost forms of brutality against its enslaved population while simultaneously preaching about such practice's intrinsic humanity.<sup>85</sup>

Correspondents throughout the Empire bolstered Steele's resolve toward this form of plantation humanism. Prior to Britain's settlement with its rebellious colonies in North America, Steele wrote to the 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Shelburne about the deficiencies of island life. Complaining to the soon-to-be Prime Minister that Barbados's governors "seldom displayed any other Talent than a great Avidity," he believed that more enlightened leadership would better direct the people: "the generality of Mankind cannot support the exertion of doing good, without being animated to it by good Examples." Continuing this theme, Steele – ever the musicologist – later lobbied Shelburne for support to help

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<sup>84</sup> Gibbes, *A Letter*, 30-32. See also, Joshua Steele to Benjamin Franklin, July 31, 1787, Benjamin Franklin Papers, vol. XXX, f. 98, APS, in which he notes that years of bad management from Osborne had greatly reduced the value of his Barbadian estate.

<sup>85</sup> Steele's letters on slave amelioration were later compiled by a friend into a collection: Joshua Steele, *Mitigation of Slavery* (London, 1814). For more on Steele, as well as the various forms of paternalism and patriarchy in eighteenth-century Barbados, see: David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 52-70.

establish a society for arts in Barbados.<sup>86</sup> He even corresponded with Benjamin Franklin, touching on topics from politics, the economy, and personal effects.<sup>87</sup> A man of the Enlightenment stationed in Barbados, Steele retained a strong Atlantic presence in the letters he wrote as well as those he read. With aspirations for Barbados far beyond its reputation as a “little England” in the Caribbean Sea, he held even greater hopes for the children he would have on the island.

After the death of his wife and step-daughter, Steele took up residence with an enslaved woman named Anna Slatia. He leased her, as well as the Byde Mill plantation on which she lived and worked, from absentee owner Admiral Thomas Shirley. No records were kept about Slatia’s life, except that she was “a Mulatto woman” and “a coloured slave” on the plantation.<sup>88</sup> Steele and Slatia lived together for a number of years after the death of his wife, and they had two children: Catherine and Edward.<sup>89</sup> Not owning Slatia outright, Steele had no legal claim to the children either. Born of a slave mother, the two were enslaved themselves, and only through Admiral Shirley could they be put on a path toward freedom. However, Steele never attempted to manumit Slatia or her children. In fact, Steele wrote to his friends of his general disapproval of emancipating children of color.<sup>90</sup> After his death in 1796, Catherine and Edward lost

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<sup>86</sup> Joshua Steele to Lord Shelburne, June 1, 1782, Shelburne Papers, vol. 87, no. 36, WCL; Joshua Steele to Lord Shelburne, April 6, 1783, in *ibid.*, vol. 87, no. 307.

<sup>87</sup> See, in particular: Joshua Steele to Benjamin Franklin, July 31, 1787, Benjamin Franklin Papers, vol. XXX, f. 98, APS.

<sup>88</sup> Gibbes, *A Letter*, 47, 57; “Case for the Opinion of Mr. Arthur Pigott,” Seaforth Papers, GD 46/17/16, NAS. It is possible that Gibbes and others misnamed Slatia. Baptismal records from Barbados’s St. Philip Parish in 1781, list a mulatto slave named “Anastatia” belonging to the “estate of Thomas Shirley now in possession of Joshua Steele, Esq.,” see Joanne McRee Sanders, ed., *Barbados Records: Baptisms 1637-1800* (Baltimore, Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., 1984), 499.

<sup>89</sup> Catherine may have been born in 1783. A mulatto slave from Byde Mill plantation “in possession of J. Steele,” named “Kitty Ann” was baptized on February 19 of that year: *Barbados Records: Baptisms*, 500.

<sup>90</sup> Steele, *Mitigation of Slavery*, 502-04.

their patriarch, and one of the only men who could deliver them from the chains of enslavement.

Prior to his demise, Joshua Steele wrote a terse will with very simple provisions. To his nephew Samuel Steele, illegitimate like his mixed-race cousins, Steele gave an ample £1,500 sterling bequest along with a three-hundred pound annuity. Another thousand pounds went to the maintenance of the children of Francis Bell, overseer on Kendal plantation. Steele named both his nephew and Bell as executors to his will. The remainder of the estate was to be divided equally between his two children and his sister in England, Mary Ann Steele. Strangely for one so attuned to slave life, Steele acknowledged that his children were still enslaved, yet included no provision for their emancipation, despite the fact that they were set to inherit an exceedingly large sum of money.<sup>91</sup> Surely he must have known that slaves could not inherit property to any degree in Barbados – certainly not shares of a wealthy plantation. Although he may have been known for his attempts to provide liberally for his slaves, Steele the nonagenarian did not properly inquire into colonial law when he crafted his will. He also had few plans for his children, other than to entitle them to a sizeable portion of his bounteous property.

As executor of Steele's will and resident on Kendal plantation, Francis Bell began administering the estate. Writing to Mary Ann Steele just months after her brother's death, Bell made a startling revelation: Catherine and Edward Steele, along with Bell's son, were headed to England. There they would be met by Stephen Walcott and his wife, who would put them into school. Bell detailed the children's futures:

I have proposed to send the boy Edward to Norwich school, under the Rev. Dr. Foster, with my son, there being a mutual attachment between them; and the girl Catharine to an established place of female education, at Camberwell, under the

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<sup>91</sup> Will of Joshua Steele, October 25, 1796, Labeled "A," Seaforth Papers, GD 46/17/15, NAS.

care of three discreet females, where she may improve her understanding, and acquire accomplishments suited to her future station in life.<sup>92</sup>

Though he did not state so explicitly, it is possible that Bell's son was also of color himself. Additionally, Bell informed Steele that he had manumitted both children, allowing them to leave Barbados and settle in England. Eventually, Bell hoped that Mary Ann Steele could take over the children's supervision, believing that "their progress in learning and virtue will eventually prove them worthy of their ancestor, especially under the influence of your tender care." Attempting to calm any possible anxieties Mary Ann Steele might have had about watching over her niece and nephew, Bell reassured her that he had partitioned the estate into three sections, and that Catherine and Edward's maintenance would come from their thirds, not from hers.<sup>93</sup> With little time elapsing between Steele's death and the administration of his belongings, Bell had freed Steele's children and sent them to Britain, without any prompting from the deceased's family.

Details of Catherine and Edward's voyage across the Atlantic are few. In the court case arising from Bell's actions, some speculation emerged that he first sent Catherine and Edward to Tobago before they finally embarked for England.<sup>94</sup> According to Kendal's register, the children were sent to the port of Lancaster. From there, Stephen Walcott took them to London, along with an attending servant named James. Along the way, the group stopped in Liverpool, Birmingham, and Bristol. Bell paid £138 to Walcott for his troubles, as well as an additional twenty-one pounds for James's service. Once in London, Bell laid out money for the children's room and board, as well as their education. The account register includes several presents made to Dr. Foster for

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<sup>92</sup> Francis Bell to Mary Ann Steele, July 18, 1797, as quoted in Gibbes, *A Letter*, 6-9.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Gibbes, *A Letter*, 45.

instructing Edward, as well as to Catherine's teacher. Their maintenance in the metropolis was not at a bargain: the children's expenses in 1799 surpassed £250. Bell also gave a healthy provision to the children's mother in Barbados. Anna Slatia received £100 per year, despite the lack of provision for her in Steele's will.<sup>95</sup> Managing the affairs of Steele's mixed-race family on both sides of the Atlantic proved an expensive undertaking.

With news of her brother's death, and Bell's division of the estate, Mary Ann Steele attempted to stop the flow of money to her mixed-race kin. She consulted with attorneys in London who looked over her brother's will, along with Francis Bell's claims about the children. The lawyers found an immediate problem. Bell had provided a copy of the children's manumission papers detailing the £110 fee paid by the estate. The manumissions omitted one crucial individual, however: Admiral Thomas Shirley, who owned Catherine, Edward, and their mother. Having leased Anna Slatia, Joshua Steele had no legal right to emancipate her, nor her children, without first purchasing them from Shirley. Bell had failed to compensate Shirley and therefore had no legal ability to manumit the children. Describing the papers as "a sham manumission," Mary Ann Steele's lawyers claimed that Bell was offering as evidence fraudulent documents which had not rightfully freed the children. Thus, their client was entitled to the whole of her brother's estate, as his two children were still slaves and therefore unable to inherit property. Her attorneys advised Steele to refuse negotiations with Bell until they could resolve the issue in court.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Account book for Kendal Plantation, Seaforth Papers, GD 46/17/18, ff. 8-19, NAS.

<sup>96</sup> Gibbes, *A Letter*, 11, 44.

After realizing that Bell had acquired fraudulent manumissions, Steele's lawyers surveyed each of his actions in managing the estate. Much like the Morse case, Mary Ann Steele's attorneys claimed that Bell had undervalued Kendal, intending to defraud Mary Ann Steele of the entirety of her bequest. Surprisingly, in legal opinions for both British and Barbadian courts, her lawyers wrote that Bell had also improperly divided the estate for Catherine and Edward. Philip Gibbes, who worked on the case, noted that even in Bell's devalued appraisal, the children were not given the full amounts which Bell claimed were owed them. Although Gibbes helped convince the courts that Catherine and Edward were slaves, and therefore not allowed to inherit their father's money, he wrote that under Bell's own terms he should have allocated £6,742 to each, rather than the £4,494 actually allotted. Attorneys also voiced concern after Bell attempted to obtain guardianship over the children, which would have entailed supervisory control over their finances as well.<sup>97</sup> Steele's lawyers were now convinced of deep deception on the part of Francis Bell.

Clearly misallocating funds to Joshua Steele's mixed-race children, Francis Bell's motives came under intense scrutiny. Attorneys alleged that Francis Bell's improper partition for the children gave evidence of a larger instance of fraud, beyond counterfeit manumissions. Gibbes, who held a tenuous claim to the Kendal estate through the aforementioned Osborne family, helped secure the plantation for Mary Ann Steele to obtain some later compensation from her. A Barbadian resident, he had a long history of dealing with individuals of mixed-race. Not only did he have a mistress of color, but he had also sat as judge on an important murder trial against mixed-race islander Joseph

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. Bell's fraud is demonstrated through his own accounting, in which he valued the entire estate at £51,211, far less than the roughly £20,000 estimate which he originally made: Account book for Kendal Plantation, Seaforth Papers, GD 46/17/18, f. 19, NAS.

Denny.<sup>98</sup> Gibbes wrote to John Beckles, who had prosecuted Denny and since been promoted to Attorney General in Barbados, of his opinion that Bell had embezzled money from Steele's estate. Claiming that Bell was £34,000 in debt, Gibbes concluded that Bell had manufactured the manumissions to assert a false claim of guardianship over the children, whose inheritance he would then use to pay his arrears.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, Gibbes accused Bell of grossly overcharging the estate for his executive services as yet another means of clearing his debt. Asserting that Bell had also commandeered Joshua Steele's sugar crop to sell illegally in England, Gibbes noted that Bell was "a confessed Bankrupt," using the estate's profits to manage his own finances, rather than to maintain Catherine and Edward in England.<sup>100</sup> Once again, an inheritance dispute with mixed-race children in the metropole became a story of colonial exploitation bridging the Atlantic.

With Gibbes's suspicion of exploitation, the case became one of proper guardianship, rather than outright estate entitlement. For one, it appeared straightforward to most commenting on the case that Catherine and Edward were not properly manumitted, making Mary Ann Steele sole heir to her brother's fortune. Steele solicited legal counsel from both England and Barbados on the question of her legacy. Those in England deferred to the colonial courts, as the property was under Barbadian jurisdiction. A number of island lawyers, including Gibbes, resoundingly concluded that Steele held solitary claim to the estate. John Beckles also gave an analysis of the case, citing a previous inheritance dispute in Barbados in the 1740s over the will of Edward Sayer.

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<sup>98</sup> The fact that Denny was allowed to flee Barbados after being convicted of murdering a white man raised intense suspicions amongst the island's white community. Many pointed to Gibbes's mixed-race lover as an improper influence over his decision: Hall, "Law and Society": 37; CO 28/65, NAE. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 1.

<sup>99</sup> Gibbes, *A Letter*, 19-20.

<sup>100</sup> Seaforth Papers, GD 46/17/18, f. 24, NAS; "Case for the Opinion of Mr. Arthur Pigott," in *ibid.*, GD 46/17/15.

Siring two children with an enslaved woman belonging to a Mrs. Harmay, Sayer's £150 bequest to his children was deemed illegitimate, as he held no title to them. Likewise, it was determined that the children were unable to inherit as slaves.<sup>101</sup> This precedent confirmed the legal opinion against Catherine and Edward's inheritance rights. While analysts on both sides of the ocean voted unanimously to disinherit the Steele children, they waived on what action to take now that Catherine and Edward lived in England. Bell wanted to claim guardianship over them, although that would certainly prove of no personal advantage once the children had lost their inheritance. Most lawyers believed Bell unfit to serve as guardian, though it became a question for the English courts. Beckles advised Steele and her lawyers to file suit in England's Chancery Court to determine who should serve as guardians to the children, as Barbadian officials had no jurisdiction over them in the metropole.<sup>102</sup>

Questions of guardianship arose in response to Mary Ann Steele's desire to ensure her mixed-race niece and nephew's survival in England. After successfully securing full control over her brother's fortune, Mary Ann Steele asked to become guardian of Catherine and Edward. Her legal counsel, conversely, was not sympathetic toward the children. Gibbes, angered over Bell's draining of the estate which he hoped eventually to claim for himself, recommended that "the charges for [Catherine and Edward's] education and maintenance ought not to be placed" upon the profits of Kendal plantation.<sup>103</sup> His wishes to acquire the estate came to fruition when Mary Ann sold the plantation to him for a reduced lump sum, unburdening her from the demands of its day-

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., GD 46/17/15.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., GD 46/17/18, f. 21.

to-day affairs.<sup>104</sup> She did not wish to horde this money for herself, however. An English court noted that Steele was “desirous of taking [Catherine and Edward] under her care and protection, with the intention of making an ample provision for them.”<sup>105</sup> Becoming the children’s guardian was crucial, especially as Francis Bell had not given up his fight to obtain the position. Upon her selling Kendal to Philip Gibbes, Steele wrote to Bell: “I have secured to myself a sum, which will enable me to make a proper provision for them. As I am thus both able and disposed to provide handsomely for them, I must request you not to obstruct my favourable intentions towards them by the interference of any power you may suppose to reside in you.” She concluded, “If you consult my satisfaction, the interest of the children, and perhaps your own, *you will avoid the waste of money in unnecessary litigation*” [emphasis in the original].<sup>106</sup> Steele was true to her word in wanting to do well by Catherine and Edward. Gibbes noted that Steele agreed to set aside nearly £8,000 for each of the children as a settlement, going well beyond Bell’s original dispensation.<sup>107</sup> Her guardianship helped to keep those finances well-regulated and supervised.

All of Mary Ann Steele’s legal counsel agreed with her taking control over the mixed-race children, thereby allowing her to command their finances. Gibbes recommended that Bell retain no attachment to the children, owing to his attempted fraud in managing them as well as his distance away in Barbados.<sup>108</sup> London attorney Arthur Piggott agreed, declaring that although Mary Ann Steele did not have explicit consent to act as guardian, “The sister of the testator is, however, undoubtedly the most proper

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<sup>104</sup> Gibbes, *A Letter*, 14.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>106</sup> Mary Ann Steele to Francis Bell, September 28, 1798, in *ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>107</sup> Gibbes, *A Letter*, 18.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

person to take the care and superintendance of the persons and education of these children in England, where they are, and she resides; more especially as she provides for them.”<sup>109</sup> With her proximity to the children, as well as her kinship and willingness to care for them, Mary Ann Steele became the obvious candidate for their supervision and control.

Although the ultimate outcome of the case is not apparent from any of these court documents, support for Mary Ann Steele’s guardianship added an extra twist in the case of her mixed-race relatives. Much like Katharine Campbell’s suit, the inheritance dispute involving Catherine and Edward Steele revolved around perceived notions of abuse and exploitation in the colonies. Mary Ann Steele and her attorneys made the case for the children’s victimization at the hands of an unscrupulous overseer who sought to embezzle funds from his previous employer’s estate by controlling his offspring. They also argued that, as a Barbadian resident, Francis Bell could not properly care for children thousands of miles away in the metropole. Mary Ann Steele’s case for obtaining guardianship over Catherine and Edward turned on evidence of Bell’s exploitation, as well as her good intentions. As vulnerable children, Catherine and Edward’s kinship to Steele would allow them to grow up under better and more consistent direction. The aunt could provide greater oversight of their development and ultimate success in Britain. Accordingly, Steele’s management of their finances might better protect them from falling prey to further deceit.

Obtaining guardianship was not entirely an exercise in familial piety. The process by which Mary Ann Steele secured the financial and supervisory rights over her niece and nephew also worked to put the children into a more dependent and disenfranchised

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<sup>109</sup> Opinion of Arthur Piggott, November 26, 1798, in *ibid.*, 52-53.

position. First, Steele's case centered on Catherine and Edward's mark of enslavement, a status which she tried vigorously to have rebranded on them in England. Without this legal emblem, she could not receive the whole of her brother's estate. Successfully retaining this mark, she made the children's lives much more precarious in Britain. Although Lord Mansfield had ruled thirty years earlier that an enslaved person could not be taken from English shores against his or her will, his decision had not banned slavery outright.<sup>110</sup> With slavery still allowed in England, Steele's inheritance suit stole away the near entirety of Catherine and Edward's legal rights. Secondly, Mary Ann Steele's settlement of nearly £8,000 apiece on the children shortchanged them from the original allocation of their father's will. Valued somewhere between £39,000-50,000 (though most likely sold off to Gibbes at a reduced amount), her bequests did not divide the estate according to the equal-thirds demand of her brother.<sup>111</sup> Mary Ann Steele's allotment reaffirmed her superiority in the family, repositioning her place in Joshua Steele's inheritance line. It also forced Catherine and Edward into a more economically circumscribed position, requiring dependence upon their aunt until they reached legal maturity. While it would be hyperbole to state that Mary Ann Steele reimposed any form of enslavement on her mixed-race family in Britain, her actions did ensure that they both stayed in a personally and financially subservient position to her. Steele may have feared rich relatives of color in the metropole, but perhaps she feared *independent* relatives of color more.

The Steele family's case reveals yet more complications surrounding estate disputes between mixed-race litigants in the metropole and white families. Mary Ann

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<sup>110</sup> This was true of England and Wales. In the 1778 case *Knight vs. Wedderburn*, the Court of Session ruled that slavery was finally illegal in Scotland

<sup>111</sup> Seaforth Papers, GD 46/17/18, ff. 19-22, NAS.

Steele waged a legal attack that ensured both her mixed-race kin's prosperity and their limited freedom within Britain. Predation on children of color who crossed the Atlantic could come from a variety of sources, based in the colonies and at home. Steele's protection of her niece and nephew kept them from experiencing complete financial exploitation, but it also re-chained the legal shackles of enslavement, put their ultimate freedom in the hands of an unfamiliar slave owner, and restricted the allocation of their inheritance. Certainly she provided much needed help for the children, but at some personal cost to them. Although the records on the Steele children dry up after the inheritance dispute, they most likely rested in the position for which their aunt hoped: prosperous yet restrained. Like most white relatives of British residents of color, attaining financial control over disputed fortunes was more important than the total disinheritance of illegitimate kin.

### **The Fraser Family of East Florida**

While many white litigants hesitated to disinherit relatives of color completely, Anne Fraser Robertson sought to eliminate colonial family altogether from her brother's bequests. John Fraser, who possessed the estate in question, led a peripatetic life taking him from his native Scotland to the Rio Pongo region of West Africa, then to South Carolina, and finally Spanish East Florida. Along the way, he made an incredible fortune, as well as raised several mixed-race children whom he had with an African wife during his days as a slave trader in the Rio Pongo. Fraser married Phenda in 1799 and the couple had five children together: James, Margaret, Mary Ann, Eleanor, and Elizabeth. His slaving activities next took him to North America, where he continued his

firm's trading in Charleston, and later East Florida, which had returned to Spanish control from American hands in 1784. It was in Florida that John Fraser drowned in 1813, setting off a dispute over his inheritance that would last decades, involving family from three different continents.<sup>112</sup> Although centered on property in Spanish East Florida, the suit retained many of the same qualities of the disputes previously discussed.

After Fraser's death, the executors of his will began settling the estate. Philip Robert Yonge, Zephaniah Kingsley, Andrew Charles, and Thomas Napier were the four executors in charge of administering Fraser's will.<sup>113</sup> Yonge and Kingsley were the principal agents, and most of the procedures were handled by them. While Yonge had been a fellow slave trader with Fraser, Kingsley was both a slave dealer and planter. Coincidentally, Kingsley had come to Florida by way of Charleston from his native England and, like Fraser, also married an African woman. Administering Fraser's estate was not an easy task. He had extensive property holdings in East Florida (worth some \$56,000), England, and Africa. Adding to the challenge, Spanish law had made it extremely difficult for non-citizen legatees to pass on estates without significant confiscation by colonial authorities.<sup>114</sup> Evading these repossessions was difficult enough, but the executors faced further troubles finding Fraser's British family to notify them of the death.

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<sup>112</sup> For a thorough biography of Fraser, and the subsequent resolution of his estate, see: Daniel L. Schafer, "Family Ties that Bind: Anglo-African Slave Traders in Africa and Florida, John Fraser and his Descendants," *Slavery and Abolition* 20, no. 3 (December 1999): 1-21.

<sup>113</sup> The records pertaining to Fraser that are considered here come from copies of the Superior Court of East Florida, lodged in the John Fraser Estate Collection, Box 38 in the Small Collections folder, WCL. Schafer has found a much larger group of manuscripts on the case from the Records of the Superior Court of East Florida, Box 156, File 59, St. Augustine Historical Society, and the Thomas Napier Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina: "Family Ties," 15-16n.

<sup>114</sup> Philip Yonge to Thomas Napier, April 7, 1822, John Fraser Estate Collection, Folder 27, WCL. Schafer goes into greater detail on both the value of Fraser's estate, and well as the legal problems characterizing the East Floridian court: "Family Ties," 5-6.

Having spent much of his life away from his homeland, Fraser had little knowledge about his family in the metropole. In his 1811 will, he recorded: “Owing to my having lived absent from my country so long, I am unacquainted with the character of my distant relations who may yet be alive.” He lamented a fifteen-year death of correspondence with his brother Archibald, who had, at that point, been living in China. Fraser worried that Archibald was already dead, an accurate premonition which came true at roughly the same time as John’s passing.<sup>115</sup> The two also had a sister, Ann, whom John believed had not married at the time he drafted his will. Indeed, she remained unwed in 1811, but would marry William Robertson in 1818, one year after being contacted by Yonge and Kingsley. As the lone surviving sibling, Ann Fraser Robertson, as she was now called, had claim to both her and Archibald’s portion of John’s estate – as set aside in his will – totaling \$8,800.<sup>116</sup> The majority of Fraser’s fortune, however, belonged to his mixed-race children and their mother. Once the Robertsons obtained a copy of the will and discovered these relatives, they would seek the entirety of the inheritance.

John Fraser’s last will and testament provided handsomely for his mixed-race children and also sought to move some of them to England. Leaving most of the estate to these children, he allocated an additional provision in order to take them from Africa to Britain. Much like children of color born in the West Indies, mixed-race offspring of slave traders in Africa were also sent to European schools. Most of Fraser’s children had grown up in Africa, except his two eldest. James, Fraser’s only son, had gone to school in Charleston and his father hoped to continue his education in either the United States or

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<sup>115</sup> Will of John Fraser, August 17, 1811, John Fraser Estate Collection, Small Collections, Box 38, Folder 27, WCL.

<sup>116</sup> Schafer, “Family Ties,” 7.

England. Margaret had been sent to Liverpool at age four, where she lived with Thomas Powell, Fraser's English agent. After Margaret's success in Liverpool, Fraser asked that his three youngest children be sent to England as well. Part of this enthusiasm for the metropole came from Fraser's belief that in England, "no particular distinction is made as to colour; but so much more of good conduct and manners." Asking two of his friends to help escort the children from Africa to England, Fraser also recommended that they allow Phenda to accompany them "as [she] would not meet with contempt in a Country where little attention is paid to colour."<sup>117</sup> Fraser's travels throughout the hotbeds of Atlantic enslavement may have endeared him to his ancestral home. Although scholars have argued that Spanish Florida maintained a much greater tolerance of mixed-race people than the United States, Fraser did not wish any of his children to follow him there.<sup>118</sup>

Charged to settle Fraser's estate, his executors contemplated the best method by which to care for his children in Britain. Philip Yonge traveled to England and Scotland to pay out legacies, allowing him an opportunity to settle Fraser's offspring in the metropole. Prior to embarking for Britain, he wrote to fellow executor Charles Napier about the status of the children. Complying with Fraser's wishes in regards to his offspring was one of Yonge's top priorities, including their arrival in Britain: "there should be no expence spared to effect it." Yonge had heard little about James's whereabouts in Charleston, however, and hoped that Napier, who lived in the city, could find out more. If James was willing, Yonge asked Napier to put him on a boat bound for England. Revealing his further plans, Yonge proclaimed, "I should wish to get him over to Liverpool, while I am there and would put him some where in Scotland." Though not

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<sup>117</sup> Will of John Fraser, John Fraser Estate Collection, WCL.

<sup>118</sup> Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

expressing so explicitly, Yonge most likely wished to put James under the care of his aunt, Ann Fraser Robertson, who lived with her husband in Inverness. He did openly declare his hope to settle Margaret “with her Aunt in Scotland if . . . she will agree to take charge of her.” Such desire for family supervision resulted partly from his previous experiences with Margaret. Yonge had overseen the payment of Margaret’s educational expenses after her father’s death and had corresponded with her during that period. Griping to Napier, Yonge declared, “I fear [Margaret] has been brought up with such ideas of wealth as will hardly be conducive to her future happiness,” due to her extensive schooling: “I should think some respectable employment would have been better for her.”<sup>119</sup> Perhaps Yonge believed that Margaret was attempting to live beyond the station of a mixed-race woman born in Africa. He may have also worried about the financial independence of a woman of color in England, much as Mary Ann Steele had, particularly one backed by such a large fortune. These fears, whether racialized or not, most likely contributed to his plot to have the children under family surveillance in Scotland.

As word reached Ann Fraser Robertson about her late brother, plans for the estate came to a halt. Yonge’s scheme to have Margaret brought under Robertson’s care would be moot after the child’s death in 1818.<sup>120</sup> Expectations for putting James in the Robertsons’ hands also crashed after the couple filed suit against Yonge and Kingsley for the entirety of John Fraser’s estate. Serious about the case’s prosecution, the couple left Scotland for Spanish East Florida to see it drawn to a hasty conclusion. Maintaining so little contact with her brother in previous years, Ann sought out his friends in North

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<sup>119</sup> Philip Yonge to Thomas Napier, April 7, 1822, John Fraser Estate Collection, Folder 27, WCL.

<sup>120</sup> Schafer, “Family Ties,” 4.

America who could testify to his status, the validity of his will, and the location of his children. After interviewing a number of people, in 1819 the Robertsons filed a motion in the Superior Court of East Florida to challenge the legitimacy of John Fraser's will.

The complexities of the case, not least of which included Florida's transition back into U.S. jurisdiction during the will resolution, are too numerous to explore. Instead, only the Robertsons' approach to the suit will be considered here, particularly as it related to Fraser's mixed-race offspring. Central to the suit's claims was the allegation that Yonge and Kingsley had presented a fraudulent will. A common assertion in testamentary contests, Parliament enacted a Statute of Frauds in 1671 requiring three witnesses to confirm a will's validity to prevent future cases. Even after the statute's passage, numerous suits emerged charging executors with producing false documents. More frequent still, were accusations of undervalued estates which allowed executors to embezzle loose assets – as had been alleged in both the Morse and Steele cases.<sup>121</sup> The Robertsons made both claims, believing that Fraser's estate had not only been improperly appraised, but that John had never written a will at all. As John Fraser's primary beneficiaries, his mixed-race children took center stage in these claims of fraud.

Certain that Fraser had not drafted a will, the Robertsons questioned the very existence of his supposed children. The couple had spoken with David Lewis, an associate of Fraser from Georgia, who expressed doubts that his friend had codified his last wishes. Such evidence led them to believe that Yonge and Kingsley had submitted a false document to Spanish authorities in an attempt to defraud the estate. Suspicious of deception, they began inquiring about the children set to inherit most of Fraser's fortune. “[T]he greater part of the property of the said John Fraser is devised to certain persons of

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<sup>121</sup> Addy, *Death, Money*, 12, 74-83.

Colour who it is pretended are the natural children of the said John Fraser” the Robertsons’ petition read. It continued, “it is not known whether the said persons of Colour . . . are in existence, or if in existence where they reside.” Their incredulity, either that Fraser would have sired mixed-race children or that he would have given them the bulk of his estate, became the first principle upon which the prosecution turned. After laying out these complaints, the couple asked the court to solicit specific information from the executors about the children. In particular, they hoped to know “whether they have any personal knowledge of . . . the natural children of the said John Fraser, . . . where they have been since the death of the said John Fraser, and where they now are, and whom they were last heard of, or from.”<sup>122</sup> It may have come as a shock that their niece Margaret had been living for years in Liverpool. Equally, it may have seemed too strange to be believed.

The Robertsons’ second argument was that even if Fraser did indeed sire these mixed-race children, they would not have been entitled to their father’s wealth. Regardless of the children’s existence, the Robertsons noted that none of them lived in the region in which the property was to be administered. They made the spurious claim that this put the children outside “the Jurisdiction of this Court or within This Territory” of East Florida. Lack of residence would not have affected their ability to inherit. However, competing probate law between the Spanish and British colonies did make the Robertsons’ question of jurisdiction valid. Britain struggled to keep English testamentary rights sound for expatriates in territories outside the Empire’s borders, with varying

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<sup>122</sup> Petition of William Robertson and Ann Fraser Robertson to the Superior Court of East Florida, 1823, John Fraser Estate Collection, Folder 27, WCL.

success.<sup>123</sup> Brazil complied with these requests until 1844, but, as mentioned earlier, Spanish authorities in East Florida made no concessions to British probative procedure.<sup>124</sup> Pushing harder in this direction, the Robertsons asserted that Fraser's marriage to Phenda was not only invalid, but that she had also been enslaved. This would have meant the children were slaves as well, and thus unable to inherit property. Additionally, by questioning the marriage, they also condemned the children as illegitimate. If, in fact, Yonge and Kingsley had manufactured the will, then Fraser had died intestate, and his illegitimate children stood to inherit nothing. All of his fortune would then pass to his Scottish sister.

Such legal strategies show two additional methods by which British family members could disinherit mixed-race relatives in the metropole. Casting doubt on the existence of beneficiaries, while dramatic, was not totally unreasonable. Attempting to hide illegitimate children, many colonists did not disclose their existence until death freed them from the burden of keeping the secret. Wills frequently served as official messengers, bearing witness to their authors' colonial indiscretions. The Robertsons' skepticism about their nieces and nephew of color speak to the insecurity that Britons held toward family fortunes in the periphery. Fearing not only that white relatives had formed mixed-race families who might dissipate their wealth, they also worried that illegitimate relatives of color could be the products of outright scams. Without firsthand knowledge of the colonies, they had to trust the veracity of strangers charged to resolve their kin's estate. The Robertsons' actions, then, could be seen as much the result of an absence of contact between a family stretched across the Atlantic, as it could an active

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<sup>123</sup> See the inheritance dispute involving James Robinson, a Eurasian man who traveled to Britain: Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 174-79.

<sup>124</sup> Nazari, "Widows as Obstacles," 783-86.

attempt to disinherit mixed-race relatives. At the same time, however, efforts to define their nieces and nephew as fictional beings from the start exposed the Robertsons' intentions to siphon away these relatives' legacies.

Secondary attempts to define the Fraser children as enslaved were somewhat more traditional. Much as with the Steele family, questioning a status of freedom could prove very effective in eliminating a beneficiary of color's claim. For the Robertsons, this strategy worked for those children still in Africa and the United States, as well as for Margaret in England. If the Robertsons could impose the colonial mark of slavery upon Margaret, who had lived in Liverpool since she was a young girl, then they could prevent her from collecting on her father's estate. This scheme took advantage of the disparities between colonial and metropolitan jurisprudence, and sought the ambiguity of the transatlantic constitution in order to strengthen the effects of enslavement in the metropole. Never codified into law, and regularly impugned as abhorrent to the British Isles, slavery still made its mark on select residents.

Such a complicated case produced two very simple condemnations of mixed-race residents in Britain. They could either be tools of white fraud, whether they themselves were fictional or not, or slaves in freemen's clothing. In any case, the imposition of colonial categories of derision and law onto mixed-race individuals in Britain often worked well to dispossess them of rightful inheritances. The Robertsons, however, did not win a total victory in their suit. Ann Fraser Robertson managed to acquire a third share of her brother's total fortune – a large sum, but significantly less than she originally demanded. The rest of the estate entered into decades of legal purgatory before Fraser's youngest, and last remaining child finally received the balance in 1851. In the meantime,

two of Fraser's daughters, Mary Ann and Elizabeth, both married mixed-race men (each the children of white slave traders and African women). Both of these husbands had also attended schools in Liverpool, much like their sister-in-law Margaret, before returning to Africa.<sup>125</sup> Fraser's extended relations, then, embodied many of the characteristics typical of families with mixed-race members in the metropole. While his extended family along the Atlantic border migrated to the Empire's center to achieve success, his British kin struck out to the periphery in order to redirect those errant fortunes away from relatives of color.

### **Further Considerations**

This chapter has examined the legal reactions of white Britons to the legacies of mixed-race relatives in the metropole along racial and class lines. While each of the cases above focus on colonial law and prejudice, none of them made explicit claims grounded in racial discourse. Instead, they each attempted to disinherit a relative of color by means of legal and cultural attacks based upon racially-structured categories and statutes founded in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, one must not forget that in addition to being children of African descent, these individuals of color were also illegitimate. Their legal status as bastards may have worked as much against them as their racial composition. It is worth briefly considering the general background of illegitimacy and family inheritance in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

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<sup>125</sup> Schafer, "Family Ties," 10-13. Folarin Shyllon notes that many Africans were sent to schools in Liverpool "for the specific purpose of learning enough to be able to conduct business with the English on the African coast," and that the city's involvement with the slave trade made it a desirable location to send children of color who would eventually join that trade: *Black People in Britain 1555-1833* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 53.

Scholars have long puzzled over a general increase in bastardy in the eighteenth century. Often labeled the “century of illegitimacy,” the eighteenth century saw bastardy soar, not only in Britain, but also in Continental Europe and the Western Hemisphere.<sup>126</sup> Debates have raged over the cause of these increased rates. While some have speculated that economic dislocation produced greater absence among early-modern fathers, others have suggested that a sub-group of “bastard prone” women bore increasingly large numbers of illegitimate children.<sup>127</sup> Still others have questioned the measurements of bastardy in the eighteenth century altogether, attributing the rise in recorded illegitimacy solely to changes in legal definition over time.<sup>128</sup> Lord Hardwicke’s Clandestine Marriage Act of 1753, for instance, made customary marriage illegal, sticking the bastard label onto larger numbers of children without any significant change in social behavior.<sup>129</sup> Regardless of any behavioral changes, the perception of a seismic shift in illegitimacy became common in eighteenth-century British society. Novels and short stories reveal an intense preoccupation with illegitimacy in this period, especially in

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<sup>126</sup> Ann Twinham, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 7. One of the earliest, and most thorough, analyses of illegitimacy in Britain (based on demographic research carried out by the Cambridge group) is Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen, and Richard Smith, eds., *Bastardy and its Comparative History: Studies in the History of Illegitimacy and Marital Nonconformism in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, North America, Jamaica and Japan* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, Ltd., 1980).

<sup>127</sup> Richard Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); Rosalind Mitchinson and Leah Leneman, *Sexuality and Social Control: Scotland 1660-1780* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989); John Black, “Who were the Putative Fathers of Illegitimate Children in London, 1740-1810?,” in *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920*, eds. Alys Levene, Thomas Nutt, and Samantha Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50-65; Nicholas Rogers, “Carnal Knowledge: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century Westminster,” *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 355-75; Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); *Ibid.*, “Introduction: Comparing Illegitimacy Over Time and Between Cultures,” in *Bastardy*, eds. Laslett et al., 1-50; Andrew Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex and Society: Northeast Scotland, 1750-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>128</sup> Belinda Meteyard, “Illegitimacy and Marriage in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 3 (Winter 1980): 479-89.

<sup>129</sup> Great Britain, Laws, Statutes, etc. 26 Geo. II, c. 33.

terms of its effect on the family and redistribution of finances.<sup>130</sup> So too does Thomas Coram's creation of the Foundling Hospital in 1739 to care for both orphans and bastard children in London.<sup>131</sup>

Although contemporaries and scholars identify the eighteenth century as a period of increasing bastardy, either real or redefined, little has been said about the effect of illegitimate births on inheritance during the period. As noted before, by the end of the seventeenth century, English common law allowed individuals to dispose of personal estate in any form they wished through a last will and testament. Intestate fortunes were not distributed to bastard children, however, due to the customary rights of legitimate heirs. But, such cases are irrelevant here, as West Indians who made no provisions for mixed-race children would have never paid for their transport to Britain. While the rise of venture capitalism in the eighteenth century reduced the absolute need for customary inheritance, and therefore diminished stigmas against bastards, Lisa Zunshine explains that eighteenth-century literature projected an "economic fear of the middle-class family threatened by . . . the bastard pretender to its property."<sup>132</sup> If the British family felt an increased sense of danger from illegitimate white claimants to its property, then it would have been all the more concerned about similar threats coming from West Indian relatives of color. Such anxiety may have inspired a more active legal stance toward mixed-race people who came to the metropole with a large colonial inheritance supporting them.

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<sup>130</sup> Lisa Zunshine, *Bastards and Foundlings: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2005).

<sup>131</sup> For more on the Foundling Hospital, see: Gillian Pugh, *London's Forgotten Children: Thomas Coram and the Foundling Hospital* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2007); Ruth McLure, *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>132</sup> Zunshine, *Bastards and Foundlings*, 123.

Alterations in bequest patterns also may have worked against mixed-race inheritance, as well. Based, as they originally were, on feudal custom, British wills tended to concentrate wealth among the nuclear family. Rarely were extended members of one's family included in wills to any substantial degree.<sup>133</sup> The aristocracy tended to favor primogeniture to keep large estates intact within their immediate family, and Jamaican planters operated in much the same fashion.<sup>134</sup> Middle class testators also favored the nuclear family, although they often used partible inheritance to ensure the success of each immediate family member. Over time, Alistair Owens argues that wills became effective tools for patriarchs to regulate the family and reinforce gender divisions after death. Wives and daughters often received inalienable funds which were not liquid, thereby preventing them from achieving much in the way of financial independence.<sup>135</sup> Trevor Burnard finds similar discrimination against wives in Jamaica, where the presence of black and mixed-race lovers reduced the sexual and economic power of white women, who often received only basic testamentary assistance from husbands.<sup>136</sup> Yet, the needs of the immediate family were foremost in early-modern wills.

An interesting change in British wills, however, arose as the eighteenth century progressed. Examining working and upper classes Britons, Ruth Perry observes a shift: “the biologically given family into which one was born was gradually becoming secondary to the chosen family constructed by marriage.” The impact of such changes on

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<sup>133</sup> Alistair Owens, “Property, gender and the life course: inheritance and family welfare provision in early nineteenth-century England,” *Social History* 26, no. 3 (October 2001): 307. Keith Wrightson and David Levine find that kinship networks were relative small and compact in the early-modern village of Terling. Their analysis of wills, correspondence and other records reinforces the notion that the nuclear family was much more important than the extended one during this period: *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>134</sup> Craton, “Property and propriety”: 513.

<sup>135</sup> Owens, “Property, gender”: 310-13.

<sup>136</sup> Burnard, “Inheritance and Independence”: 110-12.

women may provide insight into the inheritance disputes waged against mixed-race beneficiaries. In the late-eighteenth century, Perry notes, “Women’s hereditary rights in property were . . . made secondary to the imperative for accumulation . . . in large landowning families.”<sup>137</sup> This process of accumulation pushed male testators to bestow more heartily upon extended family, to the detriment of immediate female kin who labored as *femmes couvertes*. While the patriarchs analyzed here bucked such a trend by providing handsomely for children of color, white Britons may have operated under the growing assumption that legitimate extended family, who could better accumulate wealth, were more entitled to colonial fortunes than mixed-race relatives. If greater numbers of upper-class whites were reaching out to extended family through inheritance, then those distant relatives must have expected an increased stake in their kin’s estate.<sup>138</sup> Those with family of color must have felt even more qualified to inherit, owing to their mixed-race relatives’ disenfranchisement under colonial law.

Altogether, the inheritance disputes between white Britons and relatives of color in the metropole can be seen as part of a broader shift in family relations in eighteenth-century Britain. Illegitimacy came to be seen as an increasing threat to the middling class’s economic survival. Moreover, a heightened hoarding mentality amongst wealthy Britons aggressively discriminated against immediate family laboring under legal disadvantage. Legal, cultural, and gender forces within Britain at this time operated against mixed-race beneficiaries who came to the metropole, outside of the issues of

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<sup>137</sup> Perry, “Women in families”: 111-119; *ibid.*, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38-76.

<sup>138</sup> Naomi Tadmor finds that English *conceptions* of the family (grounded in linguistic categories) often included extended kin and individuals of co-residence and authority, even if not provided for in wills – though her focus is primarily on servants within a household, rather than blood relations outside of it: “The concept of the household-family in eighteenth-century England,” *Past & Present*, no. 151 (May 1996): 111-30.

racial composition and status. Still, those divisions cannot be clearly delineated, and the intersection of each of these factors contributed to the disinheritance of West Indians of color in Britain. Indeed, white relatives who wished to undo these legacies had a number of arrows in their legal quiver from which to choose.

### Conclusion

Inheritance disputes over West Indian fortunes became a common occurrence in the eighteenth century. Often with minimal contact between family members on either side of the Atlantic, unfamiliar beneficiaries could prompt heated reactions from relatives in Britain. Whites who had spent most of their lives in the colonies were also generally reluctant to dispose of estates in favor of estranged British family members. In the 1812 novel *Montgomery*, a Jamaican planter reflects on a fellow resident:

I do really think he now wishes he had followed my advice, and that he had legitimate heirs to his vast possessions. As it is, he can only bequeath to them what the law permits, and the residue of his fortune must go to relatives he knows nothing about, cares nothing about, and has never corresponded with.<sup>139</sup>

Further complicating matters was an increased fondness amongst Britons for estate litigation.<sup>140</sup> With few mementos of their relatives abroad, many Britons hung their family connections onto the hook of an awaiting colonial endowment. The surprise of finding competition for those riches, especially from mixed-race relatives, pushed whites to fight for every scrap of inheritance they could receive. Colonial law and Caribbean prejudice were easily transportable and could help bolster a case against mixed-race residents in Britain. Using such tactics, white Britons not only drew a firm line between

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<sup>139</sup> *Montgomery; or, the West-Indian Adventurer*, vol. 2 (Kingston, Jamaica, 1812), 75-76.

<sup>140</sup> Addy, *Death, Money*, 149.

themselves and their relations of color, but they also ensured that mixed-race kin could not live in the metropole unencumbered from the vestiges of colonial oppression.<sup>141</sup>

This chapter has presented a number of cases to exhibit the general legal struggles facing mixed-race West Indians when they arrived in Britain. While court cases often show only the most extreme form of action in society, the large numbers of suits presented here speak to the regularity and commonality of these disputes. Attempts at disinheritance could be stark and unapologetic, as with the Fraser and Campbell cases, or mediated by degrees of filial protection, such as in the Morse and Steele examples. The respective success or failure of these suits cast a long shadow on the lives of mixed-race children in Britain. Without their fathers' financial backing, or at least some protection from British relatives, these migrants had little chance of establishing themselves in the metropole. Indeed, family encouragement in Britain was key to their lives there, and struggles over inheritance did little to provide such support.

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<sup>141</sup> Indeed, the law became crucial to both metropolitan and colonial notions of identity. Attempts made by Britons to exclude relatives of color by using colonial law went against those mixed-race individuals' conceptions of themselves as English, or at least British, in an imperial sense of the term. This was certainly true of whites in the Caribbean who felt that legal injunctions placed upon enslaved property in Britain violated their rights as Englishmen: Jack P. Greene, "Liberty, Slavery, and the Transformation of British Identity in the Eighteenth-Century West Indies," *Slavery and Abolition* 21, no. 1 (April 2000): 1-31.

## CHAPTER 4

### Success and Struggle in Britain

#### Introduction

In the first weeks of 1791, James Tailyour<sup>1</sup> landed in Britain from Jamaica. Storms had raged in the North Sea, making the journey's final leg treacherous. According to his grandmother, James had endured a "very long & disagreeable passage," but arrived safely and was placed under the care of his aunt Catherine. Four-year-old James took an immediate liking to his British cousins, with whom he played and began attending school. Soon after James's arrival, Catherine had him and her son inoculated with smallpox, a popular practice brought to Britain from the Ottoman Empire by Mary Wortley Montagu earlier in the century. While only recently emancipated from slavery, young James became a favorite of the British Tailyours. With pride, his aunt cheerfully remarked, "he is a very fin[e] Boy."<sup>2</sup>

Over the next several years, John Tailyour sent another son – possibly two – and a daughter to Britain in their brother's footsteps. The family welcomed each of them warmly. Only through these familial connections could the Tailyour children hope to maintain themselves in a foreign land. Solidly positioned within their father's network, the children's social and class distinctions allowed them to circumvent many of the

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<sup>1</sup> James was baptized with the altered spelling of his father's name "Taylor," from the original "Tailyour." For clarity, however, James will be noted with the older spelling, as will his father.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Tailyour to John Tailyour, January 24, 1791, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

problems associated with their ancestry. Although descended, to a minor degree, from Africans, that mixture allowed them a tenuous space in which to work and operate as members of a rising family. Progress within that space continually demanded negotiation in the face of increasing racial prejudice. Many mixed-race individuals arriving in Britain without strong connections could not withstand the mounting metropolitan intolerance. As offspring of whites in the Caribbean, however, the Tailyours carved out a particular niche in British society, separating themselves from the metropole's growing black population.

What were the personal experiences of mixed-race colonists like the Tailyours who arrived in Britain from the West Indies? This chapter argues that while many assimilated easily into white society, family assistance and financial support were essential for success. Social acceptance depended upon kinship and the ability of migrants to distance themselves from Caribbean roots. At the same time, increasing concerns over race brought out by the abolition movement led to greater racial discrimination at the individual level by the turn of the nineteenth century. A number of richly detailed family experiences allow us to focus on the mechanisms which contributed to success or struggle. Such a methodology, utilizing biographical material, aids in the analysis of the mixed-race experience. This chapter will first consider the growing literature on blacks in Britain during the eighteenth century. By not separating blacks from people of mixed race, scholars have misrepresented the diversities of experience in the metropole for those of African ancestry. Secondly, several case studies will chart the achievements of mixed-race people who took a prominent, though often fragile, place in white society. Contained within this discussion will be a consideration of

those who used the metropole as a jumping-off point for greater adventure and exploits in the wider Empire. Finally, additional case studies will detail those who suffered while in Britain, never acquiring the level of comfort which their fathers' intended. Such difficulty increased over time, as political and cultural discourses worked against mixed-race interests in Britain. These individuals' stories will show the need for a more refined and complex understanding of British racial perception in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. While racial prejudice followed mixed-race migrants from the colonies to Britain, West Indian notions of *métissage* also came along, producing much more complicated attitudes to their arrival.

### **Historiography of Blacks in Britain**

In the wake of decolonization, and the subsequent flood of immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa, a growing body of literature has examined the historical presence of blacks in Britain. Originally grounded in sociological work after the Second World War, the history of black Britons took a great step forward in the early 1970s with James Walvin's documentary and analytical studies of the group.<sup>3</sup> Reacting against anti-immigration groups, Folarin Shyllon introduced his seminal work, *Black People in Britain, 1555-1833*, in 1977 to combat the notion of a long, unspoiled, white British past.<sup>4</sup> Several years later, Peter Fryer expanded this chronology in *Staying Power: Black*

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Lindsay Little, *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Race Relations in English Society* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1948). Little looked closely at working-class blacks in Cardiff (though with the dubious original intention of measuring the size of their skulls), but also wrote briefly on British black history in the early-modern period. More balanced is James Walvin, *The Black Presence: A documentary history of the Negro in England, 1555-1860* (London: Orbach & Chambers, 1971); *Ibid.*, *Black and White: The Negro and English Society, 1555-1945* (London: Penguin Press, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain, 1555-1833* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

*People in Britain since 1504*.<sup>5</sup> Studies by Norma Meyers and Douglas Lorimer have since debated the statistical and legal details of the enslaved class in Britain during this time, refining many of Shyllon and Fryer's original claims.<sup>6</sup> Additional work by Gretchen Gerzina has improved our biographical understanding of some of the eighteenth-century's most prominent black and brown Britons, and David Dabydeen has deftly analyzed the artistic treatment of blacks in Britain, both in painting and literature.<sup>7</sup> Recent investigations have also revealed a more pronounced presence of non-whites, including East Indians and Native Americans, in Britain than previously suspected.<sup>8</sup> These scholarly treatments have uncovered a rich and detailed history of Africans and their descendants in Britain, challenging popular notions of the Isles' racial past.

Despite these leaps forward, the historiography concerning Britons of African descent has followed a strict formula. Scholars generally divide the population into three groups: enslaved blacks, poor but free blacks, and privileged individuals of African descent. There has been a tendency to universalize their experiences as a racial minority,

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: Black People in Britain since 1504* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Norma Meyers, "Servant, Sailor, Soldier, Tailor, Beggarman: Black Survival in White Society, 1780-1830," *Immigrants & Minorities* 12, no. 1 (March 1993): 47-74; *Ibid.*, *Reconstructing the Black Past: Blacks in Britain 1780-1830* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996); Douglas A. Lorimer "Black Slaves and English Liberty: A Re-examination of Racial Slavery in England," *Immigrants & Minorities* 3, no. 2 (July 1984): 121-150.

<sup>7</sup> Gretchen Gerzina, *Black England: Life before Emancipation* (London: John Murray, 1995); David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987); *Ibid.*, ed., *The black presence in English literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008); June Evans, "African/Caribbeans in Scotland: A Socio-Geographical Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995); Christopher John Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773-1833* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1996), 102, 122-23; William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (London: Harper Collins, 2002), 67-69, 471-80; Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126-27, 174-79, 248-54.; Ardel Marie Thomas, "Victorian Monstrosities: Sexuality, Race, and the Construction of the Imperial Self, 1811-1924" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1998), on the case of Jane Cumming; Alden Vaughan, *Transatlantic Encounters: American Indians in Britain, 1500-1776* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

despite more recent work seeking to differentiate these groups along class lines.<sup>9</sup>

Enslaved and poor free-black voices have been difficult to recover, although court cases challenging enslavement in Britain, and the records of the Sierra Leone Company which transported several hundred free blacks from England to Africa, easily document the difficulties they faced. By far the greatest scholarly attention has focused on a select number of elite and educated blacks in the eighteenth century. The stories of Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho, and Julius Soubise have been retold many times, owing primarily to their prodigious letter writing and the various correspondence and newspaper accounts which followed their lives. This canonical litany of black figures is universally paraded about to highlight the experiences of blacks in the metropole. Few shared their circumstances, however, and little information has been added to deepen their relevance. Two individuals within this coterie of usual suspects, William Davidson and Robert Wedderburn, will also be considered in this chapter, but with a specific reconfiguration of their place within British history. It is time to move beyond this typical cast of characters to introduce fresh voices, as well as to expand our biographical knowledge of black and mixed-race British residents to include those outside the confines of popular celebrity.<sup>10</sup>

Yet another issue stifling analysis is the racial polarization that permeates these accounts. Without exception, scholars of eighteenth-century black British history have lumped all individuals with African ancestry into a single racial bloc. Although noted for having white parents, mixed-race individuals are uniformly described as “black” in these works. Fryer labels Davidson and Wedderburn as black, even though both had white

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Fryer has argued for the participation of blacks in the development of British working-class radicalism in *Aspects of British Black History* (London: Index Books, 1993), separating them from elite blacks.

<sup>10</sup> Ian Duffield, “Identity, Community and the Lived Experience of Black Scots from the Late Eighteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Centuries,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 11, no. 2 (July 1992): 105.

fathers and spoke openly about the fact.<sup>11</sup> Considering the importance of personal links to white relatives, differences between blacks and browns – outside of complexion – were crucial to their relative success in Britain. Meyers hints at this problem in her arguments for class differentiation within the black community: “the few blacks patronized by the upper and the middle white class had little in common with the majority of their black brothers and sisters.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Britons distinguished black from mixed-race in both their language and attitudes. Using the term “mulatto,” rather than “black” or “negro,” to describe individuals of color indicated a basic recognition of racial hybridity. Differences between mixed-race and black residents in Britain were both material and experiential.

