University of Southampton

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English

Landscapes of Enslavement: Imaginings, Re-imaginings, Projections, and Aestheticizations of the Atlantic Plantation in the Long Eighteenth Century

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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This thesis addresses the centrality of slavery in eighteenth-century British culture through a complex, interdisciplinary lens which brings together texts, landscapes and insights from a range of scholarly approaches and priorities. In particular it foregrounds landscape as a valuable and encompassing medium through which to explore such issues.

The most significant feature of the integrated plantation landscape in the Atlantic colonies was strategic violence, actual and threatened, deployed as a means of control. Surveillance was inbuilt, for despite their power, white colonists experienced constant fear of rebellions by enslaved workers.

Politeness, the culture of the metropolitan ruling elite, was a complex amalgam of performed genteel behaviours and evidence of taste in an exclusive and inclusive social construct. The culture of politeness was synonymous with the picturesque genre which connected art, poetry and landscape, a genre also deployed to configure the plantation colony in a cultural continuum with the metropole. This is explored in the planteresque writing of Edward Long and the colonial picturesque tour of Maria Nugent.

The overseer landscape of overt brutality enacted the proxy power of the planter, enabling the plantocracy to feign distance from the plantation and perform metropolitan politeness. The overseer class essentialized and enacted the violence, racism and misogyny of the white male gaze.

The Atlantic Ocean was an arena of transitions and transformations. The intersection between metropolitan politeness and the creole culture of the plantocracy is instanced in the differing landscapes of the fourth-generation absentee planters, William Beckford of Somerley, who traversed the Atlantic, owned the creole landscape and configured an imagined polite trans-Atlantic identity, and William Beckford of Fonthill, who shunned the oceanic crossing and displaced his creole identity in a landscape of self-fashioning and obsessive behaviours. Both experienced anxieties and neuroses derived from the plantation source of their wealth.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Nadia Amara

Title of thesis: Landscapes of Enslavement: Imaginings, Re-imaginings, Projections, and Aestheticizations of the Atlantic Plantation in the Long Eighteenth Century

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly while in candidature for a research degree at this University
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission;

Signature: Nadia Amara Date: 22 June 2024

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Elephant in the Landscape

This thesis originated in consideration of country estates in England and the narratives of empire and white supremacy which suffuse them. The world of gardens and garden history is overwhelmingly white, affirmed by and affirming of the culture of rural and middle England, in which the landscape garden is generally esteemed as high culture, and former proprietors, sometimes even their contemporary descendants, are revered for their wealth and disposition of it. Whilst the prizing of rare and historic artefacts and features is understandable, inherent racist narratives are offensive and denying of other narratives associated with such objects. Effectively it is a valorization of wealth and class at the expense of the voice and/or sensitivities of the marginalized and oppressed, as famously contended by Chinua Achebe: 'There is that great proverb, that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter', to which Achebe less famously added, 'Once I realized that, I had to be a writer. I had to be that historian. It's not one man's job. It's not one person's job. But it is something we have to do, so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail, the bravery, even, of the lions'.[1] This issue is embedded in the discourse of 'heritage' and the interconnectedness between historic and present-day engagements with iconography of white supremacy. This has been highlighted in recent years through the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, in particular with regard to Britain's past involvement in plantation slavery. The notoriety, even criminality, which the British establishment has attached to grassroot challenges by people of colour to iconography of slavery and white supremacy is a narrative of complacency and continuing racism. And this derives from the establishment power attached to such iconography expressed through its 'heritage' status. My intention is to articulate and challenge that power through exploration of some of the originating circumstances of racism in Britain,

[1] Jerome Brooks, 'Chinua Achebe, The Art of Fiction', *The Paris Review*, 133 (1994) https://www.proquest.com/docview/219551268/fulltext/F9698C469ECB49F9PQ/1?accountid=13963&sourcetype=Magazines [accessed 5 March 2023].

which immediately translocates the discussion to the Atlantic plantation colonies of the long eighteenth century.

The intersection of ruling class refinement and the brutality of slavery and their comfortable reconciliation is the core consideration that coheres the various white narratives of slavery within this thesis. The eighteenth-century desire for the luxury products of the Atlantic plantation rendered slavery ubiquitous as a generalized cultural presence in British elite society, and the locus of slavery, the plantation, and its associated embedded racism were translocated to landed estates in Britain.

My overarching intention, therefore, is to explore the historical settings in which slavery fashioned lives and mindsets and the ensuing intersections, contradictions and strategies by which different interest groups configured and reconfigured, sanitized, disguised and denied their association with the landscape of enslavement.

The background that I bring is founded in 1. the study of landscapes and garden history, and 2. anti-racism informed by global narratives of European colonialism. My focus is the way in which the latter is evidenced in the former and how culture in its fullest understanding is embedded in landscapes. Much of what is to be explored will be in the realm of the 'embedded' or internalized.

I present my material and arguments in two parts. Chapters 2 to 5 are concerned with the plantation landscape and its different configurations within the white colonial gaze over time and across a spectrum of class, each with reference to particular individuals and close readings of landscapes and texts. Chapter 2 provides a contextualizing overview of the Atlantic plantation with reference to significant features and terms of reference for chapters that follow. The subsequent two chapters address strategies by which the white gaze disguised or sanitized the brutality of slavery. Chapter 3 discusses the colonial pleasure garden, a locus in which the *plantocracy* rehearsed leisure activities and social interactions in an imagined continuity with the metropolitan landscape of polite social and cultural encounters.[2] Chapter 4 explores white colonial aestheticizations of the plantation landscape

[2] *Plantocracy* refers to the elite class of planters who owned the largest and most profitable plantations.

in European cultural frameworks, in particular the picturesque genre, again in the image of refined European landscapes, underwritten with the anxieties of disguising brutality for European audiences. Chapter 5, in contrast, reveals the unsanitized plantation landscape of the overseer, suffused with the brutality on which the entirety of the Atlantic plantation project rested, the intersection between the otherness of setting, crop and workforce and the materiality of European avarice.

Chapters 6 to 8 explore metropolitan perspectives on the plantation, through the personae of two individuals, one, William Beckford of Somerley, a 'trans-Atlantic' creole planter equally engaged with polite domestic and the hybrid colonial landscapes, the other, William Beckford of Fonthill, an absentee entrenched in the metropolitan creole landscape of denial and internal anxieties.

Slavery as Heritage

British responses to slavery have changed over time. J. R. Oldfield traces the transition over the twentieth century from the centenary of the end of slavery in the British Empire (1933-34) to the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade (2007). Two distinct views of slavery, empire and British national identity emerge. In 1933-34 abolition was represented not as the end of an extended historical era of shameful conduct, but rather 'through the moral triumph of abolition' as evidence of British 'moral strength and superiority'. As the first European power to 'perfect the transatlantic slave trade', Britain congratulated itself for being the first to abolish the trade and emancipate enslaved imperial subjects, a claim which was further deployed to justify and celebrate empire: 'Such selfless actions, it was argued, legitimised Britain's role in the world, the country's stewardship over countless millions in Africa, India and the Caribbean, and its particular claim to speak for those who were too weak to speak for themselves.'[3] In other words, a constructed humaneness of abolition was substituted for the inhumaneness of slavery itself. And this configuration of Britain's leading

[3] J. R. Oldfield, *'Chords of Freedom': Commemoration, Ritual and British Transatlantic Slavery* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 1-2.

role in Atlantic slavery was still being propounded via the state public service broadcaster, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), in the early twenty-first century:

> Its [the British empire's] advocates claim it was a civilizing mission by which Britain spread enlightenment and improvement across the globe, opponents have long seen it as a brutal business with Britons cast as cruel oppressors who set out to exploit a conquered world. But our imperial history isn't so simple. […] is slavery an inevitable part of empire? And how did Britain finally shake it off and encourage the rest to follow?.[4]

Nevertheless, from the mid-twentieth century the black African diaspora was a visible and vocal presence in the metropolitan setting and fifty years later, Oldfield observes, 'Museums, in short, have had to redefine themselves'.[5] Hence the bicentenary of the end of the slave trade, 2007, was marked in a very different manner from commemorations of 1933-34, for public bodies now recognized the moral imperative to engage with black communities and descendants of enslaved people.

Such engagements, however, remain essentially top-down and confine the role and influence of black communities to that determined by the authority of the white establishment. Recent bottom-up, direct action responses to public celebrations of slavery undertaken by BLM activism have led to further change, and the concept of decolonization has entered the vocabulary of public discourse around slavery. Bristol's Free Museums and Historic Houses, for instance, has a Decolonisation Working Group'.[6] And, in contrast to the words of Melvin Bragg in 2002, in 2021 following the rise of BLM, the BBC provided a platform for the voices of other narratives of slavery. A programme made by Bristol community journalist Neil Maggs discussed the removal of the statue of slave trader Edward

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[4] The words of Melvin Bragg, 'Slavery and Empire', *In Our Time*, BBC Radio 4, 17 October 2002.

[5] Oldfield, *Chords of Freedom*, p. 120.

[6] Lisa Graves, 'Decolonisation: An Update on What's Been Happening at Bristol Museums', 14 March 2024, https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/blog/collections/decolonisation-an-update-on-whats-been-happening-at-bristol-museums/ [accessed 15 March 2024].

Colston and issues around this man for people in Bristol.[7] And a series of seven half-hour broadcasts by Yrsa Daley-Ward centred around the question, 'How close is each of us to the legacy of Britain's role in slavery?', commencing with the first-person story of Jen Reid, the woman whose statue was placed by BLM activists on the plinth from which Colston's was removed.[8]

However, the extent and nature of change following BLM remains an open question: those who toppled the Colston statue and threw it into the sea were criminalized, and Jen Reid's statue was removed from the plinth. Further, developments in museums are not replicated across the rest of the heritage industry. Representation of slavery in museums and broadcasting within the arena of democratic public accountability are quite marginal to the barriers of race and class which separate black and working-class people in Britain from the heritage world of the country estate, where celebrations of slavery and colonial conquest are a continuing presence. Such heritage sites are for the most part not under the control of public accountable bodies. Rather they are privately owned and managed for profit or under the stewardship of charities, such as the National Trust (NT) and English Heritage (EH).[9]

Over ninety of the 500 historic homes managed by the NT have been found to have historic links to Atlantic slavery, a revelation derived from research commissioned by the Trust itself. The *Interim Report* in which the findings were published recommended a 'review [of] visitor information and displays at properties', a far from radical suggestion.[10] However the NT depends on a paying membership of a decidedly middle England demographic and culture,

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[7] 'Cancelling Colston', *Analysis*, BBC Radio 4, 25 July 2021.

[8] 'Jean and Gayle', *Descendants*, BBC Radio 4, 13 October 2021.

[9] English Heritage, formerly a government institution, was reconfigured as an independent charity in 2015, although its properties remain in state ownership.

[10] Dr Sally-Anne Huxtable, Professor Corinne Fowler, Dr Christo Kefalas and Emma Slocombe, ed., *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery* (Swindon: National Trust, 2020); Eleanor Mills, 'Profile, "We Must be Careful Not to Unconsciously Add to the Toxicity": Corinne Fowler on the need to be humane and sensitive when dealing with the National Trust's colonial histories', Museum Association, November 2022, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/people/2022/11/profile-we-must-be-careful-not-to-unconsciously-add-to-the-toxicity/ [accessed 17 March 2024]; Sally Young, 'National Trust Lists Churchill's Home Among 93 Properties with Links to Slavery and Colonialism', *Independent*, 22 September 2022, https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/national-trust-slavery-colonialism-links-list-properties-churchill-home-b526697.html [accessed 17 March 2024].

as the many angry responses to the report illustrate: 'Please do not "educate" or lecture us,' one person wrote. 'I go round houses to appreciate furniture, art and gardens,' wrote another. 'We don't need to have your view of history forced upon us'.[11]

Others cancelled their membership, and Corinne Fowler, one of the researchers, reported that she received 'death threats and vast volumes of hate mail in response to tabloid articles smearing the report and its findings'.[12] In fact, Fowler described her experience as:

> like a walk through the valley of the shadow of death. […] The report was condemned by Cabinet Members and 59 Common Sense Group MPs and Peers […] We found ourselves being presented by influential opinion writers as unpatriotic denigrators of British history. My safety was threatened, I could not walk alone and I had to call the police.[13]

Whatever the outcome of such initiatives by bodies like the NT, such responses from members affirm a barrier of race and class.

Sometimes historic landed estates overlap with museums, particularly in Atlantic settings where plantations or plantation great houses are often museums, rarely in public ownership, and frequently the property of descendants of slave owners. And this gives rise to a different dimension of cultural bias, as affirmed by Doran Eldar and David Jansson who undertook a study of two plantations in Louisiana and described one of the plantations they studied as a 'psychogeographical "safe space" where whites are "released from politically correct rules of feeling"'.[14]

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[11] Young, 'National Trust'

[12] Mills, 'Profile'.

[13] Corinne Fowler, 'Responding to the "Culture War" through Engagement and Dialogue', in *Inclusive Histories: Narrating Our* Shared *Past in Polarised Times*, ed. by Jake Puddle and Sunder Katwala (London: British Future, 2023), pp. 27-28, p. 27.

[14] Doran Eldar and David Jansson, 'Southering and the Politics of Heritage: The Psychogeography of Narrating Slavery at Plantation Museums', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 28:3, 341-57 https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2021.2009537 [accessed 20 February 2024], pp. 341 and348. In 2021 This 2021 research on representations of slavery in such museums reported that in some there was a continuation of a 'traditional' focus on 'romance, gentility and prosperity' and an entire absence of 'the topic of enslavement'. It concluded, 'It is difficult to imagine other cultural institutions narrating white supremacy so

The Jamaican scholar Celia E. Naylor highlights the prevalence of white narratives within the heritage industry with reference to the memorialization of Rose Hall plantation in post-colonial Jamaica, and the need 'to move the enslaved people from the margin to the center of this history'.[15] In fact she questions the appropriateness of 'immortalizing' loci such as plantations and slave forts as tourist destinations and venues for parties and weddings. Such 'enduring monuments of slavery', she argues, too often 'present a cursory, uncomplicated presentation of the world of slavery and the lives of bondswomen, bondsmen and bondschildren'. She goes on, 'Such sites and related tourist bureaus encourage visitation to these plantations by conveying a message about the beauty of slave sites in this neocolonial present'.[16]

Everyone's truth (like everyone's landscape) is subjective: the reality of the heritage settings discussed here is that they are the homes of former, sometimes contemporary, members of a highly privileged class, and that privilege is configured from the perspective of that class. Hence, for example, collections are presented as attributes of taste rather than appropriation and/or exploitation. It is within this context and range of considerations that I challenge the framework within which the heritage of the country house so frequently represents slavery, a challenge most lucidly clarified by Yrsa Daley-Ward: 'The history which Edward Colston represented, the history of Britain and slavery, feels incredibly personal to many British people – and distant to so many others'.[17]

Of the landed estates in Britain associated with slavery which are in the private ownership of descendants of the original owners, the narrative is less coherent. On the one hand, the Heirs of Slavery, formed in the UK in 2023 by descendants of ancestors involved in slavery, is a campaigning organization committed to 'reconciliation and reparative justice', including

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bluntly'. It also reports museum guides expressing racist views about immigrants and even regretting the end of segregation in the American south.

[15] Celia N. Naylor, UNSilencing Slavery: Telling Truths About Rose Hall Plantation, Jamaica (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2022), p. 4. Naylor writes of her lifelong desire to redress the balance of the visitor experience of Rose Hall, for the white plantation and slave owner, Annie Mary Palmer, legendarily known as the White Witch of Rose Hall, predominates in the fame and configuring of this plantation.

[16] Ibid, p. 5.

[17] Daley-Ward, 'Jean and Gayle'.

reparations.[18] On the other hand, some such descendants refuse to engage with the origin of their families' wealth and dismiss its association with present-day realities. Most famously, the Conservative MP for South Dorset, Richard Drax, lives on his family's 15,000-acre ancestral estate, Charborough Park, which is bisected by a road entitled 'Sugar Hill', and yet this man maintains:

> I am keenly aware of the slave trade in the West Indies, and the role my very distant ancestor played in it is deeply, deeply regrettable, but no one can be held responsible today for what happened many hundreds of years ago. This is a part of the nation's history, from which we must all learn.[19]

Drax continues to live in a style remarkably similar to that of his absentee planter forefathers. He owns a working sugar plantation in Barbados and he is an MP whose voting record is consistently in line with the interests of the landed gentry.[20] Another sugar dynast Richard Dawkins, whose sister lives in his family's stately home, Over Norton, responded to a query about the connection of his family's wealth to slavery with an explanation of how genetically distant he was from his ancestor Henry Dawkins and added, 'I can't help wondering at the quality of journalism which sees a scoop in attacking a man for what his five-greats grandfather did'.[21]

To summarize, this formulation of contemporary understandings and representations of slavery has been presented as a background and contextualization, primarily to my own interest and motivation: put simply, to understand the present we have to explore the past.

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[18] Heirs of Slavery https://www.heirsofslavery.org [accessed 19 March 2024]; Amelia Gentleman, 'Descendants of UK Slave Owners Call on Government to Apologise, *Guardian*, 24 April 2023 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/24/descendants-of-uk-slave-owners-call-on-government-to-apologise [accessed 19 March 2024].

[19] Paul Lashmar, **'**Tory MP's historic family links to slavery raise questions about Britain's position on reparations', The Conversation, 1 September 2023 https://theconversation.com/tory-mps-historic-family-links-to-slavery-raise-questions-about-britains-position-on-reparations-212469 [accessed 18 March 2024]

[20] 'Richard Drax, Conservative MP for South Dorset', *They Work for You* https://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/24903/richard_drax/south_dorset [accessed 18 March 2024].

[21] Matthew Taylor, 'Richard Dawkins Expresses Disbelief Over Slave Owner Ancestor Story, *Guardian*, 19 February 2012 https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/feb/19/richard-dawkins-disbelief-slave-trade-ancestor [accessed 18 March 2024].

It is also the case that the past is a component of the present. Hence this thesis is a part of the discourse of contemporary engagements with slavery and the racism which characterizes its continuing legacy. The substance is exclusively concerned with the eighteenth century. However, the content relates to dilemmas associated with engagements with historic landscapes and houses today, and the question of heritage landscapes of enslavement will re-emerge in the conclusion.

Clarifications

Initially I wish to clarify my use of the widely used and understood term 'race', despite the fact that, in the words of Gary Younge, it 'isn't real', but rather 'it is a social construct to understand the world that racism built'.[22] Its frequent occurrence in this thesis is for want of an alternative to refer to skin colour (black or white) and ethnicity (European or African), neither of which are indicators of race. They were however critical societal organizing principles in the Atlantic colonial settings in the eighteenth century: then, as now, the term was used within the articulation of racism. 'Scientific' differences of 'race' as hierarchical fed and justified the entrapment, enforced migration and enslavement of African people. This was exemplified by the 'Gentleman Planter' Edward Long, whose promulgation of polygenism took Enlightenment 'scientific racism' to the extreme of suggesting that black people were 'a different species of the same *genus*'.[23] This explicit animalization of African people and ideological bedrock of slavery found material expression in the plantation landscape.

The time frame I have determined on, the long eighteenth century, is open: this is not a discussion focused upon specific historic events or significant dates. Rather it is concerned with the mores, cultural outlooks and routine life experiences of a range of people through the medium of imagined and inhabited landscapes. It is therefore, in the words of David

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[22] Gary Younge, 'Gary Younge on Race, Racism and Identity: Racism is Not Black and White', *Double Down News*, https://www.doubledown.news/watch/2023/july/27/gary-younge-demolishes-identity-politics-and-myth-of-race [accessed 5 September 2023].

[23] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or, General Survey of Antient and Modern State of the Island; With Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government*, 3 vols, (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), II, p. 356.

Arnold, 'primarily concerned with colonialism [and landscape] as "a cultural process," "imagined and energized through signs, metaphors and narratives"'.[24]

Why Landscape

This study is predicated on a number of understandings, the most significant of which, and the central thread, is *landscape* itself. The term is generally understood as arising within the field of European aesthetics, in association with the art form of the oil painting, which in the words of John Berger, analogized '*possessing* and the way of seeing'.[25] Barbara Bender contextualizes the arrival of the term in the vocabulary of European 'aesthetes, antiquarians and landed gentry' as significantly occurring in 'the emergent capitalist world' from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, more or less coincident with the oil painting.[26] This initial conceptualization positions landscape as Eurocentric and associated with land, wealth and power. Whilst the synonymy of land with power was not new, the imperative to transfigure it into a quantifiable possession which could assimilate into the emerging economy of manufacture and trade coincided with the emergence of the landscape concept.

W. J. T. Mitchell further clarifies:

> Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package.[27]

So landscape was a reflection of engagements with mediated scenes, which were determined by proprietorship and power, the basis of ruling class culture. And, as a corollary, engagements of other classes were mediated by other cultures and other relationships to proprietorship and power, primarily their absence. For, as Bender concludes, 'at the *same*

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[24] David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science, 1800-1856* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), pp. 3-4.

[25] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin 1972), pp. 83-84.

[26] Barbara Bender, 'Landscape – Meaning and Action', in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed by Barbara Bender (Providence: Berg Publishers, 1993), pp. 1-17 (pp. 1-2).

[27] W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', in *Landscape and Power*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp.5-34, (p. 5).

time and the *same place*, other ways of understanding and relating to land – *other landscapes* [exist]' (my emphases).[28]

This understanding complicates the discourse, but it equally enlarges the scope of insights furnished, most critically revelations regarding identities and interactions between and within individuals and groups. This premise is even more precisely articulated by Howard Morphy: 'The coherent theoretical strand that I am isolating is one in which landscape is seen as being […] integral to the development of concepts of Self and Other'.[29]

From this critical integrality of landscape with identity, 'of Self and Other', subjective perceptions and engagements arise, a matrix of cultural and psychological considerations must ensue, and it is necessary to address the vast metaphorical landscape of the psyche, in particular the unconscious. Sigmund Freud famously proposed an 'iceberg' model of the psyche in which the greater part of the iceberg is beneath the water and only the small part above the water is visible, so the conscious mind constitutes a minor part of the whole psyche and the vastly larger part resides in the unconscious.[30] And particularly important to considerations of the unconscious in this context is Carl Gustav Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, in which archetypes, or generalized 'primordial images' and 'impressions of ever-repeating typical experiences', are found, expressed not only through dreams and other media in which the unconscious manifests, but also in collective expressions such as myths – and landscapes, as affirmed by the twentieth-century landscape architect Geoffrey Jellicoe both in reflections on his own designed landscapes and understandings of others.[31]

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[28] Bender, Landscape', p. 2.

[29] Howard Morphy, 'Colonialism, History and the Construction of Place: The Politics of Landscape in Northern Australia', in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. by Barbara Bender (Providence: Berg, 1995) pp. 205-44 (p. 206).

[30] The Freud Museum https://www.freud.org.uk/education/resources/what-is-the-unconscious/the-unconscious-frequently-asked-questions/ [accessed 12 August 2023]. The Freud Museum rejects this model in totality on the grounds that ice is solid and inert, whereas the unconscious is 'dynamic' and 'constantly trying to burst out'.

[31] *The Essential Jung: Selected Writings*, Introduction by Anthony Storr, 2nd edn (London: Harper Collins, 1986), p. 70; Geoffrey Jellicoe, *The Guelph Lectures on Landscape Design* (Guildford: University of Guelph, 1983), p. ix.

Michael Vannoy Adams recalibrates the dichotomy between the conscious and unconscious, arguing that they are concepts different not 'in kind' but rather 'in degree' and as such 'theoretical extremes on an experiential continuum'.[32] The polarized relations of the colonial landscape evidence multiple psyches in various racialized manifestations, like the various and varying identities of its inhabitants, across the spectrum of conscious-to-unconscious. The dualism of the conscious and unconscious is one of the most significant elements of my argument and will arise frequently, sometimes referred to as 'externality' and 'internality' or 'inscape' and 'escape'.

The close association between landscape and the psyche is attested by the anthropologist Anne Salmond. Psycholinguistics stresses the interconnectedness between language and thought and the synonymy between language and culture in formulating models of cognitive development and computational processing. This language-thought process is enabled by the ordering system of metaphor and metonymy, which equate with the Freudian unconscious processes of displacement (metonymy) and repression (metaphor).[33] Landscapes are highly significant repositories and/or expressions of such unconscious experience. According to Salmond's seminal 'theoretical landscapes', landscape is a critical and embedded element in conceptual processing: 'our discourse about knowledge characteristically elaborates a series of metaphors about location in a physical landscape […]. These metaphors mirror either the landscape itself or physical activities upon it'.[34] And this primacy of landscape in the human psyche is essentialized in the metaphor 'knowledge is a landscape', from which, through a series of 'entailments', Salmond extrapolates the

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[32] Michael Vannoy Adams, *The Multicultural Imagination: "Race", Color and the Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 153.

[33] This summation is based on: Noam Chomsky, 'New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind' in *The Essential Chomsky* (London: Bodley Head, 2008), pp. 285-99 pp. 286-87; Roman Jakobson, 'The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles' Unconscious' in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge with Nigel Wood, 2nd edn (London: Longman, 2000), pp. 56-60 (p. 59); Jacques Lacan, 'The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious' also in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, pp. 61-87 (pp. 63-64); Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, ed. and trans. by Eugenia Hanfmann and Getrude Vakar (Cambridge MA: The M.I.T. Press,, 1962), p. 51; Benjamin Lee Whorf, 'Science and Linguistics', in *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed by John B. Carroll (Cambridge MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1956), pp. 207-19 (p. 212).

[34] Anne Salmond, 'Theoretical Landscapes: On Cross-Cultural Conceptions of Knowledge', in *Semantic Anthropology*, ed by David Parkin (London: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 65-87 (p. 65).

interconnectedness of intellectual processing, social engagement and landscape encounters. Knowledge is *territory* and has *spatial existence*, within which the *journey*, and sic *destination* further metaphorize knowledge and intellectual activity.[35] Denis E. Cosgrove stresses the collective dimension of internalized landscapes, 'forms and rhythms shared between human consciousness and the natural world [...], at once individual and yet widely shared and communicated'.[36] Hence, this metaphorical landscape (and seascape) model embedded in the unconscious as a framing device for cognitive processing, aligns with Jungian archetypes. And, like archetypes, such internalized metaphors intersect with cultural specificities, for the unconscious has a material origin, as expressed in Jellicoe's Shakespearean paraphrase 'nothing comes of nothing'.[37] It is therefore predictable that tropes of conquest and colonization feature in the metaphorical landscapes of the English language: *exploration*, *pioneering*, *staking claims* metaphorize intellectual considerations and processing, a *terrain* is *charted*, *mapped* and 'brought under cognitive control', and *boundaries* between *domains* are drawn, *borders* and *frontiers* are established, and *barriers* may be built to guard them'.[38]

In summation landscape is understood as internalized and functional to psychological processing, synonymous with identity. It is also, through 'signs, metaphors and narratives', a means of external engagement, a medium of communication and locus of display and performance.[39] It is therefore a most appropriate medium through which to explore the processes and outcomes of the transformations effected by colonization and multiple translocations in other settings in the appropriative and exploitative project of settler colonialism in the Atlantic region.

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[35] Salmond, 'Theoretical Landscapes', p. 67.

[36] Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), pp. xii-xiii.

[37] Jellicoe, *Guelph Lectures*, p. 53.

[38] Salmond, 'Theoretical Landscapes', p. 69.

[39] Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*, pp. 3-4.

Cultural Contexts and Intersections

I here clarify a number of terms and concepts which are critical to the substance of my argument.

Politeness

Politeness refers to the elite culture and lifestyle that emerged from societal changes associated with the Glorious Revolution of 1688. As the new ruling class of commerce, trade and manufacture replaced the nobility, politeness was a reconfiguration of the traditional refinements of the aristocracy to incorporate the elevated nouveaux riches. Lawrence E. Klein explains:

> "politeness" came into existence as part of the process by which the English elite reconstructed itself in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: it helped to formulate the hegemony of the landed classes and their supporters, as religion was definitively subordinated to social and political discipline, as the royal court shrank in cultural stature, and as metropolitan London took over in generating cultural values. In this way, politeness constituted an oligarchical culture for a post-courtly and post-godly society with a growing metropolis.[40]

Consciously commodified and associated with the expanding urban centre, this new culture consisted of a series of defining behaviours, in the words of John Brewer, 'a finely modulated repertoire of accomplishments', together with material evidence of appropriate taste, not least in the form of consumer products with which to ornament one's life.[41] Hence it amalgamated taste with commerce and served as a vehicle by which the *nouveau riche* proto-capitalist class 'coalesced into a single group' with the 'nobility'.[42] This transitional

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[40] Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness for Plebs: Consumption and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England', *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. by Ann Bermingham and John Brewer London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 362-400 (p. 362).

[41] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013), p. 94. Brewer and Simon Gikandi both stress politeness as an undertaking of self-improvement.

[42] Tom Williams, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995), p. 109.

coalescence retained many cultural markers and behavioural conventions of the nobility, as explained by Mark Girouard: in particular, in spite of the urban focus, the landed estate remained the most eminent emblem of elite status signifying ruling-class 'culture, education and *savoir-fair*'.[43] And so an element of the 'coalescence' between new money and old was the acquisition of such traditional estates by the new elite through purchase or marriage.

