Chrysalis

[kris-*uh*-lis]

from Latin chrȳsallis, from Greek khrusallis

1. the obtect pupa of a moth or butterfly

2. anything in the process of developing

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CHRYSALIS was created by Dr. Charmaine A. Nelson as a vehicle to showcase the most innovative, rigorous, and sophisticated research produced by students within the context of her Art History courses at McGill University (Montreal). Over the years, Nelson observed that undergraduate students in her courses were more than capable of producing exceptional research on par with that of graduate students, and at times even professional academics. Disappointed that the majority of these students were faced with a negligible audience (if any) for their incredible work, with the help of her MA Art History student Anna T. January, Nelson came up with the idea to provide another platform for their research dissemination. CHRYSALIS is that platform!

In this the fourth issue of CHRYSALIS, we welcome a new Managing Editor, the talented Uma Vespaziani, a former student whose brilliant research is also showcased in this issue.

CHRYSALIS is an open access, electronic journal that will be published in seven special issues on Nelson's research website: www.blackcanadianstudies.com The goal of CHRYSALIS is transformation: to publish scholarship that seeks answers to exciting new questions, to encourage students to undertake primary research and to open the discipline of Art History in ways that make it more welcoming to a diverse population of students. For more information please contact: charmaine.nelson@mcgill.ca

COVER ART CREDIT INFORMATION:

Maria Sibylla Merian, "Untitled," (1705), print, 37.2 x 25.1 cm, Metamorphosis insectorum surinamensium (Amsterdam: G. Valck, 1705), plate 45, Cullman Library of Rare Books, Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Washington, D.C., United States.

ARTICLES:

QUEERING THE "PECULIAR INSTITUTION": UNEARTHING MASCULINE SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SAME-SEX PUNISHMENT IN SLAVERY

Chris Gismondi

"Breakfast? Want some breakfast, nigger?
"Yes, sir."
"Hungry, nigger?"
"Yes, sir."
"Here you go."
Occasionally a kneeling man chose gunshot in his head as the price, maybe, of taking a bit of foreskin with him to Jesus.

Toni Morrison, Beloved (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 127.

Figure 1: Dirk Valkenburg, Slave "Play" on a Sugar Plantation in Surinam alternatively Slave Dress (1706), oil on canvas, 58 x 46.5cm, ownership of the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen.

A reader of Toni Morrison's Beloved (2004) might miss the subtle nuances of enforced fellatio amid the troubling tale of a surreal slave life. I hope to pull the non-fiction accounts of sexual violence inflicted on the male body to the surface of slavery studies—not to undermine the known rape that enslaved females faced—but to acknowledge the atrocities also done to the enslaved male population. I recognize that this paper is truly just skimming the surface of a traumatic history that has been denied and erased. To consider how inter-racial sexual desires diverged from the time period's "compulsory" heterosexuality may seem to be a transgressive stretch. However, I believe that within the brutal capitalist system of slavery where the drive towards complete power and authority resulted in an overarching objectification, to pretend that coercive sex and rape between free men and enslaved men never happened is to perpetuate a dire fiction. Indeed, the enslaved male body as object and property could fall prey to anyone in a position of power in a slave holding culture, including white females (another as yet untold history).[1] Since same-sex violence does not result in the

"evidence" of mixed race children it is harder to trace.[2] Furthermore, the historic and contemporary taboos of masculinity make unearthing same-sex accounts difficult, potentially damaging to the historic heterosexual ideas of white and black masculinity, and to the hetero-normative fictions of the white slave owning classes. This article will analyze "queer" slave accounts and use them to outline same-sex sublimations depicted in the visual culture of slavery. Images will be re-analyzed in this queer framework to attempt to begin the process of reconciling the trauma done to the enslaved male body at the hands of the master, mistress, captain, trader, overseer, and general slave holding society.

Firstly, why is a project like this important to me? If slavery created a context in which the sexual assault of the enslaved body was ubiquitous "robbing of them the basic rights of bodily autonomy and sexual choice," I think that it is important to consider how this plays out on the male body, since the female body has rightfully been the site of most scholarly attention.[3] Can we trouble the heterosexual enslaved-man and enslaved-woman relationship since reproduction—and thus property production—was encouraged (through rape, coercion, and concubinage) under the system of chattel slavery? In the owner-slave relationship, what ability to consent was there for both enslaved females and males since both parties involved were not in full control of their own bodies and sexualities? I do not mean to diminish the scholarship that addresses the atrocities visited upon enslaved females, but rather, I wish to open the discussion to wider analysis. To connect this to a "queering" of history is interesting since the supposedly deviant sexuality of Africans, through European eyes, was seen to include perversities like bestiality and homosexuality.[4] As scholar Aliyyah I. Abdur-Rahman argues, same-sex eroticism and domination was the basis for asserting heterosexuality and sexual normalization in slave holding society. Strict heterosexuality in the context of monogamous marriage was maintained as a privilege of white society, while the recognition (legal and social) of black heterosexual monogamous love was denied in most contexts.[5] This history of strategic license and prohibition is interesting for queer scholarship to consider. Sioban Somerville theorized a link between the construction of categories of race and the development of "sexual types."[6] For terminology I refuse to refer to male-male interactions as "homosexual" because they are characterized by power and domination, not consent, and desire. Richard C. Trexler considers employing the term "pedastry" in contexts where homosexual identity did not exist, but "power and coercion did."[7]

When attempting to pull these histories out into the light of day there are many issues standing in the way. To truly do a topic like this justice would involve sifting through archives and oral histories for first-hand accounts of these traumatic experiences. However, in the absence of traditional "evidence," it would be an injustice to pretend that sexual violence against enslaved males never happened. In the place of archival and oral documentation, I have attempted to examine multiple slave narratives and travel literature to find the sort of "proof" that could ground my assumptions about the sexual violation that was forced upon black male slaves. In what would appear to be the most prolific source of evidence, slave narratives have to be considered a censored and much-sanitized rendering of real accounts.[8] With the literary genre being a rallying point for the abolitionist cause - a white upper class affair with women as active

members - accounts of rape, anal sex, and even the humiliation of perpetual nudity were systematically erased for the sake of "propriety." For example, Olaudah Equinao's narrative recounts being handled and examined many times between being kidnapped in Africa, boarded on the slave ship, crossing the Middle Passage, and before being sold in the "New World."[9] However, his constant state of undress is erased. Accounts of planters that "examined us attentively" are lacking elaborate description while alluding to thorough physical scrutiny.[10]

Proprietor journals are another source that vary in their value to such a topic. The gruesome detail of overseer Thomas Thistlewood on the Egypt Estate between 1751 and 1764 documented his 1,774 rapes of 109 different women.[11] While the horrific accounts of Thistlewood truthfully represent his extensive participation in acts of sexual violence,[12] other plantation accounts like those of Jamaican slave owner Matthew Gregory Lewis were suspiciously benevolent.[13] These very issues of propriety were well known and strategically cultivated. In the 1837 correspondence of Mr. Loring to Mrs. Ellis Gray Loring, he points out the sheltering of genteel whiteness: "Your standing with its inevitable associations, but far more your sex, must prevent your catching more than partial glimpses of what is not meant you should see."[14] Lady Maria Nugent during her extended stay in Jamaica As the governor's wife) between 1801 to 1805 remarked in her diary about seeing black islanders naked except clothed with beads.[15] However, the sheltering of upper class white female respectability could not be fully maintained within the morally flawed system of slavery.

Visitors to the slaving American South knew of the sexual exploitation of enslaved women. In 1847 Harriet Martineau found a South Carolina mulatta (mixed race) hotel worker trying to force guests to take her infant daughter with them, attempting to get her away from the "bad place." Martineau picks up the inferences of prostitution experienced by the enslaved women kept at the hotel.[16] Knowing that white women were often the owners of brothels, renting out and exploiting their black and mixed race slave women, Martineau's accounts of the American South match the Barbadian research of Beckles.[17] Thus, within the context of slavery studies, if we do not fruitfully examine the absences of what could not be written or spoken in "polite" society, we will facilitate the continuing silence around such histories.[18]

Instead of working from factual historical accounts, I hope to read into existing accounts and consider "queering" how we view the slave-master, slave-society relationship and consequently re-examine how images of the male slave body functioned as erotic. Although a contemporary analysis of same-sex rape, Michael Scarce suggests that the "segregation of male rape" is carried out in homo-social spaces like the prison or fraternity locker room hazing.[19] Scarce also argues that men who rape tend to be heterosexual, young, and primarily white. Rape attempts to overpower, humiliate, and degrade victims rather than being acts of lust or desire.[20] The immense stigma of male rape in the modern day is attached to the shame of homosexuality and arguably how it undermines normative masculinity.[21] For some, the link to a desire different from heterosexuality and therefore a deviant strain of "unmanly" masculinity, are inextricable. These points of analysis will provide context for viewing the dynamics of power and eroticism that play out and can be read into the images and accounts of slavery that I shall discuss below.

Furthermore, when considering the dynamics of power that are at play in the context of slavery and same-sex rape, the whole institution of slavery should be reconsidered as a bizarrely gendered structure. Michael Hatt speculates that if masculinity and "manliness" are about control, the black male slave in no way could be deemed masculine given the paternalistic relationship of white masculinity that distinctly undermined black masculinity.[22] Abdur-Rahman describes this demasculinization of enslaved men and defeminization of enslaved women as an "ungendered slave body."[23] Slave men were feminized by their subjugation, possible castration, and denial of patriarchal access and citizen status while slave women were masculinized through their labour and denial of protection.[24] Both of these "ungenderings" were systematically constructed as antithetical to bourgeois white connotations of sex and gender. Corrupted black masculinity was used to assert power and thus perpetuate ideas of white masculinity within the relationship of slavery. This "patriarchy of dominant males" required the subjugation and repression of other males, especially blacks.[25] For Thistlewood, the sadism of domination involved not only sex but also cruel punishments, which he documented extensively. One punishment, the "Derby's dose," involved one slave instructed to defecate in the mouth of another and to have their mouth wired shut.[26] This shows the extreme excesses of abuse to which the commodified slave body was subjected. Furthermore, it is only because these perverse and twisted acts were deemed to be normal forms of punishment that they are not recorded more often. Identifying the rarity of documentation is very different from saying that these types of sexual, violent, and shameful perversions never happened.

The male slave body should also be considered within the sphere of heterosexual violence. Across the Americas, there were many cases where male slaves were under sole ownership of white female mistresses. It is in this context that we can view the potential for heterosexual imposition, coercion or rape being inflicted on the male body. Exemplary of this is the legend of the White Witch of Rose Hall. Annie Palmer, having outlived her husband and inherited their estate, would supposedly take male slaves to bed with her and murder them. The legend continues that she would cruelly torture and terrorize the slaves who laboured under her.[27] Although scholars often discredit this fable, it is important to consider how upper class female sexuality would have been affected by the uncircumscribed power of slave ownership. Although white upper class sexuality was subject to the bounds of social propriety, patriarchy, and genteel whiteness, we should consider that male slaves could be coerced or raped to assist in white female sexual experimentation beyond the limits of white sexual respectability. Barbadian slavery scholar Beckles notes that white women were not indifferent to slave reproduction. With accounts of creole white women examining the genitals of male slaves at public slave markets before purchase, such scrutiny was likely for two purposes, their own sexual pleasure[28] and their interest in property production from the breeding of female slaves.[29] Indeed, within the exacting confines of "proper," heterosexual, monogamous sexuality within bourgeois marriage, white female slave owners may have regarded their male slaves as a suitable sexual outlet.

To begin to confront these manifestations of power, masculinity, desire, and ultimately re-read them in order to "queer" the image of slavery, I will first begin with an analysis of Slave

Dress (1707) by Dirk Valkenburg [fig. 1]. I propose that this queer picture of slavery represents a plethora of commodified humans from which labour, wealth, and pleasure can all be extracted. Marcus Wood's book Slavery, Empathy and Pornography (2002) will be used to frame this (re)interpretation of the slave genre image. Wood connects the historical sexual abuses of slaves to the strange contemporary slavery-inspired sub-genres of pornography like BDSM,[30] "plantation erotica,"[31] and Mandingo clubs.[32] The black body – although absent from early pornographic print culture – was represented as the site of sexual and violent trauma in abolitionist print culture.[33] For the black body to be erased from deliberate pornography and eroticism is revealing of the erotic limits of white sexual fantasy. On a tangential note, it is important to give scholarly consideration to the roots of pornography given its contemporary importance in shaping (racialized) sexualities and relationships through contentious and controversial depictions.

Pornography can perhaps be defined as "a genre devoted to fantasy, and its fantasies traverse a range of motifs beyond the strictly sexual."[34] Was there a more taboo fantasy in the context of white genteel society that involved the dehumanized and enslaved black body? Wood continues: "pornography appropriated as a form of speech and deployed around subjects and issues that are the most 'unspeakable', the most buried, but also the most politically and culturally significant."[35] Pornographic fantasy and its manifestations are simultaneously taboo and essential. Wood concludes that the black body became the site of punishment and fetishization "in directly explorative and eroticized ways which are blatantly pornographic."[36]

How is this pornographic fetishization and fantasy playing out in Slave Dress Notably, since the male heterosexual artist's gaze is exerted onto the group of blacks who seem at ease, we are left to ponder the extent of his voyeurism. Are they unaware of their observer's presence? The fantasy is in venturing into their uprooted world, their rebuilt community in the colonial "New World." The scant clothing reveals glistening, voluptuous, fleshy bodies rendered in detail. The musculature of every man seems just as defined and highlighted as every bosom of every woman depicted. The fantasy appears to be in the espionage. It seems ruptured not by the surveillance of black masculinity, but femininity. The woman in the right foreground redirects the gaze toward the screen, meeting or perhaps missing the viewer's gaze. This works to point out the obviousness of the perverse omniscient voyeur/viewer, as not even the dog seems aware of the intruder. In contrast, the man in the left foreground is unaware, profiled, posed, his muscular body shining in the light, his loin cloth extending down between his legs, and his long cast shadow directs us to the mass of other glistening black male bodies dancing. For the black subject to be the target of an unwelcomed voyeuristic gaze speaks to the how it would become the site of excessive pornographic fantasy in white slave holding society. The visual culture of the black slave body is highly eroticized and fetishized at its very core, as Woods would argue, and those qualities seem manifested within this work of so called "high art."