This chapter seeks to dissolve the firm boundaries between black and white in Georgian Britain. Framing his analysis of Victorian England, Douglas Lorimer warns, “In deconstructing the racism of the past we unavoidably engage in a reconstruction of the racism of the present.”<sup>13</sup> Historians approaching eighteenth-century Britain under the assumption, *prima facie*, that the “one-drop rule” of descent dominated racial perceptions may be invoking an anachronistic interpretation. While Britain contained strict advocates for hypodescent, it is not clear that this was a dominant – and by no means solitary –

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<sup>11</sup> Fryer, *Staying Power*, 214-20. In the preface to the book, Fryer sets out his terms: “Black people – by whom I mean Africans and Asians and their descendants – have been living in Britain for close on 500 years,” xi. Although he discusses miscegenation and its importance to British racial perception, he does not distinguish between black and brown in his analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Meyers, *Reconstructing the Black Past*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Douglas Lorimer, “Reconstructing Victorian Racial Discourse: Images of Race, the Language of Race Relations, and the Context of Black Resistance,” in *Black Victorians/Black Victoriana*, ed. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 187. Lorimer was prescient in his historicization of racism, and insistence on a lack of uniformity in Britain’s black population. Although he cogently noted, “the white host community did not treat [the black population] as a uniform group, and that the experience of individual blacks was often comparable to that of individual whites,” even he fell into his own trap of historical anachronism by grouping mixed-race individuals into the category of “black”: *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1978), introduction, 23.

ideology. Indeed, it may have never monopolized racial perceptions. Paul Rich's study of the Liverpool Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children in interwar England, for example, shows some flexibility in racial attitudes.<sup>14</sup> With far less conformity of racial ideology in the eighteenth century, it seems unlikely that Britain would have contained a standard notion of race, combining all individuals of African heritage into a uniform group. If we are to take Paul Gilroy's advice and push away from notions of "ethnic absolutisms" in the black Atlantic, then we must also refrain from reorganizing them as complexional absolutisms.<sup>15</sup>

Multifaceted ties between race, class, and gender produced a much wider spectrum of racial categorization in Britain. Without specific laws targeting racial groups, save a 1731 ordinance against black laborers by the Lord Mayor of London, British residents of color had much greater flexibility to construct their own racial identity.<sup>16</sup> Historians of France have recently found similar patterns. Jennifer Palmer has discovered that, while French law began conflating race with slavery in the eighteenth century, gender articulations among La Rochelle's free colored population moderated racial categories. Tying identity to their status as married patriarchs, rather than descendants of Africans, Palmer shows the ways in which racial gradation could be absorbed into the broader French community.<sup>17</sup> Much the same occurred in Britain,

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<sup>14</sup> Paul B. Rich, "Philanthropic Racism in Britain: The Liverpool University Settlement, the Anti-Slavery Society and the Issue of 'Half-Caste' Children, 1919-51," *Immigrants & Minorities* 3, no. 1 (March 1984): 69-88.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 16-30.

<sup>16</sup> The ordinance read, "for the future no *Negroes* or other *Blacks* be suffered to be bound Apprentices at any of the Companies of this City to any Freeman thereof," which make it difficult to pinpoint who is meant by "blacks" – perhaps mixed-race individuals, or East Indians: "Ordinance of the Lord Mayor of London," September 16, 1731, Printed Books, Broadside 6.34, GL.

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer Palmer, "Atlantic Crossings: Race, Gender, and the Construction of Families in Eighteenth-Century La Rochelle" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 2008), 329. All of this occurred in the face

where laws targeting slaves became less restrictive as the eighteenth century progressed. Moreover, complex racial constructions in the colonies did not dissolve upon arrival in Britain. If Englishness could be performed by non-English – if not non-whites – in the West Indies, then it could be re-articulated in the home country as well.<sup>18</sup>

The individuals discussed below each occupied a liminal space between black and white in Britain. Generally referred to as “mulatto,” or various other terms and euphemisms for possessing a mixed ancestry, they provided strong contrast to a growing population of enslaved and poor blacks within the metropole. Alternative complexions were not the only distinctions. Gender and class articulations bound up in ties to white society through family networks also helped moderate racial difference. As will be shown, Jane Harry took a prominent place in English polite society, despite her heritage, through involvement in female religious circles. Likewise, the Morse children each elided their racial background through marriage, tied to new, white patriarchs. John Tailyour’s sons both positioned themselves through professional development. Acceptance depended upon such associations with whites, however all of these individuals made personal claims as well, enabling them to construct their own racial identity.

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of increased legal restrictions against France’s growing population of color: Sue Peabody, *“There Are No Slaves in France”*: *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, empire and gender in the eighteenth century* (New York: Routledge, 2003), ch. 4, esp. 151. Robert Young also argues that Englishness was not fixed, not even in the metropole: *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2-3.

## Traveling to Britain

Spotting a mixed-race traveler was a common occurrence on ships bound for Britain in the early-modern period. Masters regularly carried servants, both black and brown, to attend them in Europe.<sup>19</sup> Nathaniel Phillips noted that his niece's mixed-race wet-nurse followed her to Britain, and Curtis Brett asked a servant of color to attend his son on a passage to England.<sup>20</sup> Bristol merchant John Pinney brought back at least two servants of color from his plantations in Nevis: Fanny, a freed slave; and Kate Coker, the mixed-race daughter of Pinney's overseer.<sup>21</sup> The Johnston family brought their servant of color, Jane Arnold, to England in 1818.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, so many mixed-race attendants crossed the Atlantic, that most voyagers expected their presence. Writing from Jamaica, Ann Brodbelt suggested that her daughter find such an individual to join her on her return from Britain: "if you could meet with either a Brown or a Black person of a Fair character, who has been already in the Island, and is inclined to return again, you may hire one of that discription for a trifle."<sup>23</sup> Brodbelt's confidence in finding a mixed-race servant to accompany her daughter reveals the regularity of their presence in vessels returning from Britain. Emigration records for the three years before the American Revolution also include mixed-race migrants sailing between England and the western

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<sup>19</sup> This migration also involved mixed-race individuals from the North-American colonies (and the later United States). The most famous of these was Sally Hemings, who traveled to London from Virginia in 1787 as a stopping point before joining Thomas Jefferson in Paris: Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008), 193-95.

<sup>20</sup> Nathaniel Phillips to Elizabeth Gillet, March 29, 1767, Nathaniel Phillips's Letter book, Slebech Collection, MS 11485, f. 133, NLW; Curtis Brett to his son, c. 1777, MS 10, letter no. 19, 40, NLJ.

<sup>21</sup> John Pinney to Eliza Pinney, October 27, 1789, Letter Book 8, Pinney Papers, Bristol Univeristy Library, Bristol, England; John Pinney to William Jones, July 28, 1785, Letter Book 6, in *ibid.* For more on Fanny, see: Christine Eickelmann, "Coker, Francis (1767-1820)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: From the earliest times to the year 2000*, eds., H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, vol. 12 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 481.

<sup>22</sup> Note written by M. Powel onto receipt from George Coward, January 31, 1818, Powel Family Papers, Box 62, Folder 2, HSP.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Brodbelt to Jane Brodbelt, February 1, 1796, in Geraldine Mozley, ed., *Letters to Jane from Jamaica, 1788-1796* (London: Institute of Jamaica, 1938), 129.

Atlantic.<sup>24</sup> With a steady and voluminous traffic across Atlantic waters, individuals of color frequently made those crossings as well.<sup>25</sup>

Equally to be seen were mistresses of color who accompanied whites to Europe. In the eighteenth century, many white men took black and brown paramours with them to Britain. After hitting a rough storm near Bermuda on a passage from Jamaica to England, Philip Thicknesse gasped at a scene on the ship's deck: "there lay poor old Commodore Brown [with] ladies, both black and white, naked among the fragment of furniture, bedding, sheets, blankets, all *helter-skelter* without any covering, but their wet shirts and shifts."<sup>26</sup> Robert Johnson's cartoons, sketched in his journal while on deck of the Lune, also depict the presence of non-white lovers in oceanic travel. Figure 4.1 shows a white man and his mixed-race companion, seated near the ship's cannon, while Figure 4.2 portrays the couple in an unflattering caricature. The impropriety of flaunting a lover of color while traveling was remarked upon by others. Sailing between the island of St. Thomas and Ireland, the George's captain noted in his log: "Had some disagreeable conversation with [a passenger] in consequence of his bringing a molatto girl on board."<sup>27</sup> Although ubiquitous in West Indian society, openly miscegenous behavior did not win favor amongst those voyaging back to Britain who wished not to view such sexual transgression carried across the divide between colony and metropole.

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<sup>24</sup> The emigration log for the port of Plymouth includes a note from December 25, 1773 – January 2, 1774: "By the *Greyhound*. . . George . . . of London, mulatto, aged 15": Peter Wilson Coldham, *Emigrants from England to the American Colonies, 1773-1776* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co, Inc., 1988), 127. Even enslaved runaways were known to board vessels sailing toward Europe. Rebecca Durant, a Barbadian widow complained that one of her mixed-race slaves had fled onto the ship of a Captain Hardy: Lord Seaforth to Captain Hardy, July 7, 1803, Seaforth Papers, GD 46/7/7, f. 111, NAS.

<sup>25</sup> Fictional accounts also noted mixed-race servants on board vessels bound for Britain. Charlotte Smith's novel *The Wanderings of Warwick* (London, 1794) includes an enslaved woman of color who accompanies Warwick to Europe, as well as a mixed-race slave who attends a Mrs. Effingham on the journey.

<sup>26</sup> Philip Thicknesse, *Memoirs and Anecdotes of Philip Thicknesse, Late Lieutenant Governor of Land Guard Fort, and Unfortunately Father to George Touchet, Baron Audley* (London, 1788), 136.

<sup>27</sup> Captain Pullinger, Log Book of the George, July 5, 1806, Miscellaneous Collections, Am 6823, HSP, (original entry in a simple code).

Figure 4.1: “A Scene on the quarter deck of the Lune,” by Robert Johnson from his Journal, April 8, 1808<sup>28</sup>



Image courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania Library

<sup>28</sup> Robert Johnson, “A Scene on the quarter deck of the Lune,” April 8, 1808, Powel Family Papers, Box 52, Folder 3, HSP.

**Figure 4.2: Cartoon by Robert Johnson from his Journal, April 8, 1808<sup>29</sup>**



Image courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania Library

Life on board these ships is difficult to recover for mixed-race passengers.

Frequently, individuals of color experienced fair treatment on such voyages.<sup>30</sup> However, racial intolerance could escalate. Sailing from Jamaica to London, John Graham endured a torrent of physical abuse from the ship's captain. Graham was born to a black slave named Eve and George Graham, a white Briton.<sup>31</sup> Having been educated on the island,

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Johnson, Cartoon, April 8, 1808, in *ibid*.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have found a degree of racial equanimity on pirate ships, as well as commercial vessels: *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), chs. 1, 7. It is unclear if such equality endured on passenger ships, or between those sailing as voyagers, rather than laborers.

<sup>31</sup> George had sired illegitimate children on both sides of the Atlantic, but he maintained their finances, including those of his offspring in Jamaica. The inheritance dispute over George Graham's estate went all the way to the House of Lords, when his illegitimate son James attempted to claim part of the fortune: *In the House of Lords; Thomas Graham, Esq. of Kinross and Burleigh, Appellant and James Graham, illegitimate son of the late George Graham, Esq. of Kinross, Respondent; Appellant's Case* (April 23,

John left for Britain in 1797 to try his hand at commerce. He boarded the ship Juno for London, under the helm of a Captain Waugh. Although his motivations are unclear, Waugh violently assaulted Graham at one point during the passage. Recounting the story years later, Thomas Lincoln recalled that Graham suffered physical aftereffects for the next fourteen years. The abuse had been so bad that Graham sought out Lincoln, a London lawyer, to prosecute Waugh. Lincoln had Waugh arrested, and the captain eventually paid a seven-pound sterling fine.<sup>32</sup> Despite an advanced status as imperial migrants, mixed-race travelers such as Graham could still undergo harsh oppression.

Those who arrived spread to the various corners of Britain's shores. A near equal number of those listed as going to Britain in Jamaican wills were bound for Scotland as they were England, as Table 2.4 shows. Locations of family and friends who were to take care of the children, or schools at which they were to board, determined their ultimate destination. Diverse records show West Indians of color settling in numerous places throughout Britain. Parish records for St. Ann in Jamaica turn up a free woman of color, Mary McDonald, who was baptized in London.<sup>33</sup> Officials in Bristol submitted a baptismal certificate for George Napier, an illegitimate Jamaican born to an enslaved woman.<sup>34</sup> Writing in 1792, abolitionist Thomas Clarkson asked his brother to "take a little Notice of G. Christie a Mulatto Man & his Wife & family – They have lived a long time on Teston Heath [Kent]."<sup>35</sup> On the opposite end of the Isles, in the small trading village of Dornoch in northern Scotland, Donald Sage attended grammar school with two

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1818), NRAS 1115/16/Bundle 45, MFP. Many thanks to the Montgomery family for their access to the collection.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Lincoln to Thomas Graham, c. 1814, NRAS 1115/21/6, MFP.

<sup>33</sup> Mary McDonald, October 7, 1805, St. Ann: Births, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1B/11/8/2/1, JA.

<sup>34</sup> George Napier, Baptisms, 1813-37, St. Andrew, Clifton parish, Bristol, 13/2/15 CL3a 20, f. 156, Bristol Record Office, Bristol, England.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Clarkson to John Clarkson, January 2, 1792, Nova Scotia Diary of John Clarkson, Clarkson Papers, Add. MS 41262A, f. 74, BL.

West Indian boys of color at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> The widespread diaspora of mixed-race West Indians put many Britons in contact with people of color. Less inclined to congregate solely in London, mixed-race migrants made their presence in locations both big and small, tied as they were to white families and specific schools. Exposure in small urban, as well as rural, centers contributed to a growing awareness of their existence within British society.

### **Arrival in Britain**

The appearance of a mixed-race child in Britain could come as a surprise to white relatives. English composer John Marsh first received word of a nephew of color when learning of his brother's death. Marsh's brother had been an officer in the Royal Navy, and met his demise in Jamaica in 1786. A fellow officer from the island, Mr. Williams, returned to England bearing the unfortunate news. Williams also informed Marsh that his brother had lived with a woman of color while in Jamaica and that she had given birth to a son who was now a year and a half old. With only vague instruction from Marsh's brother, Williams laid out a plan for the young Boy. "[O]ut of respect to his Father," Marsh recorded in his diary, Williams "felt inclined to having brought [the boy] to England, which he proposed having done immediately & supporting him between us." The thought provoked hesitation: "I must confess I at first rather demur'd at this, under the Idea of its being a common Bastard, that could not be certainly authenticated to be his, & that probably might be father'd upon him in consequence of his Death." Much like the Fraser family who doubted the genuineness of a supposed relative of color in the

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<sup>36</sup> Rev. Donald Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica; or, Parish Life in the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Menzies & Co., 1889), 157-58. See the Introduction for more on Sage's interactions with these boys.

colonies, Marsh worried that his generosity might support a mixed-race impostor.

Ultimately, however, Marsh consented to the plan. Following a lengthy discussion, he became convinced that “the Mother really lived with my Brother (as, what is called, a West India Wife) & had certainly cohabited with no other person during that time; I not only consented but wish’d to cooperate with Mr Williams in providing for the Child.”<sup>37</sup>

When the young Jamaican arrived in 1788, Marsh’s kindness took hold. Just two years after first becoming known to white family in Britain, Edward Thomas arrived at his aunt’s house. Captain Countess of the Royal Navy brought him to England, along with “a Miss Hodgkison, a little older than him.” Marsh said little else of Hodgkison, but she may have been a mixed-race child as well; part of a regular convoy to Britain of colonial children orphaned by their military fathers. Both children “made but an uncouth appearance, being dress’d according to the taste of the Country they came from,” but Marsh’s sister helped to find them adequate clothes to suit the new environment. Of all his observations in their first meeting, Marsh stood particularly amazed at the similarities between Edward Thomas and his father. Reflecting on his deceased brother, Marsh noted of his nephew: “On seeing him I was much struck with his resemblance (as I thought) to

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<sup>37</sup> John Marsh Autobiography, vol. X, f. 181, HM 54457, HL. Marsh’s agreement to care for his mixed-race nephew reflected a general compassion toward both the enslaved and illegitimate. In April 1797, Marsh attended the House of Commons to hear the deliberations, and witnessed a particularly long argument between the abolitionist M.P. William Wilberforce and the Jamaican plantation-owner and politician Bryan Edwards. Years later Marsh became personally acquainted with Wilberforce at a Bible Society assembly. They met through Marsh’s son, Edward, who taught music to Wilberforce’s child. The Parliamentarian later called at Marsh’s house, where John expressed general agreement with Wilberforce’s reform aims. Furthermore, John Marsh had to deal with the bastard child of one of his other sons. Henry Marsh revealed to his father that he had a twelve-year-old daughter with a woman he met in northern England, while stationed there. John betrayed no hidden anger in his journal, instead expressing relief that no “seduction” had occurred with the woman, and that all contact had ended between the two: *Ibid.*, 1797, vol. XVIII, f. 95-96; 1816, vol. XXXI, ff. 25-26, 167-69. Marsh was also not shy in acknowledging sexuality. He detailed the flirtatious behavior around him in his diary, as well as his own, well aware of the sexual foibles of the upper classes in England. He also noted his own father’s remarriage in his journal: William Weber, “The Fabric of Daily Life and the Autobiography of John Marsh,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (1996): 158-61. Marsh was also known for his charitable work later in life: Brian Robins, “Marsh, John (1752-1828),” *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 36, 801-02.

my Brother Edward when he was a Child.”<sup>38</sup> Blood relation was clearly important in Marsh’s connection to Edward Thomas. By acknowledging his nephew’s biological ties to the family, he also legitimated the young man’s place within it, as well as in British society. Marsh did not include anything else in his journal about the mixed-race boy, so Edward Thomas may have left for school without additional contact with the family. Nevertheless, the financial obligation borne by Marsh, as well as family connections activated in their meeting, put Edward Thomas on a more stable path.

Such familial support was crucial to mixed-race migrants, but so too was assistance from a wider British network. Robert Laing lodged at his aunt’s house after arriving from Jamaica. His father Malcolm had given him the maximum allotment of £2000 in his will, and asked that the son of his former employer, William Philip Perrin, act as Robert’s guardian while in England.<sup>39</sup> Complications in settling Malcolm Laing’s transatlantic estate, however, necessitated help from parties outside England. John Jacques and Ralph Fisher, two attorneys who took over Malcolm’s attorney position in Jamaica, regularly enquired of young Robert in England. They wrote to his guardian, Perrin: “We should be glad to hear what progress Bob Laing may have made in his education, how he is likely to turn out, and what profession he seems to have an inclination to follow.”<sup>40</sup> Additionally, they expressed concern that his finances in Jamaica were too disorganized to access easily in Britain. They convinced both Perrin and Robert to transfer guardianship of Laing’s Jamaican finances over to them, while Perrin maintained personal guardianship over the young man. Not yet eighteen years of

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<sup>38</sup> John Marsh Autobiography, 1788, vol. XII, ff. 59-60, HL.

<sup>39</sup> Will of Malcolm Laing, January 9, 1788, PROB 11/1161, NAE.

<sup>40</sup> John Jacques and Ralph Fisher to William Phillip Perrin, October 30, 1782, Fitzherbert Papers, D239 M/E 16950, DRO.

age, Robert Laing agreed to the request and gave the two control over the management of his Jamaican property.<sup>41</sup> The transfer may have further exposed Laing to colonial corruption, but owing to the business connections between his English guardian and Jamaican attorneys, his security rested firmly in this network of accountability. Social stability in the metropole, then, was still chained to associates in the West Indies.

Finding a school was a top priority for those caring for mixed-race kin, as well as their extended networks. It is difficult to discern the pattern of education for these migrants, primarily because matriculation registers do not list race in the eighteenth century, and records from private instructors rarely survive. However, West Indian parents did send many children of color to private tutors, frequently depending upon friends and family for help. John Robertson sent his two boys, Charles and Daniel, from Tobago to Scotland, placing them under the direction of merchant connections back in Britain. One Glasgow merchant's journal includes annual payments of £30 to the boys' tutor for room and board. Extending their role as commercial factors to one of family factors, British merchants became instrumental in the lives of these mixed-race students. Robertson's associate spent several years managing the accounts and debts of the children, putting him in regular contact with their material lives.<sup>42</sup> Such interaction helped integrate mixed-race individuals deeper into British networks.

While many West Indians of color received private tutoring, others matriculated at established educational institutions. Many schools north of the Tweed, in particular, opened their doors to students of color. Douglas Hamilton has found four mixed-race

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Laing to John Jacques and Ralph Fisher, April 22, 1783, in *ibid.*, D239 M/E 18242.

<sup>42</sup> Court of Session Papers, CS 96/1526, ff. 91-165, West Register House, NAS. See also: Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750-1820* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), 210.

children registered at the Inverness Royal Academy in the first decade of the nineteenth century: Helen Inglis of Demerara and Alexander, Colin, and John McRae, of Jamaica.<sup>43</sup> Scotland's Dollar Academy also taught several students of color, though not until the 1820s. Despite its foundation under the support of prominent slave trader John McNabb, it let in several mixed-race children including its first student Charles Heddle, the son of a Sierra Leonean woman and a doctor from Orkney.<sup>44</sup> John McIntyre, a Jamaican migrant who moved to Perthshire also attended the school in Dollar, as did Joseph Bourne, another student of color.<sup>45</sup> Some migrants attended British universities as well. Martin Williams, a sixteen-year-old mixed-race student from northern Jamaica, appears to have entered Magdalen College, Oxford in 1799.<sup>46</sup> Education, no matter where it occurred, provided a crucial step for mixed-race children on their path toward British assimilation.

### **Mixed-Race Success in Britain**

Upon setting foot in the metropole, West Indians of color fought vigorously to succeed. Help came from families accepting these charges, as well as from business contacts who managed their finances and education. Other forces, however, remained

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<sup>43</sup> Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean*, 209-10.

<sup>44</sup> Bruce Baillie, *History of Dollar* (Dollar: Dollar Museum Trust, 1998), 75.

<sup>45</sup> McIntyre, who went on to become a successful physician in Doune, suffered a series of attacks at school, including an incident in which a German teacher called him an "ape." McIntyre responded by hitting the teacher with one of his books: Evans, "African/Caribbeans," 75-78. Baillie also records this incident but he lists the boy's name as Daniel McIntyre: *History of Dollar*, 75. Joseph Bourne received abuse from faculty as well. The Latin master called Bourne a "smoke," and had him expelled after accusing him of throwing a slate at the master's head, as well as drawing a knife on another boy: Baillie, *History of Dollar*, 75. These events at Dollar occurred mostly in the late 1820s and 1830s, at which point racial prejudice had escalated beyond that found in the eighteenth century.

<sup>46</sup> Although not explicitly labeled as "mixed race" in Oxford's matriculation registers, a cross-reference between two sources indicates that Williams was an individual of color. William Cowper's notes in MS 20, NLJ, include a Martin Williams of St. James, Jamaica who attended Oxford in 1799, aged 16. The Jamaica House of Assembly records include a Martin Williams of St. James, who received a privilege bill in 1783: CO 138/38, NAE. Particularly as many fathers submitted privilege bills for children of color once they were born, the two were undoubtedly the same considering that the dates correspond perfectly.

beyond their control. Phenotype was critical, not only for those who could “pass” as white and thereby skirt the issue of ancestry altogether, but also for those who could still triumph even with obvious evidence of African heritage. Light skin could moderate attitudes toward mixed-race children, despite knowledge of West Indian pasts. Charles White noted in 1799: “There is at this time a gentleman well known in the first circles in London, who was born in Jamaica, and descended from a white and mestize; but he is not to be distinguished from an European by any particular. I have seen several of this description myself.”<sup>47</sup> Only through intimate knowledge of family background could such people be labeled with the mark of African ancestry. But White’s statement also underscores the fact that they were indeed passing, even at the highest echelons of English society, despite knowledge of their heritage. Racial hybridity, then, was not an automatic category of disqualification for entry into British high society. Migrants of color could highlight various other traits to avoid self-definitions generally circumscribed

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<sup>47</sup> Charles White, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (London, 1799), 117. White endeavored to catalog the world’s various ethnic groups by looking not only at faraway continents and colonies, but also at racial configurations at home. He listed several cases of mixed-race children in Britain. Most were natives of the Isles, the products of black men and white women. One he met at an unknown English lying-in hospital, another in York, and three separate cases he studied in London. Most of these he noted for their peculiarity – though some of the stories, if not apocryphal, were exaggerated to say the least: a Yorkshire mulatto born as black as the father; a London mulatto born as white as the mother; mixed-race twins, one white, one black; and a Southwark man whose left side was black and his right completely white: *Ibid.*, 116-23. Many shared White’s interest in such epidermal oddities. Peculiarities in skin color, owing to mixed parentage, became a common theme amongst natural philosophers studying human difference. Part of this sprang from confusion over the mechanics of skin color: if it was due to climate, culture, or biological inheritance. For examples, see: John Barbot, “A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea,” in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, eds., Awnsham Churchill and John Churchill, vol. 5 (London, 1732), 13, which discusses the “speckled” skin of mixed-race people; and James Parsons, *An Account of the White Negro shewn before the Royal Society*, in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, vol. 55 (London: 1765): 47-49, which includes the story of a woman giving birth to twins, one white and one black, in Virginia. A similar collection of stories emerged in the eighteenth century chronicling the “white negro.” A broadside from the early eighteenth century noted a black man “spotted . . . like a *Leppard*”: Printed Books, Broad sides 11.66, GL. See also: John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder to Benjamin Smith Barton, August 29, 1796, Benjamin Smith Barton Papers, Series I, APS; Benjamin Moseley, *A Treatise on Tropical Diseases; and on the Climate of the West-Indies* (London, 1787), 63-64, detailing a white child delivered from two black parents; and Rev. Doctor Lindsay, *A Few Conjectural Considerations upon the Creation of the Human Race. Occasioned by the Present British Quixottical Rage of setting the Slaves from Africa at Liberty* (Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1788), in Add. MS 12439, f. 141, BL.

by race. Those who found success in Britain did so along this tenuous balance between “passing” and asserting an alternative claim to social legitimacy.

*Jane (“Jenny”) Harry*

Thomas Hibbert’s two children of color, Jane and Margaret Harry, left Jamaica at the tender ages of fourteen and five, respectively.<sup>48</sup> Sometime around 1770, Hibbert sent the girls to live with his former slave-trading partner, Nathan Sprigg, who resided in Barnes, Surrey.<sup>49</sup> There, both daughters would begin assimilating into English polite society. From Barnes, Margaret left for boarding school, while Jane stayed with the Sprigg family.<sup>50</sup> Sprigg had married the former Miss Benfield, a London socialite, and the couple frequently entertained guests, including such luminaries as Samuel Johnson, at their Surrey manor house. They also took young Jane with them on trips to the spa town of Cheltenham, to mingle further with England’s elite.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Judith Jennings, “Gender, Religion, Liberty, and Abolition: Mary Morris Knowles and Jane Harry Thresher Speak Out,” paper presented at the “Free at Last?” conference, Centre for Caribbean Studies, University of Warwick, July 2007; *Ibid.*, “A Trio of Talented Women: Abolition, Gender, and Political Participation, 1780-91,” *Slavery and Abolition* 26, no. 1 (April 2005): 55-70. It is possible they sailed with their father. In a letter to Vincent Boscoe, Nathaniel Phillips wrote of Thomas Hibbert’s plan to travel from Kingston to England in June 1770. Hibbert had been plagued by gout and hoped to consult with a German doctor recommended to him by his former Jamaican partner, Nathan Sprigg, who had since returned to England. If that was the case, then the Harry daughters shared the voyage with one of the Caribbean’s most influential and wealthy colonists, Bryan Edwards, the key lobbyist for the West-India Committee in Westminster and author of the highly popular *History, Civil and Commercial, of Jamaica*: Nathaniel Phillips to Vincent Briscoe, May 27, 1770, Nathaniel Phillips’s Letter Book, Slebech Collection, MS 11485, f. 165, NLW; Nathaniel Phillips to Walter Brett, June 4, 1770, in *ibid.*, f. 166, NLW.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph J. Green, “Jenny Harry, Later Thresher (circa 1756-1784),” *Friends Quarterly Examiner* XLVII (1913): 561.

<sup>50</sup> Green’s work does not note Margaret having attended a London boarding school, but Jennings’s has found evidence of her education in the capital: “Gender, Religion, Liberty.”

<sup>51</sup> Despite the comfortable living, Jane’s recollection of these times was one of withdrawal, rather than social participation. “It has often been observed by my friends and by most of my acquaintances that I was of a grave and solid turn of mind,” Jane wrote to her father several years after arriving at Barnes. Attempting to “throw off that disposition to silence,” Jane admitted, “I did not exempt myself from the fashionable amusements of the place I lived in.” Although she studied ethics and morality in these adolescent years, her real passion rested in illustration and the arts. “[D]rawing began to engross much of my time and attention,” Harry recalled, so that, “I found it more easy to engage myself in this employment

During these early years in England, Jane suffered a devastating blow: her sister Margaret died in London, at only ten years of age. Jane herself was not yet twenty, and grieved intensely. Feeling that she had “lost part of myself,” her attention turned toward religion. She experienced something of a spiritual awakening, shifting away from “the folly of metaphysical reasoning,” as well as Anglican doctrine, which she perceived to have strayed from New Testament teachings.<sup>52</sup> She found comfort in the friendship of a frequent visitor to the Sprigg residence, Mary Knowles. A devout and zealous Quaker, Knowles consoled Jane over the loss of her sister, while encouraging her to continue questioning the Church of England. Perhaps sensing a conversion, she became close friends with Jane, who observers later commented was highly enamored of Knowles.<sup>53</sup> Still in her teens, Jane stepped into the bustling social circle of one of England’s most prominent elite women.<sup>54</sup>

Through her connection with Mary Knowles, Jane made the acquaintance of many famous figures. She had already met Samuel Johnson, but the “Good Doctor’s” friendship with Knowles put him into even greater contact with Jane. A contributor to the *Gentleman’s Magazine* later wrote that “Dr. J[ohnson] . . . loved and respected Jenny H[arry].”<sup>55</sup> Better suited to her passion for drawing, Harry also met Joshua Reynolds through her new associate. The country’s pre-eminent painter took a strong interest in

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than any literary one”: Jane Harry to Thomas Hibbert, c. 1778, as quoted in Green, “Jenny Harry,” (1913): 562-64.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*: 564-66.

<sup>53</sup> Anna Seward to James Boswell, nd, as quoted in W. Beck, W. F. Wells, and H. G. Chalkley, eds., *Biographical Catalogue; Being an Account of the Lives of Friends* (London: Friends Institute 1888), 334.

<sup>54</sup> For more on the connections between Jane Harry and Mary Knowles, see: Judith Jennings, *Gender, Religion, and Radicalism in the Long Eighteenth Century: The ‘Ingenious Quaker’ and her Connections* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), chs. 3, 5.

<sup>55</sup> M. S., *The Gentleman’s Magazine* LXI, pt. II (London, 1791), 700.

Harry's work, and lent her some of his own pictures to copy.<sup>56</sup> Her abilities flourished yet more, and with Reynold's encouragement she soon submitted an original painting to the Society in London for the Encouragement of Arts and Commerce. The Society, which gave cash prizes to young female artists, awarded Harry a gold medal for her piece in 1778.<sup>57</sup> It was a proud accomplishment, recounted by the *Gentleman's Magazine* in its obituary of Harry as an especially high honor to receive from "that learned body."<sup>58</sup>

While it is unclear if anyone in her social circle knew of Jane's biological heritage – no one commented on it publicly – they were aware of her background in the West Indies. Poet Anna Seward informed James Boswell that Harry was "the daughter of a rich planter in the West Indies [who] sent her over to England to receive her education in the house of his friend."<sup>59</sup> Jane's cousin Thomas certainly knew of her African ancestry – determined as he was to keep her away from her father's fortune – although he socialized with the pro-slavery interest in London, rather than with Johnson's retinue. Surely reports of Jane's mixed blood would have circulated around the Home Counties. Nevertheless, her skills as an artist and socialite allowed her to establish herself in England's upper ranks. Any concerns that may have existed about her race were not enough to trump her talent and connections.<sup>60</sup> As Jane reported to her father, this social

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<sup>56</sup> Bulletin of Friends Historical Association 44, no. 1 (1955): 26-27.

<sup>57</sup> Green, "Jenny Harry," (1913): 561; Jennings, "Gender, Religion, Liberty."

<sup>58</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine* LIV, pt. II (London, 1784), 716.

<sup>59</sup> Ann Seward to James Boswell, nd, as quoted in *Biographical Catalogue*, 333.

<sup>60</sup> This conforms to recent work from literary analysts on the connection between skin color and discourses on race. Both Felicity Nussbaum and Roxanne Wheeler argue that complexion was only part of a battery of markers which constituted "race" in the eighteenth century: Felicity Nussbaum, "Women and race: 'a difference of complexion'," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 69-88; Roxanne Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

circle “treated me with great respect, and some of them with much affection; they made me of some consequence among them at their places of publick resort.”<sup>61</sup>

Around the time of Jane’s award from the Society of Arts, she began contemplating a conversion to Quakerism. Her “vanity ha[ving] been flattered” from her prize, she found that “Pride and ambition were powerful Enemies to contend with.”<sup>62</sup>

With some encouragement from Knowles, she joined the Quakers.<sup>63</sup> However, it was not done without soul-searching. Jane understood that joining the nonconformist sect would immediately damage her reputation and put her outside the good favor of many friends.<sup>64</sup>

Word spread from the Sprigg household, from which she was now banned, to her friends, including Samuel Johnson. Multiple accounts tell of his anger upon hearing the news.

“Madam, she is an odious wench,” Johnson scoffed to Mary Knowles, “She knew no more of the Church which she left, and that which she embraced, than she did of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaick systems.”<sup>65</sup> Another, perhaps

apocryphal report claimed that Johnson shrieked: “I cannot forgive that little slut.”<sup>66</sup> He

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<sup>61</sup> Jane Harry to Thomas Hibbert, c. 1778, as quoted in Green, “Jenny Harry,” (1913): 562-63.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*: 563.

<sup>63</sup> Her conversion may have also been influenced by broader trends at the end of the eighteenth century. Quakerism, along with other nonconformist sects, was on the rise in this period as part of the transatlantic Great Awakening, as well as a growing political radicalism that intersected with popular religion as the eighteenth century progressed. See: Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics, and Public Order in England, 1760-1832* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Douglas Hay and Nicholas Rogers, *Eighteenth-Century English Society: Shuttles and Swords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 168-187.

<sup>64</sup> Nathan Sprigg reacted strongly against the news, warning that if she could not “shake off this Quakerism,” then she “must not expect any more of [his] friendship and countenance,” and would be forced to leave the house. When she refused to denounce Quakerism, Sprigg replied that she was “an ungrateful girl” and demanded her departure. Worried about her mental state, Mrs. Sprigg took Jane to a doctor for evidence of some trauma which might have induced apostasy: Jane Harry to Thomas Hibbert, c. 1778, as quoted in Green, “Jenny Harry,” (1913): 569-74.

<sup>65</sup> Samuel Johnson, as quoted in James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (London 1791), 231. Another account, written anonymously and which has been openly disputed, also recorded Johnson as having called Harry an “odious wench”: *Dialogue Between Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Knowles* (London, 1799), 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Dialogue Between Dr. Johnson*, 8. While “wench” could have simply referred to her age and gender, “slut” plainly indicated a sexualized attack on the young woman. In his rebuttal of these arguments, one M. S. indicated that both terms (“wench” and “slut”) were damning words. The author described both as “epithets,” “branded” onto Harry: *Gentleman’s Magazine* LXI, pt. II (London, 1791), 701.

later “rose again into passion, and attacked the young proselyte in the severest terms of reproach.” So much so that Boswell thought him like “a warm West Indian climate, where . . . heat sometimes produces thunder, lightening, and earthquakes in a terrible degree.”<sup>67</sup> Invoking Caribbean imagery, Boswell may have been hinting at the common knowledge of Jane’s racial and geographic heritage, giving yet more evidence of her ancestral reputation. Friends of both Johnson and Jane challenged the viciousness of these reports, insisting that the Doctor had always respected her.<sup>68</sup> However, Jane’s Quakerism caused an undoubtedly large shockwave to ripple through her social circle.

Cast out by Sprigg, Jane wandered through a number of houses as she struggled to settle once more. Moving from the home of Sprigg’s sister-in-law, to Mary Knowles’s residence, to a grocer’s lodging near London Bridge, she finally found a more stable residence with the Lloyd family in Birmingham. Knowles had first introduced them, and Sampson Lloyd asked Jane to act as governess to his seventeen children.<sup>69</sup> She wrote to her father about the trauma of conversion and the subsequent loss of friends. Worried about her father’s feelings towards Quakers, Harry pleaded: “I hope you will not also be irreconcilable, for I have much need of your parental love, and who have I else in this World to look unto?” With an outpouring of affection, she hoped her father would not also abandon her: “I cherish the secret hope of receiving an assurance of your tender

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<sup>67</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 232.

<sup>68</sup> M. S., *Gentleman’s Magazine* LXI, pt. II (London, 1791), 700-01. In particular, the writer challenged the claim that Johnson had called Harry a “wench & slut.” Additionally, if Johnson did invoke this imagery to point to her racial background, it was most likely not for pejorative reasons. Despite Johnson’s general conservatism, he was outspoken against enslavement in both Britain and the Americas. His loyal friendship to a freed Jamaican slave in England, Francis Barber, attests to his racial tolerance.

<sup>69</sup> Green believes this to have occurred in 1779, but the *Dictionary of Quaker Biography* places the move at 1778. See: Joseph J. Green, “Jenny Harry, later Thresher” (cont.), *Friends Quarterly Examiner* XLVIII (1914): 49; “Sampson Lloyd III,” *Dictionary of Quaker Biography*, Friends House Library, London.

protection, for if I have one worldly comfort to desire it is that.”<sup>70</sup> Despite a lack of extant correspondence between the two, Jane and her father appear to have maintained a strong personal connection. Although her British associations turned in a radical new direction, Jane’s core bond to her father remained strong.

Such firm ties did not extend to Jane’s broader white family. After the death of her father in 1780, she appealed to his nephew, also named Thomas Hibbert, for a portion of the estate.<sup>71</sup> Writing back to Harry, Hibbert noted that she was to receive £2000 from the estate, and her mother, still in Jamaica, was to inherit half that, as well as a small house. Angry, perhaps because she asked for a larger amount, Hibbert claimed that his uncle had initially allotted half as much before Nathan Sprigg convinced him to double Jane’s bequest.<sup>72</sup> The younger Hibbert chastised Jane for ingratitude, asking her to reflect on her circumstances in the metropole: “how many Daughters of some of the best Families in England, with whose Education and Style of Life and Company you yourself would not compare your own, are little better portioned?”<sup>73</sup> His experiences in Jamaica informed this opinion. According to his 1807 will, Hibbert had most likely lived with several women of color himself.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps with a mixed-race family all his own, Hibbert

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<sup>70</sup> Jane Harry to Thomas Hibbert, c. 1778, as quoted in Green, “Jenny Harry,” (1913): 576-77.

<sup>71</sup> In the absence of Jane’s letter, a reconstruction of their correspondence derives from the younger Hibbert’s response.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Hibbert to Jane Harry, 15 December 1780, as quoted in Green, “Jenny Harry” (cont.) (1914): 44-45. Rumor spread from Anna Seward, through James Boswell, that Hibbert had originally offered Jane £100,000 if she were to stay with the Church of England. This was unfounded, particularly as Jane labored under Jamaica’s 1762 inheritance cap: *Biographical Catalogue*, 334. A later edition of Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*, although not pointing to the 1762 edict, dispelled the rumor by noting an original provision of £1000, supplemented by an equal amount at a later date: James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. John Wilson Croker, vol. 4 (London, 1831), 155n.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Hibbert to Jane Harry, December 15, 1780, as quoted in Green, “Jenny Harry” (cont.) (1914): 44-45.

<sup>74</sup> After returning permanently to Britain, he removed two codicils from his will which gave £100 each to Sarah Winter, a “free quadroon of Kingston,” and Henrietta Coot Luisa, a “free mulatto”: Will of Thomas Hibbert, November 18, 1807, PROB 11/1470, NAE.

understood Harry's privileged position, and bristled under his perception of ungratefulness.

Not content simply to explain Jane's legacy, Hibbert continued on, lambasting her for asserting a place within the family. He insisted that her father never considered himself a parent of Jane and Margaret, nor ever called them daughters. Hibbert gainsaid her claims about paternal piety: "So far was my late Uncle from desiring that you should be 'held up to the World as his Child,' that no Consideration gave him more Uneasiness, than that of your being so publicly known to be so; of which the Change of your Name is of itself a sufficient Proof." He further argued that Jane's father was "extremely desirous, while it was possible, to conceal the Nature of his Relation" to her.<sup>75</sup> Hibbert's rant was most likely intended to stymie any legal maneuvers on the Jamaican estate. With frequent litigation over colonial fortunes, he may have wished to intimidate his cousin from demanding more money. Yet, as one of the more outspoken opponents of abolitionism in later years, he was never sympathetic to the plight of slaves, and may have been equally insensitive to free individuals of color, including those with a fortune in England. Regardless, his vitriol is indicative of the often polarized reactions Britons had toward people of mixed race.

Any bonds of blood severed by young Hibbert were replaced with nuptial ties after Jane's move to the Midlands. While serving as governess to the Lloyd children, Harry met Joseph Thresher, a surgeon from nearby Worcester, who came to attend a sick family member. Thresher originally made the Lloyds' acquaintance as a fellow Quaker. Not long after meeting Harry at the Lloyd house, he grew enamored of the young woman:

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<sup>75</sup> Thomas Hibbert to Jane Harry, December 15, 1780, as quoted in Green, "Jenny Harry" (cont.) (1914): 46.

“her amiable qualifications soon attracted my attention, and by degrees made such an impression on my mind, that I at length found myself very tenderly attach’d to her.”<sup>76</sup>

Questions of religion formed the core of their relationship. In fact, Thresher insisted that Harry join the Quakers before their wedding. By March 1781, she received formal admission to the Society of Friends, and Thresher prepared to marry her.<sup>77</sup> Firmly installed within the Quakers, Harry re-established herself in faith, much as she had in art. Religion provided yet another mode of expression outside of race and phenotype.

Anxious to solemnize their relationship, Thresher began applying for the requisite permissions. His friends within the Society approved of the match, but both he and Jane wished for parental support. They worked together on a letter to her mother Charity Harry in Jamaica, with Jane making several corrections that, she admitted, “may have rendered it less elegant, but I think its form is rather more simple, and may therefore be better understood.” Although a member of Jamaica’s privileged class of free coloreds, Charity was perhaps unable to comprehend Thresher’s long and florid style. The surgeon implored:

Permit me now to request the favour of thy Consent to our Union. But as I am sensible how difficult a task it must be for thee to conclude on a matter of so great importance without a personal knowledge of me, I beg leave to refer thee to thy Daughter and her Friends for further particulars concerning me.<sup>78</sup>

While it is unknown if the couple ever received explicit approval from Charity, they wed at the Friends’ Meeting House in London on November 26, 1782.<sup>79</sup> From there, they moved to Worcester and lived with his brother Ralph. Once again, Jane asserted an

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<sup>76</sup> Joseph Thresher to Charity Harry, c. 1782, as quoted in *ibid.*: 59.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*; Green, “Jenny Harry” (cont.) (1914): 49.

<sup>78</sup> Joseph Thresher to Charity Harry, c. 1782, as quoted in *ibid.*: 60. Jane’s correction appears in an amendment to the letter printed in Green’s article.

<sup>79</sup> The *Whitehall Evening Post* (London), November 28, 1782, and the *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (London), November 29, 1782, both advertised the marriage.

alternative claim to social acceptance, this time built upon domesticity. Marrying a physician, albeit a nonconformist one, allowed her an even greater claim to respectability, and removed her one more degree from the mark of black, Caribbean ancestry.

Although increasingly distanced from her roots in Jamaica, Jane's correspondence with Thresher reveals an undercurrent of racial awareness and concern. Indeed, he knew of his wife's racial makeup and her past in Jamaica, addressing Charity as Jane's "mulatto mother from Jamaica."<sup>80</sup> Friends around him understood these facts as well, and kept Thresher cognizant of their knowledge. He wrote to Jane of an associate, Samuel Neale, who asked him "How does that West Indian Girl do?" Thresher replied without much affront, but noted that a friend "observed, that much archness seemed concealed under that question."<sup>81</sup> Such suspicion reflects the sensitive nature of Thresher's alliance with a mixed-race woman. Even if Neale had no knowledge of Harry's ancestry, nor clues of it based on her phenotype, his question insinuated a black past. Britons often suspected Caribbean whites of containing African members in their family trees. Foregrounding geographic origins made implicit claims about racial stock – to such a degree that others understood the veiled critique. If Jane did pass as white, then questions of her origin immediately threw her into an uncertain racial taxonomy. If others knew explicitly of her African ancestry, then she could never take an established place within white society. Constructions of identity beyond skin color, based on class, talent, religion, and gender could never eliminate all challenges to a mixed-race individual's place in the white British public.

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<sup>80</sup> Green, "Jenny Harry" (cont.) (1914): 59.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Thresher to Jane Harry, June 3, 1781, as quoted in *ibid.*: 55.

Thresher intended his new wife to avoid, if possible, these challenges by cutting ties to the West Indies. Prior to marriage, Jane Harry had considered returning to Jamaica to free her mother's slaves, and spread the Quaker religion. Her later obituary noted that, although "she was well qualified" to provide such instruction, "the great commotion of public affairs frustrated her noble design," and she was never able to leave for the island.<sup>82</sup> Jane's husband may also have been instrumental in scuttling the trip. The year before their nuptials, Thresher decried Caribbean depravity and begged Jane: "Think of these things, my dearest Girl, but . . . I have not a wish to discourage a real religious concern, from a firm persuasion."<sup>83</sup> Thresher's apprehension over the obstacles facing his wife no doubt supplemented a worry that she would endanger her status in Britain if she left. Reestablishing herself deeper in Jamaica would undercut the advances she had made. Considering that this admonition came immediately after discussing Samuel Neale's question about "that West Indian girl," Thresher most certainly worried about others' impressions of her forays to the Caribbean.

Ultimately abandoning the return to Jamaica, Jane quickly settled into British domestic life. Not long after moving to Worcester, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, Edwin, in May 1784. Now a mother, Jane possessed the full collection of domestic trappings to place her in a socially acceptable position, in spite of her heritage. Such social stability would prove only temporary, however. Due either to complications from Edwin's birth or to severe illness shortly thereafter, she grew gravely ill. She died on August 17, 1784, just three months after Edwin's arrival. She was interred in the Friends' burial plot at their Worcester meeting house several days later. Her obituary ran

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<sup>82</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine* LIV, pt. II (London, 1784), 716.

<sup>83</sup> Joseph Thresher to Jane Harry, June 3, 1781, as quoted in Green, "Jenny Harry" (cont.) (1914): 56.

in the *Gentleman's Magazine* the next month, noting, among other things, that Jane wished for her husband to free her mother's slaves in Jamaica.<sup>84</sup> Family bonds, sanctified through marriage, bound West Indians of color to Britons in a number of ways. As much as Thresher may, or may not, have wished his wife to renounce her Jamaican origins, those bonds did not dissolve upon marriage, nor even upon death.<sup>85</sup>

Jane Harry Thresher was a model of assimilation into British society. Having come from Jamaica, with a mixed-race lineage, she created a new and successful identity. Drawing on her advanced financial position, she took a visible place in polite society, entertaining and associating with British luminaries. Fostering her artistic talent, Harry joined the cultured ranks, developing connections to some of England's most famous and influential painters. Delving deeper into her faith, she also carved out a niche for herself within an organized and established nonconformist sect. In marriage and childbirth she asserted, once more, her claim to a traditional public existence. Little wonder that her death would inspire a full obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and that England's most prominent socialites would debate the rude treatment she received from Samuel Johnson for years to come.

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<sup>84</sup> Green, "Jenny Harry" (cont.) (1914); 61-62; *Gentleman's Magazine* LIV, pt. II (London, 1784), 716.

<sup>85</sup> Tragedy struck again, when Edwin died seven months later. The loss of family seems to have pushed Thresher to forge a new connection with his mother-in-law in Jamaica. Without any extant correspondence between the two, it is difficult to reconstruct their subsequent relationship. However, they each mention one another in their respective wills. Thresher, who followed his wife to the grave in July 1786, gave a twenty pound annuity to "my Mother in Law Charity Harry of Kingston": Will of Joseph Thresher, July 18, 1786, PROB 11/1144, NAE. Considering that inheritance allocation increasingly favored nuclear, over extended, families, and male, over female, beneficiaries, these bequests were an even greater signal of affection for his West Indian connections: Ruth Perry, "Women in families: the great disinheritance," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 111-129; Alastair Owens, "Property, gender and the life course: inheritance and family welfare provision in early nineteenth-century England," *Social History* 26, no. 3 (October 2001): 299-318. In her will, Charity Harry reinforced her own ties to Thresher. She asked that he emancipate her enslaved workers after her death (although she would outlive him by seven years). Barring Thresher's ability to free them, Charity requested that John Boyd of Britain carry out the task, demonstrating her connections to Britain: Will of Charity Harry, November 13, 1793, Wills LOS 58, f. 71, IRO.

These efforts of self-construction overturned strong forces of oppression tied to race and origin. While fêted in England, Harry could never fully escape her background in the West Indies. Ties to bigoted relatives reinforced Caribbean racial oppression in the metropole. At the same time, rumor and innuendo cast damaging shadows onto Harry's reputation as well. Maintaining one's stake within these social circles was a constant challenge. Racial prejudice might always drone in the background, ready to drown out competing noise. But alternative methods of self-expression could reduce the volume of oppression. Harry's social status, therefore, was much like her skin color: in a hybrid position, and somewhere between two poles.

### *Dido Lindsay*

Perhaps the most-referenced individual of color in eighteenth-century Britain, Dido Elizabeth Belle Lindsay interacted with some of Britain's most elite members.<sup>86</sup> Born to an enslaved black woman and Captain Jonathan Lindsay (1737-1788) of the Royal Navy, she emerged from inauspicious beginnings.<sup>87</sup> Through her father's family, however, she came to live a privileged life in London's wealthy suburbs. Her story, much like Jane Harry's, demonstrates the opportunities of affluence and social

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<sup>86</sup> Numerous historians have examined Lindsay's life. See, for example: Shyllon, *Black People in Britain*, 40-41; Gerzina, *Black England*, ch. 4; Asher Hoyles and Martin Hoyles, *Remember Me: Achievements of Mixed Race People Past and Present* (London: Hansib Publications Ltd & Ethos Publishing, 1999), 65-66; Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* (New York: Ecco, 2006), 40-41; Reyahn King, "Belle, Dido Elizabeth (1761?-1804)," *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 5, 2; Gene Adams, "Dido Elizabeth Belle, a black girl at Kenwood: an account of a protégée of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Mansfield," *Camden History Review* 12 (1984): 10-14.

<sup>87</sup> Her life story is similar to one recounted in the previous century. William Heath, acting as an agent for the Guinea Company in Gamboa, married a native black woman, Speranca (later renamed Hope Booker) in 1693. After she became pregnant, Heath sent her to England, where she gave birth to their daughter Elizabeth in November 1694. William died before he could return to England himself, setting off an inheritance dispute between Elizabeth and her uncle Samuel, reminiscent of the cases detailed in Chapter 3: Book of Cases vol. 2, 1695-1738, ff. 103-04, Religious Society of Friends Library, London.

acceptance available to lucky migrants of color. Yet, her history also reveals, like Jane's, the absolute limits under which mixed-race individuals operated in Britain.

Dido was born in England along with her brother John.<sup>88</sup> Unwilling or unable to care for Dido, Jonathan Lindsay sent her to live with his uncle, William Murray, 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Mansfield. A Scottish peer, Mansfield had risen through the English legal system to become Chief Justice of the King's Bench. He lived at Kenwood House, a large villa on Hampstead Heath on the northwestern outskirts of London (see Figure 4.3), and Dido took up residence within its large expanse. The household account book lists frequent gifts and payments to Dido between 1785 and 1793. Supervising Kenwood's dairy and poultry yards, Dido received a five-pound allowance every three months for the entire period. Lord Mansfield also gave her a £5 5s birthday present each year, and a five shilling gift for each tooth she lost.<sup>89</sup> His generosity toward her was well-known. As Thomas Hutchinson, the former governor of Massachusetts, cagily remarked, "he has been reproached for shewing a fondness for her – I dare say not criminal."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Details of her birth are speculative. Thomas Hutchinson reported, after meeting Lindsay, that she was the daughter of an enslaved black woman taken from a captured Spanish vessel in the Atlantic: Thomas Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson*, ed. Peter Hutchinson, vol. 2 (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883-1886), 276. However these details have never been confirmed and are most likely untrue. Little is known about John, but he is listed in Sir Jonathan's will as a "reputed son" with whom she was to split a one thousand pound trust: Will of Jonathan Lindsay, June 13, 1788, PROB 11/1167, NAE; Shyllon, *Black People in Britain*, 41. King's updated entry for Dido in the online edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* claims that the John and Elizabeth listed in Jonathan Lindsay's will were two other illegitimate children, and that Elizabeth had no brother-german (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/73352>, accessed May 26, 2009).

<sup>89</sup> Anne Murray's Account Book, July 1785-March 1793, English Heritage, Kenwood House, London. See also: Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters*, vol. 2, 276; Sarah Minney, "The search for Dido: Sarah Minney, a genealogist-researcher, solves the mystery of the later life of a famous black beauty of the late 18th century," *History Today* 55, no. 10 (October 2005).

<sup>90</sup> Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters*, vol. 2, 276.

**Figure 4.3: Kenwood House, Hampstead Heath, London (photo by author)**



One of the few mixed-race migrants in Britain whose portrait survives, Lindsay’s physical appearance is recoverable from the visual archive, as well as the written. Following his visit to Kenwood in 1779, Hutchinson commented on his impression of Lindsay: “She had a very high cap . . . her wool was much frizzled in her neck, but not enough to answer the large curls now in fashion.” Simultaneously marking her African origins (hair like “wool”) and her European roots and upbringing (her curls mimicking English coiffure) Hutchinson firmly placed Lindsay between black and white. He closed his depiction with a flippant remark: “She is neither handsome nor genteel – pert

enough.”<sup>91</sup> A painting of Lindsay alongside her cousin Elizabeth Murray casts a similar portrait of the young woman (see Figure 4.4). Lindsay’s outmoded dress, in comparison to Elizabeth Murray’s conventional outfit, forms a striking contrast.<sup>92</sup> In motion and pushed to the background, Lindsay is both transient and unstable: an allusion to her Atlantic past. She is both part of the scene and soon-to-be absent from it. Much like Hutchinson’s conclusions about Lindsay’s hybridity, the portraitist intended to mark her as a liminal member of the Mansfield home. Curiosity may have overcome those who visited Kenwood house, unsure about the racial and class transgressions of one of its youngest inhabitants.