The landed estate was the quintessential polite setting, enabling 'elites […] more vigorously to assert differences between themselves and other members of society', a locus which assured and perpetuated this requisite exclusivism.[44] As a prescriptive mode of behaving and engaging with others, politeness exerted stringent requirements for the fashioning of a 'polite identity', for, although it was no longer a birth rite, participation in elitism was still exclusive requiring evidence of material means and an appropriate demeanour. In other words politeness was performance requiring the visible display of refinement. This, again to quote Brewer, 'represented the world as a theatre in which one was obliged to perform before one's fellow men' and consequently it was a source of constant 'tension between internal and external persona' and 'profound anxiety about […] identity'. He elaborates on this anxiety with reference to the intimate revelations of the diarist Anna Larpent, 'She struggled to accommodate her own desires to the demands of polite society', in a narrative of internality and externality, for the values associated with refinement which were routinely expressed in polite discourse were at odds with much of its material reality. [45]

Anxieties concerning this disconnect between inner and outer self found expression in the emergence of *sensibility*, a 'revolution in manners' which 'reverberates throughout the last half of the eighteenth century', as a conscious and unconscious response to the formality

[43] Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 189.

[44] Klein, 'Politeness for Plebs', pp. 362-63.

[45] Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 98-99. Anna Larpent (1758-1832) was an eminent figure within London polite society, married to an 'inspector of plays', whom she helped to write theatrical reviews. She is most famed for the surviving seventeen volumes of her daily diary, covering 1773-80, an important source regarding politeness in the late eighteenth century. Lisa Forman Cody, 'Larpent [née Porter], Anna Margaretta, Diarist' https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/65588 [accessed 8 June, 2024].

and prescriptiveness of politeness.[46] Originating in the field of literature, sensibility occupied a position more or less coterminal with the *picturesque* landscape movement (discussed in the following section), between the formality of reason and the informality of the ensuing romantic movement, in the words of Susan Manning 'a transitional phase of mid eighteenth-century writing, between the decline of neo-classical "Reason" and the eruption of Romantic "Imagination"'.[47] For most scholars sensibility also assumes a gendered narrative, 'a distinctly feminine field of knowledge', in the words of Markman Ellis.[48]

Sensibility privileged feelings and emotions over reason in cultural expressions and responses, potentially providing a framework for inner conflict. It also posed a significant dilemma regarding slavery, described by Ellis as 'Delight in misery', for the delight of politeness depended on the material reality of slavery, and the refinement of politeness intersected uneasily with its preferences for exotic artefacts and luxury products.[49] However, the feminizing influence of sensibility provided a counterpoint to the 'uncouthness' of trade, in particular the trade in entrapped and enslaved people and the products of slave plantations. And so the resolution of the dilemma was framed in 'sensible' concern for the wellbeing of enslaved captives and plantation workers, in what Ellis defines as 'amelioration', meaning 'the mitigation of slavery, but not its abolition', a position facilitated by two very convenient circumstances.[50] First the distance between polite society and the reality of slavery, whether on the west coast of Africa or in the Atlantic colonies, was marked by the physical space of the Atlantic Ocean. Secondly, discomfort regarding slavery was focused on the plantocracy, whose 'uncouthness' was already a source of vilification, particularly when they chose to leave the colony to reside in Britain where their presence drew attention to the embeddedness of slavery in politeness. Hence compassion for the victims of slavery and

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[46] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 463; George E. Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 81.

[47] Susan Manning, 'Sensibility', *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature*, ed. by Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 80-99 (p. 81).

[48] Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 24.

[49] Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, p. 87.

[50] Ibid.

disapproval of its brutality were targeted not at the institution but at its perpetrators, configuring its metropolitan beneficiaries as untainted. This is the kernel of the complicated and contradictory intersection of metropolitan polite culture and the brutality of slavery.

Creoleness

Creolization is here understood as the cultural process whereby a newly arrived group adjusts and acclimatizes to a new, other setting. In the instance of Jamaica this was a complex, multi-faceted process, for it characterizes the experience of each of the major ethnic and cultural groups which populated the island in the eighteenth century, so that it instantly assumed highly racialized and power-invested dimensions. Hence B. W. Higman explains that 'indigenous (Taino) and isolated (Maroon) groups' were 'separated […] from the process of "creolization"' in spite of hegemonic oppression by white European colonizers.[51] The creole inhabitants of Jamaica brought to the colonial landscape identities formed in other settings, resulting in a deeply contrasting duality which further complicated the process and has been the focus of contested understandings of 'creole society'. However, for the present purpose, Kamau Brathwaite's summation suffices: 'a cultural action – material, psychological and spiritual – based upon the stimulus/response of individuals within the society to their environment and – as white/black, culturally discrete groups – to each other'. Jamaican society was 'a "new" construct, made up of newcomers to the landscape and cultural strangers each to the other; one group dominant, the other legally and subordinately slaves'.[52] The Jamaican creole landscape therefore consisted of interactions on the part of two different and distinct cultures with one another and with a third different terrain. And a further complication in the creole landscape is the admixing of an introduced global biota. Finally, another signification of *creole* within narrative/s of power between colony and metropole applies the term to the plantocracy as an othered group in the domestic setting, both as colonial residents and as absentees.

[51] Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005), p. xv.

[52] Ibid, p. 296.

Performance

Although associated primarily with events enacted before an audience, *performance* is here understood in the extended meaning of 'the invisible rituals of everyday life'. These are the words of Joseph Roach, who continues, 'To perform in this sense means to bring forth, to make manifest and to transmit', and beyond this, it 'also means, though often more secretly, to reinvent'.[53] This has been highlighted with reference to the mores of politeness. Roach engages performance in a tripartite relationship with memory and substitution by which 'culture reproduces and re-creates itself'.[54] This explanation configures performance as a behaviour varyingly on the conscious-unconscious spectrum and with an agenda of transmitting something to an audience, frequently a 'reinvented' self, a defining experience of the circum-Atlantic world in the eighteenth century which centres the institution of slavery as a critical factor in all engagements, interchanges and refashionings.

Politeness in the landscape: picturesque ways of seeing and being

The arrival of landscape in the European aesthetic mainstream accompanied the transformation which gave rise to the new culture of politeness: oil portraiture was routinely commissioned by members of the ruling class to memorialize significant moments such as the grand tour portrait or conversation piece painting, frequently of families in grand house or landscape settings.

The distinct new *picturesque* genre was popularly conceived with reference to the paintings of Claude Lorrain, which portrayed mythological and heroic narratives in idealized Mediterranean settings, bringing together the cultural gravitas of the Mediterranean as the cradle of European civilization, the signature grand tour experience, many niceties of polite and sensible creativity and tropes of Enlightenment expansiveness.[55] Above all, however, the defining feature of the picturesque landscape is framing, in the words of Malcolm Andrews, 'literally defin[ing] the landscape, both in the sense of determining its outer limits and in the

[53] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. xi.

[54] Ibid, p. 2.

[55] See Appendix 1, Figure 1 for an instance of the 'Claudian prototype'.

sense that landscape is constituted by its frame'.[56] Cosgrove describes the genre as 'closely bound up with the practical appropriation of space' through the aesthetic practice of framing and the material act of enclosure.[57] Visually the picturesque was expressed in a series of formulaic features which included framing, or enclosing, 'side screens' of tall statuesque trees or buildings; particular deployments of light, tone and colour (frequently gold); frequent themes of oceanic departures; and a proprietorial viewpoint over a panoramic vista projecting into an imagined distance beyond what is visible on the canvas, often across sea, to the unknown destinations of featured oceangoing vessels, encapsulated in the epithet 'monarch-of -all-I-survey'.[58] Hence the picturesque landscape represents an appropriative gaze which connects various landscapes around the Atlantic, and projects further potential as yet unknown terrains.

The picturesque has been variously interpreted and deployed to pursue different focused discourses. John Whale configures the genre as a gendered and entitled mindset, 'a decidedly male make-believe aesthetic which has tamed, or turned its back on, the terrible threat of cultural otherness. […] a safe middle ground happily mediating the dangerous Burkean opposites of the Sublime and the Beautiful'.[59] This mindset brings together the acts of enclosure, colonization and framing as instruments of containment and control in a direct metaphorization of the material enactment of politeness, essentially concerned with the 'taming' of the wild or sublime terrain. The framed/enclosed/colonized landscape assigns a central position to the 'decidedly male', white and European proprietor/colonialist, for whom the containment of the frame furnishes safety, in contrast to the external and threatening sublime, which is, in the words of Walter John Hipple, 'great, often infinite […] founded on awe and terror', whereas '[t]he picturesque […] depends on the character of

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[56] Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 5.

[57] Cosgrove, 'Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 10 (1985), 45-62 (pp. 46-47).

[58] This phrase, penned by William Cowper, is frequently deployed as a summation of the tenor of the British long eighteenth century. William Cowper, *Poems by William Cowper of the Inner Temple, Esqu.*, 2 vols (London: D. West, 1792), I, p. 228.

[59] John Whale, 'Romantics, Explorers and Picturesque Travellers,' in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770* ed. by Stephen Copely and Peter Garside (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 175-195, pp. 176.

boundaries, [and] can never be infinite'.[60] David Punter nevertheless stresses the proximity between these two apparently oppositional modes, the 'ability of the Picturesque to modulate more or less swiftly into the Sublime', which encodes narratives of engagement and estrangement in colonized settings. Punter further addresses the issue of the picturesque-sublime tension with reference to internalized unconscious motivations from a psychoanalytic perspective, characterizing them as 'inscape and escape', and, referencing Hipple's boundaries:

> The Picturesque […] represents the movement of enclosure, control, the comforting flanking of the 'side-screen' hills, roughness subjected to symmetry, the ego's certainty about the world it can hold and manage. The Sublime represents the movement outward, the sudden rush of air which deflates the ego in the face of the avalanche.[61]

In other words, the aesthetic agency of the picturesque genre coalesced enclosure and colonization which aligned with the mores and materiality of the new ruling class.

The picturesque began to 'play a major and acknowledged role in garden design' with the work of William Kent (1685-1748), a painter as well as a garden designer, from the second quarter of the eighteenth century.[62] Horace Walpole, in his praise of Kent, conflates the language of art and landscaping: 'painter enough to taste the charms of landscape […] the pencil of his imagination bestowed all the arts of landscape on the scenes he handled'.[63] And beyond the physicality of painting and landscape design, the genre extends to Walpole's third 'Grace' of poetry.[64] Thus, the picturesque was a generalized aesthetic, configured in

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[60] Walter John Hipple, *The Beautiful, The Sublime and The Picturesque In Eighteenth Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: The Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), p. 211.

[61] David Punter, 'The Picturesque and the Sublime: Two Worldscapes,' in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770* ed. by Stephen Copely and Peter Garside (Cambridge; New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 220-239 (pp. 221-266).

[62] John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), p. 26.

[63] Horace Walpole, *On Modern Gardening* (London: Pallas Editions, 2004), p. 42; Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*, p. 26.

[64] John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting and Gardening During the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1976), p. xi. Hunt references Horace Walpole's 'three new Graces', from

paintings and poetics of landscape and 'realized' on the ground in a landscape of ostentation and high visibility. This is Tom Williamson's 'polite landscape', in which he foregrounds the garden circuit as the vehicle for performative engagement with landscape via a prescribed circular route to achieve an optimal 'way of seeing' select prospects or 'framed' views.[65] Politeness, Williamson writes, was 'forged at the emerging leisure centres for the rich', which essentially was another wider 'circuit' and mobility a defining feature of politeness. The landscape garden circuit was a semiotic representation of this mobility: 'Beyond the circuit of the carriage drive within the park there was a wider circuit of social movement, increasingly separate from the path trodden by the mass of society'.[66] And beyond that was an even wider, conveniently unseen, triangular circuit, another instance of the tension that haunted politeness.[67]

Claudian paintings were frequent souvenirs of the polite coming-of-age ritual, the *grand tour*, a significant configuration, as Susan Stewart tells us, and indicative of the afterlife of the grand tourer as a member of the landed gentry.[68] And in that afterlife the grand tour souvenir became a display of politeness, which conceived the landscape as a 'fetishized

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which the title of the book derives. There is some discussion of picturesque poetics in Chapter 4 with reference to James Thomson.

[65] 'Ways of seeing' was one of the 'key phrases' of the art historian Erwin Panofsky, cited in Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, 'Introduction: Iconography and Landscape', in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments*, ed by Denis E. Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 1-10 (p. 2), and made famous by John Berger.

[66] Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, p. 110.

[67] A paradigmatic and possibly the most coherent, garden circuit was that at Stourhead in Wiltshire, neighbouring estate to Fonthill, where the banker Henry Hoare's celebration of his family, was 'contrived in part around allusions to Aeneas' whose epic maritime voyage and foundation of a dynasty and empire was recounted in Virgil's Aeneid. The classical narrative of heroic adventure is referenced in the circuit culminating at the Temple of Apollo, positioned above the lake to catch the afternoon sun, which fell by design on the statue of Apollo within the temple, and from which the entire circuit was visible, an allegorical overview of the banker's kingdom, scattered with intellectual reassurances in the elite code of classical visual references and quotations. See Michael Liversidge, 'Virgil in Art', in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. by Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 91-103.

[68] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 132-51.

commodity', a 'potent cultural symbol', a site of 'fetishistic practices' and as such a performance of class.[69]

From picturesque to planteresque

The material and social transformation of the English countryside through enclosure is characterized by Mitchell as 'an internal colonization of the home country', a process of appropriation and dispossession, which configures the new landed estate as a proto-colony.[70] Such an understanding highlights a continuity between metropole and colony, where the process of framing becomes more apparently one of appropriation, as explained by Pratt with reference to travel writing: 'travel and exploration writing *produced* "the rest of the world" for European readerships', and Edward Said, 'as Europe moved itself outward, its sense of cultural strength was fortified. From travelers' tales […] colonies were created and ethnocentric perspectives secured'.[71] And this applies not only to the literature of travel: many colonial writers undertook the same mission.

The focus here is the picturesque 'way of seeing', and the 'entailments' that connect Claudian paintings to the Atlantic colonies and the enforced African diaspora, via enclosures and polite configurations of the metropolitan landscape. And the transition from picturesque to sublime – and potentially to grotesque - in colonial settings is inherent to the ambivalence that characterizes colonial landscape engagements. *Other* or *frontier* encounters were sublime, without boundaries, overwhelming and potentially overpowering, whilst the framed plantation served to reinforce the creole sense of self. Such tropes configured other peoples as synonymous with, or indistinguishable from, their landscape settings.

Salmond's metaphorical matrix of landscape engagement, conquest and colonization elides with a range of Eurocentric tropes deployed by the white gaze in a strategy of hegemony

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[69] Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', p. 15.

[70] Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', p. 17.

[71] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York, Routledge, 1992), p. 5; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 117.

over other terrains, a hybrid intersection which launched the creole 'way of seeing', summarized in the 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' white male gaze. Robert Lawson-Peebles discusses the dislocation of colonial encounters in *frontier* settings, where translocated metaphorical frameworks were 'confounded', 'the terrain eludes the strategies of the text', and 'Old World attitudes towards the New' were necessarily recalibrated into a new framework.[72] Whilst this thesis is not concerned with conquest in this sense or frontiers, some settings will arise which were experienced as 'frontier' by the white gaze, in the sense that they were spaces of subalternity, equated with untethered nature, the antithesis of landscape.

Oceans, connections, translocations and dislocations

A further dimension of this discourse is the series of overarching connectivities, dislocations and translocations, configured around the Atlantic Ocean. The *contact zone*, conceived by Pratt, describes 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths'.[73] Joseph Roach metaphorizes the ocean as a 'vortex in which commodities and cultural practices changed hands many times'.[74] As a space of transition, Jean-Philippe Mathy describes it, 'as a crossroads, meeting-point of various influences, African, European, North and South American. […] [a space of] cultural syncretism and intertextual influences'.[75] The 'oceanic interculture', Roach tells us, was determined by 'the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas', 'unspeakable' European violence, including the 'American Holocaust', and the centrality of 'the peoples of the Caribbean rim'. His conceptualization of the circum-Atlantic cojoins memory, substitution and performance in a

[72] Robert Lawson-Peebles, *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 1.

[73] Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession*, 91 (1991) 33-40 (p. 34).

[74] Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, p. 4.

[75] Jean-Philippe Mathy 'The Atlantic as Metaphor', *Atlantic Studies*, 1:1 (2004) ,107-117, DOI: 10.1080/1478881042000217197 , p. 107

process by which memory is lost, 'an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace' and substituted in performance.[76]

Hence the Atlantic was a space of disjuncture, in which associations of slavery with polite culture were substituted, enabling self-fashioning and the sanitization or displacement of distasteful past activities, a space of transition and refashioning in all directions. Some of the individuals who feature in this thesis took advantage of this process of dislocation to refashion, and one strategically shunned the crossing. The stratified character of polite society was readily transferred to the colony in an imagined replication of politeness, and the plantocracy conceived itself as equivalent to the metropolitan elite in a tropical setting, itself a form of substitution and hybridity.

Oceanic travel was a trope of particular resonance for island-dwelling Britons: maritime supremacy featured prominently in celebrations of nationhood, including much iconography and the ubiquitous presence of water in landscape gardens. And maritime departures were moments of transformation, as exemplified in the ritual of the grand tour, which commenced with a symbolic microcosmic maritime 'adventure' and resulted in the rite of passage transition from adolescent study to polite adulthood. This discourse of continental exchange and interchange will emerge as a narrative of translocations and cultural transformations in which the Atlantic was a key player, as a metonym for the dislocation between metropole and colony, associated with the Freudian concept of displacement.

The new elite embraced consumerism and exotic products of plantation agriculture. In fact such products came to emblematize politeness as commonplace signifiers of taste, frequently assembled with other such products and reassigned a provenance as quintessentially English. Hence tea was served in porcelain, sugar was served with nearly everything and the coffee house was a defining institution of the era.

However, as Simon Gikandi observes, 'the counterpoint to the European coffeehouse was the Caribbean sugar complex': the plantation was the bedrock of polite culture, in the words of James Walvin, by 1750 'part of the warp and weft of British commercial social life. And yet

[76] Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, pp. 3-5.

….'.[77] Hence tension, signified here by Walvin's incomplete sentence, was at the heart of polite culture, as slavery, 'informed and haunted the project of taste'.[78] Paul Gilroy's chronotope, applied to the exploration of the Atlantic as an arena of cultural exchange, stresses the unremitting presence of slavery:

> I have settled on the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol […]. Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects of redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts.[79]

The material liquidity of the ocean enhances such metaphorical consideration and provides appropriate fluidity of argument and association. Hence the paradox of the creole in the metropolitan context othered on account of the production sugar, whilst the consumption of the same product was simultaneously a performative practice of politeness.

Mathy affirms the prominence of the Atlantic as a player in such narratives:

> An ocean, obviously, can be a barrier as well as a threshold, an interrupter and a facilitator of fluxes of all kinds, a daunting obstacle as well as a means of communication, a metaphor precisely, that is, in the original meaning of the Greek word, a way to beyond.[80]

Essentially, the Atlantic was readily adapted to serve as a 'slave world/free world division'.[81] Whilst the new ruling class assumed a global outlook, the paradoxically insular and parochial exclusivity of polite culture enabled an illusion of dissociation, as Walvin points out in

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[77] Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) p. 110.; James Walvin, *Slavery in Small Things: Slavery and Modern Cultural Habits* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), p. 5.

[78] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste,* pp. 108-09.

[79] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1999), p. 4.

[80] Mathy, 'The Atlantic as Metaphor', p. 107.

[81] David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005), p. 12.

answering his own question: 'geographic remove created a cultural detachment from slavery'.[82] In other words, as David Lambert also argues, the resolution between the 'centrality of the West Indies to the imperial project' and the growing distaste for slavery, was resolved by 'disowning and repudiating those "un-British" groups involved in slavery – the West Indian planters – and displacing the spaces of slavery to the margins of Britain's imaginative imperial geographies'.[83] Physical distance enabled a conceived disconnect.

Finally, the island status of Britain fed the parochialism of ruling class culture, as argued by Stephanos Stephanides and Susan Bassnett: 'Inhabitants of an island define themselves against those who are not islanders'.[84] 'Insular England,' David Lowenthal writes, 'is little, a reef, a fortress'. For island-dwellers the sea is a barrier, such that it has always featured in British culture, serving, in the words of Lowenthal, 'treble duty: it limits size, marks boundaries and insulates against continental contamination', 'differentiat[ing] Britain from all other European nations save Iceland and Ireland. Atavistic loyalties are insularly voiced: "on these shores", "this sceptr'd isle", "the defence needs of these islands"', and, quoting Frank Kermode in a metaphor that evokes Salmond's truisms, 'our own and loved bit of territory, the garden in which, if anywhere, we walk in peace'. Yet insularity also "utterly maroons Britain from all the world"'.[85]

Such discourse in the British-Caribbean context is complicated by the instance of islands on both sides of the engagement, both dominated by the same culture and paradigmatically illustrative of creolization. Nevertheless there was a tension and power imbalance, expressed in the ambivalence of absentee creole plantocrats, who frequently lived between two islands, and their othering in the metropole. For they traversed the line dividing the world of slavery and the world of imagined freedom and took slavery into the metropolitan landscape.

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[82] Walvin, *Slavery in Small Things*, p. 5.

[83] Lambert, *White Creole Culture*, p. 12.

[84] Stephanos Stephanides and Susan Bassnett, 'Islands, Literature and Cultural Translation', *Journal of Global Cultural Studies: Poetry and Insularity*, 2008, 5-21 (p. 5).

[85] David Lowenthal, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape', *Rural History*, 2:2 (1991), 205-30 (p. 214).

The Othering Gaze

Enlightenment configurations

The Enlightenment 'knowledge-building project of natural history' is highlighted by Pratt as a tool of colonial mastery. In particular, systems of classification and naming fragmented the exotic landscape and redefined its components within a European scientific framework, in a strategy of appropriating and reassigning the other a meaning within European culture. This was synonymous with the notion of systematization, by which naming or ordering in a 'book, collection or garden' organisms were 'drawn out of the tangled threads of their life surroundings and rewoven into European-based patterns of global unity and order'.[86] Beth Fowkes Tobin also discusses this scientific strategy, with reference to the catalogue, as another mode for redefining and assuming mastery through the inventory: 'decontexutaliz[ing] tropical nature and eras[ing] the material conditions and cultural significance of the local production of tropical commodities'.[87] The catalogue was furthermore translated into a vehicle of aestheticization in James Thomson's pastoral/georgic celebration of nation and empire, *The Seasons*.[88] Not only did this have the effect of erasing 'a plant's ecological and cultural contexts' and 'putting it into a global circulation that has England as its center', it also further configured tropical appropriations as inherently English and even celebratory icons of nation, as instanced earlier with reference to tea and Chinese porcelain.[89]

Tobin argues that the hybridized outcome of this process of appropriation facilitated the assimilation or incorporation of 'the strange and the unfamiliar into existing categories of thought', in particular the configuration of the colonized landscape in the picturesque

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[86] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 31.

[87] Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters 1760-1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 12.

[88] James Thomson, *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793).

[89] Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, p. 54.

genre.[90] And what applied to biota was equally true of inanimate objects which found their way into equally hybrid collections.

The showcase function of the polite landscape glorified the proprietor and by extension proprietorship as a new mode of engagement with the terrain and in egotistical glorification of the collection. Hence the collection was a feature of polite culture, associated with performative and ritualistic behaviours. In particular the grand tour was an occasion for acquiring souvenirs and trophies to deploy in the house and garden, which in turn enacted narratives of taste. Philip Hewat-Jaboor points to the creole Alderman Beckford's failure in this respect, since he did not have a 'collection' to decorate the newly built Fonthill Splendens because he had not been on the grand tour. Hence he purchased the services of the artist Andrea Casali to select and purchase a collection to display in his house and garden, a glaring instance of the polite requirement of wealth to enable polite status.[91] Whilst collecting was a generalized undertaking for landowners, it was embraced more enthusiastically by some than by others, to the extent that for some it became an obsession and vehicle for narcissism. For the souvenir, Stewart explains, is an object that evokes or 'resonates to' an experience or event, which becomes 'miniaturized' and transformed from narrative of object or experience, into a narrative of possessor. Stewart's account of souvenirs leads to the collection, a sublimation of ego, and a frequent locus for grand tour paraphernalia. The grand tour souvenir, however, was also a trophy, which 'marked [it] as exterior' beyond the interiority of a collection.[92] In other words, the souvenir transitioned from internal narrative of self to external display enmeshed in the semiotic show of status, synonymous with the proprietor in a narrative of power.

[90] Ibid, p. 14.

[91] Philip Hewat-Jaboor, 'Fonthill House: "One of the Most Princely Edifices in the Kingdom"', in *William Beckford, 1760-1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed by Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 51-71 (p. 54).

[92] Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 147.

Tropicality

The critical matter of tropicality is defined by Tobin as 'the way in which the category of tropical operates in the European imagination'.[93] Manifest in a range of tropes that coalesced allure and sexuality with danger and decadence, 'fantasies of fertility and abundance' (Tobin), 'tropical edens' and 'the white man's grave' (Daniel Clayton and Gavin Bowd), 'warm, fecund, luxuriant, paradisiacal and pestilential' (Arnold), the tropics was 'a European artifact' (Cosgrove), after Said's identification of the Orient as created by the West.[94]

Engagements with tropical terrains were motivated by the overriding appropriative mission of 'British mastery over the globe's natural resources', essentialized in the plantation.[95] In the process, a complexity of responses to tropical settings evolved which characterized it in relation to white Europeanness in a range of, frequently paradoxical, tropes, 'an object of colonial fear and desire, utility and aesthetics', 'the exotic site of a noble innocence and simplicity that the West has lost', 'a fertile yet primitive estate awaiting the civilising and modernising intervention of the West'.[96]

In the course of this thesis a range of tropicalities will emerge: the appropriative-decontextualizing-domesticating trope is the ubiquitous narrative of many fashion-defining signature consumer products of the plantation. Fertility and abundance were conflated with notions of heat and languor to configure the environment as gratuitously and effortlessly productive, expressed in the metaphorized naming of breadfruit and in 'entailed' tropes of inertia and degeneracy. 'Physical laxity' was imagined as 'matched by moral laxity', and hazards to white people were imagined as moral as well as physical and contaminative.[97]

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[93] Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, p. 11.

[94] Tobin, *Colonizing Nature,* p. 11; Daniel Clayton and Gavin Bowd, 'Geography, Tropicality and Postcolonialism: Anglophone and Francophone Readings of the Work of Pierre Gourou', *L'Espace géographique*, 35,3 (2006), 208-21 (p. 209); Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*, p. 7; Denis Cosgrove, 'Tropic and Tropicality', in *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, ed. by Felix Driver and Luciana Martins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp.197-216, (p. 198).

[95] Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, p. 11.

[96] Clayton and Bowd, 'Geography, Tropicality', p. 209.

[97] David Arnold, *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 152.

Arnold addresses the interaction between the 'perilous tropics' and the picturesque/sublime 'way of seeing':

> [A]ppreciation of the 'sublime' and the 'picturesque', rather than contradicting the image of the perilous tropics, served, paradoxically, to give it even greater weight, for behind every enticing view and pleasing vista lurked a lethal miasma. The tropics were treacherous as well as dangerous, their beauty a deadly deception.[98]

Further, tropes of tropicality fused with the white male gaze to create the tropical landscape as a series of connecting and overlapping libidinal configurations merging misogyny, 'peril', the other female body and the sense of self as powerful.

Hence, tropicality signifies both the prejudiced mindset, which spoke of racial superiority and power, and a framework for material and emotional engagement. Set in the landscape of enslavement tropicality constructed: vulnerability and fear in some settings, associated with notions of degeneracy and contamination; avarice in relation to the fecundity of soil and climate, including endless tropes of fertility; and effortless abundance in the colonial landscape configured in sensual 'European fantasies of fertility and abundance [which] shaped material practices and were deployed in depicting nature'.[99] This is Tobin who aligns such fantasies of tropicality with the rapidly growing field of Enlightenment botany.

Ocularity

One of Bender's stated purposes is 'to deny the primacy of the European "viewpoint", and to insist that the experience of landscape is too important and too interesting to be confined to a particular time, place and class'. The Eurocentric landscape, she explains, privileges the sense of vision over others, and this is restrictive and superficial. Disproportionate emphasis is placed on 'views and vistas' which renders the landscape 'ego-centred' and 'perspectival'. 'In other times and other places,' she continues, 'the visual may not be the most significant

[98] Ibid, p. 153.

[99] Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, p. 11.

aspect, and the conception of land may not be ego-centred'.[100] Julian Thomas also stresses this European cultural prioritization of vision over other senses and subjects it to reappraisal and scrutiny, identifying it as a part of the separation and distancing that characterizes the western landscape concept and notion of 'spectacular civilisation'. This is analogized with Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, famously metaphorized by Michel Foucault as representing the power of the state and separating seeing from being seen in the form of the totalizing male gaze.[101] This proposes a power narrative inherent to the landscape concept, enhanced by race and gender in the colonial setting, and suggests a high European dependence on vision as a tool of control in the colonial landscape and a blindness to other landscapes. Cosgrove also points to this European cultural prevalence of vision and the restricted ability to perceive other ways of engaging with landscapes beyond that of the Eurocentric viewer: 'relations of power and subordination […] are effected in and through the organisation of space but are often deliberately obscured to the eye'.[102] The implication here is blindness on the part of hegemony to alternative and possibly subversive landscapes. In the pages that follow the theme of ocularity will emerge as a colonial area of disconnect and potential alternative, unseen landscapes.