The fantasy continues this time in the words of Frederick Douglass, the self-liberated former slave, who was not afraid of the boundaries of white abolitionist respectability when

recounting this scene in his narrative:

> "(Mr. Covey) ordered me to take off my clothes. I made him no answer but stood with my clothes on. He repeated his order. I still made him no answer, nor did I move to strip myself. Upon this he rushed at me with the fierceness of a tiger, tore off my clothes, and lashed me till he had worn out his switches, cutting me so savagely as to leave the marks visible for a long time after. This whipping was the first of a number just like it, and for similar offences."[37]

It is from this perspective I propose that we view An Englishmen tastes the sweat of an African (1725) [fig. 2],[38] through the dynamics of gendering and power. As background, it is important to note that illness was thought to be detectable through the practice of tasting the sweat of Africans. Depicted here, the slaver tries to guarantee the value and longevity of his purchase. The white male is hyper masculine through the domination and power of slaving, while the black male is "feminized" in his submissiveness, helpless to the demands of the white male. Similarly in Douglass' accounts, Mr. Covey is strong and ferocious like a tiger. Douglass is the recipient of the patriarch's violence, stripped, and lashed. The black male in the image is highly feminized, the power dynamics of patriarchy playing out in the body positioning. The hand of the white man guiding and forcing keeps the black commodity in a position of submission. To return to the Douglass passage, the whipping post was theorized as simultaneously phallic and vaginal. The whipping post as a site of ravage and trauma connotes the bloody event of childbirth while also remaining symbolically phallic in construction.[39] As a site of violation and violence, it is the place of the intersection of the empowered lash-baring white male and the feminized violated

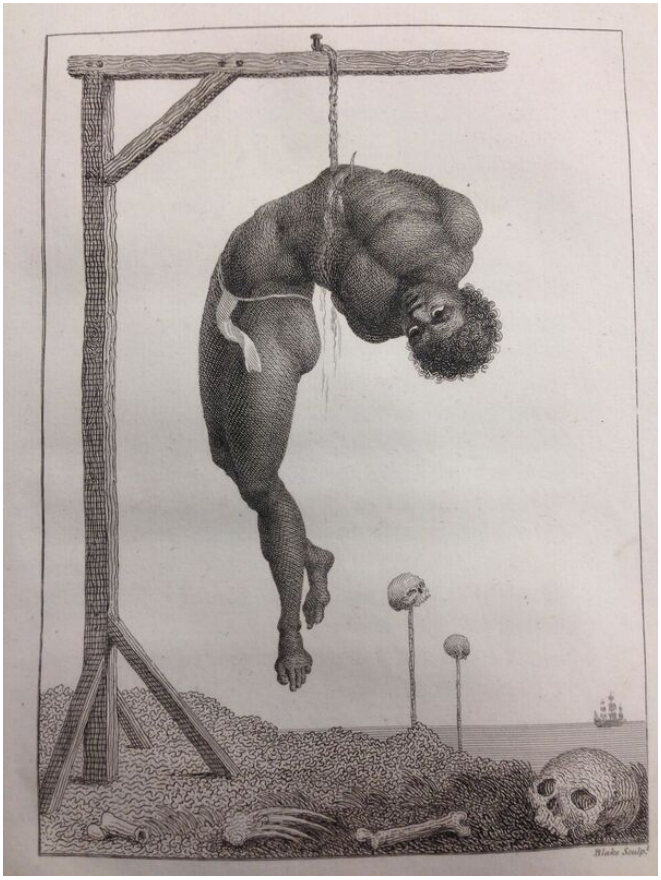
Figure 2: Serge Daget, An Englishman Tastes the Sweat of an African (circa 1725), etching.

black slave body. [40] Here the enslaved male body experiences violence, whether originating from the tongue or the whip, that is played out in the bizarre power dynamics and (un)gendering drive of slavery.

The last manifestation of "queer" slavery derives from a re-reading of William Blake's etching after Stedman A Negro Hung alive by his Ribs to a Gallows (1792)[41] [fig. 3], with an account from the slave narrative of Harriet Anne Jacobs. Abdur-Rhaman considers this a tale of "masochistic and authoritarian desire."[42] Harriet describes Luke, an enslaved man owned by the same master. His young master inherited him and Luke "became prey to the vices growing out of the 'patriarchal institution'."[43] Luke's master returns from the north after schooling "deprived of the use of his limbs, by excessive dissipation."[44] Abdur-Rhaman speculates that the master was crippled from venereal disease, and as the tale unfolds the slave body is transformed from the site of profit to one of pleasure, as the master attempts to fulfill his urges for domination. [45] Harriet describes:

> "Luke was appointed to wait upon his bed-ridden master, whose despotic habits were greatly increasing by exasperation at his own helplessness. He kept a cowhide beside him, and, for the most trivial occurrence, he would order his attendant to bare his back, and kneel beside the couch, while he whipped him till his strength was exhausted. Some days he was not allowed to wear anything but his shirt, in order to be in readiness to be flogged...(Harriet fled the house with) poor Luke still chained to the bedside of this cruel and disgusting wretch."[46]

Figure 3: William Blake after Stedman, A Negro Hung alive by the Ribs to a Gallows (circa 1792), etching, 18 x 13 cm, Rare Books/Special Collections, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.



Using this account we can begin to narrate an image from the twisted desires of sadism where the passions for violence seem to stand in for the passions of sex. A Negro Hung alive by his Ribs to a Gallows can be queered and reanalyzed where power is manifested in both sexual exploitation and the spectacle of physically grotesque violence. The man appears to have his hands bound behind his back as he hangs limply almost nude from the hook on the gallows. We can speculate that the loincloth is an addition for propriety's sake, meant to

maintain the "respectability" of slave torture. Since clothing was a rarity for the enslaved in their crossing of the Middle Passage, we should further consider what roles nudity and the strategic removal of clothes had in punishment. The stripping or refusal of clothes was sexual in regards to the (often public) strategic humiliation and how this upheld the already asymmetrical balance of power. We should wonder, how punishment varied for the enslaved in temperate climates such as the territories that became Canada where discipline was often administered inside the home and where the enslaved were more isolated in slave minority communities.[47] For the black slave to be naked before being beaten was to further empower the white clothed abuser who held the lash. The orchestration of such bodily difference is seen not only in Harriet's account of Luke, but also in the narrative of Douglass that was already viewed through a gendered power dynamic. It is here I propose we eroticize this image further with the hook penetrating the skin, and the twisted limp mass of musculature left hanging to be gazed upon. As sadistic alternatives to sex whether it be in flogging the black male, or suspending him by his ribs, these erotic and violent spectacles stand in for and emulate sexual exploitation when the appetite cannot be fulfilled.[48] It is the violent spectacle, the flogging, the suspension, and the lashing of the unclothed male body that stands in to support the constructed dynamics of power and take the place of sexual expressions.

To analyze the black male body as a site of violent sexual fantasy used to uphold white masculine ideals of power in slavery is one way to "queer" the accounts of slavery. While the much specific evidence of same-sex, sexual violence has not yet been reclaimed, there is no denying its historical existence. I in no way see this as an extensive analysis of what it meant for the enslaved black male to be sexual prey within slave holding societies. In particular, there is much to be said about how the enslaved male body fits into the equation of exploitive upper class white female power and coercion. But this work is perhaps the beginning of a process of reclaiming the traumatic, suppressed, and denied histories that diverge from histories of heterosexuality and normative masculinity. This is my attempt to add to the accounts of slavery studies in analyzing a troubling past anchored in a brutal and morally flawed capitalist system.

ENDNOTES:

[1] For more on the sexual abuse of enslaved black males by white females see: Thomas A. Foster, "The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery," Journal of the History of Sexuality, vol. 20, no. 3 (September 2011), pp. 445-64.

[2] Yet other evidence of the sexual violation of enslaved females exists in the "breeding lists" kept by slave owners like Matthew Lewis in nineteenth-century Jamaica through which he tracked the fertility of his female slaves. Matthew Lewis, Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept during a residence in the Island of Jamaica ed. Judith Terry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 237.

[3] Aliyyah I. Abdur-Rahman, "'The Strangest Freaks of Despotism': Queer Sexuality in Antebellum African American Slave Narratives," African American Review, vol. 40, no. 2 (Summer, 2006), p. 223.

[4] Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 225.

[5] Slaves often required permission from their owners to marry. A free person seeking to marry a slave would have to convince the slave owner to free the slave or to allow them to purchase the slave. Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 229. In the context of Jamaica, one of Thomas Cooper's main preoccupations was the impossibility of Negro marriage and family structures, which were under constant threat of interference from slave owners. See: Thomas Cooper, Facts Illustrative of the Condition of the Negro Slaves in Jamaica: with Notes and Appendix. (London: Sold by J. Hatchard and Son, Piccadilly, and Lupton Relfe, 13, Cornhill; G. Smallfield, Printer,

Hackney, 1824), p. 46 and Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).
[6] Sioban Somerville, Queering the Colour Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 5-50.
[7] Richard C. Trexler, Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 6.
[8] For more on the control and influence exerted by white abolitionists in the process of creating slave narratives see: Marcus Wood, "Rhetoric and the Runaway: The Iconography of the slave escape in England and America," Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
[9] William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates Jr., Slave Narratives (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2000), pp. 50-80.
[10] Andrews, Slave Narratives, p. 78.
[11] Trevor Burnard, "The Sexual Life of an Eighteenth-Century Jamaican Slave Overseer," Sex and Sexuality in Early America, ed. Merril D. Smith (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 172.
[12] Thistlewood's "truthfulness" was facilitated by the nature of the recording of his exploits in a personal journal, which appears to have been for his own (sexual) pleasure. See: Burnard, "The Sexual Life of an Eighteenth-Century Jamaican Slave Overseer" and Charmaine A. Nelson, "Imaging Slavery in Antigua and Jamaica: Pro-Slavery Discourse and the Reality of Enslavement," Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).
[13] M.G. Lewis, Journal of a West India Proprietor (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1929)
[14] Joe Lockard, Watching Slavery: Witness Texts and Travel Reports (New York: Lang Publishing Inc., 2008), p. 52.
[15] F. Cundall, Lady Nugent's Journal (London: The West India Committee, 1939), p. 10.
[16] Lockard, Watching Slavery, p. 53.
[17] Beckles explains how the strategic purchase of female slaves by white female slave owners in the capital city of Bridgetown, facilitated their sexual exploitation when the owners rented the females to sailors, soldiers, and other local or transient males for profit. Hilary McD. Beckles, "Property Rights in Pleasure: The Marketing of Enslaved Women's Sexuality," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000)
[18] For an important discussion about slavery and the limits of representation see: Wood, "Rhetoric and the Runaway".
[19] Michael Scarce, Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame (Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 1997), p. 35.
[20] Scarce, Male on Male Rape, p. 17.
[21] Scarce, Male on Male Rape, p. 19.
[22] Michael Hatt, "'Making a Man of Him': Masculinity and the Black Body in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture," Oxford Art Journal, vol. 15, no. 1 (1992), pp. 21-23.
[23] Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 230.
[24] Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 230. The defeminization of enslaved females was central in labour practices. Lucille Mathurin Mair has explained that enslaved females comprised the bulk of field labourers in the context of nineteenth-century Jamaican plantations at a ratio of 920 males to 1000 females. Lucille Mathurin Mair, "Women Field Workers in Jamaica During Slavery," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000), p. 390
[25] Burnard, "The Sexual Life," p. 166.
[26] Burnard, "The Sexual Life," pp. 166-67.
[27] "The Legend of the White Witch of Rose Hall," Jamaica Travel and Culture, http://www.jamaicatravelandculture.com/destinations/st_james/rose-hall/white-witch.htm (date of last access 6 April 2014)
[28] The idea of the white female examination of black male bodies (including genitalia) as a sexual outlet should not be underestimated since, as Beckles has explained, a significant population of these white female slave owners was unmarried and therefore bereft of any "legitimate" sexual outlet. Furthermore, by the early eighteenth century (1715), white females outnumbered white males in Barbados by one per cent, and by seven per cent in 1748. See:

Hilary Beckles, "White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000), p. 662 and Charmaine A. Nelson, "James Hakewill's *Picturesque Tour*: Representing Life on Nineteenth-Century Jamaican Sugar Plantations," Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).
[29] Beckles, "White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean," p. 661.
[30] Bondage, Discipline/Dominance, Submission/Sadism, and Masochism can be summed up as power role-play with a Master or Mistress ("Dom") and a submissive ("Slave" or "Sub"). Flogging and restraints are common to the kink.
[31] Pornographic historical re-interpretations of the plantation and slave life characterized by race play, outdoor plantation or tropical settings and some elements of punishment and domination.
[32] Mandingo Clubs are a specific sub-genre of pornography that caters to heterosexual inter-racial fantasies of white women with black "slave" men and white men with black female "slaves." Marcus Wood, Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 87-88.
[33] Wood, Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography, pp. 90-91.
[34] Wood, Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography, p. 91.
[35] Wood, Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography, p. 92.
[36] Wood, Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography, p. 93.
[37] Frederick Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave," eds. William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates Jr., Slave Narratives (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2000), p. 322.
[38] This image is included within the digitized version of the text cited, thus no specific dimensions or page number is available for complete citation.
[39] Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 227.
[40] Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 227.
[41] John Gabriel Stedman's travel book Narrative, of a five years' expedition against the revolted Negroes of Surinam: in Guiana, on the wild coast of South America, from the year 1772, to 1777: elucidating the history of that country, and describing its productions with an account of the Indians of Guiana, & negroes of Guinea, (1790, 1796) was created during his time in the colony of Surinam when he went as a Dutch mercenary there to help crush a slave rebellion.
[42] Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 231.
[43] Andrews, Slave Narratives, p. 935.
[44] Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 231.
[45] Abdur-Rahman, "The Strangest Freaks of Despotism," p. 232.
[46] Andrews, Slave Narratives, p. 935.
[47] Charmaine A. Nelson, "A Tale of Two Empires: Montreal Slavery Under the French and the British," Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).
[48] We must also consider such imagery as triggers used prior to acts of sexual violence.

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Figure 1: Dirk Valkenburg, Slave "Play" on a Sugar Plantation in Surinam alternatively Slave Dress (1706), oil on canvas, 58 x 46.5cm, ownership of the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen. ©SMK Photo. Rebecca Parker, Visions of savage paradise Albert Eckhout, court painter in colonial Dutch Brazil (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), opposite p. 139.

Figure 2: Serge Daget, An Englishman Tastes the Sweat of an African (circa 1725), etching, in Traité général du commerce de l'Amérique: Contenant l'histoire des découvertes des Européens dans cette partie du monde, son étendue, ses productions. La description & le commerce des côtes de Guinée, de Malaguete, d'Ivoire, d'Or, de la Barre de Juda, des royaumes d'Andra, Benin, Loanga, Congo, Angola, la Caffrerie, Cap de Bonne-Esperance, &c. Les moeurs des negres & des esclaves, l'état des marchandises propres à ce commerce; les précautions à prendre dans l'achat des esclaves, avec les moyens de les conduire en santé en Amérique. Un traité sur le commerce des grains du royaume & de l'etranger. Et tous les edits, déclarations, lettres patentes & réglemens conernant les differentes branches de commerce. Ouvrage utile aux négocians, jurisconsultes, gens d'affaire, & autres. Orné de figures et cartes geographiques (Amsterdam: Chez Marc-Michel Rey, Libraire, 1783).

Figure 3: William Blake after Stedman, A Negro Hung alive by the Ribs to a Gallows (circa 1792), etching, 18 x 13 cm, in Narrative, of a five years' expedition against the revolted Negroes of Surinam : in Guiana, on the wild coast of South America, from the year 1772, to 1777: elucidating the history of that country, and describing its productions with an account of the Indians of Guiana, & negroes of Guinea. Illustrations Blake after Stedman, (London: J. Johnson, & J. Edwards, 1796), folio Blake 2.1 S7N3 1796, Rare Books/Special Collections - Lawrence Lande Blake Collection (McLennan Bldg, 4th floor), McGill University, Montreal, Canada, opposite p. 110.