**Figure 4.4: “Dido Elizabeth Belle and Lady Elizabeth Murray,” unknown artist (formerly attributed to John Zoffany), c. 1780, Scone Palace, Perth, Scotland**



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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Reyahn King, “Belle, Dido Elizabeth,” 2.

Mansfield's relation to Lindsay became a further point of interest after his landmark legal decision in the 1772 case, *Steuart v. Somerset*. Widely noted as one of the first major abolitionist interventions in the eighteenth century, the Somerset trial of that year set the stage for fierce debates to come. In it, Mansfield ruled that an enslaved man named James Somerset could not be forcibly removed from Britain by his owner, Charles Steuart. Somerset had lived in England for several years, and when Steuart attempted to take him back to Jamaica, he fled his master. The young lawyer Granville Sharp represented Somerset, demanding a writ of habeas corpus. After much contemplation and worry over the response of the slave interest, Mansfield ruled in favor of Somerset, arguing that a lack of positive law on slavery in England meant that he could not be taken from the country against his will.<sup>93</sup>

Those in the slave interest, most notably Edward Long, railed against Mansfield's decision as a shocking violation of property rights.<sup>94</sup> Although Long is not thought to have known of Lindsay's residence on Mansfield's estate, many Londoners were aware.

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<sup>93</sup> The trial's proceedings may be read in Henry George Tuke, ed., *The Fugitive Slave Circulars* (London: Stanford, 1876), 23-73. The ruling, however, did not prohibit slavery in England outright. Instead, it only granted the right of habeas corpus to the enslaved; they could still be traded and retain their subjugated status in England. Not surprisingly, confusion over the exact ramifications of the case ensued, with many Caribbean slaves interpreting it to mean that they would become free upon setting foot in England. Scotland banned domestic slavery six years after Mansfield's decision, in the case of *Knight v. Wedderburn* (1778), but legal sovereignty in North Britain prevented this emancipation from spilling into English law. Douglas Lorimer explores this legal ambiguity, and both its de facto and de jure implications in the years after Mansfield's decision: Lorimer, "Black Slaves and English Liberty." See also: Ruth Paley, "Imperial Politics and English Law: The Many Contexts of Somerset," *Law and History Review* 24, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 659-64, which further documents the various ways in which the ruling could be (and was) interpreted in both England and the colonies. For an interesting contrast with English law, see Peabody, 'There are no slaves,' which focuses on eighteenth-century France. Peabody argues that after nearly a century of hearing individual challenges from slaves for legal rights, French authorities decided to skirt the complicated legal precedents set by these individual suits and rule against all people of color. The 1777 edict, the *Police des Noirs*, conflated "slave" with "person of color," so that anyone of color lost a degree of legal rights, outside of their statuses of freedom. The Revolution and Napoleonic wars complicated the issue further as rights were given and retaken in quick succession.

<sup>94</sup> Edward Long, *Candid Reflections Upon the Court of King's Bench in Westminster-Hall on what is commonly called the Negro-Cause* (London, 1772); Samuel Estwick, *Considerations on the Negro Cause Commonly So Called* (London, 1772).

Recalling a conversation after the trial, Thomas Hutchinson noted that a Jamaican planter when “asked what judgment his Lordship would give? [answered] ‘ No doubt . . . he will be set free, for Lord Mansfield keeps a Black in his house which governs him and the whole family.’”<sup>95</sup> Already the threat of infiltration and African corruption in Britain loomed in the minds of those attentive to the abolition question.

Family ties solidified Mansfield’s connection to Lindsay, and she entered adult life with a modest financial backing. In addition to a thousand-pound sterling bequest from her father, Dido also received support from both Mansfield and his wife.<sup>96</sup> As the daughter of a slave, Dido was born legally enslaved herself, making any inheritance problematic. Owing to her mother’s absence, the interpretation of Dido’s enslavement may have been loose, and not formalized by any decree of ownership. Perhaps unwilling to risk any potential compromise in her inheritance, Mansfield confirmed her freedom in his will, and also gave her a £500 sterling gift and a £100 annuity. Tenderness toward Lindsay shone through his will, as he requested his portrait be placed “in her room to put her in mind of one she knew from her Infancy and always honoured with uninterrupted Confidence and friendship.”<sup>97</sup> Six years later, his wife Lady Margaret Murray left Lindsay £100 sterling “as a token of my regard.”<sup>98</sup> Family bonds tied the Murrays closely with Lindsay, and those connections lasted throughout their lifetimes. Even as England’s chief judge, Mansfield relished his association with Lindsay, and never hid her from public view. Both he and his wife wished the best for Dido, and hoped that her finances would stay secure.

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<sup>95</sup> Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters*, vol. 2, 276.

<sup>96</sup> Reyahn King disputes that the bequest from Sir Jonathan Lindsay was for Dido, but rather another illegitimate child. (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/73352>, accessed May 26, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Will of William Murray, March 28, 1793, PROB 11/1230, NAE.

<sup>98</sup> Will of Margaret Murray, May 9, 1799, PROB 11/1324, NAE.

Lindsay, however, never solidified her place within the English ranks of privilege. Very little evidence sheds any light on her adult life. Apparently, she was unable to maintain her affluence after the death of her great-uncle and -aunt. Lindsay married in 1793, and her wedding certificate lists her residence on London's Hanover Square. Her husband, John Davinier, lived in St. Martin-in-the-Fields parish, but far from a man of leisure, he worked as a servant.<sup>99</sup> The couple had at least two children: twins named John and Charles, born in 1795. Charles would later apply to the East India Company in 1809. His mother, however, died several years earlier, when John and Charles were still young boys. Dido Elizabeth Davinier passed away in 1804, aged roughly forty-one, and was laid to rest at an overspill burial ground in Hanover Square.<sup>100</sup>

Sadly, such brief glimpses into her adult years only hint at her modest experiences outside the walls of Kenwood House. Lindsay may have lived comfortably, drawing on her inheritance. Marrying a servant, however, undoubtedly compromised her status in the capital. Her comparatively dark complexion could have impeded her marriage prospects, at least among the upper ranks, which left her with fewer matrimonial options. The generally falling tide of her success in the metropolis was inextricably linked to the loss of family connections, and lends further proof of the tenuous position of many individuals of color in Britain. Unlike Jane Harry, Lindsay appears to have been either less able or less fortunate in her ability to construct a niche for herself outside the parameters of racial heritage.

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<sup>99</sup> This comes from an online database on black and Asian individuals in the Library's collection: Bishop of London's Marriage Allegations, November 3, 1793, MS 10091/169, GL, <http://www.history.ac.uk/gh/baentries.htm>; MS 10091E/106 in *ibid.* Margaret Murray noted in her will that Lindsay was "now married to Mr. Davinier": Will of Margaret Murray, NAE.

<sup>100</sup> Minney, "The Search for Dido."

## *The Morse Family*

Success beyond the Caribbean did not necessarily require confinement within British shores. For many West Indian migrants of color, Britain was a stopping-point for exploits in the wider empire. Just as the Scottish helped forge a British identity through imperial participation, other colonized peoples utilized the Empire to confer statuses of legitimacy as well.<sup>101</sup> The East Indies became a popular place for mixed-race islanders to assert such social and cultural authenticity. Severed geographically from both the Caribbean and Europe, they could reconstruct a British identity on the subcontinent divorced from their colonial roots, yet also distant from the metropolitan eye of racial inspection.

Commonly, many fathers sent children of color from the Caribbean to India, or those children took themselves there. John Graham, who was beaten on his way from Jamaica to England, next turned to the subcontinent.<sup>102</sup> Two of Bengal's most prominent residents in the eighteenth century – the Palmer brothers – also came from the West Indies, and were likely of mixed race. Samuel and William George Palmer were born in St. Kitts to the Englishman William Palmer and a “creole” woman named Sarah.<sup>103</sup> Both entered the East India Company Army as officers in the late eighteenth century, and rose to prominent ranks. The father, William Palmer, also went to India, and had several mixed-race children with a native woman there, before sending them to England as well.

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<sup>101</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 117-31.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Lincoln to Thomas Graham, c. 1814, NRAS 1115/21/6, MFP.

<sup>103</sup> Entries for “Samuel Palmer” and “William George Palmer” in V. C. P. Hodson, ed., *List of the Officers of the Bengal Army, 1758-1834* (London: Constable & Company Ltd. 1927), 450, 453. See also: Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 81-83. The couple also had a son, John, who also traveled to India: P. J. Marshall, “Palmer, William (1740-1816),” *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 42, 541-43. William Dalrymple notes that William and Sarah had two daughters as well, although they do not appear to have traveled to Britain. Dalrymple does not speculate about the racial composition of Sarah, opting instead to label her a “Creole beauty”: Dalrymple, *White Mughals*, 266-67.

As historian Durba Ghosh has recently argued, these individuals are examples of crucial lacunae in the historiography of the early British Empire: “The prevalence of interracial concubinage in the West Indies has been well documented by many Caribbean historians, although no scholar has yet traced the links between social life in the British empire in the Americas with the empire on the Indian subcontinent.”<sup>104</sup> Indeed, the commonality of cross-colonial links increases the necessity of their study. This phenomenon was true not only of whites traveling between the imperial peripheries, but also of mixed-race individuals. Grounded in the colonies, those of hybrid ancestry often traveled to other imperial outposts to legitimate their upward progress.

Several of John Morse’s children traveled the well-worn path from the West Indies to Britain and finally to East India. John Morse sired five children with a free woman of color in Jamaica: John, Robert, Catherine, Ann, and Sarah (see Figure 4.5 below). Each of the siblings relocated to England. Catherine married her father’s legal attorney, Edmund Green, in June 1777, and the two soon moved to London.<sup>105</sup> The couple occupied a house on Lincoln’s Inn Fields, where Catherine gave birth to three daughters and four sons.<sup>106</sup> She and Green remained close to her siblings in England, as well as their respective husbands and wives. Indeed, the extended family frequently helped one another in all matters, including business. Sarah’s husband, William Cator, established a London brewery with the financial backing of Green, Robert Morse, and

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<sup>104</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 84.

<sup>105</sup> The location of the wedding is unclear, but the *London Evening Post* records the marriage, noting Edmund Green’s origins in the Isle of Wight: *London Evening Post* (London), June 17, 1777.

<sup>106</sup> Will of Edmund Green, April 4, 1802, PROB 11/1422, NAE.

Ann's husband Nathaniel Middleton.<sup>107</sup> Living in England, without the protection of either father or mother, the Morse children came to depend upon one another for support.

**Figure 4.5: "The Morse and Cator Family," by John Zoffany, c. 1783  
Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums<sup>108</sup>**



From the left: Robert Morse, Ann Morse, Sarah Cator (née Morse)  
and her husband William Cator

While Catherine further insinuated herself in London society, Robert Morse was not content to stay in the metropolis for long. As a young man, he studied law and forged a flourishing career, arguing cases before England's highest courts in the 1770s. Like

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<sup>107</sup> "Abstract of Release & Assignment from Mr. Cator to his Trustees," August 7, 1799, 789/202, WCA.

<sup>108</sup> Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture 1770-1825* (New York: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979), plate 85, 137.

John Campbell and the Palmer brothers, however, the riches of India attracted him.<sup>109</sup>

Although not grounded in overseas trade, Morse sought judicial appointments in the subcontinent which might allow him to profit from such business. Accordingly, Morse set out for India on the Seahorse in May 1777 with fellow lawyer William Hickey. Also on board was a fellow West Indian, one Mr. Arnott, the illegitimate son of Navy Captain Frederick Maitland and “a native woman of Jamaica.”<sup>110</sup> Undoubtedly a person of color himself, Arnott joined Morse in the flow of mixed-race people from West to East India.

Robert Morse’s passage to India reinforced his self-identification with elite British society, wholly divorced from any subordinate, colonial roots. Upon landing in Bengal in November 1777, Morse and his companions marveled at the natives before them “laugh[ing] heartily, not only at the language so new to our ears, but at the whole scene that presented itself and the many grotesque figures that appeared amongst the spectators.” Moreover, each of them found intense amusement with “the ludicrous figures and postures the black people put themselves.”<sup>111</sup> Morse fit in well with this cadre of English voyeurs studying the natives. As his portrait in Figure 4.5 suggests, Morse may have easily passed as white – certainly Zoffany painted him so. Further distanced of his West Indian and African heritage through an English upbringing, he could assert an equal claim to metropolitan identity against a colonized people. It may or may not have been a conscious construction on his part, but Morse’s participation in the ridicule of Indian natives sadly formalized his own imperial advancement. Ironically, though born

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<sup>109</sup> Prior to wage restructuring in 1784 and the subsequent reforms enacted after Warren Hasting’s trial several years later, private trading had made East-Indian merchants fabulously wealthy: P. J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: the British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1976).

<sup>110</sup> William Hickey, *Memoirs of William Hickey*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. Alfred Spencer, vol. 2 (New York: Hurst & Blackett Ltd, 1948), 103-07.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-20.

in the Empire's periphery, his reengagement with other colonies helped clear away that peripheral past.<sup>112</sup>

Soon after arriving, Morse was admitted as an advocate, and began making "a great deal of money" in his law practice.<sup>113</sup> His career took a number of turns after that: he served as paymaster for a battalion of Bengalese troops; after resigning that post, he rejoined the bar in Calcutta once more, reentering practice in a much lower position. Morse now "sat whole days in Court, unemployed, a circumstance that mortified him excessively, for . . . he had a large share of pride." Yet he persisted. By 1783, he won an appointment as sheriff, and nominated his fellow voyager William Hickey for his deputy.<sup>114</sup> Eventually he returned to London, where he invested in his brother-in-law's brewery, and acquired a share of property in Covent Garden.<sup>115</sup> Success on the subcontinent cleared away Morse's Caribbean past, and he arrived back in England as an Indian nabob, rather than as a descendant of slaves.

Before Morse returned to the metropole, two of his sisters followed him to India. In his memoirs, William Hickey remembered "my friend Morse" carrying him in 1782 to see the pair when they arrived in Bengal. Hickey failed to mention their motives for

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<sup>112</sup> For an analysis of the portrait and its statement on colonial identity in a metropolitan setting, see: Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 121-23; and Richard Leppert, "Music, domestic life and cultural chauvinism: images of British subjects at home in India," in *Music and society: the politics of composition, performance and reception*, eds. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 68-88.

<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, Morse found initial difficulties in Bengal. Immediately upon their arrival, Morse and Hickey discovered that Bengal's Supreme Court Justice Stephan Caesar Lemaitre, for whom both men had introductory letters, had died. Morse had met its author, a Welsh judge, at a dinner in London shortly before embarking for India. After reading through two pages of the recommendation without a single mention of his name, Morse found himself inserted into the letter's final line: "This will, I believe, be delivered to you by a Mr. Morse, who the devil he is or what sort of a man I cannot tell, never having seen him in my life!" Networks were thus not always reliable: Hickey, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 122-30; vol. 3, 156.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 191. Nathaniel Middleton, Morse's brother-in-law, wrote of his concern about Morse's struggles upon reentering the bar after leaving his paymaster position: Nathaniel Middleton to Elijah Impey, August 12, 1782, Correspondence of Sir Elijah Impey, Add. MS 16263, ff. 273-74, BL.

<sup>115</sup> Will of Robert Morse, February 29, 1816, PROB 11/1577, NAE.

traveling to India, but perhaps marriage was on their minds, for men and women of mixed-race could find more receptive partners there. In Calcutta, Ann and Sarah met two Englishmen serving in various capacities. William Cator, an associate of Robert Morse and William Hickey, worked as a merchant factor for the East India Company.<sup>116</sup> In the autumn of 1780, Cator wed Sarah in Calcutta.<sup>117</sup> Nathaniel Middleton, a junior merchant and later a Company servant, married Ann the week before Sarah's wedding.<sup>118</sup> Both would eventually return to England with their husbands, bolstered by newfound imperial connections to India, as well as added colonial fortunes. In less of a position to articulate their inclusion into British society through professional development, as Robert could, the Morse sisters instead constructed a refined identity through marriage.

To understand the choices made by Sarah and Ann more accurately, one must examine the lives of their husbands more deeply. William Cator came from a distinguished family, albeit one on the rise. He was baptized in London on January 18, 1753, the second-youngest son of a successful timber merchant.<sup>119</sup> Following his brother Joseph into the colonies, William attempted a career at writing before taking a merchant's position in the East India Company. The Cator brothers used commerce and imperial travel to launch their family into the aristocracy.<sup>120</sup> From this standpoint, then, William's

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<sup>116</sup> Hickey, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 123; vol. 3, 155.

<sup>117</sup> Returns of Marriages, APAC, November 4, 1780, N/1/2 f. 145v, BL.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, October 26, 1780.

<sup>119</sup> East India College Records, Baptisms, APAC, January 18, 1753, J/1/8 f. 36, BL; Pat Manning, *The Cators of Beckenham and Woodbastwick* (Eastbourne, UK: Antony Rowe Ltd, 2002), 11.

<sup>120</sup> His two older brothers, John and Joseph, became quite successful early in his life. John, the oldest of the Cator boys, purchased Beckenham Place in Kent. An associate of Samuel Johnson, he perhaps made the acquaintance of Jane Austen in middle age. Later, he won a seat in Parliament, representing Berkshire in 1774, and acquired the post of sheriff for Kent in 1781. John and Joseph, intent on materializing their upward progress, acquired coats of arms in 1780, a common practice among rising gentry. John's prominence took a blow in 1784 when he was ousted from Parliament for bribery. Brother Joseph traveled to Jamaica in 1762, when William was still a child, and returned with a sizeable fortune. William also manufactured heraldic roots, producing his own coat of arms soon after his brothers': Manning, *The Cators*, 6-22.

marriage to a West Indian woman of color is somewhat surprising, although her whiteness, wealth, and residence in a place where hybridity was accepted, and even favored, probably overcame any scruple. For Sarah Morse, however, attaching herself to a rising English family was the best method by which to reinforce her social legitimacy.

Nathaniel Middleton held a more prominent place within the East India Company. By 1769, just short of his twentieth birthday, he had arrived in Bengal, as a “Writer.” Within four years Warren Hastings had chosen him to serve as his representative at Shuja ud-Daula’s court in Lucknow, and he was instrumental in negotiating with Bengalese officials.<sup>121</sup> Much like British planters in the West Indies, Middleton sired several children with a native woman: Eliza, Charlotte, and George.<sup>122</sup> Oddly, Middleton baptized his daughter Eliza on the same day that he wed Ann: the ubiquity of mixed colonial relations could manifest itself strangely.<sup>123</sup> Over the course of his marriage, Middleton fathered an additional ten children with Ann. His high position in the East India Company allowed him to procure Robert Morse’s paymastership for the Bengal army. As the years advanced, he grew increasingly close to the Morses. Just two years after their nuptials, he and Ann suffered when their infant son became severely ill. Middleton worried to a colleague that, were the child to die, it “will be a severe blow, especially to Mrs. Middleton, whose affliction for the death of her father is yet fresh.”<sup>124</sup> Kinship bonds, consecrated through marriage, professional connections, and even shared legal action against an estate usurper, tied the notable East-Indian official to his West

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<sup>121</sup> T. H. Bowyer, “Middleton, Nathaniel (1750-1807),” *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 38, 73-75.

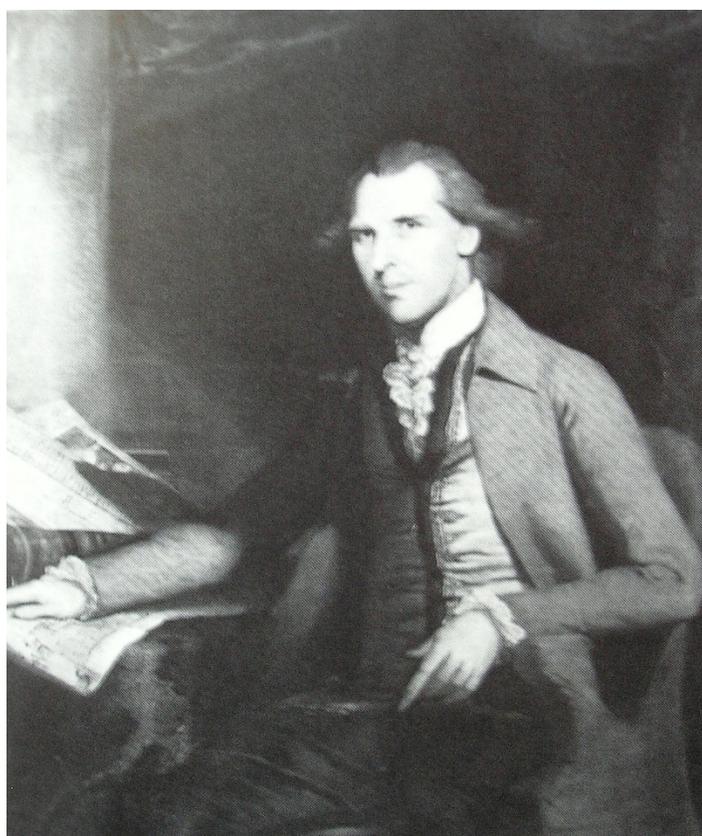
<sup>122</sup> Will of Nathaniel Middleton, August 1824, PROB 11/1470, NAE; *Robson and Robson vs. Leake and Smith*, 1834, PROB 37/909, NAE.

<sup>123</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 76.

<sup>124</sup> Nathaniel Middleton to Elijah Impey, May 12, 1782, Correspondence of Sir Elijah Impey, Add. MS 16263, ff. 154-55, BL.

Indian family. By 1784, Hastings lost confidence in Middleton, prompting the latter's resignation and return to England.<sup>125</sup> With a colonial fortune totaling some £61,000, he and the family settled on Wimpole Street, London; several years later they moved to Southampton.<sup>126</sup> An East-Indian nabob, Middleton firmly rooted his mixed-race family in affluent society. As had each of her sisters, Ann Morse effectively shed her colonial baggage with her marriage to a rising imperialist.

**Figure 4.6: “Nathaniel Middleton,” by Tilly Kettle, c. 1773, Bradford Peverell House, Dorchester**



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<sup>125</sup> He later became a key witness in Hasting's famous trial of murder and extortion in India, achieving a degree of notoriety for his own testimony. As William Hickey noted, with humor, “[Middleton] rendered himself famous . . . when his total want of recollection respecting any fact or circumstances which he conceived could tend to the prejudice of his patron . . . that he acquired the nickname of ‘Memory Middleton,’ and retained the same to the day of his death.”: Hickey, *Memoirs*, vol. 3, 155.

<sup>126</sup> Bowyer, “Middleton,” 74; PROB 37/909, NAE.

All of the Morse children found their way back to England, and settled into lives of privilege. Only John's fate is unknown. Catherine outlived her husband Edmund, who died in 1805. Robert died a bachelor in London in 1816, and granted bequests to nieces and nephews, including two of Catherine's children who had moved to Jamaica.<sup>127</sup> Nathaniel Middleton himself died in London in November 1807, after contracting a serious cold.<sup>128</sup> William Cator fared less well than his in-laws. Although he had acquired a large, independent fortune, bad investments forced him to sell his public houses and brewery in 1799.<sup>129</sup> He set out for India, but perished on the way, after a French privateer attacked his ship.<sup>130</sup> His brother, John, provided liberally to his widow and children before his own death several years later.<sup>131</sup> Sarah lived on into the late 1820s, still close to her extended family; she made her nephew, Francis Edmund Green, her estate's executor.<sup>132</sup>

The Morse sisters all mothered large families who appear to have seamlessly entered white society. Catherine and Ann both had several children, who in turn gave birth to a number of offspring as well. Sarah Cator's daughter, Ann Frances, married army general Edward Baynes. The couple retained land in Canada, and settled in a

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<sup>127</sup> Will of Robert Morse. *The Morning Chronicle* noted his death, writing "He was a gentleman of fine taste, and his collections are well known to the scientific world," (London), February 20, 1816. His collection was primarily of engravings. A month after Morse's death, *The Morning Chronicle* advertised his estate sale, which included a "collection of engravings . . . [which] comprehends all the Master Pieces of almost every Engraver from the origin of the Art to the present time," March 29, 1816. Morse also collected in British portraiture, old wines, and musical instruments: *The Morning Chronicle*, April 18, 1816, June 10, 1816.

<sup>128</sup> His estate became frozen when his will could not be found, and it took decades to resolve, even after the will was discovered nine years after his death: Bowyer, "Middleton," 75; PROB 37/909, NAE.

<sup>129</sup> 789/201, 203, 217, WCA.

<sup>130</sup> Hickey, *Memoirs*, vol. 3, 155; Manning, *The Catons*, 17. See also: Will of William Cator, August 14, 1802, PROB 11/1379, NAE.

<sup>131</sup> Will of John Cator, March 20, 1806, PROB 11/1439, NAE. To Sarah, he gave £60 sterling each year. To her daughter, Ann Frances Baynes, Cator gave a £2000 sterling gift.

<sup>132</sup> Will of Sarah Cator, October 25, 1828, PROB 11/1746, NAE.

Devon village.<sup>133</sup> Subsequent generations lived as complete and unquestioned members of British white society. The Morses covered over their African heritage so thoroughly that a recent family genealogy of the Cators makes no mention of their Jamaican past.<sup>134</sup> Looking again on the portrait of Robert Morse and his two sisters, it is understandable that this Jamaican family might have been able to pass so easily into the British elite. With no visible marker of African bloodlines, asserting a claim to whiteness was neither a complicated nor a difficult endeavor. Experiences in India helped to solidify those claims, whether or not under threat. A stay on the subcontinent could reaffirm a mixed-race migrant's genteel identity at the same time that it laundered his or her racial past through service in the East India Company. Robert Morse built upon his professional reputation in India, and his sisters followed suit, asserting an additional claim to privilege through the ritual of marriage.

### *The Tailyour Family*

Much like several of the Morse children, John Tailyour's eldest son James solemnized domestic refinement by joining the East India Company Army after leaving school. While the other Tailyour children – John, Catherine, and possibly Simon – stayed in Britain, James's experiences paralleled those of many West Indians of color. Products of empire and migration themselves, their success often lay in a continuous wandering. At the same time, James's accomplishments abroad overshadowed his

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<sup>133</sup> Also spelled "Anne Frances." See: Will of Ann Frances Baynes, November 22, 1849, PROB 11/2168; and Will of Edward Baynes, April 18, 1829, PROB 11/1754, NAE.

<sup>134</sup> Manning, *The Cators*. It does not appear to be a conscious omission. Even Hickey failed to note their origins in Jamaica, and apparently had no clue as to their racial ancestry.

siblings' more humble achievements at home. Emblematic of the variance in individual experience, Tailyour's children endured the gamut of highs and lows.

The Tailyour family's move into British privileged society occurred in stages. Both the children and their father took several requisite steps to transition from Jamaican colonists to cultured metropolitans. James arrived in Britain in 1791, followed a year later by his father. Domestic prejudice against individuals from the colonies made both Tailyour and his son targets for biological mockery. Upon the father's return, his former employer in Glasgow joked: "I may suppose ye are all of a healthy brown complexion, to which I have no objection."<sup>135</sup> Of course, his jab hinted at general anxiety over colonial degeneration. The other children's arrival dates in Britain are somewhat uncertain; apparently John and Catherine – and probably Simon – sailed together shortly after May 1796.<sup>136</sup> While Tailyour wrote extensively of James's early years, he said little of those of John and Catherine, and almost nothing of Simon's, who may have died before the family moved to Britain. John eventually attended the same school as James, and Catherine apparently lived with an aunt and uncle in Scotland.<sup>137</sup> Certainly she stayed with his sister in Montrose in 1809. Perhaps Catherine worked as a governess; regardless she occupied a secure place in the Scottish family.<sup>138</sup> It was a piecemeal migration, but

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<sup>135</sup> George McCall to John Tailyour, July 29, 1793, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>136</sup> John McCall to John Tailyour, May 8, 1796, in *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Thomas Renny to John Tailyour, May 13, 1795, in *ibid.* Renny discussed a school for Tailyour's son. Considering that one had already been found for James, this most probably referred to John's education. However, by 1803 John had come under the tutelage of John Bowman, who had taught his brother James: John Bowman to John Tailyour, January 22, 1803, in *ibid.* That same letter contains a reference to Tailyour's son Simon attending the school with John. In all likelihood, this was Tailyour's Jamaican son Simon, although in 1796 his white wife, Mary McCall, gave birth to another Simon. None of the children lived with their father in Britain. Tailyour's sister Catherine, who lived only miles from her brother, took care of them all when they arrived.

<sup>138</sup> John Tailyour to John Orr, October 28, 1809, John Tailyour Letter Book (1804-10), in *ibid.* In an odd letter from James Renny to Tailyour, he wrote to congratulate Catherine on her "becoming a Jamaica Heiress" after the death of a Doctor Forbes in Jamaica. Only four years old at the time, it is unclear what the relationship between Catherine and Forbes was, but she may have inherited some money from the man

eventually each member of the Jamaican Tailyours, save Polly, landed in the metropolis, ready to rise through society's ranks.<sup>139</sup>

The first major challenge facing Tailyour's Jamaican offspring was education. Having found an instructor in Yorkshire on his brother Robert's recommendation, Tailyour sent James to John Bowman's school, Byers Green Hall, outside Durham.<sup>140</sup> Soon after James's arrival, Bowman informed his father: "I am happy to say that James is very hearty and few there be that can exceed him in learning at his Age." Reputedly bright, James eagerly studied a variety of topics. Mathematics and grammar were the first subjects he tackled, but slowly he added Latin, advanced accounting, and bookkeeping. These courses prepared James for a career in the overseas trading sector. Under close, private instruction, the young Jamaican acquired the rudiments of a refined education – a professional requirement for a potential British merchant and gentleman.

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at his death (perhaps as an act of charity because her father was no longer resident on the island): James Renny to John Tailyour, June 27, 1796, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>139</sup> John Tailyour, himself, wished to stake a claim towards elite status. This was a common feature of Scots who migrated to the colonies: Alan Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). On June 25, 1793, a year after his homecoming, Tailyour wed Mary McCall, daughter of his former employer George McCall: Baptisms, Mary McCall, June 27, 1770, Parish of Glasgow, OPR Ref. No. 644/1, GROS; Marriages, John Taylor to Mary McCall, June 25, 1793, Parish of Glasgow, OPR Ref. No. 644/1, GROS. Tailyour repurchased his family's ancestral estate, Kirktonhill, which had been sold after his father's death in 1780. He bought it along with much of the surrounding property in 1798 for £33,000, and added an adjacent house with nine bedrooms: Inventory of John Tailyour's Will, Commissary Court Records, CC20/7/8, ff. 664-80, NAS; Andrew Jervise, *Epitaphs & Inscriptions From Burial Grounds & Old Buildings in The North-East of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1875), 134. Tailyour wrote to his Simon of the pleasure in moving back onto the family estate: John Tailyour to Simon Taylor, February 2, 1798, Simon Taylor Papers, ICS 120 XIV/A/141, ICS. Immediately, Tailyour's contacts began distinguishing between his "Kirktonhill family" and his Jamaican one: Archibald McCall to Tailyour, May 20, 1804, Tailyour Papers, WCL. Tailyour, himself, distinguished firmly between the two families in his letters, often making no mention of the Jamaican children: John Tailyour to Simon Taylor, February 2, 1810, Simon Taylor Papers, ICS 120 XIV/A/198, ICS. More pointedly, Tailyour left nothing to his Jamaican children in his will: Will of John Tailyour, July 17, 1816, PROB 11/1582, NAE.

<sup>140</sup> During this period, Durham fell into the county of Yorkshire. Bowman's school had been in family hands for years. The *Daily Advertiser* included a posting for the school in 1783 which noted that his father had previously run the school for thirty years. It also noted that students were instructed in classics, grammar (without learning Latin), mathematics, and drawing for twelve guineas a year: *Daily Advertiser* (London), March 20, 1783. The price had increased to thirteen guineas by 1792: *Diary or Woodfall's Register* (London), August 4, 1792.

James's family monitored his learning from its outset. Robert believed Bowman's teaching would be "sufficient to give him all the Instruction that Will be necessary to enable him to make his way in the World with a little of [Tailyour's] Assistance."<sup>141</sup> James's grandmother, Jean, also conveyed a strong interest in him, relating to Tailyour: "Ketty (Tailyour's sister) wrote me that your James was gon to a B[oa]rding Scool at a good distence from her which She was Sorry for. She says he is a very Cl[e]ver good temper[ed] Boy."<sup>142</sup> Though at a distance, his relatives still kept him within their purview and interest. Future success would not be possible without continued supervision over his affairs, even after he left school.

As James approached maturity, his father sought out options for future occupation. Hoping his son would follow in his father's footsteps, Tailyour won James a clerkship in a London merchant house at the age of sixteen. James worked for three years as a clerk, but either the work did not suit him or his performance was lackluster, for his father began exploring alternatives. Owing, perhaps, to his brother Robert's commercial success in India, Tailyour started looking for a post on the subcontinent. James's primary path lay in applying to the East India Company's army.

As much as Tailyour's inspiration may have come from his brother's achievements in India, he may have also been following the example of those mixed-race migrants, such as the Morses, who traveled to the subcontinent. Individuals personally known to Tailyour likely bolstered the decision. Hercules Ross, fellow native of Kincardine, returned from Jamaica in 1781 and purchased the Rossie estate, outside Montrose, where Tailyour's mother and sister lived. Ross and Simon Taylor were great

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<sup>141</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, May 2, 1792; November 28, 1792, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>142</sup> Jean Tailyour to John Tailyour, March 27, 1792, in *ibid.*

friends; the latter was the godfather of Ross's son. Like Simon, Ross cohabited in Jamaica with an enslaved woman – a “quadroon” named Elizabeth Foord, whom he freed in 1776 and bore him at least six children: Elizabeth Ann, twins Jane and Margaret, Hercules, Daniel, and David.<sup>143</sup> While Margaret died in infancy, the other children accompanied their father to Britain in 1781.<sup>144</sup> Each of the brothers next moved to India.<sup>145</sup> Hercules joined the East India Company's navy, but failed to enter the officer's ranks due to his colonial birthplace. In 1800, the Company had extended a 1791 prohibition against admitting officers born in the East Indies “whose Parents are not Natives of Great Britain or Ireland” to those born in the West Indies.<sup>146</sup> The regulation was not always enforced, and, through deception, could be skirted. While Hercules fell victim to it, both Daniel and David won positions as officers in the marines. David entered the Bombay Marines in 1799, at age seventeen, and eventually rose to the rank of second lieutenant.<sup>147</sup> Daniel's career was more prestigious. He entered the Bombay Marines earlier in 1795, and saw a great deal of combat.<sup>148</sup> He returned periodically to England, but his career flourished in India.<sup>149</sup> There, he became an expert surveyor,

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<sup>143</sup> Agnes M. Butterfield, *Hercules Ross of Kingston, Jamaica, and Rossie, Forfar 1745-1816*, Unpublished Manuscript, 1982. Many thanks to Mr. J. H. St J. McIlwaine for allowing me to read a copy of his aunt's manuscript. After the birth of the twins, Foord applied for a privilege bill for herself and her three daughters, which the Assembly granted in 1778: Jamaica House of Assembly Minutes, CO 139/36, NAE.

<sup>144</sup> Little is known of the daughters, although when Ross wrote his will in 1814, they were living in Doncaster, England. They later moved to Ramsgate, where they ran a school and cared for their brother Daniel's children when he was abroad: Butterfield, *Hercules Ross*, 96.

<sup>145</sup> Like Tailyour's children would discover, all three of the Ross boys owed their stations in the Company's military to their father's connections. Indeed, the elder Hercules's friendship with Lord Nelson may have been instrumental in Daniel's high placement within the Company.

<sup>146</sup> East India Court Minutes, APAC, B/130, f. 998, BL.

<sup>147</sup> Company records indicate that he left the service several years later after “turning Turk”: either becoming Muslim or entering native state service: Butterfield, *Hercules Ross*, 96; Marine Miscellaneous Records, APAC, L/MAR/C/683, f. 16, BL.

<sup>148</sup> Marine Miscellaneous Records, APAC, L/MAR/C/689, f. 3, BL.

<sup>149</sup> Daniel's relationship with his father fractured after his first tour in India. On visiting the family in Scotland, Daniel “was not welcomed by the household . . . and left in anger.” This, despite the fact that Daniel's Scottish cousin fondly remembered him as a “fine-looking young man with pleasant manners.”

whose talent earned him membership in the Royal Society in 1822. Their sojourn in the East Indies helped earn them in a more legitimate position in Britain as military men defending the edges of empire.

A few short years after Ross's sons left for the subcontinent, John Tailyour drafted a similar plan for his child. The two fathers do not appear to have corresponded on the matter...or at all.<sup>150</sup> Still, Tailyour need only have heard of his neighbor's behavior. He drew upon business and personal network members for assistance. His brother Robert answered the call immediately. Having spent much of his youth in India, Robert was in a strong position to help: "I Observe your Plan with regard to your Son James - & do Assure you I will do all in my Power to Assist you."<sup>151</sup> His cousin, Sir David Carnegie, also felt optimistic about the endeavor, saying he would help obtain "a Cadetship for your young Man" once he traveled to London.<sup>152</sup> Tailyour did not stop with his family, however; he approached a number of notable contacts, including Sir John Stuart, Bt. Discussing his "natural son" with Stuart, Tailyour wrote of James's grammar schooling, clerkship, and service in the local militia. "Could I get him to India as a Cadet," Tailyour insisted, "I think his Chance of Success would be better than in any other area of life I know."<sup>153</sup> India was an immediate and obvious choice for a young man with limited opportunities in Britain, and even fewer in the Caribbean.

Within months of Tailyour's initial enquiry, an interview with the East India Company was arraigned for James. While Robert's associations may have contributed,

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He made one final trip to England in 1822, but returned to India a year later. Daniel stayed there for the rest of his life: Butterfield, *Hercules Ross*, 98-128.

<sup>150</sup> Hercules Ross's conversion to abolitionism, and the help he gave to William Wilberforce on the matter, severed his relation with Taylor, enough so that Taylor's nephew once bristled at having been invited to a dinner which Ross attended: *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>151</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, October 2, 1804, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>152</sup> David Carnegie to John Tailyour, March 1, 1805, in *ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> John Tailyour to John Stuart, January 18, 1805, Letter Book (1804-10), in *ibid.*

ultimately it was Sir David Carnegie's influence that won the spot. Within days of first writing Tailyour, Carnegie broke the good news: "I owe this favor to my friend Lord Sidmouth (Henry Addington), to whom I would not have applied on any common occasion, but as I saw no other chance of serving you this season, I determined to attempt that channel."<sup>154</sup> Soon, Tailyour's friends and relatives began congratulating him on the success. Thomas Renny celebrated the news in a letter to Tailyour: "I am glad to find you have got James appointed a Cadet; He is a Clever Lad."<sup>155</sup> Clearly tapped into the vital channels of imperial business, Tailyour's connections allowed his son James to become as much a citizen of the world as his father.

Soon after receiving word of James's interview, the extended family began the process of preparing him for the ordeal, and this included re-constructing his racial past. Robert supplied Tailyour with a written oath required by the Company to confirm James's heritage.<sup>156</sup> Immediately a problem arose. The Company's recent ban from service on West Indian natives without European parents prevented James from joining. Ostensibly, the provision sought to keep individuals of mixed-race from entering the corps and inspiring insurrection from within its ranks. Indian fears of mixed-race rebellion now made blanket claims against West Indians of hybrid ancestry – likely due to the Revolution in St. Domingue. Tailyour drafted a response, admitting that James had

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<sup>154</sup> David Carnegie to John Tailyour, March 3, 1805, Tailyour Papers, WCL. In fact, James's file within the Company's records list Sidmouth as his official recommender: Record of Incoming Cadets, APAC, L/MIL/9/258/96-97, BL. Robert Taylor believed that the interview's success was owed to Lady Campbell, wife of General Archibald Campbell who served in Madras. Lady Campbell had a close connection to Catherine Foulerton, Tailyour's younger sister who had lodged James in his early days in Britain. In all likelihood, however, David Carnegie's influence proved most important. See Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, May 8, 1805, Tailyour Papers, WCL

<sup>155</sup> Thomas Renny to John Tailyour, March 15, 1805, Tailyour Papers, WCL. Indeed, the process had been so quick that Tailyour received requests from friends seeking East-Indian patronage themselves. His former business partner in Jamaica, and namesake of one of his white sons, Peter Ballantine asked to use Tailyour as a reference for his brother-in-law already stationed on the subcontinent: Peter Ballantine to John Tailyour, March 19, 1805, in *ibid*.

<sup>156</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, March 8, 1805, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

been born and baptized in Kingston, but claiming that he held no copy of the baptismal certificate.<sup>157</sup> While the latter declaration may have been true, he knew that Polly's status as a "mulatto" appeared on the registration for James's baptism.<sup>158</sup> Deception took a more explicit turn in James's oath. He acknowledged his West Indian birth, but stated "My Father [is] a European and my Mother [was] born in the West Indies, but of European parents."<sup>159</sup> This "white lie" repositioned James within British society. Perhaps for the first time in his life, his racial ancestry was disguised rather than recognized, and he attempted to pass as white. Prior to his dealings with the East India Company, Tailyour's son had operated in a space of tolerance allowing family, friends, and teachers to accept his heritage. As James's extended networks became less personal, or as he encountered official systems of oppression, he camouflaged that heritage.

Robert Taylor saw no way around such subterfuge. He had high hopes for James and believed he could get the young man recommended "very strongly to Men High in Rank" within the Company. Aware of the racial bar, yet not having already met James, Robert had little real sense of the obstacles the young man faced. "I Hope James's Colour will not be Objected to," Robert wrote in anticipation, "if he has much if any of the dark Cast in his appearance – I will do all I can to remove Objections if there are any." He repeated that assurance, although worried about the feasibility of presenting James as white, for, he was told, the Directors were "rather particular in that respect."<sup>160</sup> Having relied so heavily upon personal contacts to gain the interview, Tailyour and his brother risked public scorn, both for themselves and their associates, if caught in

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<sup>157</sup> Military Department, Cadet Papers, APAC, L/MIL/9/114/212, BL.

<sup>158</sup> Kingston Baptisms, Copy Register vol. 1, f. 371, IRO.

<sup>159</sup> Military Department, Cadet Papers, APAC, L/MIL/9/114/211, BL.

<sup>160</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, March 8, 1805, March 18, 1805, April 5, 1805, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

dishonesty. The social risks undertaken by all who recommended James reveal a greater degree of tolerance toward individuals of color in Britain than official restrictions might initially indicate.

Within two weeks, James made his way from Yorkshire to London for his interview.<sup>161</sup> Upon arrival in London, he was warmly embraced by his uncle and cousins, and won them over immediately.<sup>162</sup> Seeing James also brought Robert relief: “His Colour . . . as you Observe [is] not darker than the Foulertons (their sister’s in-laws).” In the days leading up to James’s interview, Robert introduced him to the extended family and associates responsible for this opportunity. The young man dined with several of Robert’s friends, who offered James additional letters of recommendations to contacts they had in India.<sup>163</sup> He also saw a play with his step-grandfather, George McCall, who James noted, showed him “great kindness.”<sup>164</sup> Finally, James met with the man most responsible for his interview, Sir David Carnegie, who was, “much pleas’d with his appearance.”<sup>165</sup> The young Jamaican’s familial networks, then, were not simply abstract associations, but ones which bound him materially to white, metropolitan kin.

Warm feeling was succeeded by increased anxiety as the day of the interview approached. While Robert had been surprised at how light-skinned James appeared, he still perceived some African characteristics which bothered him enough that he “could

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<sup>161</sup> Robert insisted that he come to the capital as soon as possible to prepare. Although he did not have enough room in his own home for James, Robert found lodgings nearby so that James could eat and visit with during the day. James made his way first to York, then by coach to London, catching a cold along the way as his fellow passenger left the carriage window open all night: *Ibid.*, March 18, 1805.

<sup>162</sup> Robert informed his brother affectionately that “[James] is a very fine young Man”; “he is a favorite with us all”: Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, April 5, 1805, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, April 6, 1805.

<sup>164</sup> James Tailyour to John Tailyour, April 9, 1805, in *ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, April 6, 1805, in *ibid.*

not Sleep the first night after [James] Came,” especially as he heard that the Company was “particularly strict in not allowing any[one] . . . who can be supposed to have any Black blood in them.” Indeed, both color and illegitimacy were targets for scrutiny. Apprehension permeated the house, as Robert realized that his trick might wreak havoc with his reputation: “I should have been very much disappointed & Mortified had I not succeeded in getting him through.” Even James started to worry. This paranoia multiplied until Robert soon perceived, “on Account of [James’] Anxiety – he appear’d . . . a Shade Darker.” Searching for a solution, Robert constructed a disguise. If he could not alter James’s heritage, he could at least soften his visage. Desperately, he tried using makeup to lighten James’s skin: “I try’d him in Powder & various Colour’d Dresses,” Robert informed Tailyour, but “Powder made him much worse.” Ultimately they found a useful combination in short hair and blue cloth, which diminished James’s African features and helped him pass the interview, at least in Robert’s analysis.<sup>166</sup>

Robert’s actions in preparing James and the East India Company’s subsequent obsession with the young man’s heritage highlight parallel attitudinal currents in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century. In his rush to ensure James’s success, Robert literally sought to mask his nephew’s racial ancestry. Efforts at passing were not unusual in racially stratified societies, but James Tailyour’s experience bucked the norm. Well-

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., April 5, 1805. This was not, however, a perfectly-executed fraud. Robert qualified James’s victory: “some of my friends at the India House told me that no One ever Pass’d under so many Objections.” The next day he reiterated this aside: “I mention these difficulties to no One but yourself but I do assure you they were most severe.” Even a month later, Robert indicated that several committee members still grumbled about the decision: “some of the Directors have said since, they are not at all satisfied with their own Conduct in passing [James] – as they still think he must have some black blood – and there is nothing they are so particular about.” Reinforcing a sense of James’s luck, Robert related the rejection of a young man for suspicion of African heritage, despite the fact that his father had previously served as the Governor of Bengal. The affair greatly troubled Robert, and he advised both Tailyour and James to speak no more of the matter, fearing additional Company investigation: Ibid., April 5-6, 1805, May 8, 1805.

known throughout his father's familial and commercial networks as a freed Jamaican of color, James's disguise was simply an ad hoc measure to face an organizational prejudice which had only emerged five years before. These increasingly restrictive institutional practices were out of step with much greater levels of tolerance at the individual level. As popular opinion flared against blacks and people of color – due to the rise of abolitionism and revolution in the Americas – the act of passing was perceived as problematic. Especially in official channels, racial hybridity found fewer sympathizers. While toleration had traditionally been extended toward West Indians of color who came to Britain, open acceptance quickly diminished in the last decades of the long eighteenth century. James Tailyour operated in both environments – an acknowledged metropolitan child of color and an imperial soldier outfitted with a uniform of untainted aristocratic origins.

Less than a week after winning approval from the Committee of Shipping, James boarded a ship bound for India. Tailyour's father-in-law, George McCall, accompanied James to see him off. At Gravesend, on April 9, 1805, he embarked on the Devonshire Captain, bound for Madras.<sup>167</sup> While on the journey, James wrote to his father, expressing concern about Jean Tailyour, now in poor health: "I have today wrote my Grandmother a fare well letter."<sup>168</sup> Communication remained strong between James and his British family, even after he left for India. He kept them abreast of his adventures abroad.<sup>169</sup> Having raised him for most of his youth, the Scottish Tailyours maintained a strong interest in his future accomplishments.

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<sup>167</sup> Record of Incoming Cadets, APAC, L/MIL/9/258/96-97, BL.

<sup>168</sup> James Tailyour to John Tailyour, April 24, 1805, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>169</sup> His aunt expressed great joy after James wrote to her of his arrival in Madras: Catherine Foulerton to John Tailyour, February 29, 1806, in *ibid.*

While clearly not a mirror of his time spent in Britain, James's experiences in India reflected his metropolitan upbringing and his family's expectations for him. James scoffed at his low salary, which seemed not to match his qualifications. He lamented the position of soldiers like himself: "all these nabobs who return home have made their money by having some other situation."<sup>170</sup> Needless to say, James wished to return to Britain, anticipating much greater success outside the military in a mercantile career. Frustration also stemmed from the perception that he was not receiving fair treatment. On the voyage over, he felt neglected by the ship's captain, whom James claimed had barely spoken to the young officers: "had he even paid us the common civilities due from one Gentleman to another it would not have been required to have done more." Raised primarily in Britain, James's genteel identity endured after he entered the military. His offense at not having been acknowledged as a gentleman speaks to his social expectations. It also reveals his sense of entitlement, forged in a privileged education and landed-family comfort. He was certainly far removed from his enslaved, Jamaican past. Indeed, when he first attended a market on the island of St. Helena, his greatest disappointment was the exorbitant prices charged for European articles without which (he believed) he could not live happily.<sup>171</sup>

James's expectations ran counter to his family's. He complained to both his father and uncle about India, but Robert, having spent time there, countered each of his grievances. Clamoring for more money greatly upset Robert, who grumbled to Tailyour

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<sup>170</sup> James Tailyour to John Tailyour, January 7, 1806, in *ibid.* James later wrote to his father to disabuse him of the notion that all migrants to India made money, especially those in the military: *Ibid.*, October 6, 1807. After a crackdown in private, illicit trade in 1784, Indian merchants' wages increased, but soldiers' did not keep pace: Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*. Although Marshall focuses on Bengal, and not Madras, the Company's policies extended toward the various other areas of the subcontinent.

<sup>171</sup> James Tailyour to John Tailyour, June 27, 1805, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

that James “has a disposition to be more extravagant than his situation entitles him to . . . He certainly has higher Notions than either you or I had at his age.” Having traveled to India alone as a youth, without a large stack of recommendations, Robert believed that James had had it too easy.<sup>172</sup> He assured his brother that James would eventually discover the advantages given him in India, and implored Tailyour not to allow his immediate return: “it would be impossible to get him any thing half so good”; “if he were to return to England – there is no Situation you could place him in where he could have anything more than above subsistence.” A colonial career was, in Robert’s mind, the best, if not only, option for a mixed-race man straddling the border of passable whiteness. James’s genteel assurance conflicted with Robert’s pessimistic viewpoint. Certain that James had always operated at the margins of respectability in Britain, Robert saw his gripes as evidence of social confusion: “The sudden Change he found in his Situation, commencing the Gentleman all at once, was too much for him.”<sup>173</sup> For Robert, then, mixed-race individuals never had full access to elite metropolitan society, nor should they expect it. While he undertook the requisite steps to place his nephews and niece in relatively privileged positions, he never believed them entirely worthy of such places.

Beyond James’s disappointment with humble finances, his identification with elite British society became more pronounced after interacting with foreigners abroad. Crossing the equator off the coast of Africa, James’s ship indulged in the traditional crossing-the-line ceremony. Following the figure of Neptune in the ceremony were “a

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<sup>172</sup> His frustration toward James’s complaints became much more pronounced after the young man began drawing bills of exchange against his father and uncle, without their permission. Robert became livid about the affair, especially after James drew on his uncle again. Part of Robert’s protestation, then, came from his own anger about James taking money without consent.

<sup>173</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, February 17, 1806, September 18, 1806, October 5, 1809, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

long train of attendants,” who, James noted, were “all blacks, having their bodies bare and painted . . . upon the whole in my opinion they had a most grotesque appearance.” Passing from the northern to southern hemisphere, James’s encounters with the colonial “other” mimicked those of many whites in the Empire. His fixation on the African bodies before him was part of a greater sense of metropolitan identity, disconnected from his own African past. Describing those he met upon landing in Madras, James echoed the reactions of fellow Jamaican of color Robert Morse: “The natives are such a set of ignorant & careless fools . . . the[y] are a most effeminate set of wretches; one stout Englishman would be more than a match for ½ a dozen of them.” Speaking with the voice of a proud metropolitan, James recoiled at native practices, including the caste system and sati, and confirmed his own sense of British superiority. Surprised at “what a set of cursed rascals these black fellows are,” James articulated his own differences along racial, class, and gender lines.<sup>174</sup> He was both white and British; elite and masculine. The same markers of difference which distinguished white Britons from colonial others separated James from the natives with whom he interacted as well. If he did retain a tenuous social existence in Britain, then his colonial experiences removed most of those limiting factors. In Madras, James was not a transported colonial; he was a normalized colonizer who could further refine his fashioned British identity.

Tracking James after he arrived in India proves exceptionally difficult. He spent several years in Madras before being reassigned to the Île de France (modern-day Mauritius) in 1810, and later promoted to Brigade Major.<sup>175</sup> At that point, his correspondence with his father ends, and there is no mention of him in any of Tailyour’s

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<sup>174</sup> James Tailyour to John Tailyour, June 27, 1805, January 7, 1806, in *ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26, 1810, October 21, 1810.

other letters.<sup>176</sup> James's travels to these islands off Africa provide a fascinating twist on a geographically and racially transient life. Born in Jamaica, vaulted to the upper echelons of society in Britain, serving the military in India, and eventually transported to fight off the coast of Africa, James Tailyour embodied the prototypical wandering, British imperialist. His status shifted from Jamaican slave to privileged English student, and finally to East India Company officer. At each point along the way, circumstances forced him to alter his identity with techniques that adapted racial, class, geographic, and even gender characteristics. With the ability to articulate these attributes in novel ways for each situation, James Tailyour achieved a degree of the success envisioned by his father while under the Jamaican sun.