The colonized body

The mental 'inscape-escape' narrative has one more critical application: Stewart points to the human body as 'the paradox of contained and container at once'. The exterior of the body constitutes a boundary or limit (frame), while the interior is a 'physical extension into space' up to this limit. The grotesque body is essentially 'hyperbolized', a 'form of the gigantic', but also a 'body of parts', imagined as disproportionate or disrupted by exaggerations, particularly by orifices consisting of 'cuts and gaps on the body's surface', associated with the emission of bodily secretions.[103] In European tradition the grotesque was

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[100] Bender, 'Landscape', p. 1.

[101] Julian Thomas, 'The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape', in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed by Barbara Bender (Providence; Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), pp. 19-48 (pp. 22-23).

[102] Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, pp. xxv-vi.

[103] Stewart, *On Longing,* p. 104

assigned to the realm of 'freak' and carnivalesque, and to the archetype of 'trickster', 'part animal, part human (often a "talking" animal […]) part man and part woman (often coupling with either sex indiscriminately), and a violator of cultural taboos'.[104] And this was extended to the 'body of the cultural other':

> The body of the cultural other is […] both naturalized and domesticated in a process we might consider to be characteristic of colonization in general. For all colonization involves the taming of the beast by bestial methods and hence both the conversion and the projection of the animal and human, difference and identity. On display, the freak represents the naming of the frontier and the assurance that the wilderness, the outside, is now territory.[105]

Grotesque hyperbolization, of sexual organs and appetite in particular, was a critical element in the configuration of black people as primitive, animalistic and dangerous. The association of apes with devils was readily extended to imagined 'unnatural conjunctions' between animals and people in Africa and configure black people as innately 'barbarous, cruel, selfish and deceitful'.[106] This configuration, like the picturesque, privileges the visual, and affirms the ocularity which characterized the European 'way of seeing' and the polite preoccupation with appearances as a critical consideration in discourse on colonial landscapes.

Collecting

Maurice Rheims tells us: 'Many collections have been built up to cover a rapid social rise in the world, or to cloak a range of nefarious activities'.[107] In the case of Alderman Beckford, both apply, for the sugar fortune had a decidedly nefarious reputation, and his pseudo-collection was collected neither genuinely nor by him. His son, however, was a truly obsessive collector and very exercized by his creoleness. Rheims and Jean Baudrillard

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[104] Ibid, p. 106.

[105] Ibid. p. 110.

[106] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), pp. 140-41.

[107] Maurice Rheims, *The Strange Life of Objects: 35 Centuries of Art Collecting and Collectors*, trans. by David Pryce-Jones (New York: Atheneum, 1961), p. 23.

identify collecting in adulthood as a 'regression', or displacement, associated with childhood trauma or anxieties, primarily, if not exclusively, in men.[108]

Stewart also addresses the origin of collecting, commencing with a scrutiny of possession and possessions from the starting point of the 'souvenir', as a 'narrative of interiority', individual and unique, 'envelop[ing] the present within the past'. This 'past' is a constructed and idealized nostalgia, in which the souvenir displaces 'authenticity', 'seek[ing] to reconcile the disparity between interiority and exteriority'.[109]

The transition from accumulated object or souvenir to collection connects with the conceptualization of property engagements with objects. Baudrillard distinguishes between an object that is a 'utensil' and cannot be 'possessed' because it is defined by its functionality which in turn determines the owner's external engagement with the world, and a 'possessed' object which is '*abstracted from its function and thus brought into relationship with the subject* [i.e. the owner]'.[110] In other words the collection severs an object from its origin and reassigns its function and provenance, replacing, in Stewart's words, 'history with *classification*'.[111] This aligns with the arguments of Pratt and Tobin regarding the appropriation and decontextualization of and reassignment of provenance to tropical botanics.

The collection is thus a 'private totality', and 'form of enclosure', characterized by Stewart as 'a dialectic of inside and outside, public and private', or interiority and exteriority. Further it is inherently 'determined' by spatial boundaries, 'box', 'cabinet', 'shelves', in other words it is framed, spatially, aesthetically and psychologically, in line with the framing of the picturesque landscape, representing an analogous narrative of control.[112] And frequently it incorporates mementoes of experiences in distant or exotic locations transitioning to

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[108] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. by James Benedict (London: Verso, 1996), p. 93.

[109] Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 136 and 151.

[110] Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 91.

[111] Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 151.

[112] Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 92; Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 151 and 157.

'specimen' or 'trophy' of 'distance appropriated'.[113] Such an object is assigned to the realm of 'cultural imperialism', constituting both specimen, as part of a collection, and 'trophy', as narrative of power.[114] The narrative is not merely that of dislocation between an object's authentic significance and use value but also of otherness and 'display value'. Hence, not only does the trophy constitute 'a narrative of interiority', but further its exteriority is weaponized in a metaphorical 'taming' and assertion of hegemony.[115]

Hence, whilst the collection was a generalized feature of the eighteenth-century polite house and landscape, for the 'collector' it was a locus of anxieties and neuroses, with a further narrative of gender. As explained by Baudrillard, 'there is something of the harem about collecting, for the whole attraction may be summed up as that of an intimate series (one term of which is at any given time the favourite) combined with a serial intimacy'.[116] The collection is alluring, offering an endless seriality and compelling personal engagement, for it is serves as substitution for what is just below the conscious. As summarized by Stewart:

> While the point of the souvenir may be remembering, or at least the invention of memory, the point of the collection is forgetting - starting again in such a way that a finite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, an infinite reverie.[117]

Hence the practice of collecting in settings of polite culture and performance, was frequently associated with internalized neuroses and assumed the function of displacement and narcissistic projection, as summarized by Baudrillard: 'what you really collect is always yourself'.[118]

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[113] Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 147.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 94.

[117] Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 152.

[118] Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 97.

Trauma

This study arose through questioning the presence of white supremacy and racist tropes of other colonial subalterns in landscapes of privilege and entitlement in Britain. It is a discourse on the white presence in colonial territories and the injustices it perpetrated and recorded, both consciously and unconsciously, through the white colonial gaze. I do not claim an understanding of the experience of enslavement from any point of view. The argument that follows is based on accounts by perpetrators of the criminality of slavery. I offer wider biographical information about people featured as a contextualization and in the interest of determining the positions from which their accounts derive. I do not attempt an account of an undocumented subaltern landscape which arose from an enforced and violent diaspora under circumstances of unimagined suffering and trauma. What I do offer is an interpretation of the trauma of enslavement as reported by a number of black scholars and members of the African diaspora.

The condition of slavery in the Atlantic colonies was one of deep psychological trauma, deriving from the series of experiences which brought African people to the landscapes of Atlantic plantations, a spatial displacement which fractured identity. Each step in the process was an experience of unimaginable suffering, both emotional and physical, commencing with entrapment or kidnapping and dislocation from family, society and place, followed by the inhumane treatment of the middle passage and the brutality of plantation existence. Every stage of this process was a further dislocation from the locus of identity formation for every one of the fifteen million African people removed to the Americas.[119] The extreme physical pain and suffering endured by enslaved Africans is beyond imagination. However black scholars tell us that 'slavery's true brutality was the psychic condition it imposed', 'evok[ing] the core intrapsychic experiences of helplessness, shame, and rage', 'it sought nothing less than annihilation of that which is uniquely human – the self'.[120]

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[119] United Nations, 'International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024' https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/slave-trade [accessed 24 April 2023].

[120] Alex Bontemps, *The Punished Self: Surviving Slavery in the Colonial South* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. ix; Gump, 'Reality Matters', pp. 46 and 48.

Every stage of this process was one of renewed trauma, as attested by Samantha Longman-Mills, Carole Mitchell and Wendel Abel:

> Being abducted is considered one of the most psychologically damaging acts […] forced to treck to the coast to board ships […] with most dying before reaching the ships. Watching others die […] would only serve to exacerbate their psychological distress. […]
>
> It is difficult to exaggerate the traumatic and psychological damaging nature of the middle passage […]. They experienced extreme dehumanization […]. The groans of the grieving and dying […] Africans who resisted were beaten raped and murdered. This was a setting for deep despair, hopelessness, recurrent thoughts of death, insomnia and feelings of worthlessness; all of which are symptoms of a major depressive disorder.[121]

As a locus of trauma from its very inception, the plantation also became the originator of a more complex *received* or *collective trauma* of African American and African Caribbean descendants of enslaved Africans, now referred to as Post-traumatic Slave Syndrome (PSS).[122] The trauma of enslavement, including entrapment and the middle passage, was and continues to be experienced by descendants of transported Africans, embedded in the culture of the African diaspora as much as the racialized entitlement of white people persists in British culture.

This brief account, based on the reading the works of black scholars, of the trauma of enforced migration and its ensuing consequences, is intended as an attempt to clarify the white landscapes that will be discussed in the following chapters. I do not presume to imagine the landscape of enslaved Africans. The singularity of the societies of the creole colonies is dislocation: both black and white landscapes were a hybridity of distant identities

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[121] Samantha Longman-Mills, Carole Mitchell and Wendel Abel, 'The Psychological Trauma of Slavery: The Jamaican Case Study', *Social and Economic Studies* 68, 3/4, pp. 79-101, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45299241> [accessed 19 Apr. 2023] (pp. 80-82).

[122] Longman-Mills, et al, 'The Psychological Trauma of Slavery', p 91.

inscribed on a new, unknown terrain. Their copresence gave rise to a new form of societal organization based on a racialized imbalance of power, a landscape designed by a European organization of production and represented through European aesthetics. The landscape of the colonizer was highly visible, a manifestation of white power, however, which co-existed in the white consciousness with an understanding of the immense brutality they inflicted on black people. Thus, the anti-landscape of the Atlantic plantation colony was one of disturbing and disturbed imaginings and perceived threats. The predominance of ocularity and the inability of European cultural frameworks to incorporate other perspectives rendered the subaltern compromised, invisible and unempowered. Hence, in the words of Gayatri Spivak, 'The subaltern cannot speak'.[123]

Dramatis personae

The voices, or 'ways of seeing', presented in the following chapters will be with reference to selected individuals within or with close reference to Britain's largest Caribbean plantation colony, Jamaica, in the late eighteenth century. The first is Edward Long (1734-1813), a highly influential planter, who returned to Britain in 1769 where he was a prolific writer, an active member of the West India Merchants' and Planters' Committee and a campaigner against the abolition of slavery. In 1772 he published *The History of Jamaica*, a laudatory representation of the colony and the plantocracy at a time when the institution of slavery was under attack. The focus will be on aestheticizing passages in which the picturesque is deployed to represent the slave colony as benign in the Claudian mode.

Thomas Thistlewood (1721-86) was an overseer who wrote a journal during his 36-year residence in Jamaica (1750-86). I have selected him for scrutiny because his journal is a rare (or unique) instance of a written record of the experience of overseers in the plantation landscape, an important and distinct way of seeing. This includes the infliction of unrelenting brutality on enslaved people and the serial sexual predation of enslaved women. Equally he occupied a unique position as someone of his class who was devoted to the study of science,

[123] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. By Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66-111 (p. 104).

in particular botany, and eventually became a small-scale landowner famed for the garden he established.

Like Thistlewood, Maria Nugent (1770/71-1834) also kept a journal during her residency in Jamaica, but unlike him, she was driven by standards of metropolitan refinement to position herself as distinct from and superior to the colonial community. As wife to the governor she was a prominent and visible figure, conscious of the frequent absence of polite behaviour, as documented in her journal. Like Long, she applies a picturesque framework to the landscape, but, unlike him, her polite, tinged with 'distinctly feminine' sensibility, way of seeing brings the metropolitan othering of the plantocracy to the colony and presents a novel polite narrative of perceived vulgarity and degeneracy in a picturesquely framed tropical setting.

Finally, through the landscapes of the cousins William Beckford of Somerley (1744-99) and of Fonthill (1760-1844), I consider the plantation in conscious and unconscious conceptualizations beyond the colony. What emerges is a deep continuing connection with the colony on the part of not only the trans-Atlantic creole cousin, but also the creole-denying metropolitan one, two identities, established and accustomed to metropolitan refinement, distanced from colonization by four generations, but still engaged with the plantation landscape as metonym for slavery, inhabiting the unconscious and expressed in neuroses and dysfunctional behaviours.

Intention and originality

With regard to the status and function of my thesis as an original piece of scholarship and contribution to existing discourse, I present a range of disparate voices and challenge understood commonalities within the white presence in the colony and other associated contact zones. Undertaking a multi-faceted analysis informed by different areas of scholarship has enabled a more holistic approach and revealed the white gaze as at once shared and fractured and, in the metropolitan absentee/returnee setting, expressed in internalized anxieties and neuroses.

CHAPTER 2: PLANTATION: LANDSCAPES WITHIN THE LANDSCAPE

This chapter sets out some generalities about the plantation landscape of the Atlantic slave colonies as a preliminary to and contextualization for the chapters that follow. The plantation emerged in Barbados in the second half of the seventeenth century and was subsequently weaponized as a 'vehicle for the territorial extension of empire' in the conquest and settlement of Jamaica and Carolina.[124] Richard Sheridan's characterization of Barbados as 'both colony and regional metropolis, both tropical export economy and centre of leadership in culture, politics and trade' suggests that, from the outset, the landscape vision of the Atlantic colonial world was clearly defined.[125] Settlement of these further colonies was understood as expansion of the plantation: in the words of Trevor Burnard, 'The Barbadians who moved to Jamaica in the 1660s and to South Carolina in the 1670s wanted to establish flourishing plantation societies to create settled societies based on the Barbadian model'.[126] And this became the exported framework within which new colonies were imagined.

The attributes of this model of agriculture that drove history so dramatically, as summarized by Burnard, were: monocultural cultivation, an innovation in Britain; tropical and subtropical botanics, assembled from regions of global extent; a workforce of enforced and enslaved migrants from Africa; largeness of scale, 'with dozens to hundreds of slaves'; and specificity of market in Europe.[127] A further novel feature was the 'integration' of all aspects of production on one site. The plantation was more than an agricultural landscape, it was also the locus of processing and preparing the final product for transportation. But the most critical characteristic was its dependence on the most brutal labour regime. Enslaved labour

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[124] Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 3.

[125] Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies* (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1994), p. 124.

[126] Trevor Burnard, 'Not a Place for Whites? Demographic Failure and Settlement in Comparative Context: Jamaica 1655-1780', in *Jamaica in Slavery and freedom: History, Heritage and Culture*, ed by Kathleen Monteith and Glen Richard (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), pp. 73-88 (p. 74).

[127] Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Planation Societies in British America, 1650-1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 4.

was endless, deployable at all times for unlimited hours to all tasks. Essentially the 'integrated' plantation was a finely tuned unit of production, analogous to the industrial factory on the other side of the Atlantic.[128] And, as in those factories, an organizing principle was the division of labour, an innovation which transformed the creativity of production into an experience of alienation, further exacerbated the dislocation of enslaved Africans and facilitated white surveillance and control over them.

To establish and contextualize my frame of reference, the discussion here pertains to the anglophone colonies of the Atlantic region, with particular reference to Jamaica. It was on this island that the great fortune of the Beckford dynasty, the family of the two men whom the second part of this thesis is devoted to, was made. And the major part of the source material drawn on is also concerned with Jamaica, which was the most profitable of British sugar colonies, in the words of William Beckford of Somerley, 'one of the richest jewels in the crown of Great Britain'.[129]

The purpose of the plantation and reason for expansion was the great profit to be made from tropical and subtropical botanical products in Europe, and the consequent requirement of a climatically appropriate setting in which to cultivate such crops appropriated from a range of originating locations. In its initial manifestation in Barbados, and later in Jamaica, the crop was sugar. In other places the prototype was deployed for the cultivation of other crops, such as rice in the very different environment of the South Carolina Lowcountry.

Within this organizational framework, the narrative of the integrated plantation was one of overarching violence, again to quote Burnard:

> Planters were violent people, and their underlings were usually even more violent. They employed violence mostly against slaves. […] The large integrated plantation

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[128] Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism and French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 3; Burnard, 'Not a Place for Whites?', p. 74.

[129] William Beckford, *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica: With Remarks upon the Cultivation of the Sugar-Cane, Throughout the Different Seasons of the Year, and Chiefly Considered in a Picturesque Point of View; Also Observations and Reflections Upon What Would Probably be the Consequences of an Abolition of the Slave-Trade, and of the Emancipation of the Slaves*, 2 vols (London: T. and J. Egerton, 1790), I, p. xiii.

> […] was born in violence. It was sustained by the willingness of men experienced in warfare or the Atlantic slave trade to employ extreme violence against adult African men.[130]

Hence the Atlantic colonies of the long eighteenth century were loci of anomalies and extremes. The region was fraught with the tension of European national and commercial rivalries, compounded by the presence of pirates. The plantation was invested with a strong ideology of nationalism and the belligerence of the warring metropolitan centre from which it was colonized. And this was exceeded by the racialized conflict inherent to the landscape between the white presence invested with the greatest entitlement and sense of racial superiority and the enslaved black subaltern presence, invested with trauma and anger.

A critical factor in the process of settlement and emergence of a racialized and highly invested hierarchy of power was the prior ethnic cleansing of the terrain, either by earlier European settlers, such as the Spanish in Jamaica, or by the ruthless strategic removal of indigenous people by the British. This was the framework within which the African presence arrived and imprinted another other narrative on the terrain.

Planters identified with the landed gentry of the metropolitan centre and aspired to their social and cultural mores.[131] As such, the plantocracy focused on the creation of the lifestyle of privilege and distance, or even retreated into metropolitan absenteeism, and overseers assumed an increased role in the hands-on running of the plantation.[132] The identity that emerged from this process was inspired by the metropolitan vogue for the egocentric landed estate. Hence the creole performance of politeness configured the brutal plantation landscape in the picturesque genre. This vogue was expressed in countless literary accounts of the colonial landscape by planters and European travellers.[133]

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[130] Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, p. 6.

[131] Ibid, p. 97.

[132] Trevor Burnard, 'The Planter Class', in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. by Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard (London: Routledge, 2010), pp.187-203 (p. 192).

[133] William Beckford of Somerley's *Descriptive Account*, the subject of Chapter 7, is an instance of this.

Through the eighteenth century the Atlantic plantocracy, as absentee planters, purchased prestigious estates in Britain, insinuating themselves into the gentry and stimulating responses that laid bare the disconnect between the domestic setting and the colonial cradle of their wealth. According to Burnard, this hostility was less specifically targeted at creole planters than 'the typical disdain well-placed Britons have always felt for the nouveau riche with their arriviste vulgarity and lack of recognizable genealogy'.[134] Sarah Yeh, on the other hand, tells us that even in the colony they experienced a 'diverging sense of identity', between 'an idealized sense of Britishness' and bewilderment at their 'fail[ure] to convince British observers of their genteel civility'.[135] She characterizes the Caribbean as 'a realm of loose morals […] in the words of one late seventeenth-century visitor, the place was "one of the ludest in the Christian world, a sink of all filthiness, and a meer Sodom"', and, although wealthy planters routinely sent their children to Britain to be educated, these children were 'notorious' for their 'bad behaviour', and sometimes even sent back to the colony.[136] In other words, the plantocracy, in absenteeism and in the colony, was othered by metropolitan observers and experienced the marginalized sense of identity that always belongs in an imagined elsewhere. Hence, the imperative of self-fashioning impelled the minimalization or concealment of colonial connectivities, as expressed by Nevis planter John Pretor Pinney after his return to England in 1783, 'My greatest pride is to be considered as a private Country Gentleman therefore am resolved to content myself with a little and shall avoid even the name of a West Indian'.[137] Equally, of course, the 'sugar interest' remained a collective political entity which brought absentees together in an alternative identity of the colonial patriarch. The metropolitan landscapes of this interest group reflect this conflicted experience of marginalization and entitlement.

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[134] Trevor Burnard, 'Et in Arcadia Ego: West Indian Planters in Glory, 1674-1784', *Atlantic Studies*, 9:1 (2012), 19-40 (p. 19).

[135] Sarah Yeh, 'Colonial Identity and Revolutionary Loyalty: *The case of the West Indies*', in *British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed by Stephen Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 195-226 (p. 198).

[136] Sarah Yeh, '"A Sink of Filthiness": Gender, Family and Identity in the British Atlantic, 1688-1763', *The Historian*, 68:1 (2006), 66-66 (pp. 67 and 75).

[137] Kenneth Morgan, 'Pinney, John Pretor (1740-1818), Merchant and Planter', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography https://www.oxforddnb.com [accessed 1 Feb 2023].

With regard to the central premise of the synonymy of landscape with identity, the discussion that follows is based on an understanding of the three interest groups in the colony, identified by Richard Ligon, 'The Iland is divided into three sorts of men, *viz*, Masters, Servants, and slaves'.[138] This observation, a summary, as Ligon saw it, of Barbadian society in the late seventeenth century, is here applied to the plantation landscape. Between the two is a continuum (the planting of colonies, the planting of colonized crops, the planting of populations, enforced and voluntary), so that the plantation landscape might be considered a microcosm of the colony itself, as a readily internalized summation of a natural order and a locus of inherent tension and anxieties.

Prior to pursuing this, I wish to present some further considerations regarding the colonial landscape as a locus for the interaction and potential clash of identities and hybridity. Morphy addresses this with reference to the process of colonialism in Australia, whereby an indigenous population was conquered not for the purpose of exploitation as a workforce, but to be replaced with white migrants. The colonized terrain became a site of coexisting landscapes 'constructed on fundamentally different premises', but, consciously or unconsciously, 'not […] strictly separate, and in their particularities […] influenc[ing] one another' in a relationship of constant distrust and veiled enmity.[139] This scenario bears some resemblance to the Atlantic colony. However, conditions in the Caribbean/Americas lent a further level of complexity.

James A. Delle points to the 'prior' landscape of the Spanish *hato* in Jamaica, a former system of agricultural settlement established by Spanish settlers and worked by indigenous Taíno people and a few enslaved Africans.[140] By the time the Spanish had departed and been replaced by the British, the Taíno population had been 'decimated'.[141] Hence both ruling and subaltern groups were settlers, a model distinct from the settler colonialism described by

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[138] Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (London: for Humphrey Moseley, 1657), p. 43.

[139] Morphy, 'Colonialism', pp. 206-07.

[140] James A. Delle, *The Colonial Caribbean: Landscapes of Power in the Plantation System* (New York: Cambridge Univesity Press, 2015), p. 32.

[141] Barry Higman, *A Concise History of the Caribbean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 77.

Morphy but consisting of similar narratives of a landscape informed by ethnicity or skin colour. For Morphy the prior landscape in Australia was contemporaneous with that of European settlers and refers to the contrasting and conflicting landscape of indigenous subalternity.[142] In Jamaica, although the British encountered a hostile presence in the form the Maroons, a community of escaped Africans living in the mountainous interior, the prior landscape had essentially been vacated. The hybrid mix of African and European engagements with the environment resulted in a novel, hybrid landscape, referred to as *creole*. These settlers experienced dislocation from their native and embedded culture which reconfigured and was reconfigured by the new terrain. Each experienced this, however, in distinctly different ways, one as powerful conquerors, the other as traumatized and unempowered victims. Hence conflict was inherent to the creole landscape from the outset.

These conflicting interests inscribed on the landscape a thematic distillation of relations within it, encapsulated in five prevalent themes. The first of these is violence: colonial conquest was an act of violence against people of colour, and settlement and colonization was a continuation of the process and means. In this respect, the integrated plantation occupied a superlative position, in the words of Burnard, 'born in violence' and maintained by the employment of 'extreme violence against adult African men'.[143] It consisted not only of the delivery of brutal physical punishment, but also of the threat of it. As a hugely outnumbered minority these white men depended on the further potential violence of surveillance.

Within this cultural dominance of violence inflicted on black people by white people, Orlando Patterson identifies slavery as a substitute for death in that the threat of death was permanently present. This threat was institutionalized in the plantation landscape through such ritualized performances as public executions, the prominent display of the heads of executed enslaved workers and such like. Hence, the threat of death became a death

[142] Morphy, 'Colonialism', p. 206-07.

[143] Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, p. 6.

penalty: 'Slavery was not a pardon; it was, peculiarly, a conditional commutation. The execution was suspended only as long as the slave acquiesced in his powerlessness'.[144]

And beyond violence against black men, sexualized violence against the most unempowered members of the plantation population, black women, was equally embedded in the landscape. In fact, sexual violence towards black women was inherent to the generalized dysfunction and essentialized violence of the landscape: rape is the quintessential expression of male power, in the words of Barbara Bush, 'intimate "policing" of slaves' bodies', and of Burnard, 'a weapon of mastery'.[145] The frequent metaphorical application of rape to landscapes devastated and reconfigured by war or colonialism reaffirms it as an integrated element of male conquest and control. It is a weapon deployed in warfare as routinely as any others, long established within the realm of legend and archetypes.

Second, the plantation was a highly racialized landscape, in which enslaved Africans were 'chattels' and consistently and even strategically treated as 'an inferior species […] beasts of burden to be driven and inventoried like cattle'. They were dispassionately classified and evaluated in a continuation of the monitoring and documentation of livestock and crop yields and, within the framework of plantocratic perceptions as dispensable as their livestock, referred to as *animalization*.[146]

Third, beyond the marker of skin colour the colony was further socially and economically stratified within white society. This importantly distinguished between landed and landless, educated and uneducated, moneyed and those who were not, and other potential distinctions by which members of the plantocracy could imagine themselves as more refined than others. This included, for instance, the distinction asserted by large planters between 'estates', on which sugar was grown, practising the innovative agricultural practice of

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[144] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study with a New Preface* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 5.

[145] Barbara Bush, '"Sable Venus", "she devil" or "drudge"? British Slavery and the "fabulous fiction" of Black Women's Identities, c. 1650-1838", *Women's History Review,* 9.4, 761-789 (p. 767); Burnard, 'The Planter Class', p. 196.

[146] David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 32.

monoculture, and smaller 'plantations' where less profitable crops were grown. In other words, prestigious proprietors of large-scale integrated plantations engaged in what was perceived as more progressive and metropolitan methods, whereas smaller planters adhered to traditional agriculture.[147]

Fourthly, trauma was writ large across the entire plantation and the matrix of supporting processes that enabled it. Elizabeth A. Bohls identifies three 'traumatic events' that 'shaped' the islands of the Caribbean, 'the eradication of their first inhabitants, the arrival of many thousands of captive Africans, and the degradation of their environment through sugar monoculture'.[148] She applies the term to the origin and entirety of European intervention in the Atlantic colonies, an interesting and appropriate trope for the social, cultural and psychological outcome of colonization and summation of the Atlantic plantation. But a greater trauma defined this landscape, directly for the majority of inhabitants and by association for its white perpetrators. Attempts to understand the experience or mindset of the enslaved presence within this landscape is problematic. As an expression of identity and command of space within the European landscape framework, already identified as an 'imperial process', it constitutes an absence.[149] It also eludes Morphy's 'prior landscape', for the terrain of the Atlantic colonies had been ethnically cleansed through European colonizing engagements, and thus an indigenous subaltern class barely existed, especially in the Caribbean islands.[150] Rather the entirely creole landscape was one of disconnectedness, and black spaces were by definition subversive and invisible to the ocularity of white observation and surveillance.

The psychologist Janice P. Gump defines trauma as 'the experience of unbearable affect occurring in a context of profound relational malattunement', and she concludes, 'There is

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[147] Barry Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834* (Kingston: The Press, University of the West Indies, 1995), pp. 30-31.

[148] Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place: Representing the Colonial Caribbean, 1770-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 16.

[149] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. 191.

[150] Morphy, 'Colonialism', pp. 206-07.

little in slavery that was *not* traumatic: the loss of culture, home, kin, and attendant sense of self destruction of families through sale […], [and] physical abuse'.[151]

Ron Eyerman makes a distinction between psychological trauma based on experience and cultural trauma based on collective memory. Passing down generations, cultural trauma is 'a form of remembrance that grounded the identity-formation of a people', in which slavery became 'traumatic in retrospect', forming a 'primal scream' or 'the root of an emergent collective identity through an equally emergent collective memory'. Equally, as much as this matrix of trauma was identity creating, it was destructive, causing 'a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion'.[152] Hence, the plantation of the enslaved African was a landscape, or space, of trauma from its inception, and continued to be experienced as such by the descendants of transported Africans born on plantations. Key emotional expressions of this trauma were shame and anger.[153] The pervasive culture of the plantation asserted the superiority of white people over black, a message internalized in the black psyche, in spite of an accompanying buried anger. And the accumulated trauma was enhanced through the continuation of received brutal treatment.

Furthermore, this continued or enhanced trauma did not come about by chance, but rather, as already established, it was strategic with the aim of pacifying traumatized African workers and inflicting on them 'extreme dehumanization' and consequent erosion of African identity.[154] This is what Patterson refers to as 'natal alienation' or the contrived dislocation from any sense of heritage in 'both ascending and descending generations', as part of the process of identity denial.[155] Patterson posits three factors that enabled the exertion of 'total power from the point of view of the master, and of total powerlessness from the point of view of the slave' in his seminal formulation of slavery as 'social death'. These were: the

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[151] Gump, 'Reality Matters', pp. 46 and 48.

[152] Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma and the Formation of African American Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1-2.

[153] Longman-Mills et al, 'The Psychological Trauma', pp. 91-93.