THE YOUNG AND FORGOTTEN: PHOTOGRAPHS OF SLAVE CHILDREN IN THE ANTEBELLUM AMERICAN SOUTH

Catherine LaMendola

Since the abolition of slavery in America, countless studies have been done on slave demographics, but only recently has scholarly attention been paid to the youth that were enslaved along with their parents. Similarly, the visual record of slavery, which spans a variety of media, from paintings to engravings, greatly lacks in depictions of slave children, especially in the care of their black kin. However, photographs taken in the Antebellum American South provide a rare exception to this rule, and many accurately capture the conditions of growing up as someone else's property. Two photographs in particular, one taken by Timothy O'Sullivan and the other by an unknown photographer, provide a glimpse into the familial structure and physical labour associated with enslaved children, respectively. I argue that children are missing from the majority of the visual record of slavery, but that those few surviving photographs, taken in the Antebellum South, prove that enslaved children on plantations were denied any kind of childhood at all, and that they were exploited in much the same way as enslaved adults.

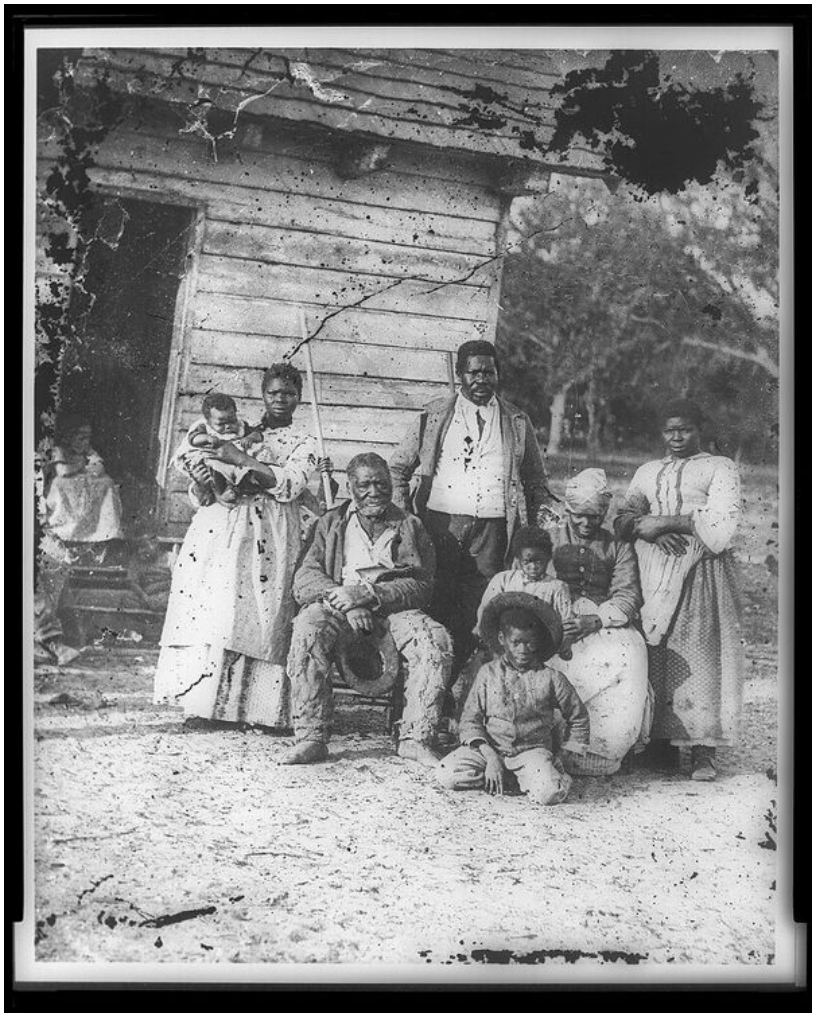

Figure 1: Timothy H. O'Sullivan, Five Generations on Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina (1862), photographic print, Civil War Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., United States.

Slavery existed in America for approximately three hundred and forty-three years, longer than the United States of America has been recognized as an independent nation.[1] Slavery was considered essential to the American economy, as cotton and tobacco, two of the most profitable and common crops grown on plantations, accounted for sixty-four percent of all US exports by 1860.[2] The southern slave worked on a farm (known often as plantations) that could be anywhere

from two hundred and eleven to five hundred and ninety acres, or in a private home.[3] Although it is well known that being a slave in the Antebellum South was dangerous, and slaves were often subject to severe mistreatment by their owners, the census of 1850 recorded suspiciously low numbers in several areas of mortality, specifically only reporting twenty-two counts of slaves committing suicide, and twelve counts of execution.[4] For a slave population that numbered in the millions, these numbers seem unreasonably low, however it is not hard to believe that many plantation owners would forgo reporting incidents of slave suicide and execution to avoid exposing the abuse that occurred on their plantations. This could also account for why such a high number of slave deaths fell into the "Unknown" category.[5]

For the little attention they have received from academia, youth and children made up a very large portion of the American slave population. By 1860 in the United States, there were 3,952,760 slaves and fifty-six percent were under the age of twenty.[6] Plantation owners encouraged the birth of many slave children because they provided a new and continual source of labour, even though pregnant women were a burden because they could not work as effectively without risking the health of the unborn child.[7] In addition, many slaveholders rewarded slaves who gave birth to live children by granting them extra provisions of clothing.[8] Likewise, in cases where male and female slaves were forcibly coupled, the more children that such slave pairings produced, increased the likelihood that the couple would be allowed to have their own cabin and be recognized as a "family unit".[9] As toddlers, enslaved children were most often unable to spend time with their parents during the day, as the adults were out working in the fields, therefore the care of children was usually entrusted to an older slaves who watched over the majority of the plantation's child population.[10] Parents would only be able to see their children in the evenings, when they were exhausted from performing long hours of manual labour and needed to prepare their evening meals. Therefore, it was pertinent for parents to form strong relationships with their children during the short periods of time they spent together. Due to the deprivation built into the slave regime, very young enslaved children were prone to neglect even when living in the same home as both of their parents.[11] This is why Charmaine A. Nelson has argued that enslaved children were *socialized into deprivation* at an early age.[12]

In a rare depiction of a slave family, the early nineteenth-century photographer Timothy H. O'Sullivan captured a photograph entitled Five Generations of Slaves on Smith's Plantation in South Carolina (1862) [fig. 1]. The photograph captures five enslaved adults and three enslaved children of various ages posing on a patch of dirt outside a wooden cabin, with a fourth youth seated in the doorway. All of the female figures are wearing dresses, and the males are depicted wearing jackets and pants. The oldest male seated in the middle of the image appears to be wearing ragged pants, perhaps the ones he wore when working on the plantation. Indeed, as David Waldstreicher has argued in his discussion of marginalized populations like the enslaved and indentured, "since few people had an extensive wardrobe, describing the clothes was a good as describing the man or woman."[13]

This scene is rare mainly because families were very often split up and separated through sale by their owners. However, family life was one of the few spheres where the

enslaved had any control over their surroundings.[14] Although that holds true, slaveholders continually found ways to interfere in family affairs, such as forcibly giving Greek names to enslaved children.[15] Many male slaves purposely avoided marrying and having children because they did not want to bring a life into the world that would be held indefinitely in bondage.[16] The most important familial bond was between the mother and child, as it was more common for husbands to be split from their families than mothers from their children.[17] However, as children grew older, they would customarily be sold and separated from their parents.[18] The wooden structure that stands behind the enslaved family in Five Generations of Slaves on Smith's Plantation in South Carolina (1862) may have very well been the home that they all shared. Sometimes, owners would deny new couples and families their own private cabins, and several generations ended up living together under the same roof, like the family pictured in O'Sullivan's photograph presumably did.[19]

Slaves were encouraged to produce as many children as possible because the infant mortality rate for slaves was very high and children needed to be "replaced" when they died either in childbirth or during their first years.[20] However, even with a high birth rate, illness was rampant in the Antebellum South, and death was frequent within enslaved populations, a fact that was acknowledged only as a financial loss by many slaveholders.[21] Extended families were useful in the raising of children, especially when enslaved parents were involved in what were known as "abroad marriages," and were owned by two different masters. In such an instance, the child stayed with the mother and became her owner's property, as American slavery was a matrilineal institution.[22] Owners often visited the slave's quarters and children were taught to be presentable and polite when they arrived, as such visits intended to "inspire in children awe for their owners."[23] These visits to the slave's homes were yet another way slaveholders inserted themselves into the day-to-day lives of enslaved children, and yet another way they interfered with their family dynamic.

Enslaved children in the Antebellum South were at just as much risk of abuse as enslaved adults on plantations. This held especially true for young females, like the one pictured in O'Sullivan's photograph seated in the doorway. Slave girls arguably grew up even faster than boys because they were at higher risk for sexual abuse. There were few, if any, laws that protected enslaved black females from rape in Southern states, unlike their white (free) counterparts. A rare law from Antebellum Mississippi made the rape or attempted rape of a black girl under twelve years old by a black man punishable by death or whipping.[24] However, laws like this did not protect older adolescent slave girls from black men, or protect them at any age from white men, and they continued to be vulnerable to sexual assault by men of both races, along with the undocumented instances of same-sex sexual violence.[25] One slave girl recounted that by the time she "matured" at age fifteen, her master began to "whisper foul words in [her] ear," and from an early age she feared the violent, jealous wrath of her owner's wife.[26] These intense fears provide yet another example of how slave children were denied a true childhood during which they could be carefree and insulated by the protection of their parents.

Figure 2: Anonymous, Women and Children Picking Beans Near Norfolk (nd), photograph, 12 x 17 cm., Valentine Richmond History Center, Richmond, Virginia, United States.

In one particularly evocative photo entitled Women and Children Picking Beans Near Norfolk (nd), enslaved children are shown working in the field alongside women picking beans, with what appears to be the Big House in the background [fig. 2]. Like many images of slaves, the identities of those depicted went unrecorded, and no names or ages are listed. Even so, the child whose back is facing the viewer appears to be small and young, revealing the role slave children had in the agricultural production of the Antebellum South. Even though labour laws in America began to protect children after the Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938, the families of enslaved children did not directly benefit from their labour.[27] Instead, the slave owner benefited from the enslaved child, differentiating them from white child labourers of the same time.[28] Enslaved children were considered fully able to work alongside their older family members in a field by the time they were between the ages of ten or twelve, although some were tending to livestock as young as seven or eight years old.[29]

The children shown in O'Sullivan's photo are likely the children of slaves who also worked in the fields, as children were trained to eventually take the place of their parents or older members of the plantation workforce once they were too old to work, in the perpetual cyclical nature of slave labour.[30] The children depicted in Women and Children Picking Beans Near Norfolk would, more likely than not, come to one day replace the labour of the woman next to them. It is difficult to tell the sex of the child whose back is to us in the photo, largely due to the fact that there was no differentiation between the clothing of young boys and girls on plantations.

They both generally wore simple outfits composed of "one-piece garments with no underclothes," and like adults normally only bathed once a week, usually on Sundays.[31] Therefore, children of "skilled worker" slaves who laboured away from the field as carpenters or coopers would have a better chance of eventually running away, due to the lack of overseers.[32] However, the punishments imposed upon the families of the runaway slave child to deter attempted escapes were often the same as those imposed upon the families of adult runaways, again highlighting the lack of distinction between enslaved adults and children in the eyes of white Southern slave owners.[33]

The "education" of enslaved youth during the first half of the nineteenth century revolved more around teaching the child how to be a good, industrious, and obedient slave than any real sort of academic education.[34] This is why the enslaved child in the photo is working in the field, instead of performing any kind of constructive intellectual task. Both their parents and their owners frequently physically punished children in an attempt to mold them into the perfect slaves, and many slaveholders acted as stand-in parents for the children. They therefore felt justified in using corporal punishment, viewing their actions as "in the best interests of the youngsters."[35] Second only to a hands-on education in labour was religious education and many slaves were raised as Christians.[36] Owners saw this as yet another way to control their slaves. Believing Christianity would stabilize the institution of slavery in the South, they established Sunday schools for children working on the plantations.[37] Literacy varied among slaves from plantation to plantation in the South, and while some owners purposely kept their slaves ignorant, others believed slaves needed to be able to read the Bible in order to achieve Christian salvation.[38]

The majority of white society did not consider enslaved children in the Antebellum South "true children". Enslaved children were further separated from white children through an imbalance of power between the two. Enslaved children were taught to be respectful not only to their owners but to their children as well, and power relations between black and white children mirrored those between black and white adults, ensuring the continuation of the racial hierarchy in place in the Antebellum South.[39] Some enslaved children were even owned by white children of the same age and the white children of slave owners routinely inherited the slaves, adults and children, of their deceased relatives.[40] The degree of neglect experienced by enslaved youth only helped to amplify the already present trend in Western society during the early nineteenth century of seeing children as merely "small adults," whose physical and mental maturation was measured only by the maturation of their labouring capabilities.[41] The black slave child was given no chance at a childhood because the only form of development that mattered was their ability to produce for their owners, and this duty therefore diminished the conventional period of growth from child to adult.

Whether or not it was the intention of the photographer, images of enslaved children contributed to an abolitionist discourse. Unlike other media such as painting or engraving, the photographer has much less control over the subject that is depicted. Certainly, the photographer could stage the photograph in various ways, but only to a certain extent. For example, it would

be difficult to completely change the subject's surroundings when photographing an enslaved child in the fields in order to make slavery appear as a benign and Christianizing mission. Photographs from the late nineteenth century have an element of indexical realism and manage to preserve a more historically accurate image of African Americans who were otherwise denied an individual identity, as opposed to paintings or prints of the enslaved, which normally depicted figures with all the same skin tone, and indistinguishable facial features.[42]

Slavery in the Southern United States affected all population demographics, including the often forgotten enslaved youth. Enslaved children were born into terrible living conditions, forced into labour from a very young age, and were just as vulnerable to abuse as adult slaves. Rare photographs capture facets of the experience of the youth trapped in perpetual bondage in the Antebellum South. These photographs played a role in abolitionist discourse and brought to light the discrepancies between the experiences of white children and enslaved children, who did not have a chance at a true childhood and who were forced to grow up much more quickly than white children. By examining these photographs, we help to recuperate the experience of millions of people held in bondage who were never able to tell their stories, and we become cognizant of the trauma that was inflicted upon them from a very young age.

ENDNOTES:

[1] Clayton E. Jewett and John O. Allen, Slavery in the South: A State-by-State History (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), pp. xxxi-xxiii.

[2] Jewett, Slavery in the South, p. 286.

[3] Jewett, Slavery in the South, p. 287.

[4] J.D.B. De Bow, Mortality statistics of the seventh census of the United States, 1850: with sundry comparative and illustrative tables (Washington: Sabin Americana, 1855), p. 28.

[5] De Bow, Mortality Statistics, p. 28.

[6] Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), p. xvii.

[7] Marie Jenkins Schwartz, Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 21. In the American South as in other locations of slavery like the Caribbean, it is clear that pregnant female slaves did continue to perform hard labour, including field labour, often up until or close to their due dates. For more on the labour of enslaved females in the American South see: Deborah Gray White, Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999). Enslaved females who were pregnant also did not escape corporal punishment. Thomas Cooper described the flogging of pregnant slaves in Jamaica. Thomas Cooper, Facts Illustrative of the Condition of the Negro Slaves in Jamaica: with Notes and Appendix. (London: Sold by J. Hatchard and Son, Piccadilly, and Lupton Relfe, 13, Cornhill; G. Smallfield, Printer, Hackney, 1824), pp. 20, 21.

[8] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 32. In various slave regimes, clothing or the cloth to make it, was provided in rations to the enslaved. Therefore, the provision of extra clothing was used to incentivize enslaved females participation in the breeding of new slaves.