Little information is available for Tailyour's other children of color, except his youngest son, John.<sup>177</sup> After attending the same school outside Durham as James, he left for London in 1809 with some money from Tailyour.<sup>178</sup> Indicating a lapse in family contact, that same year Robert Taylor reassured his brother that he would, "certainly

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<sup>176</sup> East India Company records do not provide any clear information on his exploits after this point.

<sup>177</sup> With as little known about John, even less is evident of Tailyour's two other mixed-race children, Simon and Catherine. Simon may have arrived in Britain with his siblings and attended the same school as his brothers, but no letters survive from him, and almost nothing is mentioned about the young boy in his father's papers. Catherine appears only briefly in several letters. When reporting to Polly about their children's lives in Britain, Tailyour wrote that Catherine lived with his sister in Scotland: John Tailyour to John Orr, October 28, 1809, Letter Book (1804-10), Tailyour Papers, WCL. This was the same sister who cared for James and John when they were young. John and Catherine, as the two youngest children, retained a tight bond. After moving to London, John wrote regularly to Catherine, and frequently asked his father to give her his regards: John Tailyour (younger) to John Tailyour, March 15, 1810, Tailyour Papers, WCL. The younger John had included a number of letters to his sister in this message to his father (and noted as much in the missive). Unfortunately, copies of these letters to Catherine have not survived. She may have become a governess, or married. In either case, her familial connections would have served her well, and most likely she made a smooth transition into Scottish life. Tracking such individuals of color in Britain through parish records is extraordinarily difficult. Most parishes did not identify race in their records. Scottish records, in particular, are especially silent on race. Searches through the parish records in GROS turned up several individuals known to be of color whose race was not designated in the source. Tracing the Tailyour children – whose names changed to "Taylor" along with their father – is nearly impossible due to the ubiquity of the surname in Scotland.

<sup>178</sup> His later education, if any, is unknown. John may have disappeared from the family or ceased contact with them in the years immediately before his majority: John Tailyour (younger) to John Tailyour, October 29, 1809, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

endeavour to hear of something of your little Boy John.”<sup>179</sup> By the next summer, John had recommenced communications. Robert had found him, and placed him with a family in London, the Lows, most likely the family of Tailyour’s Scottish lawyer. John also reconnected with his extended family. Another uncle, John Foulerton, began writing to him suggesting that he get in touch with his step-grandfather, George McCall, with whom the younger John was unfamiliar.

Placed back into his father’s network, he took a stable place in the capital. The arrangement was not a happy one, however, as John complained: “I am sorry to say that I am not so much at home here . . . often while we are at breakfast One of them (when they see Mr. Cowie or me spreading our bread thick with butter as they think) will say . . . do they not know the price of butter?”<sup>180</sup> Eighteen-year-old John’s indulgences would require moderation, and certainly he needed a career which could allow greater independence. Once again, Uncle Robert stepped in to guide his Jamaican relative. Tailyour wrote back to Jamaica soon after to inform Polly that her son John was “at present in my Brothers Counting house in London” working as a clerk.<sup>181</sup>

Despite his new employ, the pleasures of the capital diverted John’s mind. Robert’s premonition about London’s numerous enticements for young men like James and John came true for the latter. John admitted as much to his father; after arriving in London, “what money I received from you . . . I have thrown away foolishly.” None of it, though, was “spent in the presence of bad Company.” Youth and indiscretion, instead, were the culprits: “There are so many ways of spending money in London that [one] . . .

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<sup>179</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, September 1, 1808, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>180</sup> John Tailyour (younger) to John Tailyour, July 22, 1809, in *ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> John Tailyour to John Orr, October 28, 1809, Letter Book (1804-10), Tailyour Papers, WCL.

spends it all in a few weeks, not thinking where he shall get more.”<sup>182</sup> Moderation proved difficult for a young man in an expensive city, and he regularly implored his father for more money. Such requests frustrated both father and uncle. Echoing his claims about James’s elevated sense of entitlement, Robert declared, “there is nothing I am so apprehensive of, in young men like [John], as getting an expensive turn.”<sup>183</sup> Again, Robert anticipated far less success for the boys than Tailyour, and bristled when their expectations seemed to exceed his own beliefs. He may have expected even less of John due to either his darker complexion or his lesser sociability.

Just as John lamented his pittance, he begrudged the tedium and long hours of his clerkship. Extended days of work tired the young man, and dampened his enthusiasm for a renewed correspondence with his father. “I am very sorry to think that you are displeased with my letters,” he explained. “[I] must indeed confess that I have in general very little time when I write.”<sup>184</sup> When Tailyour pressed his brother about John’s abilities, Robert reported that the young man’s penmanship was lacking, and not swift enough for the large amount of copying needed by the house. Robert also worried about John’s comportment: “He seems to be a Meek quiet Boy”; “quite a Boy – being very little - & awkward in Manner.” Having done far less than his brother to impress Robert, John never fit in well with family in the capital. Over time, however, John’s speed and skill at work improved, and Robert congratulated him on exceedingly high morals.<sup>185</sup> Grooming himself for a career in trade, John began studying French and Spanish outside work.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., October 29, 1809.

<sup>183</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, June 27, 1810, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>184</sup> John Tailyour (younger) to John Tailyour, October 29, 1809, in *ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, March 14, 1810, September 25, 1811, in *ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> John Tailyour (younger) to John Tailyour, September 9, 1809, September 27, 1810, in *ibid.*

Possessing less social charm than his brother, young John took more time to prove his occupational competency.

Acutely aware of this restricted progress, John quickly grew displeased with metropolitan life, and looked for ways out. Work dissatisfied him the most and he asked his father to help procure a position as a captain's clerk on an outward-bound ship. Taking a cue from his brother's career, he hoped he could sail as a clerk on an East Indiaman. Charged once more to find John such a position, Robert demurred, certain that he would not be able to obtain one for the young man, perhaps due to his appearance and the Company's racial bar.<sup>187</sup> Discouraged, John next considered returning to Jamaica.<sup>188</sup> He said nothing of his motivation to move back, but re-migration from Britain to the colonies was common for West Indians of color. Eventually, he relinquished that idea as well. Still eager to leave Britain, however, he inquired about the possibility of traveling to Île de France, either as a merchant or a clerk. John had recently heard of his brother's voyage to the island and perhaps wished to join him there, although he had not personally communicated with his brother in over three years.<sup>189</sup> At this point, John's letters to his father stopped, and nothing is said of the young man in Tailyour's other correspondence. John represents a strong contrast to his brother James. While the latter prospered, gaining a highly respectable position which disguised his racial past, the former struggled to maintain even his most basic employment. Perhaps John's African descent was more visible than his brother's. No one in the family pointed explicitly at complexion as a predictor of achievement, but it may have been quietly understood. Yet John's letters also reveal a young man unable to construct a respectable identity outside his father's

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., September 25, 1811.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., September 27, 1810.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., March 20, 1811, July 16, 1811, August 17, 1811.

sphere of influence. Even if he did bear more visible signs of African ancestry, his inability to establish a genteel posture proved equally as damaging.

In several significant ways, the Tailyour children embodied many of the diverse experiences of mixed-race migrants in Britain. Educated under refined English tutelage, the Tailyour sons received the advanced instruction necessary for beginning successful, British careers. James's accomplishments and ability to cast himself as a legitimate participant in distinguished society show the potential which individuals of color had in Britain. His imperial travels also highlight the path taken by some of these migrants. Nonetheless, his brother's faltered progress reveals the burdens and lowered expectations under which others suffered. Failing to construct a privileged identity could cast West Indians of color into a social purgatory between family advantage and racial constraint. Catherine's experiences uncover a similar position of stasis. As a female of color, her prospects outside marriage were narrow. While she may have carved out a niche for herself within another household, as Jane Harry did, her peripheral position within the Tailyour family inhibited her ability to achieve such relative independence. Taken together, these children both succeeded and stagnated, realizing the high goals set out by their father, while also succumbing to the limitations of the metropole.

### *The Macpherson Family*

Most of the families discussed above avoided the topic of race when discussing mixed-race kin. Much of this may have stemmed from the chronology of those migrants' entry into Britain. Arriving towards the end of the eighteenth-century, they entered a British society slowly coming to terms with issues of race. The rise of the abolitionist

movement in the late 1780s pushed the matter of racial distinction and human difference to the fore; by the 1810s many Britons had acquired a larger vocabulary on, and awareness of, race. This evolution in awareness often handicapped children of color. Arriving in Scotland in 1814, the Macpherson children's prospects – similar in many ways to the Tailyours – were tempered by their family's heightened concern for racial difference. Although the children's white relatives worked hard to establish them in Britain, they did so with extreme pessimism. Certain that their mixed-race charges could not fully assimilate into Scottish society, the Macphersons resigned themselves to low expectations, thereby tacitly legitimating Britain's growing racial prejudice.

The Macphersons had guarded, yet extensive, dealings with their mixed-race relatives in the Caribbean. Wanting to restore his family's fortunes in 1802, William Macpherson traveled to Guyana, where in time he cohabited with an enslaved black woman named Countess. Over the course of their relationship, she gave birth to three children: Eliza, Matilda, and Allan. William informed his parents of the union and children, not as fully as he might. Several years before sending the children to Scotland, he wrote to his brother Allan, who had also moved to Guyana: "Any letter in which you mention Countess, direct to me; My father and Mother both know of the business, but I should like to see what you write about her before they see it."<sup>190</sup> Clearly worried about the family's discussion of his sexual affairs, William sought to limit the information. Yet the Macpherson family knew all too well of his colonial dalliances.<sup>191</sup>

On hearing of William's intention to bring his children with him to Scotland, his parents worried about its effect on the extended British family. Colonel Allan

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<sup>190</sup> William Macpherson to Allan Macpherson, June 28, 1807, Bundle 203, NRAS 2614, MBP.

<sup>191</sup> Allan himself had had at least two children of color after his own voyage to Guyana: Eliza Macpherson to William Macpherson, August 28, 1817, October 8, 1817, Bundle 112, in *ibid.*

Macpherson warned his son that “from the pure delicacy” of his mother, Eliza’s, heart “it would grieve her to see you introduce them with yourself at our home.” The Macphersons hesitated to include them immediately into the family. Allan implored William to “leave them a little at Glasgow until you arrive at home, when after you may be able to resolve upon a plan suited for their future care.”<sup>192</sup> William complied, temporarily. Within a year of his arrival, just as John Tailyour had, William Macpherson married. Macpherson wed Jessie Chalmers, daughter of William Chalmers of Glenricht, in 1815.<sup>193</sup> The new bride’s attitude toward her husband’s illegitimate children of color was anything but positive. Eliza related gossip from friends that Jessie “could not take trouble with [the children]. She was as little able or Capable as myself; from the State of her health rendering her as infirm.” Whether from sickness or reluctance, Eliza’s letters to William indicate that Jessie was eager to have them leave his residence. Although Eliza may have been moved to assume the care of her grandchildren by an allowance she received from William, she nonetheless did so with little coaxing.<sup>194</sup>

The children’s status as free people of color complicated Eliza’s feelings. She openly condemned her sons’ experiences in the Caribbean, quoting Lord Brougham: “a Residence in the West Indies tends (speaking generally) to debase the European character whilst a Residence in the East Expands & Ennobles it – by mixing with an immense population of men the most . . . enlightened that have ever existed in the World.”

William’s choice of the Caribbean rather than the East Indies seemed, to Eliza, a poor

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<sup>192</sup> Allan Macpherson to William Macpherson, March 21, 1813, Bundle 202, in *ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> W. Cheyne-Macpherson, *The Chiefs of Clan Macpherson* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1947), 127.

<sup>194</sup> Eliza Macpherson to William Macpherson, December 25, 1817, January 1, 1818, November 16, 1816, Bundle 112, MBP. The family’s finances were in dire straits, both from Colonel Allan’s losses in India, as well as William’s economic failure in Guyana. Eliza’s dependence on her son’s stipend may have been a strong factor in her willingness to care for her grandchildren.

one reflected in the children with whom he returned. Yet concerns over her grandchildren's ancestry were tempered by a greater desire to protect them. Eliza declared that her "little moonlight shades" were "more worthy [of her] peculiar care than Handsome fair ones from an unprincipled woman." She often used the phrase "moonlight shades" to call attention to their racial origins and difference from the British side of the family.<sup>195</sup> Soon, however, Eliza developed a strong attachment to her grandchildren. She reaffirmed her belief in Christian equality: "you have made them Christians & God's Children – and if they live & aim the Christian's part, our Heavenly father makes no distinction of Persons." "[A]ltho' they were in the line of Egyptian Bondage," she encouraged her son, "They could become through Gods Grace Heir to an immortal Crown. God had made a distinction in this world . . . but he had made no distinction for Jew or Gentile."<sup>196</sup> The religious fervor surrounding the abolitionist movement may have influenced Eliza's feelings toward the enslaved, as well as those descended from slavery.<sup>197</sup> Her sentiments toward relations of color were similar to many popular attitudes at the time. She could profess religious piety toward them while publicizing their difference; personal views of African heritage were not always overlapping with humanitarianism.<sup>198</sup>

Having agreed to care for the children, Eliza Macpherson struggled to decide the best course for their development. Unsure of their chances of marriage or employment, Macpherson debated the merits of both. She advised her son to "give them as good an

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., December 25, 1816.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., November 27, 1816, October 13, 1818.

<sup>197</sup> Devoutly religious, she preached to her son of the humanity of Africans: "nothing can be more opposite to gospel doctrine than the slave trade": Ibid., December 25, 1816.

<sup>198</sup> See Christopher Brown's discussion of the various motivations which brought together a diverse group of people under the common banner of abolition: *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2006).

Education as” he was able, but balked at the notion of investing too much in their instruction. Putting young Allan into a trade seemed obvious, as did preparing his sisters for lives either as domestics or governesses, but the paths toward those futures were unclear. Either way, Eliza Macpherson believed education a necessity, and recommended that her son continue instruction beyond grammar school. Allan and Eliza decided to place the two girls in a dame school in Stevenage, outside London, run by a Miss Fisher. Young Allan remained closer to home, however, attending a school near Perth. Both the Macphersons and their grandchildren – who took the surname “Williams” after their father’s forename – traveled back and forth between London and Scotland as school went in and out of session.<sup>199</sup> Eliza Williams would later advance to a school in Dulwich, south of London, and Allan would continue with a tutor in Scotland. Under such a system, Eliza hoped, “they might become not unworthy Members in a Country Society.”<sup>200</sup>

Eliza Macpherson’s strategy for her grandchildren was not a private affair. Many of her friends and contacts were apprised of the plans for William’s daughters. As she confessed to her son, “all people here who come to me seem very jealous that my ideas for your little girls are too elevated for you & them.” In particular, these associates complained that she “d[id] wrong not to place them to business” immediately, opting instead to have them educated. The prospect of refined and scholarly children of color clearly bothered these contacts. While most assumed that the children could not graduate to elite society, and therefore recommended that they labor in manual undertakings, Eliza

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<sup>199</sup> At times the Williamses would stay with their extended family during these journeys. In a letter from Eliza to William, November 20, 1816, Bundle 112, MBP, she notes that the children were going to stay with “Major and Mrs. Macpherson.”

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., January 1, 1818.

Macpherson was not so resigned. Skeptical, herself, of the children's prospects, Macpherson nevertheless believed that an education was mandatory even for those who would eventually become domestics. So many mixed-race children came to Britain that Eliza Macpherson could study those around her for guidance. Insisting that her grandchildren of color receive a better education than what "this Class of People find from the folly of those who have to do with them," she pointed to a neighbor who did not educate his mixed-race children: "what have Mr. Graham's Daughters got to live upon . . . to keep them from starving?"<sup>201</sup> Perhaps having seen untrained migrants of color fail in Britain, the idea of a rudimentary education struck her as a necessity.

Despite brushing off criticism, Eliza Macpherson lessened her expectations for the Williams children. Apart from referring to her grandchildren as "moonlight shades," Macpherson made few explicit comments about their color. Indeed, her daughter mentioned to William, "I never presume to speak to My Mother on the subject."<sup>202</sup> Instead, Eliza Macpherson addressed the issue through the notion of one's social place. She worried that the Williamses might "think more of themselves than they should" if given too much instruction. Macpherson sought to impose not only limits, but a sense of inferiority. "They do, or will soon know, & feel, they are not Honorable Children," she wrote to her son. Rather than see this as an impediment, Macpherson wished to cultivate it: "this feeling I wish them to possess – since this virtue in themselves with modesty would or will draw attention from friends inclined to bestow it – where an opposite Conduct of assurances would deny it them."<sup>203</sup> More than anything, Eliza Macpherson wanted her grandchildren to know their place. Disdaining an arrogant individual of

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., December 25, 1817, January 1, 1818.

<sup>202</sup> Harriot Macintyre to William Macpherson, November 26, 1819, Bundle 60, MBP.

<sup>203</sup> Eliza Macpherson to William Macpherson, January 1, 1818, October 13, 1818, Bundle 112, MBP.

color, she wanted grandchildren who were subservient first, and accommodated second. Complexion and origin were obvious markers on the Williamses, and their grandmother feared they would attempt to erase them through a British upbringing.

Such concerns over the Williamses' place in society extended to the children's aunt. Harriot Macintyre, William Macpherson's sister, frequently socialized with her nieces in London, where she and her husband lived. Despite reassuring her brother that Eliza Williams, "seems a fine disposition and a great tempered girl," Macintyre grew concerned that she would find little success in Britain. Although Eliza Macpherson had hoped to instill a sense of inferiority in her grandchildren, Macintyre believed she had instead raised young Eliza's "ideas too high and making her feel worse if she should be obliged to get her own bread." Such doubts about the girls' prospects either to provide for themselves, or marry into a nice household, sprang primarily from their appearance. Macintyre admitted, "I am apprehensive [Eliza's] colour will always be against her being taken as a Governess."<sup>204</sup> Eliza Macpherson's diminished expectations for the children, therefore, stood still too high in her daughter's estimation. Neither class, nor legitimacy raised Macintyre's alarm; only complexion aroused her concern. Writing in 1819, perhaps her understanding of difference had become boiled down, like much of the British populace, to simple notions of color distinction.

Despite such pessimism, the Williams girls received an advanced education. Both learned French, Latin, spelling, and mathematics, along with sewing, dance, and music. After her grandmother paid for additional lessons with a music master, Eliza gratefully responded, "I shall take great pains and hope I shall improve according to your wishes both in playing, and singing." She boasted of her ability to play the "Hallelujah Chorus,"

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<sup>204</sup> Harriot Macintyre to William Macpherson, November 26, 1819, Bundle 60, MBP.

“Hear my Prayer,” and the “Easter Hymn.” In order to secure a place as a woman of leisure, Eliza would need to cultivate musical talent. She would also need to maintain her extended kinship networks. Putting their sewing instruction to practical use, the children often made handcrafted gifts for their father and his wife back in Scotland. Eliza confided to her grandmother, “I am desirous of working [a] cap for Papa’s Lady,” in preparation for Christmas.<sup>205</sup> Attaining intellectual prowess, as well as domestic skills, set the Williamses on a path toward gentility and marriage. It also drew them more closely into British society and away from their origins in the West Indies. Even with their family’s low expectations, the Williams sisters began cultivating genteel identities.

Sensing their determined aspirations, Eliza Macpherson soon spoke more encouragingly of her granddaughters’ futures. Matilda had long impressed Macpherson with her sharp wit and quick learning. However, Eliza’s instruction and training took longer, and she became something of a pet project for her grandmother. Macpherson regularly scolded her for unassertiveness, and her propensity to mumble. Outside the issue of clarity, Macpherson grew anxious that Eliza’s speech would frustrate future employment: “I tell her nobody will take her for a Governess or Teacher, or any thing.” Would Eliza not improve her diction, she would have little chance outside the immediate household. Although she and her grandmother fought regularly on the topic, Macpherson reassured, “it is all for her own good & to make her get her bread gently, & like a gentlewoman she promises to mind me & do better.” Continued interaction between the two improved their connection, and ultimately Macpherson fought aggressively for her

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<sup>205</sup> Eliza Williams to Eliza Macpherson, October 15, 1818, July 24, 1821, Bundle 112, MBP.

granddaughter. She appealed to Eliza's teachers to give her extra attention, and implored them to help prepare her for a position as a governess.<sup>206</sup>

Each of the Williams children maintained close relationships with British family. Not long after moving to a new school in Dulwich, Williams started caring for Macpherson, who by this time had settled in London. Illness began to plague Eliza Macpherson, and Williams assumed the oversight of care. About 1830, Macpherson died, and Williams moved out of the capital. Eventually, she returned to Perthshire, where she died in January 1837. She had most likely married, but had not found much financial security.<sup>207</sup> Little is known of Matilda and Allan's experiences in Britain during these years. Rarely did the Macphersons discuss Matilda, and none of her letters survive. Only a few small scraps exist of Allan's correspondence as a young man. He wrote two letters to his father while at the Dupplin School near Perth. Both tell of upcoming vacations, and his desire to visit his father. Their relationship developed further in 1829, when both departed for New South Wales. As India had done for West Indian migrants of color in the eighteenth century, Australia served to enhance the respectability of mixed-race travelers in the nineteenth. Possibly better poised to assert racial legitimacy than his sisters – Eliza Macpherson described him as “Allan the fair” – Allan carved out a niche for himself in the Australian countryside.<sup>208</sup> He and his father stayed in the colony, where the latter died. Most likely Allan spent his final days there as well.

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<sup>206</sup> Eliza Macpherson to William Macpherson, August 9, 1819, Bundle 112, MBP; Eliza Macpherson to Miss Brooks, September 21 1821, in *ibid*.

<sup>207</sup> A receipt sent to the Macpherson estate billed the family for working clothes purchased by “Miss Williams Inness”: Receipt, March 21, 1837, Bundle 202, MBP.

<sup>208</sup> Eliza Macpherson to William Macpherson, May 18, 1821, Bundle 112, MBP.

The story of the Macpherson family offers an important counterpoint to the relative success of the lives previously narrated. Although the Macpherson/Williams histories mirrored those of many other families, the level of racial prejudice openly discussed was something quite novel. More inclined, free, or accustomed to draw attention to color differences, the Macphersons exuded a stark, confining pessimism towards mixed-race relatives' futures that other earlier families only hinted at. Perhaps a more polarized racial discourse facilitated this newer, franker dialogue. Regardless, the family still attempted to incorporate their mixed-race kin in much the same way as Britons had in prior years. Not only did the Macphersons send the children to notable tutors and schools, but they also pushed for some degree of professional attainment. Eventually, they relied on time-honored strategies of imperial sojourn and service for greater financial success. Yet such approaches fared less well than with their predecessors. Either from more pronounced racism in Britain or from the uncertainties of chance, the Williams children seem to have struggled harder to achieve a distinguished status. Their stories serve as examples of the increasing unpredictability of social assimilation for immigrants of color. While some could assert alternative claims of legitimacy in Britain, others could have far less luck.

### **Mixed-Race Struggle in Britain**

For every West Indian of color who succeeded in Britain, another arrived who faltered. Some of the latter may have arrived with little paternal help, but still more landed with the same degree of backing as their more fortunate peers. Not only did racial prejudice frustrate ambition, but the normal professional and social struggle facing all

migrants pushed some to return to the Caribbean. Not all. Others stayed and carved out new niches as reformers and advocates for racial equality. Either way, assimilation was far from easy.

Evidence abounds of mixed-race struggle in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Old Bailey (London's central criminal court) saw a number of cases tried against defendants of color, or including them as witnesses between 1750 and 1820.<sup>209</sup> Many of those involved were sailors on shore leave. Others were servants, some born overseas and some born at home – increased relations between the capital's growing black community and white women also expanded London's mixed-race population, adding to the numbers of mixed-race criminals in the docket. However, Old Bailey trials generally give little sense of individuals' origin or social status. Indeed, most who passed through the court were not privileged children of colonists.

Outside of criminal matters, West Indians often languished in Britain. A 1788 compendium of prostitutes in London's West End includes one who came from the "West Indies." Mrs. "L-w-s," who worked on Upper Charlotte Street, near the modern-day British Museum, entertained guests with her "natural warmth" and "sweet cheerful disposition." Although no explicit mention was made of her complexion, the compiler hinted at her racial heritage in describing her "fine dark hair, and eyes of the same friendly hue." Perhaps unable to establish herself in the capital, despite colonial support, prostitution became a viable option for this migrant.<sup>210</sup> Bridgett Dorset of Kingston came to England, and gave birth to an illegitimate child. She sought assistance from London's

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<sup>209</sup> Keyword searches for "mulatto," "man of colour," and "woman of colour" turned up a number of results for the court between 1750 and 1820. The records are contained online, and may be accessed through <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>.

<sup>210</sup> *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies: Or, Man of Pleasure's Kalender, for the Year 1788* (London, 1788), 77.

Foundling Hospital, which took care of orphaned and bastard children. Her color also remains undisclosed, but the Hospital noted that her father was an army captain stationed in Jamaica, increasing the possibility that his lover was not a local white woman.<sup>211</sup> Employment and inheritance could be the most difficult things to obtain for women of color in Britain. Christian, the “natural Daughter” of Robert Stewart from Tobago, fought for years to secure her father’s bequest. Raising children in Scotland, with no apparent husband, she relied more heavily upon her colonial inheritance than her male counterparts. Again, Stewart may not have been mixed race, but the circumstances surrounding her origins indicate an African heritage.<sup>212</sup> Women of color, then, faced added difficulties in Britain – much like they did in the colonies – due to victimization in sexual labor, pregnancy, and fatherless families.

Although different, mixed-race men suffered similar problems. Marriage was as much an issue for men of color as it was for women. James Pitt Lawrie, born illegitimately in Honduras to Colonel James Lawrie, traveled to Scotland at least once in his life. While potentially not mixed-race, or if so possibly of Amerindian descent, Lawrie’s difficulties in finding a Scottish wife became the stuff of family legend. As a later genealogist noted, “I remember to have heard that he proposed to marry either Louisa or Mary Lawrie . . . but that her parents would not allow it.”<sup>213</sup> That Lawrie proved unable to find a wife suggests that his racial ancestry may not have suited his Scottish contacts. Likewise, those men of color who came to Britain could fall victim to professional exclusion. In Gloucestershire, one such individual lost his bid for a teaching

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<sup>211</sup> Admitted Petitions, July 29, 1807, Foundling Hospital Records, A/FH/A/08/001/002/016, London Metropolitan Archives, London.

<sup>212</sup> See the letters of Sir William Young, in particular John Hagart to Alex Gordon, January 25, 1796, November 25, 1796, MS 375, NLJ; Anonymous to William Young, November 17, 1800, in *ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Biography of Colonel James Lawrie, GD 461/20, f. 20, NAS.

position. “Unfortunately he is a Mulatto, a native of the West Indies,” one referee commented on the application: “Where so dark a complexion is not objected to, he would make a very valuable Schoolmaster.”<sup>214</sup> Prejudice extended out into the English provinces; and, though many migrants of color might succeed, others might toil with few options. Just as sexual and professional restrictions plagued women of color in Britain, so too did they haunt men.

Life away from the colonies did not automatically engender an easier existence. Financial impediments, structural prejudice, and family exclusion could all dog individuals of color in Britain. While some floundered in their attempts to enter privileged society, others abandoned the quest altogether and forged new paths – either back in the colonies or in new British associations.

### *Peggy Ker and James Fyffe*

Some families gladly took care of mixed-race relatives, while others viewed the task as a burden. For Clementina Ker, the arrival of a mixed-race girl in her Scottish home was not a welcome one. Her stepson, David Ker, traveled to Jamaica as a physician, and returned with a “mulatto girl” named Peggy in 1775 or 1776.<sup>215</sup> At first she lodged with Ker’s aunt. Recalling her appearance several years before, one cousin noted: “My Mother took the charge of her for some time but as she discovered vicious habits I would not allow my aged Parents to be troubled with her.” Such bad behavior

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<sup>214</sup> Letter of Richard Raikes, July 5, 1815, Gloucestershire County Record Office, as quoted in James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro in English Society, 1555-1945* (London: Penguin Press, 1973), 60-61.

<sup>215</sup> The family genealogy is a bit unclear. From letters in the Lynedoch Papers at NLS, Clementina Ker is noted as David Ker’s “mother-in-law.” Ker was not the surname of his later wife, however, and it appears through the family correspondence that Clementina Ker was married to his late-father, which would mean that she was, in fact, his stepmother and not his mother-in-law.

must have exhibited itself late, as Peggy lived with Burt's mother for at least seven years. Peggy next traveled to Forfar, to lodge with her step-grandmother. Only twenty miles from the Macpherson residence in Blairgowrie, and even closer to the Tailour and Ross families outside Montrose, Clementina Ker's home in Forfar was near the epicenter of Scotland's mixed-race community. Yet, even if she was aware of other families boarding children of color, Clementina "was neither able nor willing to take any further charge."<sup>216</sup> David Ker having returned to Jamaica, his relatives debated his daughter's future. Living in nearby Perth, his cousin Henry Burt could easily oversee Peggy's upbringing, and he took over the management of her affairs. Having "no friend [who] would take upon them to care for her," he placed Peggy in a Perth boarding school run by a Miss Cameron. Burt paid for a year's instruction, "expecting between then to get notice from the Dr. what he intends to do with the creature."<sup>217</sup> Unlike the other students previously described, Peggy's matriculation was less out of a desire for formal education than formal supervision.

Throughout the correspondence on Peggy, Ker's family wrote dismissively of their new charge. Her uncle, James Ker, supported his stepmother's decision not to care for Peggy after her first move: "I think Mrs. Ker is right not to meddle with the Mullato Girl," Ker wrote to his cousin Burt, "and I think you will likewise be right in keeping her at School till you hear from the Doctor."<sup>218</sup> Despite the blood tie, and the wishes of David Ker to protect his daughter, his family had little patience for the child. For her part, Clementina Ker was hostile. Referring to Peggy as "the Indian," Clementina

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<sup>216</sup> Henry Burt to James Ker, April 21, 1783; Henry Burt to David Ker, April 9, 1783, Lynedoch Papers, MS 3591, f. 100, NLS. Timing may have weighed most heavily on Clementina's decision. Her husband – David Ker's father – had only recently died of pleurisy, and she herself was afflicted.

<sup>217</sup> Henry Burt to James Ker, April 21, 1783, in *ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> James Ker to Henry Burt, April 19, 1783, f. 104, in *ibid.*

wondered antagonistically “what is to be don[e] with that Creten.”<sup>219</sup> Peggy had not made a good impression. British relatives immediately sided with Clementina. Henry Burt insisted that his cousin David provide “some acknowledgement” to his stepmother “for her trouble in fitting out Peggy.”<sup>220</sup> Indeed, Clementina frequently alluded to the generosity of some kind of compensation. Driven by mercenary considerations, rather than familial ones, Peggy’s relatives did not provide an environment conducive to her acculturation and integration. Her time in Britain, then, would not conform to her father’s original expectations. With little assistance from her metropolitan family, Peggy decided to return home.<sup>221</sup> Ker wrote dejectedly to Burt: “I beg you’ll be kind enough to send my poor little Peggy to Glasgow.” Suspecting only a minimum of support, Ker hoped that his stepmother would be able, at the very least, to provide some clothes for Peggy on her return voyage.<sup>222</sup>

Trips back to the islands were not uncommon amongst mixed-race migrants to Britain. The motivations behind such moves are not entirely clear, but Peggy Ker’s story hints at the reasons why some might not have felt content in their new-found land. Without encouragement and assistance from family, West Indians of color had very little likelihood of success. While Peggy’s relatives blamed her bad habits for their relationship breakdown, prejudice against African heritage and illegitimacy likely compounded attitudes. If the networks upon which mixed-race migrants depended to get to Britain weakened, then those individuals’ abilities to flourish in the mother counter

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<sup>219</sup> Clementina Ker to Henry Burt, September 1, 1783; September 8, 1783, ff. 124-26, in *ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Henry Burt to David Ker, September 15, 1783, f. 131, in *ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Her father paid for her transport from Perth to Glasgow and finally to Greenock. From there she sailed back to Lucea, Jamaica, where her father lived with a white wife.

<sup>222</sup> David Ker to Henry Burt, June 22, 1783, Lynedoch Papers, MS 3591, ff. 115-16, NLS.

drastically reduced in turn. Familial support was necessary for socioeconomic success; without it, a return to the Caribbean was the last and final choice.

Much like Peggy Ker, James Fyffe never solidified his place in British society. Born to William Fyffe and a black woman in Jamaica, he came to Scotland as a young man toward the end of the eighteenth century. In yet another geographic coincidence, the young man of color first served as a wright's apprentice in Kirriemuir, just a few short miles from Peggy Ker's brief stop in Forfar. Moreover, he would have been a mixed-race contemporary in Forfarshire of John Tailyour's and Hercules Ross's children. One of James's relatives,<sup>223</sup> David Fyffe, asked a Glasgow friend to introduce James to a carpenter in the city.<sup>224</sup> Despite following mechanical work, David described James as having "been pretty well taught writing and arithmetic."<sup>225</sup> Perhaps a failed entrant to Scotland's rising mercantile class, James Fyffe commenced a career in carpentry, which he hoped would settle him securely in Britain. Unlike Peggy Ker, James Fyffe received a good deal of aid from his father's contacts in Scotland. David Fyffe closely managed his progress, ensuring he did not want in basic subsistence. David provided small loans fully cognizant of the fact that they might not be repaid: "[I]t's likely I shall lose what money I have advanced," he admitted, "but [with] William Fyffe's good intentions towards my family, I cannot regret what I have done for his Son." James's continually lacked money, which David provided with some compassion: "Notwithstanding the Considerable expence I have been at in supporting the poor lad Since his coming home from Jamaica . .

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<sup>223</sup> The exact relation is unclear, but in all likelihood David Fyffe was William Fyffe's cousin.

<sup>224</sup> David had lived in Jamaica on several different occasions, and was no stranger to black and mixed-race migration – he once brought a black servant with him to Britain, before both returned to Jamaica: David Fyffe to Elizabeth Fyffe, December 5, 1766, Fyffe Collection, MS 1165, no. 6, NLJ.

<sup>225</sup> David Fyffe to James Fyffe [of Glasgow], May 12, 1803, no. 21, in *ibid.*

. I cannot without pain think of the lad being in want.”<sup>226</sup> This principle guided David’s relationship with the Jamaican. He worked vigilantly to promote James’s carpentry trade, which he hoped would eventually allow the young man to care for himself.

James’s professional attempt proved more difficult than originally expected. He struggled to establish a practice in carpentry, but eventually found work with a master, one Mr. Mackay. However, the crew’s foreman demanded that Fyffe provide his own tools. With no cash to purchase them, he asked David for several small advances in order to amass a collection. Six pounds came first, followed by another four pounds. The Glaswegian who found James the position distributed the cash, even if he reacted skeptically to the transaction. Sensing his incredulity, David reassured him: “I believe [James] is a sober creature and means to do well.”<sup>227</sup> Dependent upon David for credit extensions, James needed to maintain a good relationship, and in that he appears to have succeeded. David spoke openly and consistently of his trust in him. By maintaining strong familial networks, James prolonged his career in the face of setbacks. He never acquired adequate operating capital, however, and relied entirely on David. Ultimately, James never achieved professional and financial independence, and began questioning his future in Britain.

Without a profitable trade, James Fyffe decided to leave. It is unclear if he had always planned on returning to the West Indies. James held some title to his father’s Jerusalem Estate in Jamaica, so he may have always intended to return.<sup>228</sup> Yet, once in Glasgow, James worked hard to establish himself in carpentry. Obstacles, however,

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid., May 30, 1804, no. 33.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., July 7, 1803, no. 22.

<sup>228</sup> In fact, James’s reason for traveling from Kirriemuir to Glasgow, according to David, was to save money for passage to Jamaica.

abounded. Not only did the delays from lacking tools impede his work, but David noted James's regular illness: "that poor Mulatto lad James Fyffe . . . is troubled with a Slow fever . . . that renders him unable to work."<sup>229</sup> Keen to hasten return, James decided to borrow yet again from David for passage to the Caribbean in 1804.<sup>230</sup> Certain of James's potential, he anticipated, "If the lad James after getting to Jamaica will be industrious & behave decently which from what I know, & have heard of him . . . he may very well earn his own bread."<sup>231</sup> Thus, personal and familial relations did not break down between James Fyffe and his contacts in Britain. Rather, the unfortunate circumstances of his professional development in Scotland necessitated a return home, without any love lost between those upon whom he relied. Nevertheless, even if Jamaica had always been his final destination, frustrations in Britain pushed James to leave sooner than originally intended. Once again, unfortunate circumstances could cut short time spent in Britain for individuals of color. Fyffe's example shows even more clearly the importance of British networks to a migrant of color. Even after a failed attempt at integration, metropolitan contacts were crucial to one's continued livelihood, albeit back in the colonies.

#### *William Davidson and Robert Wedderburn*

If racial oppression and economic hardship were forceful enough to cause some migrants of color to retreat to the West Indies, they were strong enough to inspire others to lobby for reform. The working-class radicalisms of nineteenth-century Europe did not

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<sup>229</sup> David Fyffe to James Fyffe [of Glasgow], May 30, 1804, Fyffe Collection, MS 1165, no. 33, NLJ.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., September 14, 1804, no. 36. After sailing for Jamaica, James's relationship to David turned formal. William Fyffe's plantation in Jamaica could produce a hefty profit, were it run efficiently, and David believed that James, by returning to the island, was bound for large riches. Therefore, he called back all of his loans, which totaled some £130. However, David accommodated James nicely. He assured James "that neither I nor my attorneys will ever distress him for payment": "State of the debt due by James Fyffe to David Fyffe," no. 61 in *ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> David Fyffe to James Fyffe, September 7, 1804, Fyffe Collection, MS 1165, no. 34, NLJ.

operate in nationalist vacuums. Rather, they traversed state and imperial borders, embracing a variety of participants and ideologies. In Britain, proto-socialist appeals in the 1810s incorporated aspects of the eighteenth-century antislavery movement – a tactic which appealed to the metropole’s population of color. London’s black and mixed-race community became politically active, in both progressive and reactionary ways. Individuals of color joined the mob in 1780 during the Gordon riots, which attacked parliamentary concessions to Catholics. One black woman was hanged for her involvement. The community’s participation became so notorious that West Indian missionaries worried for years that “one of their assistants, a mulatto, Thomas Gordon,” had participated in the riots, and had “brought insurrectionary proclamations to the island.”<sup>232</sup> West Indians of color who survived in the metropole frequently aligned their experiences of racial oppression with wider appeals for economic justice.<sup>233</sup>

Within emerging radical circles in the early nineteenth century stood two mixed-race Jamaicans. William Davidson and Robert Wedderburn both left Jamaica for Britain, but neither found secure careers. Financial difficulties and social ostracism had pushed them to the margins, where they came in contact with revolutionary figures and ideas. The first two decades of the nineteenth century anticipated Britain’s later working-class movements.<sup>234</sup> Luddites, advocates for the Corn Laws’ repeal, and parliamentary reformers emerged at the end of the 1810s to appeal for political transformation. Descendants of slaves and victims of metropolitan inequality, Davidson and Wedderburn were ideal candidates for this revolution. While scholars have not failed to notice these

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<sup>232</sup> John Holmes, *Historical Sketches of the Missions of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen, From their Commencement to the Present Time* (Dublin, 1818), 375.

<sup>233</sup> Fryer, *Aspects of British Black History*.

<sup>234</sup> E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991).

men, most ignore their status as *mixed-race*. That status was key, proving vital to both men's theories of reform and social reorganization. Claimants to joint white and black heritage, they used their own biographies of oppression to advocate radical change.

William Davidson came to Britain with the same intentions as most other children of color. Born in Kingston in 1786 to a black woman and the island's attorney general, Davidson was sent to Scotland at age fourteen to study law. He spent a few years in Edinburgh, before entering into a lawyer's apprenticeship in Liverpool. Apprenticeship did not suit him, however, and he ran away. While on the move, the navy impressed him on two separate occasions. After discharge, he studied mathematics in Aberdeen. He proposed marriage to a Miss Salt of Lichfield, Staffordshire, but was rebuffed. In Birmingham, he purchased a house and, there, set up shop as a cabinet-maker – a mistake as he had no aptitude for business. Evading creditors, he fled to London, and there also tried to ply his trade. He married a poor widow with four children, Sarah Lane, who gave birth to two of Davidson's offspring. Times were tough, particularly as Davidson's business failed to take hold.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Fryer, *Staying Power*, 216-20; Marika Sherwood, "Davidson, William (1786-1820)," *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 15, 331-32; Howard Mackey, "William Davidson," in *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals: Volume I. 1770-1830*, eds. Joseph A. Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), 113-14; Hoyles and Hoyles, *Remember Me*, 70-72.

**Figure 4.7: “William Davidson,” by R. Cooper, c. 1820, WCA**



Buffeted by repeated setbacks, Davidson found solace in the church and in London’s emerging radical movement. In particular, he joined the Union Reading Society, formed in the aftermath of the 1819 Peterloo Massacre in which a number of parliamentary reformers were killed. There he discussed radical publications, and heard fiery orations urging social action on various subjects. Davidson assumed a prominent place in this association, attending meetings and planning actions. Under the auspices of Arthur Thistlewood, he also joined a small group of dissidents who plotted to blow up the British Cabinet in the political turmoil that followed the death of George III in 1820. This so-called “Cato Street Conspiracy” was doomed from the start, inasmuch as it was infiltrated by a government spy who arrested the group before it could exact their plan. Davidson, Thistlewood, and three others each hanged on May 1, after a court found them guilty of high treason.

How did Davidson's identity as a man of color affect his action and outlook, and how did the public respond to his racial background? Throughout the trial, Davidson claimed innocence, arguing instead that prejudice not only handicapped his career, but also sealed his conviction. Certainly, public interest in his complexion and biography figured prominently in the case. But how did Davidson represent himself as a man of color?<sup>236</sup>

In his own defense, Davidson recited a litany of issues chronically vexing individuals of color in Britain. First of all, he declared mistaken identity in arrest. Davidson drew on previous personal examples of improper identification to demonstrate the regularity of racial confusion in daily life. "[O]ne man of colour may be mistaken for another," he argued, and this "must have been my case." He recalled a troubling incident that took place several years before. On that occasion a young woman from his church accused him of molestation. Accounts vary on the incident, and even Davidson revised the story to claim that he was alleged only to have insulted her. But the gist of the matter was that another man of color in the largely white church had done the deed for which he fell victim to blame, and that whites, making few distinctions, saw all men of color as fungible: "this shows how one man may be mistaken for another . . . Although I am a man of colour, that is no reason that I should be guilty of such a crime."<sup>237</sup> Davidson

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<sup>236</sup> Most scholarly treatments of William Davidson describe him as black, and not of mixed-race. See, in particular, Fryer, *Aspects*.

<sup>237</sup> William Davidson, as quoted in George Theodore Wilkinson, *An Authentic History of the Cato-Street Conspiracy; with the Trials at Large of the Conspirators, for High Treason and Murder* (London, 1820), 321-22. The exact wording of Davidson's speech may be an exaggeration, or florid retelling, on Wilkinson's part, but the substance of the speech is consistent with other summaries of it. For more on his discussion about mistaken identity, see: Howard Mackey, "'The Complexion of the Accused:' William Davidson, The Black Revolutionary in the Cato Street Conspiracy of 1820," *The Negro Educational Review* XXIII, no. 4 (October 1972): 138. For the Old Bailey account of Davidson's defense – which essentially contains the same statement: Proceedings of the Old Bailey, April 16, 1820, pp. 61-62, Ref. No. T18200416-1, [www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org).

maintained that such racial profiling had plagued him throughout life. Considering the reigning beliefs about vicious black male sexuality, it is hardly surprising that fingers pointed to Davidson. Any well-educated man of color was subject to accusation.

Secondly, Davidson asserted that, as a man of color, he fell into an awkward social position between black and white. He described an instance in which an undercover officer asked to take him “to Fox-court, where there was a countryman of mine; a man of colour he meant.” Davidson objected, noting that he “never associated with men of colour, although one myself, because I always found them very ignorant.” His defense was meant to present himself as an elite mixed-race man, disconnected from London’s rabble of color. Perhaps unwisely, he also asserted he held no bonds with whites either; indeed “no friends in England” at all, nor “a relative who will stretch out his hand to my helpless family.”<sup>238</sup> In his self-conscious attempt to avoid association with any community of color, Davidson painted a picture of racial discrimination. In such a way, he could claim victimization at the hands of prejudice, while simultaneously distancing himself from those of similar complexion. Like most mixed-race migrants, he tried to construct an identity not wholly divorced from race, yet not wholly consumed by it either.

If he was no member of the capital’s mixed-race population, then he was – he averred – a member of elite white society. Again, he insisted that Britons – both within and outside his family – refused to accept him. At the same time, Davidson cast himself as English, if not essentially white, despite these rejections: “I am a stranger to England by birth; but . . . educated and brought up in England; my father was an Englishman, my

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<sup>238</sup> Davidson, as quoted in Wilkinson, *An Authentic History*, 320-24.

grandfather was a Scotchman; I may too claim the prerogative of an Englishman.”<sup>239</sup> By claiming British heritage, avoiding the African line, he revealed the importance of mixture. Davidson could not avoid his appearance – which, if a contemporary engraving was accurate, was quite dark – but he could draw attention to the white side of his family and their importance to his upbringing. Pushing to deemphasize outer complexion, Davidson cried, “My colour may be against me, but I have as good and as fair a heart as if I were a white.”<sup>240</sup> Sensitive to the growing oppression against blacks in Britain – particularly the black poor – Davidson’s defense begged for the consideration of a hybrid racial position. He only could have done so had the English and their courts possessed an understanding of racial gradation. As a mixed-race man raised in privilege, but done in by prejudice, Davidson could be separate from, yet still firmly connected to, white society.

Both the court’s and the public’s reaction to Davidson’s heritage reflected their understanding of his mixed ancestry, as well as his privileged upbringing. Reports from the Home Office described him as “dark” in complexion and in his eyes, along with “dark & curly” hair.<sup>241</sup> Most likely he could not have passed as white in terms of appearance. Nevertheless, few described him as “black” in their accounts. Detailing the trial’s proceedings, the *Gentleman’s Magazine* did refer to Davidson as “the black,” but most accounts refer to him as “of colour.”<sup>242</sup> While both expressions may have been synonymous to some degree, the fact that most reports used “of colour” indicates an

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 323-24. During the trial, several witnesses testified that Davidson sang, “Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled” during the conspiracy: Proceedings of the Old Bailey, April 16, 1820, 15, Ref. No. T18200416-1.

<sup>240</sup> Davidson, as quoted in Wilkinson, *An Authentic History*, 323-24.

<sup>241</sup> February 29, 1820, HO 44/4, f. 322, NAE.

<sup>242</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine* XC (London, 1820), 165-68, 269-70, 454-60; see also John Stanhope’s *The Cato Street Conspiracy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), for several extended quotes from the *London Gazette Extraordinary*.

awareness of racial mixture. At the same time, one of the trial's judges had previous legal experience with mixed-race migrants from the colonies. William Garrow sat not only at Davidson's trial, but also at that of Thomas Picton, accused of torturing a woman of color in 1806 who came to Britain to testify against him. Garrow's involvement in both trials indicates his experience with mixed-race individuals from the Caribbean, and possibly his awareness of racial hybridity in terms of public perception.

Davidson's education and background may have figured in the more nuanced assessment. Interviews of former employers produced high commendation: an associate in Aberdeen described him as possessing "a gigantic mind."<sup>243</sup> Throughout the trial, witnesses repeatedly said Davidson conducted himself "with great composure and propriety."<sup>244</sup> The *Times* recorded Davidson's appeal that he was "not of that ignorant and illiterate class of being which he was supposed to be . . . he was indeed a man of colour but was neither devoid of a human understanding or human feelings."<sup>245</sup>

Understood to be an educated and refined man from the colonies, Davidson did not fall into the category of "black." Certain that the court had tried Davidson outside the narrow confines of his appearance, the judge adamantly dismissed any proclamations of racism: "God forbid that the complexion of the accused should enter, for a single moment, into the considerations of the jury."<sup>246</sup> Indeed, the trial hovered around issues of race, but not without reflecting on Davidson's other attributes.

Nevertheless, questions of race still lingered, even after Davidson's conviction. Upon receiving his sentence, Davidson insisted he could not have done anything more

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<sup>243</sup> February 29, 1820, HO 44/4, f. 323-24, NAE; Wilkinson, *An Authentic History*, 317.

<sup>244</sup> Wilkinson, *An Authentic History*, 312-13.

<sup>245</sup> *London Times*, April 28, 1820, 3.

<sup>246</sup> Baron Garrow, as quoted in Mackey, "William Davidson," 114.

than silently attend conspiratorial meetings as, “from the nature of my color I should have been immediately remarked if I had taken an active part.”<sup>247</sup> Such protests vanished, however, on the day of his execution. Consistent with the positive testimonies about his character, Davidson’s composure at his hanging impressed many. “His behaviour presented a gratifying contrast to that of his companions,” the *Gentleman’s Magazine* praised “His deportment was mild, yet firm, and he prayed with great fervency.”<sup>248</sup> In front of a large crowd at Newgate Prison, Davidson was hanged and decapitated.<sup>249</sup> A witness later recalled of Davidson: “no expression of agony or change of colour, could be remarked.”<sup>250</sup> Once again, complexion factored in the reports on Davidson, but it was more of a curiosity than a defining characteristic.

Tried at the end of the Regency period, Davidson encountered stricter notions of racial difference, even though prior allowances for racial hybridity had not dissipated fully. The ability of mixed-race individuals in eighteenth-century Britain to construct identities beyond the boundaries of race was not entirely cut off from Davidson in 1820. He could still claim the rights of Englishmen, grounded in British ancestry, while also calling attention to a privileged upbringing. Nevertheless, Davidson’s color figured regularly in any other discussion of him. If Davidson is to be believed, and he was the victim of mistaken identity, then race played an important role in the court’s evaluation of dissent. With increased agitation and radicalism in Britain, the government may have assumed extremism in its community of color. As stronger and more color-based racism

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<sup>247</sup> April 28, 1820, TS 11/202/872, f. 21, NAE.

<sup>248</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine* XC (London 1820), 460.

<sup>249</sup> Sherwood claims that it was “one of the largest crowds ever assembled in London”: “Davidson, William,” *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>250</sup> Wilkinson, *An Authentic History*, 386.

evolved in the nineteenth century, mixed-race articulations of legitimacy outside complexion came under greater attack and held less purchase.

At the same time that Davidson found himself in court, fellow Jamaican Robert Wedderburn came under government scrutiny. Like Davidson, Wedderburn came from Kingston, the child of Scottish planter James Wedderburn and an enslaved black woman named Rosanna.<sup>251</sup> While Rosanna was pregnant with Robert, James sold her to Kingston resident Lady Douglas, demanding that the child be freed upon birth, which occurred in 1762. Young Robert matured under the guidance of his black grandmother, “Talkee Amy,” before leaving the island aboard a warship in 1778. In London he became a tailor, running a shop near St. Martin-in-the-Fields. As troubled as Davidson by racial prejudice and economic difficulty, Wedderburn likewise turned to dissenting religion, and a fiery Wesleyan minister inspired him to become a preacher. He obtained a license as Unitarian minister, espousing nontraditional notions of Christianity which questioned Jesus’ teachings and denied the Trinity. Such extremism aligned with political radicalism when Wedderburn read the philosophy of Thomas Spence, a proto-communist agitator who called for the eradication of private property. (Davidson, too, had been a “Spencean,” and it is likely the two met at some point in London.) The combination of unconventional Christian theology and socialist political philosophy made Wedderburn a subject of suspicion to an increasingly nervous state.

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<sup>251</sup> Robert would later claim that his father sired two more children of color in Jamaica, before sending each to Scotland.

Figure 4.8: “Robert Wedderburn,” 1824<sup>252</sup>



Just as scholars have thoroughly discussed William Davidson, so too have they exhaustively chronicled the life of Robert Wedderburn.<sup>253</sup> What light do his pronouncements shed on the experiences of a mixed-race man? Even more so than Davidson, Wedderburn called attention to his mixed ancestry when describing his political position. His memories of Jamaica, which he left at a later age than Davidson, helped shape his call for the emancipation of Caribbean slaves. His political philosophy contained personal connections to African and British oppression; accordingly he

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<sup>252</sup> From Robert Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery* (London, 1824).

<sup>253</sup> See Fryer, *Staying Power*, 220-27; Malcolm Chase, “Wedderburn, Robert (1762-1835/6?),” *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 57, 915; Ian McCalman, “Anti-slavery and ultra-radicalism in early nineteenth-century England: The case of Robert Wedderburn,” *Slavery and Abolition* 7 (September, 1986): 99-117; and Hoyles and Hoyles, *Remember Me*, 63-64. Paul Edwards has appropriately called for a differentiation between Wedderburn and other figures of African descent in Britain at this time (namely Olaudah Equiano) based on his radicalism: “Unreconciled Strivings and Ironic Strategies: Three Afro-British Authors of the late Georgian Period (Sancho, Equiano, Wedderburn),” *Immigrants & Minorities* 12, no. 3 (November 1993): 28-48.

addressed the plight of Britain's poor through his genealogical ties to England.

Wedderburn's activism was thus shaped by a mixed-heritage, rather than by a solitary black identity.

Wedderburn first entered the political arena in 1817, publishing a pamphlet entitled *The Axe Laid to the Root*.<sup>254</sup> In it, he drew attention to the problems of oppressed people in Britain and the West Indies. Eager for the last vestiges of feudalism to crumble, he openly called for the dissolution of the monarchy, and the elimination of noble titles and the country's land tax. Fully "Spencean," Wedderburn extended such radical ideas to the Caribbean. He called upon the enslaved in Jamaica to rise up in rebellion. Antislavery dominated his writing, and he used his own experiences to bolster the appeal. "My heart glows with revenge, and cannot forgive," Wedderburn proclaimed when looking back upon his life in Jamaica: "Repent ye christians, for flogging my aged grandmother before my face." Having witnessed, firsthand, abuse visited upon the slaves, Wedderburn affirmed his authority. Casting himself even closer to the heart of the matter, he traced his origins through the islands' sexual violence. He condemned planters "taking your Negro wenches to your adultrous bed," including his own father: "what do you deserve at my hands? Your crimes will be visited upon your legitimate offspring."<sup>255</sup> Racial mixture and miscegenation, albeit damned, were crucial to Wedderburn's self-portrayal, connecting him to the Empire's worst abuses and validating his authenticity as an agitator.