[154] Ibid, p. 81.

[155] Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 7.

threat of violence as a means of control; submission through psychological persuasion or indoctrination; cultural hegemony through 'the control of those private and public symbols and ritual processes that induce (and seduce) people to obey because they feel satisfied and dutiful when they do so'.[156]

The fifth theme identifies the plantation as a landscape of tension and anxieties all round. Notwithstanding the extreme oppression and trauma inflicted on black people together with the imbalance of power and routine deployment of violence, white anxieties imagined uprisings of enslaved workers, who massively outnumbered white people. In such a setting of fear and mistrust, interactions between the three identified interest groups were cautious and performative. And white self-interest became associated with the need for the surveillance into the landscape.

A critical framework for considering the landscape of white power and surveillance is the 'viewshed analysis', developed by scholars in the field of historical geography. This work has revealed the extent to which surveillance was a priority through consideration of white domains, in particular the houses of planters and overseers, in locations that afforded visibility over and/or across the surrounding terrain.[157] This model derives from the 'panopticon', initially conceived by Jeremy Bentham and further elucidated by Michel Foucault, by means of which surveillance is weaponized to further oppress and control the unempowered.[158] Hence, this theory proposes visibility as the motivation for spatial design, 'to "make things seeable" while also producing "spaces of constructed invisibility" from which to monitor slaves' behaviour and conceal their presence'.[159] Surveillance was a guiding principle in the design of plantation 'great houses' and overseers' houses. Piazzas, at the

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[156] Ibid, p. 2.

[157] Delle, *The Colonial Caribbean*, p. 133; Lisa B. Randall, 'Applying the Panopticon Model of Historic Plantation Landscapes through Viewshed Analysis', *Historical Geography* 39 (2011), 105-27.

[158] Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon: Or, the Inspection-House* (Dublin, Thomas Byrne, 1791); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1991), Ch. 3. The panopticon tower imagined by Bentham was located in a prison surrounded by cells which were constantly visible, so that prisoners were constantly visible and never knew when they were being watched.

[159] Randall, 'Panopticon', p. 105.

front and back facilitated this function, within which by the late eighteenth century telescopes and watches were 'ever-present'.[160]

A further backdrop to this discussion is Enlightenment developments in agriculture and botany, fuelled by maritime expeditions, the accumulation of knowledge about exotic botany and the imperative to turn it to profit: the wealth and energy of Joseph Banks, whose life and projects embodied the era, were devoted to this mission. The recent Linnaean system of classification, embraced and promoted by Banks, named the reproductive organs of plants after those of people, and botany became highly controversial as a scandalous field of discourse. As president of the Royal Society and a confidant of the king, Banks was immensely influential.[161] He was also known and satirized for scandalous sexual conduct in Tahiti when he accompanied James Cook on his first expedition to the South Pacific. He was portrayed by the cartoonist Matthew Daly as 'The Botanic Macaroni' and in an image of 'corrupt sexuality and phallic qualities' as a 'Banksian caterpillar rising from the Tahitian soil to be transformed into a Bath butterfly' by James Gilray.[162] Thus the sexualization of exotic plants and terrains was well established within Enlightenment discourse and found expression as a narrative of white male power in the tropical plantation landscape. Casid suggests that this power harnessed and possessed such narratives: 'The British imperium [was] represented as a global botanic garden that becomes the scene of torrid romance, particularly those sexual practices disavowed at home'.[163]

Landscape discourse was also imbued with reference to the 'so-called Enlightenment's prioritization of the sense of sight', foregrounded in the picturesque genre which prevailed in aestheticized renditions of the colony, not least William Beckford of Somerley's

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[160] Louis Nelson, *Architecture and Empire in Jamaica* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 129.

[161] Patrica Fara, *Sex, Botany and Empire: The Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2004), pp. 38-39 and 56-57.

[162] Ibid, pp. 6-9 and 60-61. Fara explains, 'The term "Macaroni" was originally coined to denigrate the aristocratic youths who had acquired continental manners during their Grand Tour to Italy, but it became a more general term of abuse for deriding foppish young gentlemen who adopted ridiculous extremes of stylish clothing. The label was laden with sexual contempt'.

[163] Casid, *Sowing Empire,* p. 2.

Descriptive Account.[164] It also connects with the ocularity that abounds in the writing – and psyche – of William Beckford of Fonthill, as in the gaze as a vehicle of appropriation and oppression, and surveillance as a mechanism of control and intimidation.[165] The counter narrative here resides in the absence of other senses, and the spaces created for the counter landscapes.

The plantation was a locus of transplantation of both crop and workforce, which two elements became amalgamated in the white gaze via the Enlightenment process of classification and ordering into a creole construct that informed the identity of the landscape. The animalization of the African workers was authenticated by Linnaeus, who proposed several species of the genus *Homo*, *H. sapiens*, *H. caudatus*, *H. troglodytes*. This last species was identified as close to Satyr and Pygmee, which were 'apes behaving in a humanoid way', and *H. monstrosus* as well as four racialized 'varieties of man'.[166] Thus the white gaze was informed by an animalizing conceptualization of other peoples embedded in Enlightenment thinking, and the plantation landscape became a 'discourse' of Enlightenment methods of plant technology, 'transplantation and grafting', overlaid with a racialized and sexualized narrative of transplanted objects.[167] The animalized conceptualization of people of colour was affirmed by Enlightenment accounts of encounters with and configurations of otherness in a range of locations, as summarized in Pratt's previously cited assertion that such accounts '*produced* "the rest of the world" for European readerships', and Said's concurrence: 'innumerable speculations on giants, Patagonians, savages, natives and monsters supposedly residing to the far east, west, south and north of Europe'.[168] Hence it overlapped with the concept of the *grotesque* which configured dark-skinned people as *monstrous*. Fryer relates a metropolitan back history of

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[164] Ibid, p. xiv. *A Descriptive Account* is the subject of Chapter 7.

[165] See Chapter 8 on the landscape of Fonthill Abbey and William Beckford's novel *Vathek* in which ocularity is a critical theme.

[166] Fara Sex, Botany, pp. 102-04; Casid, Sowing Empire, p. 3; The Linnaean Society https://www.linnean.org/learning/who-was-linnaeus/linnaeus-and-race [accessed 7 June 2023]

[167] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. 2.

[168] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 52; Said, *Orientalism*, p. 117.

the 'freak show', frequently featuring people of colour.[169] Hybridized plantation crops aligned with the miscegenous outcome of sexual violence committed within the landscape. Casid metaphorizes the cultivation of exotic and hybrid plants in colonial territories as an expression of imperialism: 'With the materializing metaphor of planting and scattered seed, that is, the practice of agriculture and landscaping as (hetero)sexual reproduction, to plant was both to produce colonies and to generate imperial subjects to sustain them'.[170] The hybridity, or creoleness, of the landscape was a narrative of white male supremacy and brutality, expressed in botanical cross-breeding and miscegenation within the workforce through white male violence. It was a space of inclusion and exclusion, constant tension and multiple anxieties. Such diverse and conflicting interests rendered the space one of mistrust and, critically as a *modus vivendi*, performance. Whilst the black experience was ultimately determining for all interests that inhabited the plantation landscape, it is equally an experience beyond twenty-first century understanding. The particular focus here is the motivations and psyche, 'inscape and escape', of individuals whose lives were so occupied with the cruel treatment of others.

The plantation landscape is historically remarkable for a number of reasons. It was a vehicle for high productivity and profit, and for colonial expansion. Further, it was adapted by the white European gaze as a vehicle for aestheticization and self-promotion and became a motif of emotional engagement and disengagement. The last two of these functions form an overarching question regarding the white colonial gaze. The imperative for self-creation and -recreation on the part of newly rich British colonialists in the eighteenth century is understandable. The deployment of the colonial landscape in the pursuit of this aim is resourceful. But the extent of brutality committed and concealed by this apparently aestheticizing project raises questions about the motivations and psyche of the ruling class on each side of the Atlantic. From the metropolitan perspective the Atlantic crossing assumed, or was portrayed as having, iconic transformative status. The colony was endowed with contaminative properties of vulgarity and absence of empathy that internalized

[169] Fryer, *Staying Power*, pp. 228-30.

[170] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. xiv.

violence against the most wronged and aggrieved people in history. The mass of contradictions inherent to this landscape, as reconfigured in different sanitizing and aestheticizing manifestations, is the encompassing question that drives this discussion.

The first documentation of the integrated plantation was written by the planter Henry Drax (1641-82), who retired from Barbados to absenteeism in England c. 1669. Prior to his departure he drafted an *aide-mémoire* for his overseer, Richard Harwood, on the running of the plantation entitled 'Instructions which I would have observed by Mr. Richard Harwood in the Mannagment of My plantation according to the Articles of Agreement betwene us which are heare unto Annexed'.[171] This text provides a detailed picture of the integrated plantation at its inception and became a prototype, in the words of Simon P. Newman, 'a definitive statement of good plantation management', which, according to Peter Thompson, 'delineates emerging practices that would define the Caribbean sugar industry for most of the colonial era'.[172]

Little is known about Drax, other than that he was one of the wealthiest planters on the island of Barbados. Based on Ligon's account of encounters with his father, James Drax, it is to be assumed that, like his father, Henry lived 'like a prince', in the plantation great house, Drax Hall, which 'closely resembled an English manor house'.[173] Ligon wrote of dining with Drax on '*Virginie Botargo* of which sort I have eaten the best at Colonel *Draxes* that I ever tasted'.[174] Thus, it would seem, even at this nascent stage, that planters lived in the image and re-enacted the lifestyle, as they perceived it, of the English ruling class. These men were early predecessors of the Conservative MP Richard Drax, who today owns Drax Hall and the plantation.

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[171] Peter Thompson, 'Drax's Instructions of the Management of a Seventeenth-Century Barbadian Sugar Plantation', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 66, 3 (2009), 565-604.

[172] Simon P. Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 194, Thompson, 'Drax's Instructions', p. 565.

[173] Ligon, *A True and Exact History*, p. 34; Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 293.

[174] Ligon, *A True and Exact History*, pp. 34 and 37.

As overseer, Harwood was a representative of a group that was critical to the success of the Atlantic plantation project. He was educated, the senior amongst the minimal number of white servants, and entrusted by the planter to responsibly and honestly manage the plantation.[175] Occasional reference is made to white servants, who were to attend Sunday prayers and who, or some of whom, were privileged to 'Eatt att table with you'.[176] Thus, in the planter's absence, power relations continued within the plantation and crucially intersected with race. A few themes in the text are pertinent to the following discussion of later authors whose personal motivations distorted or denied the reality of the plantations they inhabited or wrote of.

Drax's 'first injunction' was to ensure that white and black workers were well fed, as a precaution against sickness 'for the better Making the Negros goe thorrow theire work with Chearefulnese'. And the brutal reality of this work was acknowledged in his stated financial allowance for the annual death and replacement of ten to fifteen black 'family' members and detailed criteria for the purchase of replacements, in complete alignment with the 'Nesessite of a good Stock of able working Cattle'. In other words the function and worth of enslaved Africans were equated with those of the plantation livestock.[177] Like the livestock, they were perceived as a collective, de-individualized and dehumanized, their needs were reduced to the essentials of survival, like those of farm animals, 'a reserve of 12 or 15 acres of Cossava', a crop which could 'Ly four or five years in the ground', and plantains which were judged 'a provision the Negros much delight in and is Wery Wholsome'.[178] In fact the section marked 'Negroes' follows on from 'Advise about raysing of Calves and welle feeding of Cattle', 'A Caution to be very Carefull of horses' and 'Assnegoes'.[179] The concept of animalization was clearly a critical element in the requisite mindset of an overseer.[180]

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[175] Thompson, 'Drax's Instructions', p. 587.

[176] Ibid, pp. 582 and 587.

[177] Ibid, pp. 582-85.

[178] Ibid, p. 586.

[179] Ibid, p. 582-84.

[180] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 32; Vincent Brown, 'Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery', *The American Historical Review*, 114 (2009), 1231-1249 (p. 1232).

The text also lays bare the ruthlessness of the long and arduous labour regime, close supervision, and brutal routine of punishment. Drax apparently found it unnecessary to expound details regarding punishments to be delivered. On the contrary he warned against extremism: 'You most Newer punish Either to Satisfy your own anger or passion, the End of punishment being Either to reclame the Mallyfactor or to terrefie others from Comitting the like fault'.[181] 'The blacks', he asserted, 'are generally adicted to thieving', and he therefore urged precautions such as 'the greatestt Care Imaginable to preserve all portable things from Being Stolen'. However, there was a limit and that was the theft of 'Sugr Molases or Rum […] our Money and the finall productt of all our Edewors', and for this no punishment was 'tooe terrible […] as doeth Not deprive the party of Either life or Limbs'.[182] This passage on punishment is short, but fully conveys the rational institutionalization of brutality. The violent character of the overseer class is discussed in another chapter: here I merely stress that the successful running of the integrated plantation depended on this propensity. Drax did not need to specify how severely African workers should be punished, but merely to insist that they were not disabled to an extent that would devalue their labour power. And often this labour was 'Sisyphean'.[183]

Drax apparently considered and desired that the plantation was self-contained and self-sufficient. Harwood was told that he must 'be Newer absent from the planttation bott in Cases of Nessecety'.[184] This is a measure of the understood need for surveillance.

The 'Instructions' is unique in the plantation canon in that its critical singularity of audience essentializes the landscape as a complex but focused unit of production in which the maximization of productivity pervaded. Newman identifies Drax as the pioneer of the integrated plantation and the 'Instructions' as one of just two 'most valuable surviving documents from mid-seventeenth-century Barbados'.[185] Significant features of the text for

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[181] Thompson, 'Drax's Instructions', p. 588.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Ibid, p. 572.

[184] Ibid, p. 602.

[185] Newman, *New World*, p. 194. The other 'valuable document' he cites is Ligon's *A True and Exact History*.

the present purpose include the early prioritization of surveillance as a critical organizational element in the landscape, the role of skin colour as the most important marker of empowerment and the characterization of African people as different and distinct from white-skinned Europeans, even animal. The restricted audience makes clear the purpose and motivation of the author. The reality of the plantation as a damaging, dysfunctional and traumatic landscape is laid bare by Drax in marked contrast to later discourse.

In later times, the authorial gaze of the planter was preoccupied with significantly different representational means of and audiences for configuring the plantation landscape. By the late eighteenth century the picturesque genre had arisen as a routinely utilized vehicle to aestheticize the colony as a place of Europeanness in an other setting. This aesthetic mission imagined a metropole-colony continuum and expunged the Atlantic as a barrier and zone of transition between the polite homeland and colonial otherness, a trope which positioned the plantocracy in full alignment with the metropolitan landed gentry. In reality an admixture of signature picturesque features and the tropical setting gave rise to the hybrid genre and landscape identity, the planteresque.

This genre will be explored in the following chapter with reference to the colonial aesthetic evocations of Edward Long, a prominent and eminent member of the Jamaican plantocracy. As a resident and fierce defendant of slavery, Long's aesthetic purpose was the promotion of the slave colony and plantation landscape and aligning it with the polite landed estates of the metropole and of slavery as compatible with politeness.

Another strand of the picturesque, exemplified by William Gilpin in Britain, configured the picturesque as movement through the landscape, expressed in the 'picturesque tour' and the landscape garden circuit, both of which sought idealized views. This strand did not represent a single cohesive interest: the gaze of the itinerant Gilpin differed from that of the proprietorial landed gentry. Essentially the 'travelling gaze' was a broad and flexible aesthetic tool which lent itself appropriately to various Europeans travelling in colonial settings. In 1825 James Hakewill published *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica*,

configured by the title in the tradition of Gilpin.[186] Hakewill's text, the product of a two-year sojourn in Jamaica, also referenced his own previous publication *A Picturesque Tour of Italy* which lent a gravitas of classical, grand tour associations to the colony, in the words of Bohls it, 'confer[red] on the slave colony a seductive allure drawn from the influential style of Claude Lorrain'.[187]

However, Hakewill was not an aestheticizing picturesque tourer. Rather his circumstances in Jamaica were specifically bound up with the propaganda mission of the plantocracy in the face of abolitionism. The dedication is 'To the Noblemen and Gentlemen, Proprietors of Estates in the West Indies; To the Resident Gentlemen, (From many of whom the Author received so much kindness); And to the Merchants of the United Kingdom, Connected with Those Valuable Colonies'. The brief introduction (six pages), which addresses and defends slavery, is followed by a five page 'historical sketch' of the island, after which each image is accompanied by a page of text about the location featured. Bohls scrutinizes Hakewill's work initially in relation to Gilpin's as modelled on the domestic *Picturesque Tour*. She describes the scenes as pastoral, populated by livestock and undifferentiated figures of 'staffage', 'glowing tints' in the distance, 'the aquatint medium infuses the plantation with the famous "atmosphere" of a painting by Claude Lorrain'. Here she has shifted from Gilpin to Claude and has also brought George Robertson's portrayals of the Jamaican plantation landscape into the argument.[188] Whilst the title evokes Gilpin, I would suggest that Hakewill's 'rigidly formulaic visual version of the picturesque' rather than in the tradition of Gilpin is akin to Robertson. Bohls describes Hakewill's depiction of Montpellier Estate, as an example, as 'serene stasis', 'a plantation at rest, its parts poised in visual harmony', and, most significantly, there is a conscious misrepresentation of labour in line with the plantocratic propaganda purpose.[189] This is the plantocratic gaze, a landscape of dissimulation and

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[186] James Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica, from Drawings Made in the Years 1820 and 1821* (London: Hurst and Robinson, 1825).

[187] Ibid, p. 19.

[188] Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place*, pp. 19-21. George Robertson was a painter patronized by William Beckford of Somerley to paint his plantations. See Appendix 1, Figure 8 and Chapter 7.

[189] Ibid, p. 21

performance. However, although Bohls aligns Gilpin's account of the technique for producing 'atmosphere' with Hakewill's use of colour and composition, nevertheless, Gilpin's was not the landscape of monarch-of-all-he-surveyed, and his figures were not 'staffage'.[190] Although formulaic and frequently 'improved', his images are inherently mobile and transient, an embodiment of the 'picturesque tour'. Further, I suggest that Gilpin's substantial text is as significant to his picturesque tourism as the images. Hakewill describes his mission, and the 'tradition' he claims for it, as 'to convey a general idea of the surfaces and external appearances of a country'.[191] Gilpin, in contrast, configured his tours as experiential, touching sublimity even. Hence, Hakewill's picturesque tour, despite the misnomer of the title, was not in the Gilpinesque tradition: rather, it was an exploitative and weaponized adaptation of the genre for the benefit of the plantocratic defence of slavery, entirely in the planteresque tradition.

In contrast, Maria Nugent, whose journal includes many picturesque accounts of landscapes traversed or perceived while resting, is more in the convention of a genuine 'tour'. As wife to the governor, Nugent arrived in the colony emboldened by the entitlement of her position and imagined metropolitan superiority and adopted a critical stance towards the creole behaviour and culture of the plantocracy. This was in contrast to her opinion of the landscape, which she recorded in picturesque descriptive passages, the 'idiom', to quote Bohls, 'expected of educated Britons', as she toured the island with her husband, in an act of polite performance.[192]

The remaining chapters concerned with the colonial setting explore white engagements with the plantation and their representations. The following two chapters address: creole mimicry of politeness in landscapes of leisure and pleasure; aesthetic configurations in the planteresque white male gaze which possessed and controlled; and the representation of the passing traveller's gaze which also possessed and controlled, but within a framework of externality and distance. The final chapter exploring colonial landscapes is devoted to the

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[190] Ibid, p. 19.

[191] Hakewill, *Picturesque Tour*, p. 3.

[192] Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place*, p. 157.

landscape of the white landless class whose critical function, as overseers, was to implement violence and ensure the profitable running of plantations as agents of the aestheticizing ruling class. The distinctions between these various white interests lies in material and emotional investment in the landscape and proximity to the shame of slavery. Exploration of these landscape engagements will address further layers of complexity and associated anxieties inherent to this landscape founded and dependent on violence. For the overseer, accustomed to and inured to violence, cruelty was a routine matter and the substance of his terms of employment. For the pretentious planter, the dichotomy between his avowed 'culture of taste' and the landscape of his wealth was a defining dichotomy of creoleness and a source of anxiety.

CHAPTER 3: POLITENESS AND THE PLANTATION: THE WHITE CREOLE PLEASURE GARDEN

The eighteenth-century metropolitan country estate served several functions within the world of polite society, not least that of self-projection and of elite social engagement. As the outcome of enclosure, the scale of such estates was huge, and size in itself was a part of the proclamatory function: land equated with wealth and power, and the landscape garden was designed to enhance this. The fashionable Palladian house was set within the pleasure garden, a performative arena of strategic planting and placement of ornamental structures, such as statuary and garden buildings, many of them souvenirs and trophies, all indicators of taste and narratives of self. The picturesque framing of views was a prevailing design concept, realized in viewing points on the garden circuit. Such estates were also settings for the performance of polite behaviours, and much of the iconography and aesthetics of the landscape encoded esoteric configurations of politeness by which exclusivity was embedded. In the words of Tom Williamson, the landscape garden was a place of 'polite exclusion', and, as a corollary, it was a space of polite inclusion.[193] Hence politeness was a self-affirming enclosed world, which intersected with picturesque aesthetics.

The mimetic replication of this important signifier of gentility was an aspirational undertaking for Jamaican plantocrats concerned to self-fashion in the polite mode. This is highlighted by Christer Petley who stresses the *haut* plantocracy's preference for the removal of their main place of residence away from their plantations in the style of the metropolitan country seat as a locus of retreat and recreation. This notion of retreat in the metropole functioned as removal from urban business to rural tranquility and spaciousness. In the colony, however, such retreats were from one rural setting to another, from the brutal plantation to another remote place, for the plantation landscape was self-evidently incompatible with the culture to which planters aspired. Further, plantations were large and remote loci and the distances between plantation houses was not conducive to routine

[193] Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, p. 107

socializing or polite intercourse.[194] Famed as they were for excess and ostentation, planters, whilst they 'enjoyed the wealth and social prestige that owning a plantation conferred', did not appreciate the social isolation of 'living in rural backwaters among hundreds of slaves'.[195] Hence they followed the model of their metropolitan peers and chose to removed their residences to properties such as pens, which, as places designed for livestock, were removed from the materiality of the gruelling excesses of plantation labour and enslavement, other than that of their domestic servants, which was appropriate in the polite home.

These preferred residences tended to be in 'peri-urban' settings, in the environs of cities, where planters could be relatively close to one another. William Beckford of Somerley's Jamaican dwelling was Hertford Pen, the eminent planter John Cunningham resided at Hill House near Montego Bay, and Simon Taylor, one of the most prominent of late eighteenth-century planters, chose for his main place of residence Prospect Pen near Kingston. Such residential areas are characterized by Petley as 'enclaves of gentility', appropriately 'distant' both from the 'brutal realities of plantation production' and from 'the bustle of urban commerce', but 'within easy striking distance of both'.[196]

Petley's account, based on the inventories of Cunningham's and Taylor's possessions following their deaths, extrapolates that such men lived lavishly and ostentatiously. Taylor's house contained a ball room, dining room and large drawing room.[197] Such information is not so readily available regarding the landscape settings, however, although it is known that Prospect was set in 119 acres and boasted a nine-acre parkland and two-acre garden, entirely aligned with the metropolitan model.[198] Maria Nugent visited several such residences, including Cunningham's Hill House, where her account of dining with sixty or seventy people affirms the extravagance of Cunningham's lifestyle.[199] The house, she says,

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[194] Christer Petley, 'Plantations and Homes: The Material Culture of the Early Nineteenth-Century Jamaican Elite', *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Societies*, 35:3, (437-457), p. 445.

[195] Burnard, 'The Planter Class', p. 192.

[196] Petley, 'Plantations and Homes' p. 450.

[197] Ibid, pp. 440 and 447.

[198] Ibid, p. 447.

[199] Wright, *Nugent's Journal*, p. 87.

was ‘as comfortable as possible’, and the grounds afforded a ‘lovely prospect’. In fact she describes the view of the entire area as ‘interspersed with gardens, palms of all sorts, &c. So that from the town up to the tops of the hills, you see nothing by villas peeping out from among the foliage’.[200]

Nugent’s journal records descriptions of several such gardens, which provide significant detail of planting and hint at some layout features. At Clifton she describes a ‘blissful garden’, with a ‘great variety’ of shrubs, including the ‘very pretty’ coffee, and trees, pomegranate, logwood, acqui and avocadoes, a hedge of lime trees and rows of orange trees. She describes fragrances and flowers that ‘at this moment delight my eyes, and regale my nose’, as she and her husband passed ‘the whole morning, looking about and admiring everything’.[201] This suggests a design conducive to leisurely strolling, an important signifier and signature activity of politeness in the garden. Such gardens, or similar ones, were also discovered on the island of Nevis by the archaeologist Roger H. Leech. He identifies ‘garden houses or villas’ which were planters’ second residences, located similarly to those of the Jamaican planters described by Petley, ‘some distance from the main plantation house’.[202] Leech reveals a number of ornamental pleasure gardens, laid out with walks, terraces, pavilions, and towers, some adjacent to plantations, but others, even on such a small island, distant ‘country retreats’, such as Mountravers Garden, ‘possibly the result of the Pinney family moving their residence from the plantation […] named by the late 18th century as Pinney’s Yard’.[203] The strolls undertaken by the Nugents suggest a similar layout. Nugent also refers to ‘walks’ or rows of trees in other gardens, such as the ‘fine bamboo walk’ at Papine, which also boasted ‘an infinite variety of beautiful flowers’ and was judged by Nugent ‘the best and most curious [garden] I have yet seen’.[204]

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[200] Ibid, p. 88.

[201] Ibid, pp. 25-26.

[202] Roger H. Leech, ‘Lodges, Garden Houses and Villas: The Urban Periphery in the Early Modern Atlantic World’, in *Slavery and the British Country House*, ed. by Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann (Swindon: English Heritage, 2013), pp. 46-56, p. 47.

[203] Ibid, pp. 47-52.

[204] Wright *Nugent’s Journal*, p. 28.

Gikandi tells us that such houses, constructed as 'monuments to Englishness in the tropics', were remarkably similar to the English prototype, 'as distinguished in [their] appearance on the West Indian landscape as [their] English equivalent[s]'.[205] Hence, as 'icons of "Englishness and money" in the tropical Jamaican landscape' and 'characterised by the material culture of genteel grandeur', they were loci in which creole planters could adopt an imagined lifestyle in line with that of the metropolitan polite elite.[206] Nevertheless, such mimetic undertakings remained strongly hybrid in character. Although planters enjoyed many consumer luxuries imported to the island from Britain, the quintessentially English style of landscape in which they led an imagined life of polite insularity was entirely planted with exotic other plants. The iconic tree of the landscape garden, the English oak, was the ultimate symbol of nationhood, signifying longevity and proactive patriotism (many were grown on metropolitan estates were used in shipbuilding), not comparable with the logwood.

Some of these houses remain, but there is no material evidence of the designed landscapes in which they stood. One, however, is substantially documented by Nugent and Edward Long and stands out as singularly closer to the English model. This is the Decoy, 'seat' of the Price dynasty of Worthy Park, built c. 1765 by Charles Price (1708-72), pronounced by Burnard to have been 'the closest property in Jamaica to an English country estate'.[207] And this is no surprise, given Price's stature: he studied in England, an accomplishment which in no way distinguishes him, but further to this he is the first Jamaican on record as having undertaken the grand tour. And, even more exceptionally, he was later made a baron by George III, 'signifying', in the words of Louis Nelson, 'his elevation to a position many elites in Jamaica deeply desired: English Nobility'.[208] Clearly Price designed Decoy to be a replica of the metropolitan 'country retreat' in all aspects and probably with considerable understanding.

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[205] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 116.

[206] Petley, 'Plantations and Homes', pp. 450 and 452.

[207] Michael Craton and James Walvin, *A Jamaican Plantation: The History of Worthy Park, 1670-1970* (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 85; Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 117.

[208] Nelson, *Architecture and Empire*, p. 137.

As with other ornamental landscapes, no trace of the Decoy remains, but written accounts provide evidence of a highly refined pleasure garden and wider parkland. We learn from Long (1774) that the house, 'of wood, but well finished', was fronted, by an English style lake, a 'very fine piece of water' and defining feature of the English landscape garden, and furthermore that it was stocked with wild ducks and teal for the purpose of being shot. Long continues:

> Behind it is a very elegant garden disposed in walks, which are shaded with the cocoanut, cabbage, and sand-box trees. The flower and kitchen-garden are filled with the most beautiful and useful variety which Europe, or this clime, produces. It is decorated, besides, with some pretty buildings; of which the principal is an octagonal saloon, richly ornamented on the inside with lustres, and mirrors empaneled. At the termination of another walk is a grand triumphal arch, from which the prospect extends over the fine cultivated vale of Bagnals quite to the Northside Sea. Clumps of graceful cabbage-trees are dispersed in different parts, to enliven the scene; and thousands of plantane and other fruit-trees occupy a vast tract, that environs this agreeable retreat, not many years ago a gloomy wilderness.[209]

As a friend of Price, Long was clearly informed of the garden by him: hence the terminology deployed in describing it aligns with the metropolitan model. There was a 'flower and kitchen garden', significantly referencing European plants, although equally significantly not claiming that any grew there. 'Pretty buildings' were also de rigueur in the landscape garden, the triumphal arch and octagonal summer house being very typical, and trees planted in clumps were associated with the iconic landscape designer 'Capability' Lancelot Brown. Long's account confirms the notion of retreat: Price, he tells us, was 'extremely attached to this place, and spent much of his time here, making it the abode of chearfulness and hospitality'. It was, he concludes, 'the temple of social enjoyments' and 'constantly open to the reception of worthy men, whether of the island, or strangers'.[210] He also writes of a 'club

[209] Long, *History*, II, p. 76.