[9] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 51.

[10] Wilma King, " 'Raise Your Children Up Rite:' Parental Guidance and Child Rearing Practices among Slaves in the Nineteenth-Century South," Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South, ed. Larry E. Hudson Jr. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1994), p.144.

[11] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 52.

[12] Charmaine A. Nelson, "Racing Childhood: Representations of Black Girls in Canadian Art," Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (NYC: Routledge, 2010), p. 43.

[13] David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the 18th c. Mid-Atlantic," The William and Mary Quarterly (April 1999), p. 252.

[14] White, Ar'n't I a Woman?, p. 147.

[15] King, Stolen Childhood, p. 50.
[16] White, Ar'n't I a Woman?, p. 147.
[17] Another way that enslaved males were separated from their families was through their resistance through escape. In comparison, far fewer enslaved females fled, in part since they were loathe to leave behind their children or those in their care. This is why far more males than females are listed in runaway or fugitive slave advertisements.
[18] White, Ar'n't I a Woman?, p. 149.
[19] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 50.
[20] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 50. See also: Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia H. Kiple, "Slave Child Mortality: Some Nutritional Answers to a Perennial Puzzle," Journal of Social History, 10, no. 3 (Spring, 1977), pp. 284-309.
[21] King, Stolen Childhood, p. 58.
[22] King, Stolen Childhood, pp. 40-41.
[23] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 95.
[24] White, Ar'n't I a Woman?, p. 152.
[25] White, Ar'n't I a Woman?, p. 152.
[26] Harriet A. Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, ed. Lydia Maria Child (Boston: Published for the author, 1861), p. 44.
[27] J.D.B. De Bow, Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, As Amended, Rev. Feb. 1980. (Washington: Dept. of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Wage and Hour Division, 1980), p. 2.
[28] King, Stolen Childhood, p. 72.
[29] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, pp. 132-34. In tropical regions like Jamaica, child slave labour began even earlier. For instance, in the eighteenth century, the children on Hope Estate began work at the age of six. A List of Negroes on Hope Plantation in St. Andrews (1788), ST West Indies Box 3(1), Huntington Library, San Marino California, U.S.A.
[30] King, "Raise Your Children Up Rite," p. 145.
[31] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 83.
[32] King, "Raise Your Children Up Rite," p. 146.
[33] King, "Raise Your Children Up Rite," p. 149.
[34] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 109.
[35] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 114.
[36] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 121. This forced Christianization was at the heart of slavery's conception as a "civilizing mission".
[37] Schwartz, Born in Bondage, p. 120.
[38] King, Stolen Childhood, p. 180.
[39] King, "Raise Your Children Up Rite," p. 150.
[40] King, Stolen Childhood, p. 32.
[41] Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph C. Miller, "Children in European Systems of Slavery: Introduction," Slavery & Abolition, vol. 27, no. 2 (August 2006), p. 165.
[42] Nelson argues that this anonymization and racial homogenization of the enslaved was orchestrated in James Hakewill's prints in his illustrated book A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica from Drawings Made in the Years 1820 and 1821 (London: Hurst and Robinson and E. Lloyd, 1825). See: Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).

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Figure 1: Timothy H. O'Sullivan, Five Generations on Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina (1862), photographic print, Civil War Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., United States.

Figure 2: Anonymous, Women and Children Picking Beans Near Norfolk (nd), photograph, 12 x 17 cm., Valentine Richmond History Center, Richmond, Virginia, United States.

THE PEACOCK FLOWER: HIDDEN SEEDS OF FEMALE RESISTANCE AGAINST SLAVERY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY JAMAICA

Erica Morassutti

The vibrant yellows and blazing reds of the peacock flower made the plant a favourite decorative shrub among members of the European aristocracy in the eighteenth century, who imported its seeds from the Caribbean for ornamental purposes.[1] However, the peacock flower had a much more subversive purpose. The abortifacient properties of its seeds rendered the plant a critical tool of resistance for enslaved African women on Jamaican sugar plantations. Female slaves were exploited for their childbearing abilities, which plantation owners hoped would bolster the plantation labour force and ensure the operation of slavery in perpetuity.[2] The female slave could not protect herself from sexual assault, avoid bearing children who would inherit her slave status, or avoid being separated from her children if her owner decided to sell them. However, by using an herbal agent to induce abortion, she could refuse to be bred by her owners and thus assert control over her own fertility. Informed by African cultural practices, the deliberate control of one's fertility using herbal abortifacients could be undertaken discreetly; consequently, it was a form of resistance not easily detected or prevented by slave owners.[3] Ultimately, this action constituted an expression of individual female resistance against both the system of slavery and the denigration of African heritage.[4]

Figure 1: Maria Sibylla Merian, "Untitled," (1705), print, 37.2 x 25.1 cm, Metamorphosis insectorum surinamensium (Amsterdam: G. Valck, 1705), plate 45, Cullman Library of Rare Books, Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Washington, D.C., United States.

I will begin by exploring why the abortifacient properties of the peacock flower never entered the mainstream of European knowledge, despite its inclusion in a seminal botanical text on plants from the so-called New World. Next, I will explore the legal and social institutionalization of slave owners' right to unrestricted sexual access to female slaves – factors that made rape an inevitable reality for female slaves and facilitated slave breeding.[5] After examining the

implications of resistance to such breeding through the use of herbal abortifacients, I will conclude with a comparison of accounts written by white plantation owners and their white female companions to determine the extent to which they were aware of these practices.

The collection and classification of natural organisms was a lucrative pursuit in eighteenth-century Europe. Following the import of Peruvian quinine - the anti-malarial properties of which enabled Spanish colonists to retain their health while spending extended periods of time in Africa - European botanists made the costly and perilous voyage to colonies in the so-called New World in pursuit of rare plants and insects to study, harvest, and develop for European markets.[6] German naturalist Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) was the first European to discover the peacock flower, record its abortifacient properties, and note its use by African female slaves.[7] These findings were published in her Metamorphosis insectorum surinamensium (1705), a text that constituted a seminal contribution to natural history at the time of its publication.[8] Working in Amsterdam, Merian was already an established figure in the field of botany, having previously published two volumes devoted to the life cycle of European butterflies.[9] Inspired by the desire to locate a type of caterpillar that would produce thread to rival the quality of that produced by silkworms, Merian departed for the Dutch colony of Surinam in 1699.[10] Over the course of her two-year stay in Surinam, Merian documented no less than sixty species of plants and over ninety species of animals, many of which she painted from life.[11]

Upon her return to Amsterdam, Merian compiled her findings in Metamorphosis, which was published as a large folio volume with pages measuring fifty-three centimetres in height. Containing sixty plates of hand-coloured etchings and engravings, it was one of the earliest books to show the natural colours and actual size of the specimens described.[12] Typical entries in the book note the characteristics of various organisms – their appearance, their growth, and development, their edibility and uses. Merian's entry for the peacock flower includes a colourful depiction of the entire plant, featuring its lush green leaves, long stem, blooming yellow and crimson flowers, and a crown of bursting seed pods [fig. 1]. A moth, caterpillar, and chrysalis are also shown. In the original description opposite the image, Merian refers to the flower by its Latin name, *flos pavonis,* and notes that enslaved women who were "not treated well by their Dutch masters" would "use the seeds [of the plant] to abort their children, so that their children will not become slaves like they are."[13]

Despite the fact that European naturalists often relied on slaves as guides or sources of knowledge for the specimens they catalogued, acknowledging the assistance of these sources in their work was unusual. However, Merian not only admitted the fact that her own knowledge of the peacock flower was supplied by enslaved women, but also recorded evidence of their deliberate resistance to reproduction and acknowledged their desire to spare their progeny from a life in slavery. The entry accompanying her illustration of the peacock flower thus considers the practice of abortion in the context of slavery, which makes possible the examination of abortion as an act of resistance.[14] The illustration and description of the peacock flower in a renowned resource on natural history proves not only European acquaintance with the existence of herbal

abortifacients in the Caribbean, but also European awareness of their employment for abortive purposes by enslaved black women.

However, this knowledge failed to reach the European mainstream for several reasons. First, Merian was primarily renowned for the intricate quality and colouring of her botanical illustrations. As a woman working in a male-dominated field, she was praised for the decorative aspects of her work rather than her research, which went mostly unrecognized by comparison.[15] Her images, which needed no translation, were widely reproduced and made accessible to a large European public. While later editions of Metamorphosis were translated into French and English, indicating its popularity among a wide European audience, several translations of the text were greatly truncated, conveying little information other than the visual appearance of the plants; consequently, anyone seeing these books would have had little idea of the informative content of her original writings.[16] While these truncated translations included the illustration of the peacock flower, they did not include mention of its abortifacient properties. Hermann Boerhaave, a leading professor of botany in Leiden, reported "no known virtues" of the plant in his *Historia plantarum,* published 1727.[17] The only prominent European naturalist to publish a similar illustrated catalogue entry of the peacock flower was the British physician and naturalist Sir Hans Sloane, who practiced medicine in Jamaica from 1687 to 1688.[18] Despite holding Merian's work in high regard, recording evidence of the peacock flower in Jamaica, and revealing an awareness of its abortive properties, Sloane did not write of its use by enslaved women.[19] Instead, he warned of the danger posed by the use of such herbs to induce abortion in general, echoing the sceptical tone of European physicians regarding the administration of herbal abortifacients. Thus, Sloane's failure to situate the abortive properties of the peacock flower in the context of slavery effectively obscured knowledge of such practices for his European audience.[20]

Merian was also the first European naturalist to travel the so-called New World without objectives set by the government.[21] Her note of the abortifacient properties of the peacock flower was recorded in a project driven by her personal interest in natural organisms, rather than by a political imperative. While there was no legal consensus concerning abortion or the use of herbal agents to procure one, mercantilist expansion inspired a pro-natalist European mindset that celebrated children as "the wealth of nations, the glory of kingdoms, and the nerve and good fortune of empires."[22] Furthermore, midwives typically administered herbal abortifacients in Europe. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the management of childbirth shifted from female midwives to predominantly male obstetricians. As midwifery moved out of mainstream medicine, the herbal agents administered by midwives were replaced by surgical procedures to induce abortion.[23] Ultimately, due to the interest in population increase and state wealth and the declining use of herbal abortifacients in Europe, trade in newly discovered herbal abortifacients was not considered a lucrative business in European markets. Consequently, no systematic attempts were made to expand European knowledge of and access to abortive pharmacopoeia.

In Jamaica, as in Surinam, both African women and women of the indigenous Arawak population were enslaved on sugar plantations.[24] Merian affirmed that knowledge of herbal

abortifacients was the domain of women and midwives, noting that Arawak women used the plant to control their fertility prior to European contact and African women used similar herbs in their native countries before being taken to the colonies.[25] In traditional African societies, cultural knowledge of herbal abortifacients was passed on from mother to daughter.[26] African women would have carried this knowledge to plantations in the so-called New World.[27] Dr. James Thomson, who practiced medicine in Jamaica, hinted at the sharing of such knowledge among women, noting that young female slaves would "endeavour to procure abortion…in which they are too often assisted by the knowery of others."(sic)[28] Evidence testifies to the administration of herbal abortifacients such as cassava and peacock flower by midwives enslaved on Jamaican sugar estates.[29] In this way, abortion constituted not only an act of resistance against the system of slavery, but against the denigration of African cultural knowledge as well.

Herbal abortifacients held great significance for the African women enslaved on Jamaican plantations in part because they had no defense against sexual violation. Rape was an inevitable part of enslaved female reality. Its institutionalization within the system of slavery began with the Middle Passage, when women aboard slave ships were sexually subjected to captain and crew and severely beaten if they refused to comply.[30] Performed in earshot of shackled male slaves, such practices constituted a critical stage of the "breaking" process, in which white men asserted their dominance over the comparatively helpless black slaves to transform them into commodities for the labour market.[31] One account of the Middle Passage written by the slave Olaudah Equiano affirms that hearing "the shrieks of the women," while he himself was shackled and unable to protect them, rendered the experience "a scene of horror almost inconceivable."[32] Equiano gravely noted that certain members of the crew would regularly "gratify their brutal passion with females not ten years old."[33] No female slave, regardless of age, was exempt from sexual assault. The rape of female slaves persisted on plantations. In all Caribbean jurisdictions, slaves were legally defined as chattel – property with real estate values.[34] Neither slave codes nor colonial statutes provided slaves with rights over their own bodies; instead, such rights were forfeited to the legal person of their owners.[35] Consequently, slave owners considered sexual access to female slaves to be their legitimate right and privilege.[36] Ultimately, enslaved females had no defense against perpetrators of sexual violation, as the choice not to be raped simply did not exist and the ability to bring their violators to justice legally after the fact was nullified by their chattel status, through which judicial access was denied.

However, such violation of slave women was not undertaken solely to service the sexual desires of their white overseers. Their ability to bear children was of critical economic importance to plantation owners.[37] Regardless of the legal status of the father, one's status as a slave was acquired through his or her mother, meaning that sexual exploitation yielded material gains for the plantation labour force and ensured the operation of slavery in perpetuity.[38] The so-called "breeding" of slave women, either by personally raping them or forcing them to mate with pre-selected healthy male slaves, evidenced the manner by which slave owners not only "extracted surplus value" but also "emphasized their status as colonial masters."[39] When British

abolitionist fervour over the course of the eighteenth century culminated in the abolition of the British Atlantic slave trade in 1807, it only placed pressure on plantation owners to maintain their labour force through self-reproduction known as "natural increase".[40] The fecundity of slave women thus became even more critical to the viability of plantation slavery in the British Caribbean.[41]

While slave women could not avoid sexual violation, they could retaliate by refusing to bear children – an action for which they had ample cause. Failing to reproduce would deny their masters the ability to realize a profit on the birth of their children – children who would also be doomed to eternal servitude and could be sold away at the whim of the slave owner.[42] The account of the slave Mary Prince, who was sold at the age of twelve, recounts the haunting experience of being taken with her two sisters to the slave market, only to be separated and sold to different masters while their mother helplessly looked on: "I was surrounded by strange men, who examined and handled me in the same manner that a butcher would a calf or a lamb he was about to purchase […] One [sister] went one way, one went another, and our poor mammy went home with nothing."[43] As Merian had recorded in Metamorphosis*,* female slaves would "use the seeds [of the peacock flower] to abort their children so they will not become slaves like themselves."[44] In a plantation economy that relied upon the breeding of slave women, the deployment of herbal abortifacients to deliberately terminate a pregnancy ultimately constituted an act of resistance against the system of perpetual chattel slavery.[45]

Reactions of white male and female plantation owners to low rates of slave fertility allow further insight into the issue of abortion as a deliberate act of resistance. Male plantation owners were generally unable to discern whether a miscarriage had occurred naturally due to the brutal conditions of slavery or was self-induced, revealing a lack of control over this form of protest. In contrast, white European women often characterized the problem of infertility as an act of obstinacy caused by the promiscuous nature and general racial inferiority of black women.[46]

Thomas Thistlewood, the English overseer of a Jamaican plantation, was notorious for recording his sexual exploits with virtually every female slave on the estates to which he was assigned.[47] His journals also indicate a range of misdemeanours committed by male slaves, including animal theft and abuse, runaways and destruction of property. While he focuses on describing the punishments these slaves received for such acts in harrowing detail, such punishments indicate that the acts being punished had the desired effect of undermining the order and efficiency of plantation operation.[48] Thistlewood also recorded frequent "miscarriages" among female slaves as if they were a common occurrence and only briefly stated a suspicion that they deliberately aborted their pregnancies by "drinking various herbs."[49] The frequency of spontaneous miscarriage due to the brutal conditions of slavery enabled abortion to be concealed. Further, matters of miscarriage were attended to in secret by female slaves and midwives, which prevented slave owners from being able to discern whether a miscarriage had occurred spontaneously or had been self-induced.[50] Since the deliberate control of one's fertility using herbal agents could be undertaken in clandestine ways, consequently, it constituted a form of resistance that was not easily detected or prevented by slave owners.[51]

While strenuous work demands, poor nutrition, and severe physical punishment naturally inhibited slave reproduction, planters were generally unwilling to reveal causes that would reflect poorly on the regime of slavery they enforced.[52] For instance, Jamaican proprietor Matthew Gregory Lewis suspected that his female slaves purposely chose not to reproduce.[53] While women comprised roughly half of the population of the three hundred slaves on his sugar estate, their reproduction rates did not reflect this relative sexual parity.[54] Motivated by the need to sustain his labour force, Lewis bestowed various rewards upon mothers and midwifes who produced healthy children, only to conclude that "in spite of all indulgences…not more than twelve or thirteen children have been added annually to the list of births."[55] His lamentation of the low birth rate was not without speculation: "I really believe that the Negresses can produce children at pleasure," he wrote, "and where they are not barren, it is just as hens will frequently not lay eggs on shipboard, because they do not like their situation."[56] While Lewis does not refer explicitly to abortive practices, he acknowledges the active resistance of slave women to pregnancy as an act of retaliation against the horrific treatment they received in slavery.