In addition to writing, Wedderburn developed his oratory and soon organized public meetings. He lived on Great Windmill Street, in London's rough-and-tumble

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<sup>254</sup> He later changed the name to *The Forlorn Hope*, selling it from his tailoring stall.

<sup>255</sup> Robert Wedderburn, *The Axe Laid to the Root*, vol. 2, no. 1 (London, 1817), 11-13.

district of Soho, and held his sermons in nearby Hopkins Street. Many attendees were fanatical Wesleyan Methodists. Others hailed from the social margins, including the capital's black community. It surprised no one that a government detective could spot two black men from the West Indies at one of Wedderburn's meetings.<sup>256</sup> His audience was both black and white – fitting for sermons advocating solidarity between enslaved West Indians and impoverished Britons.

By Autumn 1819, Wedderburn's rhetoric took a turn towards the revolutionary. The Home Office issued a warrant for his arrest on August 12, 1819, after he gave a sermon calling for the death of the Prince Regent, and the murder of white masters by slaves. Days later, after the Peterloo Massacre, Wedderburn gave vocal support to those hurt and killed, and provoked his audiences to spread the protest to London: "the revolution had already begun in blood there, and that it must now also end in blood here."<sup>257</sup> He tied slavery and England closer together, proclaiming that Parliament was responsible for the deaths of American slaves as it had approved slave-produced cotton to flow to textile mills in the North.<sup>258</sup> Two particularly vituperative sermons given by Wedderburn on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of October convinced London's magistrates of his danger, and they finally arrested him on charges of seditious language.

Brought before the King's Bench in May 1820, Wedderburn's trial contained fewer allusions to racial bigotry than Davidson's had. Most of his writings had avoided the subject, outside considerations of enslavement. Indeed, his most explicit mention of racism in Britain appeared in a sermon delivered the previous autumn, when he lamented the "influence of bigotry and superstitious prejudice" which kept him from making a

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<sup>256</sup> November 10, 1819, HO 42/196, NAE.

<sup>257</sup> Deposition of Richard Dalton, TS 11/45, no. 167, NAE.

<sup>258</sup> H. Hobhouse to George Maule, August 12, 1819, in *ibid.*

decent living in London.<sup>259</sup> He made oblique references to his social status and, thereby, his race, by asking the court if he was “a low, vulgar man . . . incapable of delivering my sentiments in an elegant and polished manner”; but most of his comments stayed within the political and religious realm.<sup>260</sup> None of his appeals convinced the court, which sentenced him to two years at Dorchester prison.

Incarceration allowed Wedderburn time for reflection. Brought to trial the week after William Davidson’s execution, perhaps he felt relieved to have escaped with his life. In prison, the abolitionist and M.P. William Wilberforce paid him a visit. As one of the capital’s more outspoken critics of slavery, Wilberforce may have asked for his opinions, or his experience while in Jamaica. Discouraged at labor reform and sensing the movement’s transition, Wedderburn refocused his energies on England’s revitalized antislavery effort. In 1824, two years after leaving prison, he published *The Horrors of Slavery*, an autobiographical account that further pressed the case for emancipation. He dedicated the tract to Wilberforce.

Once more, Wedderburn highlighted his past in the West Indies, and the miscegenation which ushered him into life. Describing himself as an “oppressed, insulted, and degraded African,” he chronicled the depredations he observed as a young man. From the outset, he claimed he harbored strong feelings against his father: “From him I have received no benefit in the world. By him my mother was made the object of his brutal lust, then insulted, abused, and abandoned.” Most of Wedderburn’s critique revolved around the treatment of his mother; indeed, he only met his father once. He

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<sup>259</sup> TS 11/45, no. 167, NAE.

<sup>260</sup> Erasmus Perkins, ed., *The Address of the Rev. R. Wedderburn, To the court of King’s Bench at Westminster* (London, 1820), 6-11. For more on Wedderburn’s trial, see: Ibid., ed., *The Trial of the Rev. Robt. Wedderburn* (London, 1820).

scoffed: “My father’s house was full of female slaves, all objects of his lusts; amongst whom he strutted like Solomon in his grand seraglio, or like a bantam cock upon his own dunghill.” Wedderburn senior did little to care for his son, aside from allowing him a pittance. At their first and only meeting, his father berated him with “abusive language,” which William’s grandmother rebuffed, insisting that she would bring up the child “without his paltry assistance.”<sup>261</sup> Tying such execrable behavior to Wilberforce’s damning reports on the scale of the practice, Wedderburn inserted himself squarely into the story of West Indian depravity and the mistreatment of slaves.<sup>262</sup>

Adding to this theme of family neglect, Wedderburn challenged a half-brother in Scotland to recognize their relation. After noting his parentage, Wedderburn revealed that his father’s colonial plantations were now “in the possession of a younger brother of mine, by name, A. Colville,” living in the City of London. Colville had claimed, prior to the publication of *Horrors*, that Robert was not his brother. Robert’s mother, he argued, “was delivered of a mulatto child, and as *she could not tell who was the father*, her master, in a foolish joke, named the child Wedderburn.” Robert, Colville continued, had terrorized both he and his father, demanding money. Colville’s indignation was great at the claim of black blood in the family, and he chided Wedderburn for “foul slander upon the character of the respected dead.”<sup>263</sup>

In both *Horrors* and *Bell’s Life*, Wedderburn insisted upon the relation and pointed to the strains of prejudice flowing through his kin’s blood. Repeatedly calling Colville his “dear brother,” Wedderburn claimed that the two had in fact met in their father’s Scottish house, and that other mixed-race relatives had also come to Britain.

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<sup>261</sup> Wedderburn, *Horrors of Slavery*, 46-49.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-47.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-53.

Mocking Colville's memory, Wedderburn predicted he would "remember seeing me at his father's house," at which time his father "threaten[ed] to send me to gaol if I troubled him" and called him a "lazy fellow." Not only had Colville met him, Wedderburn averred, but he also met several other Jamaican half-siblings. "Perhaps, *my dear brother* knows nothing of one Esther Trotter, a free tawny, who bore my father two children, a boy and a girl, and which children my inhuman father *transported to Scotland*," Wedderburn speculated. Those children had to be known to Colville, as he was "brought up in the same house with them at Inveresk." Additionally, Wedderburn pointed to Colville's older brother who visited the mixed-race family in Jamaica and openly acknowledged them during the trip. Racism, had kept Wedderburn from receiving any benefit from their relation. Such was "their hatred of any one having black blood in his veins," that it surprised him that they had not attempted to hang him for claiming kinship.<sup>264</sup>

Despite his half-brother's rebuff, Wedderburn continued to claim British relations. Augmenting his revolutionary bona fides, he revealed that his "grandfather was a staunch Jacobite, and exerted himself strenuously in the cause of the Pretender, in the rebellion of the year 1745. For his aiding to restore the exiled family to the throne of England, he was tried, condemned and executed."<sup>265</sup> His lineal ties to Scottish resistance not only bolstered his claims to reform, but also connected him more securely to his British roots. Indeed, his black Jamaican grandmother and white Scottish grandfather stood as twin figures in Wedderburn's revolutionary genealogy, reinforcing his identity as a mixed-race figure sprung from two separate but similar traditions. By highlighting

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 58-61.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 45.

his British grandfather, Wedderburn fought against any broad characterization of himself as simply a black, colonial radical. His white ancestry was crucial to legitimizing his calls for reform. Without it, the public might only consider him a disaffected colonial migrant, compromising his attempt to link white, working-class radicalism with enslaved revolt. As a mixed-race man, Wedderburn used his hybridity to call for a global uprising. In so doing, he took a fairly distinctive position among nineteenth-century reformers.

Wedderburn's agitation never produced its desired effect, but he did live long enough to see the legal emancipation of the Empire's slaves. Most of his life after writing *The Horrors of Slavery* is unknown. He returned to prison after an 1831 incident at a London brothel, and died some four years later. With Davidson, he helped paved the way for later radicals of color, such as William Cuffay who was active in the Chartist movement. As a proponent of rebellion and radical ideas, Wedderburn had few equals in his lifetime. His ultimate impact on English society, though, was perhaps biological. While his wife's name and heritage is unknown, Wedderburn most likely married a white Englishwoman. The couple had two sons: Jabez (1798-1880), and Jacob (1806-1841), both of whom became scale-makers. Between them, Wedderburn had fifteen grandchildren. All assimilated easily into English society.<sup>266</sup>

Mixed-race struggle could manifest itself in a number of ways. Lack of family support could push West Indians of color to the outer margins of society in Britain. Some turned to crime and prostitution. Others returned to the islands from which they originally fled. Still others, like William Davidson and Robert Wedderburn, called

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<sup>266</sup> Alexander Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book, A History of the Wedderburns in the Counties of Berwick and Forfar*, vol. 1 (Privately Printed, 1898), 505-06.

attention to their difficulties, even if they also became subsumed by them.<sup>267</sup> Their revolutionary fervor brought to light the struggles experienced by those of African heritage living and working in the metropole, at the same time that it tied global issues of oppression together. Each of those who failed to achieve worldly success stumbled for the same reasons. Without financial backing from abroad, or family support in Britain, West Indians of color knew few basic protections. Like those who succeeded, however, they also constructed identities outside the boundaries of race – or at least they tried to do so through manual labor or political agitation. Each prided themselves in their upbringing or heritage, and promoted those experiences and connections, even if they were of little use. In sum, they lived not as black Britons, but as mixed-race sojourners, joined to both black and white, as well as both colonial and metropolitan, society.

### Conclusion

Transatlantic commerce, booming in the eighteenth century, took diverse people to various locations around the globe. Wherever empires conducted business, peripheral residents eventually made their way to imperial epicenters. A generation of scholars has examined the arrival in Europe of these varied individuals – both those indigenous to the colonies and those forcibly transported there. Recent work on eighteenth-century France has highlighted the migration of mixed-race individuals from the Caribbean to the metropole in the eighteenth century.<sup>268</sup> Several scholars of the British Empire have

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<sup>267</sup> For more on racial oppression and political dissent, see: David Brion Davis, “The Culmination of Racial Polarities and Prejudice,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 4 (Winter, 1999): 768.

<sup>268</sup> The most thorough and quantified consideration of non-whites in eighteenth century France (both black and Asian, as well as mixed-race) comes from Pierre Boule’s *Race et esclavage dans la France de l’Ancien Régime* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), esp. section III, “Les Non-Blancs Dans la France de la Fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle.” See also: Palmer, “Atlantic Crossings;” Dwain Pruitt, “Nantes Noir: Living Race in the City of Slavers” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2005).

noticed the arrival of mixed-race children from India.<sup>269</sup> No one has chronicled the migration of West Indians of color to Britain in any systematic or concerted way.

Instead, academic treatment of African heritage in Britain groups those of mixed race into the general category of “black,” eliminating crucial aspects of difference and experience. But the reality of mixed-race folk – too few to dismiss – offer alternative considerations of race and the lived realities of racial perception in Georgian Britain.

Racial mixture, along with class and gender, mattered to British perceptions of racial difference. Court records from the Old Bailey make careful distinction between “black” and “mulatto” defendants. When violin prodigy George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower – the son of a black Caribbean man and an eastern-European woman – came to England in 1789, the papers announced him as a “mulatto.”<sup>270</sup> Those who discussed their family members of color did not do so by using the term “black,” nor by equating them with Africans. Instead, they considered them as family, although bastard children hampered by illegitimacy and complexion. Inasmuch as conceptions of the household were quite broad in the eighteenth century, it is unsurprising that British families could make a secure and loving space for relatives of color.<sup>271</sup> Meanwhile, the children themselves constructed complicated identities that involved both their color and their professional, artistic, and matrimonial prospects. Aspects of gender and class regularly intersected and modified their status as mixed-race individuals. If family and neighbors

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<sup>269</sup> Hawes, *Poor Relations*, 102, 122-23; Dalrymple, *White Mughals*, 475-501; Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 126-27, 174-79, 248-54.; Thomas, “Victorian Monstrosities.”

<sup>270</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, December 3, 1789, as quoted in F. G. Edwards, “George P. Bridgetower and the Kreutzer Sonata,” *The Musical Times* 49 no. 783 (May 1908): 304. Originally thought to have been the son of an African father (see Shyllon, *Black People*, 212-21), recent research reveals that his father most likely came from the Caribbean (though possibly still born in Africa): Clifford D. Panton, *George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower, Violin Virtuoso and Composer of Color in Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 5-7.

<sup>271</sup> Naomi Tadmor, “The concept of the household-family in eighteenth-century England,” *Past & Present*, no. 151 (May 1996): 111-30.

in the West Indies could appreciate their racial gradation, so too could those in Britain, many of whom often had extensive experience with the Caribbean.

Paths toward success were open to West Indians of color who arrived in Britain, but they were never sure. Those with supportive family could escape the worst aspects of racial oppression. Indeed, kinship was the most important component to mixed-race success; without it, West Indian migrants had little chance at establishing themselves in Britain. For those who could not capitalize on paternal networks, their struggle no doubt confirmed racial stereotypes in the minds of those who witnessed them. Racial categorization was not an all-or-nothing system in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Britain. Just as scholars must avoid the notion of a “stable Manichaeian order of race and status” in writing the history of the early-modern Caribbean, so too must they do so when they cast their gaze backwards toward Britain.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 31.

## CHAPTER 5

### West Indians of Color in Britain, and the Abolition Question

#### Introduction

It did not take long for one of Britain's first abolition efforts to be met with waves of scorn and clamors of fear. Members of the slave interest railed against Lord Mansfield's controversial decision in 1772 to allow an enslaved man named James Somerset to stay in England, rather than be forcibly returned to the West Indies. Most attacks focused on the verdict's apparent violation of property rights, but a handful of polemicists gilded the lily with dramatic fear-mongering. Edward Long warned that freedom-seeking blacks would soon flood in from the colonies and marry English women, so that "English blood will become so contaminated . . . till the whole nation resembles the *Portuguese* and *Moriscos* in complexion of skin and baseness of mind."<sup>1</sup> Samuel Estwick could not refrain from similar grandstanding in his reproach of Mansfield. He believed that the decision needed to be struck down and replaced with a law banning the further arrival of enslaved blacks to "preserve the race of Britons from stain and contamination."<sup>2</sup> From its inception, the abolition debate embraced hyperbolic

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Long, *Candid Reflections upon the Court of King's Bench in Westminster-Hall on what is commonly called the Negro-Cause* (London, 1772), 49.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Estwick, *Considerations on the Negro Cause Commonly so Called, Addressed to the Right Honourable Lord Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench* (London, 1772), 44. For more on Long and Estwick's individual and collective arguments, see Jack P. Greene, "Liberty, Slavery, and the Transformation of British Identity in the Eighteenth-Century West Indies," *Slavery and Abolition* 21, no. 1 (April 2000): 16-23.

rhetoric on the issue of racial mixture and the purity of British blood. Public knowledge of Mansfield's mixed-race great-niece, with whom he lived in London, may not have helped matters.<sup>3</sup>

Neither Long nor Estwick touched specifically upon the arrival of wealthy West Indians of color, but later authors on both sides of the abolition question considered such migrants in their appeals. Long referred to them only obliquely in his predictions. Should a black slave become rich in England, either "by a fortunate ticket in the lottery, or other means," Long worried that the man might purchase a rotten borough seat in Parliament: "complexion will be no disqualification."<sup>4</sup> Fully aware of the fortunes behind many mixed-race residents in Britain, Long surely held more anxiety towards elite West Indians of color than lucky slaves. Such concern also weighed on the minds of commentators anticipating the effects of slave reform on the social and geographic mobility of nonwhites. Demographic analyses of the colonial slave system, which vilified racial intermixture, produced mirror arguments about interracial unions in the home country as well. While West Indians of color had long been traveling to Britain, the fervor engulfing the abolition debate made their presence much more conspicuous.

Focusing principally on the pamphlet war between pro- and anti-slavery interests, this chapter argues that abolitionism not only increased public recognition of mixed-race immigration, but that it also stigmatized the phenomenon, helping to justify stricter notions of racial difference in Britain. Abolitionism gained such widespread attention in the Isles that the movement's discussion of mixed-race migrants had a tremendous impact

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 4 on Dido Elizabeth Belle Lindsay. Thomas Hutchinson hinted that Mansfield's cohabitation with Lindsay may have affected his decision on the Somerset case: Thomas Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson*, ed. Peter Hutchinson, vol. 2 (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1883-1886), 276.

<sup>4</sup> Long, *Candid Reflections*, 50.

on public attitudes toward the group.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will first examine demographic rhetoric critiquing colonial society and the ways in which it influenced similar considerations of Britain. Asserting that miscegenation undercut enslaved fecundity, thereby increasing demand for slave imports and weakening colonial stability, observers argued that racial mixture might also present dangers to British society at home. Secondly, direct commentaries on migrants of color from both sides of the abolition debate will be considered. Pondering ways in which to reform slavery, abolitionists and the slave interest each wondered how such measures might affect the arrival of mixed-race individuals from the Caribbean. Events surrounding the slave Revolution in St. Domingue dramatically increased the relevance of this question. Finally, this chapter will detail the 1806 trial of Thomas Picton, the Governor of Trinidad who stood accused of torturing a mixed-race colonist. Tried the year before Parliament officially banned the slave trade, Picton's case embodied many of the concerns central to the abolition movement. Moreover, the mixed-race woman he tortured came to Britain to testify, inspiring a number of comments on her presence in the metropole.

### **Demography, Miscegenation, and Mixed-Race Migrants in Abolition Discourse**

Scholars have closely studied the subject of abolitionism: exploring its origins, intentions, and cultural impact. While the two former issues are of little concern here, the latter proved important to the period's ideologies surrounding racial mixture. Current

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<sup>5</sup> For evidence on the widespread nature of abolitionism, and its popular appeal, see: James Walvin, "The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery," in *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin, (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 49-68.

opinions differ over abolitionism's influence upon British racial perceptions.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have almost universally avoided examinations of the movement's concerns over mixed-race individuals, save for a handful of exceptions.<sup>7</sup> With a growing scholarly interest in the link between abolitionism and racial ideology, it is surprising that the overwhelming majority of work only considers views on Africans and enslaved blacks, and not on those of a less determinate heritage. In order to advance and refine the scholarship of racial perceptions in Georgian Britain, it is crucial to move onto the topic of racial intermixture.

Cross-racial pairings, of course, could manifest themselves in a variety of ways. The male partner's complexion made an enormous difference to interpretations of interracial sex. Unions between black men and white women were of highest concern for metropolitan observers: fear of black male sexuality trumped unease over reverse pairings. Mixed heritage in the partner of African descent also mattered to overall perceptions. Those who passed as white, though suspected to have had an African ancestor, provoked worry over an invisible degradation of British blood. Class positions also figured prominently in conceptions of, and anxieties toward, such unions. Coupling between wealthy whites and equally affluent West Indians of color presented different social realities than relationships between freed slaves and poor Britons. Anxieties over metropolitan miscegenation, then, were not uniform during the period. Although black

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<sup>6</sup> Seymour Drescher, for example, contends that abolitionism did not speak directly to the issue of racial difference: *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> The most notable exception is Robert Young's, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), which looks most closely at the nineteenth century. See also: Henrice Altink, "Forbidden Fruit: Pro-Slavery Attitudes Towards Enslaved Women's Sexuality and Interracial Sex," *Journal of Caribbean History* 39, no. 2 (2005): 201-35. Literary critics have produced some of the best scholarship of late on the history of British racial perception. Felicity Nussbaum's brief consideration of miscegenation and mixed-race offspring in Britain is a welcome first step on the connection between metropolitan residents of color and abolitionism: *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 239-42.

male and white female pairings will be explored in this chapter, it is important to differentiate those relationships from associations with mixed-race colonists. As wealthy, educated, racially-diverse, and frequently female individuals, West Indians of color posed different threats to Britain's body politic than their poor, black, male peers.

Owing to its political and activist nature, rhetoric deployed by both sides of the abolition question must be interrogated critically. Scholars have thoroughly dissected and analyzed the various tropes and discursive elements behind the debate. Beginning with Lowell Ragatz and Eric Williams, the pro- and anti-slavery interests' motivations have come under intense scrutiny.<sup>8</sup> More recently, Barry Higman and Seymour Drescher have pointed to abolitionists' use of demographic arguments.<sup>9</sup> The movement's members hoped to present stronger economic justifications for their position by asserting that the Caribbean's enslaved population had reached demographic stability, thereby eliminating the need for further slave imports. Drescher cleverly reveals the utter lack of data behind such claims, alleging that attempts by the movement to marshal real figures were halfhearted and secondary to its political message. Rhetoric superseded evidence, and the abolition debate's engagement with issues of race and demography reveal more about popular attitudes at the time than any statistical realities.

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<sup>8</sup> Lowell Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in Britain* (New York: Century Co., 1928); Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944). For more recent examples analyzing the discursive element of the abolition debate – particularly from a literary standpoint – see: Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Philip Gould, *Barbaric Traffic: Commerce and Antislavery in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, and Sarah Smith, eds., *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Barry Higman, "Slavery and the Development of Demographic Theory in the Age of the Industrial Revolution," in *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 164-194; Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment*, 35-53. See also Lucille Mathurin Mair, "A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica from 1655 to 1844" (Ph.D. diss., University of the West Indies, 1974), 308-31, for a discussion of the importance of the topic of enslaved fecundity on the abolition debate.

*Demography and Anti-Miscegenation in the Colonies*

West Indian population levels fluctuated wildly in the first century of British colonization. Early Caribbean settlements replicated, to some degree, the family migration patterns of North America. This was particularly true in the Lesser Antilles during the early decades of the seventeenth century, before the sugar monoculture began impeding white immigration.<sup>10</sup> Even Jamaica initially sought to form a robust white society, despite having the Anglophone Caribbean's highest gender imbalance.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the growth of a strong and self-sustaining white population became crucial to West Indian officials, especially after the massive influx of enslaved Africans. Whereas Barbados contained no registered black inhabitants during its first two decades of colonization, by 1660 Africans surpassed Europeans in population. By the end of the seventeenth century, blacks outnumbered whites nearly three to one.<sup>12</sup> Jamaica, a generation behind Barbados in British colonization, saw a more rapid demographic outpacing by its enslaved class. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the island held ten times as many blacks as it did whites.<sup>13</sup> This large racial imbalance, coupled with fears about the subtropical climate, inhibited white-female and family migration. While

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<sup>10</sup> Karen Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Alison Games, "Opportunity and Mobility in Early Barbados," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, eds. Robert Pacquette and Stanley Engerman (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), 165-81.

<sup>11</sup> Arguing that Jamaicans strived to "create a genuine settler society," Trevor Burnard believes that social realities, rather than the nature of the plantation complex, hurt white reproduction on the island: "A Failed Settler Society: Marriage and Demographic Failure in Early Jamaica," *Journal of Social History* 28 (Fall 1994): 63-70.

<sup>12</sup> John McCusker and Russell Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 153.

<sup>13</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 1981), 7.

Barbados achieved white gender parity by 1715, Jamaica's white population was still more than sixty percent male at the end of that century.<sup>14</sup>

Such gender and racial imbalances produced substantial fears about island society, long before Britons began worrying over the slave trade's demographic effects. The most important of these anxieties concerned security. "[A]n enquiry ought to be made into the Causes and Reason," a Jamaican resident implored in 1726, as to why "the Negroes encrease very considerably, and the White Inhabitants every Year diminish." The author most dreaded the prospect of an enslaved rebellion, but also worried about foreign invasion.<sup>15</sup> Owing to Britain's protracted wars with France and Spain throughout the eighteenth century, self-defense was vital to the West Indies' sustained profitability.<sup>16</sup> Without a strong white population to control slaves and guard against foreign invasion, the islands held an unstable social grip. Numerous proposals emerged attempting to solve the demographic crisis. Some colonists believed that a constantly refreshing pool of European settlers needed to arrive, while others insisted upon the importance of white reproduction. One 1743 scheme advocated shipping four hundred boys and two hundred girls annually to Jamaica: "it is highly necessary to send over Girls as well as Boys . . . they may in time intermarry . . . and raise so many Families in the Island."<sup>17</sup> The military also actively encouraged white marriage. General Frederick Maitland campaigned in

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<sup>14</sup> Verene Shepherd, ed., *Women in Caribbean History: The British-Colonised Territories* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 1999), 21.

<sup>15</sup> 1726, Add. MS. 22676, f. 68, BL.

<sup>16</sup> As an example of the importance of the West Indies to Europe, France traded all of its land in Canada, as well as all of its North-American land east of the Mississippi River, to retain the small island of Guadeloupe in the 1763 Treaty of Paris.

<sup>17</sup> "Proposals For Increasing the Number of White Inhabitants and for Promoting the further Settlement of the Island of Jamaica," 1743, Add. MS. 22676, f. 141, BL.

1763 to give ten acres of land to every soldier in Tobago who wed a white woman.<sup>18</sup> By mid-century, concerns over the ability of whites to bring forth new generations preoccupied strategies for Caribbean development.

Various island assemblies reacted by passing legislation which might curb the growing imbalance within their European populations. Deficiency acts sprang up throughout the West Indies. Each deficiency measure required a minimum number of white residents – determined by the colonial assemblies – on every plantation or retail shop. The small Leeward island of Nevis decreed in 1701, for instance, that each estate needed to house at least one white resident for every twenty black laborers.<sup>19</sup> Similar laws in the Windward Islands imposed the toughest restrictions on its population, whereas those in Jamaica tended to be more lenient. Residents in the latter complained of the acts as sources of revenue rather than real encouragements for white growth.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Jamaica's Assembly occasionally reinforced the strength of its deficiency legislation. In 1732, Governor Robert Hunter implored the House to increase fines, not only to add to public coffers, but to repopulate the island for added security.<sup>21</sup> Sixteen years later, the Speaker of the Assembly made a similar appeal: “[The] Deficiency Law has . . . wanted that tool of an encrease so necessary for [our] Security.” He successfully lobbied to include white children under the age of eight in deficiency calculations. This

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<sup>18</sup> “Information relative to the settling of Dominica, Grenada, Tobago and St. Vincent,” 1763, Stowe-Grenville Papers, Box 12, no. 12, HL.

<sup>19</sup> December 21, 1701, no. 48, *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Island of Nevis, From 1664 to 1739* (London, 1740), 37. Jamaica began its deficiency legislation two years later: Mair, “A Historical Study,” 55.

<sup>20</sup> Neville Hall, “Some aspects of the deficiency question in Jamaica in the eighteenth century,” *Caribbean Studies* 14, no. 1 (April 1975): 11-12. Mair agrees that the deficiency laws in Jamaica had little intention of increasing the white population. In fact, “Jamaica’s Deficiency Laws demonstrated how little real concern existed about the size of the female population. . . . [the act] ignored women as potential immigrants, capable of saving deficiency”: Mair, “A Historical Study,” 55-56.

<sup>21</sup> Governor Robert Hunter’s speech to the Jamaica Assembly, April 5, 1732, MS 439, NLJ.

meant that white childbirth once again became a priority for Jamaican officials.<sup>22</sup> If white residents could avoid deficiency fees through reproduction, then the Assembly believed that they might eventually take marriage and legitimate families more seriously as well.

Further legislation attempted to bolster white reproduction in Jamaica. A 1736 act prohibited taking any white servant off the island without governmental consent. The Assembly drafted the measure as “the Number of White People residing in this Island is of the greatest Consequence to its Security.”<sup>23</sup> Similar restrictions emerged in different forms throughout the eighteenth century. In 1776, the Assembly appointed a committee to “bring in a bill for laying a tax upon all bachelors, from 21 years and upwards.”<sup>24</sup> This was part of a larger trend of anti-miscegenation law approved in the mid-eighteenth century, intent on augmenting white numbers while reducing those of mixed race. Indeed, officials defending the 1762 inheritance cap limiting the legacies of illegitimate children of color claimed the measure would “encourage the legal propagation of Children by Marriage, and by that means to transmit property and power to a pure and legitimate race.”<sup>25</sup> Regardless of such efforts to curb interracial unions, whites never lined up behind the Assembly, and most regulations lacked the legal teeth needed to cut down the practice. Interest in West Indian demography, particularly in Jamaica, was both real and pressing. Attempts to control it, however, were feeble and insincere.

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<sup>22</sup> Jamaica House of Assembly Minutes, April 14, 1748, 1B/5/1/3, f. 385, JA; *Ibid.*, August 12, 1748, f. 471.

<sup>23</sup> “An Act to prevent the Abuses committed by Entertaining, Concealing, or Carrying off, any of His Majesty’s Soldiers, any White Men or Women Servants,” November 27, 1736, Add. MS 22676, f. 87, BL.

<sup>24</sup> November 27, 1776, vol. VI, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica* (Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1800), 661.

<sup>25</sup> Lovell Stanhope, “Reasons in support of the Bill to restrain exorbitant Grants to Negroes &c. and Answers to the Protest of three of the Members of the Council in Jamaica,” 1763, CO 137/33, f. 39, NAE.

At the inception of the abolition movement, therefore, demographic analyses of the Caribbean had long been established. As the slave trade expanded in the eighteenth century, the growing racial disparity between blacks and whites reinvigorated colonial discourse on population levels. Indeed, these debates heightened in tandem with a more acute acceleration in slave imports immediately prior to the American Revolution. Jamaican slave purchases more than quintupled in a five-year span, skyrocketing from 3,575 in 1769 to 18,448 in 1774.<sup>26</sup> Fearing a rebellion from this tremendous influx of “salt-water slaves,” colonial officials soon increased fees on new imports. Although decidedly in support of the slave trade, the Assembly’s attempts to control the market created, what Neville Hall argues, “the ambience which ultimately made possible the Abolition Act.”<sup>27</sup> Such regulation, occurring alongside a heightened awareness of the slave trade after the 1772 Somerset decision, fastened long-standing colonial interests in island demography to new metropolitan concerns.

Abolitionism’s engagement with West Indian demography came as the result of an expanded plan of attack. Struggling against a highly-lucrative slave trade and lobbying forces with unrivaled influence, the movement understood that humanitarianism did not provide a sufficient appeal. Instead, it had to present a more pragmatic and logical economic solution than the slave interest. Abolitionists jumped onto the emerging field of demography, and the ways in which it could justify stifling the Caribbean’s imported labor force. In 1783 – four years before Britain’s first abolition organization formed – the bishop of Chester, Beilby Porteus, extolled the importance of humanity

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<sup>26</sup> Hall, “Some Aspects”: 16. Hall took these numbers from the Assembly’s journals. The number went back down to 9,292 the next year, but the rapid upswing in importation made many Jamaican officials nervous of enslaved rebellion.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*: 19.

toward the enslaved. Not only would such an approach facilitate evangelical efforts, he asserted that it would also stimulate more successful reproduction.<sup>28</sup> In 1788, England's Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade attempted to join plantation data to Porteus's claims. The group reported that it held information from a number of West Indian estates showing slave population growth without any new imports. This created a circumstance that would afford, "the strongest proof that the nature of the case will admit, that a proper attention to the principles of humanity in their treatment would preclude the necessity of any further supplies from the coasts of Africa."<sup>29</sup> Humanitarianism, then, could go hand-in-hand with the perpetuation of slavery in the colonies, without disrupting imperial commerce. As Drescher notes, however, much of this evidence was flawed and served only to justify the movement's conclusions.<sup>30</sup>

Frequently, this demographic attention turned toward the bodies of enslaved women and the barriers to their reproduction. The treatment of pregnant women became a central issue in Westminster's discussions. One witness claimed to the House of Commons that he had seen pregnant slaves working "till within a few hours of their delivery." Another testified that "[i]n some estates, it is usual to dig a hole in the ground, in which they put the bellies of pregnant women, while they whip them."<sup>31</sup> James Ramsay, having lived for a time in St. Kitts, echoed these statements. He believed that plantation owners had little sympathy toward enslaved women, especially soon-to-be mothers. As most were bachelors, Ramsay believed that planters had no understanding

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<sup>28</sup> Beilby Porteus, *Sermons on Several Subjects by the Right Reverend Beilby Porteus* (Dublin, 1784), 268-69.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, January 15, 1788, Add. MS 21254, f. 28, BL.

<sup>30</sup> Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment*, 42-47.

<sup>31</sup> *An Abstract of the Evidence Delivered Before a Select Committee of the House of Commons in the Years 1790, and 1791; On the Part of the Petitioners for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1792), 52-53.

of pregnancy, and viewed motherhood as an impediment to productivity: “nothing raised a manager’s resentment sooner, than to be informed that a negress was with child.”<sup>32</sup>

This concern over the bodies and reproductive capacities of African women had obsessed Europeans from the first days of the slave trade.<sup>33</sup> Motions to end that commerce aroused such fascinations even further.

The slave interest immediately turned the abolitionists’ own demographic arguments against them. West Indian planters insisted that claims of reproductive balance in the colonies were greatly exaggerated. Using many of the same tactics employed by the abolitionists, West Indians and Britons sympathetic to their cause cited alternative problems undermining slave fecundity. An anonymous planter argued that the general “[s]terility of the females” in the islands did not arise “from excessive labour, but from their exposure to the weather.” Such geographic deficits kept both the black and white populations from growing.<sup>34</sup> Bryan Edwards provided another suggestion: African culture had instilled polygamous and licentious values so firmly within the enslaved community that neither European reforms, nor planter instruction, could do anything to create more stable and numerous families.<sup>35</sup> These claims, the slave interest argued, necessitated further African imports in order to keep the islands’ commercial wheels spinning.

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<sup>32</sup> James Ramsay, *Objections to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, with Answers* (London, 1788), 5, 50-1.

<sup>33</sup> Jennifer Morgan has observed a general trend in Atlantic history of imperial obsession and fascination with the body of the enslaved female, and that body’s ability to perpetuate the slave economy: *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> *Considerations on the Emancipation of Negroes and on the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, By a West-India Planter* (London, 1788), 14.

<sup>35</sup> Bryan Edwards, *A Speech Delivered at a Free Conference Between the Honourable the Council and Assembly of Jamaica, Held the 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1789, on the Subject of Mr. Wilberforce’s Proposition in the House of Commons, Concerning the Slave-Trade* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1789), 46.

Similarly, pro-slavery supporters insisted that abolition would diminish the islands' already fragile white population. Meeting specifically on the issue of the slave trade, Jamaica's Assembly claimed that abolition would confuse slaves on the status of their freedom. Rebellion would ensue and white lives would be lost. Moreover, the Assembly maintained that without further slave imports, both elite and middling whites would quickly leave Jamaica, anticipating little future profit in the sugar economy.<sup>36</sup> Members of the Tailyour clan agreed. Writing to his cousin Robert, Simon Taylor scoffed that should abolition occur, "I am convinced that Flight from the Islands or Death in the moment be the Fate of the White Inhabitants."<sup>37</sup> Robert passed these views onto his brother John, certain that ending the slave trade would spoil any incentives for whites to travel out to the Caribbean.<sup>38</sup> Jamaican planter Nathaniel Phillips echoed these fears, hoping that the movement would "not bring about an abolition of the White People."<sup>39</sup> For those with a stake in the West Indian economy, abolition clearly threatened the islands' enslaved populations, thus simultaneously compromising their white communities.

Abolition supporters responded to this frenzy over the Caribbean's white future. The group's main advocate in Parliament, William Wilberforce, conceded that the islands' European numbers were vulnerable to diminution, but asked how further slave arrivals might help that fact.<sup>40</sup> Most in the movement simply dismissed these fears as

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<sup>36</sup> *Proceedings of the Hon. House of Assembly of Jamaica on the Sugar and Slave-Trade* (London, 1793), 12-13.

<sup>37</sup> Simon Taylor to Robert Taylor, November 1799, Simon Taylor Papers, ICS 20 Letter Book C, no. 31, ICS.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, August 27, 1800, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>39</sup> Nathaniel Phillips to Messrs. Hibbert, Fuhr, and Hibbert, September 3, 1788, Slebech Collection, MS 11484, f. 122, NLW.

<sup>40</sup> William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; Addressed to the Freeholders and other inhabitants of Yorkshire* (London, 1807), 321-23.

misplaced apprehensions. Arguing that abolition would in fact bolster the economy, antislavery adherents disregarded anxieties over profits and white immigration. Even if the West Indies' massive revenues decreased slightly, one author wondered, "does it [not] follow that an equal number [of whites], with more moderate views, might not be procured to supply [the] place" of those who left?<sup>41</sup> Sensitive to the economic concerns raised by a British public after losing most of its North-American colonies, abolitionists confirmed their support for a strong, white community to continue the Caribbean's plantation system. Again, demographic appeals, this time to the strength of the white populace, undergirded abolition arguments.

Such rhetoric, employed by both sides of the debate, established a consensus on the twin pillars of West Indian stability: increased white numbers and greater enslaved fecundity. This made the prospect of interracial sex intensely problematic as it produced children who contributed to neither of these basic goals. Indeed both pro- and anti-slavery supporters alike railed against mixed relations, as it created a middle caste that did not fit easily into the islands' social and economic ambitions. Visitors to the Caribbean had long held a scornful eye to the open display of racial intermixture in the islands, establishing a fully-formed discourse of disgust toward miscegenation and its products. Both those allied and against the abolition movement built upon these rhetorical axioms, although the issue now took on greater political and social importance.

One of the first volleys between the two sides of the abolition debate included mutual revulsion at interracial sex. Indicative of the abolitionists' ambiguous attitudes toward slaves, James Ramsay simultaneously condemned planters for raping enslaved women while also chastising those same women for indulging their masters' passions.

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<sup>41</sup> *The Horrors of the Negro Slavery Existing in our West Indian Islands*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. (London, 1805), 35.

Planters gave undue attention, Ramsay argued, to “some unfeeling black or mulattoe concubine” on their estate, rather than the rest of the workers. Yet he also attacked “that legion of harlots and their children, with which the plantation abounds.”<sup>42</sup> James Tobin met Ramsay’s 1784 account with his own tract a year later. Tobin shared Ramsay’s disapproval of West Indian miscegenation. In fact, he emphasized it even further to attack his opponent’s position. Rebutting Ramsay’s suggestion that Britain emulate France’s more moderate approach toward the enslaved, Tobin portrayed a more wanton culture within the French system. “[T]he promiscuous commerce” between black and white in the French islands, Tobin noted, was “openly carried to the most notorious and extravagant excess, not merely by young, raw managers and overseers, but even in families of the first rank, opulence, and distinction.”<sup>43</sup> For Tobin, such actions eliminated crucial distinctions of color. These two early opponents in the abolition contest, then, concurred on the subject of mixed relations. Both saw it as an impropriety as well as an impediment to political goals.

Moral considerations, however, took a back seat to economic concerns over the place of the Caribbean’s mixed-race population. The group’s capacity to work became a crucial topic in a debate fixated on the question of labor. Tobin insisted that people of color generally refused to work in the fields, especially those who had become free.<sup>44</sup> Even Ramsay conceded this point when responding to his critics. In a 1788 tract, he agreed that mixed-race people not only worked less strenuously, but if freed, would not

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<sup>42</sup> James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London, 1784), 84.

<sup>43</sup> James Tobin, *Cursory Remarks upon The Reverend Mr. Ramsay’s Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the Sugar Colonies* (London, 1785), 36-37.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-19.

undertake serious manual labor.<sup>45</sup> Many others echoed this claim, including fellow critics of the slave trade. One abolitionist decried the place of mixed-race people in the Caribbean economy: “*mulattoes* are . . . the greatest receivers of stolen goods; and the female mulattoes are little else than mistresses. *Negroes*, are, then, the only class that will stand the climate, and, at the same time, labour.”<sup>46</sup> With near universality, pro- and anti-slavery commentators believed that only Africans could endure heavy exertion in the West Indies. Any mixture of European blood compromised that ability, thus undercutting the plantation system. Indeed, this argument never lost popularity. At the turn of the nineteenth century, abolitionists still invoked these claims. An anonymous pamphlet from 1803 alleged, “*Mulattoes* are very seldom destined to the labours of the field. – Of the agricultural slaves, therefore . . . they are exclusively Negroes.”<sup>47</sup> In the eyes of imperial commentators, the children of interracial unions inherited not only the taint of patriarchal immorality, but also a dissolute biology that eliminated their usefulness in colonial society.

Early-abolitionist rhetoric against colonial miscegenation and mixed-race individuals was simply a reiteration of long-held West Indian views. From the start, island authorities struggled to maintain social and racial stability in the face of tremendous demographic imbalances. Colonial laws, from the deficiency acts to Jamaica’s inheritance cap, targeted miscegenation specifically and people of color directly. Abolitionists could not chastise these statutes – nor did they necessarily wish to – and still present themselves as strong advocates for a robust Caribbean economy. In

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<sup>45</sup> Ramsay, *Objections*, 31-32. Despite this, Ramsay still believed that mixed-race people could serve as an important social bridge between blacks and whites.

<sup>46</sup> *Thoughts on Civilization and the Gradual Abolition of Slavery in Africa and the West Indies* (London, 1787), 11.

<sup>47</sup> *The State of Slavery, in the British West Indies, Delineated and Considered* (c. 1803), ICS, 33.

order to convince both the British government and public of the efficacy of abolition, those in the movement had to incorporate the islands' long-standing demographic reflections, including those against mixed-race people, into their appeals. Opponents of abolition needed to do more than simply rebut population analyses. To sway a domestic audience, the slave interest brought these fears of colonial demography into a metropolitan context.

### *Demography and Anti-Miscegenation in Britain*

Edward Long and Samuel Estwick's reactions which opened this chapter established an influential precedent for the discourse surrounding abolitionism. In light of the Caribbean's protracted interest in population levels, both authors understandably employed demography to attack slave reform, especially Long who had previously resided in Jamaica. Applying West Indian demographic discourse onto the British arena fit well in the Somerset trial debate. Most of the case's legal arguments revolved around differences in property rights between the West Indies and Britain. Long and Estwick maintained that if colonial laws of enslavement were not upheld in Britain, then a civil-rights vacuum would develop, drawing thousands of enslaved runaways to the mother country. Both appealed for legal universalism between the periphery and center which might impede any social and racial homogenization between the two. Abolitionists made much the same plea.<sup>48</sup> They demanded an extension of British liberty which also might induce those in the West Indies to stay put.

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<sup>48</sup> This question of legal pluralism in the Empire on the subject of slavery interested both pro- and anti-slavery supporters: William M. Wiecek, "Somerset: Lord Mansfield and the Legitimacy of Slavery in the Anglo-American World," *University of Chicago Law Review*, 42 (1974-75): 86-146; Robert Livingston

Scholars have uncovered a broad trend of colonial and metropolitan conflation during the abolition period. Examining legal challenges to slavery, as well as comparisons between enslaved and wage labor, Seymour Drescher contends that abolitionism helped erase the jurisprudential and cultural line between Britain and its colonies.<sup>49</sup> Philip Gould's rhetorical analysis of the period shows how the debate "collapsed the opposition between civilized and savage – or European and African – societies."<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Henrice Altink demonstrates the slave interest's use of a "metropolitan model of female sexuality" in analyses of enslaved women.<sup>51</sup> Each of these indicates the ways in which the cultural and discursive border between periphery and center slowly dissolved. If abolitionism could convince Britons that there was no difference in humanity between Africans and Europeans, or that the plights of slaves and poor whites were roughly equal, then it could also persuade a metropolitan audience that the racial and demographic conditions of the West Indies could easily come to Britain as well.

Outside these notions of imperial amalgamation, little theorization has been done on anxieties toward interracial unions in Britain. Most scholars acknowledge the presence of anti-miscegenation discourse in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, but without much further detail. Felicity Nussbaum argues that "fears of anomalous, racialized subjects moved from the colonial context, to that of England itself," during the period. Yet, she attributes much of this shift to the increasing number of black

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Schuyler, *Parliament and the British Empire: Some Constitutional Controversies Concerning Imperial Legislative Jurisdiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929).

<sup>49</sup> Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>50</sup> Philip Gould, *Barbaric Traffic*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Altink, "Forbidden Fruit": 205-06.

immigrants.<sup>52</sup> While Britain's population of African descent grew as the eighteenth century came to a close – certainly after several hundred freed slaves arrived after the American Revolution – the absolute numbers of black individuals was still relatively minor. Indeed, black Loyalists did not land in England until well over a decade after the Somerset decision. Instead, scholars must view concerns over domestic miscegenation as part of a rhetorical rallying-cry within the emerging abolition debate. Douglas Lorimer rightly asserts that Long and Estwick did not truly fear black migrants, but rather “grasped onto the possibility of antipathy toward blacks in England as a way to stress the contrast between a free white England and a slave black empire.”<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the authors incited worry over sexual commerce between races to hammer home that very point on geographic difference. Demographic discourse would become the vehicle by which to deliver racial fear-mongering to the British public.

The importance of the 1772 Somerset decision to subsequent debate over abolitionism cannot be overstated. Subsequent waves of commentators continued to ape Long and Estwick's vitriol against racial contamination in Britain. Three years after Mansfield's ruling, Charles Johnstone opined about future generations. Should England continue “mixing with Jews and negroes,” he predicted that the nation's “progeny will not much longer have reason to value themselves on their beauty, wit, or virtue.”<sup>54</sup> Already a national sense of racial difference infused English notions of the Empire. Many reiterated these concerns, writing near-verbatim copies of Long and Estwick's sentiments, even a decade on. James Tobin's 1785 attack against James Ramsay

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<sup>52</sup> Nussbaum, *The Limits*, 19, 239-42.

<sup>53</sup> Douglas A. Lorimer, “Black Slaves and English Liberty: A Re-examination of Racial Slavery in England,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 3, no. 2 (July 1984): 138.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Johnstone, *The Pilgrim* (Dublin, 1775), 127.

included a warning against the possibility of England transforming into another Spain or Portugal: countries he believed to have already descended into racial chaos.<sup>55</sup> In the same vein, Philip Thicknesse warned in 1788 that if emancipated slaves were “all to come to this country . . . the English nation would in another century, degenerate into a race of Portuguese.”<sup>56</sup> Tobin and Thicknesse, following Long, called attention to the supposed racial hybridity of the Spanish and Portuguese to a British audience well-versed in the so-called “Black Legend.”<sup>57</sup> Racial degeneracy and domestic miscegenation, therefore, were styled as symptoms of a dysfunctional and immoral empire.

The slave interest continued such attacks into the 1790s, frequently reciting the themes of racial hybridity in Britain and improperly-regulated imperialism. Appropriating the rhetoric of parliamentary reform, it attacked abolitionism as a special-interest lobby in Westminster. Writing in 1777, Thicknesse admitted some admiration for Granville Sharpe (James Somerset’s attorney), but also condemned him for extending rights to individuals not normally protected. Africa’s kingdoms, he argued, did not grant natural rights to its people, and Britain should not offer anything more. Abolitionist influence in Parliament, which promoted the rights of foreign migrants, struck Thicknesse as corrupt and treacherous. He added a racial element to this notion of British subjecthood: “London abounds with an incredible number of these black men, who have clubs to support those who are out of place, and every country town, nay in almost every village are to be seen a little race of mulattoes, mischievous as monkeys, and infinitely

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<sup>55</sup> Tobin, *Cursory Remarks*, 118-19.

<sup>56</sup> Philip Thicknesse, *Memoirs and Anecdotes of Philip Thicknesse, Late Lieutenant Governor of Land Guard Fort, and Unfortunately Father to George Touchet, Baron Audley* (London, 1788), 282.

<sup>57</sup> Beginning in the sixteenth century, many English commentators chastised the Iberians for practicing brutal colonization schemes. This effort to paint the Spanish and Portuguese with a “Black Legend” worked to glorify English notions of a benevolent British imperialism. For more on the “Black Legend,” particularly in English humanist discourse of the sixteenth century, see: Jonathan Hart, *Contesting Empires: Opposition, Promotion, and Slavery* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

more dangerous.”<sup>58</sup> According to Thicknesse, abolitionists not only gave political power to black migrants, but also facilitated the corruption of British blood. A decade and a half later, John Scattergood leveled the same argument. “When the patrons of the Negroes shall have carried this their favourite scheme,” Scattergood railed, “the Negroes from all parts of the world will flock hither, mix with the natives, spoil the breed of our common people . . . and make Britain the sink of all the earth, for mongrels, vagrants, and vagabonds.”<sup>59</sup> Twenty years after the Somerset decision, little had changed in pro-slavery discourse. Abolition, in this view, toppled the appropriate order of imperial commerce and legal structures. From this rubble would emerge an impure British population. Few proponents of this position surely could have believed such forecasts, but for a popular debate plagued by hyperbole it provided a strong contrast to the abolitionists’ assertions.<sup>60</sup>

These comments focused on only one type of sexual pairing, and did not reflect any specific alarm over the immigration of mixed-race West Indians. Indeed, the slave interest’s anxieties over British racial dissolution in the 1770s and 1780s looked primarily at the sexual unions between black men and white women – predominantly poor white

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<sup>58</sup> Philip Thicknesse, *A Journey Through France, and part of Spain; including many curious and interesting observations*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1798), 101-12. The first edition was published in 1777.

<sup>59</sup> John Scattergood, *An Antidote to Popular Frenzy, Particularly to the Present Rage for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade* (London, 1792), 24.

<sup>60</sup> A similar view was expressed in the United States during the same period, although from abolitionists. Jonathan Edwards gave a sermon in Connecticut on September 15, 1791, in which he called for an end to enslavement. Among his rationales was the argument that, “Slavery tends to lewdness . . . And we learn the too frequent influence and effect of such a situation . . . from the multitude of mulattoes in countries where slaves are very numerous”: Jonathan Edwards, *The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade, and of the Slavery of the Africans* (Boston, 1822), 13. Emancipation, then, would help ensure purity in the new nation. One year later, the Reverend David Rice conceded a similar point in Kentucky. He argued, “Another frightful objection to my doctrine is, That should we set our slaves free, it would lay a foundation for intermarriages, and an unnatural mixture of blood, and our posterity at length would all be Mulattoes. This effect, I grant, it would produce”: Rev. David Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy; Proved by a Speech Delivered in the Convention Held at Danville, Kentucky* (Philadelphia, 1792), 16. Despite this threat of racial breakdown, Rice still advocated for emancipation.

women. This stemmed, in part, from what Nussbaum describes as the transition from concerns over a “racialized femininity” situated in the colonies to one rooted in the metropolis at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>61</sup> It also reflected a heightened sense of fear over black male sexuality in Britain, with the attendant effects on an emerging English/British identity.<sup>62</sup> It seems imprecise to conflate these types of fears with those surrounding elite West Indians of color. Nevertheless, the comments made by Long, Estwick, Thicknesse, and others set the backdrop for later examinations of mixed-race migrants. Anxieties over the coupling of black men with white women in the early abolition movement would provide the template by which later observers would critique the arrival of West Indians of color. Indeed, it would take a transformational event to shift the focus onto this small group of migrants.

### **Mixed-Race Migrants, St. Domingue, and Abolition**

British commentators slowly developed an interest in mixed-race immigration by 1780. Brief as they were, these initial observations tended to look at the phenomenon as a social curiosity. Popular attitudes toward people of color changed dramatically, however, when an enslaved revolt unfolded roughly one hundred miles east of Jamaica. Beginning with political demands by free black and mixed-race people in 1790, the island of St. Domingue erupted into rebellion several months later. Over the next twelve years, the island’s enslaved population struggled for freedom before creating the modern nation

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<sup>61</sup> Nussbaum, *The Limits*, 3, 239.

<sup>62</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, empire and gender in the eighteenth century* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 24-35. Colley argues that, amongst other contrasts, Britons defined themselves against the French as they associated femininity with France and masculinity with Britain. This seems appropriate in the discussion surrounding racial intermixture, particularly as so many pro-slavery commentators highlighted miscegenation in France and the ways in which it compromised, if not increasingly feminized, that country.

of Haiti. The Revolution confirmed planters' worst fears, and those in both the French and British West Indies used the event to lobby more frantically against abolition. Metropolitan observers also used the Revolution as evidence of the detrimental impact that abolitionist ideas had upon enslaved people. Commentators levied intense scorn against the island's free population of color as well. Those who had attended schools in France were thought to have carried the tenets of the French Revolution, and notions of European liberty, back to St. Domingue. Fearful of a similar insurrection in their islands, British observers focused more closely on West Indian migrants of color. Not only did their arrival in the mother country threaten Britain's racial composition, but it now seemed further to endanger the Empire's compromised strength in the Americas.

Fittingly, one of the first major invectives printed against mixed-race immigrants came from none other than Edward Long. In 1774, Long published his *History of Jamaica*, which would become a central reference for future abolition debate.<sup>63</sup> In describing Jamaica's mixed-race exodus, Long characterized the migration as a futile exercise rather than as an imminent political danger. If anything, he viewed those who crossed the Atlantic as a sufficiently neutralized threat upon arrival. Detailing the various ranks of Jamaica's mixed-race population, Long noted that "the opulent among them withdraw to England; where their influence, if they ever possessed any, ceases to be of any use." Moreover, he ridiculed the intentions of colonial parents who sent these children abroad. According to Long, because "mamma protests" that her children

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<sup>63</sup> Long's text displayed complex attitudes toward mixed-race Jamaicans. Some passages decried their immorality and insisted upon their biological sterility. Yet, Long also advocated for the group's enfranchisement in order to serve as a middling class which might provide a racial buffer between white and black. Like his appeals to end the slave trade, however, Long's support of Jamaica's population of color reflected his obsession with island security rather than any progressive opinions toward those of African descent. Continuing West Indian commerce was the *sine qua non* of Long's arguments; his tolerance of mixed-race individuals ended as soon as they left the colonies: *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2 (London, 1774), 333-36.

“ha[ve] a most delicate ear for music and French, are both of them sent early to England, to cultivate and improve the valuable talents which . . . the parents, blind with folly think they have discovered.” A British education for mixed-race children was laughable to the Jamaican émigré who felt that such schooling did the students little service. In particular, he opined on those who returned to Jamaica, either to visit or to remain permanently.