[210] Ibid, p. 77.

of gentlemen' created by Price for the 'diversion of shooting ring-tail pidgeons' at Decoy, where there was 'a range of apartments on a pretty lawn just fronting the [White River] cascade'.[211] Michael Craton and James Walvin write that Price introduced imported deer into the 'park', analogous to the English 'parkland', an area of the landed estate where hunting was a significant activity.[212] In fact when Nugent visited, in July 1802 (by which time it was no longer in the possession of the Price family), she referred to her husband 'really enjoying himself very much; walking about, shooting, and fishing on the lake, till dinner time'.[213] And later on:

> A nice walk in the garden in the evening. Fine broad gravel walks, cabbage and cocoa-nut trees, and many ornamental shrubs. Have a syllabub on the lawn. The gentlemen play at bowls, and the young people swing. The comparative coolness of the climate is quite refreshing, and all things are so comfortable about us, that I felt almost as if I were in England.[214]

Signature 'broad gravel walks' and lawns are mentioned by her nowhere else, and motifs of polite intercourse, syllabub, lawn and bowls, followed by chess and cards on subsequent evenings, were truly evocative for Nugent of her polite metropolitan lifestyle.[215]

In spite of the apparent absence of archaeological evidence of Decoy, we learn sufficient from Long and Nugent to understand that this was a colonial instance of a landscape garden in the picturesque mode such as prevailed amongst the richest and most powerful people in Britain, and that, like the landscape garden in Britain, it was a space of self-projection, and performative social gatherings. No wonder Nugent observed 'I felt almost as if I were in England', as she strolled along the same shaded walks, enjoyed a syllabub on the lawn and watched gentlemen playing bowls.

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[211] Ibid, p. 95.

[212] Craton and Walvin, *Jamaican Plantation*, p. 93 fn. 43.

[213] Wright, *Nugent's Journal*, p. 110.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Ibid, p. 111.

Decoy included the signature features of the 'British model'. There was a pleasure garden and wider parkland, as well as the lake and shaded walks leading to focal point views and destinations, such as the 'octagonal saloon', 'triumphal arch' and 'a massive, fifteen-foot-tall marble column carried by a marble pedestal ornamented on each face with an allegorical representation of one of the four continents'. This last garden ornament is still in existence and now located in a park in Port Maria.[216] The iconography of tropicality that it portrays was found 'on an epic scale' in 'Baroque court art across Europe'. It was deployed by William of Orange in his garden at Het Loo and subsequently at Kensington Palace and Hampton Court when he became king of England. It personified four continents as female figures, posed submissively offering produce. Variations were published via the 'ubiquitous genre of the illustrated emblem book […] a visual dictionary' of racial and gendered stereotypes. An example remains in the renowned British political landscape at Stowe, in a relief by the sculptor Peter Scheemakers, entitled *Britannia receiving Produce from the Four Quarters of the World*. The narrative of the four continents is conveyed in the title of this relief, in which the figures represent a racial hierarchy: Europe 'at the pinnacle', followed by Asia, both considered civilized and as such are clothed in lavish attire, whereas Africa and America are naked, articulating primitivism and barbarity. This iconography was particularly affirmative of white perceptions in the Atlantic colonies and a vindication of European ethnic cleansing and enslavement in the Americas.[217] This iconography extended to the infamous and ubiquitous blackamoor image represented in many domestic, landscape and personal decorative items, including a set of 'Venetian stools supported by Blackamoor figures' possessed by William Beckford of Fonthill.[218]

However, in spite of the impeccable metropolitan style of the Decoy, the cultural fusion of a metaphorical landscape of British patriotism planted with and populated by exotic and other

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[216] Nelson, *Architecture and Empire*, pp. 137-38.

[217] Patrick Eyres, 'British Warfare and the Blackamoor: A Patriotic Commemoration of Victory and Trade', *New Arcadian Journal* 69/70 (2011), 25-95 (pp. 29-33); Cesare Ripa, *Iconology or Moral Emblems* (London: Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia: or, Moral Emblems* (London: Benj. Motte, 1709).

[218] Israel Shenker, 'Scotland's Castles by the Sea', *The New York Times* 18 March 1984 https://www.nytimes.com/1984/03/18/travel/no-headline-063478.html [accessed 27 August 2023]. The blackamoor statue, or 'kneeling slave', is an ornament in eighteenth-century houses and landscapes which frequently causes offence today.

flora and fauna undermines the polite function of the landscape. Trees such as the ubiquitous other logwood and cabbage trees were substituted for the English oak, and Price's exclusive gentlemen's club gathered for the purpose of shooting exotic ring-tailed pigeons. Like the great landscapes of England, Decoy was designed as a self-enhancing dynastic narrative; it was also a proclamation of the most exceptional plantocrat and aristocrat. However, for all of Price's reputation and title, it remained unadulteratedly hybrid or creole. The native English oak (*Quercus robur*) endowed Brown's clumps with gravitas and patriotism. The trees deployed for similar purposes and very widespread in the pleasure gardens of Jamaica proclaimed otherness.

An adjunct to the rise of the polite landscape and the picturesque genre was that of the oil painting, analogized by Berger with the fetish of possessing, and a connected 'way of seeing'. The oil painting, he argues, was deployed as a symbol of class and power, functioning both as a possessable item itself, and as a representation of a possessable object, both projections of power. So the painting aligned with the fetishization of accumulated 'things'.[219] The fetishistic conceptualization configures landscape as both a series of symbolical representations, and a site of 'fetishistic practices' or behaviours, such as hunting and shooting animals.[220]

Berger applies this analytical framework to Gainsborough's conversation piece portrait, *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*.[221] This painting configures the landscape as one of the 'accumulated assets' of a wealthy landowner, who features in the foreground, surrounded by signifiers of his wealth in the landscape: he poses beneath the protective shade of an English oak, a gun rests under his arm, his personal enclosed space in which to deploy it for 'fetishistic practices' stretches into the distance, to one side a loyal gun dog looks up to him and his wife poses on the other. The portrait is completed by evidence of innovative agricultural improvements indicated by drilled rows of wheat and hedges enclosing sheep, accessed by a

[219] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 84.

[220] Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', p. 15.

[221] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp. 106-08. Appendix 1.

new-style five-bar gate.[222] In summation the painting was a highly visible proclamation of ego embedded in the power of wealth and nation, in this instance metonymically invoked by the oak tree.

It is to be expected that colonial landowners endeavoured to express their landscapes in similar visual immortalizations. William Beckford of Somerley commissioned George Robertson to paint his Jamaican estates, and Edward Beeston Long, son of Edward Long, commissioned the artist William Berryman to paint the Lucky Valley plantation. Although this painting was not accomplished, a watercolour sketch remains in the Long archive with an aide-memoire drafted by Berryman:

> Lucky Valley Estate from the westward – the Hills in canes – Pinder's River – tops of Plantation Trees in the fore-ground – Buildings from the left – old Overseer's House where the Doctor resides – new Overseer's House concealed by trees – trash-house – corn-store - shed & cattlepens – coopers' shop – Hospital – Mr Miller's house – works – mill house – boiling and still house - rum store – piggery & poultry house with sheep pen – wagon with 12 Steers & load wagon – going down.[223]

It was Berryman's intention to complete five paintings of Lucky Valley in England, but he died very soon after his return to England.[224]

The plantocratic landscape portrait is discussed more fully in Chapter 7 concerning William Beckford of Somerley. Suffice to say at this juncture that these pictures differ from the metropolitan landscape portrait in that they are not 'conversation pieces', and they are aesthetic representations of plantation landscapes and not projections of a landowner in triumphal association with their landscape. The function of such paintings seems to have been political rather than personal, propagandist rather that egotist. These people, I suggest,

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[222] Hugh Prince, 'Art and Agrarian Change, 1715-1815' in *Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments*, ed. by Denis E. Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 98-118 (p.103). Auberies was the name of Robert Andrews's estate.

[223] London: British Library, Add MS 43379F. The sketch is reproduced in Appendix 1, Figure 4.

[224] Barry Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed: Plantation Maps and Plans of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaican Publications, 1988), p. 87.

were concerned with the projection of the landscape, and themselves by association, as humane. In other words, the purpose concerned slavery, the political agenda was to configure the landscape of enslavement as humane and benevolent and themselves as polite slave-owners. Similar renditions are expressed in Hakewill's *Picturesque Tour* and in two water colour sketches of Worthy Park, plantation of the Price family.[225] In line with the pastoral elements of *The Seasons*, these pictures feature enslaved workers as 'staffage', embedded in the landscape of production but critically displaying body language of tropical languor, not brutalized and racialized subalternity.

A significant exception to this generality of the planteresque landscape portrait applies to a remaining painting of the Decoy. It was undertaken by the Swiss artist Pierre Eugene du Simitière in the 1760s but is now in a private collection and unfortunately inaccessible. Louis Nelson, however, secured permission to reproduce it in his book *Architecture and Empire in Jamaica*.[226] This painting features Charles Price, sitting in a 'Windsor chair', his back half-turned to the viewer, beneath the triumphal arch referred to by Long and looking out over his landscape to a mountainous horizon. This is a triumphal and highly egotistical landscape portrayal in line with the metropolitan model. Beneath the towering and framing arch, in the style of metropolitan garden buildings, Price positions himself as exerting power over an extensive and fully visible terrain, the ultimate cultured Englishman in the colonial setting. The landscape is distant and fairly undifferentiated: the nature of buildings is not discernible, trees are not identifiable.[227] That is except for one: framed by a section of the arch, an exotic palm tree belies the domestic possibility. In fact, although the picture is framed and the landscape extends to a distant horizon, it is not in the Claudian style: it looks down across the landscape together with the owner, sharing his gaze of power and surveillance: this is a critical trope of hybridity, for lounging in a chair with his back to the viewer does not equate with the authoritative conversation piece of landscape-as-adjunct-to-identity, nor the Claudian heroic narrative. Essentially we are being shown the firm and comfortable

[225] Appendix 1, Figure 3.

[226] Nelson, *Architecture and Empire*, p. 138.

[227] These observations are based on the representation of this painting in Nelson's book. Plants and buildings may be more differentiated than the reproduction suggests.

establishment of English culture in an other setting, symbolized by the huge solid arch. Whilst Price's intention was surely to project his metropolitan credentials, he failed to eradicate or render invisible the otherness of the location and the detail of his own posture belies his creoleness: no polite English gentleman would have posed for a portrait lounging back with his legs crossed and head leaning on his elbow which in turn rests on the arm of the chair. The painting is a distant creolized refiguration of the polite outlook, the overwhelming narrative the creole trope of monarch-of-all-I-survey.

Gikandi argues that the polite creole houses and landscapes were 'out of place in the tropics', because they were unsuited to the climate and, in a 'cultural and moral sense', too close to the origin of their wealth in spite of removal from the plantation.[228] However, he also argues that cultural and architectural taste crossed the Atlantic in both directions, and that features of creole culture were exported and incorporated into the activities, and architecture, of absentee creoles in Britain.

Hence, the metropolitan location for the landscape and garden creations of the plantocracy was not a separate setting disconnected from the colony, rather it encompassed the trans-Atlantic zone of transition and recreation. If the English landscape garden was an unambiguous representation of power and elitism, the Atlantic slave plantation took it to another level. It was a polarized institution and narrative of power, ruthless productivity and, crucially, of race, a 'way of being' as well as a 'way of seeing' and the cornerstone of creole culture. The intrinsic position that it occupied in the creole mindset had implications for the landscapes of absentee planters in the metropolitan setting. Further, the relative status of the planter on either side of the Atlantic complicated the trans-Atlantic planter's sense of self and engagements with politeness, a complication that became exacerbated as it moved down generations.

Like others in his position Alderman William Beckford (1709-70) built a new Palladian house on his estate, essentially analogous to others built by wealthy traders and colonialists, such as Wanstead House, belonging to the 'Nabob' Richard Child, son of the Governor of the East

[228] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 116.

India Company, and even the adjacent Stourhead, home of the banker Henry Hoare, which the Beckfords designated as a challenge for them to outshine. Inevitably determined to outperform his peers, Alderman Beckford is said to have modelled Fonthill Splendens on Robert Walpole's Houghton Hall, 'the perfect model for the Alderman's political and social aspirations'.[229] This massive material investment and most ambitious of self-creation projects, in the image of the first prime minister, was renowned as much for the extravagant expenditure consumed in its construction as for its inherent qualities or taste, consigning it to the realm of transparent and inevitable hybridity, as much in the image of the plantation great house as any metropolitan model. In the words of Gikandi:

> While the façade of his house reflected the architecture of his class, its interior exhibited the magnificent style associated with the colonies, including the Baroque. Indeed there is a sense in which Fonthill House can be read as an extension of the West Indian Georgian house, including Drax Hall in Jamaica, which Alderman Beckford purchased in 1762.[230]

Nevertheless, the house was reputed for its grandeur and within the sphere of absenteeism, as judged by Nelson, it was 'the most spectacular of the houses of the first wave of mid-eighteenth-century Jamaicans to remove […] to Britain'.[231] In other words, the narrative of exceptionality applied.

Externally the Palladian villa, was carefully in conformity with the prevailing fashion. The interior, however, as Gikandi tells us, was entirely out of such conformity, decorated in the flamboyant and ostentatious style of platocratic taste.[232] Hence its entirety was a hybrid comingling of domestic fashion and creole otherness, consigned by polite taste to vulgarity. The 'Grand Apartment' doors were made of mahogany, a signature feature of the creole planter's house, whilst the floors were of English oak, and 'the window sashes of large plate

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[229] Hewat-Jaboor, 'Fonthill House', p. 54.

[230] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 136.

[231] Nelson, *Architecture and Empire*, p. 258.

[232] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 136.

glass with very neat brass frames [were] covered with mahogany'.[233] When visiting in 1769 Lady Shelburne wrote in her diary, 'it surpris'd me that with so fine an Appartment we should always breakfast dine & sup in the Rustick Story': the rustic (ground) floor, accessed from beneath the outside staircase that ascended to the main entrance, was conventionally the space used for daily life, whilst the *piano nobile* level was where guests would expect to dine and be entertained.[234] This preference for the lower storey was a legacy of colonial living; even the Alderman's famed libraries were on the ground floor. On the principal *piano nobile* level, Fonthill Splendens offered a 'circuit' of nine intercommunicating rooms, in the customary layout of the polite villa.[235] This conformed with the function of the house as a performative space and social assimilation as a protracted process. The Alderman was famed for lavish entertainment, which required a normalized polite setting. Lady Shelburne's access to the lower floor was not the normal experience of guests. Another visitor in 1766 remarked 'the Offices are united with the House by a Piazza of the Doric Order', an architectural feature of the plantation great house transplanted by the creole planter, but again not within the main area generally seen by guests.[236]

In accordance with this narrative of external conformity and internal creole comfort, a conventional landscape garden ensued, and here process was as much a performance as the completed project. Thus, in laying out his landscape, Alderman Beckford followed normal contemporary methods, which frequently entailed wholesale relocations of buildings and even entire villages, a routine practice in the business of landscaping with a concern for views, vistas and borrowed landscapes - and a display of extravagance and the extent of wealth being deployed. Landscaping commenced with the demolition of the parish church which was rebuilt on a new site to serve as an eye-catcher, 'a good termination of the

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[233] Elizabeth Marsh, the Alderman's stepdaughter, quoted in Hewat-Jaboor, 'Fonthill House', p. 55.

[234] Lady Shelburne, quoted in Ibid, p. 56.

[235] Ibid, pp. 55-56; Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, pp. 110-11.

[236] This visitor was possibly the architect James Essex, quoted in Michael Cousin, 'The Landscape at Fonthill: An Assessment of the Grottoes and Their Builders', in *Fonthill Recovered: A Cultural History*, ed. by Caroline Dakers (London: UCL Press, 2018) pp. 247-75 (p. 253); Nelson, *Architecture and Empire*, pp. 6 and 260.

prospect', in the words of Richard Pocock following a visit in 1754, with its cupola able to be 'glimpsed among the trees from the garden front of the house'.[237]

Pocock goes on to describe other features of the landscape:

> There is a large lawn that way & plantations to the west, an open Temple on the Side of the hill; & an open rotundo is building higher up on the hill; To the east is a broad serpentine river with a very handsom bridge of free Stone built over it of three arches, with a Stone Baluster. To the north is a grand gateway near the village, from which there is a gravel walk to the Grand front about a furlong in length.[238]

This description is affirmed by two paintings attributed to Antonio Joli of an archetypal eighteenth-century landscape garden including the completed rotundo.[239] The 'serpentine river' was achieved by the Brownian practice of damming a stream, and 'plantations' of Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) furnished 'twin rewards' of financial profit from the sale of timber and 'the approbation of bodies such as the Royal Society of Arts' which in 1769 awarded Beckford a gold medal for this. In the words of Megan Aldrich, 'The park at Fonthill was replete with the picturesque elements of water, woods, hills and vistas', which characterized the landscape garden.[240] This included the monocultural 'plantation' of *Pinus Sylvestris* managed for timber production, visually conflating the picturesque with patriotism and the national interest, embodied in the felled trees destined for military and maritime use. The materiality of the considerable profit attached to the 'plantation' connects directly with the Alderman's trans-Atlantic plantations in a highly visible trope of creoleness.

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[237] Quoted in Cousin, 'The Landscape at Fonthill', p. 248; Alexander Marr, 'William Beckford and the Landscape Garden', in *William Beckford, 1760-1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed by Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020) pp.137-53 (p. 140).

[238] Quoted in Cousin, 'The Landscape at Fonthill', p. 248.

[239] 'The Early Paintings of Fonthill' https://www.ucldigitalpress.co.uk/Book/Article/68/92/5117/accessed [accessed 13 July 2020].

[240] Megan Aldrich, 'William Beckford's Abbey at Fonthill: From the Picturesque to the Sublime', *William Beckford, 1760-1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed by Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 117-35, p. 117.

A garden feature of particular interest to the creole landscape was the grotto. It aligned with the Gothic: 'the clear aim […] was to provoke great heights and depths of emotion'. Thus it constituted a 'dark and terrifying entrance' to a 'dark, twisting and turning tunnel' designed 'to stir the imagination to fear sublimely terrifying and end to the dark and Gothic journey', terminating in 'a great surprise at the watery, glittery and glistening cavern decorated to delight and enrapture in the exact opposite of the expected horror.'[241] Sarah Rutherford and Jonathan Lovie propose its origin in the classical 'shrine to the spirit of a spring'. It was a ubiquitous Italian garden feature, reminiscent of the mountainous terrains of Switzerland and northern Italy, and thus equally a familiar motif of grand tour reminiscence. But in the creole cultural repository it contained a further evocation as a replication of the caves which feature prominently in the geomorphology of Jamaica and creole landscape awareness.

The sublime experience of the grotto in the metropolitan landscape frequently aligns with that of caves as represented by colonial picturesque writers such as Long and Beckford of Somerley, where countless descriptive passages configure the rocky terrain of the colony as dangerous and sublime, and identify caves as spaces occupied by escaping slaves, and potential loci for the planning of subversive uprisings and threats to the colony. The grotto brought together a number of strands both nostalgic and conformist, which lent it a particular significance in the Fonthill landscape. Predictably the extent of the Fonthill grottoes was exceptional, extending to several acres: 'Fonthill, Wiltshire, has a unique group of lakeside grottoes with primitive monolithic exteriors, the caverns brought to life with the play of water glinting on the rock and mineral decoration of the walls an ceilings'.[242] This system of grottoes included a tunnel passing under a road, modelled on the famous precedent created for Alexander Pope, with a connected grotto designed as a hermitage. Like Pope's grotto, the hermitage was 'adorn'd with Shells and Spars', also comparable to the spectacular grotto at Goldney Hall. And there was a connected material interest for Beckford, since he and his brother Julines were involved in the importation of such exotica.[243]

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[241] Sarah Rutherford and Jonathan Lovie, *Georgian Garden Buildings* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2012), p. 59.

[242] Ibid, p. 60.

[243] Cousin, 'The Landscape at Fonthill', p. 257.

In summation, the aestheticizing colonial landscape canon represented a voice of power and investment in the landscape oriented towards metropolitan audiences and external impressions. Nugent's accounts and the evidence of Petley and Leech affirm the frequency of creole ornamental 'pleasure gardens' which were attached to planters' houses, laid out in walks and with ornamental planting. These pleasure gardens were designed for recreational purposes by those same plantocrats whose invested interests were enshrined in the distasteful and unpolite plantation. In these instances anxious concern for external scrutiny was diminished, although the lavish materiality of creole high living was frequently considered vulgar and potentially engendered alternative anxieties. The Decoy was exceptional in its size, proclamatory style and design for performative entertainment in the metropolitan mode. Nevertheless, it remained a locus of slavery and synonymy of setting with other unaestheticized and undisguised landscapes of brutality. The strained mimetic polite imprint on the colonial terrain was fractured by the embedded creoleness of the proud aristocratic planter, who audaciously transgressed the norm of Jamaican estate portraiture. Price projected the landscape as integral to and enhancing of his identity by positioning himself centrally in the painting in the metropolitan mode. His demeanour, however, undermines this, affirms the otherness of his engagement with the landscape and subverts politeness.

Gikandi applies the telling metaphor of money laundering to the complex creole intervention in the culture of taste: 'art', he declares, was 'an important conduit for laundering a self produced by slave money into a civic, virtuous subject', and provided 'a site for displacing or repressing the culture of slavery'.[244] Nevertheless, the polite exterior of Fonthill Splendens and flamboyant creole interior constituted a place of safety for a man desirous of acceptance and respectability but habituated to a significantly different style of living. The anxiety and vilification frequently projected onto absentee planters was experienced, not by the Alderman, but rather his son, as attested in Chapter 8.

[244] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 119.

CHAPTER 4: AESTHETICIZING BRUTALITY

As a ubiquitous vehicle for the display of politeness and proclamation of self, the picturesque genre was second nature to the British ruling class of the eighteenth century. At the same time as affirming control through boundaries of framing, it acknowledged and celebrated the expansiveness of the uncharted through its ability to transition into sublimity. This was the ideal landscape for a new class, establishing and protecting its status, whilst equally preoccupied with ever expanding commercial opportunities, metaphorized in the oceanic narratives portrayed in the paintings of Claude Lorrain. And in the eighteenth century the logical conclusion of such departures was conquest and colonial settlement. Hence the genre was readily weaponized by the plantocracy as a strategy to amalgamate politeness with the unpolite reality of the plantation and frame the slave colony within the 'culture of taste'. The picturesque of refined taste, however, was never an enclosed landscape of uniform rows of sugar canes tended by enslaved workers. This was the creolization of the genre, the planteresque.

Metropolitan politeness, itself an aspirational performance, was encoded in prescriptive behaviours and motifs, including a plethora of exotic luxury consumer goods originating in the colonies. It is an irony that the behaviour of this pretentious class was mimetically performed in the marginal setting of the very locus where so much of its signature paraphernalia originated, and that this very origin was a source of discomfort and engineered distancing for the metropolitan elite from the Atlantic colonies because of the taint of slavery. Hence creole attempted engagements with polite culture accented the distance between the plantocracy and the metropolitan landed elite, and the very group that enabled the consumption of such fashionable products was strategically excluded from, or marginalized within, fashionable circles. The intersection of the metropolitan lust for plantation products and discomfort regarding slavery fuelled this desire to distance the colony and its representatives.

However, as expressed by Sarah Yeh and highlighted in the previous chapter, plantocrats 'clung to an idealized sense of Britishness' and 'aspired to replicate […] [a] vision of Britain in

their new environment'.[245] This vision, based on a 'collective social and cultural identity that Britons associated with an idealized version of their own society', prioritized land ownership as the cornerstone of elitism, 'the idealized manor as the heart of British society', with the recent added acceptance of 'new men and money' within the ranks of elitism.[246] Hence, the plantocracy imagined that its vast acres and wealth similarly qualified it for exclusivity. In challenging metropolitan opinion of planters as lacking the polite refinement which underpinned the identity of 'gentility, morality, femininity, masculinity, and Christianity, among others' the planteresque aesthetic was a critical tool.[247]

The Planteresque

The 'Gentleman Planter' Edward Long (1734-1813) was a leading member of the Jamaican plantocracy, whose *History of Jamaica* includes countless passages of planteresque renditions of the colonial landscape. He was the great grandson of Samuel Long, a grocer's son who was neither wealthy nor powerful when he arrived in Jamaica in 1655 as a part of Cromwell's conquering expedition. Of relatively humble birth, but apparently related to the 'landed Longs of Wiltshire', in an early gesture of entitlement he imprinted the Wiltshire dynasty on the colonial terrain by renaming the land he was granted after conquest 'Longville'.[248] In her history of the dynasty, Cheryl Nicol traces the early history and elevation of various strands and individuals of the Long family through the hierarchy of titles, some to very elevated positions in the country and even royal circles.[249] Samuel experienced a similar elevation in status and power within the Jamaican plantocracy, and the Longs rose to be one of the most prestigious and influential families in the colony.

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[245] Yeh, 'Colonial Identity' pp. 198 and 200.

[246] Ibid, pp. 199 and 204.

[247] Ibid, p. 201.

[248] Robert Mowbray Howard, *Records and Letters of the Family of the Longs of Longville, Jamaica, and Hampton Lodge, Surrey*, 2 vols (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1925), I p. 23.

[249] Cheryl Nicol, *Inheriting the Earth: The Long Family's 500 Year Reign in Wiltshire* (Sutton Veny: The Hobnob Press, 2016).

At the time of Edward's birth in England, however, the family sugar fortune, had been largely lost through the irresponsible and fraudulent financial conduct of Samuel's son Charles, and the family was relatively impecunious. Charles's son and father the Gentleman Planter, a second Samuel, having enjoyed a youth of privilege at Eton and then in the Horse Guards as a favourite of Queen Caroline, found himself on his father's death burdened with the task of resolving the indebtedness and restoring the family's finances.[250] He was obliged to remove two older twin sons from Eton and send them with Edward to a school called St Edmundsbury in Suffolk. These elder brothers apparently featured significantly in Edward's emotional development. He wrote of Charles, 'I loved him, not only for his amiable qualities of heart and head […], [but also because he was] a noble manly figure of uncommon strength and agility, which he had frequently exerted in protecting me from ill usage at school', whereas Robert was 'of a most tyrannical overbearing disposition', against whom Charles was a 'dearly beloved protector'.[251] His father returned to Jamaica in 1746 and Edward was moved to a school in Liskard where he lived in very frugal lodgings, 'lack[ing] a suit of clothing that was not "patched and darned in a thousand places"'.[252] His education then moved for a third time to a school and even more meagre lodgings in London.[253] He entered Gray's Inn, but the death of his father and the 'meagre provision left for him in his will' curtailed his studies before he graduated. Hence, Edward Long arrived in Jamaica accustomed to penury, but this was no obstacle to rapid social elevation and powerful office. Nor were the unscrupulous dealings normalized in his family, to the extent of criminality, both in Jamaica and among earlier ancestors in England. In fact, membership of the Long dynasty afforded him respect.

In 1757 he sailed for Jamaica and a colonial life as proprietor of 'a moity of the Longville estate' and manager of Lucky Valley, which was later conveyed to him.[254] In 1758 he married

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[250] Ibid, p. 395.

[251] Quoted in Ibid, p. 398.

[252] Ibid, p. 400.

[253] Ibid. Nicol writes of the 'small inconvenient garret' in which he lived, which had 'no fireplace but a bedful of bugs'.

[254] Ibid, p. 400.

Mary Ballard Beckford, daughter and heir to Thomas Beckford, and widow of John Pallmer, two planters of similar standing, creating a 'powerful union between the plantocratic Long, Beckford and Pallmer families', and accumulating a considerable fortune.[255] He became chief judge in the Vice-Admiralty Court and went on to sit in the Assembly, eventually in 1768 as speaker. Long is reputed to have been 'a cultivated, studious man who wanted his family to be brought up in an intellectual atmosphere', 'an accomplished musician' and amateur scientist who corresponded with the botanist Dr Thomas Dancer.[256]

Hence, in spite of a background of austerity Long had the self-assured, aristocratic demeanour appropriate to the standing of his family within the plantocracy, he was looked upon as a man of taste and refinement, and in 1769 when he retired to England he had acquired the wealth appropriate to this reputation. Back in England, he became a writer, most famously of *The History of Jamaica*, published in 1774. He was a member of the West Indian Merchants' and Planters' Committee and outspoken in promoting the colony and in defence of the inhumane enslavement of African people.

Long was a 'proud patriot who believed that Jamaica had progressed wonderfully in the 120 years since English settlement in 1655', and insistent on the importance of the colony to Britain.[257] He expressed effusive admiration for the creole ruling class and undertook to present the colony as a locus of humaneness. Burnard tells us that 'the Jamaican slave system was notorious for its violence', and enslaved people were more brutalized in Jamaica than in other colonies.[258] Long was closely associated with this brutality and defended it unconditionally, even insisting, 'There are no people in the world that exceed the gentlemen of this island in a noble and disinterested munificence', and that Jamaican planters were

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[255] Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, 'Edward Long' https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146633762 [accessed 12 March 2023]. Thomas Beckford was the brother of the younger Peter Beckford and uncle to the Alderman discussed in the previous chapter and again in Chapter 6.