In contrast, white European women who visited the slave colonies typically held the view that promiscuity among enslaved women was to blame for their infertility.[57] They framed the act of abortion not as an act of resistance against colonial abusers, but rather as the draining of labour resources by promiscuous slave women, effectively reconstituting their white male aggressors as (economic) victims.[58] Janet Schaw, an upper-class Scottish woman, held such an opinion. She accompanied her younger brother to Antigua in 1774.[59] Schaw was scandalized by the number of interracial children on the island, as they were the "unmistakable products of sexual relations between white men and black slave women."[60] Although miscegenation on plantations was typically a matter of sexual exploitation of black slave women by white slave overseers and planters, Schaw's interpretation of the situation inverted the balance of power. She described "young black wenches" who "lay themselves out for white lovers," noting that the children produced by these interracial unions were "spurious and degenerate…neither so fit for the field, nor indeed any work, as the true bred Negro" and that "[slave women] have certain herbs and medicines that free them from such an incumbrance."(sic)[61]

The effect of Schaw's characterization is twofold. First, blame for sexual transgressions is relegated upon black slave women, as she laments both the shameless seduction of white men and the subsequent production of unfit labourers or no labourers at all, both of which resulted in economic penalties through slave labour losses.[62] Second, faced with visual evidence of miscegenation and its implication of a lack of sexual fulfillment with white wives, such a characterization spares white women (like Schaw herself) the humiliation of being sexually displaced by enslaved black women, who were supposedly inferior.[63]

While the vivid colours of the peacock flower rendered it an attractive addition to the botanical catalogues of Maria Sibylla Merian, its ultimate significance was much greater. The subsequent erasure of its abortifacient properties from European scholastic records allowed the plant to flourish as an obscure means of reproductive control and a critical tool of resistance for African females enslaved on Jamaican sugar plantations in the eighteenth century. The

deployment of peacock flower seeds to deliberately terminate pregnancy posed a significant threat to the wellbeing of plantation economies that relied upon the reproduction of enslaved females. Guided by an inherited cultural knowledge of herbs and undertaken in a discreet manner, these practices were difficult for slave owners to prevent, and thus afforded enslaved African women a feasible means of retaliation against the constant rape from which they had no protection, the psychological toll of bearing children from whom they would be separated, the denigration of their native cultural knowledge, and the brutal conditions of slavery as a whole.

ENDNOTES:

[1] Londa Schiebinger, "The Art of Medicine: Exotic Abortifacients and Lost Knowledge," The Lancet, vol. 371, no. 9614 (March 2008), p. 718.

[2] For instance, white Jamaican plantation owners like Matthew Lewis kept a breeding list through which they tracked the fertility of their female slaves. Matthew Lewis, Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept during a residence in the Island of Jamaica, ed. Judith Terry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 237.

[3] Barbara Bush-Slimani, "Hard Labour: Women, Childbirth and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies," History Workshop, vol. 36 (Autumn 1993), p. 96. The planter Matthew Lewis lamented the fact that there were not more than eight women on the breeding list of the one hundred and fifty enslaved females on his plantation named Cornwall in Jamaica. Besides not understanding the use of abortifacients, he also seemed not to understand how breastfeeding was being used to delay a return to fertility after childbirth (*lactational amenorrhea*). See: Lewis, Journal of a West India Proprietor, p. 237 and Charmaine A. Nelson, "Imaging Slavery in Antigua and Jamaica: Pro-Slavery Discourse and the Reality of Enslavement," Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).

[4] Bush-Slimani, "Hard Labour," pp. 93, 96.

[5] Hilary McD. Beckles, "Property Rights in Pleasure: The Marketing of Enslaved Women's Sexuality," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000), p. 692.

[6] Clifford D. Connor, A People's History of Science: Miners, Midwives, and 'Low Mechanicks' (New York: Nation Books, 2005), pp. 95–96.

[7] Schiebinger, "The Art of Medicine," p. 718.

[8] Originally published simultaneously in Latin and Dutch by one G. Valck in Amsterdam, one of the Dutch copies of Merian's text survives in the Cullman Library of Rare Books at the Smithsonian Institution Libraries in Washington, D.C. No details of its provenance have been released to the public. Kay Etheridge, "Maria Sibylla Merian and the Metamorphosis of Natural History," Endeavour, vol. 35, no. 1 (March 2011), p. 15.

[9] Etheridge, "Maria Sibylla Merian," p. 15.

[10] Schiebinger, "The Art of Medicine," p. 718. At the time, European women were generally discouraged from traveling to the so-called New World. Physicians' warnings of afflictions suffered exclusively by white women as a result of exposure to the tropical climate proved to be a significant deterrent – one prominent German physician advertised the aggressive onset of "copious menstruation" culminating in "fatal hemorrhages of the uterus"; others claimed pregnant women would deliver dark-skinned babies resembling the indigenous inhabitants of the colony. In lieu of a male chaperone, Merian was accompanied by her twenty-two-year-old daughter, Dorothea, whom she had trained as her assistant. As such, Merian's voyage was a noteworthy feat. (Londa Schiebinger, "Feminist History of Colonial Science," Hypatia, vol. 19, no. 1 (Winter, 2004), p. 238.

[11] Etheridge, "Maria Sibylla Merian," p. 15.

[12] William T. Stearn, "Maria Sibylla Merian as a Botanical Artist," Taxon, vol. 31, no. 3 (August 1982), p. 524.

[13] Londa Schiebinger, Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 1.

[14] Schiebinger, "Feminist History," p. 242.

[15] Etheridge, "Maria Sibylla Merian," p. 18.

[16] Etheridge, "Maria Sibylla Merian," p. 18.

[17] Schiebinger, "The Art of Medicine," p. 719.

[18] For more on Hans Sloane's activities in Jamaica see: Kay Dian Kriz, "Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies in Hans Sloane's *Voyage to…Jamaica*," Slavery, Sugar and Refinement: Picturing the British West Indies 1700-1840 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[19] Schiebinger, "Feminist History," pp. 238-40. During his time in Jamaica, Sloane encountered a plant with abortive properties to which he referred as "flour fence." Following publication of Merian's *flos pavonis*, Sloane recognized the plant cited in her work in an appendix to his book, which was published after her voyage. Writing that his flour fence and her *flos pavonis* were one and the same, Sloane affirmed the presence of the peacock flower in both Jamaica and Surinam.
[20] Etheridge, "Maria Sibylla Merian," p. 20; Schiebinger, Plants and Empire, pp. 139-140.
[21] Etheridge, "Maria Sibylla Merian," p. 19.
[22] Londa Schiebinger, Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), p. 66.
[23] Schiebinger, "The Art of Medicine," p. 719.
[24] The enslavement of Arawak people in Jamaica was under Spanish occupation since by the time of British conquest in 1655, the vast majority of the Arawak people had been killed. By 1615 an official report to the King of Spain claimed that only seventy-four Arawak survived on the island of Jamaica. Barbara Lalla and Jean D'Costa, Language in Exile: Three Hundred Years of Jamaica Creole (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 9.
[25] Schiebinger, "Feminist History," p. 241.
[26] Bush-Slimani, "Hard Labour," p. 92.
[27] Charmaine Nelson, "The Fruits of Resistance: Reading Portrait of a Negro Slave on the Sly," Public Eating Things (Special Issue), vol. 30 (2004), p. 19.
[28] Morgan, "Slave Women and Reproduction," p. 245.
[29] Bush-Slimani, "Hard Labour," p. 92.
[30] Alexander Falconbridge, An Account of the Slave Trade off the Coast of Africa (New York: AMS Press, 1973), pp. 23-24.
[31] Marcus Rediker, "Introduction," The Slave Ship: A Human History (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 7.
[32] Olaudah Equiano, "The Life of Olaudah Equiano," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000), p. 827.
[33] Olaudah Equiano, The Life of Olaudah Equiano (New York: Dover Publications, 1999), p. 74.
[34] Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles, "Rejecting Slavery: Blacks Speak Back," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000), p. 821.
[35] Beckles, "Property Rights in Pleasure," p. 693.
[36] Beckles, "Property Rights in Pleasure," p. 693.
[37] Deborah Gray White, "Life Cycle of the Female Slave," Arn't' I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South (Revised Edition) (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1999), p. 16.
[38] Beckles, "Property Rights in Pleasure," p. 700.
[39] Beckles, "Property Rights in Pleasure," p. 700.
[40] Slavery itself was still legally sanctioned in the British Empire until 1833. Kenneth Morgan, "Slave Women and Reproduction in Jamaica, c. 1776 – 1834," History, vol. 91, no. 302 (April 2006), p. 235.
[41] Morgan, "Slave Women and Reproduction," p. 235.
[42] White, Arn't' I a Woman?, p. 94.
[43] Mary Prince, "The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Related by Herself," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000), p. 845.
[44] Schiebinger, "The Art of Medicine," p. 718.
[45] Morgan, "Slave Women and Reproduction," p. 246.
[46] Bush-Slimani, "Hard Labour," p. 89.
[47] Shepherd, "Gender and Representation," p. 706. For more on Thistlewood see: Trevor Burnard, "The Sexual Life of an Eighteenth-Century Jamaican Slave Overseer," Sex and Sexuality in Early America, ed. Merril D. Smith (New York: New York University Press, 1998) and Charmaine A. Nelson, "Imaging Slavery in Antigua and Jamaica: Pro-Slavery Discourse and the Reality of Enslavement," Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).

[48] Verene A. Shepherd, "Liberation Struggles on Livestock Farms in Jamaica During Slavery," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000), pp. 900-902.
[49] Shepherd, "Liberation Struggles," p. 902.
[50] White, Arn't' I a Woman?, pp. 25, 26, 87.
[51] Bush-Slimani, "Hard Labour," p. 96.
[52] Morgan, "Slave Women and Reproduction," pp. 240-41.
[53] Lewis, Journal of a West India Proprietor, p. 237.
[54] Morgan, "Slave Women and Reproduction," p. 231.
[55] Morgan, "Slave Women and Reproduction," p. 233. Such "rewards" for prolific mothers included colorful girdles, silver medals, and occasional holidays.
[56] Shepherd, "Gender and Representation," p. 710.
[57] Verene A. Shepherd, "Gender and Representation," p. 710.
[58] Elizabeth S. Kim, "Complicating 'Complicity/Resistance' in Janet Schaw's Journal of a Lady of Quality," Auto/Biography Studies, vol. 12, no. 2 (1997), pp. 172-74.
[59] Kim, "Complicating 'Complicity/Resistance'," p. 66.
[60] Kim, "Complicating 'Complicity/Resistance'," p. 172.
[61] Kim, "Complicating 'Complicity/Resistance'," p. 173.
[62] Kim, "Complicating 'Complicity/Resistance'," pp. 172-73.
[63] Kim, "Complicating 'Complicity/Resistance'," p. 174. Similar reasoning appears in the journal of Lady Maria Nugent, as discussed by Verene A. Shepherd in "Gender and Representation," pp. 707-08.

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: Maria Sibylla Merian, "Untitled," (1705), print, 37.2 x 25.1 cm, Metamorphosis insectorum surinamensium (Amsterdam: G. Valck, 1705), plate 45, Cullman Library of Rare Books, Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Washington, D.C., United States.

DESIRABILITY AND DIFFERENCE: A COMPARISON OF THE DEPICTIONS OF MULATTO MEN AND WOMEN IN THE WORK OF AGOSTINO BRUNIAS

Moriah Stendel

Italian born artist Agostino Brunias first set sail for the Caribbean in 1764 as a painter commissioned by Sir William Young, the governor of the Ceded Islands, which included Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada and Tobago.[1] Brunias spent the next three decades of his life painting scenes of the West Indies.[2] Of particular interest to Brunias was the subject of the mulatto – mixed-race men and women of African and European ancestry – who are frequently depicted in his jovial scenes of social life. The mulatto's lighter shade of skin afforded them a higher social standing as their appearance more closely approximated the white "ideal" favoured in European racial hierarchy. However, the perception of mulattos differed across sex: while "brown" females were sexually desired, this elevated status did not exist for mulatto men.[3] This article will argue that Agostino Brunias' representations of Caribbean slave society exhibit the favourable status of mulatto women over mulatto men, while examining the reasons for this disparity.

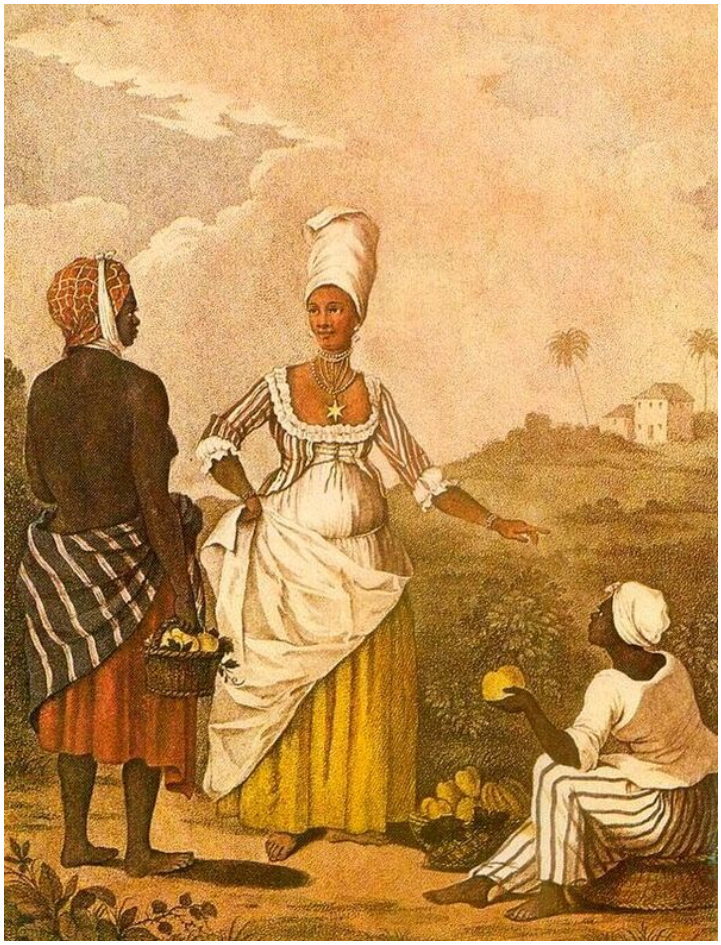

Figure 1: Agostino Brunias, The Barbados Mulatto Girl (1764), Engraved print from painting, Barbados Museum & Historical Society, Bridgetown, Barbados.