“Miss faints at the sight of her relations, especially when papa tells her that black *Quasheba* is her own mother,” Long scoffed. The same, he argued, would occur to the men of color who returned: “He is . . . left to herd among his black kindred, and converse with *Quashee* and *Mingo*, instead of his school-fellows, *Sir George*, or *My Lord*; while mademoiselle, instead of modish French, must learn to prattle gibberish with her cousins *Mimba* and *Chloe*.”<sup>64</sup> Advanced instruction must ultimately produce dissatisfaction for those who could never replicate metropolitan life in the colonies. Long held these beliefs widely. Elsewhere in the *History of Jamaica*, he lambasted educating Jamaican whites in Britain; thus his quips on people of color stayed true to his general concerns over colonists in English schools.<sup>65</sup> Even so, Long portrayed mixed-race migration as evidence of the plantocracy’s comic excess, not as a political threat to the Empire.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 329-32. Long was not alone in these opinions. John Matson returned to Bath, England from Dominica, having left behind a mistress of color and at least two children. In 1801 he wrote from England to his white son, who had traveled out to Dominica himself, about these two mixed-race children. “Although I hold it to be unwise and improper to introduce into this Country and Persons of Colour,” Matson believed that his children – as well as his mistress – might be exceptions to the general rule. Yet, he ultimately determined, “Be assured that the Education, Habits and other Causes, render Persons of this Disposition convenient only in the warm Climate of their Birth; it becomes a Misfortune to themselves to be removed to any other Country and they are very rarely and perhaps never comfortable and happy when taken from their Homes to mix with Persons of a different Description and Habits”: John Matson Sr. to John Matson Jr., December 17, 1801, *Caribbeana*, vol. 1 (London, 1910), 221.

<sup>65</sup> Long wrote of an English education for Jamaican whites: “[W]hat are the mighty advantages which Britain, or the colony, has gained by the many hundreds who have received their education in the former? . . . [T]hey have spent their fortunes in Britain, and learned to renounce their native place, their parents, and friends. . . . Their industry is, in general, for ever lost . . . having acquired a taste for pleasure and extravagance of every kind, far superior to the ability of their fortunes. . . . The education they usually

With the emergence of popular interest in abolitionism a decade later, mixed-race migrants in Britain gained official attention. Prompted by the new abolition movement, in 1788 England's Board of Trade solicited information broadly on the African slave market. Among other topics, the Board's Council for Trade and Plantations sought evidence on the practice of sending black and mixed-race children from African slaving ports to Britain. John Mathews's "[O]bservations on the Conduct of Mulatto and Black African Children, who had been educated in England" detailed the experiences of six black, and eight mulatto, children from Africa who had come to Britain as scholars.<sup>66</sup> Most of the mixed-race individuals were the offspring of slave merchants, while the black children primarily descended from African royalty.

Mathews said little of the black students in England, but commented extensively on those of mixed ancestry. Of a Miss Norie, he wrote, "[o]n her return to her Native Country, she continued to dress in the English fashion and appears to be a sensible and intelligent woman." Describing Jeremy Clinton, son of a merchant on Bance island, Mathews noted, "his attachment to Europeans is strong, as he is, as well as all others who partake of European Blood, proud of the distinction." After discussing another African trader's son, he concluded, "To sum up his Character in a few words – with a white man he is a white man, with a Black Man a Black Man." Mathews's comments on these Africans of color show a fascination with identity and cultural practices in light of mixed heritage. He believed that the students' joint African and European ancestry could work

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receive in Great-Britain does not qualify them for useful employment in Jamaica": *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 248.

<sup>66</sup> "Mr. John Mathew's observations on the Conduct of Mulatto and Black African Children, who had been educated in England on their subsequent Return to their Native Country prepared in pursuance of minute delivered by their Lordships Order of 19<sup>th</sup> April 1788 to Mr. Tarleton one of the Delegates from Liverpool," BT6/11, NAE; my thanks to Ian Barrett for the reference.

to tremendous advantage in regulating the slave trade. As most of these children eventually planned to return home, Mathews argued that an English education would make them better mediators between African and British slave merchants. He also believed that their presence would help in “promoting Civilization,” which would reduce chaotic slave raids and more thoroughly formalize the trade.<sup>67</sup>

John Mathews’s evidence eventually made its way into the Committee’s slave-trade report. In 1789, the Board of Trade released a lengthy account of the commerce in human cargo, which included Mathews’s details on students of color in Britain.<sup>68</sup>

Although the report focused specifically on children from Africa, rather than the West Indies, it still concerned itself broadly with the impact of students of color in Britain as they related to the abolition movement. The Board identified mixed-race immigrants as unique subjects who might potentially reform the slave trade. Abolitionism, then, brought the issue of mixed-race colonists in Britain further to light. For the Board of Trade, a mixed-race presence in England could help accelerate commercial reform, even if there was a disquieting sense of uncertainty about these migrants’ social positions. Future commentaries would alternate between such optimistic appraisals of these individuals, and reactionary denunciations against their presence.

While the government took a moderately positive approach in 1789, others flatly criticized mixed-race immigrants of all stripes that same year. In describing the southern

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. C. B. Wadstrom also made an observation on John Cleveland’s son in his tract, *An Essay on Colonization, Particularly Applied to the Western Coast of Africa, With Some Free Thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce*, pt. 2 (London, 1794), 15.

<sup>68</sup> Committee for Trade and Plantations, *Report Of The Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations; Submitting To His Majesty's Consideration The Evidence and Information they have collected in consequence of his Majesty's Order in Council, dated the 11th of February 1788, concerning the present State of the Trade to Africa, and particularly the Trade in Slaves; and concerning the Effects and Consequences of this Trade, as well in Africa and the West Indies, as to the general Commerce of this Kingdom* (London, 1789), 83-86.

coast of India, Innes Munro added a diatribe against the practice of sending children of mixed ancestry to Britain from both ends of the Empire. Interracial partnerships were ubiquitous throughout the colonies, and to a variable extent the children of all such unions came to Britain. Indeed, the practice may have been as frequent for mixed-race individuals from the East Indies as it was for those from the West. Munro insisted, “If you were only to examine all the seminaries in Britain for the education of youth, it would be found that nearly one out of ten in the numbers they contain is of that description.” Rather than installing them in English universities, Munro declared, “Measures might easily be fallen upon, both in the East and West Indies, to give those mulattoes a decent education in the country where they are born.” Keeping them in the colonies might also save the children from “ridicule and reproach” in England. These opinions stemmed not from fears over mixed-race politicization in Britain, but rather from the same demographic anxieties aroused by Long and Estwick a decade before. Like many others’, Munro’s observations on educating immigrants of color included a near-verbatim recitation of Long’s earlier rant:

a commerce, that may so sensibly degenerate the race, and give a sallow tinge to the complexion of Britons, [must] certainly be prohibited. It was by this means that the Spaniards and Portuguese got so much of the dusky hue in their countenances, having kept up an unrestrained intercourse with their colonies till they were reduced to their present despicable state.<sup>69</sup>

Munro joined together a number of different debates to form a general mistrust of British immigrants of color. In his tract, demographic anxieties about British racial stock joined public observations of mixed-race education in Britain, as well as the growing debate surrounding abolition. Yet he tied such ideas only loosely to these migrants’ colonial origins. Focused less on the political repercussions of hosting such travelers in

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<sup>69</sup> Innes Munro, *A Narrative of the Military Operations, on the Coromandel Coast* (London, 1789), 50-51.

the metropole, Munro dwelled instead on the biological and demographic impact of their arrival. Such broad concern indicated the importance that mixed-race migration had achieved by 1789. For a brief moment, the sexualized fears attached to free and enslaved black men in Britain were suddenly linked to incoming colonists of hybrid ancestry as well. Thus, as abolitionism began growing in popularity, the original demographic fears propagated by Long and Estwick now had associations with elite migrants of color. Such general concerns would operate during a very narrow window of time, however, before new events would arouse more specific, political anxieties.

Interest in mixed-race migrants shifted from those of African and Indian origin, to those more exclusively from the West Indies after rebellion broke out in St. Domingue. Prior to the general slave revolt that began in 1791, the island's free population of color attempted its own coup. In the wake of the 1789 meeting of the Estates-General, Vincent Ogé and Julien Raimond – two mixed-race St. Domingans staying in France – lobbied for the rights of the island's free people of color, irrespective of any reforms for the enslaved. Ogé, convinced that his efforts in France were heading nowhere, returned to St. Domingue and organized a group of free blacks and people of color in the northern port of Cap-Français. Demanding the franchise, the group marched on the city in the autumn of 1790. Colonial battalions quickly destroyed Ogé's forces and executed him the following February. That summer, the island's slaves rose up in rebellion, commencing near-uninterrupted warfare over the next decade. Although scholars have fiercely debated the real ties between St. Domingue's community of color and its enslaved people, French contemporaries drew a firm line connecting the two.<sup>70</sup> Most

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<sup>70</sup> Although the historiography is quite large, crucial texts on the matter start with C. L. R. James's *Black Jacobins: Touissant Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938),

metropolitans believed that the political agitation of mixed-race migrants, educated and radicalized in France, lit the powder-keg of plantation discontent.

European commentators never forgave the *gens de couleur* for their supposed instigation, and searched for links between the group and French abolitionists. Immediately upon receiving word of the Revolution, the French National Assembly began pointing fingers. Many members recounted tales of mixed-race children accosting parents in St. Domingue. Others told of seeing them in the metropole, associating with France's primary abolitionist organization, the *Amis des Noirs*. The French Assembly lambasted the *Amis* for radicalizing the immigrants:

they collected together at Paris some people of colour; they extolled their understandings; they invited them to unite their cause with that of the negroes. The men passed over to St. Domingo, in the sort of delirium occasioned by such doctrine . . . *Ogé* was the first victim of this fatal error.<sup>71</sup>

Six years later, in his history of St. Domingue, Jamaican absentee Bryan Edwards noted similarly, “[a] considerable body of the mulattoes from St. Domingo and the other French islands, were resident in the French capital” before the Revolution. The catalyst for their radicalism, he confirmed, was abolitionism: “With these people the society of *Amis des Noirs* formed an intimate connection . . . and poured out such invectives against the white planters, as bore away reason and moderation in the torrent. Unhappily, there was too

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which uses a Marxist interpretation to draw connections between the island's free people of color and its enslaved class. David Nichollas offers a more controversial interpretation in *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), which argues for racial links between the two groups that trumped matters of class and materialism. More moderate interpretations, including Thomas Ott's *The Haitian Revolution: 1789-1804* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1973) and Laurent Dubois's *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), see insurgent connections between free people of color and the enslaved, but not strong political or personal ties.

<sup>71</sup> French National Assembly, *A Particular Account of the Insurrection of the Negroes of St. Domingo, Begun in August, 1791: Translated from the French*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (1791), 3-13.

much to offer on the part of the mulattoes.”<sup>72</sup> Pro-slavery supporters, even those observing France’s empire, fingered abolitionism as the source of such imperial chaos. They also nominated metropolitan residents of color as the agents spreading this anarchy.

Although Edwards condemned French abolitionists for inspiring the Revolution in St. Domingue, he did not believe that the group operated alone. Rather, he sensed close associations between French and British antislavery activists in distributing these revolutionary ideals to the Caribbean. London’s abolition movement, he asserted “had served as a model and exemplar to that of Paris.” Indeed, Edwards insisted that British abolitionists helped inspire the chain of events leading up to the Revolution.<sup>73</sup> In truth, Edwards did not dream up ties between Britain’s antislavery organizations and the *Amis des Noirs*. Jacques Pierre Brissot, founder of the *Amis*, not only contacted England’s Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, but also published a pamphlet urging the formation of a similar group in France with links to its British counterpart.<sup>74</sup> The Committee inducted Brissot as an honorary member in 1787 and encouraged him in the formation of the *Amis des Noirs*, but declined lending any pecuniary support.<sup>75</sup> This connection, no matter its frailty, enraged Edwards, who worried that British abolitionists would attempt to affect the same result in the Anglophone Caribbean as that in the French West Indies. He was not alone in this suspicion. Several months after the insurrection broke out, Robert Taylor wrote to his brother John: “I sincerely hope the troubles which

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<sup>72</sup> Bryan Edwards, *An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo* (London, 1797), 17. The issue dominated many British officials’ correspondence. John Wells wrote to George Chalmers, Secretary to the Board of Trade for the Bahamas, of his concern over “the Coloured people of St Domingo . . . whose minds have been highly cultivated,” July 19, 1793, Add. MS 22900, vol. 1, f. 195, BL.

<sup>73</sup> Edwards, *An Historical Survey*, 85-86.

<sup>74</sup> Jacques P. Brissot de Warville, *Discours Sur la nécessité d’établir à Paris une Société pour concourir, avec celle de Londres, à l’abolition de la traite & de l’esclavage des Nègres* (Paris, 1788).

<sup>75</sup> Minutes of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, August 27, 1787, Add. MS 21254, f. 13, BL.

have become so serious in Hispaniola will not reach Jamaica and I think they will be serviceable in Opening the Eyes of People in this Country to Mr. Wilberforce's mad projects & mistaken humanity."<sup>76</sup> Likewise, John Tailyour made the same connection in a 1793 letter to his cousin Simon: "The massacre at Hispaniola is really the most dreadful affair . . . the eyes of people [in Britain] are now open to the ruinous consequences would follow adopting Mr. Wilberforce's Humanity."<sup>77</sup> If Britons now associated abolitionism with French radicalism, then they would soon question the loyalty of West Indian migrants of color on their own shores as well.

The Revolution in St. Domingue politicized the issue of mixed-race immigration, but it produced neither consistent, nor universal opinions. Members of the slave interest viewed mixed-race advancement as unequivocally dangerous, in light of the supposed impact of French-educated people of color in St. Domingue. Yet those who supported abolition wavered on the benefit of having West Indians of color in Britain. For some, the migration symbolized equality's progress, and at the very least could help stabilize the islands' social structure if those migrants returned to the Caribbean. Others, however, believed that it contributed to the eradication of the Empire's racial and economic organization. Regardless of individual opinions, the twin effects of St. Domingue's Revolution and the abolition debate vaulted the issue of mixed-race migration from the realm of personal correspondence to the public sphere.

During the so-called "Age of Revolutions," attitudes differed on the boundaries of liberty for those previously oppressed. For staunch advocates of equality, enfranchising and advancing the Caribbean's population of color was not only natural, but vitally

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<sup>76</sup> Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, November 2, 1791, Tailyour Papers, WCL.

<sup>77</sup> John Tailyour to Simon Taylor, October 1, 1793, Simon Taylor Papers, ICS 120 XIV/A/101, ICS.

necessary. Jamaican-born Benjamin Vaughan held somewhat radical opinions during his youth in Britain. He entered Parliament in the 1780s, a firm supporter of Lord Shelburne, and soon became an apologist for the French Revolution. These radical ideas forced him to flee England for Maine in 1794. Two years previously, however, he wrote an extended piece on the relationship between whites and people of color in the Caribbean.

Appealing for greater political rights for those of mixed-race, Vaughan believed that enfranchisement would prevent another revolution. In fact, he encouraged the education of Jamaica's population of color in Britain. West Indian whites should not condemn the practice, Vaughan argued, "since no unprejudiced persons for example think it strange to see people of color becoming citizens of Europe."<sup>78</sup> Indeed, a British education would allow those of color to progress more rapidly when they returned to the colonies, and draw them closer to white society. Such experience in England did not automatically settle well with those in the Caribbean, however. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a group of West Indian missionaries interrogated a mixed-race man who returned from England in the same year that Vaughan wrote his proposal. Certain that Thomas Gordon had taken part in London's Gordon Riots, members of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel became convinced "that he had brought insurrectionary proclamations to the island."<sup>79</sup> Vaughan and the missionaries, then, anticipated two very different outcomes for mixed-race residency in Britain. While Vaughan viewed it as a step toward political assimilation, the missionaries predicted that it would transport political agitation from the metropole to the Caribbean. Expressed only a year after the

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<sup>78</sup> Benjamin Vaughan, Concerning the "whites and people of color in the colonies," c. 1792, Benjamin Vaughan Papers, Series III, no. 11, APS.

<sup>79</sup> John Holmes, *Historical Sketches of the Missions of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen* (Dublin, 1818), 375.

outbreak of St. Domingue's Revolution, both opinions took into account the need for West Indian stability, and the place of metropolitan-educated people of color within it.

Over the next decade, as the struggle in St. Domingue progressed and the movement to abolish the slave trade lost and regained momentum, debate continued to rage over the issue of mixed-race immigration. Abolitionists attempted to downplay the political aspects of the topic in favor of the religious and moral dimensions of an English schooling for people of color. Advocates for the free black colony of Sierra Leone pushed to create more British institutions to educate black and mixed-race children in order to ensure the settlement's success.<sup>80</sup> Those appealing for an amelioration of West Indian slavery made the same argument for schools to educate Caribbean children of color. Included within an 1807 proposal to train more West Indian ministers, an anonymous pamphleteer recommended British seminaries for those of African descent. Considering the "expediency of educating any Negroes or Mulattos in such a College," the author believed "the instruction of such persons would probably much facilitate the propagation of the Gospel among those of their own colour." Approaching the end of the transatlantic slave trade, the author felt assured that such an institution would best be suited in Britain, as West Indian whites would not allow one in the islands.<sup>81</sup>

Parallel proposals emerged as the abolition movement transformed into an emancipation effort. Published nearly a decade after the formal end of British slave trading, Dr. Pinckard's *Notes on the West Indies* included a detailed consideration on emancipation and the role that mixed-race education in Britain might play in accomplishing it. Convinced that slaves were much too ignorant, Pinckard wondered if

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<sup>80</sup> See, in particular: Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization*, pt. 1, 92-94.

<sup>81</sup> *Observations on the Necessity of Introducing a Sufficient Number of Respectable Clergymen into our Colonies in the West Indies* (London, 1807), 12n.

mixed-race teachers might better instruct the group than white missionaries. “Perhaps the best preparatory step” to teaching the enslaved, Pinckard argued, “would be, to bring a considerable proportion of the *people of colour*, between the whites and the negroes, to England to be educated.” Such a plan would accelerate the pace of black learning, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful emancipation. Pinckard also maintained that it would calm the political machinations of the islands’ mixed-race populations in tandem. By educating handfuls of individuals of color in England “[t]he coloured inhabitants would be made fellow-citizens with the whites, and they would aspire to be – Englishmen!” Political assimilation would engender “the same interests and propensities” of white Britons for mixed-race migrants, tying the Empire more closely together. More nobly, “If a school were endowed. . . and appropriated to the education of the creole children of colour, it would immortalize the name, and prove a lasting monument of the wisdom and benevolence of the Prince [Regent] . . . mark[ing] the period as an *era of humanity*.”<sup>82</sup> Humanitarian and imperial goals could both be accomplished through this mixed-race presence in England.

While some reformers and emancipation proponents considered welcoming West Indian migrants of color, others viewed the group with suspicion. James Stewart’s 1808 *Account of Jamaica*, although not particularly tied to abolitionism, considered the ramifications of mixed-race persecution in the islands. Certain that the population “*must*, in time, know and feel their own strength, when increased to an enormous disproportion to the whites,” he advised reducing activities which might further reveal such disparities. Chief among these was the homecoming of educated people of color from Britain who

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<sup>82</sup> George Pinckard, *Observations on the Emancipation of the Slaves*, in *Notes on the West Indies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1816), 5-10.

found no diminution of prejudice upon their return. Whatever social parity existed in the metropole did not transfer to the Caribbean: “a white and a brown child sent to Europe at the same time, and brought up together at the same school, though they may be in habits of the strictest intimacy while there, discontinue that intimacy on their growing up and returning to the West Indies.” Enduring such contempt from both rich and poor whites alike could kindle political conflagrations. No doubt contemplating the origins of the St. Domingue Revolution, Stewart worried that under such harassment “[t]he better sort of the people of colour” educated in Britain, “thus shut out from the society of the whites, form a separate society of themselves.”<sup>83</sup> A firm divide between Jamaica’s racial castes may have proved manageable in the colony’s early years, but by the turn of the nineteenth century it was no longer a workable option. The tremendous growth of Jamaica’s mixed-race population, linked with the events in nearby St. Domingue and Britain’s abolition movement, eliminated the possibility of racial apartheid. In Stewart’s estimation, Jamaican whites needed to accommodate their neighbors of color. Advancing them to the upper rungs of English society, however, would only serve to put their meager colonial gains in relief.

Other colonial observers made parallel claims, outlining more specific connections to the Revolution in St. Domingue. James Walker’s general description of the West Indies in 1818 still held the Revolution in mind when considering British students of color. Like Stewart, he too worried about those mixed-race children “sent to Europe for education, and when, after being received into company there, they find upon their return to the West Indies, that the lowest white person disdains to associate with them.” Walker worried that these migrants “finding themselves and their sisters in such a

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<sup>83</sup> James Stewart, *An Account of Jamaica, and its Inhabitants* (London, 1808), 300-02.

state of wretched degradation, are ripe every moment for revolution.” Thinking back to previous insurrections, he continued “it was they who effected the mighty overturn in St. Domingo, portentous still in its aspect over all the Antilles.”<sup>84</sup> Although more than a decade removed from the Revolution’s official conclusion, Walker still connected the event to mixed-race education in Europe. Additional slave revolts and more vocal protests from communities of color in the early nineteenth century continued to haunt slavery supporters. Educating individuals of color in the home country would only compound these grievances, or, worse still, lead to all-out rebellion. Indeed, even the author advocating for a mixed-race school in England wondered if “the consequence which they would derive from having had a learned education in Europe, would enable them to do incalculable mischief, if they should turn out ill.”<sup>85</sup> For Walker, the solution was obvious: “Send none of them to Europe who are ever to return; but give them the best education the West Indies can afford.”<sup>86</sup> Integration and mutual exchange would only heighten demand for legal and social uniformity between colony and metropole. Reducing mixed-race education in Britain, if not eliminating it altogether, would help colonial society remain intact.

Inasmuch as the issue of political stability dominated considerations of mixed-race immigration, demographic fears surrounding the practice still factored into early-nineteenth century discourse. Once again, demographic arguments sprang from an abolitionist source. Barbados’s colonial agent G. W. Jordan gave a shocked response in 1816 to the African Institution’s suggestion to send free coloreds to Britain to testify on colonial oppression. Registering dismay at the thought of any subjugation endured by the

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<sup>84</sup> James Walker, *Letters on the West Indies* (London, 1818), 170-71.

<sup>85</sup> *Observations on the Necessity*, 12n.

<sup>86</sup> Walker, *Letters on the West Indies*, 173.

group, Jordan balked, “[t]he people of colour . . . possess all the rights of Britons.”

Jordan wondered what additional rights free people of color might need: “All that remains for the Institution to do, is to introduce them to the boards and beds of the white Colonists.” As with demographic fears aroused by abolitionist agitation, the push for slave reform signaled to Jordan a breakdown in sexual divisions between white and black colonists. However, Jordan did not see the collapse of sexual boundaries as a purely colonial phenomenon. Rather, he imagined that gains made by colonists of color would result in their attempt to enjoy open access to British society. Jordan asked his audience:

what shall we say of submitting the daughters of Great Britain . . . to the embraces of persons [of color], towards whom there is in fact, and confessedly an instinctive feeling . . . which the strongest and most brutal of passions is not always able to overcome, and which . . . would abate even the joy of a mother, that a man child is born into the world.<sup>87</sup>

This polemic appropriated earlier abolition rhetoric against colonial miscegenation and applied it to a metropolitan context. In this instance, Jordan substituted white male morality for British female chastity, but the threat of bastard children produced through mixed unions remained the same. Abolitionism had highlighted imperial concerns with miscegenation, and as the debate continued to rage, it began incorporating the metropole. Indeed, abolitionism’s demographic analyses of West Indian society provided the lens through which to view mixed-race immigration.

Although rhetorical flourishes against free coloreds in Britain were the slave interest’s stock-in-trade, those who supported abolition also registered similar concerns. Hester Piozzi held such uncertain opinions in her observations of the increased number of mixed-race individuals on London’s streets. Writing to her friend Penelope Pennington

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<sup>87</sup> G. W. Jordan, *An Examination of the Principles of the Slave Registry Bill, and of the Means of Emancipation* (London, 1816), 114-15.

in 1802, Piozzi remarked, “I am really haunted by *black shadows*. Men of colour in the rank of gentlemen; a black Lady cover’d with finery, in the Pit at the Opera, and tawny children playing in the Squares.” Her anxieties about these people of color contained fears about the racial and class elements of their presence in England. These comments point, in particular, to her feelings of invasion within a specific urban space. Not only had people of color come to the metropolis, but they had also rooted themselves in the geography of polite London society. Piozzi gave credit for this new reality to abolitionists “Hannah More and Mr. Wilberforce’s success towards breaking down the *wall of separation*.” She lamented of this breakdown in the wall, “Oh! how it falls on every side! and spreads its tumbling ruins on the world! leaving all ranks, all customs, all colours, all religions *jumbled together* . . . preparing us for the moment when we shall be made *one fold under one Shepherd*.”<sup>88</sup> While Piozzi sensed prophecy in the elimination of such distinctions between individuals, her tone was one of resigned acceptance to a world irrevocably turned upside down through humanitarianism. The fear of colonial miscegenation, instilled into public discourse through the abolition debate, easily triggered anxieties about interracial couplings in Britain. As mixed-race visibility increased, abolitionist rhetoric provided the model by which to critique it. Although she may have attributed the hand of Providence to the equalization of all classes and colors, Piozzi was reluctant to see these new residents show up in her neighborhood.

Antislavery debates developed specific attitudes toward the arrival of mixed-race individuals. Those who deliberated over the merits of abolitionism commented on mixed-race migration within the context of larger imperial conversations. Early polemics

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<sup>88</sup> Hester Piozzi to Penelope Pennington, June 19, 1802, in *The Intimate Letters of Hester Piozzi and Penelope Pennington 1788-1821*, ed. Oswald G. Knapp (New York: John Lane Co., 1914), 243-44.

thrown out by the slave interest insisted upon the demographic damage to Britain should an end to the slave trade occur. This demographic obsession naturally extended to consider those individuals of color who arrived from the West Indies. If freed slaves could degrade British racial stock in the lower orders, then elite students of color could compromise the bloodlines of England's highest ranks. These were linked, yet separate concerns around interracial unions. Long and Estwick's cries against the arrival of enslaved blacks in the 1770s set the rhetorical parameters by which later observers would assess the migration of mixed-race West Indians.

Meanwhile, the Revolution in St. Domingue lent more evidence against the education of free coloreds in Britain. Events in France's empire reinforced the need to prevent mixed-race people from traveling to the metropole, especially if they intended to return to the Caribbean. One cannot overemphasize the dramatic effect the St. Domingue Revolution had on observers throughout the British Atlantic, nor the shadow cast by French-educated people of color singled out for blame. The parallel issues of the Revolution and the abolition movement worked together against migrants of color. Increased discrimination was not the result of a vague tightening of racial prejudice, nor of significantly larger numbers of immigrants, but rather a product of heightened rhetoric grounded in two of the period's most important events.<sup>89</sup> In this way, the discourse on mixed-race immigrants alternated between fears over their political influence, as well as their effect on British racial character. These, in turn, fed into larger concerns over imperial administration, strength, and racial composition.

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<sup>89</sup> Nussbaum, *The Limits*, 239-42.

## Louisa Calderon and Thomas Picton

While most of these debates played out in various tracts and pamphlets, one event encapsulated many of the period's attitudes. One year before Parliament officially ended the slave trade, Thomas Picton, Governor of the island of Trinidad, came before the King's Bench accused of torturing a mixed-race teenager named Louisa Calderon. Picton's prosecutors brought Calderon to London in order to testify against him, igniting a firestorm of opinions on her presence. The trial would touch on issues of abolitionism, mixed-race influence in the metropole, and the administration of Britain's Empire. It would eventually become something of a public event, grabbing enormous amounts of attention. Such a high-profile affair incorporated a number of topics swirling in the political and cultural air. In its case against Picton, the state drew on sentimental outrage against Calderon's torture in Trinidad. Depictions of her ordeal fell closely in line with abolition imagery known to provoke outrage. Picton countered that he had not violated island law – at the time in transition from a Spanish standard – reviving British anxieties about Spanish influence and imperial degradation. Once Calderon arrived in London, Picton's supporters targeted her connections with British men to undercut her credibility. In sum, the trial of Governor Picton emblemized many of the various critiques of mixed-race migration, distilling them into a single event capturing the public's fevered curiosity.

Welsh-born Picton built an impressive reputation in the British military before the Calderon episode all but derailed his career. He first took up an army post in Gibraltar at age fifteen.<sup>90</sup> There he learned Spanish, a crucial skill that would later help him win the

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<sup>90</sup> For more on Picton's biography, see: H. B. Robinson, *Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1835), though it is an apology for Picton and defensive of the

governorship of Trinidad. After the military reduced its forces in the 1780s, Picton struggled to win an appointment. When Spain ceded control of Trinidad in 1797, however, Picton's military skill and Spanish fluency made him a prime candidate to become the island's governor. Sir Ralph Abercromby, commander-in-chief of the Leeward Islands, appointed Picton to the position, which he assumed later that year.

**Figure 5.1: "Sir Thomas Picton," c. 1810**



Image Courtesy of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

While Picton succeeded, by some measures, in calming the island after its conquest, he struggled under Westminster's interference. Convinced of political corruption and tyranny in the West Indies, Prime Minister Addington reorganized the

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events surrounding the Calderon trial. See also: Robert Havard, "Picton, Sir Thomas (1758-1815)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, v. 44 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 238-43.

administration of several Caribbean islands. In 1802 he put Trinidad “in commission,” forcing Picton to serve as co-administrator of the island with two new arrivals: Scottish colonel William Fullarton, who had previously served in India, and naval captain Samuel Hood. Picton took offense to the reorganization and bristled at the controlling presence of Fullarton, who landed in Trinidad on January 4, 1803. The two personalities immediately clashed as Fullarton attempted to reform island governance. Within six weeks of Fullarton’s appearance, Picton resigned his post and returned to Britain.

Upon arriving in London, Picton discovered that Fullarton had filed charges against him for torturing a mixed-race Trinidadian. The incident dated back to 1801 when Louisa Calderon had been arrested in conjunction with a burglary. The young woman of color lived as the mistress of Pedro Ruiz, whose house had been robbed. Authorities suspected Carlos Gonzalez of the crime, and learned that he and Calderon were rumored to have had a secret relationship. Gonzalez and Calderon were both arrested and later interrogated. When Picton learned of the arrest, he ordered – or at least conceded to – the torture of Calderon to extract evidence. Fullarton alleged that the method of torture used was not tolerated under British law, especially for minors like Calderon, whom he estimated to be younger than fourteen. Before Picton could dispute these claims, Fullarton took his arguments to the court of public opinion.

Soon after Picton left Trinidad, Fullarton followed him to England, peppering the government with letters against the former Governor. In particular, he pointed to Picton’s general actions against Trinidad’s mixed-race population. Fullarton brought forth a litany of cases in which free people of color, primarily exiles from French islands, suffered at Picton’s hands. The Governor had hanged a free mulatto, Jean Baptiste

Richard, in 1797 for having brought three French men of color into Trinidad. Fullarton laid out six additional cases of torture and execution, each involving black or mixed-race inhabitants.<sup>91</sup> Every one of these charges characterized Picton as a brute intent on establishing Trinidad's security through tyranny.

This correspondence represented only a first line of attack, as Fullarton next hoped to convince the British public of the former Governor's guilt.<sup>92</sup> In 1804 he published a pamphlet which brought forward yet more evidence of Picton's cruelty toward Trinidad's mixed-race population. The tract contained additional offenses, such as the imprisonment of a mixed-race man in February 1803 "without any Crime specified." More meticulously, Fullarton described an odd event between himself and Picton. Madame Jeanne Louise Duval, a mixed-race woman from Martinique, had asked Fullarton for permission to enter Trinidad in order to settle her affairs – a request the Colonel granted. Upon learning of the authorization, however, Picton invalidated it and demanded that Duval be sent off immediately. The two commissioners fought over her fate in a very public fashion: "General Picton thought proper to make a public disturbance in the gallery of the drawing-room at Colonel Fullarton's house, in the presence of Mrs. Fullarton and a number of gentlemen sitting there at coffee."<sup>93</sup> As before, the Colonel used the event to demonstrate Picton's deep mistrust and persecution of mixed-race West Indians.

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<sup>91</sup> William Fullarton to Lord Hobart, December 15-21, 1803, CO 295/6, ff. 3-5, NAE.

<sup>92</sup> Fullarton was not the only one who took the issue to the court of public opinion. Pierre McCallum, one of Fullarton's supporters, lambasted Picton in an account of his voyage to Trinidad. In particular, he supported Fullarton's suspicion of the political machinations of Picton's mistress of color, Rosetta Smith: *Travels in Trinidad* (Liverpool, 1805), 139-58, 215-16.

<sup>93</sup> Colonel William Fullarton, *A Statement, Letters, and Documents, Respecting the Affairs of Trinidad: Including a Reply to Colonel Picton's Address to the Council of that Island* (London, 1804), 9, 50-53.

Twisting the knife further, Fullarton exposed Picton's domestic life on the island to prove the former Governor's hypocrisy. In Trinidad, Picton lived with Rosetta Smith, a mixed-race woman with whom he had four children.<sup>94</sup> Fullarton uncovered the relationship, and condemned Picton for "granting to Mrs. Rosetta Smith . . . a Contract for supplying the Soldiers Barracks with Wood . . . [and] For illegally employing Soldiers." If Picton truly felt threatened by Trinidad's mixed-race population, Fullarton alleged that he would not have entrusted one of its members to sit so close to governmental power. Finalizing his case, Fullarton included several letters and statements between himself and Trinidad's mixed-race community, in which the latter proclaimed their strong support for Fullarton's gentler approach.<sup>95</sup> William Fullarton thus painted a scathing portrait of Picton long before the trial commenced.

Picton's unease with mixed-race people stemmed from the still-raging Revolution in St. Domingue. West Indian whites worried about a pan-Caribbean rebellion exported through mixed-race migrants. Many of Britain's West Indian colonies, including St. Kitts and Grenada, banned foreign islanders of color altogether at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>96</sup> Because so many Eastern-Caribbean islands had only recently come into British hands from the Spanish and French, officials there worried more acutely about the revolutionary potential of their islands' communities of color. Trinidad had officially barred foreigners of color from entering the islands – explaining Picton's anger over the Madame Duval episode. Picton himself issued an 1802 proclamation

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<sup>94</sup> Picton provided one thousand pounds apiece for these mixed-race children in his will, executed nearly a decade after his trial over the Calderon affair: Will of Thomas Picton, July 5, 1815, PROB 11/1571, NAE.

<sup>95</sup> Fullarton, *A Statement*, 41-44, 114-16, 192-93.

<sup>96</sup> Edward L. Cox, *Free Coloreds in the Slave Societies of St. Kitts and Grenada, 1763-1833* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 83

against those “now employing every incendiary means to infuse a spirit of insubordination amongst the Negroes and People of Colour” in Trinidad.<sup>97</sup>

Hoping to counter Fullarton’s barrage of correspondence, Picton sent out his own letters explaining this control over Trinidad’s mixed-race population. “I took upon myself the Military Command of a Colony,” Picton wrote to the Duke of York, with “a population composed almost wholly of French People of Colour who, after participating in the Insurrection and Revolutions, of all the unfortunate neighbouring Islands, at length, sought an Assylum, covered with Blood & Infamy in this deplorable Colony.”<sup>98</sup> His replacement, Frederick Maitland, agreed with Picton’s assessment, and commended him for staving off revolt.<sup>99</sup> While there is no evidence that Trinidad’s population of color planned an insurrection, Picton’s fears were consistent with many other officials’ in the West Indies.<sup>100</sup> The Revolution in St. Domingue, nearing its final, heated stages at the end of Picton’s governorship, still caused panic throughout the Caribbean. Its specter would eventually loom over Picton’s trial in London as well.

When the King’s Bench finally heard the case in February 1806, it focused principally upon one question: whether the Governor had illegally tortured Louisa Calderon. During the young woman’s interrogation, Picton had allowed authorities to “picket” her: a method which suspended a victim by the wrist, while he or she balanced upon a pointed object with one foot (see Figure 5.2). Officials tortured her in this manner twice, in a fifty-minute session and another twenty-minute one. The defense

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<sup>97</sup> “Proclamation by His Excellency Thomas Picton, against certain well-known seditious Characters, dated Feb. 5, 1802,” as quoted in Fullarton, *A Statement*, 145.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas Picton to the Duke of York, October 31, 1803, CO 295/6, f. 323, NAE.

<sup>99</sup> Frederick Maitland to Mr. Brownrigg, June 5, 1802, in *ibid.*, f. 329.

<sup>100</sup> Trinidad, at this point, was still very rural, without much of a cosmopolitan epicenter from which to plot an insurrection amongst free people of color.

acknowledged these events, but argued that Picton had not breached island law. Because Trinidad had only recently come under British jurisdiction, the defense claimed that the island was still in a transitional legal state when the picketing occurred. Spanish law was still in use according to Picton's attorneys, and it did not ban the interrogation technique. Rebutting this charge, the prosecution insisted that Spain's colonies had indeed proscribed picketing, and that they did not allow its use on minors regardless. Furthermore, even if the old system tolerated torture, the island no longer came under Spanish legal jurisdiction. From such arguments, the case became one centered on virtuous British imperialism against the depredations of Spain. Lead prosecutor William Garrow scolded Picton, as "a British governor, [who] had an English heart beating in his bosom . . . ought to have required no legal advice, no auditor, and no assessor, to have told him of [picketing's] illegality."<sup>101</sup> Still, the court had to decide which system of jurisprudence applied, and if it condoned torture. Judge Lord Ellenborough admitted his own confusion, not only of the newly-acquired island's legal standing, but of "[t]he law of Jamaica, and various other dependences on the British government, [which] is totally different from that of the mother country."<sup>102</sup> Mirroring perfectly the abolition movement's debates, the case turned on issues of legal difference between colony and metropole, as well as fears of Spanish incursion into the British Empire.

Reengaged with such questions of Spanish and colonial regulation, public reactions to the trial mimicked those of the pro-slavery interest's aspersions of abolitionism. The court had brought forward Spanish law records and experts to

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<sup>101</sup> William Garrow, as quoted in Pierre McCallum, *The Trial of Governor T. Picton, For Inflicting the Torture on Louisa Calderon, a Free Mulatto, and one of His Britannic Majesty's Subjects, in the Island of Trinidad* (London, 1806), 114.

<sup>102</sup> Lord Ellenborough, as quoted in *ibid.*, 124.

determine picketing's previous legality – a step which incited numerous protests.

Chastising the trial for such consideration, Edward Draper lamented the “inauspicious day, I much fear, that the Court at Westminster Hall . . . resolved itself into a Spanish criminal court.” For Draper, trying a British Governor under Spanish statute seemed to degrade British law and sovereignty. Mixing the two empires' legal structures would dilute British prowess and direct it more closely toward the Spanish system. Draper also mocked Garrow for “flounder[ing] in the mud of Spanish law.”<sup>103</sup> Just as Long had criticized abolitionist efforts to bring Britain more in line with the “mongrelized” people and administration of Spain, Picton's supporters believed that the trial had appropriated that same system. As late as 1806, therefore, early-abolition rhetoric still held discursive currency in the public arena. It also touched upon central concerns over the scope and outlook of Britain's changing empire.

These deliberations on imperial administration were not new to many of the trial's key players. Both Ellenborough and Picton's defense attorney, Robert Dallas, had served as counsel to Warren Hastings in his famous trial for murder and extortion of East-Indian natives. The House of Commons impeached Hastings as Governor-General of India in 1788 before acquitting him of all charges seven years later. Although ostensibly concerned with matters of improper force, Hastings's trial ultimately became a spectacle centering on anxieties over colonial management. Daily proceedings inundated the press, drawing the public into debates on the nature of British imperialism and its moral character. In many ways, Picton's trial rehearsed this same chorus of questions. Robert Dallas took a near-identical approach in defending his client. Once more, he held up

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<sup>103</sup> Edward Draper, *An Address to the British Public, on the Case of Brigadier-General Picton* (London, 1806), xiii., 150-51.

matters of security and the need to achieve them by force as a central component of British imperialism. Interestingly, Picton's prosecutor, William Garrow, would later adjudicate the trial of William Davidson (discussed in Chapter 4). For Garrow, the Picton case acted as an early initiation into matters of racial mixture in the Empire, and more specifically of Britain's mixed-race presence.

Picton's case emerged as something of a cause célèbre in Britain – one prominently reported by the press and consumed by an attentive domestic audience. In his prosecution, Garrow produced a colored picture depicting Calderon's torture (much like that of Figure 5.2). He showed it to the jury, as well as to Louisa Calderon herself, whom the Crown had brought to London in order to testify. Pierre McCallum reported that the “exhibition occasioned [Calderon] to shudder in a way which nothing but the terrific recollection of her sufferings could have excited.”<sup>104</sup> Dallas railed against the exhibit, particularly for its possible influence on the jury. Although Ellenborough asked jurors “not to suffer their minds to be inflamed” by the image, he conceded that the court did not endorse its display.<sup>105</sup> One contributor to *The Anti-Jacobin Review* condemned Ellenborough for allowing the picture to be shown. The author believed that its use violated legal propriety: “Of all the circumstances which took place in the course of the trial, the most novel and striking, was the introduction of a painting, representing Louisa Calderon undergoing the punishment of the picquet. The effect it was artfully calculated to produce, I cannot . . . describe.”<sup>106</sup> Another critique in the *Review* congratulated Garrow on his dramatic ability to portray Calderon's harrowing ordeal. Claiming that

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>105</sup> Donald Thomas, ed., *State Trials, Volume 2: The Public Conscience* (Boston: Routledge, 1972), 198.

<sup>106</sup> “Amicus Curiae,” “To the Right Honourable Lord Ellenborough” *The Anti-Jacobin Review* (London), vol. 24, no. 48, August, 1806, 445.

Garrow had turned the Old Bailey into a theater, the author grieved, “The ancients pictured the Goddess of Justice with a bandage over her eyes . . . [Garrow] tor[e] off this sacred veil to inflame the passions of your audience, instead of appealing to their understandings.”<sup>107</sup> Fully aware of the image’s remarkable effect, Picton’s supporters worried about its influence on the jury. Perhaps even more, they agonized over its potential impact on those outside the courtroom.

**Figure 5.2: Calderon’s Torture, from *The Trial of Governor Picton*<sup>108</sup>**



Image courtesy of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies Library, London.

<sup>107</sup> “Valerius,” “To William Garrow,” in *ibid.*, 506-08.

<sup>108</sup> Frontispiece, McCallum, *Trial of Governor Picton*.

As damaging as the image could be in front of a jury, its potential to tarnish Picton publicly could be worse. After expressing his disappointment over the pictures' display in court, Robert Dallas desired "that they have been confined to this place; I hope they have not been exhibited out of Court, to influence the judgment, and inflame the passions of the public."<sup>109</sup> He would not get his wish. An 1835 biography of Picton complained that "coloured drawings were paraded through the streets, calling forth the public commiseration, by exhibiting the '*picture of the girl*.'"<sup>110</sup> Edward Draper's defense of Picton also condemned public viewing of the illustration. In particular, he decried the image's poisonous spread through every region of the country, as well as its permeation into both the "middling and lower classes."<sup>111</sup> Depictions of Calderon, according to Draper, became as much a business preying upon British sentimentality as it was an argument for legal justice. He grumbled over its ubiquity:

the placards, and the posture master figures, the blacks and the whites, the spikes and the pulleys, and the whole *tasteful* apparatus of beautiful imagery that have been exhibited to the good people of London, and exported in wagon loads in octavos, duodecimos, and quartos cut down, in pamphlets, half pamphlets, all at reduced prices, to the wholesale and retail dealers in the country.<sup>112</sup>

Those who traded in such portrayals, Draper argued, simply capitalized on the previous fervors surrounding John Wilkes and the French Revolution. In Draper's view, Garrow used the image of Calderon's torture to arouse "an unthinking rabble" to renew those movements' "expiring strength."<sup>113</sup>

The image's dramatic public effect came from its appeal to sentimentality and humanitarianism at a crucial moment immediately before abolitionism's ultimate success.

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<sup>109</sup> Robert Dallas, quoted in McCallum, *Trial of Governor Picton*, 51.

<sup>110</sup> Robinson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 140.

<sup>111</sup> Draper, *An Address to the British Public*, ix., 257.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

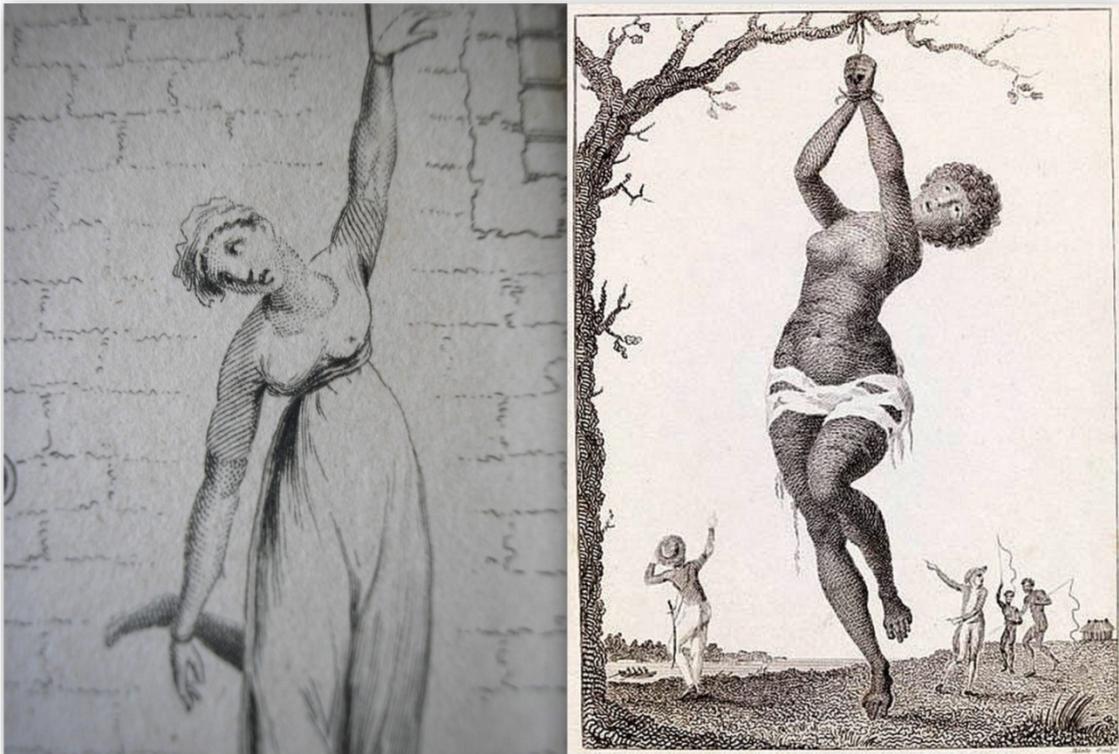
James Epstein has rightfully pointed to the picture's similarity to another memorable portrait from the period: William Blake's "Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave," from John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition* (see Figure 5.3).<sup>114</sup> Both scenes use the meting out of violence to arouse sympathy for individuals of African descent. Again, Epstein's analysis deftly connects the two images to Karen Halttunen's arguments about the links between a "pornography of pain" and humanitarianism in Anglo-American culture.<sup>115</sup> Considering the popularity of Stedman's *Narrative*, those who viewed Calderon's portrayal would have associated it with Blake's engraving. Similarities between both images' illustration of a woman hanging by the wrist and balancing upon one foot connected anti-Picton propaganda to the decades-old interest in slave amelioration. Calderon's torture, tried a year before the official end of Britain's slave trade, aroused such public sympathy because it embodied so many facets of the abolition movement. Those who wished to drum up popular support for her cause naturally strengthened those links in the public sphere.

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<sup>114</sup> James Epstein, "AHR Forum: Politics of Colonial Sensation: The Trial of Thomas Picton and the Cause of Louisa Calderon," *The American Historical Review* (June 2007), <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/112.3/epstein.html>, accessed July 10, 2008.

<sup>115</sup> Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 303–334. See also: Marcus Wood, "John Gabriel Stedman, William Blake, Francesco Bartolozzi and empathetic pornography in the *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*," in *An economy of colour: Visual culture and the Atlantic world, 1660-1830*, eds. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 129-49.

**Figure 5.3: Calderon’s Torture, and “Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave,”  
by William Blake, 1793<sup>116</sup>**



Interest in Calderon’s torture, provoked by her infamous depiction, stimulated public curiosity about the woman herself. Calderon’s presence in London elicited a wide range of reactions, similar to the general British discourse on elite migrants of color. While Garrow repeatedly referred to Calderon as a “blessed innocent” and one of His Majesty’s subjects, others openly reviled such praise.<sup>117</sup> Draper insisted that Calderon did not fall into British subjecthood, and condemned the prosecution for bringing her to Britain. He also labeled Calderon as a “hypocritical mulata prostitute, [and] self-convicted robber, introduced into Westminster Hall.” Draper wondered why “the peculiar boast and glory of the English nation, be perverted to the basest and most

<sup>116</sup> From John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (London, 1796).

<sup>117</sup> Garrow, quoted in *State Trials, Volume 2*, 160, 170.

degrading purposes” of hosting this Caribbean woman of color.<sup>118</sup> Picton’s later memoirist echoed these castigations. H. B. Robinson asked how Garrow had appealed to the “humanity and passions of the public in favour of a common mulatto girl, of the vilest class and most corrupt morals.”<sup>119</sup> Portrayals of Calderon in the press latched onto her mixed-race status in order to question her veracity and social standing. Without exception, Picton’s defenders argued that Calderon did not belong in Britain. One commentator, reviewing a poem on Picton’s prosecution, used this language of social disconnection: “[the verse] exhibits a kind of *mulatto metre*, neither one thing nor the other, neither poetry nor truth.”<sup>120</sup> The critique contained an implicit reference to Calderon’s racial indeterminism, which hinted at her lack of social place in white Britain.

Many more observers scoffed at Calderon’s introduction into British society. Prior to the London trial, William Fullarton brought Louisa Calderon to Scotland, where she met a number of his friends and family. During a stay in Ayr, John Downie wrote of his astonishment “When I was told, that along with Colonel Fullarton there had arrived, with his lady, ‘a Mademoiselle Louisa Calderon,’ whom the Colonel and Mrs. F. paraded about with them in their carriage, introducing her *wherever* they went.”<sup>121</sup> *The Anti-Jacobin Review* published Downie’s letter to further vilify Calderon’s presence in Britain: “This introduction of a little abandoned thief and prostitute in a country where decency and sobriety of manners, respect for virtue, and abhorrence from vice, prevail

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<sup>118</sup> Draper, *An Address to the British Public*, 58-59, 148.

<sup>119</sup> Robinson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 186.

<sup>120</sup> Review of “The Pictonian Prosecution,” *The Anti-Jacobin Review* (London), vol. 26, no. 54, February 1807, 186.

<sup>121</sup> Letter from John Downie, quoted in Draper, *An Address to the British Public*, 184.

. . . was such a gross and intolerable insult, as will, no doubt, be properly resented by the respectable persons to whom it was offered.”<sup>122</sup> Britain’s literati fretted over Calderon’s presence in metropolitan high society in much the same fashion as abolition theorists worried over the arrival of elite children of color.<sup>123</sup> Chastised as a poor mulatta, and therefore prone to sexual libertinism, Calderon’s ancestry sparked fears of racial dissolution and its threat to the emerging British nation. As Robinson would declare nearly thirty years later:

The introduction of Miss Luise into such good society might have been exceedingly agreeable to all parties; but as the ladies of Scotland are rather famous for their uncompromising sense of decorum, it seems strange that they should have exposed themselves to the contaminating influence of [this] young lady.<sup>124</sup>

Trial proceedings also included references to Calderon’s sexuality, particularly in light of her West Indian origins. General obsessions with Caribbean bodies and mixed-race eroticism came to influence arguments over Calderon’s torture. Garrow hoped to prove the young woman’s minority at the time of her interrogation, thereby establishing that her treatment constituted torture. The principal evidence indicating that Calderon had not reached maturity came from colonial testimony reporting that she “had no

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<sup>122</sup> “The Pictonian Prosecution,” *The Anti-Jacobin Review* (London), vol. 24, no. 45, May 1806, 64.

<sup>123</sup> This concern over a mixed-race presence in Britain was not only among those who supported Picton. Thomas Peregrine Courtenay railed against *The Anti-Jacobin Review*’s diatribes on Colonel Fullarton by claiming that many of the damning remarks had been written to the magazine by a man of color from York: “if [the writer] be this *tawny man of Y—k* himself, it is truly ridiculous to hear *him* talk of *glorying* in the *name* and *character* even of Colonel Picton, or of any man who has a name and character, however bad they may be. The name, character, and qualities of Colonel Fullarton would indeed ill befit *such a mongrel*: but, certainly, the *real* qualities and conduct of Colonel Picton would have been more befitting this *man of Y—k* than himself. HE, who cannot possibly be known to be the son of *any white* man, *because he is not white*; and yet would disclaim a *negro* father, *because he is not black*”: Thomas Peregrine Courtenay, *Letters of Decius, in Answer to the Criticism upon the Political Account of Trinidad; and upon the Defence of the Crimes of Governor Picton, in the Anti-Jacobin Review, under the Title of the ‘Pictonian Prosecution’* (London: 1808), 60-61. Anti-mixed-race rage, then, did not rest solely in the Picton camp, and indeed, this rant against a Yorkshire man of color may have been the product of the trial’s heightened attention to the issue of mixed-race migration.