[256] Kenneth Morgan, 'Long, Edward (1734-1813), Planter and Commentator on Jamaican Affairs', ONDB [accessed 4 February 2023].

[257] Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), pp. 47 and 49.

[258] Ibid, p. 63.

'humane and indulgent masters'.[259] He also promoted controversial views regarding African people and earned himself the lasting title 'Father of English Racism'.[260]

Long spent just twelve years living in Jamaica (1757-69). Four years after the publication of his *History*, he published a pamphlet entitled *English Humanity No Paradox: Or, An Attempt to Prove that the English are not a Nation of Savages*, on the subject of the greatness of the English and the empire.[261] In this document he expressed awareness of and discomfort concerning brutality in apparent entire contradiction to the demeanour of the superior plantocrat who celebrated his own superiority and the humaneness of the plantocracy. Robin Blackburn suggests that white planters did not believe their own mythology which rationalized the inhumane treatment and animalization of black people, asserting that 'the American planter who treated his slaves like subhumans' understood 'the basic similarity between himself and his property'.[262] Long's discussion of cruelty and brutality tellingly drifts to the subject of the beating of children in school, regarding which he cites his own experience:

> I know in my own Example, that I still feel it lively and fresh, though above thirty years have elapsed since my deliverance from Bondage; and ever and anon my nightly slumbers are disturbed by *Doctor Tickle-tail's* direful Figure in dismal Raven-colour clad; who, with Fury-d-rod is just about to flay my poor dismantled Breech. In vain I supplicate his clemency with tears, or try to mollify his rage with Entreaties. Deaf and insensible to the voice of woe, his bloody, boisterous threats, now thunder in my ear; my very soul is agonized with terror; it is too much for nature; She reprieves me from the lash; I wake; and rejoice to find, *it is but a Dream!* May every Advocate for Tyranny be haunted *de die in diem*, with these nocturnal visions, till he

[259] Long, *History*, II, pp. 262-63.

[260] Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 70.

[261] Edward Long, *English Humanity No Paradox or, An Attempt to Prove that the English are not a Nation of Savages* (London: T. Lowndes, 1778).

[262] Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern* (London: Verso, 2010), pp. 12-13.

> recants his error and vows eternal enmity against all power unduly and rancorously exercised.[263]

This account of trauma originating in abuse by 'the lash' is a reminder of his childhood relationships with his brothers. He was clearly protected by one from the bullying of the other, and he implies that he was also bullied in school. In fact, this passage suggests a less than happy, even traumatic, school experience.

It is remarkable that in Jamaica this man was responsible for the infliction of much greater and more systematic brutality on enslaved workers than experienced by any child, no matter the extent of bullying, in an English school. And this leads to consideration of his internality. Was it the case that he was aware of the contradiction between his espoused beliefs and this candid account of himself as a traumatized victim of brutality? Was his risible theory of racial difference contrived as a justification for his brutal conduct? For his expressed belief in white supremacy was extreme and his theories on race were 'problematic', even amongst fellow polygenists, who 'shied away' from him, and deployed only by abolitionists to discredit supporters of slavery.[264] It would seem that for even the viciously racist and entitled white presence in the plantation landscape its brutality could evoke trauma, and that Long's amplified landscape aestheticization was connected with repression.

The *History* attracted and continues to attract gravitas as a 'magisterial work', described by Jefferson Dillman as:

> A magisterial work of politics, society, and economics […], contain[ing] landscape descriptions that highlight one of the main purposes of the work: to defend slavery […], and to present Jamaica as a land of productive beauty that deserves to be regarded as the crown jewel of the British Empire.[265]

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[263] Long, *English Humanity No Paradox*, pp. 38-39.

[264] Suman Seth, *Difference and Disease: Medicine, Race and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 239.

[265] Jefferson Dillman, *Colonizing Paradise: Landscape and Emoire in the British West Indies* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), p. 160.

The focus here is exclusively the justification of slavery through the configuration of the landscape in the European framework as picturesque and the effects and subtexts of Long's aestheticizing mission through close textual reading of selected extracts.

Thematically the Claudian prototype required classical Mediterranean settings, and the planteresque was therefore inherently tasked with the translocation of such signifiers to the enslaved landscape. Stories and characters of Greco-Roman mythology are obvious vehicles for this. In this example, Long writes of his discovery of a series of caves:

> The famous Cretan labyrinth did not, I am persuaded, contain half the turns and windings which branch through every part of this infernal wilderness; and which even Theseus, with the help of his clue, would have found difficult to unravel. […]
>
> These are the most remarkable curiosities as yet discovered in this parish; but it may probably contain others, the grotto not having been found out or at least generally known, till within these few years. We are uncertain whether it was known to the Spaniards; but it is supposed that run-away Negroes were not unacquainted with so convenient a hiding-place.[266]

The surface narrative here finds the knowing historian in an unknown location. It is dark and below the surface, literally and metaphorically, and invisible to the white gaze, opportunistically configured by Long as a classical picturesque/sublime adventure translocated to the colony, with a racialized subtext. A 'faint, cadaverous smell' and 'a congeries of bat dung' imply a locus of danger, death and the animalized other, not only of bats but also of Africans imagined to have found shelter here after escaping slavery.[267] And this animalized other, removed from the framed and surveilled plantation, becomes a monster, a Minotaur, lurking in the terrifying 'labyrinth' of underground passages. Ultimately this is a 'frontier', an unknown, unconquered not-white space, as signified by the hostile and potentially deadly representation as the dwelling place of the Minotaur. By means of the Greek mythological association Long contrives this fearful experience as a fashionable

[266] Long, *History,* II, p. 100.

[267] Ibid, pp. 97 and 100.

conceit of sublimity and refers to the caves as a 'grotto', a routine and prized feature of the metropolitan polite landscape. Nevertheless below-the-surface anxieties are writ large. Long was all too aware that he was not Theseus and did not have the means of combatting this imagined danger, which is therefore configured as so huge that it would have been beyond even Theseus's ability to discover and overcome. Rather what is unconsciously revealed is a huge, hidden and irreconcilable threat at the heart of the colony. Casid's proposed 'medium and ground of contention for countercolonial strategies' within the colonial landscape was identified and feared by the 'Gentleman Planter'.[268]

In another passage the transference of Mediterranean cultural motifs and narratives to the colonial Caribbean is triangulated with the metropole through the referencing, and imitation, of the iconic patriotic poet James Thomson (1700-48).[269] John Barrell identifies in Thomson's *grand oeuvre*, *The Seasons*, various syntactical strategies which equate in poetic terms with the Claudian visual prototype. Long, influenced and inspired by Thomson, attempts a similar prosaic strategy. Hence the drama of this description of the White River Cascade echoes that in a part of *The Seasons*, included by Long in the text, in which a storm, personified as 'the Father of the Tempest', causes a river to burst its banks. This is an audacious translocation, for Thomson's tempest is set in his native Scotland.

Long's imitative account of the cascade also allows for the planteresque translocation of signature grand tour landscapes of Italy, an indulgence of self-fashioning on behalf of himself, as a knowing aesthete, and on behalf of the colony he was so anxious to promote as an equal and fitting place of residence for the genteel European of taste. Hence, 'The fall is said to exceed in grandeur that of Tivoli or any other in Europe, though much inferior to that of Niagara'.[270] This incidental reference to Niagara is another self-aggrandizing conceit, a supreme flourish of global knowing and imperial extension of the trope of grand tourism on a globalized scale in a likeness to Joseph Banks, who famously, in a new framework of

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[268] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. 191.

[269] Appendix 2, Long, *History,* II, pp. 92-95.

[270] Long, *History,* II, p. 95.

Enlightenment bravado, exoticized and redefined the grand tour as an imperial adventure.[271] Long here contrives the Americas as a location of similar sophistication and adventure, itself an unconvincing hybrid configuration, for he had seen none of the spectacles he references, since he had neither visited mainland America nor undertaken the grand tour.

The passage concerns two 'remarkable cascades'. First, the 'lesser' one on the Rio Alto passes a 'very curious group of anchovy pear-trees, whose spreading roots intercept the shallow stream in a multitude of different directions' into 'cisterns, or reservoirs, […] their sides formed by broken boughs and limbs, incrusted over, and sustained by the trunks of trees, promiscuously growing between them'. These cisterns are 'enveloped' by '*lamina*' which have 'the appearance of stone' but are in fact 'either a bough between the two incrusting coats, or a vacant space, which a bough has once filled, and by the mouldering of which in length of time a cavity has been left'.[272] Scientific account and aesthetic configurations mingle. Hence the 'very curious anchovy-pear trees', graphically explained to slow down the flow of water by means of their paradoxically and disconcertingly above-ground roots, visible, huge in scale and said to bear:

> no ill resemblance to a magnificent flight of steps in rustic work, leading up to the enchanted palace of some puissant giant of romance. A sheet of water, transparent as crystal, conforming to the bend of the steps, overspreads their surface; and, as the rays of light, or sun-shine, play between the waving branches of the trees, it descends glittering with a thousand variegated tints.[273]

This account assumes a figurative narrative of sublimity, as the reality of these structures is configured as awesome, but it is also one of underlying decay, a rapid process in the tropics, equally rapidly disguised in a resemblance to stone. A structure composed of apparently strong material is in reality insubstantial, decaying and potentially, or eventually and inevitably, unsafe. And the beauty of a sheet of water, 'transparent as crystal', becomes

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[271] Fara, *Sex, Botany and Empire*, pp. 51-53.

[272] Long, *History*, II, p. 93.

[273] Ibid.

disturbing and sinister, emanating from the otherness of the encrusted decayed vegetation and paradoxically conflating with an inference of luxury in the 'magnificence' of the steps and crystal appearance of the water. This is the sublime, referred to by Hipple, 'founded on awe and terror', where a man may move freely or may find the ground crumbling beneath him: the charm and aesthetic appeal belies the sinister other and an imagined threat.[274] For these sentences foreshadow the account of the previously discussed 'grotto', leading to the underground caves. In a glorious sublime metaphor Long has imagined the European presence in the colony, the source of luxury consumer goods from which wealth derived, as an endowment, a sheet of water metaphorized as a crystal, a hard long-lasting object of beauty, conflating the European presence with the luxury. But this imagined unyielding matter is actually fluid and shown to originate in an apparently solid and long-lasting but in fact inherently fragile source. In the tropics, we learn, things are not as they appear, and Long, invested in a culture within which appearances are paramount, imagines the decay of the very substrate on which the wealth of the colony and European commerce rests.

This implausible naturally occurring decorative formation, affirmed by an illustration, is a novel configuration of the ubiquitous tropical trope of effortless abundance, associated with vegetation and the notion of plenty or excess.[275] Signifying the terrain as desirable in the European framework, this representational conceit suggests the colonial landscape requires no 'improvement' and sic no labour. Hence the planteresque serves the function of concealing the existence of agents of improvement (i.e. enslaved workers), although the trope of superficial appearances as different from underlying realities, conveyed through the decaying-vegetation-as-stone-staircase, undermines the entire passage. The colonial terrain is referenced as inherently aesthetic but equally inherently unstable.

The strategic representation of naturally occurring features in the tropical landscape as visually synonymous with details found in fashionable designed landscapes removes labour

[274] Hipple, *The Beautiful*, *The Sublime and The Picturesque*, p. 211.

[275] Appendix 1, Figure 4.

from the picture and also from consideration, it is configured as unnecessary. This trope recurs in the account of the second cascade, where a 'bason':

> is ornamented with two elegant trees of the palm kind, which spring like straight columns out of the water, placed by the hand of nature at such even distance from the banks on each side, that art could not have done the work with more attention to propriety and exactness.[276]

This configuration of an 'unimproved' feature as aesthetically in alignment with European taste is a hyperbolic extension of the Tivolian likeness. By emphasizing an imagined synonymy between the hybrid landscape and fashionable designed landscapes in Europe, Long ultimately undermines his own proposal through a comparison with decaying matter. And it affirms the blindness of the white male gaze to features of the other landscape.

Picturesque tropes (personified light, sunshine and its active movement, its descent 'glittering with a thousand variegated tints') echo the recurring enticing luxury which the colonial lifestyle offers. The omnipresence of water lends fluidity, constant movement, and tropical luxuriance, and 'promiscuous' tree-growth references tropes of tropical sexual excess, temptation and moral danger. Further to this though the revelation of boughs and leaves within the incrusting mineral material mingles the exotic and domestic in a troubling aesthetic and emotional synthesis, exposing the disconnect between the European settler and the landscape he is celebrating. Mineral deposits which coat the vegetation of the 'magnificent flight of steps' are scientifically accounted for as 'incrustations', but they are also configured as a part of a threatening environment.

These instances of planteresque landscape understandings highlight the essential role of denial and disguise fulfilled by aesthetic renditions of enslaved landscapes. Equally, however, they highlight the subtext of anxiety and dislocation that disturbed and destabilized the plantocratic inscape.

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[276] Long, *History*, II, pp. 94-95.

In summation, Edward Long arrived in Jamaica accustomed to penury, but with an inherited demeanour of plantocratic self-assurance. In the colony he found privilege and was looked upon as a man of unusual taste and refinement. In spite of his family's unscrupulous and even criminal past, both in Jamaica and in England, he possessed effortlessly claimed plantocratic privilege and moral superiority and achieved great power in the colony. It is curious that such a proud and entitled man revealed inner vulnerability and that this concerned an experience of brutality such as he defended and was himself responsible for delivering in the colony. Did he imagine differing understandings or standards of brutality on either side of the Atlantic? Did he believe black people deserved such treatment? Or did he configure a theory of racial difference as a justification for prioritizing his own material benefit over the criminal and undeserved suffering of others? Or was there another performative motivation for the disclosure of vulnerability? Regardless of such speculations, Long was a great propagandist and an assertive manipulator of the picturesque genre on behalf of slavery. He also stands as a revealer of inner anxieties in the planter psyche, a 'way of seeing' made evident in the colonial landscape.

The Colonial Picturesque Tour

The picturesque tour, as conceived by William Gilpin (1724-1804), was a physical movement through the landscape in a search for an idealized view, which became fixed, not infrequently 'improved' or edited, and then immortalized as an aesthetic creation, a sketch (or painting), a literary account or both.[277] In the colonial setting this conflated with an important Enlightenment trope of the European traveller in other territories. As Pratt tells us, the 'travelling gaze', to adopt Arnold's phrase, was instrumental in the colonial project.[278]

Thirty years after the publication of Long's *History*, Maria Nugent (1770/71-1834), a sojourner in the colony as wife to the governor George Nugent, configured a picturesque colonial landscape that differed significantly from the planteresque aesthetic. Long was

[277] Malcolm Andrews, 'Gilpin, William (1724-1804)' https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10762 [accessed 20 May 2024] Gilpin published his notes and illustrations of the many 'picturesque tours' he undertook in the famous *Observations on . . .*' series of books.

[278] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 5; Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*.

driven by a strong political motivation at a time when abolition was imagined as potentially disastrous for the plantocracy and the entire domestic 'West India Interest'. In spite of such anxieties, however, back in England it was distant and probably not imagined by Long as a possibility, as he confidently positioned himself within an encompassing culture of creole and metropolitan politeness. Nugent's time in the colony (1801-05) followed a number of transformational events for the colony which reconfigured what was not just imaginable but probable, in the light of the French and Haitian revolutions. Burnard identifies the year 1788 as the moment at which 'parliamentary action to abolish the slave trade […] began in earnest', a development following domestic responses to the brutality of creole culture and the suffering of enslaved Africans, most specifically the Somerset ruling of 1772 and the scandal of the Zong in 1783.[279] Hence, when the Nugents arrived in 1801, the colony differed significantly from the time of Long's residence and tensions between the colony and metropole were heightened. Britain was at war with France, and Nugent's duties as governor included the problem of 'relations with Toussaint' and frequent hostility on the part of the plantocracy.[280]

In spite of considerable political and diplomatic turmoil, the Nugents presented as an eminently genteel couple identified with the polite cultured ways of the metropolitan elite. Maria was reputedly a dazzling socialite, described by a contemporary as 'very pretty […] very thin and little […] an amazing dresser, never appear[ing] twice in the same gown' and known for her 'vivacity [and] sense of humour'.[281] And, as revealed in the journal of her five-year residence in Jamaica, she believed her gentility detached her from and elevated her above the Jamaican plantocracy. However, in spite of the vivacity and stylish clothes, the Nugents' polite credentials were potentially compromised: George was of illegitimate birth to Irish gentry and Maria was born in America to a family of Scottish, Irish and Dutch heritage: in the words of Elizabeth Bohls, they were 'two colonials, serving the British Empire

[279] Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, p. 241.

[280] Wright, *Nugent's Journal*, p. xix.

[281] Rosemary Cargill Raza, 'Nugent [née Skinner], Maria, Lady Nugent (1770/71-1834), Diarist', https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/47677 [accessed 21 August 2022].

on the other side of the Atlantic, identify[ing] England as their home'.[282] It is conceivable, therefore, that Maria's superior, censorious, and polite persona was in some part a compensation for interior insecurity. Certainly, she, like many of her white colonial contemporaries, was on a mission of self-creation during her Jamaican sojourn.

Writing of the diarist Anna Margaretta Larpent, Gikandi explains the diary, or journal, as a significant tool of polite self-creation:

> Her diaries showcase a life in which the most private behaviour was seamlessly connected to the public life of an intellectual and cultured woman. […] Her daily movement from the scene of domesticity to the realm of high culture seems to overcome any assumed difference between these two spheres of social life. […]
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> [P]oliteness had to be presented as a public act for modes of behaviour acquired value through their exhibition, where culture was "characterized by an emphasis upon social display" and cultured sites became "places of self-presentation in which audiences made publicly visible their wealth, status, social and sexual charms".[283]

Nugent's journal falls exactly into this mode, featuring the routine and domestic alongside the conscious and performative. For Bohls this domesticity prompts the question: 'What is the relationship between domesticity and the empire?',[284] and then the answer:

> An answer to this question can begin usefully with what Charlotte Sussman calls the "semantic slippage between 'the domestic,' meaning British national territory and 'the domestic,' meaning interior of the family."[285]

Further, whilst for Larpent this performance was a laboured 'representation of herself as a cultured person', Nugent's entitlement is of a different magnitude.[286] However, traversing the

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[282] Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place*, p. 155.

[283] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, pp. 60-61.

[284] Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place*, p. 143.

[285] Ibid, p. 144.

[286] Brewer, *The Pleasure of the Imagination*, p. 56.

Atlantic and translocating these two realms of domesticity and public performance to the colonial environment, immediately instils Nugent's journal with creoleness with the added dimension of confidence in herself as different. This intersection enhances the tensions inherent to the conceptualizing of gentility against the ubiquitous reality of slavery.

The fusion of domestic and public, in both spheres of which Nugent wielded the considerable power of the white gaze, and the slippage of domesticity meant that there was a continuum between the two realms: one might infer that Nugent's behaviour in the domestic realm was a rehearsal for her conduct in the wider world. In both she understood her position to be external and her status superior to that of the plantocratic establishment. Her presence in the colony was after all effectively as a representative of the British state, and, through 'slippage', her routine domestic engagements became a wider narrative of racialized relations within and beyond the home intersected with metropolitan disdain for the mores of the colony.

In the domestic setting her considerable discussion of the inadequacies of her black servants aligns blackness of skin with an absence of cleanliness, and other associated qualities. Just six days after her arrival she wrote:

> This day we have kept to ourselves and the house is put into as good order as we could prevail upon the poor blackies to do it. They are all so good-humoured and seem so merry, that it is quite comfortable to look at them. I wish, however, they would be a little more alert in clearing away the filth of this otherwise nice and fine house.[287]

This early entry exemplifies a predictable response to black people. Whilst such referencing of enslaved Africans was general to white colonial discourse, Nugent's favoured terminology is illustrative of her particular stance of disguising distaste through infantilization. Most famously and frequently, enslaved Africans were 'blackies', her 'house slaves' were 'servants', and she imagined them as rendered 'good-humoured', through her benevolent treatment to such an extent that even to her hyper-sensitive gentility they became

[287] Wright, *Nugent's Journal*, p. 13.

'comfortable to look at'. Embedded in this framework is the trope of animalized other as monster which through her infantilization was transfigured from subaltern-as-monster to as-pet: 'One of the black women produced two boys, this morning. Went to see them, and they were exactly like two little monkeys'.[288] She applied herself to educating her servants in Christianity and led them in regular worship.[289] This benevolence allowed an internalized self-construction which enabled her to externalize and distance the brutality she encountered in the colony. Hence, at the beginning her residence, she wrote:

> Reflect all night upon slavery, and make up my mind, that the want of exertion in the blackies must proceed from that cause. Assemble them together after breakfast, and talk to them a great deal, promising every kindness and indulgence. We parted excellent friends, and I think they have been rather more active in cleaning the house ever since.[290]

This reflection is a reassurance, within the sphere of domestic rehearsal for public performance, that she personally is possessed of politeness. The entitlement she experienced is invested with comfort in her gentility and denial of the creole values which she has assumed in the other setting. Politeness, as discussed previously, constituted a closed social entity from within which external contact was minimal. But in the colony, in spite of her imagined enclosed domestic-governor's-wife orbit, Nugent was inevitably on occasion faced with the reality of racialized undercurrents of conflict and hostility that pervaded the colony. On one such occasion:

> We met a horrid looking black man, who passed us several times, without making any bow, although I recollected him as one of the boatmen of the canoe we used to go out in before we had the *Maria*. He was then very humble, but to-night he only

[288] Ibid, p. 42.

[289] Ibid, pp. 53, 103 and 215.

[290] Ibid, p. 14.

> grinned, and gave us a sort of fierce look, that struck me with a terror I could not shake off.[291]

In contrast to a previous humble demeanour, which probably means lowering his eyes and submissive body language, this man has the temerity to 'grin' (smile?) and at the same time give her a 'fierce look' (imagined?) and seemingly, more significantly, meet her gaze directly, rather than averting his eyes in submission. This is a narrative of perceived subversion, a reconfiguration of gazes which reveals to Nugent the reality of a black person with individuality and an identity at odds with the cosy Christian domesticity by which she conferred identities on her servants. And for her this is a terrifying experience, a 'horrid looking black man', definitely not a 'blackie'. This affirms Nugent's perception of blackness as an 'aberration' and 'grotesque', away from the subservient role of boatman (or 'servant', or field slave), the decontextualized black body is transformed into 'spectacle', which configuration 'assumes that the object is blinded; [and] only the audience sees'. In this framework, proposed by Susan Stewart, the black man becomes a 'freak of culture' (as distinct from the misnomer, 'freak of nature') and his 'anomalous status is articulated by the process of spectacle as it distances the viewer, and thereby it "normalizes" the viewer as much as it marks the freak as an aberration'.[292] The perceived violence in this encounter evidences the colonial subtext of discomfort which projects white violence onto the subaltern other, as a response to brutal treatment. And, unlike Long's response of anxiety to the other landscape, Nugent's sense of self configures this incident as affirmation of her 'normalized' metropolitan superiority.

A critical trope of tropicality, the synonymy of cleanliness with whiteness, frames Nugent's view of the colony: beyond black servants, she perceives the setting as inherently unclean and contaminative, in line with disease and degeneracy. The creolization of, or notional transformative effect of the tropical setting on, white people is also allegorized in cleanliness and hygiene. Thus, Alexander Lindsay, Earl of Balcarres, a man of considerably higher social

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[291] ibid, p. 227.

[292] Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 108-09.

standing than the Nugents, whom Nugent replaced as governor, is the object of copious censorious observations regarding personal hygiene:

> I wish Lord B. would wash his hands, and use a nail-brush, for the black edges of his nails really make me sick. He has, besides, an extraordinary propensity to dip his fingers in every dish. Yesterday he absolutely helped himself to some fricassee with his dirty finger and thumb.[293]

Balcarres significantly was not accompanied by his wife during his governorship of Jamaica and Nugent seizes upon this to construct a narrative of male degeneracy in the tropics, exhibited in unhygienic habits, and inappropriate sexual relationships with enslaved African 'mistresses':

> Lord B.'s *domestic* conduct, and his ménage here altogether. Never was there a more profligate and disgusting scene […]. I was glad to get to my own room, and employ my time more profitably than listening to such horrid details.[294]

This recurring theme amalgamates with other tropes of tropicality applied to the planters whom Nugent met as she accompanied her husband on his travels around the island. Cleanliness becomes a proxy for politeness and is weaponized in her constant narrative of self-assurance through the denigration of all that surrounds her. As a means of expressing politeness, the stress on its absence abounds.

The domesticity that inhabits her polite self-creation incorporates a further aspect of Nugent's perceived (or self-perceived) role in the colony in the narrative of domestic slippage: as helpmeet to the governor, adjunct to political power and embodiment of metropolitan culture, she is matriarch to the colony. Her journal abounds with expressions of concern for the wellbeing of others, most particularly her husband and children, after they were born, but also for those of lower status. The slippage is literally evident from the behavioural standards and Christian observance she requires of her servants to the

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[293] Wright, *Nugent's Journal*, p. 11.

[294] Ibid, p. 38.

standards she wishes but is unempowered to impose on the conduct of young men regarding interracial sex, 'Remonstrate with some of our young men upon the improper lives they lead, and the miseries that must result from the horrid connections they have formed […] This is, indeed, a sad immoral country'.[295]

And this immorality is essentialized in the inevitable outcome of the racialized relations of power embedded in the colonial landscape, namely the violation of black women by white men:

> I talked to the black women, who told me all their histories. The overseer's *chère amie*, and no man here is without one, is a tall black woman, well made, with a very flat nose, thick lips, and a skin of ebony, highly polished and shining. She shewed me her three yellow children, and said, with some ostentation, she should soon have another. The marked attention of the other women, plainly proved her to be the favourite Sultana of this vulgar, ugly, Scotch Sultan, who is about fifty, clumsy, ill made, and dirty. He had a dingy, sallow-brown complexion, and only two yellow discoloured tusks, by way of teeth. However, they say he is a good overseer.[296]

Whilst Nugent's disapproval is targeted at white men, what she disapproves of is not the exploitation and suffering of victims, but rather the moral degeneracy that she reads into it and the outcome of mixed-race children. Further, she concedes that this filthy man whom she despises is a good overseer. And ultimately, she and Long, who is equally vehement in his disapproval of interracial sex, are entirely accepting of a system from which every aspect of the society flows, and which frames their very being in the colony. In Nugent's narrative of self and judgement of creole society domesticity features prominently, and she sees it serially subverted in the sexual predation and lack of hygiene in white men in the colony. These two objects of disapproval are amalgamated into a trope of tropicality, which configures whites as victims of the other environment, although through her self-satisfied account of her fruitless attempts to curb the behaviour of young men whom she counsels,

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[295] Ibid, p. 172.

[296] Ibid, p. 28.

she in fact assigns herself to the limited and relatively powerless and gendered role of domesticity. The esteemed status within which she was held was token and as adjunct to her husband.

The landscape of the colonial picturesque tour landscape

Against this background of domesticity, externality and superiority of gaze, Nugent brought a very different interest to the picturesque colony. Like others, her first observations on Caribbean landscapes describe glimpses from on-board ship, before even reaching Jamaica, when she first saw Bridgetown: 'Came in sight of Barbadoes. The first appearance of the island is quite beautiful. It put me in mind of the scenes in Captain Cook's Voyages.' Familiarity with Cook's travel writing tangentially signals polite credentials of a well-read woman, very much in line with the self-conscious Larpent.[297] And the reference to Cook already establishes a framework in which she is a fashionable regency woman on a contemporary imagined voyage of discovery 'after Cook' rather than the would-be grand tourist 'after Theseus'. She is also a visitor or tourist discovering the landscape rather than a resident presenting it to a European readership. As a traveller, her aesthetic responses to the environment resemble the familiar form of the 'tour', by means of which the picturesque genre became conflated with travel.

Nugent saw a lot of the Jamaican countryside and visited many plantations and planters' homes, and during these visits she frequently strolled in gardens and commented in detail on plants and vistas. Her first view of Jamaica was also from on board the ship, 'Such hills, such mountains, such verdure; every thing so bright and gay, it is delightful!'[298] Soon after arriving, she went for a drive:

> All the country is flat, but very pretty. The farms are of various descriptions, and the orange trees, &c. lovely. I am told that the scenery of the interior is quite

[297] See Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 52, 'the ordinary business of consuming culture and consolidating her middle-class identity, reading books . . .', and Brewer, *The Pleasure of the Imagination*, p. 56, 'She aspired to what she called "a refinement which can only be felt in the pure pleasure of intellectu al pursuits". The proof of this quest, the evidence of her frequent play- and concert-going, together with assiduous reading […], is to be found in her journal'.

[298] Wright, *Nugent's Journal*, p. 10.