From the time of Brunias' arrival to the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833, the mulatto population in the Caribbean almost tripled.[4] This proliferation of mixed-race offspring was almost entirely the result of cross-racial sex between white, male slave owners (and their surrogates like overseers) and black female slaves. A highly asymmetrical power dynamic existed between the planter class and their female slaves because enslaved women were legally considered property. The lawful ownership of female slaves and the matrilineal organization of slavery created an environment within which sex between masters and slaves was often non-consensual, forced, and violent.[5] The rape and sexual abuse of enslaved females was not a legal offense, allowing male slave owners the ability to racially, socially, and sexually

dominate their slaves.[6] Evidence of tyrannical miscegenation between planters and their slaves can be seen in the journal of Thomas Thistlewood, a British overseer in Jamaica in the eighteenth century.[7] Thistlewood's thorough records detail the brutality he inflicted on his slaves: he would rape females, and if they returned to their husbands, the men would be violently beaten as well.[8] Rape was ubiquitous on the plantation, not only due to its legal status but also because it had economic benefits for the slave owners. While European society was traditionally patriarchal, the familial structure of slave families in the West Indies (and indeed across the Americas) was strategically reversed – a matriarchal society ensured that the offspring of slaves would be considered chattel.[9] This practice incentivized the institutionalization of rape, allowing white males to economically profit from impregnating their female slaves. The slave owner's paternity was often ignored or denied, and very rarely would white fathers manumit their mulatto children.[10]

Despite the sexual trauma that female slaves would regularly experience when raped by their white male owners and others, miscegenation also served as an opportunity for the black female to aspire to a higher social status. Firstly, the "whitening" of one's family line could eventually lead to manumission. In his journal of his residence in the West Indies, Matthew Lewis explains the process of "whitening":

> "The offspring of a white man and black woman is a *mulatto;* the mulatto and black produce a *sambo*; from the mulatto and white comes the *quadroon;* from the quadroon and white the *mustee*; the child of a mustee by a white man is called a *musteefino*; while the children of a musteefino are free by law, and rank as white persons to all intents and purposes." [11]

Lewis' journal shows that after six generations of miscegenation, a person with one African ancestor would be considered free. While "whitening" was a long-term "benefit" of miscegenation to slaves, there were some immediate advantages as well. Lewis writes, "It is a custom as to the mulatto children that the males born on an estate should never be employed as field negroes, but as tradesmen; the females are brought up as domestics about the house."[12] Female mulattos worked in the non-praedial sphere, which was considered less physically laborious. However, it was difficult to separate their domestic roles from their sexual roles.[13] While promotion to working in the home was an escape from the heat and toil of plantation field labour, female domestics would habitually be at the sexual disposal of the planter, his family, and his guests.[14] The relationship between a female slave and her male owners was sexual but not marital. In his book, The History, Civil & Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies (1794), Bryan Edward's wrote, "No white man of decent appearance, unless urged by the temptation of a considerable fortune, will condescend to give his hand in marriage to a mulatto. The very idea is quite shocking."[15]

Edward's book contains several images by Brunias, which display the female mulatto as sexually desired in Caribbean society. In The Barbados Mulatto Girl (1764) [fig. 1], Brunias

depicts three females, a black slave, a black peddler, and a mulatto; the status of each visually encoded within the composition. Tall and central in the image is the mulattress, indicating her predominant social role in the West Indies over her black female counterparts. One is forced to visually attend to the centred mulatto: the black females both cast their gaze upon her, also directing the eyes of the viewer. Brunias also shows the elevated social status of the mulatto through her mode of dress. Most cloth in the Caribbean was imported,[16] making it an expensive commodity, therefore an accurate indicator of status.[17] With this in mind, it is apparent that Brunias employs clothing as a status symbol, further propagating the social difference between the women in the painting. The black female slave is depicted in a simple work dress, her bare breast exposed in reference to the so-called primitive and animalistic characteristics of Africans.[18] In contrast, the mulatto female is in elegant, Creole dress, emphasizing the esteem of European notions of beauty. However, while her attire reinforces European values of desirability, it also evokes the fantasy of the mulatto. While the mulatto's "whiteness" is emphasized by her refined dress, she is still barefoot. This racial synthesis provokes an erotic reading of the mulatto female, who possesses a body that both *is* and *is not* white.[19] She has the sophistication of a European and the hyper-sexuality of an African, allowing her to fulfill the fetishistic desires of the white male planter.[20]

Mulatto women were known to upstage white females in adornment, and Brunias' depiction of a mulattress in extravagant dress is in concordance with this fact.[21] There are several reasons why mixed race females would dress lavishly. Conceivably, for mulatto women in relationships by white males, the excess adornment may have reflected insecurity in response to the threat of being displaced by a white bride.[22] Additionally, the possibility of social leverage for mulatto females may have encouraged them to distinguish themselves from black women, and extravagant fashion was a mode of dissociation from their African heritage.[23] It is also likely that mulatto women wore luxurious clothing because they were given money, expensive clothing, and jewellery in exchange for sex.[24] The Barbados Mulatto Girl also demonstrates a correspondence between race and labour: mulattos worked in the domestic sphere, while black slaves did praedial work. Brunias emphasizes the physical exertion of the black females in his composition by depicting them holding and carrying items; their hands are involved in manual labour. In contrast, the mulatto is portrayed lifting her dress to cool her legs and extending her left hand as if providing instruction; her hands are therefore used for pleasure, comfort, and direction rather than labour, indicating her elevated status over the black females. [25] In The Barbados Mulatto Girl, Brunias employs visual strategies to indicate the desirability of the mulatto female.

Brunias' portrayal of the mulatto female as desired in Caribbean society was not just a fiction of the artist. White male planters viewed mulattas as the ultimate sexual partner because they possessed aspects of white beauty coupled with black sexual accessibility. Mulatto women took advantage of their perceived desirability and routinely engaged in hypergamy[26] for self-advancement.[27] While miscegenation could lead to social advantage for mulatto females, the same system did not exist for mulatto males. Evidence of the unidirectional nature of

miscegenation can be found in the journal of Lady Maria Nugent, the wife of the governor of Jamaica, George Nugent. She wrote, "Dismiss my mulatto friends as soon as possible…. Several of them gave me their histories. They are all daughters of Members of the assembly, officers, etc."[28] This excerpt indicates that the fathers of mulattos were influential, white men while the mothers were presumably black slaves who were coerced into sexual relationships. The patriarchal context of British Caribbean societies allowed white males access to black females, but the sexual lives of white women were severely restricted. White female sexuality was already suppressed under the norms of European femininity. However, this repression was especially enforced in the West Indies where cross-racial sex between white women and enslaved black men would have resulted in a free, mixed race population.[29] Since the institution of slavery functioned under a matriarchal structure, a black child born to a white female would not be considered chattel and would have legal freedom. Free black men were a particular threat to white males because their perceived strength designated them biologically superior.[30] To avert this potential threat, black men who engaged in miscegenation were punished with castration and lynching.[31] This gendered regulation of miscegenation rendered only the female mulatto accessible, therefore desirable. Thus, while the female mulatto could capitalize upon her access to white men, the mulatto male did not have the same opportunities for social mobility through cross-racial relationships. While it was infrequent for mulatto women to bear children darker than themselves, mulatto men were actually more likely to pair with darker women.[32] This was in part due to the elevated status of the mulatto female; she was designated as more desirable, therefore she could exercise more discernment when selecting a male partner.[33]

In her journal, Lady Nugent wrote, "…all I say and do is perfection, for I am the only woman!" indicating that white females constituted a minority population in the West Indies.[34] This small population of white women in the colonies gave mulatto females bargaining power: they could serve as substitutes for the white family who often resided in Europe.[35] Male mulattos were not afforded this same opportunity because there was no corresponding niche to fill in the lives of the white Creole females. While male planters may have longed for the companionship of a wife who lived overseas, there were generally fewer instances of single white females in the Caribbean, and if they lived in a colony, it was under the care of their planter husband.[36] This lack of opportunity for mulatto men to advance themselves by hypergamy prevented them from using their sexuality to improve their social rank. Mulatto men were also restrained from elevating their status because they were obstructed by an abundance of white men, who completely occupied the upper class and prohibited the political, social, and sexual access of mulatto men. In contrast, the minority population of white females in the Caribbean facilitated the mulatto females' social and economical elevation. The esteemed sphere once reserved for white females was left open in their absence, allowing mixed race women to enter a more elite social tier.[37] Male mulattos did not have an equivalent opportunity for socioeconomic advancement.

As indicated in the painting The Barbados Mulatto Girl*,* it is evident that Brunias encoded the esteemed social status of mulatto women in his work. However, his depictions of

life in the colony also represent the subordinate position that mulatto males held in society. Also featured in Edward's text is an engraving by Brunias entitled A Negro Festival drawn from Nature in the Island of St.Vincent (1783) [fig. 2]. In a similar manner to The Barbados Mulatto Girl, Brunias has incorporated a social, racial, and gendered hierarchy within this work. The festival scene depicts black slaves preparing fruit and playing drums around four characters engaged in a cheerful dance. Brunias used a stippling technique to achieve colour differentiation between these four subjects, each representing a different racial and societal rank.[38] On the far right, Brunias has depicted a mixed race female as evidenced by her "African" coiled hair, despite her light skin and luxurious clothing. She is dancing next to a white man who is likely an overseer or a sailor.[39] While his skin colour indicates his race to the viewer, Brunias has supplemented this with other encoded measures of race, such as his shoes and wigged head.[40] This coupling of the white male with the mulatto female is evidence of the incentive for mixed-race women to strive for relationships for the purpose of social leverage.

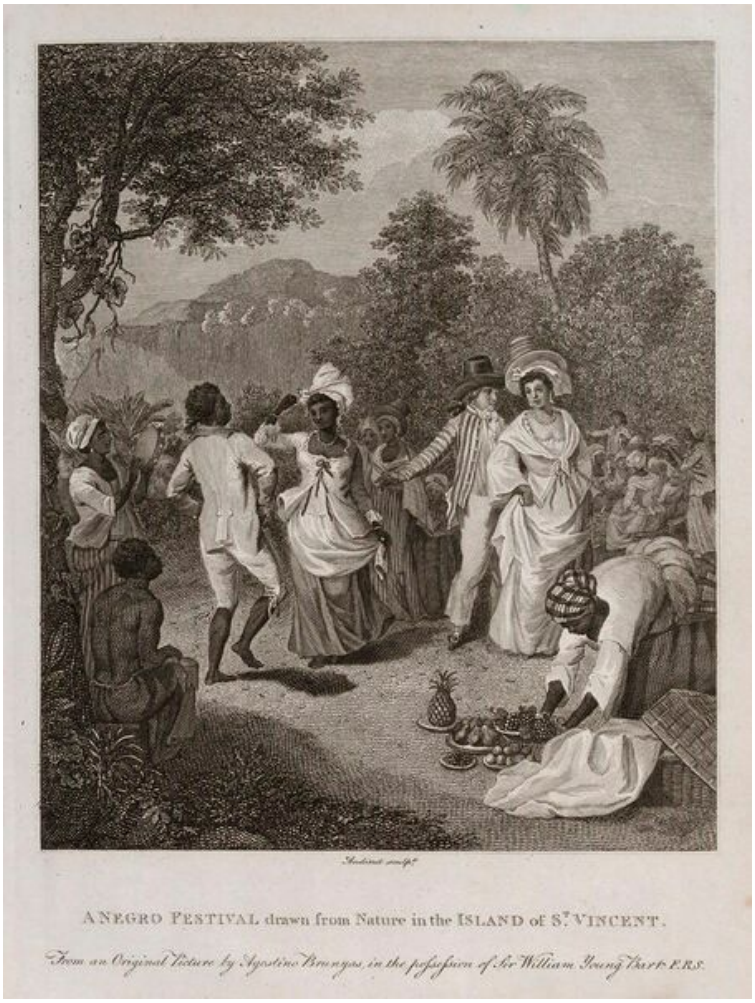

Figure 2: Agostino Brunias, "A Negro Festival drawn from life in the Island of St. Vincent," (1793), Engraving, in Bryan Edwards, The History, Civil and Commercial of the British colonies in the West Indies (London, 1793), p. 183. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Michael Graham-Stewart Slavery Collection, acquired with assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

In contrast, the couple on the left displays the conventional practice for a mulatto male to partner with a female darker than himself. Furthermore, the complexion of this mulatto male is affirmed when compared to the dark-skinned, nearly naked black slave playing the drums in the foreground. In comparison, the mulatto male is dressed in European clothing and has a lighter shade of skin. His dance partner appears to be a free black or sambo woman. But while her skin is darker than his, she is also shown in luxurious dress. Brunias depicts this couple as having a higher status than the peripheral black slaves, who are poorly clothed, lower to the ground, and labouring. However, the mulatto male and the black female he is paired with remain barefoot,

indicating that they do not belong to the upper class. The partnership of the mulatto male with a darker female indicates the unequal opportunity for mixed-race males to engage in strategic hypergamy. He is not approaching the mulatto woman, despite the fact that they are the same shade, because mulattas were largely understood to be reserved for relationships with white males.

The dominance of the mulatto female over male is emphasized through the gaze of the subjects in the composition: most eyes rest on her with the effect of directing the focus of the viewer. Additionally, while both characters are dressed in white clothing, potentially to emphasize their European ancestry, the mulattress wears a headwrap topped by a large hat, which extends her to a height far taller than the mulatto male, suggesting her societal dominance. Brunias' engraving can be viewed as a map of the racial hierarchy of the West Indies. The black slaves are depicted closer to the ground and in the periphery of the composition, mirroring their marginalization within society. They are not depicted as participating within, but facilitating the dance. While white people, free black people, and mulattos all possessed a more esteemed rank than black slaves, social gradation still existed among these groups. Brunias' A Negro Festival is a display of the mulatto male's dominant status over the black slave, but social inferiority to the mulatto female.