<sup>124</sup> Robinson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 178.

breasts.”<sup>125</sup> Dallas objected, pointing to Calderon’s relationship with Pedro Ruiz to prove her sexual maturity and adulthood. Garrow, in turn, responded that “in that hot climate where the puberty of females is much accelerated, it is common for them to become mothers at the age of twelve; at that early period they either marry, or enter into a state of concubinage.”<sup>126</sup> The sexual qualities of mixed-race women once again gained the curious attention of a domestic British audience. Having cohabited with Ruiz while carrying on a relationship with Carlos Gonzalez, Calderon seemed to embody the stereotypical Caribbean mistress of color. Her sexuality became central to the case, engendering greater interest in her torture and the “pornography of pain” which it elicited. As it had for other West Indian migrants of color, sexualized notions of character followed Calderon from the islands to Britain.

Anxieties over Calderon’s libido fed rumors about her connections in Britain. With her reputation as a mistress, Calderon’s association with William Fullarton came under close scrutiny. Ever willing to disparage Fullarton, *The Anti-Jacobin Review* printed gossip about the two in Scotland. “We have heard, from good authority, that this *interesting young lady* has been delivered of a child, since she has had the happiness and the honour of being under the protection of Mr. Fullarton,” the *Review* published in May of 1806: “Let it not be supposed, however, for a moment, that we mean to insinuate, that the Laird of Fullarton is the father of this *bairne*.”<sup>127</sup> Naturally, the connection was intended and others soon picked up the story. Declaring Calderon a prostitute, Archibald Gloster supported his assertion with the *Review*’s rumor: “It must be particularly

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<sup>125</sup> Thomas Picton, *Evidence Taken at Port of Spain, Island of Trinidad, in the Case of Luisa Calderon* (London, 1806), 61.

<sup>126</sup> William Garrow, as quoted in *State Trials, Volume 2*, 170.

<sup>127</sup> “The Pictonian Prosecution,” *The Anti-Jacobin Review* (London), vol. 24, no. 45, May 1806, 57.

gratifying to Mr. Fullarton, that this virtuous young lady has insured a continuance of her fair race, by producing an heir to all her virtues, whilst under his philanthropic protection.”<sup>128</sup> Gloster’s implication mirrored many contemporary opinions that elite migrants of color would automatically form miscegenous unions in Britain. Mixed-race assimilation into British society, particularly while under white patronage, was understood to include sexual congress with whites. Gloster’s comments linked Calderon’s lasciviousness to Fullarton’s philanthropy, once again underscoring the ties between mixed-race migration and abolitionism.

Insinuations over Calderon’s potential pregnancy did not die quickly. Rather, the rumor lived on, frequently plaguing Fullarton’s household. Editorials printed by the *Review* in 1808 rekindled interest in Calderon’s supposed Scottish child. One letter blamed Fullarton’s wife for the pregnancy. Asserting that Mrs. Fullarton associated “with mulattoes, and mulattresses” while in Trinidad, the author claimed that she carried these sympathies with her back to Scotland, allowing her to indulge Louisa Calderon: “this prostitute lived in your house for some time, and whilst in your family had been got with child by some person.” Furthermore, the author accused, “the reputed father of the child was known to you, and that it was reported you had declared you would protect the offspring of the virtuous Colonel’s protégée.”<sup>129</sup> The editorial chided Fullarton for her lack of sexual surveillance and constraint over a woman of color in Britain. Such toleration of mixed-race sexuality violated colonial protocol, to say nothing of metropolitan norms. Families and guardians of mixed-race migrants had to restrain their charges of color, both financially and reproductively, in this new, post-abolition age.

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<sup>128</sup> Archibald Gloster, *A Letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Buckinghamshire... Respecting Affairs in Trinidad in 1803, and in Answer to William Fullarton, Esq.* (London, 1807), 24n.

<sup>129</sup> “Decius Alter,” in *The Anti-Jacobin Review* (London), vol. 30, no. 69, May 1808, 99-100.

Despite the public clamor, suggestions about the Fullartons' indulgences were groundless. Soon after arriving in Britain, Calderon had to appeal to the government for "being in want of necessary Subsistence."<sup>130</sup> Yet notions of her sexual promiscuity in Britain reflected a growing concern over West Indian migrants of color, and their ability to infiltrate society's upper ranks. Diatribes against a pregnant Calderon appropriated abolition discourse on colonial and metropolitan miscegenation. In many ways, Picton's trial solidified these broad, general anxieties toward mixed-race immigrants. Diffuse concerns about partnerships with individuals of color could now crystallize around a solitary event, allowing for a more specific attack against mixed relations in Britain.

The court's verdict did nothing to quell these fears about mixed-race influence. Deciding only on whether picketing constituted torture in Spanish law, the jury found the former governor guilty. Immediately, his lawyers filed an appeal. Picton's second trial determined that picketing was a legal means of interrogation, effectively acquitting him of all charges. Nevertheless, the initial conviction enraged Picton's supporters. A full year after the exoneration, periodicals and pamphlets still grumbled over the court's original verdict. Picton's conviction, along with the subsequent abolition of the slave trade, reinforced apocalyptic visions of Britain's future empire. The trial galvanized many opinions, and clarified somewhat opaque concerns about mixed-race migration and imperial stability.

## **Conclusion**

In the years following Picton's trial, British observers frequently referenced it as a shameful event in the Empire's past. For those moved by Calderon's ordeal, the trial

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<sup>130</sup> Louisa Calderon to William Fawkener, May 16, 1804, PC 1/3557, NAE.

reflected a growing need to reform British colonialism, and moderate attitudes toward individuals of color. Amongst those behind Picton, however, the case indicated a dangerous trend toward moderation and appeasement which would undue imperial security. Indeed, in an 1810 article on Trinidadian law, one essayist surely thought of Picton when considering the colony's growing toleration for mixed-race people. In particular, the author worried about the arrival of a mixed-race emissary from the island. Trinidad's population of color had "deputed one of their own tawny tribe to come to England and present the petition," the author noted, echoing back to Calderon's earlier landing in Britain. Wary of bolstering mixed-race rights, the author fell back onto old debates linking abolitionism, the Revolution in St. Domingue, and the place of migrants of color in that insurrection. "[L]et these inhuman Philanthropists" advocating for emancipation, the author argued, "bear in mind, that they have a lesson before them in the massacres of St. Domingo and Guadaloupe, which originated, precisely in the same cause, - the assertion of their *natural rights* by the mulattoes."<sup>131</sup> Thus, for those who worried over slave reform, the connections between these different phenomena were still strong and relevant, even after the slave trade had come to an end.

Abolitionism went through many phases, encompassing a number of different discourses over the course of its life-span. As the movement threatened one of Britain's most lucrative trades, individuals from all corners of life joined the debate. Hyperbolic prophecies on the future of Britain's racial character emerged from demographic arguments, thereby condemning the arrival of mixed-race individuals from the Caribbean. At the same time, events in rival islands reinforced the political dangers in sending children of color to the mother country. Each of these individual concerns joined to

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<sup>131</sup> *The Anti-Jacobin Review* (London), vol. 37, no. 147, September 1810, 57.

create a blanket distrust of mixed-race migration. By the time of Thomas Picton's hearing, those connections were firmly established and dominated the trial's proceedings.

West Indians of color who landed in Britain, therefore, came under increasing pressure as wider political events unfolded around them. Public interest in their arrival materialized only as the abolition movement, and news of the St. Domingue Revolution, emerged in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Prior to those developments, their presence posed little serious political or demographic threat. Although mixed-race migration increased at the end of the century (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2), the growth in absolute numbers was not significant enough to inspire genuine social alarm. Instead, polarized rhetoric within the abolition debate tarnished these migrants as socially problematic. As the biographies in Chapter 4 indicate, such prejudice did not necessarily trickle-down to the individual level. Many families cared for mixed-race relatives as readily in the nineteenth century as their peers had in the eighteenth. Yet, the experiences of the Macpherson family, as well as William Davidson and Robert Wedderburn, show a constriction in British racial tolerance by 1820, even at the family level. A half-century of public pressure against mixed-race migrants had undoubtedly affected personal opinions, even if British families were still opening their homes to relatives of color.

## CHAPTER 6

### Depictions of Mixed-Race Migrants in British Literature

#### Introduction

Five short years after surviving capture by privateers off the coast of Barbados, Henry Senior wrote his ordeal into a semi-fictional account of West Indian life.<sup>1</sup> Upon regaining his freedom in 1814, he meticulously recorded his experiences into a journal that would later inform the novel. Henry's brother, the famed economist Nassau Senior supervised the writing and helped to craft the narrative around the kidnapping. Like any good sentimental tale of the period, the story involved postponed love and romantic tragedy. Setting the novel in the Caribbean, however, Henry and Nassau did not bowdlerize the traditional structure of West Indian couples. Instead, they played on their protagonist's heart-rending devotion to a mixed-race lover. Having never visited the tropics himself, Nassau had little idea what to make of this companion of color, Julia. He admitted, "Julia is a delightful creature & your creation. I will not meddle with her." But he openly questioned: "what is [the protagonist] to do with Julia? Gratitude & honor make it impossible to desert her. . . . If he marries her, setting his own feelings of pride aside, he never can hope to bring her into society – she will be a clog to him in his own views of improving the island." Nevertheless, this narrative conundrum ultimately fit well into Nassau's vision of a novel overflowing with emotion. According to him, two

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the journal can be found in MS 1966, NLJ; the original is housed in NLW.

things had to happen in the text: first, “All the Jamaica prejudices of ‘colour’ must be set forth in their strongest light” to reinforce Julia as a tragic figure; and, secondly, Henry had to “let Julia die. Her death had to be detailed & come unexpectedly on the reader.”<sup>2</sup>

By the time Henry Senior finished his draft of the novel *Charles Vernon: A Transatlantic Tale* in 1819 – and which he would wait thirty years to publish – mixed-race women had dominated both travel and fictional literature on the West Indies. Mary Louise Pratt has uncovered the trope of women of color in the early-modern period, and the importance of their racial hybridity to narrative functions.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Nassau’s letter to Henry indicates his own understanding of the formulaic nature of such depictions. Yet, still another character of color looms in Senior’s novel, occupying a different and thoroughly understudied literary convention all its own: the protagonist’s mixed-race child who travels to Britain.

Henry complied with his brother’s request to kill off Julia, so as to allow Charles Vernon to marry a more suitable prospect: a white woman named Emily. The page before her death, however, Julia gives birth to the couple’s daughter in Jamaica. Nothing else is said of the child until the novel’s final paragraph. Charles and Emily, now married and settled in Devon, were “childless, but a fair girl about seven years old was playing on the lawn with . . . Hector, whom she was taught to call cousin. The beautiful child’s name was Julia.”<sup>4</sup> Henry Senior may have decided to transport Charles and Julia’s mixed-race child to Britain as a coda to their passionate and tragic relationship in Jamaica. But in choosing such an ending, Senior relied upon a common convention of

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<sup>2</sup> Nassau Senior to Henry Senior, February 9, 1819, MS E140, Nassau Senior Papers, NLW.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 97-100. See also: Carol Barash, “The Character of Difference: The Creole Woman as Cultural Mediator in Narratives about Jamaica,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23, no. 4 (Summer 1990): 406-24.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Senior, *Charles Vernon: A Transatlantic Tale*, vol. 2 (London, 1849), 353.

late-Georgian literature. While scholars have examined the frequency and importance of Victorian narratives depicting mixed-race characters in Britain, this chapter asserts that the literary device had much earlier foundations. In fact, the overlap between abolition and sentimentality helped to spawn and popularize metropolitan residents of color in British literature at the end of the eighteenth century, at the same time that the trope fell further away from any firsthand knowledge of the group.

This chapter argues that British literature absorbed and reflected a growing political criticism over mixed-race inheritance and sexuality in the metropole at the turn of the nineteenth century. This was partly due to sentimental writing's interest in questions of abolition. More important, however, was metropolitan society's growing worry over the financial and hereditary impact of mixed-race migrants – fears that fit well into these literary conventions. With such a focus on wealth and sexuality, this chapter will not examine mixed-race servants as characters. A number of novels included such depictions, but lower class and social positions made them quite distinct figures from elite migrants, and therefore representative of different societal concerns.<sup>5</sup>

Portrayals of mixed-race Britons at the turn of the nineteenth century came primarily from the popular genre of sentimental romance. Made famous by Samuel Richardson in the 1740s, sentimentalism as a form carried with it a number of standard conventions. Illegitimate birth, or eventual orphanage, dominated these tales, particularly because it reinforced the financial and emotional vulnerability of a protagonist. Sub-plots

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<sup>5</sup> Sara Salih groups both elite and servant together in her thorough piece, "The Silence of Miss Lambe: *Sanditon* and Fictions of 'Race' in the Abolition Era," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 329-53. Salih deftly exposes the racial concerns central to these characters, but does not portray it as two separate miscegenational threats (from both rich and poor individuals of African descent). See also her forthcoming work *Representing Mixed Race Women: The 'Brown Woman' in Jamaica and England from the Abolition Era to the Present*.

involving the main character's inheritance were therefore crucial to these stories as well. Indeed, romantic tales throughout history have typically "expresse[d] a transitional moment," and more recently "nostalgia for a social order in the process of being undermined and destroyed by nascent capitalism."<sup>6</sup> The near ubiquity of these conventions in sentimental writing speaks to British society's general alarm over status and birthright. Genre writing makes explicit political and social claims simply by playing upon a formula, and sentimentalism continually worked through these complicated matters.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, literary concerns over illegitimacy and inheritance reflected wider social fears of new economic and political forces that appeared to weaken "traditional" family structures.

Sentimental literature became such a uniform genre by the end of the eighteenth century that many primary and secondary plots remained identical between works. Protagonists, whether male or female, almost universally labored as illegitimate or orphaned, and thus cut-off from a rightful legacy. Successful marriage at the novels' ends corrected those wrongs, or uncovered their mistaken foundation. So consistent was this device that authors had little room to deviate from it if they wished to court a popular audience. Character variation, then, became the instrument by which to place greater emphasis upon one idea over another.

Tropes of bastardy and inheritance were central to the eventual incorporation of mixed-race migrants into British literature, signifying those characters' place as symbols of social upheaval. As the children of enslaved mothers, these figures were uniformly

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<sup>6</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre," *New Literary History* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 158.

<sup>7</sup> For more on Jameson's theory of genre writing as a political action, see: *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 103-50.

illegitimate. This legal status, along with large colonial subsidization, naturally made them vehicles for discussing complications in family inheritance. Indeed, when analyzing migrants of color in Georgian literature, issues of race must not be privileged over themes of legitimacy and legacy. While considerations of race were important, they were tied up in larger literary tropes standard to novels from the period.

This chapter will examine fictional representations of mixed-race migrants as expressions of two primary themes: the insecurity of British family fortunes, and the threat to British bloodlines – particularly in the upper classes. Sentimental literature obsessed over the former category; increased illegitimacy and the eighteenth century's riskier financial climate contributed to fears over estate dispersal. Elite travelers of color were hyperbolic manifestations of that concern. Both illegitimate and supported by some of the Empire's largest fortunes, they represented the most extreme version of improper inheritance. Bearing a darker complexion made matters worse. Such wealth fed into anxieties over the latter category: interracial relations amongst Britain's higher orders. All of the characters examined here attempted to integrate into metropolitan society, sounding an alarm over their potential to marry and produce yet more children of color in Britain. With the concurrent, if not reactionary, growth of an English ethnic nationalism, the prospect of mixed marriages in the imperial center was not well received, and these portrayals exploited such fears.

Drawing entirely from novels of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this chapter reveals the frequency and characteristics of literary depictions of mixed-race migrants to Britain. As many of these works fall into the form of sentimentalism, the chapter will first briefly describe the genre's features. Illegitimacy, inheritance, and

romantic prospects of marriage were central to these stories. Standard tropes established in mid-eighteenth century sentimental literature became joined to later portrayals of mixed-race immigrants. This chapter will next interpret a number of novels with such characters during the period that capitalized on these concerns over heredity and birthright. Generally, authors employed mixed-race figures resident in Britain to underscore the vulnerability of a white protagonist's position within the novel. As rich colonists eager to wed British spouses, the mixed-race immigrant put the poverty and romantic stagnancy of the main character into relief. In these ways, race was both central and peripheral to the literary trope of British residents of color. The characters fit into the well-defined categories of illegitimacy and restructured inheritance within sentimental literature – categories not originally concerned with race – but their complexional difference heightened the literary effect of these tropes.

Although most of the novels discussed here did not find a large audience, they nevertheless speak to public engagement with issues of race and abolition. The figure of the mixed-race foil to a destitute protagonist reveals the ways in which Britons reconciled anxieties about the Empire – particularly in terms of slavery, colonial degeneracy, miscegenation, and imperial identity – without dealing with such questions directly. Understanding the narrative conventions of sentimentality is therefore crucial; rich heirs of color fit into prescribed roles of dramatic tension. Accordingly, mixed-race migrants in a text were not out-of-keeping with traditional styles. Still, their presence demonstrates real concern with questions of race generally, and issues of mixed-race migration specifically. Many of the authors may not have had strong feelings on such matters, but their use of these characters shows the degree to which debate over mixed-

race migration had saturated the public sphere. Ultimately, the literary figure of the mixed-race colonist in Britain reflected the social apprehensions noted throughout this dissertation: fears over her financial independence and ability to start new families in the metropole.

### **Sentimentality and the Tropes of Legitimacy, Legacy, and Romance**

In the long eighteenth century, sentimentality pervaded British writing. Novels, correspondence, and philosophical tracts each reflected its tone during the period. Above all else, sentimental literature was concerned chiefly with emotion. More specifically, it centered on extravagant emotion. The stoic, Hobbesian, Calvinist approach of the seventeenth century gave way to the eighteenth century's more dynamic interest in passion and self-improvement through a reflection upon one's feelings. Scholars have credited the rise of consumer capitalism and subsequent development of leisure to the emergence of sentimentality. The transatlantic Great Awakening, with its evangelical insistence upon personal experience with emotion, helped disseminate these ideas still further.<sup>8</sup> Members of the Scottish Enlightenment also inquired into emotion. David Hume's three-volume *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) explored the ways in which individual feelings could transfer to others, while Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) sought to understand how emotional control could reorganize and benefit society as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Adela Pinch, "Sensibility," in *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Nicholas Roe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 50-51.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), Chapter 1.

Literary scholars have traditionally dated the arrival of sentimentality in fiction to 1740, with the publication of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. The story of a poor working girl, tormented by her employer whom she eventually marries and with whom she becomes a landed lady, popularized emotion as a narrative tool. Richardson's subsequent novel *Clarissa* (1748) continued the theme of social mobility and the dangers associated in "marrying up." *Clarissa*, the young heiress, suffers great trials in her courtship to a man of more-established wealth. Both works privilege romance as the site of highest emotional access, but also emphasize the importance of birth and assets in the composition of one's emotive state. Social rank dominated later novels in the second half of the eighteenth century, building upon Richardson's themes of love delayed and the complications of inheritance.

Such tropes focusing on legitimacy and legacy permeated British literature, as authors rushed to duplicate Richardson's success. Many works of fiction in the eighteenth century, whether or not they qualified as sentimental, exploited the dramatic potential of a lost inheritance, often through the figure of an illegitimate or orphaned child.<sup>10</sup> Within this formula, a protagonist typically struggles under the impression of having been born a bastard. Without legitimate parents, he or she has no money and a mark of social disgrace, thus presenting little incentive to entice future spouses. Much of these stories' drama comes from the main characters' frustrated passion for a much wealthier and more socially-advanced partner. Generally, the tension is resolved upon the protagonist's learning that he or she was orphaned, rather than illegitimate, and also

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<sup>10</sup> This obsession over bastardy had long traditions: Michael Neill, *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 127-47.

entitled to a large fortune. Any hesitations on the partner's family to the match suddenly dissolve, and the novel ends in marriage.

Two conventions stand out in these tales. First is the near ubiquity of parental absence. If the protagonists are not either illegitimate or abandoned, then they often have little immediate parental contact. Pamela's interactions with her father and mother in Richardson's novel, for instance, are entirely through correspondence. Female protagonists typically have fractured relationships with fathers, and, as Ruth Perry notes, aunts often replace unseen mothers in the text. Orphanage, then, need not be literal to be perceived. Secondly, these works show an intense preoccupation with family relations through marriage, particularly in the case of female main characters. Perry argues that bonds of matrimony replaced those of blood in these stories, reflecting the general disinheritance many British women underwent during the period. Fathers gave less generously to daughters in testamentary documents as the eighteenth century progressed, increasing the need for those women to look outside immediate family for support.<sup>11</sup> Equally, interest in bastards and foundlings was, as Lisa Zunshine claims, part of a general concern about the weakened abilities of women to bargain in the social marketplace. The figure of the illegitimate daughter represented the starkest version of that matrimonial vulnerability.<sup>12</sup>

The recurring nature of these formulas indicates a profound sense of unease in Britain about illegitimate birth and issues surrounding inheritance. Many of the

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<sup>11</sup> Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Chapter 2, Chapter 8, 372-73. See also: Alastair Owens, "Property, gender and the life course: inheritance and family welfare provision in early nineteenth-century England," *Social History* 26, no. 3 (October 2001): 299-318.

<sup>12</sup> Lisa Zunshine, *Bastards and Foundlings: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2005), 13-14.

protagonists in these novels are firmly situated within the emerging middle class. Unlike the aristocracy, they are unable to pay off an illegitimate heir, and any complications to a legacy are bound to destroy it altogether. The growth of the market economy, which injected added risk to business and probate matters, aroused heightened fears over the composition of the British family. Literary depictions of bastards and orphans, as Zunshine argues, was “a function of a primarily economic concern about the (re)distribution of family resources.”<sup>13</sup> Increasing bastardy rates in the eighteenth century – either real or perceived – contributed even greater anguish.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the topic of bastards and orphans so permeated British culture that it helped to inspire one of the first massive philanthropic campaigns in England: London’s Foundling Hospital. Hoping to care for what he believed to be a glut of abandoned children in the capital, Thomas Coram established the Hospital in 1739 with funds from a large number of private donors.<sup>15</sup> His success in creating the institution reflected the concern over orphanage in eighteenth-century Britain. In many ways, fictional accounts of illegitimate and neglected children capitalized on this sympathy as well.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>14</sup> For a sense of the debate on illegitimate births in early-modern Britain, see: Richard Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); Rosalind Mitchinson and Leah Leneman, *Sexuality and Social Control: Scotland 1660-1780* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989); John Black, “Who were the Putative Fathers of Illegitimate Children in London, 1740-1810?,” in *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920*, eds. Alys Levene, Thomas Nutt, and Samantha Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50-65; Nicholas Rogers, “Carnal Knowledge: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century Westminster,” *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 355-75; Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Ibid., “Introduction: Comparing Illegitimacy Over Time and Between Cultures,” in *Bastardy and its Comparative History: Studies in the History of Illegitimacy and Marital Nonconformism in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, North America, Jamaica and Japan*, eds. Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen, and Richard Smith (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, Ltd., 1980), 1-50; Andrew Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex and Society: Northeast Scotland, 1750-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Belinda Meteyard, “Illegitimacy and Marriage in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 3 (Winter 1980): 479-89.

<sup>15</sup> Gillian Pugh, *London’s Forgotten Children: Thomas Coram and the Foundling Hospital* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2007); Ruth McLure, *Coram’s Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

When authors began inserting mixed-race figures into their stories, they drew on these conventions surrounding inheritance and troubled parentage. Virtually all travelers of color were born out of wedlock, and most arrived with large fortunes which appeared to compromise those of legitimate relatives in the metropole. Characterizations of the group, therefore, fit well within sentimental tropes. The relative increase of West Indian migrants to Britain as the eighteenth century progressed may have popularized these characters, but their presence in fiction drew primarily upon this specific narrative context. Nevertheless, the anxieties provoked by mixed-race migrants within the confines of sentimental tales reflected insecurities about their real-world presence.

### **Mixed-Race Migrants in Literature**

#### *Early Characterizations*

Depictions of mixed-race travelers did not originally develop alongside sentimental fiction. The arrival of colonists to the metropole, easily found its way into literature well before 1740. Authors were not hesitant to use such characters, but initially they did not have a customary portrait by which to present them; themes surrounding mixed-race migration at the end of the eighteenth century had not yet been established. Illegitimacy and inheritance had not even become dominant tropes for tales without nonwhite characters. Until the 1740s, then, there was little explicit connection between those issues and the presence of West Indians of color in the metropole. Mixed-race figures in early accounts were treated more as exotic curiosities than reflections on race and family, the latter only emerging in the 1780s.

The lack of a literary consideration of race before the 1780s indicates the place of abolitionism in public discourse. Prior to the movement's inception, depictions of mixed-race migrants focused closely on their foreignness to British shores. Certainly, the domestic audience was well aware of slavery and the place of bound Africans in the Empire. However, there is no reason to suspect that Britons saw either the slave trade or slavery itself as vulnerable to collapse until abolitionists began clamoring for reform. Likewise, discussions over the difference between Europeans and Africans before 1780 were less uniform and directed.<sup>16</sup> Specific political appeals during the abolition debate made targeted attacks on individuals of African descent. Both pro- and anti-slavery supporters condemned mixed-race migrants in particular for their potential to disrupt white family fortunes and bloodlines. Before that first salvo was launched, however, fiction writers struggled to make sense of peripatetic colonists of color, passing diverse and imprecise comment on them.

The first major character of color appeared in the 1720 tale *The Jamaica Lady*. Although centered principally on Bavia, an Irish woman traveling to Britain from Jamaica, the story deals extensively with the character of Holmesia, a quadroon woman from Kingston whom Bavia meets on the passage. Little explicit mention is made of Holmesia's racial heritage. The narrator describes her as "a Creole, and consequently of a pale yellow Complexion, of Stature tall and meager, very demure and precise in her Carriage, but withal haughty; and, when mov'd, of an implacable, revengeful Temper." More noticeable than her skin color is Holmesia's language: "it being party [sic] English, and party Negroish." This colonial dialect creates severe problems in communication

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<sup>16</sup> This is true in both the intellectual and literary realms: Roxanne Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

once Holmesia arrives in England. A peddler whom she asks for directions mistakes her for a gypsy due to this incomprehensibility, as do two passersby and a constable.<sup>17</sup>

Holmesia's distinction is thus not entirely rooted in her ancestry. Much of the story works to excoriate Jamaica as a site of sin, and the narrative critiques of Holmesia focus primarily upon her status as a colonist, not as a woman of color. Her place in the text is one of liminality: between Jamaica and Britain in her constant travels, between black and white, and between mother and prostitute. In fact, Holmesia has barely arrived in England before she returns to Jamaica permanently, reflecting the text's interest in her place within the colonies, rather than the metropole. She is no threat to Britain because she is not bound to stay. She has no fortune, no husband, and little chance at self-advancement. Holmesia is therefore a reflection of colonial disorganization, rather than metropolitan invasion.<sup>18</sup>

Another woman of color makes a similarly benign appearance in the mid-eighteenth century tale *The Fortunate Transport* (c. 1750). The story follows Polly Haycock, the product of a young woman raped in a haystack in Hampstead, who travels to Virginia and Jamaica. She eventually marries the Deputy-General of Jamaica and gives birth to several children whom she brings back with her to England. Virtually nothing is said of colonial society, although the text includes some vaguely humanitarian

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<sup>17</sup> *The Jamaica Lady: or, the Life of Bavia* (London, 1720), 8-9, 85.

<sup>18</sup> Most of the commentary about Holmesia fixates on her colonial life, instead of her time spent in Britain. Perpetually crossing the Atlantic, she is conceived on board a transport ship, bound for Jamaica from London, by an English shoplifter and a mulatto shipman. Holmesia emulates her mother and becomes a prostitute to Kingston pirates, before eventually being impregnated by her physician's friend. She then travels to London with the goal of marriage. On the voyage, she becomes a mistress to a fellow passenger. Yet, Bavia's actions on board are no different: she also has an affair with a member of the ship's crew, drawing parallels between the two female travelers. Carol Barash notes that both characters undergo similar sexual transgressions on the journey to England, indicating their juxtaposition as a measure of similarities rather than differences: "The Character of Difference": 416-22. The author's account of Holmesia's corporeal misbehaviors is therefore tied to her colonial origins, rather than her biological ones.

themes in its discussion of slavery. In the second part of the tale, however, the narrator reveals herself to be Polly's former slave in Jamaica who came to England with her master. She also describes herself as a "Creolian."<sup>19</sup> Carol Barash interprets this to mean that she is mixed race, but the term could have simply denoted her birth in the colonies.<sup>20</sup> Both whites and Africans were labeled as creoles in the eighteenth century. This had particular significance for the enslaved, as planters generally preferred creoles, rather than the so-called "salt water slaves" fresh from Africa. Regardless of her ancestry, the narrator says little about her experiences in the metropole, nor of English reactions to her presence. She does note a fair degree of attention received at a coffee house, but it is not clear why she draws such interest. Once again, the racial component of a mixed-race migrant operates far in the text's background. The narrator's enslaved past legitimates the protagonist's experiences in the colonies, but it does not connect to any wider reflection on notions of difference.

As with *The Jamaica Lady*, the potentially mixed-race character in *The Fortunate Transport* is in a less independent position than many later depictions of mixed-race migrants. Colonists of color were understood to be either enslaved or subordinate in the opening decades of the eighteenth century. This had real-world precedent. The Caribbean's free community of color, particularly in Jamaica, was relatively small before 1770. Between 1780 and 1820, however, it swelled.<sup>21</sup> Much of this had to do with increases in both white and black arrivals over the course of the eighteenth century. Early characterizations of mixed-race colonists, therefore, did not have a substantial

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<sup>19</sup> *The Fortunate Transport; or, the Secret History of the Life and Adventures of the Celebrated Polly Haycock, the Lady of the Gold Watch*, pt. II (1750), 18.

<sup>20</sup> Barash, "The Character of Difference": 423-24.

<sup>21</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 7.

group to appraise. Island demography, perhaps as much as abolitionist discourse, shaped British narratives about those of color. Equally, the absence of sentimental conventions allowed for more variable commentary. These earlier characters are in much more servile and vulnerable states than the rich heirs soon to appear, and did not come with attendant fears over family fortunes or racial composition.

As British literature adopted sentimental themes more readily, it began giving greater consideration to race in both colony and metropole. Sarah Scott's 1766 novel *The History of Sir George Ellison* considers the possibility of slaves marrying white servants in Britain. After arriving in the West Indies, Ellison bristles at the treatment of enslaved workers, to the amusement of his Jamaican-born wife. Much of the text incorporates such proto-abolitionist themes, which include sentimental portrayals of slave mistreatment.<sup>22</sup> Curiosities about race emerge in the text when Ellison transports six slaves to serve him in England, alongside white staff. Settled in Dorset:

his servants had intermarried, the blacks with blacks, the white servants with those of their own colour: for though he promoted their marrying, he did not wish an union between those of different complexions, the connection appearing indelicate and almost unnatural.<sup>23</sup>

Although eager to care for his slaves, Ellison does not countenance sexual commerce between white and black servants in the metropole. Such liberality is a violation of the

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<sup>22</sup> Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 46-57. The relationship between Ellison and his slaves, and indeed between Ellison and race, is constantly in flux. A proponent of slave amelioration, Ellison is cast as overly feminine in contrast to his wife's more patriarchal attitude. The ability of Jamaica to disrupt these gender roles ties to the island's parallel ability to reshape race through heat and depravity. See: Felicity Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 135-50; and Candace Ward, "Sensibility, Tropical Disease, and the Eighteenth-Century Sentimental Novel," in *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838*, eds. Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, and Sarah Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 63-77.

<sup>23</sup> Sarah Scott, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, vol. 2 (London, 1766), 48.

already-stressed boundaries of imperial philanthropy.<sup>24</sup> Once more, the mixed-race presence in Britain – this time only in potential – is not caught up with issues of inheritance. However, the suffering of those slaves who eventually cross the Atlantic played on the sentimental depiction of Ellison and on the convention of heightened emotion. Abolitionist waters now flowed into the narrative stream of sensibility, carrying mixed-race migrants in its current.

An important narrative transition occurred for the biracial traveler in *The Female American* (1767). Set in the opening years of Virginia's colonization, the novel recounts the story of a mixed-race woman, Unca, the daughter of an English colonist and tribal princess who intervenes on his behalf. At the age of seven, after the death of her mother, Unca travels with her father to England. Attended by Indian slaves, she is raised with all the privileges of an English aristocrat; she is tutored in Greek and Latin, and lives on a large estate for the remainder of her minority. Yet she cannot escape her colonial roots. Unca is the personification of hybridity: "My tawny complexion, and the oddity of my dress, attracted every one's attention, for my mother used to dress me in a kind of mixed habit, neither perfectly in the Indian, nor yet in the European taste."<sup>25</sup> She emphasizes this sartorial amalgamation by carrying a bow and arrow around her Surrey property. From the beginning, Unca lives comfortably in two worlds. She is fluent in her mother's native tongue, and educated in the highest European manner. She sports the trappings of an American heritage, but as accessories to English dress. In many ways she is a bridge linking these two traditions, but she can also shift between either side of the span.

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<sup>24</sup> Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 104.

<sup>25</sup> Unca Eliza Winkfield, *The Female American; or, the Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield*, vol. 1 (London, 1767), 43.

Unca's ancestral mixture becomes crucial to the novel's primary narrative. Borrowing heavily from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the story strands Unca on a seemingly uninhabited island while traveling back to Virginia.<sup>26</sup> Unca's survival now hangs perilously on the edge between her American and English roots. She discovers a survival guide left by a previous castaway, allowing her European upbringing and literacy to facilitate her endurance. However, her Indian childhood also enables her to forage for roots she remembers from her youth. The text continuously plays on the balance between these two halves. In a struggle to obtain new clothes Unca "started at the thought of going naked."<sup>27</sup> She is both native and non-native, English and non-English. This hybrid status allows her to thrive in the American landscape.

Most of the story's second volume is concerned with Unca's attempt to minister to native peoples who visit her island. In much the same way that Crusoe is surprised by the arrival of neighboring tribes, Unca learns that her island is a site of native religious pilgrimage. She makes herself known and begins proselytizing, translating the Bible into their language. Again, her racial and experiential hybridity ensure success. Unca mediates between America and Europe, drawing the two closer together, as she has little problem convincing the natives to accept Christianity. Indeed, the text implicitly explores the advantages of racial intermixture for Britain's efforts toward converting American Indians. That quest becomes Unca's life goal and the story's moral conclusion. Before the end of the novel, however, Unca's English cousin John discovers her on the island. He arrives having recovered her stolen fortune and the two marry in

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<sup>26</sup> Her desertion is not the result of a shipwreck, but rather of the actions of a bitter captain angered by her refusal to marry his son. Like many of the novels that would come afterward, the mixed-race protagonist – especially the rich heir – served to fascinate and captivate the desires of young men.

<sup>27</sup> Winkfield, *The Female American*, vol. 2, 76.

both native and English ceremonies. The story concludes with the couple's commitment to native evangelism.

Although Unca's time in England is relatively brief, it establishes the novel's central focus while also previewing later themes in British literature. An English education hones the European half of a mixed-race individual who would otherwise blend easily into colonial society. Settling permanently in the Americas at the end of the novel, "never intended to have any more to do with Europe," Unca embraces her mother's lineage, but she returns as something of an ethnographer of her own past.<sup>28</sup> She is distanced from the tribes and her status is one of religious colonizer. Indicative of this transformation is Unca's massive inheritance and marriage to an Englishman. Ultimately, however, she gives away these riches in an effort to reassume a native lifestyle. Indeed, her legacy is too problematic; she cannot remain a sympathetic character of Indian blood and still retain ties to an English fortune. Future novels would wrestle with this concern for beneficiaries of West Indian origin as well. At the same time, Unca's marriage to a white man predated later literary interest in mixed-race characters' romantic prospects. Unca's match is promoted in the story, primarily because the couple stays in America, where they can cause little more financial or biological problems for the British family.

By 1770, literary depictions of mixed-race migrants were still somewhat divergent, but were coalescing around certain sentimental tropes. While *The Female American* did not touch on sexual matches between Europeans and Africans, it did tie a mixed-race colonist to an English education, a substantial legacy, and a white spouse. Tobias Smollett, who, in his 1769 work *The History and Adventures of an Atom*, put a

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 171.

mulatto rape victim on London's Old Bailey court docket, connected these themes to the West Indies. His *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* of 1771 noted of an English ball: "[it] was opened by a Scotch lord, with a mulatto heiress from St. Christopher's."<sup>29</sup> Whereas Unca's wealth appears to have been primarily a literary device, the Caribbean economy naturally connected mixed-race migrants to large fortunes in British literature. Smollett's mulatto heiress was not an imaginary concoction, but a genuine social reality. Depictions of West Indian migrants of color thus played on the balance between material fact and sentimental convention in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

### *Abolitionism and Sentimentality*

Crucial to the fusion of sentimentality and mixed-race migration was the advent of the abolition movement. The rhetoric of sensibility sprang, in part, from a mixture of evangelism and philanthropy attached to emotion. Early abolitionist sermons drew on such patterns; the suffering of enslaved Africans fueled the narrative structure of these appeals.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, abolitionist iconography attempted to create empathy between Britons at home and slaves in the colonies. The famous image of a bound African genuflecting with the caption, "Am I not a man and a brother?" pushed viewers to relate not only to the slave's humanity, but also to his emotional demands for compassion (see Figure 6.1). Female abolitionists also deployed strong sentimental language in order to join their struggle with that of the enslaved class.<sup>31</sup> Sympathetic appeals were vital to a

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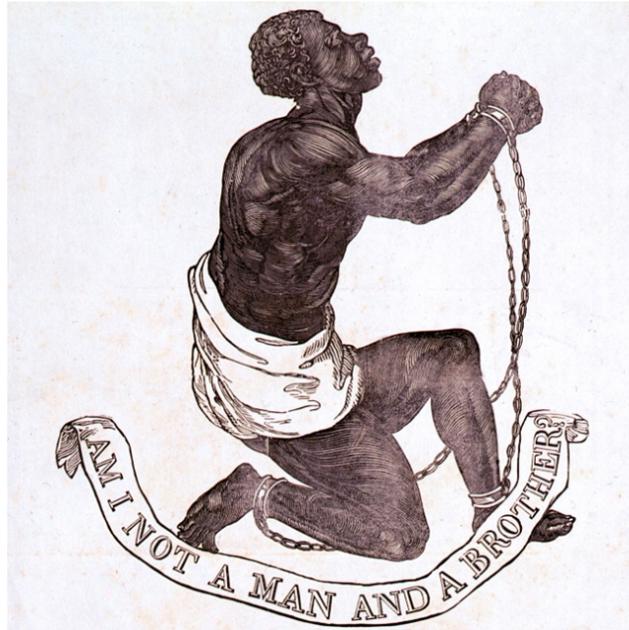
<sup>29</sup> Tobias Smollett, *The History and Adventures of an Atom*, vol. 2 (London, 1769), 21. Ibid., *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, vol. 1 (London, 1771), 74.

<sup>30</sup> Bob Tennant, "Sentiment, Politics, and Empire: A Study of Beilby Porteus's Anti-Slavery Sermon," in *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition*, 158-174.

<sup>31</sup> Ferguson, *Subject to Others*.

debate calling for the end of one of Britain's most lucrative trades. Abolitionism thus borrowed heavily from sentimental literature in crafting a narrative of oppression.

**Figure 6.1: “Am I Not a Man and a Brother?” by Josiah Wedgwood, 1787  
Medallion of the British Antislavery Society**



This was not, however, a one-sided adoption. As antislavery stormed the British conscience, sentimentalism began appropriating public interest and pity for those of African descent. Novels frequently inserted slaves or characters of color in order to draw from the emotional well of abolition activism. In so doing, they reaffirmed abolitionist portrayals of black and mixed-race individuals. The movement's depictions of the latter focused on their wealth and education in the metropole, fearful of their political potential and disruptions to class structures. Moreover, abolitionism fretted over the possibility of mixed-race marriage in Britain's upper ranks, especially as pro-slavery advocates warned of a similar miscegenational threat coming from slaves and poor whites. Although fictional works did not obsess as strongly with aspects of political revolution, they did debate the possibility of class transgressions through inheritance – in keeping with will

disputes in British courts – as well as the likelihood of interracial marriages.

Sentimentalism made implicit political remarks upon mixed-race migration because it appropriated an established political discourse on the issue. By incorporating abolition themes, the genre added yet another voice in the chorus of debate over West Indians of color in Britain.

While not necessarily protesting these migrants' arrival, each of the works discussed below struggled to marshal much in its support. Much like the abolition movement, sentimental literature dealing with migrants of color did not uniformly describe it as evil. However, all of them did portray the phenomenon as problematic. Whether or not the authors advocated for humanity toward Africans, the prospect of aristocrats of color, to say nothing of metropolitan unions between white and brown individuals, pushed the limits of philanthropy. Writers could borrow from abolitionism to add greater drama to their tales, but using mixed-race migrants as characters came with an understanding: their portrayal could offer a critique of slavery and inhumanity in the Empire, but it could not unseat the traditional order of British society.

The blending of sentimental writing and abolitionist agitation first became explicit after the famous Somerset trial of 1772. When Lord Mansfield decreed that the slave James Somerset could not be forcibly taken from England back to the West Indies, polemicists such as Edward Long and Samuel Estwick worried about Britain's future racial stock should slaves begin flocking to the metropole. One year later, *The Dying Negro* appeared in print. Self-proclaimed as a "poetical epistle," it copied Somerset's story, but heightened its effect through the prospect of black and white pairing. The poem's advertisement alleged that it was written in response to an article in which "a

Black, who a few days before, ran away from his master, and got himself christened, with intent to marry his fellow-servant, a white woman, . . . took an opportunity of shooting himself through the head.” Clearly a reaction to Mansfield’s decision, as well as the vitriol offered by Long and Estwick over the possibility of black and white sexual coupling, the poem attempts to legitimate and embrace the young man’s passions. “How shall I soothe thy grief, my destin’d bride” the enslaved man asks: “Bleed for my wounds, and feel my deep despair./ Thy tears alone will grace a wretch’s grave,/ A wretch, whom only thou would’st wish to save.” The black poet is thus a sentimental protagonist rather than a farcical character with uncontrolled desires. His story is meant to elicit pity, rather than contempt. Possibly aware of the controversial implications of this love affair, however, the author downplayed the prospect of sexual consummation. Although the young man wishes to “blend with mine the colour of thy fate,” racial mixture is not central to the poem.<sup>32</sup> Racial sympathy, instead, is what the poem demands. In light of the fervor over Somerset’s fate, the use of an abolition figure added a more dramatic twist to sentimental verse.

Mixed-race migrants from the Caribbean entered this literary environment at the end of the eighteenth century. Novels did not embrace them in the 1770s, but the formation of major abolition societies in the next decade prompted their inclusion. Abolitionist discourse, whether it came from Britain’s Board of Trade, Philip Thicknesse’s observations, or condemnations of Governor Picton’s trial, engaged with mixed-race travelers. Until the Revolution in St. Domingue, the rhetoric surrounding them dealt principally with issues of wealth and status as potential spouses for rich

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<sup>32</sup> *The Dying Negro, A Poetical Epistle, Supposed to be Written by a Black (Who lately shot himself on board a vessel in the river Thames;) to his intended Wife* (London, 1773), Advertisement, 2-3. See also: Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 75-84.

Britons. After the colony's first slave revolt in 1791, British commentators began considering the migrants' political risk as well. For sentimental novels already concerned with matters of inheritance and marriage, the mixed-race migrant fit easily into an older model. The political dimension of their presence never seriously entered the fictional realm, however. Instead, the mixed-race grandee replaced other stock figures in order to deliberate over new racial concerns, established in the abolition movement, within the boundaries of a familiar and accessible formula. Polite society could therefore come to terms with an emerging discourse on race in the metropole without insinuating itself too firmly into a highly polarized and contentious debate.

*“Positive” Depictions of Mixed-Race Migrants*

One of the first substantial portrayals of a rich migrant of color came in the 1791 saga *Memoirs of a Scots Heiress*. Anabel Macgilroy, the heiress in question, moves next door to Miranda, the daughter of a Dutch settler and a black Surinamese woman. The two characters are fellow colonists now resident in London. Besides colonial roots, both share a number of other similarities, including substantial inheritances from their uncles and affection toward the same man. However, Anabel's financial state is in a much more precarious position. Like many of the sentimental characters before her, Anabel is an orphan: she is quite young when her mother dies and her father passes at the same time as the rich uncle from whom her bequest derives. A competing cousin wrests away Anabel's legacy, forcing her to move to London, where she serves a Mrs. Semhurst.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Her substantial inheritance entices a Sir Luson Linfield, who marries her in Edinburgh. On the wedding day, however, a poor Irish woman with an indecipherable brogue informs Anabel, through a translator, that the inheritance belongs to someone else: Anabel's uncle had secretly married the woman's daughter in Ireland while on a visit of his colonial estates. Linfield immediately initiates the process of annulment, and

Miranda is also an orphan and indebted to the kindness of an uncle, Dr. Vanderparcke, who raises her in the capital. Unlike Anabel, however, her inheritance is intact and immense. As would occur in later novels with such characters, the mixed-race migrant appears to put the protagonist's struggles further into relief.<sup>34</sup> By giving a mixed-race character a secure fortune, the author accentuates and dramatizes Anabel's financial troubles and social standing. Miranda is the shadow sentimental heroine. Her fortune and adherence to sentimental convention makes her understandable to readers, while her lineage allows them to consider larger matters on race in Britain. She therefore drives the plot forward seamlessly while incorporating new discourses on complexion and imperial travel.

Unlike many of the fictional accounts preceding it, *Memoirs* actively discusses race. From the moment of her entrance in the novel, Miranda's physical and ancestral difference is repeatedly remarked upon. Before the young woman's face comes into view, Anabel comments on the refinement of her dress and the gracefulness of her movement. Indeed, Anabel notes that she had the "most pleasing expression in her countenance," but was nevertheless "almost a negro. The hue of her skin perhaps wanted some shades of the deep African dye; but it passed the degree of copper colour." Extraordinary wealth in the hands of such a dark-skinned woman is all the more problematic due to her poor grammar and immoderate behavior. "Miranda's character of mind was as foreign as her hue," Anabel explains, even after the two become close

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Anabel flees Scotland's capital unsure of how to care for herself. Indeed, colonial matters saturate the text. After a fraught journey to London, Anabel is taken in by a family who are soon to travel to America (where the patriarch is staving off American rebels in Quebec). Eventually returning to Britain, her ship is taken by American privateers and, like Unca, deposited on an uninhabited island before natives help her back to England. Colonial perfidy pervades this section on Anabel's time in America, indicating the author's sense of disorganization and debauchery on the imperial fringes.

<sup>34</sup> Salih, "The Silence of Miss Lambe": 340-41.

companions: “Her spirits were indeed ‘finely touched . . . joy would transport her to delightful frenzy . . . [but] her joys were in an instant annihilated, and sorrow occupied her dusky countenance.”<sup>35</sup> Even with deep affection for Miranda, Anabel still laughs at the “jargon” of her friend’s letters. The mixed-race migrant is therefore a figure of both sympathy and derision. Her heritage is precisely what distinguishes her from the protagonist, and is therefore central to considerations of her nature.

More pertinent to the traditional sentimental tale, Miranda’s romantic interests figure into her juxtaposition to the main character. Throughout the novel, Anabel balks at the prospect of love, unwilling to embrace any romantic emotions.<sup>36</sup> When she learns of Miranda’s infatuation with Mrs. Semhurst’s son, Mr. Cyril, Anabel records Miranda’s unrestrained passions: “I witnessed the ecstasy of her joy. Wild as her native woods, and free as the gale that agitated them, she was ignorant of the cold reserves fashion enjoins.” Anabel’s disposition is one of European restraint and moderation; Miranda’s is one of Caribbean lasciviousness and uncontrollability. Such love, however, is unrequited. Despite assuring him, after a round of kisses, “Never mind: colour won’t come off,” Miranda cannot capture Cyril’s heart. His attention, instead, is focused on Anabel, who stammers under his gaze. The only man to command the protagonist’s affection, then, is the one loved by the mixed-race neighbor. Miranda and Anabel’s shared sweetheart reflects the novel’s continued comparison between the two. The text’s world is upended by the presence of a mixed-race grandee with intemperate emotions, amusing vocabulary, and sexual intentions. It cannot be made stable until the rightful heiress takes her place.

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<sup>35</sup> Mrs. Charles Mathews, *Memoirs of a Scots Heiress*, vol. 2 (London, 1791), 183-85, 190-91.

<sup>36</sup> Never formally ended, her marriage to Luson Linfield looms over subsequent relations with men. Linfield stalls at finalizing the annulment in the hopes that Anabel’s fortune will be reacquired.

As a woman of color, Miranda's race undoes her elevated status and romantic ambitions. Anabel describes her as a "child of Nature," destroyed by the very passion which fuels her. Mr. Cyril's disinterest in Miranda causes her to go into a deep illness, compelling the other characters to face the prospect of a forced union to bring about her recovery. Anabel, trapped between her desires and quest to save Miranda, confronts Cyril on the issue. She accuses him of holding "narrow prejudices" against Miranda, to which he replies, "Can you call it *narrow* prejudice to dislike Miranda's colour?" Anabel responds, "Blanch her, and you yourself, Mr. Cyril, have often said she would be a complete beauty." The realities of marriage to a woman of color, however, make the option unthinkable: "What say you to a brood of tawney children?" Cyril asks. Passion and sentimental enthusiasm cannot eliminate family realities should he marry Miranda. Indeed, everyone ultimately agrees with his assessment. Anabel concedes, "The aversion he manifested comes into the world with us, and reason would in vain subdue [it];" Miranda's uncle confesses, "certainly a white man can never love a black woman;" and even Miranda feels the potential match doomed: "Every body will cry out *black wife*. Mr. Cyril *black wife* – Oh they will so laugh! and I shall die."<sup>37</sup> Caught between these prejudices and the expectation of returned love, Cyril fights his instincts and proposes. Miranda is a suitable prospect for a young man seeking out a large dowry, but her African ancestry unsettles the proceedings. No matter what etiquette dictates, interracial marriage is ultimately vilified in the text.

Cyril and Miranda's upcoming marriage pushes the tension over interracial pairings, but in the lead-up, it underscores the ridiculousness of such a match in Britain. Miranda never accepts the authenticity of Cyril's proposal, fully aware of its social

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<sup>37</sup> Mathews, *Memoirs of a Scots Heiress*, vol. 2, 207-21.

transgression. “Why was I not born in happy England?” she wonders, “Why am I not of his complexion?” As the wedding date approaches, no one is sure what to think of the event. Anabel helps her friend prepare, and records Miranda’s elegance in her wedding dress:

It was with infinite pleasure I saw the negro-bride . . . She always wore white of the finest kind, unmixed with any colour, and now she was drest in flowing muslin. Her head, her neck, her arms, were adorned with pearls that gave undescribable luster to her eyes and jetty skin: she was in her bridal honours, as in every thing she said or did, simple and elegant. I could have paid homage to our Indian queen. . . . [W]ho that had seen Miranda that evening would have wished her a shade fairer than she was?

Anabel’s sartorial description speaks to the narrator’s attitude toward Miranda, and the author’s impression of mixed-race metropolitans. With fine clothes and luxurious accessories, Anabel emphasizes Miranda’s racial difference. Her attire reinforces Miranda’s complexion, and the contrast between her white dress and dark skin is portrayed as a futile attempt to downplay heritage. Indeed, Miranda’s efforts to wear only those garments “unmixed with any colour” reveal, in the author’s mind, the pointless attempt at mixed-race assimilation into British society. She may have been elegant on her wedding day, but Miranda is nonetheless an exotic, and one who will never fully integrate into the elite.<sup>38</sup>

Returning the world to order, the ceremony is never completed. In true sentimental fashion, Miranda is struck down as she recites her vows: “Miranda’s heart fail – black woman die; but black woman never make laugh at dear Cyril.”<sup>39</sup> She expires in Cyril’s arms, to the shock of spectators. Aching emotion kills Miranda, much as it did many other heroines in the genre. Her death, however, helps to avoid a major obstacle in

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 230-36.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 238.

the plot: interracial unions in the capital and the prospect of additional Britons of color. Although Miranda is a sympathetic character in the narrative, particularly in her close friendship with the narrator, she is ultimately problematic for the story. She is contained and controlled when she lives as an exotic unable to master her adopted country's manners. When she attempts to integrate fully – in this case by marrying a white man – she violates the sacred boundaries between European and African, metropolitan and colonist. Only in death can Miranda's transgression be absolved and avoided. Racial mixture in Britain is thus a threat once sexual unions are proposed and social ranks traversed.<sup>40</sup>

Miranda's heritage presents a direct message on race in British society. She serves to underscore the protagonist's vulnerable position and amplify its effects, but that feat is accomplished primarily through her ancestral difference to Anabel. Although not a malevolent figure in the narrative, Miranda's apparent ease at taking Anabel's place as Mr. Cyril's rich wife reflects the novel's sense of an unjust world working to destroy its heroine. Instead, the shadow Anabel must be removed in order to rebalance and normalize the world. Miranda is therefore a convention of sentimental literature, as well as a comment on the threats many Britons felt to social stability. Readers could ponder the meaning of her presence as a mixed-race woman within the established context of the British romantic tale. Race, then, fundamentally constitutes her character, while, at the same time, becomes subsumed by larger conventions propelling the narrative.

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<sup>40</sup> Miranda's place in the romantic context of the novel is also crucially important. Almost immediately after Miranda's death, Cyril proposes to Anabel. For the remainder of the novel, the two struggle through a battery of obstacles to realize their love. One of these barriers is Anabel's reluctance to indulge her passion for Cyril. Miranda's example, however, helps the narrator to overcome her reservations and embrace the emotional connection to her employer's son. She is aided by the fact that her still-husband Linfield finally dies, as does the heir to her uncle's fortune, shuffling the massive inheritance back to the protagonist. Now single and rich, Anabel can claim Cyril for herself, and fulfill the twin goals of every sentimental heroine.