> beautiful, and this I can well imagine, from the lilac-coloured mountains, and the variety of ground and tints, that I see form my window.[299]

This is the picturesque of overviews from carriage windows and great house piazzas. Nugent, we infer, did not favour getting up close, especially if it might involve getting her shoes dirty or wet or coming into close proximity with unclean individuals or locations. Hence on an occasion which found her in a close encounter with the 'curious and entertaining' process of sugar making in the boiling house, she observed:

> how dreadful to think of their standing twelve hours over a boiling cauldron, and doing the same thing; and he [the overseer] owned to me that sometimes they did fall asleep, and get their poor fingers into the mill; and he showed me a hatchet, that was always read to sever the whole limb, as the only means of saying the poor sufferer's life! I would not have a sugar estate for the world![300]

This was followed by a visit to the distillery, where she 'could not comprehend' the process fully, but 'the smell of the dunder, as it is called, made me so sick, I could not stay to make a minute enquiry'.[301] In this 'on-the-spot' account of the plantation we witness white colonial intersectional conflict: the reality is at odds with her picturesque safety blanket of distance, which has momentarily slipped. And yet she readily dismissed the experience and resolved 'not to have a sugar estate'. She had learned the strategy of disassociation inherent to the polite 'vivacity' for which she was famous and deployed it equally in accepting the need for 'good overseers' even if they did abuse black women and father mixed-race offspring.

This disruption to the picturesque continuity does not recur. Rather, in spite of her discomfort regarding the creole environment, polite performance persists and her descriptive passages are effusive and hyperbolic: 'Nothing, certainly, can exceed the beauty

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[299] Ibid, p. 17.

[300] Ibid, pp. 62-63.

[301] Ibid, p. 63.

and enchanting scenery of this country'.[302] En route to the home of George Cuthbert at Clifton estate, she selects a colonial-Gilpinesque vista:

> The road beautiful and romantic, overhung with bamboos, and different picturesque trees and shrubs. Then, again, opening to a great width, and the soil like the bed of a river, owing to the torrents that occasionally pour down from the mountains. The palms and cotton trees on each side of it were majestic. It was all singularly beautiful, and my delight increased upon arrival at Clifton (Mr. Cuthbert's seat), which is indeed indescribably lovely. The views from it are quite enchanting.[303]

This description is classically Gilpinesque containing requisite framing, moving water, and mountainous backdrop, hybridized, by the archetypal other vegetation of exotic bamboos, palms and cotton trees of which the 'different trees and shrubs' consisted. And the apparently instinctual hyperbole, 'singularly beautiful', 'indescribably lovely' resonates performance. On arrival at Clifton:

> As soon as I could get away from the party, I went to my own room, the better to enjoy the landscape, as from my windows it is enchanting indeed. Imagine an immense amphitheatre of mountains, irregular in their shape and various in their verdure; some steep and rugged, others sloping gently, and presenting the thickest foliage, and the most varied tints of green, interspersed with the gardens of little settlements, some of which are tottering on the very brinks of precipices, others just peep out from the midst of cocoa-nut trees and bamboos, the latter looking really like large plumes of green feathers. The buildings are like little Chinese pavilions, and have a most picturesque effect. In front is a view of the sea, and the harbours of Kingston, Port Royal, Port Henderson, &c. full of ships of war and vessels great and small; the whole affording and exceedingly busy and interesting scene. The plain, from the Linguanea mountains, covered with sugar estates, *penns*, negro settlements, &c. and then the city of Kingston, the town of Port Royal, all so mixed

[302] Ibid, p. 54.

[303] Ibid, p. 25.

> with trees of different sorts, and all so new to an European eye, that it seemed like a paradise; and Clifton, where I stood, the centre of the blissful garden.[304]

The hyperbole continues ('enchanting indeed') and the account is painterly in detail and picturesque in structure, 'varied tints of green', an 'irregular' mountainous backdrop, the sea in front populated by vessels which reference the Claudian comfort blanket. But the hybrid assumes pre-eminence: sugar estates and all their features are rendered aesthetic, in summation 'to an European eye […] a paradise'. Here the subtext is extensive. Beyond the trope of plantation-as-idyll in the distance, the entirety of the view is a metropolitan characterization of the colony in the polite framework, containing all the elements of the Claudian prototype.

Having admired the view prior to arrival, she relishes it more from the framed viewpoint of her window, where an 'amphitheatre' cojoins her performative text. Miniaturized dwellings and exotic flora populate the slopes of the mountainous background, whilst the middle- and foreground consist of plantations, warships and trading vessels, connecting the view with the metropole in a narrative of production-commerce-seafaring and the destination of European markets, linked to warfare inherent to the defence of the colony and even colonial expansion.

To summarize, Nugent cherished her whiteness as a signifier of superiority, but it is more than this that sets her apart. She occupied a moral high ground of metropolitan politeness, metaphorized in hygiene and Christianity, that insulated her from the colony. And she perceived the absence of cleanliness in the plantocrats she met as much as in her black servants. Her emphasis is on the decadent environment and the gendered necessity of European domesticity, including Christianity which she inflicted on her servants. Her journal furnishes a layered range of insights into interactions between the transient sojourner and the plantocracy, and the tensions revealed in her engagements with the majority population on the island. Her moral high ground, however, was all that she had to internalize her superiority, for, in spite of her moralistic counselling and disapproving demeanour, she could

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[304] Ibid.

neither exert control nor effect change. The esteemed status within which she was held was token and gendered, as adjunct to her husband.

Her engagements with landscape, however, enabled her to recalibrate this position: the familiarity of the picturesque asserted a continuity for her with the metropole, which she and her husband were tasked to represent. By means of this genre she could imagine framing the colony, selectively including and excluding elements, and exerting control. And yet, in spite of her conscious posturing, as the last quotation illustrates, she was not immune to creolization. Indeed it took just two months for it to surface in her journal: in spite of her judgmental externality, the hybrid flora 'all so new to an European eye' had become entirely normalized, to such an extent that she found the scene 'like paradise' and the planter's garden 'blissful'. In fact the plantation itself was embedded in the magnificence of the view. It had taken just two months for her to internalize this hybrid landscape into her framework of performance, for the reality is that, whilst she experienced discomfort in beholding and having to suffer the company of a colonial ruling class which she disdained, this negative experience was also positive in affirming her superiority. The filthy 'good overseer' was imprinted on the landscape which she so enthusiastically aestheticized. Further, she was perceived to have absorbed the creolizing otherness of the colony on her return to England: travelling to London from Weymouth, where she landed, she reports the reaction of the landlady of an inn where she stayed with her children: '[she] dropped some hints about *odd people* travelling about the country'.[305]

Nugent's journal reads as a conscious polite performance in the fashion described by John Brewer: 'Above all, keeping a journal or diary, which Addison explicitly recommended, was the most important means by which refinement might be cultivated'.[306] Further it is an account within a domestic and gendered framework that perceived the colony through a prism of cleanliness, a generalizing trope which encompassed real and imagined absence of hygiene, a measure of sexual mores and a deep prejudice regarding skin colour. As a picturesque tourer her position was effortlessly externalized, entirely uninvested in the

[305] Ibid, p. 255.

[306] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 95.

landscape, casting a gaze of distant superior judgement as distinct from the invested planteresque. In contrast to the planteresque embedded in the colony and tasked with the aestheticization of brutality, Nugent's picturesque tour brought no anxieties to the surface, and her polite entitlement persisted.

CHAPTER 5: ENGINEERED AND LIBIDINAL VIOLENCE

Engineered Violence: The Overseer in the Landscape

Thus far, discussion has focused on landscapes of white privilege and pretension devoted to the sanitization and misrepresentation of the brutal plantation landscape as picturesque and to imagining that spaces away from plantations were uncomplicated as loci of leisure and pleasure. Such people were entirely complicit in the violence on which the integrated plantation was founded, and their landscape configurations were performative, self-delusory and filled with anxiety.

Such laboured contrivances to disguise brutality were entirely absent from the landscape of the uninhibited class of overseers. This group represents individuals who lived in routine intimate closeness to the landscape but had no material investment in it. As a 'middle' layer in terms of power they owed little or no loyalty to their masters or those over whom they exercised control. Indeed they were tasked with the most dehumanizing of functions, to implement the violence that was 'intrinsic to the plantation system from the start'.[307]

The colonies were frequent destinations for men in Britain who were without means or income and/or looking to better their circumstances, frequently enticed by long-term promises of land as indentured labourers. And in the Atlantic colonies the prevalence of skin colour as signifier immediately placed such people in positions of relative privilege. According to Burnard, in eighteenth-century Jamaica in particular, indenture lasted 'only a little time', and many such men were promoted to overseership 'soon after they came over'.[308]

In spite of the ruthless culture of the Atlantic colonies, the extreme violence endemic to the plantation was not intuitive: rather, it 'arose out of the particular historical context of the Atlantic slave trade and large-scale European warfare'.[309] It is Burnard's contention that the

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[307] Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves* p. 75.

[308] Ibid.

[309] Ibid, p. 54.

brutalizing experience of serving as rank-and-file soldiers in European wars or as sailors on slave ships, which cast them in roles of both receiving and delivering barbaric violent treatment, disposed them to a 'specific kind of violence', which '[m]ost people shrank from'. The foundational imperative for the success of the plantation system was to discipline 'angry, alienated, and aggressively hostile African slaves', many of whom were 'experienced warriors […] [endowed with] boldness and confidence', and this was fulfilled through the recruitment of overseers from a group of men, themselves brutalized and inured to the suffering of others and disposed to inflict the requisite dehumanizing and degrading violent treatment on Africans.[310] Alexander Falconbridge, who served as a doctor on several slaving ships, recounts graphically the process of desensitization on board these vessels. Routinely sailors received 'cruel usage', 'brutal severity' from their officers, and cruel and inventive punishments akin to the treatment they later delivered to enslaved Africans. Falconbridge describes beatings; the use of chains; a sailor having to work for several weeks with a chain around his neck attached to a heavy log; an 'iron pump-bolt' fixed in a man's mouth; men flogged till their backs were raw and then washed in salt water mixed with 'chian pepper'; and men having dogs set upon them.[311] Such treatment was an education in the conduct required of an overseer.

Rosalind Carr's exploration of masculine violence in eighteenth-century Scotland examines models of masculinity, class distinctions and intersections with politeness. Her concept of 'martial manhood' coincides with Burnard's suggested character of brutalized rank-and-file soldiers, a masculinity distinct from 'elite models of manhood' and 'peripheral' to it.[312] 'Refined manhood', found within the officer class and essentialized in the duel, was ritualized (and 'framed') within polite culture, whereas the unrefined masculinity of the 'labouring poor', 'martial manhood', was configured as lesser and distant from politeness.[313]

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[310] Ibid, pp. 54 and 86-87.

[311] Alexander Falconbridge, *Of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 2nd edn (London: James Phillips, 1788), pp. 51-56.

[312] Rosalind Carr, 'The Gentleman and the Soldier: Patriotic masculinities in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', Journal of Scottish Historical Studies, 28, 2, 2008, 102-21 (p. 103).

[313] Carr qualifies this by showing that the duel was contentious and not universally considered to be polite.

Hence, she concludes, brutal 'martial manhood' was 'articulated by army officers, politicians and landowners, and placed upon economically impoverished Highland men and was performed in the context of eighteenth-century wars of imperial occupation.'[314] This scenario was enacted in the relationship between elite planters and the subordinate class of overseers in the landscapes of Atlantic plantations.

The white interest in the plantation landscape critically depended on strategies to subdue a grossly maltreated workforce, strategies that included the weaponization of the threat of violence as a means of surveillance and control. This process of humiliation was ritualized for the social function of instilling compliance and maximal labour output. Violent abuse and torture were a constant possibility for enslaved workers. And for black women the violence went beyond ritual or threat in the public plantation arena. The normalized and routine rape of black women by white men rendered them vulnerable and unempowered in a further and individualized way in concealed locations and at all times.

Hence the overseer was positioned in the plantation landscape as an enforcer of ruling class order through the implementation of violence, and he belonged to a class specifically trained to carry out this function. Essentially within white colonial society these men were unempowered and as such conditioned by ruling class requirements to implement a role in the landscape which, however, was invested with immense power over the subaltern workforce. Naturally not all overseers fell into the two categories suggested by Burnard but arrived in the colonies via many varied routes. The previously mentioned overseer Richard Harwood, to whom Henry Drax addressed his 'Instructions', was born in Barbados to a father who had been sentenced in 1643 to servitude in the colony after the defeat of the royalists for whom he fought in the English Civil War.[315] Nevertheless, regardless of origin or means of arriving in the colony, the pervading culture and practice of extreme violence was quickly learned, as illustrated in the experience of Thomas Thistlewood (1721-86), the son of a Lincolnshire farmer, who arrived in Jamaica in 1750 and received his first offer of employment as an overseer within ten days of docking. By the time he took up his first post

[314] Ibid, p. 113.

[315] Newman, *A New World of Labour*, p. 101.

he had witnessed and become fully educated in the brutal treatment of enslaved workers during two months spent on the plantation awaiting the departure of the incumbent overseer whom he was to replace. Although he had no martial experience, nor had he previously been in a position of meting out brutality to enslaved Africans, Thistlewood had prior encounters with the culture and demeanour of colonialism. From 1746 to 1748 he served as a purser in the employ of the East India Company on a round trip that incorporated a stop at Bahia in Brazil, where he would undoubtedly have witnessed the enslavement of African people.[316] As a historical figure, Thistlewood is anomalous, for he became a landowner and a person of some repute in Jamaica on account of horticultural interests and activities. As an overseer, however, nothing distinguished him from others, other than that he wrote a copious diary for the entirety of his time in the colony, which lasted up to his death. Clearly, he lived a happy and fulfilled life in the brutal landscape in which he routinely delivered the harshest cruelty to enslaved workers.

The role of the overseer required an intimate awareness of the landscape. Within it he substituted for the aloof planter, immersed in the subaltern community, where, as well as wielding power, he carried much responsibility. For he was tasked with extracting the highest level of effort from a reluctant enslaved labour force and maximal productivity, which required close surveillance. The extensive and candid documentation of his life makes Thistlewood's diary an exceptional source of information regarding the overseer in the plantation landscape, positioned between two polarized interest groups and experiencing antagonism and distrust from both sides, in relative isolation and distanced from others in his position. The resultant mindset that normalized and implemented the requisite violence is amply evidenced in Thistlewood's dispassionate accounts of the horrendous suffering he routinely inflicted on enslaved people.

Two predominant preoccupations emerge in Thistlewood's diaries: first, his brutal, in the opinion of some 'sadistic', treatment of enslaved workers, including serial rape, and, second, his horticultural and scientific interests which he endeavoured to deploy as a vehicle to

[316] Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 1-3.

elevate his social standing.[317] My intention is to bring together these two aspects of Thistlewood's identity and commentators' responses to them into a single coherent landscape narrative as an exemplar of the overseer experience.

As a farmer's son in Lincolnshire, Thistlewood acquired early agricultural experience and an interest in horticulture. He visited the gardens of members of the local landed gentry and their gardeners, through whom he presumably gained access. At least one of these was connected with slavery in the Caribbean, namely William Beckford of Somerley. In fact while preparing to depart for Jamaica, he received a letter of introduction to Beckford and called on him in London, but was informed that Beckford was in Jamaica.[318] Beckford was subsequently to befriend Thistlewood when they met in Jamaica, although in Lincolnshire, in the light of the class difference between them, such a friendship would have been much less likely. Nevertheless we understand that from an early age Thistlewood had knowledge of some grand gardens and potentially saw that an interest in gardening and horticulture could open to him a network whereby he could associate with his social superiors, possibly even engendering in him the aspiration to acquire such a garden himself. Regardless of such speculation, however, we know that he had a focused and knowing way of engaging with landscape both as a productive medium and as a source of satisfaction and pleasure, and that he was well placed for life in a plantation colony.

In Jamaica, this expertise gained him an entrée into the privileged circles of 'white Jamaicans who were interested in reading and science'.[319] Dr. Anthony Robinson, a medical botanist, friend of the self-aggrandizing plantocrat Edward Long and occasional visitor to Thistlewood, was one such contact.[320] Thistlewood's status, however, was relatively marginal within this circle, and he set his sights too high when he attempted to establish a correspondence with Long by sending him 127 pages of scientific observational notes on the subject of rainfall. Long replied, thanking him, which Thistlewood interpreted as the initiation of a

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[317] Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire*, p. 104: Burnard refers to Thistlewood as a sadist throughout this book.

[318] Hall, *In Miserable Slavery* p. 8.

[319] Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire*, p. 62.

[320] Ibid, pp. 102 and 119.

correspondence. Unsurprisingly the plantocrat did not respond to Thistlewood's second letter.[321] This sense of entitlement beyond his status tells us something about his persona as it developed in the colonial setting. He possessed a large collection of books and was an avid reader of scientific texts. The fact that he was accepted in relatively elevated circles of scientific discussion, composed primarily of doctors, apparently gave him a false sense of his social acceptability by more elite members of colonial society. There was a hierarchy amongst overseers, the most senior of whom were relatively privileged: according to Ligon the 'prime' overseer was allowed 'Fifty pounds Per Annum or the value in such Commodities as he likes' in excess of what was allotted to 'other 'overseers and bookkeepers', whom 'the master may allow sometimes to sit at his own Table'.[322] Clearly Thistlewood was amongst the most privileged of overseers and seems to have considered himself worthy to associate with planters.

In fact his enthusiasm for horticulture was undoubtedly successful in achieving social elevation: he was a passionate plantsman and eventually purchased a piece of land, Breadnut Island Pen, where he created a garden of repute. He corresponded and exchanged seeds with fellow horticulturalists within and beyond the colony, including the famous Brompton Nursery in London. He additionally sold seeds and vegetables locally, as a source of income, as well as hiring out his enslaved workers, whom he purchased over time commencing while he was an overseer. He also apparently 'established a rich social life among fellow white inhabitants', although the emphasis in this quotation must be on 'fellow' meaning social equal and some distance from the politeness affected by the likes of Long.[323]

Thistlewood's horticultural interest fell within, or possibly on the fringes of, the generalized movement associated with the expansion of British colonialism in tropical and subtropical regions, where Europeans were encountering botanics which they understood as potentially

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[321] Ibid, p. 121.

[322] Ligon, *A True and Exact History*, p. 70: the role of bookkeepers is explained here.

[323] Trevor Burnard, 'Thistlewood, Thomas (1721-1786), Slave Owner and Diarist', https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64972 [accessed 3 June 2023].

profitable. Masterminded primarily by Joseph Banks, this globalized botanical project saw the establishment of botanic gardens at Kew, Chelsea and Edinburgh alongside energetic plant collecting and botanical correspondences within colonized territories. In 1765 a botanic garden was established on St. Vincent for the purpose of trialling exotic plants for economic cultivation in British-controlled tropical territories. In Jamaica Spring Garden was established by the lawyer and Assembly member Hinton East in the 1770s.[324] A catalogue of plants in this garden and the people believed to have introduced them to the island was published under the title *Hortus Eastensis*, essentially naming the most prominent men of scientific and botanical learning. This was clearly a list of individuals of high social standing, for Thistlewood was not included.[325] It is a trope of the mimetic colonial societal infrastructure that a former overseer could not gain admission to institutions of the plantocracy, which was itself equally precarious and aspirant in another context. Nevertheless Thistlewood derived pride from his scientific knowledge and achievement to the extent, Burnard tells us, that he assumed that his lasting reputation and 'claim to later distinction' would be as a horticulturalist.[326]

So it is an irony that this is far from reality, for in shocking contrast the most striking feature of Thistlewood's diaries is the catalogue of unashamed and dispassionate accounts of 'many episodes of horrifying brutality and sexual exploitation', and it is for this that Thistlewood is most famed today.[327] Clearly the cruel and violent treatment of enslaved workers was such a normalized feature of the plantation landscape that Thistlewood reported his horrendous and inventive punishments without inhibition, and without any concern that it would bring notoriety to him in the future.

In the three-tiered infrastructure of the plantation the overseer occupied the middle tier, experiencing by definition both power and its absence, with a two-fold performative requirement of subservience towards the planter and violence towards the enslaved. This

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[324] Douglas Hall, *Planters, Farmers and Gardeners in Eighteenth Century Jamaica: The Elsa Goveia Memorial Lecture* (Mona: The University of the West Indies, 1987), p. 4.

[325] Ibid, p. 4.

[326] Burnard, 'Thistlewood, Thomas'.

[327] Ibid.

was a continuation of the role the slaving-ship sailor and the rank-and-file soldier was required to perform violence against an enemy. The psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1925-61) encountered a French policeman, whose function in the colony was akin to that of the overseer in that he inflicted torture on captured freedom fighters on behalf of the French state during the Algerian war of liberation. This man consulted Fanon after meeting one of his victims suffering from 'stupor', which encounter had initiated disturbances in the night, 'hearing screams which prevented him from sleeping'. He blamed the trauma he experienced on his victims: 'if they had a bit of consideration for us they'd speak out without forcing us to spend hours tearing information word by word out of them […]. I hear their screams even when I'm at home'. Another French police officer suffered nightmares, extreme intolerance, shortness of temper and what he described as 'fits of madness'. 'Sometimes, I torture people for ten hours at a stretch,' he told Fanon, adding, 'it's very tiring. […] It's certain there's something wrong with me. You've got to cure me, doctor'. Fanon concludes, 'This man knew perfectly well that his disorders were directly cause by the kind of activity that went on inside the rooms where interrogations were carried out'. More significant, he continues: 'he asked me without beating about the bush to help him to go on torturing Algerian patriots without any prickings of conscience, without any behaviour problems and with complete equanimity'.[328] These encounters shed light on several aspects of the overseer experience, most apparently routine violence and responses to it. Such men who reached Fanon's consulting room were clearly in a minority. For the most part responses of this kind were internalized and relegated to the unconscious.

But further even to this, the plantation, like all colonial landscapes, was highly sexualized, resting on a power relationship of extreme inequality, in which the greatest inequality was between white men and black women. Even the lowliest man is habituated to the experience of empowerment in some part of his life, often in a domestic setting, and the most extreme expression of such power is sexual violence towards women. Thistlewood was a self-confessed serial rapist. Burnard cites his 'voracious libido which manifested itself in

[328] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farringdon (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 213-17.

countless sexual encounters with […] dependent female slaves'. And there is every reason to assume that Thistlewood was no different in this respect from other overseers, just as it is known that the majority, if not all, of French colonial policemen tortured Algerian freedom fighters, although most did not seek psychotherapy.[329] Indeed Thistlewood's nonchalance in recording his acts of violation suggests that they were not exceptional but rather common amongst men in his position, and this is also the view of Burnard: 'his comments on the sexual behaviour of other men suggest that his sexual athleticism was more typical than extraordinary', and Nelson, 'it is clear that he [Thistlewood] and many other men regularly preyed on enslaved women'.[330]

Thus we have a portrait of a very clever man and enthusiastic amateur scientist, 'self-fashion[ed] as an avid reader, capable surveyor, and producer of natural-historical and botanical knowledge', who delighted in thinking of new ways to inflict humiliation and pain on other human beings.[331] The two parts of Thistlewood's fame are generally addressed separately. On the one hand he was an 'Enlightenment' man, elevated and respected through learning. On the other, he was a sadist. And an addendum to this narrative, generally subsumed within the latter and considered less sadistic, is his routine rape of enslaved women, often described in benign terms. In reality the plantation landscape was an arena of supremacy for the overseer: there was no place to which he did not have access and where he did not exert supreme power and 'use sex as a weapon of mastery'.[332]

A number of scholars, mainly women, have challenged the generally dismissive accounts of the trauma of rape which have characterized responses to Thistlewood's sexual violence revealed in his diaries. In particular Heather V. Vermeulen takes issue with the benign language frequently used when describing his 'libidinal violence', implying a relative innocence and victimhood in the face of tropical temptation.[333] It has even been suggested

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[329] Burnard, *Mastery*, *Tyranny and Desire* p. 104.

[330] Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire*, p. 28; Nelson, *Architecture and Empire*, p. 127

[331] Heather V. Vermeulen, 'Thomas Thistlewood's Libidinal Linnaean Project: Slavery, Ecology and Knowledge Production', *Small Axe*, 22:1 (2018), 18-38 (p. 23).

[332] Burnard, 'The Planter Class', p. 196.

[333] Vermeulen, 'Thomas Thistlewood', pp. 19-20.

that his relationships with enslaved women were based on some imagined consent and that a degree of mutuality existed in such sexual encounters.[334] It is truly extraordinary that such consensual relationships could be imagined to have occurred in the brutal plantation landscape and that enslaved women exerted agency in relation to white men.

Vermeulen approaches Thistlewood's diary with quite different priorities from most other scholars who have studied the life of this man, starting with his abuse of women, and the conflation of this with his botanic/horticultural obsession.

The sexual overtone of botanical science in the Enlightenment era naturally informed both the circles in which Thistlewood indulged his botanical interests and his individual engagements with and within the plantation landscape. He was a self-gratifying highly egotistical man, aware of agriculture and botany from a young age, and it should not surprise us that he engaged with the landscape is such an arch-patriarchal and sexual way. The animalization of black people aligned them very closely with the exotic biota, and the white male gaze enveloped them undifferentiatedly into a landscape of opportunity and exploitation.

Against this backdrop Thistlewood's diary assumes a dimension overlooked by the authors to whom Vermeulen takes exception. In the diary Thistlewood records all occasions on which he has committed rape according to a consistent formula. For example: '[Tuesday, 10th September] about ½ past 10 a.m. *Cum* Flora, a congo, *Super Terram*, among the canes, above the wall head, right hand of the river, toward the Negro ground', and 'She been for water cress. Gave her 4 bitts', and 'Saturday 21st: In the evening, *Cum* Susanah (a Congo Negro) Stans, in curing-house'.[335]

These accounts read like scientific records: in fact, as Vermeulen reveals, that is exactly what they are, methodical and economic of language. He records the date and time of day, the precise location, '*Super Terram*' means out-of-doors, 'bitts' refers to a payment, and the

[334] For example, Delle, *The Colonial Caribbean,* p. 77.

[335] Hall, *In Miserable Slavery*, pp. 20 and 37.

women are classified, in this instance as 'Congo'. Vermeulen suggests that the acts are calculated and the locations, noted with extreme accuracy, significant:

> his chief mode of surveying – and surveilling – the landscapes under his control was through serial rapes of enslaved women, which he documented in his diaries. This practice constituted what I term a "libidinal Linnaean project," in which rape, slavery, natural history, and surveillance coalesce'.[336]

As she goes on to expand this explanation, Vermeulen addresses two critical underlying issues: 'It is my contention,' she says, 'that Thistlewood's rapes of enslaved women should be viewed as both acts of sexual terror and ways of marking the grounds—and people—under his surveillance'.[337] As an example she cites a rape of which the location is most accurately identified, 'by the Side of the fence, running from the Corner of the New Clear'd groun'd, thro' the burnt ground, to fullerswood Canes Side, within about 2 hund. [hundred] *yards* of the latter', which she explains 'engenders a map of Vineyard Pen and traces his control of it'.[338] In another location:

> Thistlewood marks a boundary with the neighboring estate through rape: the attack takes place "by the Side of the fence" about two hundred yards from a section of Fullerswood Pen. He even uses this record to measure the work that he has overseen—his, or, rather, the enslaved persons' productivity—through references to "the New Clear'd groun'd" and "the burnt ground."[339]

These two examples show clearly the extraordinary reality that Thistlewood's selection of victims was inherent to their position, and that his 'way of seeing' the landscape was as a locus for predation and personal territorial imprinting or 'marking' in the most elemental and animalized way. It is an irony that the trope of animalization so generally applied to enslaved black people was overtly displayed by this white man who exerted such power over

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[336] Vermeulen, 'Thomas Thistlewood', p. 18.

[337] Ibid., p. 29.

[338] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[339] Ibid., p. 30.

them. And it is a further irony that this exhibition of raw white male power was enacted as a display of European Enlightenment learning. Hence it culminated in a pseudo-Linnean classification and binomial naming: 'like a natural historian documenting a new species Thistlewood provides two names: "Mary, alias Adamah." The former denotes the woman's insertion into the plantation's anglophone nomenclature; the latter suggests her "foreign" appellation. Then he classifies her: "a Coromante Negroe"'.[340]

As I have already stressed, Thistlewood's sexual violence in no way singles him out amongst white men within the plantation landscape, in particular overseers. I am convinced that the rape of enslaved women was routine and universal in the plantation, and that it was committed and experienced as an expression of power and control, and this is affirmed by Burnard: 'White men molested slave women […] because they constantly needed to show slaves the extent of their dominance. The institutional dominance of white men had to be translated into personal dominance'.[341]

However, Thistlewood's egocentrism does distinguish him: he was a clever and self-conscious man, and he considered himself superior amongst his peers, whether acknowledged or not by the likes of Long. Vermeulen points to instances of puns and clever jokes in accounts of his strategically committed acts sexual violence, by means of which he imprinted his entitlement on the landscape. His imagined audience, I suggest, is likely to have been himself in the future, reading a text designed to amuse, recalling exploits of sadism and displays of power. And he may have shared it with similar-thinking contemporaries, such as his 'friend' Tom Williams, who apparently also enjoyed Thistlewood's amusement of inventing new forms of torture to inflict on enslaved people. Williams, the diary tells us, called on him on one occasion and made 'observations as usual' about a most cruel way 'he once killed a Negro girl'. This man, the diary also records, 'Frequently at home wears nothing but a shirt, and fans himself with the forelap before his daughter', exposing his genitals.[342]

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[340] Ibid.

[341] Burnard, *Mastery*, *Tyranny and Desire*, p. 160.

[342] Hall, *In Miserable Slavery*, p. 46.