During his residence in the West Indies, Agostino Brunias produced many works that visually encoded the contemporary racial, societal hierarchy. Caribbean colonies were racially organized according to a "colour scale"; the lighter one's skin, the higher one's social rank. Mixed-race people experienced privilege over those of entirely African descent, by nature of their more European features and lighter skin. However, only female mulattos had the opportunity for social mobility through sexuality.[41] Mulatto men were prevented from elevating their rank because they were denied sexual access to white females due to a cultural fear of producing free black slaves. Even if these men were permitted to form relationships with females lighter than themselves, it was statistically unlikely due to the very small number of white females in the West Indies; a fact which made white women in demand amongst upper class white males who desired marriage. This minority population of European women left the upper class tier vacant in Caribbean society, therefore mulatto females could occupy this gap. In contrast, mulatto men could not ascend the social ladder as easily, because white men populated the elite sphere, leaving it impenetrable. Brunias' The Barbados Mulatto Girl employs visual strategies of composition, dress, and the gaze, to highlight the desirable status of the female mulatto in West Indian society. This gendered privilege is also apparent in his work A Negro Festival drawn from Nature in the Island of St.Vincent, where the mulattress is depicted as tall, lavishly dressed, and in the company of a white male. However, the mulatto male in this image is shown dancing barefoot with a female of dark complexion. Brunias' engravings visually juxtapose the mulatto male and female, indicating their unequal social status in Caribbean society.

ENDNOTES:

[1]Simon Gikandi, Slavery and the Culture of Taste (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 160.
[2] Kay Dian Kriz, Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement: Picturing the British West Indies, 1700-1840 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 37.
[3] Patricia Mohammed, " 'But Most of All mi Love Me Browning': The Emergence in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Jamaica of the Mulatto Woman as the Desired," Feminist Review, no. 65 (Summer 2000), p. 30.
[4] Mohammed, " 'But Most of All mi Love Me Browning'," p. 31.
[5] Children of enslaved females were slaves like their mothers and owned by their mother's owner, regardless of the race or social status of their father.
[6] Hilary Beckles, Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999), p. 23.
[7] Hilary Beckles, Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 1996), p. 237.
[8] Beckles, Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery, p. 237.
[9] Beckles, Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery, p. 230.
[10] Mohammed, " But Most of All mi Love Me Browning'," p. 31.
[11] Matthew Gregory Lewis, Journal of a Residence Among the Negroes in the West Indies (London: William Cloves and Sons, 1845), p. 106.
[12] Lewis, Journal of a Residence Among the Negroes in the West Indies, p. 36.
[13] Lucille Mathurin Mair, Historical Study of Women in Jamaica, 1655-1844 (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2006), p. 273.
[14] Thomas Thistelwood, the overseer at Egypt Estate, Jamaica documented on 12 March 1755, that he had witnessed the gang rape of a house slave named Eve, after his employer John Cope had spent a night in intense drinking with six male guests. Trevor Burnard, "The Sexual Life of an Eighteenth-Century Jamaican Slave Overseer," Sex and Sexuality in Early America, ed. Merril D. Smith (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 177.
[15] Bryan Edwards, History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies (London: Oxford University, 1798), p. 26.
[16] Beth Fowkes Tobin, Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 151.
[17] Many enslaved women also made their own cloth from locally sourced materials. Steve Buckridge, "The Role of Plant Substances in Jamaican Dress," Caribbean Quarterly, vol. 49, no. 3 (Sept. 2003), pp. 61-73.
[18] Winnifred Brown-Glaude, "'Natural Rebels' or Just Plain Nuissances? Representations of Higglers from Slavery to Independence," Higglers in Kingston: Women's Informal Work in Jamaica (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), p. 102.
[19] Kriz, Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement, p. 55.
[20] Kriz, Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement, p. 55.
[21] Mohammed, " 'But Most of All mi Love Me Browning'," p. 32.
[22] Mair, Historical Study of Women in Jamaica, p. 285.
[23] Carl N. Degler, Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 109.
[24] Tobin, Picturing Imperial Power, p. 151.
[25] Brown-Glaude, "'Natural Rebels' or Just Plain Nuissances?" p. 104.
[26] Hypergamy is the action of marrying a person of a superior caste or class.
[27] Ronald E. Hall, "Rooming in the Master's House: Psychological Domination and the Black Conservative," Journal of Black Studies, vol. 38, no. 4 (March 2007), p. 569.
[28] Maria Nugent, Lady Nugent's Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 24.
[29] Beckles, Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society, p. 178.
[30] Degler, Neither Black nor White, p. 118.
[31] Beckles, Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery, p. 239.
[32] Mohammed, " 'But Most of All mi Love Me Browning'," p. 37.
[33] Mohammed, " 'But Most of All mi Love Me Browning'," p. 30.
[34] Nugent, Lady Nugent's Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica, p. 86. Nugent's declaration also indicates the extent to which she refused to see females of African descent as *women*. See: Charmaine A. Nelson, "James Hakewill's *Picturesque Tour*: Representing Life on Nineteenth-Century Jamaican Sugar Plantations," Slavery, Geography, and

Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).

[35] Mohammed, " 'But Most of All mi Love Me Browning'," p. 32.

[36] While many islands had "shortages" of white women, this was not always the case. For example, in Barbados, there were single and widowed white females who acted as independent owners of slaves. Hilary McD. Beckles, "White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000).

[37] Mohammed, " 'But Most of All mi Love Me Browning'," p. 37.

[38] Amanda Michaela Bagneris, "Colouring the Caribbean: Agostino Brunias and the Painting of Race in the British West Indies, c. 1765-1899," (Cambridge: PhD Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard University, 2009), p. 34.

[39] Gikandi, Slavery and the Culture of Taste, p. 188.

[40] However, it is important to note that enslaved and free black males in various parts of the Americas also wore wigs. See: David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the 18th c. Mid-Atlantic," The William and Mary Quarterly (April 1999), p. 254 and Jacob Kuhn and EDW. WM. Gray, "BROKE Goal and escaped on Sunday the 18th," Montreal Gazette, 22 November 1792; reproduced in Frank Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), pp. 335-36.

[41] A means through which mulatto men would have gained social mobility is same sex relations with elite white males. However, this is extremely hard to prove due to the fact that white men would have been hesitant to document such relations and therefore it is beyond the scope of this article.

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Figure 1: Agostino Brunias, The Barbados Mulatto Girl (1764), Engraved print from painting, Barbados Museum & Historical Society, Bridgetown, Barbados.

Figure 2: Agostino Brunias, "A Negro Festival drawn from life in the Island of St. Vincent," (1793), Engraving, in Bryan Edwards, The History, Civil and Commercial of the British colonies in the West Indies (London, 1793), p. 183. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Michael Graham-Stewart Slavery Collection, acquired with assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

THOMAS ROWLANDSON'S *RACHEL PRINGLE OF BARBADOS* (1796): THE MISTRESS/PROSTITUTE CYCLE FOR WOMEN OF COLOUR IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

Uma Vespaziani

Figure 1: Thomas Rowlandson, Rachel Pringle of Barbados (1796), Engraving, 52.7 cm x 43.8 cm, published by William Holland, Barbados Museum and Historical Society, Bridgetown, Barbados.

In the eighteenth-century, Bridgetown, Barbados was known as the crown jewel of British Caribbean colonies due to its prosperity as a dominant trading port. What its imperial title and economic success tends to mask is Bridgetown's horribly remarkable history of sexual exploitation, a history that blurred the labour boundaries between slavery and prostitution.[1] As a pivotal city dominating sugar and shipping markets within the network of trade, the slave labour market thrived in order to keep up with the economic and social demands entailed within such a bustling port site. Prostitution became a common facet of female slave labour in order to fulfill the sexual demands of town visitors, typically white males of the military and naval ranks, as a way for them to find pleasure during business.[2] Black and coloured (mixed race) women – both free and enslaved – became most involved in running Bridgetown's prostitution industry, which maintained them in a relationship of subservience to white male demands.[3]

This aspect of eighteenth-century Bridgetown history is the premise of a 1796 illustration titled Rachel Pringle of Barbados [fig. 1] by French-English artist Thomas Rowlandson (14 June 1756 –21 April 1827). The illustration depicts the portrait of a lodging house/tavern owner who

happens to be a woman of colour, not to mention a former slave. Born to a white slave owning father and a black enslaved mother, Rachel Pringle-Polgreen (c. 1753 – 23 July 1791) is significant within Barbados history for obtaining freedom within an oppressive British colonial society, eventually attaining status as a financially successful entrepreneur and landowner.[4] She utilized her sexual relationships with white men as a way of escaping ownership by her father, leading to her manumission and ultimately, her possession of other slave women. Once a free woman, Rachel[5] became a land and business owner, notably one of the first freed women to open a hotel-tavern in Barbados.[6] She was even referred to by white creole society as "Miss Rachel" during a time when black and coloured women were never granted a prefix.[7] Upon her death in 1791, her will shows that she legally owned at least 19 slaves, the majority of whom she bequeathed to her white male benefactors, while the remaining few were granted manumission.[8] Rachel was able to work within and manipulate the oppressive white patriarchal framework of Barbadian society, through meeting the needs of white society in a subversive way that in turn elevated her position, although certainly to the detriment of other racially marginalized women.

When considering the satiric and erotic qualities common throughout Rowlandson's work with caricature, his portrait of a seated Rachel outside her business diminishes narratives of her agency and power. Rowlandson's satirical rendering of her image and hotel front, adorned by the sexually suggestive sign reading "Pawpaw Sweetmeats & Pickles of all Sorts by Rachel PP," is in fact more suggestive of the truth of Rachel's supposed power. In addition, he offers a portrait of Rachel where her image is commemorated alongside the presence of white men, alluding to her dependence on white patriarchy for economic gain. This article will argue that Thomas Rowlandson's image of Rachel Pringle-Polgreen exposes her power as a façade, highlighting her reliance on sexual exploitation of herself and other women. He does so through asserting conventions of the black female as simultaneously hypersexualized and undesirable, confined to the domestic realm, and subservient to white male dominance – even when freed from slavery.

Prostitution was a form of labour that destabilized categories within slave society because it created overlapping, indistinct female identities. Within Bridgetown, the female slave was not independent from certain roles such as "housekeeper" or prostitute; the labour expected of each role had the potential to overlap, rendering their divisions arbitrary. Indeed, the term housekeeper became a euphemism for free or enslaved female concubines, often mixed race, that provided the sexual and domestic services of a wife, without the legal protection or social sanction offered to white women through marriage.[9] Due to the covert nature of the sex market and the lack of laws protecting enslaved females as legitimate persons, white slave owners could even "hire out" their female "property" to other free households to fulfill positions such as nurse, cook, seamstress, or nanny. However, these positions often ran parallel to sex work.[10] It is the overlapping of such categories within the urban context of Bridgetown that could allow the enslaved woman to attain freedom, since the intimacy between her and white male customers created private opportunity for manipulating power structures; they could coerce their clients into paying higher wages, keep some of the profits, and in time, purchase their manumission.

In the case of longer-term relationships, white men who developed emotional ties to their coloured "housekeepers" often produced mixed race children with them and sometimes liberated both mother and children.[11] However, when slaves were brought into the domestic realm, they were also brought closer in proximity to their masters, leading to improved material conditions in comparison to field slaves, but also making them more vulnerable to "sadistic whims and personal caprice."[12] Nonetheless, the emergence of a group of free black women signifies their ability to gain relative economic success through "creatively adapting to and strategically exploiting the limited opportunities that Barbados's circumscribed social order provided."[13] Rachel's history proves that exploitation became a pathway to attaining freedom and economic success; since it was arguably through her self-exploitation and that of other women, that she gained such a social status.

The unique demographic of Bridgetown, Barbados in comparison to other British Caribbean colonies contributed to the exceptionally high demand for prostitution. Its population during the eighteenth century was comprised mainly of enslaved Africans, controlled by a minority population of Europeans, a third emerging population of mixed raced peoples (of African and European descent), and a small group of free "coloureds," who were granted more privileges and rights than slaves, yet remained subordinate to the white population.[14] Contrary to other British plantation societies at the time, Barbados' slave population was comprised of more females than males, and slightly more white women than white men.[15] Hilary McD. Beckles describes in his book on female slaves in Barbados, Natural Rebels (1989), that according to the rector of the St. Michael Parish Church, there was a rapid increase in the number of freed slaves since the start of the nineteenth century, with three quarters of those freed being women.[16] This striking statistic relates to the presence of prostitution and concubinage within Barbadian society, conveying the link between sexuality and manumission for enslaved females. In comparison to male slaves, female identity proved to have subversive potential in the process of attaining freedom, since women held the possibility of rising from their slave status through their ties to white men, presumably their customers, slave owners, and often the fathers of their children.[17] However, this is not to say that black women within the freed population could escape the very labour that pulled them out of slavery in the first instance. Interchangeable categories such as prostitute and housekeeper, or prostitute and "mistress" overlapped within the urban context of Bridgetown, perpetuating a cycle where what helped black women attain freedom became one of their few options to sustain themselves outside of the slave system. Even as a coloured woman free from slavery, Rachel relied on inheritances from her former wealthy white male owners to establish her businesses, then the purchasing and prostituting of slaves to maintain it.

Through Rowlandson's depiction of Rachel as hotel/tavern owner sitting outside of her business, her authority is undermined by her crude sexualized appearance. Rachel is in the foreground, slouched and sitting heavily in front of her property. Her body is portrayed as overweight, and her chest is overexposed by her low cut white dress, accentuated by her excessive jewellery. The emphasis on Rachel's abundant cleavage, although not entirely exposed, reaffirms stereotypes of the black woman as animalistic, hypersexual, and "primitive,"

therefore unrefined. Her breasts pour forward due to her slouched position – creating an illusion of near exposure – and her legs are spread apart underneath her dress. She is portrayed as taking up as much compositional space as possible, staring straight ahead at the viewer with a disillusioned expression. Her appearance is overly sexualized, yet purposefully unattractive at the same time. Although sitting outside of her hotel/tavern as if asserting her ownership over the business, Rowlandson emphasizes her sexualized body through exaggerated feminine signifiers such as the artificiality of her dress, makeup, and accessories.

According to a 1958 anonymous editorial published by the Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, the woman in the background of Rowlandson's lithograph is in fact a young Rachel, standing in between the figure of her father, William Lauder, and the man responsible for her manumission, British Naval officer Thomas Pringle.[18] It is known that Lauder abused his ownership of Rachel by attempting to establish an incestuous relationship, leading to the reason for her need to be rescued by Pringle.[19] The figure of a young Rachel is in the background facing her father, who is caricatured with a repulsive appearance that symbolizes his vile mistreatment of her. His face has a sinister grin, full of signs of aging such as wrinkles, his body is somewhat overweight and supported by his cane, and his legs look heavily inflamed. He is looking up at Rachel, who stares ahead with a disillusioned expression resembling her face in the foreground. The presence of two male figures within the narrative of Rowlandson's lithograph of Rachel stages the dependency of free coloured women upon white males as saviors and financial supporters. The only escape from her lecherous slave owning father was through a white male "savior" figure such as Pringle, who by purchasing Rachel as property was able to provide her with more comfortable conditions as a concubine.