Similar anxieties over wealth and interracial coupling saturate *The Woman of Colour* (1808), the only sentimental novel with a mulatto woman at its center.<sup>41</sup> Olivia Fairfield, the novel's protagonist leaves Jamaica at the command of her dying father, a rich island planter. Like other sentimental heroines, she is orphaned at the novel's introduction – her enslaved mother had died long before – and she is connected to a large fortune (a £60,000 dowry). Once in Britain, Olivia is to marry her cousin and settle as an English lady. She explains the necessity of leaving the islands for Europe: in Jamaica “[t]he illegitimate offspring of [her father's] *slave* could never be considered in the light of equality by the English planters.” The emphasis on Olivia's illegitimacy is important, even though connections between whites and blacks in the West Indies were almost universally out of wedlock. As both an orphan and bastard, she embodies the essence of the sentimental heroine. As a mixed-race woman she is cast out from her own society, shunned by her father's peers. To look after her, Mr. Fairfield worked “to secure to his child a proper protector in a husband, and to place her far from scenes which were daily hurting her sensibility.” Olivia is emotionally attuned to these inequalities. “Such is the wretched state of degradation to which my unhappy fellow-creatures are sunk in the western hemisphere,” she complains in a letter to her governess: “*We* are considered . . . as an inferior race, but little removed from the brutes, because the Almighty Maker of all-created beings has tinged our skins with jet instead of ivory.”<sup>42</sup> Olivia's personal drama is tied to that of Jamaica's enslaved population. Published one year after the abolition of

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<sup>41</sup> Written in 1808, it built upon themes from the author's previous work. In 1803, the novelist penned *Light and Shade*, about an orphaned girl who falls in love with a Jamaican boy at school in England. He eventually returns to the islands and marries “a creole” whose “complexion was of a clear brown,” painting an ambiguous portrait of her ancestry. Soon the couple moves to England, where the young wife, his “poor little *exotic*,” struggles to acculturate to high society. She dies after learning that her West Indian estate has been given over to a cousin, who also comes to England and is described in racially ambiguous ways as well: *Light and Shade*, vol. 1 (Bath, 1803), 57-60; vol. 2, 18-26.

<sup>42</sup> *The Woman of Colour*, vol. 1 (London, 1808), 3, 9.

the slave trade, *The Woman of Colour* drew upon popular outrage against slavery. While many abolition texts had appropriated sentimental rhetoric to heighten their appeals, Olivia's story used themes of abolition to advance the tension of sensibility.

Connected to Britain through her father, a substantial fortune, and a metropolitan engagement, Olivia is nevertheless rooted in colonial society. Her voice is one of compassion for African heritage, if not of promotion. "I am not ashamed to acknowledge my affinity with the swarthiest negro that was ever brought from Guinea's coast!" Olivia brags: "all are brethren, children of one common Parent!" In particular, she speaks eloquently of her mother Marcia. Borrowing from the traditional account of the enslaved African princess – established in Aphra Behn's 1688 work *Oroonoko* – the author praises "the symmetry and majesty of [Marcia's] form [and] the inflexible haughtiness of her manner."<sup>43</sup> Reinforcing her nobility, Marcia falls victim not to her master's passion, but to his charm. As Pratt observes of fellow abolition tales from the period, "sex replaces slavery as the way others are seen to belong to the white man."<sup>44</sup> Olivia's parents fall deeply in love, and Mr. Fairfield reveals the gospel to his mistress. Marcia, in turn, convinces Fairfield of the sin of enslavement, and when she – in true sentimental style – dies giving birth to Olivia, he immediately frees the child. In recounting this tale of her parents, Olivia concludes that "it is culture, not capacity, which the negro wants."<sup>45</sup> She empathizes and identifies with her mother's African origins, and through her sympathies the text preaches an abolitionist message. Olivia is both African and European, and her passage to England is part of the general rise out of enslavement for all subjugated West Indians.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 3-4

<sup>44</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 97.

<sup>45</sup> *The Woman of Colour*, vol. 1, 6-8.

Throughout the text, England is characterized in opposition to the Caribbean. Britain represents, to a large degree, a place of advancement – both of thought and status. Mr. Fairfield pushes Olivia out of Jamaica because “[i]n England . . . a more liberal, a more distinguishing spirit had gone abroad.” Both locales are continuously compared, although not necessarily to England’s advantage. While the author sees the metropole as a less oppressive society, the text does not portray a clean break between Britain and its colonies. Olivia, for instance, waxes poetic about England on her voyage, but cannot help becoming disheartened when sailing past Bristol’s rough and rugged quays. Equally, she senses a loss of autonomy when arriving. Before landing, she admits to a fellow passenger “from the moment when I set my foot on your land of liberty, I yield up my independence – my uncle’s family are then to be the disposers of my future fate.”<sup>46</sup> Couched in the general arguments surrounding the slave trade, which cast England as a beacon of freedom to its slave colonies, Olivia’s comments reinforce the metropole’s legal sanctuary, but also uncover the problem of its social rigidity. While Olivia could not enjoy many civil rights in Jamaica, she could operate independently with her large fortune, as many women of color did. In England, her financial freedom would be immediately subsumed by her husband’s authority. Britain, therefore, could impose its own forms of social bondage, albeit of a much more tolerable variety than those of Jamaica. Regardless, *The Woman of Colour* trains a critical gaze on British society, and its acceptance of colonial others.

Olivia’s engagement to cousin Augustus provides the avenue for the greatest exploration of English racial attitudes. Augustus’s mother, Mrs. Merton, dislikes Olivia from the start, and picks upon her biological difference. Merton refuses to shake her

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 20, 48-49, 57-59.

hand, causing Olivia to believe “its *colour* disgusted her.” In fact, she describes Merton as having exceptionally white skin, in contrast to her own. This distinction factors heavily in the relationship. Olivia grumbles, “*she* considers *me* as but *one* remove from the brute creation.” Merton does her best to disparage the young Jamaican. She orders a large supply of rice, commenting that she wants Olivia to feel welcome, but adds that she herself had never tasted the grain. Olivia, in Merton’s view, is an exotic far removed from the society in which she is attempting to marry. Such opinions extend beyond the family. Olivia finds in England, “I am an object of general curiosity, and many a gentleman follows to repress me, and to be mortified at his folly when he has caught a view of my mulatto countenance.” The interest amplifies when she attends a ball with the Mertons, and is praised as a fashionable accessory to the English family. This attention reinforces Olivia’s suspicion of the metropole: “I am disappointed in England: I expected to meet with sensible, liberal, well informed, and rational people, and I have not found them; I see a compound of folly and dissimulation.”<sup>47</sup> Olivia’s color and ancestry mark her permanently, and neither her dowry, nor connection to the Mertons, can eliminate that stamp. England is not the oasis Mr. Fairfield imagined, and it has not helped Olivia to escape her colonial past.

The novel’s most revealing passage on the question of race comes from a conversation between Olivia and a young child. Soon after arriving in England, Olivia is confronted by George, Mrs. Merton’s grandson, who is frightened by the Jamaican’s appearance. Comparing his hands to Olivia’s, George comments that while his are clean, hers are “dirty.” This sets off a discourse on the childlike qualities of racial prejudice; whenever *The Woman of Colour* engages with race, it does so in such a highly didactic

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 68, 72-73, 88-90, 111-26.

fashion. Olivia reveals that George's ignorance comes from parental misinformation. "God chose it should be so, and we cannot make *our* skins white, any more than you can make yours black" she tells the young man. Miraculously cured of his discrimination, George lauds, "I could wish . . . that God had made you white, ma'am, because you are so *very* good-natured." Olivia's unassailable argument stuns the Merton household, convincing all but the matriarch of its soundness. Augustus admits, upon hearing it, "Prejudices imbibed in the nursery are frequently attached to the being of ripened years . . . and to eradicate them as they appear, is a labour well worthy the endeavour."<sup>48</sup> Bigotry tied to biology is held up for scorn in the text in order to convince readers of Olivia's qualities as a heroine, and of the righteousness of abolition.

Although *The Woman of Colour* contains numerous scenes of disabused intolerance, the novel still maintains a fragile stance on issues of race and status. Olivia is not the only character of African descent in England. She brings along one of her father's black slaves, Dido. Without any racial mixture, Dido holds a much different place in the text. Not only does she adhere to servile roots, always obedient to Olivia's needs, but Dido is utterly isolated from the European community. Olivia's sermon to George includes a separate discussion of Dido. She attempts to convince the young man of Dido's humanity, even though a slave, but the conversation is cut short and the author gives no indication that Olivia's audience was at all persuaded. While racial mixture is defended and legitimated, blackness hangs tenuously in the balance without a strong advocate. Moreover, Dido plays the comic sidekick to Olivia's sympathetic heroine. She is never in control of her emotions, whether during a violent storm on the voyage to England or when Olivia confronts the dour Mrs. Merton. Her accent is also a rough

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 90-104.

pidgin, in contrast to Olivia's eloquent speech. Without Dido, Olivia's accomplishments and mixed ancestry would have little meaning. Dido's simplicity and intemperance allude to the notion of an essential inferiority of African blood – one that Olivia has escaped to some degree due to partial European descent. In a sense, Olivia's sympathetic qualities are augmented through her connection to these unfortunate African features.

Such ambiguities surrounding race trickle to the surface with the marriage of Olivia and Augustus. The couple's courtship echoes that of Miranda and Cyril in *Memoirs*: social sanction against interracial pairing plagues the relationship. Olivia worries that Augustus will be unable to “get over his own prejudices as to my colour,” and denigrates her own potential as a wife, fearing that he “would have to encounter all the sarcastic inuendoes and jeering remarks of his companions.” While Augustus admits to a friend that he initially held Olivia in disgust, “for I beheld a skin approaching to the hue of a negro's, in the woman whom my father introduced to me as my intended wife,” he later praises her for her “noble and dignified soul.”<sup>49</sup> Yet, after the two marry and settle in Devonshire, Olivia learns that Augustus had secretly wed a former lover beforehand. His clandestine vows invalidate those he took with Olivia, and she learns that her dowry has been swindled away by Augustus's brother. Bereft of fortune, Olivia packs her belongings, and returns to Jamaica with Dido.

The end of Olivia's marriage averts a larger problem in the text: her potential children with Augustus. Olivia, the embodiment of sentimental heroism is denied the reward of her tortured story. She does not find true romance, reclamation of her fortune, or legitimization of her status of birth. Those fruits are reserved only for protagonists who will not upset the biological balance.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 132-33, 174-75.

While *The Woman of Colour* proclaims the virtue of bound Africans, its message centers on the importance of social and geographic segregation. Many characters emphasize Olivia's incompatibility in the metropole. In apologizing for his marital transgressions, August sobs, "how may you regret the day when you left your native island!" Olivia herself cries out to her departed father, "why did you not suffer your poor child to continue in Jamaica? – there, *there* she was respected . . . The prejudices of society which *you* feared for her there, have here operated against her with tenfold vigour."<sup>50</sup> Women of color do not fit into metropolitan society, not because of a lack of humanity, but rather because of a potential to dilute the purity of British blood. Olivia's flight back to Jamaica confirms Jennifer De Vere Brody's assertion that "it is the fate of the woman of color to disappear in order to sustain the fiction of the pure, white family . . . which functions as a homologue for the English nation."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the novel's author affirms the importance of Olivia's hardship. In a mock questionnaire between the supposed editor of Olivia's letters and a friend at the story's end, the editor responds as to why Olivia did not win a husband. "Virtue, like Olivia Fairfield's, may truly be said to be its *own reward*," the editor writes, "the *moral* I would deduce from her story is, that there is no situation in which the mind . . . may not resist itself against misfortune, and become resigned to its fate."<sup>52</sup> Even though promoted as a virtuous woman, equal in every measure to her white kin, Olivia is destined to suffer, and should do so compliantly.

*The Woman of Colour* may be an abolition text, but its message is one of submission and acceptance to a world naturally prejudiced. Olivia's soliloquies on

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 33-34, 86.

<sup>51</sup> Jennifer De Vere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 25.

<sup>52</sup> *Woman of Colour*, vol. 2, 219-20.

slavery, and conversations with ignorant Britons, preach a strong abolition message. Africans are not only professed to be human in the text, but promoted as beautiful and sympathetic. The novel's diatribes against racism echo abolitionists such as the Reverend Peters who in 1802 decried "that contempt of the negro race, which may with justice be considered as an inveterate disease."<sup>53</sup> Eliminating discrimination, however, was not tantamount to acceptance. Abolitionists erected different walls of bigotry against those of African descent at the same time that they advocated for an end to the slave trade. While *The Woman of Colour* protests oppression, it does not push for the full eradication of distinction and inequality. Despite having crossed borders, both geographic and racial, Olivia is not allowed to settle permanently in her new environment. She can come to Britain only if it is a temporary stop; her flight back to Jamaica returns the world to its segregated order. Although Olivia is to be lauded, she is not to be indulged, especially when it comes to matters of marriage in England's elite circles.

Mixed-race migrants, such as Olivia, became so common in English sentimental literature that their portrait could at times be skewed by authors with little knowledge of colonial reality. Vicar-turned-author Edmund Marshall used a character of color in *Edmund and Eleonora* (1797), but the depiction bears few similarities to historical experience. While passing through an English village, the novel's orphaned protagonist Edmund finds "a tall, elegant Mulatto girl" at the side of the road.<sup>54</sup> Born in western Jamaica, Alicia Seldon is the daughter of a wealthy white planter, and a formerly

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<sup>53</sup> Reverend C. Peters, *Two Sermons, Preached at Dominica, on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of April, 1800* (London, 1802), 29.

<sup>54</sup> Edmund Marshall, *Edmund and Eleonora: or memoirs of the Houses of Summerfield & Gretton*, vol. 1 (London, 1797), 95.

enslaved African. In fact, Alicia's mother is an African princess, yet another literary throwback to the seventeenth-century tale *Oroonoko*. Perhaps more surprisingly, the Seldons are married. Interracial marriage was not only rare in the real-world, but it had virtually no precedent in the fictional realm. Marshall's mixed-race character is blessed with a fortune which is to be used for her education in an English boarding school, but she is a legitimate heir and not a testamentary usurper. Seldon is thus a stock character disconnected from both her historical and her literary roots. She is an appropriation of a standard narrative trope without full knowledge of its origins.

Like other novels of the period, Marshall employs his Jamaican character in an attempt to promote slave emancipation. Alicia's parents soon come to visit her, and Mr. Seldon notes that upon freeing his slaves, they became Christians: "they are no longer licentious like other negroes – polygamy is not permitted as heretofore, they marry, and are so prolific, that I now purchase no more slaves." This language borrows wholesale from abolitionist rhetoric around the fecundity of well-treated laborers.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the rest of the text attempts to establish equality between Europeans and Africans. Soon after the Seldons arrive in England, Alicia's uncle – the Maraboo of Senegal, brother to an African king – comes over as well. Quite literally a noble savage within the text, the Maraboo is regarded highly:

he was himself a remarkable fine figure – in height upwards of six feet, of a very placid countenance, and formed very differently from the Africans that we have usually seen . . . the features of his face were good, his nose was well formed, and properly prominent: nor were his lips disagreeably thick, like those of most of his countrymen: and his eyes were, as well as his teeth, remarkably fine.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42-53.

<sup>56</sup> Marshall, *Edmund and Eleonora*, vol. 1, 126, 146-50.

Although written in 1797, the description looks back to much older characterizations of African inhabitants. Compare this passage to Aphra Behn's 1688 sketch of Oroonoko:

He was pretty tall . . . His eyes were the most awful that could be seen, and very piercing; the white of them being like snow, as were his teeth. His nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat. His mouth, the finest shaped that could be seen; far from those great turned lips, which are so natural to the rest of the Negroes.<sup>57</sup>

The Maraboo, like Oroonoko, is noble because he is so distanced from his African biology. While the novel proclaims an emancipatory ideal, it promotes only those individuals of color the most removed from an African stereotype. Admittedly not a writer by training, Edmund Marshall's account of the royal Africans melded proto-abolitionist themes with contemporary antislavery messages. His depictions were less grounded in fact than in literary and political conventions.

References to Alicia's race are rare in the novel, indicating her assimilation into the English village. Geography puts a strong mark on notions of Alicia's exoticism. While on the voyage between Jamaica and England, she is attacked by the ship's captain, who "made no scruple to make love to her." Not yet in the metropole, Alicia is still subject to the normal predations common to young women of color in the islands. Once she arrives in England, however, Alicia becomes a model of female domesticity. She displays a "genius for music, drawing, and dancing," attracting the attention of Mr. Adderley, a music and dance teacher. With miraculous fortune, Adderley wins a £10,000 lottery prize, and he marries Alicia. By the end of the novel, she has given birth to a daughter, blending seamlessly into the English pastoral: "Alicia is celebrated for her hams and her guinea-fowls . . . Adderly's cottage . . . is a compleat model of rural

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<sup>57</sup> Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*, in *Oroonoko, The Rover and Other Works*, ed. Janet Todd (New York, Penguin Books, 1992), 80.

habitation. . . striking proofs of the delicate tastes of the master and mistress of the little mansion.” Another character says of the farm, “[it] was now become one of the most elegant cottages perhaps in the whole kingdom; his farm and his garden being also in the highest state of cultivation.”<sup>58</sup> Alicia’s inclusion into this society does not destroy metropolitan domesticity, but enhances it. Much as the emancipation of Mr. Seldon’s slaves bolsters his plantation, Alicia’s marriage and reproduction in England advances the civilization of England’s rural landscape.

While promoted, rather than condemned, Alicia and Adderley’s relationship nevertheless takes on some qualified endorsement. Marshall does not include any significant protests to the couple’s interracial status. Indeed, when the Maraboo himself proposes to a white Englishwoman, the town celebrates. Only Eleonora offers a complaint to Alicia: “I could wish, my dear Brunette, that your uncle could resolve to take a lady of his own complexion, I mean one of his own countrywomen.”<sup>59</sup> But this objection is stated only because the Maraboo plans to marry Eleonora’s governess, whom she does not want to leave. Interracial unions are not a pointed threat in Marshall’s novel, either for the mixed-race woman or the African man. Yet, Alicia’s nuptials come only under certain conditions. She is not entitled to marry the novel’s protagonist, but rather one of its more peripheral characters. Moreover, Adderley is, in many ways, the male version of Alicia. He privileges music and dance, retains little distinguishing features, and comes – undeservedly, it might be argued by the Marshall – into a large fortune. While certainly not villains, Adderley and Alicia are not highly sympathetic characters. The formidable circumstances required to advance them into a state of

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<sup>58</sup> Marshall, *Edmund and Eleonora*, vol. 1, 96, 102; vol. 2, 214, 265.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 193.

contentment speaks to fundamental flaws in their natures. Alicia is not to be oppressed because of her African heritage, but neither is she to be privileged. In a story in which “every body is *so good*, and every circumstance turns out *so happily*,” according to *The Critical Review*, any such marks against Alicia’s character are likely larger concerns about a mixed-race presence in England than the author was willing to betray.<sup>60</sup>

*Edmund and Eleonora* demonstrates the degree to which sentimental literature was influenced by both abolition themes and the motif of mixed-race migration. Unlike the other novels discussed here, Marshall’s story is only loosely connected with the historical realities of West Indian grandees. Alicia Seldon comes to England for school, but her wealth is not a central issue in the text. Her status as a legitimate daughter of an African princess further reveals the fanciful nature of Marshall’s understanding. It appears that he included her simply to capitalize upon an emerging convention – one overlapping with his abolitionist sympathies. Alicia’s arrival facilitates a broader discussion on slavery and racial equality, and to some degree Marshall engages with the common issues pertaining to mixed-race migration: inheritance and miscegenation in Britain. Yet, her variance from the standard trope indicates how significantly it saturated British society. Marshall did not need to comprehend the political and social realities behind British residents of color to appropriate a popular convention. Alicia Seldon was shorthand for slave emancipation and racial justice. A British audience could easily grasp her literary meaning, even if she failed to conform to her material inspiration.

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<sup>60</sup> *The Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature*, vol. 20 (London, 1797), 117.

“Negative” Portrayals of Mixed-Race Migrants

Alongside these ambiguous portrayals, mixed-race migrants could also receive decidedly negative depictions in sentimental literature. While *Memoirs* and *The Woman of Colour* condemned colonial sexual practices, they did so with reserved support of mixed-race migration. Abolitionism promoted vague notions of racial equality, and sentimental tales employing its rhetoric used British residents of color to make similar claims. Latent fears over the group’s inheritance and sexuality came out more forcefully in stories without a firm abolition message. Authors who did not wish to draw equivalence between Europeans and Africans recoiled strongly against rich heirs of color in Britain who might marry white spouses. Accordingly, they wrote mixed-race migrants into their stories in order to expose this threat.

Helena Wells’s *Constantia Neville* (1800) plays on the relationship between white and mixed-race colonists in Britain in order to criticize the latter. Much the same as Anabel Macgilroy, Barbadian heroine Constantia Neville is orphaned and dispossessed of her fortune by the time she arrives in London.<sup>61</sup> Born on the island, Constantia’s whiteness is closely guarded and cultivated in the Caribbean: “The pains taken to keep Constantia from the negroes . . . gave her at twelve years old a fluency of speech, and a correctness of language, which many of her seniors would have been proud to possess.”<sup>62</sup> Although a creole, she is not to be confused with those boasting African ancestors. The difference becomes important when she learns of two mixed-race siblings from Nevis who have recently settled in Dorset. The older brother Ned is set to inherit nearly half a

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<sup>61</sup> Still a young woman, Constantia discovers that her older brother has squandered the family’s West Indian fortune. The financial trauma drives Constantia’s father to an early grave, and forces her mother back to Barbados to sort out the family’s affairs, where she too dies.

<sup>62</sup> Helena Wells, *Constantia Neville; or, The West Indian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1 (London, 1800), 73-74.

million pounds and the younger sister Felicia is entitled to ten thousand. Constantia is shocked to learn that they are the children of two separate enslaved women by the same English father: “It is hardly possible to do justice to the scene that followed, when the unsuspecting Constantia was informed.”<sup>63</sup> Her disgust at such colonial impropriety is exacerbated by her belief that metropolitan decorum has been violated. Mixed-race children should never be advanced, and certainly not with such large fortunes. Like Anabel Macgilroy, Constantia’s poverty is all the more shameful in light of the legacies of two offspring of slaves.

Ned and Felicia’s fortune is part of a larger set of comparisons drawn between the siblings and the protagonist. As Sara Salih notes, the two arrive in the novel at Constantia’s most despondent point. Much the same as the relationship between Miranda and Anabel in *Memoirs*, the children from Nevis are a foil to Constantia.<sup>64</sup> Like the heroine, they are Caribbean colonists transported to England. Equally, all three depend upon a West Indian fortune, although Constantia’s has disappeared. Perhaps to make the connection even more explicit, Wells gives Ned and Felicia the same surname as Constantia’s mother. The Carletons from Nevis are connected to Constantia through this shared name, and even a friend remarks upon on the commonality. Ned and Felicia are thus mirror images of Constantia, albeit of a different racial group. Once again, mixed-race success in England, despite bloodlines, reinforces the sentimental notion of the protagonist’s persecution in an unfair world. As Miranda did in *Memoirs*, the Carletons’ presence moves the plot forward, but it does so with added commentary on the politics of race in Britain.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 263-68.

<sup>64</sup> Salih, “The Silence of Miss Lambe”: 344.

Although the Carletons only hover in the background for a short period, the narrator takes extensive pains to disparage them. Nothing presents a greater problem than their inheritance. Ned and Felicia's legacy is not only absurdly large, but it comes at the expense of white family in Dorset: the father "left the paltry sum of five thousand pounds to a brother, a clergyman . . . who had two sons and four daughters but slenderly provided for, and who had been buoyed up with the hope of succeeding to great part of their uncle's possessions." As inheritance challenges indicate, mixed-race legacies often infuriated white relatives awaiting a colonial fortune. Wells reinforces the ridiculousness of the young Carletons' bequests by casting Ned as an indolent grandee. Constantia's acquaintance, Mr. Lambton, claims Ned "is idle, and knows that money will command all that he now considers necessary to happiness." Colonial notions of mixed-race laziness and degeneracy inform the Carletons' portrait. Both illegitimate and sluggish, Ned conforms to the worst prejudices against West Indians of color, making him unfit to receive his father's substantial estate. In fact, when Constantia considers taking a position as Felicia's governess, she hopes to be "an instrument in correcting the early vices contracted by her young country woman, who, though of a different complexion, was still of the same species with herself."<sup>65</sup>

Constantia's fears about the Carletons are ultimately confirmed, reinforcing the text's disgust with their place in Britain. Wavering on her decision to instruct young Felicia, Constantia agrees with her father that mulattos possess "the predominate [sic] bad qualities of both Europeans and Africans." In contrast to the message of *The Female American*, hybridity in *Constantia Neville* produces biological diminishment, rather than avenues for advance. Constantia's decision also averts any threat of attack by an

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<sup>65</sup> Wells, *Constantia Neville*, vol. 2, 265-72.

independent man of color with whom she would have lived, concealed from white supervision. Mr. Lambton supports her decision, especially as he finds Ned to be an inconsistent young man in “want of gratitude for attentions conferred on him . . . [and] to be little worthy of regard.” Wells’s portrait of Ned Carleton is crafted through an idea of his father: the West Indian lothario with poor judgment and no self-control. Given his African roots, he is the symbol of Caribbean degeneracy and dissipation. His arrival in Britain therefore undermines the social boundaries of the metropole. However, his colonial status is not the primary offense; Constantia herself is a West Indian in London. Instead, the Carletons’ racial heritage is the root problem. Their behavior, status, and class positions are all compromised by origins in slavery, and the fundamental sin of miscegenation. Indeed, some time after Constantia declines the position, she learns that Ned has unsuccessfully attempted to court a “beautiful, highly-accomplished, and amiable young woman” in England. Constantia is excited to learn that the young woman told Ned “that those who sent the issue of such connections [as Ned’s] to Europe, were not aware of the evil consequences that might result to society from so doing.” Weary of the prospect of Ned siring children with the English elite, Constantia congratulates the woman as “she would be amply rewarded for not having been led to sacrifice her hopes of connubial happiness at the shrine of wealth.”<sup>66</sup>

Wells introduces yet another colonist in England in order to reinforce the importance of metropolitan racial purity. In the novel’s third volume, the character of Luke appears as Constantia’s love interest. A young European kidnapped and raised by Indians in New York, Luke is recovered and sent to Britain for an education. In an act of charity, Mr. Lambton takes him in, causing many to wonder if Luke is actually his

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 273-82; vol. 3, 9-10; 67-69.

“natural son, whom the father did not choose to desert, though he hesitated to acknowledge him openly.” Once more, orphanage is employed in the text to draw parallels to the protagonist, as well as hint at racial mixture. Announcing his deep connection to the tribes with whom he lived, Luke declares “he would sooner take an *Indian Squaw*, from among his old friends on the other side of the Atlantic, than seek a wife reared by the *high-born, high-bred* dames of Britain.”<sup>67</sup> After she learns that Luke’s parents were friends of her family, Constantia falls deeply in love and the two soon marry. Raised in a native culture, Luke embodies the trappings of a mixed-race man. He is not biologically hybrid, but he is acculturated to Indian society. In many ways, Luke is a foil to Ned Carleton. Constantia finds love with Luke, and feels repulsion towards Ned, because of their respective ancestries. While Luke may be part-Indian in behavior, he is pure European in blood, and thus adequate for marriage.

Race is therefore a central component to Wells’s views on individuals of color in England. The Carletons’ inheritance is intensely problematic, primarily because of their racial difference. More importantly, Ned’s failure to woo an English bride toward the end of the novel speaks to the necessity of restricting his sexuality. Luke’s success further underlines the need for British matches to be racially endogamous. Although the Carletons appear only briefly in the text, their presence frames the debate on metropolitan sexuality: ethnic purity stands at the pinnacle of colonists’ potential romance in the home country. According to Wells, interracial pairings are already far too common in the colonies; the prospect of such practice in Britain is too forbidding for the novel to entertain seriously.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, 12-20, 49.

Although containing comedic elements, Richard Cumberland's 1795 novel *Henry* plays with similar tropes of illegitimacy, inheritance, and racial mixture. The titular hero, an orphan as one might expect, is dogged for most of the first volume by Robert Blachford, a justice of the peace in a small English village. Blachford is declared to be "as base in heart as he is black in person." This castigation hints at his racial background. Blachford's genealogy is obscure, except for the fact that "he had made a fortune in the island of Jamaica from a very abject station in society." His mark as a West Indian influences assessments of his appearance: "He was . . . of a stout athletic make, with a swarthy atrabilious complexion, strongly leaning toward the cast of the mulatto, with all his passions hot and fiery as indulgence could make them."<sup>68</sup> Intemperate and of a dark color, Blachford fits the stereotypical qualities of a mixed-race man before any evidence is proffered on his origins. These physical and emotional descriptions reflect his villainous personality, as he conspires to assault Henry's sweetheart, Susan, and to take Henry's life. Blachford succeeds in the first goal, but fails in the second.

The shadow of Blachford's heritage follows him throughout the text, until his death brings the issue starkly into light. While on his deathbed, Blachford crafts a will giving nearly all of his riches to a solitary heir: Henry. Worried over his eternal soul, Blachford seeks atonement, bringing the novel's protagonist into his former nemesis's possessions. Henry learns that Blachford was "the son of a certain planter in Jamaica, long since dead, by a Mulatto wench, who was his property." More news of Blachford's private life, however, dampens Henry's excitement over his foe's conversion. Blachford had not only assaulted Susan, but also impregnated her. Susan's young son, Henry declares, must be made the full beneficiary of the will, and he refuses Blachford's

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<sup>68</sup> Richard Cumberland, *Henry*, vol. 1, (London, 1795), 47, 153.

bequest. The dying Jamaican obliges Henry's appeal, leaving his illegitimate son a £2000 annuity.<sup>69</sup>

Blachford is a clear villain in the novel's first half and, despite his attempt at absolution, he is never fully exonerated.<sup>70</sup> His colonial and ancestral roots make him an overly emotional and aggressive man, inciting his lust to spread the sin of miscengenation and illegitimacy further into the metropole. Blachford is a character comparable to Henry, but racial status clearly distinguishes the two. Likewise, the Jamaican's predation on a young Englishwoman is cast as all the more tragic for the child born from it. As with the other novels of the period, the birth of mixed-race children in Britain is a threat and danger, but this time much more pointedly so.

A stronger critique of male migrants of color, and their potential to sire still more mixed-race offspring, came in John Moore's 1794 work *Edward*. Far less successful than Moore's previous novel *Zeluco*, *Edward* nonetheless received critical praise upon its publication.<sup>71</sup> Within two short passages of the story, Moore includes a "young mulatto, whose father had left him a considerable fortune." One of the novel's central characters, George Barnet, restores an old house in an attempt to sell it off at a large profit. Unable to attract any buyers, Barnet and his wife consider moving into the home themselves, but are spared once the West Indian arrives. Accompanied by a local woman, the mixed-race man is "in search of a country house" when he comes across the Barnets' offering. Both the young man and his mistress fall in love with the property, particularly with two sphinx sculptures at its entrance that the Barnets' English friends had mercilessly

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 292, 327; vol. 3, 185.

<sup>70</sup> Wylie Sypher, "The West-Indian as a 'Character' in the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Philology* 36, no. 3 (July 1939): 514.

<sup>71</sup> See, for instance: *Critical Review*, vol. 19 (1797), 15-21.

mocked. Portrayed as an unsophisticated upstart, the young man's massive fortune is directed toward the gaudy, rather than the elegant. The West Indian's black servant is also taken with this sculpture, declaring, "she is very like massa's mother, and if she were made of *black* stone in stead of *white*, her face would be quite almost the same."<sup>72</sup> Mixture is emphasized in the passage; a direct line is drawn between the hybridity of the sphinx and the mulatto man, as well as their apparent gracelessness.

This metaphor extends further in a discussion about the house's purchase between Barnet and a friend. Appalled that the home's original sculptures of a lion and a unicorn – the two figures in Britain's Royal Coat of Arms – have been reshaped into sphinxes, Barnet's friend complains bitterly about the alteration. "[T]his attempt to convert those two royal animals into a couple of base Egyptians" was as disgraceful, he proclaims, "as permitting them to be placed over the shop-doors of perfumers, milliners, cork-cutters, shoe-makers, breeches-makers, and other tradesmen." Such changes are problematic for those "who wish to keep up the proper distinction between the king and the cobbler."<sup>73</sup> Once again, a connection is made between the West Indian and the sculptures. Not only are both "mixtures," but they are each seen to degrade the British standard. While the sphinx bastardizes the representation of royalty, the mixed-race migrant compromises the racial state of Britain's upper classes.

Reinforcing this theme, the now-landed mulatto man sets about an attack on English virtue and purity of blood. The house continues to serve as an allegory for the grandee. Its garishness only increases, due to "the taste of three Ladies, who had successively been mistresses of it and of the Mulatto." Each of these women degrades

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<sup>72</sup> John Moore, *Edward. Various Views of Human Nature, Take from Life and Manners, Chiefly in England*, vol. 1 (London, 1794), 116-17.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 119-20.

the house's décor in tandem with themselves. One mistress implements a Chinese theme while beginning an affair with the mulatto man's black servant. She gives birth to a child, whom the West Indian provides for, "though of a complexion a shade darker than he expected." The next woman redirects the furnishings towards a Gothic aesthetic, but her lover soon tires of her. His last sweetheart nearly bankrupts the estate. Scared of the prospects of her benefactor's death, she mourns "the criminal state in which they both lived . . . [and] she brought him to propose that they expiate the guilt of their past commerce, and consecrate their future union, by marriage."<sup>74</sup> Married and settled, the West Indian is now at his most dangerous. His relationships with several English women pose an obvious threat to the nation's moral fabric, but they also compromise its racial stock. Not only might children result from these unions, but a chaotic sexuality resembling colonial customs – particularly in the description of the servant's actions – could emerge. Now a landed husband, the West Indian can sire legitimate children who may blend even more easily into England's elite circles. As with the sculptures, distinctions can be erased – this time between black and white, as well as rich and poor.

The young mulatto, who is never named, returns only briefly in the text as a subject of debate between two servants. His attendant argues with the servant of another household, over their masters' statuses. The West Indian is attacked by the rival servant as a philanderer, a "mule," and "half a Christian." The latter comment infuriates the mulatto's footman. Asserting his master's religious bona fides, he shouts, "Why I am sure I once saw him in church . . . and he regularly eats cross-buns every Good-Friday and minced pies at Christmas." The debate is as much about the West Indian's assimilation into English society as his colonial ancestry. Although he may perform

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 21-27.

Englishness, the young mulatto is depicted as far from the archetype. “[H]e is no full Christian, being between a Christian and a Blackamoor,” the fellow attendant concludes, “his face would condemn him before any court in Christendom.”<sup>75</sup> Moore’s inclusion of the West Indian migrant is a specific denunciation of the supposed degradation of English national integrity. Although Moore’s other works often appealed to the humanity of slaves, his compassion did not extend to those of color in the metropole.<sup>76</sup> *Edward*’s mulatto figure is one to be scorned, not only for his financial freedom in contrast to that of the novel’s other characters, but for his sexual independence as well.

Sentimentality in literature could evoke empathy for such migrants, but it could also solicit fear. *Constantia Neville*, *Henry*, and *Edward* each damn their figures of color as scourges preying on white Englishwomen. Interracial pairings in Britain are thus rebuked outright, and not put into a wider romantic context. Equally, the characters’ inheritance facilitates their sexual dalliances, while also upending Britain’s emerging class system. While some authors could reflect upon mixed-race migration within an abolitionist context of racial tolerance, others could represent the matter as unmistakably horrific. Abolition, therefore, could influence sentimental literature of all stripes, although the message could deviate substantially.

These characters were not confined to sentimentalism, however, as they bled into other genres from the period. Jane Austen, arguably a critic of the style of sensibility, included a mixed-race character in her last, unfinished work. Although she appears only briefly, *Sanditon*’s Miss Lambe, a “half mulatto” from the Caribbean, represents the text’s uncertain position on the changing face of Britain’s imperial and economic

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 28-33.

<sup>76</sup> *Zeluco*, in particular, decried the inhuman punishment of slaves.: E. M. McClelland, “Sidelights on Universal Benevolence,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9, no. 4 (July 1967): 359-60.

standing.<sup>77</sup> News of Lambe's visit to a seaside resort excites the proprietors of the Sanditon house, primarily because of her wealth. "A West Indy family," Lady Denham ponders; "That will bring money." Yet Denham recognizes the possible economic drawbacks: "they who scatter their money so freely . . . rais[e] the price of things – and I have heard that's very much the case with your West-injines." Indeed, Lambe "had an immense fortune – richer than all the rest." Yet her "delicate health," and "chilly and tender" constitution compromise her quality.<sup>78</sup>

As many literary theorists suggest, Austen uses Lambe to convey her uncertainty about emergent capitalism and English enthusiasm over the accumulation of wealth.<sup>79</sup> Considerations of race in *Sanditon* are accordingly surpassed by those of money: "In Miss Lambe, here was the very young lady, sickly and rich."<sup>80</sup> Lambe is therefore a symptom of both the financial and sexual excesses of the West Indies. While less explicit comment is made on her racial characteristics, the surfeit of her fortune embodies many of the same features of colonial degeneracy. Austen may have felt comfortable using Lambe to make such comments in light of the frequency of such depictions in the period's literature. As with her fellow novelists, however, such appropriation was meant

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<sup>77</sup> Jane Austen, *Sanditon*, in *Jane Austen: Lady Susan; The Watsons; Sanditon*, ed. Margaret Drabble (New York: Penguin, 2003), 206. Miss Lambe's presence in *Sanditon* has piqued recent scholarly attention, perhaps because of the debate over Austen's conception of British imperialism: Salih, "The Silence of Miss Lambe"; Elaine Jordan, "Jane Austen goes to the seaside: *Sanditon*, English identity and the 'West Indian' schoolgirl," in *The Postcolonial Jane Austen*, eds. You-me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (New York: Routledge, 2000), 29-55; and Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 80-96. The West Indies famously hover in the background of Austen's novel from three years before: *Mansfield Park*. In that story, Sir Thomas Bertram's lavish English estate is fueled by the profits of an Antiguan plantation that he visits with his son. Soon after the younger Thomas returns from the Caribbean, he improperly flirts with the younger of two sisters – the elder of whom he was to court. His impropriety and confused sexuality reflect the novel's disagreeable view of the colonies, and the islands' ability to upset social decorum: Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (London, 1814).

<sup>78</sup> Austen, *Sanditon*, 180, 195.

<sup>79</sup> Salih, "The Silence of Miss Lambe": 329-35; Elaine Jordan, "Jane Austen": 32, 44; Margaret Drabble, *Sanditon*, Introduction, passim.

<sup>80</sup> Austen, *Sanditon*, 207.

primarily to comment on the protagonist and the work's primary themes in general. Nevertheless, by crafting a degraded migrant of color, Austen reaffirmed popular attitudes toward those of mixed-race in Britain.

The trope of the mixed-race grandee permeated English literature, even if – like Lambe – the character appeared only briefly, still. Although published in Jamaica, and set primarily in the colonies, the 1812 novel *Montgomery* alludes to children of color in Britain. After returning to Jamaica, Henry Montgomery meets an islander whose mistress had “borne him a numerous family of quadroon children, most of whom were in Great Britain for their education.”<sup>81</sup> Even for works set in the Caribbean, therefore, the mixed-race migrant remained a stock figure. The convention was so thoroughly established that it could function without any actual characters of color. The illegitimate and orphaned heroine of *The Solemn Injunction* (1798), for instance, endures the insults of her classmates for having a West Indian heritage. “Miss Aislabie, a creole of Jamaica,” and classmate of the protagonist in England, “insinuated she was a girl of colour” after becoming jealous of her beauty.<sup>82</sup> Once more, the trope functions to isolate the main character in her most vulnerable position. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, even the innuendo of mixed-race migration was enough to activate established notions of disgust and metropolitan incongruity.

Whether portrayed as active agents degrading British civilization, or unfortunate travelers unable to overcome social norms, mixed-race characters frequently appeared in metropolitan literature at the turn of the nineteenth century. In nearly all cases, the character was the same: an orphaned child of color, backed by a large fortune, attempting

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<sup>81</sup> *Montgomery; or, the West-Indian Adventurer*, vol. 2 (Kingston, Jamaica, 1812), 49.

<sup>82</sup> Agnes Musgrave, *The Solemn Injunction*, vol. 1 (London, 1798), 182-84.

to integrate. Each author provided a different take on the shared scenario, however. A mixed-race presence, to some, signified progress in the global struggle for equality. To others, it represented the breakdown of imperial boundaries. Regardless, issues of inheritance and reproduction saturated these tales, allowing the West Indian figures to fit into prescribed literary roles at the same time that they touched upon recent interest in race and slavery. Every author using a migratory character of color wrestled with these matters. All of them determined that the phenomenon had the potential to alter Britain significantly.

### **Conclusion**

The abolition movement's heavy social influence inspired authors to incorporate characters of color into their stories. While depictions could run the gamut, recurrent themes emerge in each of these tales. Unacceptably large legacies were standard attributes of these characters, enabling authors to condemn West Indian sexuality and affluence within a metropolitan framework.<sup>83</sup> Mixed-race inheritance also came under fire for its ability to erase racial distinctions through class ascension. Migrants of color threatened the composition of Britain's upper ranks, and sentimental tales worried over the effects of their presence. Connected to this issue of wealth was the matter of interracial sex. As rich metropolitans, mixed-race West Indians enticed white spouses. Their arrival came as an attempt at assimilation, which included marriage into British households. Mixed unions were carried from the colonies to the metropole through these characters, and the authors who portrayed them castigated such actions. Inheritance and

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<sup>83</sup> Henrice Altink, "Forbidden Fruit: Pro-Slavery Attitudes Towards Enslaved Women's Sexuality and Interracial Sex," *Journal of Caribbean History* 39, no. 2 (2005): 201-35.

miscegenation, two issues which overwhelmed the subject of mixed-race migration in the private and political spheres, dominated the literary realm as well.

Fictionalized portrayals of mixed-race migrants also operated within a very specific subset of literary themes. As wealthy heirs and illegitimate children, these characters played upon broader conventions crucial to sentimental writing. Bastards, orphans, and dispossessed elites saturated novels in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. At the same time, abolition narratives joined the empathetic tones of sensibility to the issue of African slavery. Depictions of mixed-race migrants capitalized on these themes, and enhanced the somewhat routine and stale formula that had long dominated popular sentimental literature. Analyses of these works, as Sara Salih suggests, should not fail to contextualize them within the larger conventions at play.<sup>84</sup> However, the increasing and consistent use of these characters at the turn of the nineteenth century connected to wider social concerns about the real-world corollaries of those portrayed. Fictional fears over Caribbean inheritance and illegitimacy tapped into the regular lawsuits between whites and relatives of color in the metropole. Narrative anxieties about metropolitan miscegenation reflected parallel rhetoric brought out by the abolition movement. Mixed-race characters in England, therefore, were ideal figures for sentimental literature: they fit well into the style's conventions, while heightening their effects through real-world concerns.

To return to the novel that opened this chapter, Henry Senior's brief mention of the young Julia playing with her cousin in Dorset came at the end of a long period of mixed-race depictions. His portrayal used the same techniques as the numerous sentimental tales which preceded it. As racial attitudes shifted over time and place, these

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<sup>84</sup> Salih, "The Silence of Miss Lambe": 340-41.

depictions transitioned as well. More comical portrayals, such as that of Rhoda Swartz in *Vanity Fair* (1847), sat opposite to a growing literature on the “tragic octoroon” in antebellum-American fiction.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, these later-nineteenth century works still incorporated similar fantasies/insecurities about mixed-race inheritance and the potential for African blood in the upper-ranks. As Britons came into greater contact with West Indians of color, their literature attempted to understand and normalize the phenomenon. Consequently, concern over these migrants’ presence was a struggle over a new, exotic threat that could be made more simple and clear if seen through a sentimental lens.

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<sup>85</sup> Jules Zanger, “The ‘Tragic Octoroon’ in Pre-Civil War Fiction,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1966): 63-70.

## CONCLUSION

In the 1780s, Nathaniel Wells, son of St. Kitts planter William Wells and a black household slave named Juggy, arrived in England to attend school. Expecting a bounteous West Indian legacy, he began grooming himself as a landed gentleman. Upon his father's death in 1794, Nathaniel came into a fortune valued at roughly £120,000. Several years later, he married Harriet Este and purchased the Piercefield estate at Chepstow, using three-quarters of his inheritance. Numerous visitors of note called at the house, including Joseph Farington, who declared it a "specimen of very bad taste in architecture." Perhaps Farington saw in Wells the personification of John Moore's mixed-race heir in *Edward*. Regardless of his preferences, Wells impressed the diarist. Farington noted his reputation for a "charitable and good disposition," only casually remarking that "Mr. Wells is a Creole of a very deep colour, but Miss Wells is fair."<sup>1</sup> Before his death in 1852, Wells sired twenty children who matriculated into Britain's elite ranks apparently unconcerned by their distant African heritage.<sup>2</sup> Bankrolled by his father's colonial plantation, unchallenged by white relatives, and eager to succeed in British society, Wells flourished, achieving the ambitions that all West Indian parents held for their children of color in the metropole.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Farington, *The Farington Diary*, ed. James Grieg, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 2 (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923), 154.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. H. Evans, "Wells, Nathaniel (1779-1852)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: From the earliest times to the year 2000*, eds. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, vol. 58 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 68. See also: Will of Nathaniel Wells, July 28, 1852, PROB 11/2157, NAE.

In the 1820s, two of the four “natural sons” of Patrick McGregor arrived in Scotland from Jamaica with many of the same goals that Wells possessed. Each entitled to £500 under their father’s will, they fell under the watch of his contacts in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Life in Scotland did not suit the boys initially, however, and they expressed an immediate wish to return to the West Indies. John Anderson hoped to keep them in Edinburgh, according to their father’s desires, rather than send them back to an uncertain and possibly oppressive existence. Perhaps in an effort to make their voices heard, however, the two young men sabotaged their prospects. John, employed by a grocer, stole regularly from the store, forcing Anderson to apprentice him with an upholsterer. Younger brother Robert followed suit, pilfering from the jeweler under whom he was working. Asked if they might prefer to live in the country, to avoid the capital’s temptations, John and Robert instead demanded to return home. Within a month, they set sail.<sup>3</sup>

Wells and the McGregors represent two sides of the same migratory coin. Each ventured to Britain with the hope of escaping colonial oppression. Each wished to become established in their fathers’ ancestral homes. Yet the outcomes of their journeys could not have differed more. Wells served as a justice of the peace, sheriff, deputy lieutenant for Monmouthshire, and churchwarden in St. Arvan’s.<sup>4</sup> Buoyed up by an extraordinary fortune, he had no trouble entering Britain’s landed ranks. Moreover, he came to London in the early years of a fresh debate on slavery and race in the Empire. Perhaps his timing, more than anything else, allowed for a smooth transition into metropolitan society. The McGregor boys, on the other hand, landed in Scotland with

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<sup>3</sup> John Anderson’s Letter Book, CS 96/1823, ff. 21, 47-50, 60, 64-67, 117, NAS.

<sup>4</sup> J. A. H. Evans, “Wells, Nathaniel,” 68.

less plentiful assets, and at a time by which Britons had soured on interactions with mixed-race migrants. The fury over abolition and building resentment against a new emancipation movement plagued the McGregors' relations with their father's British network. Individuals of color like themselves would still come over the course of the nineteenth century, but they would never achieve the same type of regular success as those from Wells's generation and before.

These were children of an uncertain fortune. Their lives balanced between colonial repression and metropolitan acceptance, Caribbean riches and British poverty. They descended from an enslaved class brutally suppressed by white colonists, yet they held a place within their fathers' Atlantic networks. Indeed, they embodied the complex realities of race and status in the West Indies. Many migrants were born to enslaved women who had caught the eye of a white settler – part of a systematic culture of cross-racial pairings that exploited the islands' inequalities. While these mothers generally lived in quasi-matrimonial states with white partners, rather than suffering the colonies' more regular abuse of random sexual violence, they still operated in highly imbalanced relationships. Even free women of color, who were the more typical mothers of these migrants, fell upon the financial and social mercy of their lovers. Yet, even within this system of oppression the islands' mixed-race communities could flourish. Patriarchal bequests created extraordinarily wealthy islanders of color. Ubiquitous interracial relations produced an elite society in which white and brown frequently interacted. Transatlantic commerce put mixed-race individuals into the regular correspondence between white families in Britain and the Caribbean. The legal and institutional barriers crafted to reverse this trend only resulted in more complex maneuvers to avoid

subjugation. Although built upon one of the most brutal structures of slavery in the New World, the Anglophone Caribbean contained a space of racial toleration formed through class and social distinctions. That allowance was crucial in the eventual movement of the islands' most elite residents of color to Britain.

Firmly situated within their fathers' networks, West Indians of color drew on British connections to leave the islands. For those with the option, the decision was often an easy one. Lacking schools and employment, the West Indies were not ideal places for any children. Increasingly harsh laws against blacks and people of color in the eighteenth century made it even more difficult to stay. Even though Jamaica's laws against mixed-race employment and inheritance could be overturned in individual cases, the process was long and difficult. Britain offered everything that the islands did not: schools, tutors, apprenticeships, and potential legal parity with whites. Not surprisingly, elites of color left for Europe regularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Amongst the wealthiest whites in Jamaica, perhaps a quarter of their mixed-race children arrived in Britain during this period. Most were young men intended for enough schooling to win a modest living in the metropole. A significant number, however, returned to the islands, eager to win their own fortunes, if not in sugar, then in the burgeoning coffee trade. Britain, therefore, was both a destination for oppressed West Indians of color, as well as a stopping point in their advancement.

Regardless of the time period in which they arrived, West Indians of color faced a number of obstacles once in Britain. Perhaps the most immediate and damaging was the threat of law. British legal pluralism saddled migrants of color with an ambiguous status. Colonial determinants of race and slavery were never exact, often resulting in the illegal

reenslavement of legitimately manumitted individuals. Metropolitan engagement with these issues was even more muddled, and British judges frequently deferred to colonial authorities. Consequently, mixed-race migrants could have their statuses of freedom revoked, or find themselves bound to West Indian laws that circumscribed their financial positions. Inheritance disputes with white relatives were the contexts in which these legal questions were most commonly raised. Excising mixed-race kin became a routine procedure in colonial will administration. For those in Britain, a legacy contest not only froze desperately needed assets, but also effectively destroyed the familial bonds crucial for metropolitan success. Financial independence was the ultimate goal for those who traversed the Atlantic in search of a more tolerant home.

For the majority of migrants dependent upon British relatives, interpersonal negotiation could prove as complicated as legal settlement. Mixed-race children were generally not secrets, whether in the colonies or at home. When news of their existence broke, family across the ocean became involved with their upbringing. For those individuals of color coming to Britain, then, they arrived in full view of white kin. Many Britons honored relatives' requests to care for the children. The Tailyours and Marshes, for example, cleared at least a partial path for their mixed-race relatives' achievement. More often than not, however, these relations were marred by a reluctance to accept Caribbean cousins fully. While financial competition could land both parties in court, even more subtle pressures against illegitimate children and colonial inhabitants generally worked against reconciliation. Larger political and intellectual debates against racial mixture also turned whites against mixed-race charges. Without family support, many

migrants of color had no choice but to return to the colonies. Britain may not have been the final destination anyhow, but many left before their intended departure.

Public anxieties raised in the abolition debate also played with judicial and personal concerns. The movement to end the slave trade focused on issues of colonial demography and attacked mixed relationships for undercutting humanitarian reform. The children of such unions naturally came under metropolitan scrutiny, particularly when they arrived in Britain. Fears of British racial purity, seemingly under assault from black slaves in the working classes and mixed-race *grande*s in the upper classes, heightened metropolitan concern over mixed-race migration. Moreover, such discussion collapsed class distinctions which had previously moderated attitudes toward race, so that by 1820 Britons were less tolerant of those with African blood, even if the majority of descent was European. Meanwhile, broader questions of subjecthood, including the emancipation of Catholics, the freedom of slaves, and extensions of the franchise, dominated discussions of reform at the end of the long eighteenth century. The legal status of mixed-race individuals was part of that larger discussion about belonging in Britain. Fearing an open door of metropolitan inclusion, many Britons reacted against mixed-race migrants in tandem with their anxieties over abolition.

Novelists capitalized on these worries, portraying the presence of West Indians of color as a danger to Britain's financial and biological strength. Although often depicted in a positive manner, mixed-race characters in Britain nevertheless posed major societal problems. First and foremost was their potential to marry and have children in the metropole. Playing on abolitionist fears, mixed-race marriage to whites was always threatened in these novels, but almost never realized. Social sanctions against interracial

pairings in Britain, particularly legitimate ones, kept authors from realizing the act.

Second, these characters' large fortunes worked to castigate them. Often contrasted to a much poorer protagonist, or one prevented from acquiring a rightful legacy, the mixed-race migrant as a character symbolized improper inheritance and social upheaval. Once again, abolitionist rhetoric against the infiltration of wealthy mulattos onto British shores seeped into popular literary conventions. Although only a modest migration, mixed-race arrival in Britain provoked an outpouring of published reaction. Such outcry worked its way back into society, and soured personal attitudes toward those West Indian travelers.

Public and private attitudes toward mixed-race migration thus developed alongside, and in conversation with, one another. Family connections to the slave trade operated next to ties with mixed-race kin. Accordingly, those with the greatest stake in abolition had the strongest association with migrants of color. Writers feeding the abolitionist fire could draw on their experiences with individuals of African descent in the metropole to make larger arguments about the state of Britain's racial future. As these personal attitudes hardened, the discourse surrounding the movement began to set as well. British racial ideology was therefore not sealed off from material experiences with blacks and individuals of color. Rather, it developed in response to a regular and sustained presence of mixed-race migrants. Students of transitions in the intellectual and rhetorical characteristics of British racial attitudes must consider the place of these migrants.

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LPL

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