Although the version of Rachel in the foreground is darker, older, and heavier than the younger, lighter-skinned, and more ideally beautiful Rachel in the background, the primary consistency between the two women is their overtly sexualized appearance. Both women are wearing similar striped headwraps and white dresses, with younger Rachel's breasts slightly more accentuated and exposed. Rowlandson's depiction of the two black female figures as inherently sexualized beings was a prevalent Eurocentric belief during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, supported by new developments in science and medicine. According to Sander Gilman's article "Black Bodies, White Bodies" (1985), iconographic representations of the black female were inescapably synonymous with black sexuality – a "deviant" sexuality – and supposed scientific proof aided this stereotype into a seemingly proven fact.[20] Gilman states:

> "The polygenetic argument is the ideological basis for all the dissections of these women. If their sexual parts could be shown to be inherently different, this would be a sufficient sign that the blacks were a separate (and, needless to say, lower) race, as different from the European as the proverbial orangutan."[21]

The nineteenth-century author J.J. Virey contributed to a major essay titled Dictionnaire des sciences médicales (1819), where he naturalized stereotypical views of black female sexuality

"in terms of acceptable medical discourse," through marking the sexual organs of the Hottentot woman – the epitome or "essence" of black female sexuality – as deviant.[22] The Hottentot (Khoisan/Khoikhoi) woman was believed to have sexually different genitalia and protruding buttocks, differences that became associated with the idea of black sexuality in its entirety, rendering their biology "primitive" and subordinate in relation to European ideals of beauty and sexuality.[23] The bodies of Hottentot women such as Sarah Baartman the "Hottentot Venus" became property for the public to scornfully gaze upon and for white scientists to dissect, ultimately proving the sexuality of all black women to be inferior for their assumed sexual differences when compared to white female bodies.[24] Rowlandson's black female figures are represented in contrast to the white males within the illustration as inferior bodies open to exploration, whether as slave, prostitute, or free woman of colour.

Since Bridgetown was a bustling port city with transient military men and naval officers, Rachel capitalized on the opportunity to lend domestic services to such white male visitors, including sex. This made her hotel/tavern interchangeable with a brothel, as the keeping of lodging houses in Bridgetown was unavoidably related to the society's "housekeeper"/prostitute cycle. As the housekeepers of white men, coloured women were granted special treatment such as financial support, where in turn they could establish businesses.[25] However, once these businesses were established, the most secure way for coloured female lodging house owners to gain economic success and sustainability was through prostituting their female workers.[26]

Rowlandson does not shy away from exposing Rachel's use of prostitution for economic success as a lodging house owner. The sign hanging above her head on the hotel's storefront reads "Pawpaw Sweetmeats & Pickles of all Sorts by Rachel PP," where according to Marisa J. Fuentes, "The language of the consumption of 'Sweetmeats & Pickles' worked to both mask and advertise the sexually overt activities within the tavern."[27] The sign's sexually suggestive offerings - innuendo for penis and vagina - convey an illusion of consent between the male customer and the female labourer. The presence of the two men inside of the hotel reassert the demand for sexual favours made by visiting naval and military men, where despite women being the legal owners and providers of such services, they are still black and coloured women positioned as sexually available, consumable, and disposable to white men.

According to Elsa V. Goveia's research on slave society in the British Leeward Islands, "The system of concubinage was accepted by the women of colour, because association with the whites, even on terms of inequality, enabled them to improve their standing within their own groups."[28] Due to the lack of opportunities for enslaved females to improve their marginalized social standing, to what extent were concubinage or prostitution considered to be "acceptable" forms of labour, within the extreme conditions of repression and restrictions in which enslaved females worked and lived? Regardless of the potential improvements in treatment, black slave women with supposedly "better" treatment were still considered slaves. They were sexually targeted, isolated, and largely powerless. Rowlandson displays this dilemma, communicating Rachel's dependence on one wealthy white man to escape the clutches of another. Regardless of whether or not the female figure in the background is Rachel, the narrative alludes to the sexual

exchanges that occurred within Rachel's hotel/tavern, and the inescapable presence of white males, to whom both slave and freed coloured women were deemed compliant.

It is important to consider why an established British artist such as Rowlandson would find interest in Rachel as a subject for his art. Born in London in 1756 to a white middle class family, Rowlandson attended several prestigious art institutions such as the *Royal Academy*, attaining technical skills in drawing and painting, but later turned to the popular art form of caricature.[29] As a contemporary of William Hogarth, Rowlandson found influence in much of his work. However, while Hogarth's work sometimes depicted black subjects who would be placed in the background or periphery of an image or marginalized through the gaze of his white subjects, Rowlandson's lithograph of Rachel is one of his few works that explored the black subject.[30] He was known for living a life of excess involving "hard drinking, gambling and promiscuity," finding inspiration within male dominated, sexually charged private sectors for his popular erotic caricatures.[31] Rowlandson played with the ideals of sin and innocence defined by the church, exemplifying how sin was constructed through one's environment, mainly by the precarious sources of money and power.[32] This therefore enticed him to depict characters embodying "the exaggerated human imperfections of the everyday" such as thieves, beggars, liars, and prostitutes – those deemed most victim to "the pitfalls of urban living" – and satirize them.[33] Rachel as a subject fit neatly within Rowlandson's thematic preoccupations.

Rowlandson's illustrations of London prostitutes tend to be extremely graphic and sexually charged, conveying his curiosity in the female body, particularly their genitals. Returning to Gilman's essay on the Eurocentric belief in black female as sexually subordinate and primitive, Rowlandson's work highlights a linkage in nineteenth-century representations between the icon of the Hottentot female and the icon of the prostitute.[34] When comparing the female figures in two of his works, Rachel Pringle of Barbados and a more modest watercolour work by Rowlandson, Dr. Eady and his Patients [fig. 2], this linkage between two separate figures as "sexually deviant" becomes clear. The female patient at the centre of the watercolour is presumably a prostitute due to her sexualized appearance and un-idealized facial features. The title implies that the central female figure is a patient of Dr. Eady, but the extent of his inspection is a strong gaze at the woman's breasts. Like Rachel, she is wearing a low cut white dress, her hair is wrapped in a headscarf and the jewellery hanging from her ears and neck further accentuate her almost entirely exposed breasts. There is an uncanny resemblance between fig. 1 and fig. 2, for both compositions involve the unmet gaze between a female figure who stares forward while a male figure in close proximity gazes at her nearly bare, accentuated chest. The gaze of the males in authority – slave owner William Lauder in fig. 1 and physician Dr. Eady in fig. 2 – both lend attention to the female subject of each work, where acknowledgment of her existence is equated with an acknowledgement of her hypersexual appearance. When comparing these separate figures of Rowlandson's work, the parallel between the "deviant sexualities" of black women and female prostitutes becomes visibly legible.

Figure 2: Thomas Rowlandson, Dr. Eady and his Patients (c. 1825), Pen, ink and watercolour, 13 cm x 19.5 cm, Wellcome Library, London.

Another compositional similarity between the two works by Rowlandson is the relationship staged between the two female figures within each. In fig. 2, the woman to the right of the central female figure is also assumed to be a patient of Dr. Eady, based on the plurality of "patients" within the title. She is depicted as older and larger with peculiar facial distortion and a lack of composure, likely a result of the bottle of alcohol in her hand. William Schupbach of the *Wellcome Library* in London where fig. 2 is housed, writes that Dr. Eady was in fact a real doctor, and most of what is known about him is through an advertising pamphlet c. 1820-1825, describing his treatment as intended for "those who are unhappily afflicted with diseases of the generative system," as in syphilis.[35] Rowlandson therefore associates the readily available and disposable sexuality of the London female prostitute of the nineteenth century with the dangers of venereal disease, crudely caricatured in the second female figure. The diseased female figure in the background hovers over the central female figure as if foreshadowing how the sexual appearance of the young prostitute will degenerate over time due to the repercussions of the profession. Sexually transmitted disease was also rampant in the Caribbean, and as Charmaine A. Nelson has argued, its spread was aggravated by the normative promiscuity of white men of all classes.[36] Similarly in fig. 1, the juxtaposition between young and old Rachel conveys the wearing down effects of sexual labour, implying that one can never be fully rid of sexual exploitation.

Although Rachel and Rowlandson were contemporaries, it is unclear whether or not Rowlandson ever travelled to Barbados, which leads me to question how he would have chosen Rachel Pringle as a subject for his art. The original drawing of Rachel was made by an anonymous artist and has the inscription E.D. It is this image from which Rowlandson then recreated his own version.[37] Rowlandson was a close friend of Prince William Henry (later King William IV), who was one of the most high profile visitors to Rachel's *Royal Navy Hotel*.[38] The Prince paid a legendary visit to Rachel's hotel on 2 February 1789 with the British Army, where it is recorded that he and his men went on a "drunken spree," carelessly breaking the hotel's furniture and properties.[39] Apparently, Rachel watched passively, since her position in society did not in any way grant her the authority to curtail the Prince's actions. She later quietly fined the Prince $700 in damages, which he willingly paid.[40] Within the days following Prince William Henry's visit, Rachel placed an advertisement in the Barbados Gazette listing all of the lost items from her hotel, such as silver table spoons, which were presumably thrown out of the hotel by the Prince and his military.[41] However, Rowlandson's connection to Rachel remains vague, proving that much of the story behind her highly visible portrait still remains invisible.

As in many cases of mixed race or black subjects, what is known about the life and struggles of Rachel Pringle-Polgreen is through fragmented visual culture objects and documents, which were primarily created and produced by white men. However, Rachel's oddly hyper-visible legacy rendered invisible the stories and experiences of those who she enslaved for her attainment of an elevated position in Barbadian society. Fuentes accurately describes the consequences of Rachel's highly visible legacy:

> "From the only existing visual representation, Rachel's race, gender, and sexuality become so concretely fixed as to make an alternative image of her body and lived experiences nearly impossible. How do such powerful visual and discursive productions silence not only the possibility of Rachel's injuries but the bodies and voices of the women she enslaved? Rachel represents an example of the problems with sources depicting women of African descent who lived in a slave society."[42]

The fact that the image Rachel Pringle of Barbados exists is representative of her significance within Barbadian history as a figure that managed to defy the obstacles of marginalization set out for her as a former slave and woman of colour. However, her legacy as a coloured woman with power able to resist white domination through her independent entrepreneurial success is only a surface level reading of her story. Rowlandson's illustration encapsulates the cyclicality of housekeepers/prostitute roles within Bridgetown slave society as a form of labour and exploitation that could both liberate and isolate black females – both enslaved and freed. What cannot go unnoticed is the psychological trauma and corruption that the institution of slavery had on all persons involved, to the point where free black men and women exploited and enslaved their own people in order to be economically stable under an oppressive white colonial society.

ENDNOTES:

[1] Jerome S. Handler, "Joseph Rachell and Rachael Pringle-Polgreen: Petty Entrepreneurs," Struggle and Survival in Colonial America, eds. D.G. Sweet and G. B. Nash (California: Univ. of California Press, 1981), p. 376.

[2]Hilary Beckles, Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 144.

[3] I make the distinction between "black" and "coloured" women to recognize their difference in status within slave society. People described as "black" were of darker complexions and likely purely of African descent, whereas "coloured" signified a mixture, perhaps of lighter complexion, due to white ancestry. Despite having "white" blood, many coloured men and women born to black mothers were still enslaved. But slave owners often placed them higher on the slave hierarchy.

[4] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," p. 383.

[5] I choose to refer to Rachel Pringle-Polgreen informally by her first name instead of her last names, which were the family names of her past owners, therefore signifying her previous status as an object of property.

[6] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," p. 383.

[7] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," pp. 387-8.

[8] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," p. 387.

[9] For more on "housekeepers" and the use of concubinage in Jamaica see: Christer Petley, " 'Home' and "this country': Britishness and Creole Identity in the Letters of a Transatlantic Slaveholder," Atlantic Studies, vol. 6, no. 1 (April 2009), p. 49; R. Bickell, The West Indies as they are: or a Real Picture of Slavery: but more particularly as it exists in the Island of Jamaica. in three parts. with notes. (London: Printed for J. Hatchard and Son, 187, Piccadilly: and Lupton Relfe, Cornhill, MCDCCCXXV, 1825), p. 104; Charmaine A. Nelson, "Imaging Slavery in Antigua and Jamaica: Pro-Slavery Discourse and the Reality of Enslavement," Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming 2016).

[10] Beckles, Natural Rebels, p. 143.

[11] Christer Petley, " 'Home' and "this country': Britishness and Creole Identity in the Letters of a Transatlantic Slaveholder," Atlantic Studies, vol. 6, no. 1 (April 2009), pp. 43-61.

[12] Barbara Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838 (Kingston: Heinemann Publishers (Caribbean), 1990), p. 44.

[13] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," p. 378.

[14] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," p. 376-7.

[15] Marisa J. Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring: Rachael Pringle Polgreen's Troubled Archive," Gender & History, vol. 22, no. 3 (November 2010), p. 567. See also Hilary McD. Beckles, "White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000), p. 662.

[16] Beckles, Natural Rebels, p. 149.

[17] Beckles, Natural Rebels, p. 149.

[18] Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring," p. 569.

[19] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," p. 384.

[20] Sander L. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," Critical Inquiry, vol. 12, no. 1 (1985), p. 212.

[21] Gilman, "Black Bodies," p. 216.

[22] Gilman, "Black Bodies," pp. 212-13.

[23] Gilman, "Black Bodies," p. 213.

[24] Deborah Willis and Carla Williams eds., Venus 2010: They Called Her Hottentot: The Art, Science, and Fiction of Sarah Baartman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, Academic, 2010)

[25] Paulette A. Kerr, "Victims or Strategists? Female Lodging-house keepers in Jamaica," Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective, eds. Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 197-8.

[26] Kerr, "Victims or Strategists," p. 198.

[27] Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring," p. 571.

[28] Elsa V. Goveia, Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 217.

[29] Art Young, Thomas Rowlandson (New York: Willey Book Co, 1938), p. 21.

[30] Marisa Joanna Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring: Rachael Pringle Polgreen's Troubled Archive and Enslaved Prostitution in Bridgetown," Buried Landscapes: Enslaved Black Women, Sex, Confinement and Death in

Colonial Bridgetown, Barbados and Charleston, South Carolina (University of California, Berkeley: ProQuest, 2007), p. 31.
[31] Mark Bills, "Thomas Rowlandson's London," The Art of Satire: London in Caricature (London: Philip Wilson Pub., 2006), p. 106.
[32] Young, Rowlandson, p. 27.
[33] Bills, "Thomas Rowlandson's London," pp. 106, 112.
[34] Gilman, "Black Bodies," p.206.
[35]William Schupbach, "Dr Eady – from Soho to Beverly Hills," Wellcome Library, http://blog.wellcomelibrary.org/2011/08/dr-eady-from-soho-to-beverly-hills/ (date of last access 29 July 2014)
[36] Nelson, "Imaging Slavery in Antigua and Jamaica".
[37] Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring...Enslaved Prostitution in Bridgetown," pp. 31-2.
[38] Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring...Enslaved Prostitution in Bridgetown," p. 32.
[39] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," p. 386. Of course this debauchery may have resulted in physical harm to the females who worked in Rachel's hotel/tavern. White creole male culture was notorious for excessive alcohol consumption, which often resulted in violence. In one such case, the overseer Thomas Thistlewood of Egypt Estate, Jamaica, related how an enslaved female named Eve was gang-raped by the plantation owner John Cope and six male guests after a night of intense drinking. Trevor Burnard, "The Sexual Life of an Eighteenth-Century Jamaican Slave Overseer," Sex and Sexuality in Early America, ed. Merril D. Smith (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 177.
[40] Handler, "Petty Entrepreneurs," p. 386.
[41] Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring," p. 575.
[42] Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring... Enslaved Prostitution in Bridgetown," p. 34.

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: Thomas Rowlandson, Rachel Pringle of Barbados (1796), Engraving, 52.7 cm x 43.8 cm, published by William Holland, Barbados Museum and Historical Society, Bridgetown, Barbados.

Figure 2: Thomas Rowlandson, Dr. Eady and his Patients (c. 1825), Pen, ink and watercolour, 13 cm x 19.5 cm, Wellcome Library, London.