The narrative of white supremacy in the landscape was rent apart by the critical contradiction of 'libidal violence'. For the self-styled exemplars of metropolitan standards in the decadent tropics, Edward Long and Maria Nugent, interracial sex was of huge concern as the acme of moral slippage. Both refer to the scandal of 'yellow' children populating plantations, the outcome of white men's, 'improper lives', 'horrid connections' (Nugent), and 'infatuated attachments to black women' (Long).[343] And yet, as the life of Thistlewood more than adequately affirms, sexual violence towards black women was inherent to white supremacy. Falconbridge even writes of such abuse during the Middle Passage:

> On board some ships, the common sailors are allowed to have intercourse with such of the black women whose consent they can procure. […] The officers are permitted to indulge their passions among them at pleasure, and sometimes are guilty of such brutal excesses, as disgrace human nature.[344]

Hence, in conclusion, the place occupied by the overseer in the plantation landscape was one of clarity: it has been conclusively established that the plantation landscape was one of intense and unrelenting violence. It is also the case that the plantocratic ruling class was at pains to disguise this in attempted performances of politeness, whilst acknowledging and colluding in it. The overseer, in contrast, epitomized white violence and realized white power over the landscape of enslavement which the planter wished to distance himself from, or portray himself as distant from. In other words, this 'middle social group', disdained by their social superiors and resented by those over whom they exerted power, occupied a discrete position in the plantation landscape, where they exerted power over enslaved workers, through the dependency of the planters. The starkest expression of this role was sexual violence allegorized in the act of cultivating exotic and frequently hybridized plants. Parallel narratives of appropriation/entrapment, translocation and hybridization connected the botanical and human elements in the landscape. Overseers were feared, for they were essentially enabled to commit violence against enslaved black people to a very full extent. In particular this applied to the most vulnerable and invisible victims, the enslaved black

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[343] Long, *History*, II, p. 327; Wright, *Nugent's Journal*, p. 172.

[344] Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade*, p. 30.

women who were routinely sexually abused and raped by white men. The extent of the racialized and misogynist abuse of black women will be further explored with reference to pornography.

Pornography in the Landscape: The White Male Gaze and the Black Female Body

This discussion further explores white male sexuality as it was weaponized in the plantation landscape. This is potentially understood as a means of gratification on the part of white men within a setting of extreme inequality and exploitation based on race and gender, which is how many writers have interpreted the conduct of Thomas Thistlewood. Here I enlist further evidence of the extent of misogyny and racism that configures white male abuse of black women as quite distinct from the uncomplicated satisfaction of sexual desire and assigns it to white male power most violently enacted against the most vulnerable and unempowered inhabitants of the plantation.

Discourse regarding the objectification of black people in western aesthetics traditionally focuses on male figures, both adult and child. The black uniformed footman or animalized black child portrayed as a plaything accessorized European portraiture and conversation pieces in much the same way as pug dogs, and the blackamoor was ubiquitous throughout the polite landscapes and Palladian houses of the metropolitan elite.[345] Such decorative motifs were celebrations of commerce, racial supremacy and white power and aligned with the very widely deployed trope of animalization. Black women, however, do not feature in such images; rather, where they appear, it is in sexualized configurations, such as in the iconography of four continents, of white male fantasies of illicit desire coupled with gratification derived from power. In this disposition the appearance of the black woman was equally widespread, though less prominent, since it included a subtext of white male transgression.[346] Nevertheless, the sexualized black woman was embedded in the tropicality which framed white approaches and found the otherness of the black female body alluring. The bizarre narrative of European botany added a further layer to the sexualization of the

[345] Eyres, 'British Warfare and the Blackamoor', pp. 29-33.

[346] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the Four Continents.

colonial environment. It is here worth briefly revisiting the journey that took Joseph Banks to Tahiti where he indulged in nefarious sexual activities.[347] The voyage, led by James Cook, was for the purpose of observing the transit of Venus, which led, in the words of Roy Porter, 'to observations of transits of another Venus entirely', and did much to 'eroticize the exotic' in the British imagination.[348] Porter here deploys the term 'Venus' metonymically for sex as alluring, excessive, tropical and primitive: in the Atlantic slave colonies it became a metonym for the allure of the black female body to white men in the imagined persona of a 'Black Venus'.[349]

Tropes of climatic degeneracy were widely deployed as a justification for the sexual exploitation of black women by white men, exonerating them and demonizing the victims, enslaved black women. Long, for instance, wrote:

> in a place where, by custom, so little restraint is laid on the passions, the Europeans, who at home have always been used to greater purity and strictness of manner, are too easily led aside to every kind of sensual delight […]. Many are the men, of every rank, quality and degree here, who would much rather riot in these goatish embraces, than share the pure and lawful bliss derived from matrimonial, mutual love. Modesty, in this respect, has but very little footing here. He who should presume to shew any displeasure against such a thing as simple fornication, would for his pains be accounted a simple blockhead; since not one in twenty can be persuaded that there is either sin; or shame in cohabiting with his slave.[350]

The tropical setting is identified as the primary cause of inter-racial sex of which Long was so disapproving and by which he was so disgusted that he animalized the 'sensual delight' of

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[347] See Chapter 2.

[348] Roy Porter, 'The Exotic as Erotic: Captain Cook at Tahiti', in *Exoticism in the Enlightenment*, ed. by Roy Porter and George Rousseau (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 117-44 (p. 119).

[349] I used this term after Saidiya Hartman, who discovered in the archive an enslaved black girl named Venus who was killed on board a slave ship, probably by the captain. It is more or less synonymous with the 'Sable Venus': I use 'Black Venus' to suggest a prototype/archetype beyond the title of the imagetext discussed later in this chapter. Saidiya Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe* 12.2 (2008) 1-14 (pp. 7-8).

[350] Porter, 'The Exotic as Erotic', p. 121; Long, *History*, II, pp. 328 and 335, the latter for the characterization of black and 'mulatto' women as 'lascivious'.

such encounters as 'goattish embraces'. This concerns another manifestation of the untenable conflict inherent to the white European demeanour to which enslaved black people fell victim. The inherent sense of racial superiority experienced by white colonists and the 'conflicting repulsion and attraction for the racial other' combined to demonize the black woman, imagined as seductive, embodied in the imagined 'Black Venus', an 'emblematic figure of the enslaved woman in the Atlantic world […] the convergence of terror and pleasure in the libidinal economy of slavery'.[351]

The planter and author Bryan Edwards (1743-1800) is a critical figure at this juncture. Edwards had a back history similar to those of other British writers discussed here. He arrived in Jamaica as a penniless young man, was taken under the wing of an uncle resident in the colony and rose to wealth and power through sugar. In absentee retirement he wrote *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, another of the texts characterized by Jefferson Dillman as 'magisterial'.[352] When the third edition of this *History* was published, Edwards added to the original text a poem entitled 'The Sable Venus; An Ode' together with an engraving entitled 'The Voyage of the Sable Venus, from Angola to the West Indies'.[353] The poem was a trans-Atlantic configuration of Black Venus in the most degrading and exploitative configuration of the enslaved woman foretelling her experience in the plantation landscape. It is, in the words of Adams, '[p]erhaps the most egregiously perverse image of the transatlantic slave trade'.[354]

This poem was written in 1765 by the Rev. Isaac Teale, at the request of Edwards to whom he was tutor, and the engraving was from a painting by the Royal Academician Thomas Stothard.[355] As a two-part aesthetic composition, or imagetext, it was created by Edwards in

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[351] Regulus Allen, '"The Sable Venus" and Desire for the Undesirable', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 3. 21 (2011) 667-91 (p. 667); Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', p. 1.

[352] Dillman, *Colonizing Paradise*, p. 172.The other two 'magisterial histories of the British West Indies' are Long's, *History*, and Beckford's *Descriptive Account*.

[353] Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 2 vols (London, John Stockdale, 1794), II, pp. 27-33; Appendix 3.

[354] Michael Vannoy Adams, 'The Sable Venus on the Middle Passage Images of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', http://www.jungnewyork.com/venus.shtml(accessed [accessed 18 June 2023].

[355] David Dabydeen, John Gilmore, and Cecily Jones, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 426; Rosalie Smith McCrea, 'Disordering the World in the

an evocation of European classicism and fashionable high culture via the dictum of *ut picture poesis*, which interlinks visual and literary aesthetics in a neoclassical framework of epic deeds in Mediterranean settings.[356] This hybrid construct associates the oceanic theme of classical European art with the eighteenth-century oceanic middle massage, structures the most extraordinary and 'egregiously perverse' narrative of travel and integrates the 'Sable Venus's' African identity with white mythology. It also positions the pretentious planter in the role of virtuous citizen in 'a republic of taste' and high culture within the framework of civic humanism.[357] Hence, the point of departure in discussing this work, is that it emanates from the egocentric white identity of the plantocratic landscape.

The 'epic' or 'history' subject matter of this work contextualizes the colonial landscape in the highest category of art.[358] Although the setting is actually a seascape representing the 'vortex' of cultural exchange (the Atlantic Ocean), it is an allegory of the plantation landscape.[359] The subject of the ode is the voyage of the 'Sable Venus' from Africa to the Americas, seated on a gold throne in a chariot of (white) ivory inlaid with shell, with a coral footstool and amber wheels, surrounded by colourful fish of the tropics. On the journey she bestows with 'kind consenting eyes' her favours, 'Beauty […] valour's prize', on Neptune ('The pow'r that rules the old ocean wide') disguised in the 'figure of a tar', and gives birth to a son, who 'mingled shafts of black and white'. On her arrival in Jamaica 'Wild rapture seiz'd the ravish'd land' and the poet and/or the addressee, 'Dear Bryan', pledge/s to follow her in 'ev'ry form thou canst put on'. This is followed by a stanza which lists some of the commonest names of enslaved black women:

Eighteenth Century. The Duplicity of Connoisseurship: Masking the Culture of Slavery, or, *The Voyage of the Sable Venus: Connoisseurship and the Trivialising of Slavery*', in *Beyond the Blood, the Beach and the Banana: New Perspectives in Caribbean Studies, ed. by Sandra Courtman (Kingston: Randle Publishers, 2000),* pp. 275-96 (p. 279).

[356] John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 107-09.

[357] John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp.13-18.

[358] Smith McCrea, 'Disordering the World in the Eighteenth Century', p. 284.

[359] Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, p. 4.

Do thou in gentle Phibia smile,
In artful Benneba beguile,
In wanton Mimba pout;
In sprightly Cuba's eyes look gay,
Or grave in sober Quasheba,
I still shall find thee out.

This unpleasant ironic fantasy, configuring the enslaved African woman as a European goddess and her middle passage experience as an erotic fantasy, is reduced in this twenty-fifth stanza to reality in the plantation landscape where these women experienced 'libidinal violence' from the likes of Edwards, 'a fate in stark contradistinction to his [the poet's] fiction'.[360]

Much has been written about the content and aesthetics of this poem, including the extent to which it might have been motivated by a genuine and comfortable, albeit pornographic, admiration for black women, rather than racist and misogynist humour and irony. My view is that there is no ambiguity, it is unthinkable that this white man residing in the slave colony, writing at the request of a plantocrat, or future plantocrat, was not filled with the racist disdain that pervaded that society. It is a mock-heroic enshrining of a black African woman in a framework of classical European mythology in an ironic valorization of black beauty as an assertion of the superiority of white European beauty. The metaphorical rape (stanzas 17-18) and sexualization of black women, the ironic reversal of agency and power, configuring the white male gaze as vulnerable to conquest by the alluring black woman, the notion of the white colony as 'ravish'd' by her arrival, portraying her as a sexual predator: all of this and more constitutes an unconvincing denial of the agency of white men in the 'libidinal violence' of the plantation landscape. It also mocks and humiliates the Phibias, Bebbebas and others, not to mention the dead child Venus, who were the real victims.

Further to this, the poem was reconfigured by Edwards into a two-part imagetext by its juxtaposition with Stothard's image. This recasts the narrative into unambiguous misogynist

[360] Smith McCrea, 'Disordering the World in the Eighteenth Century', p. 284.

distaste, as the transported African woman is portrayed as a pastiche of Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (ca. 1485).[361] Both Venuses rest on a scallop shell, one rising from the sea, born fully grown, the other entrapped and traversing the ocean, apparently voluntarily, to enslavement in the Americas. The oceanic settings are a world apart, one signifies the cradle of European civilization, the other separates and connects loci of the slave trade. The Sable Venus is surrounded by white figures, including Neptune whose trident has become a union jack flag, her wrists and ankles are ornamented with 'trinkets […] essentially little more than a nuanced representation of shackles', entirely undermining her 'supposed mastery over surrounding white men'.[362] It is an entire narrative of British mastery over Africa and a celebration of slavery. And, even in such a nefarious imagetext as this, Rosalie Smith McCrea identifies deeper and more extensive classical references: the prefatory quotation from Virgil's *Eclogue II*, the sculpture *Venus Pudica* or *Chaste Venus* and Raphael's *The Triumph of Galatea* and possibly Poussin's *The Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite*, all audacious vehicles for self-fashioning by Teale's white male entitlement on behalf of himself and his pupil Edwards.[363]

Barbara Bush further contextualizes the Black Venus within the white male gaze which projects a range of 'white visions' of black women that configure Phibia *et al*: 'White men created a black woman who essentially reflected their needs, economic or sexual'. Citing incidents from Thistlewood's diary she proposes three stereotypes that arose from this 'remaking of black womanhood' to accommodate the requirements of the plantation and satisfy 'white male obsessions with sexual otherness and exoticism', contained in the white male gaze: the alluring 'Sable Venus' imagined as lascivious and submissive; the 'drudge'

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[361] 'The Birth of Venus' is widely described as the inspiration for 'The Voyage of the Sable Venus', e.g. Royal Museums Greenwich https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-254621 [accessed 4 July 2023]. Some, however, such as Regulus Allen, argue that Stothard is unlikely to have been familiar with Botticelli's work, which I find hard to believe. See Allen, 'The Sable Venus', p. 691.

[362] Steph Reeves, 'The Violating Power of the Colonial Male Gaze in Isaac Teale's The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies', The Literature Blog https://interpretingliterature.com/2018/10/18/the-violating-power-of-the-colonizing-male-gaze-in-isaac-teales-the-voyage-of-the-sable-venus-from-angola-to-the-west-indies-and-thomas-stothards-accompanying-illustration [accessed 3 July 2023].

[363] Smith McCrea, 'Disordering the World in the Eighteenth Century', p. 286.

representing 'the mass of faceless, asexual women' who toiled in the plantation; and the demonized and resistant 'She Devil'.[364] The last of these applies to women who displayed recalcitrant or defiant behaviour, frequently punished but persistent in their behavioural defiance, possibly 'prompted or exacerbated,' Bush speculates, 'by psychological trauma and/or sexual violation'.[365] The She Devil stereotype also extended to older black women 'midwives ("grandees") , doctoresses or sinister "haggs" and dangerous "obeah" women. […] associated with a power and influence amongst slaves associated with "bad" African practices'.[366]

Finally, beyond the most plausible and uppermost 'iconography as pornography', this imagetext is an 'amplification' and a 'euphemism' that elides the middle passage into a fantasy of traversing the ocean on a huge shell surrounded by mythical *personae*:

> The image stylizes an ugly, coercive experience, the slave trade, and revises it into a beautiful, consensual – and sensual – experience. Slavery is lovely. In this stylization and revision, Britain waves the flag, and, like Neptune, rules the waves – and, by Cupid, loves the slave woman.[367]

As Adams, a Jungian psychologist, concludes: 'The value of the image is that it accurately depicts the psychic reality of European men. The image is not a slave narrative but a master narrative. […] It is the exotic, erotic anima of an imperialistic, psychopathic ego'.[368]

This 'psychic reality of European men' is an affirmation of the conclusion that the plantation was a space of opportunity and excitement for sexual predation by white men, and not only those of lower and more vulgar rank. The 'Sable Venus' is a sophisticated creation in a polite mode, an elite joke which reveals a misogynist white male mindset expressing undisguised disdain for the black female body, which it nevertheless finds alluring. We can imagine the

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[364] Bush, '"Sable Venus", "She Devil" or "Drudge"?', pp. 762 and 770.

[365] Ibid, pp. 778-80.

[366] Ibid, p. 764.

[367] Adams, 'The Sable Venus on the Middle Passage'.

[368] Ibid.

young military officers counselled by Maria Nugent enjoying this piece of pornography. And whilst it is unquestionably a narrative of daily abuse in the plantation landscape and white male power, it must surely also have been a source of inner anxiety, a humorous configuration of some inner discomfort, possibly guilt, regarding the sexualization of white power which configured the plantation landscape as a locus of predation.

This chapter has addressed the extreme violence, racism and misogyny that morphed into serial sexual predation and abuse in the landscape of plantation overseers. Superiority as a white-skinned person was embedded and reaffirmed on a daily basis through immense power over black people. Sadistic treatment of enslaved people and sexual violence were also routine experiences in the landscape. And it is conceivable that this experience of power engendered resentment into the subservience required of overseers towards planters. Thistlewood was befriended by William Beckford and others of higher social class than himself through his scientific and botanical interests. Yet ultimately he was rejected by Long, and it seems that even in botanical circles his lower social rank was an obstacle to full recognition and participation, for his name was not included in the list of prominent men of scientific and botanical learning referred to earlier.

Nevertheless his ego propelled a cynical enactment of Enlightenment performance and self-satisfaction in his territorial demarcation of the landscape. This display of cleverness was also one of animalization in the territorial demarcation in a fashion deployed by many animals. Within Susan Stewart's framework, excessive public emissions of bodily fluids from an aperture of the 'erotogenic zones', such as the penis, become 'products of great cultural attention' and 'ultimately the self'.[369] Cultural norms render such zones private, such fluids as taboo, and excessive or hyperbolized activities which transgress these norms align with the grotesque.[370] It is an ultimate irony that the cleverness and power which fed Thistlewood's ego were so transgressive and so close to white configurations of black people. And we must

[369] Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 104. Stewart uses the term '"erotogenic zones" of the body', as described by Lacan, to mean 'areas where there are cuts and gaps on the body's surface – the lips, the anus, the tip of the penis, the slit formed by the eyelids, for example'.

[370] Ibid.

conclude that in the plantation landscape, within the white male gaze, grotesque and animalistic behaviours were normalized on the part of empowered and entitled white men.

CHAPTER 6: TWO COUSINS AND THE BECKFORD HERITAGE

The remaining chapters are devoted to a study of two individuals, William Beckford of Somerley and William Beckford of Fonthill, whose lives and created landscapes exemplify the resonance of the plantation as an embedded element of the creole identity. It has been argued that the experience of performing brutality or witnessing its performance, directly or indirectly on one's behalf, is a source of anxiety, frequently displaced by neuroses and/or obsessive behaviours. I have argued that experience of slavery was, and still is, a lasting reality that touched and touches the lives of black people, individually, collectively and societally. In other words, twenty-first century racism is a legacy of slavery, as experienced by black people and expressed by white people. The rest of this thesis is concerned with two men whose sense of self, and the majority of whose lives, were based in England, but for whom slavery was deeply embedded in their psyche. Both, I suggest, were deeply preoccupied with landscapes and these preoccupations were haunted by the locus of enslavement and sadistic white behaviour, namely the sugar plantation from which their extreme wealth and privilege derived.

Available information about these two men is uneven: William Beckford of Fonthill is a famous historical and literary figure, whereas his cousin is relatively unknown. The former is the subject of a considerable body of writing, covering different aspects of his life, person, creativity and legacy, whereas relatively little information is available concerning the latter. This has complicated my task in the case of both men: on the one hand, the paucity of source material on Beckford of Somerley has been frustrating, whilst on the other the extent of the body of writing on Beckford of Fonthill has at times felt unmanageable. Nevertheless, in both instances, their landscape creations are remarkably revealing of character and the colonial continuum that unites and defines them.

The older of the two, Beckford of Somerley (1744-99), is most famous as the author of a seminal text on the plantation landscape, *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica*, and his younger cousin, Beckford of Fonthill (1760-1844), is famed as an aesthete, collector, and, most significantly for this discussion, for the idealized landscape and house which he

designed, known as Fonthill Abbey, based on that created in his novel *Vathek*.[371] They were fourth generation planters, educated in Britain to a life of metropolitan elitism. They lived at a time when disapproval of slavery was increasing in metropolitan society and this conflicted with the creole culture of their upbringing and by implication challenged their entitlement to the refinement to which they were accustomed. The outcome of this was essentially discomfort regarding their proprietorship and exploitation of human chattels, and denial, concealment or reconfiguration of their colonial heritage and culture. Both men were trapped in a creole identity in the setting of the domestic contact zone, experienced conflict and self-doubt, turned their gaze inward and devoted themselves to egocentric landscapes invested with dreams and fantasies and seemingly devoid of elements of discomfort and conflict. The difference in their circumstances resulted in different anxieties, preoccupations and idealized configured landscapes.

Heritage

These men were first cousins, descended from Peter Beckford (bap. 1643, d. 1710), who arrived in Jamaica in 1662 as a part of the first wave of settlers to colonize the island in the mid-seventeenth century. Peter, the son of a tailor and 'a common seaman and adventurer', initially earned his living in Jamaica as a 'horse catcher' of feral horses left behind by the Spanish, and later became an associate of the infamous buccaneer Henry Morgan.[372] He was also connected to the colony through an uncle, Richard, a 'clothworker' and 'slop seller' in London, who invested in a cargo vessel going to Jamaica and later purchased substantial land interests there. Although he never set eyes on his land, this acquisition contributed significantly to the great fortune of his nephew and founder of the Beckford dynasty, who at the time of his death was 'the wealthiest planter in Jamaica'.[373]

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[371] Beckford, *A Descriptive Account*; 'Vathek: An Arabian Tale, 1786', in *Vathek and Other Stories*, ed. by Malcom Jack (London: Penguin, 1955)

[372] Anon, 'Jamaica: Description of the Principal People There', *Caribbeana* 3 (1914), 5-9 (p. 6); ll Department for History and Archaeology, *Parish Histories of Jamaica*, 'Chapter 7: The Beckfords' http://historyjamaica.org/the-beckfords/ [accessed 9 September 2019]; Richard Sheridan, 'Beckford, Peter (bap 1643, d. 1710), Planter in Jamaica and Politician' https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/50424 [accessed 24 November, 2020].

[373] UWI Department for History and Archaeology, 'Chapter 7: The Beckfords', *Parish Histories of Jamaica*, 'The Beckfords'.

As well as achieving unimagined wealth, Peter Beckford rose to high political office in the Jamaican Assembly, council and militia, including serving eight months as deputy lieutenant-governor of the island in 1702.[374] His son, also Peter and grandfather of the Williams (1672/3-1735), had a similarly prominent political career, serving twice as speaker of the Assembly and controller of customs.[375]

Both Peter Beckfords were renowned for their violence of action and of temper. Boyd Alexander tells us that the younger Peter 'shamefully murdered the Deputy Judge-Advocate'.[376] And the older Peter fell downstairs and died of a stroke in the Assembly chamber during a significant incident of rowdy behaviour, which became legendary in the Beckford family and served as the model for a famous incident in *Vathek*.[377] This volatility of temper and violence of demeanour was famed within (and without) the Beckford family and was said to have been inherited by subsequent generations.

William Beckford (bap. 1709-70), second son of and heir to the second Peter, was educated in England from the age of fourteen, attended Westminster School, Baliol College, Oxford, the University of Leiden and the Hôpital des Invalides, and only left Europe on the death of his father in 1735. He remained in Jamaica for nine years, during which time he pursued a prominent and influential political career in the Assembly, alongside his brothers and brothers-in-law.[378] On his return to Britain in 1744 he 'preside[d] over the family business' in the City and served as 'the acknowledged leader of the West Indian merchant interest' in the metropole, in the interest of which he continued to be active in politics as an MP, Alderman and Lord Mayor of London.[379] The extent and significance of this is elucidated by Sheridan:

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[374] Sheridan, 'Beckford, Peter (bap 1643, d. 1710), Planter in Jamaica and Politician'.

[375] Ibid

[376] Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford* (London: Centaur Press, 1962), p. 31.

[377] Sheridan, 'Beckford, Peter (bap 1643, d. 1710), Planter in Jamaica and Politician'.

[378] The oldest son of the younger Peter Beckford, also Peter, died two years after his father, so William inherited the principal part of the estate.

[379] Brian Fothergill, *William Beckford of Fonthill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 17.

> Absentee planters from the West Indies were widely criticized for their identification with slavery, penchant for conspicuous consumption, purchase of rotten borough seats in parliament, and manipulation of the sugar market. The Beckford brothers were singled out for criticism in a pamphlet of 1754, asserting that "No less than three brothers from one of our Sugar-islands having offered themselves, one for London, one for Bristol, and one for Salisbury; and a fourth brother, according to what has been published in the publick papers, intended for a Wiltshire Borough" (*A Short Account of the Interest and Conduct of the Jamaica Planters*, 1754, 3).[380]

Even by the standards of Jamaican planters the Beckfords' wealth was exceptional, and the Alderman, as he is known, followed a well-trodden path, purchasing the 4000-5000-acre Fonthill Estate in 1744, building a magnificent Palladian house on it and landscaping the grounds. He then married a woman of noble descent, Maria Marsh née Hamilton (1724/5-98), granddaughter of the Earl of Abercorn and niece of Charles Hamilton of Painshill, to create a 'combination of city wealth and aristocratic landed interest […], the obvious basis for political power'.[381] Sheridan observes that he 'occupied a difficult position in English society because of his ugly Jamaican accent, lack of charm, and ostentatious display of immense wealth. He was reputed to have a 'temper and a streak of vulgarity', entirely in compliance with the trope by which creole planters were othered in metropolitan society.[382]

The Alderman's younger brother Richard Beckford (1712-56) seems to have been anomalous within his family. Unlike his brothers, he did not marry, purchase an estate and settle in Britain. Burnard places him in a category of five planters whom he describes as 'both residents and absentees for approximately equal amounts of time […] genuinely trans-Atlantic': 'Born in Jamaica, like his brother, he was educated in Britain and became a member of parliament. Yet he returned to Jamaica in the early 1750s and became a

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[380] Richard B. Sheridan, 'Beckford, William (bap 1709-1770), Planter and Politician' https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1903 [accessed 20 November 2020].

[381] Fothergill, *William Beckford of Fonthill*, p. 14.

[382]Sheridan, 'Beckford, William (bap 1709-1770), Planter and Politician'.

legislator before dying relatively young in 1756'.[383] Richard's life differed significantly from that of his brothers, who married and settled in England, and one can only speculate as to why, although he was 'an enormously wealthy planter', Richard failed to do likewise, and what circumstances account for his failure to marry his white creole 'common-law' wife. [384]

William Beckford of Somerley

William Beckford of Somerley was the illegitimately born only son of Richard Beckford and Elizabeth Hay, generally referred to as Richard's 'common-law wife', and described by Richard himself as 'my much esteem'd friend Elizabeth Hay whom I have esteemed and do esteem in all respects as my wife'.[385] William's wife was Charlotte Hay, his first cousin and daughter of Thomas Hay, 'a former secretary of Jamaica', presumably the brother of Beckford's mother.[386]

I have found no explanation for the 'common-law'' status of Richard Beckford's marriage to Elizabeth Hay and the consequent illegitimacy their son's birth. But it was crucial for William, who is absent from the Beckford genealogy, so celebrated and mythologized at Fonthill: in the words of Frank Cundall, 'Unlike his kinsman at Fonthill, who filled the Abbey windows with heraldic glass, he took no pride in his family history; and, in his work, he makes no mention of his relations'.[387] Cundall further points to his exceptional coat of arms, which essentially enshrined his illegitimate status: 'he impaled with his father's arms those of the Hays - on a field argent, three escutcheons gules: but, in preference, to the bend sinister, the usual mark of illegitimacy, he added the less-known badge, the fimbria or border'.[388] When

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[383] Trevor Burnard, 'Passengers Only', *Atlantic Studies*, 1:2 (2004), 178-195, (p. 183).

[384] Burnard, *Mastery*, p. 149. His three brothers, William, Julines and Francis, purchased the estates of Fonthill in Wiltshire, Stepleton in Dorset, and Ashtead in Surrey respectively and built or refurbished fashionable Palladian houses on them.

[385] Richard B. Sheridan, 'Beckford, William (1744-1799), Sugar Planter and Historian' https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1904 [accessed 19 September 2019]; 'Will of Richard Beckford', 4 March 1756, The National Archives, Ref: PROB 11/821/63.

[386] Anon 'Biographical Sketch of William Beckford, Esq.', *The Monthly Mirror* 7 (1799), 259-64 (p. 260).

[387] Frank Cundall, 'Jamaican Worthies. VII William Beckford Historian', *Journal of the Institute of Jamaica* 2.2 (1895) 249-60, p. 359.

[388] Ibid p. 351; Appendix 1, Figure 7.

Beckford was eleven years old his father died unexpectedly and his inheritance was entrusted to the management of his two surviving uncles, William (the Alderman) and Julines.

Beckford of Somerley was born in Jamaica, went to England at the age of five and remained there into adulthood. He was educated at Westminster School and Balliol College, Oxford, and he undertook the grand tour under the tutorship of the eminent traveller, author and man of scientific learning, Patrick Brydone, whose published travelogue of Sicily and Malta was addressed to Beckford.[389] To be so esteemed by Brydon, is indicative of his status within polite literary circles.[390]

Following the grand tour he took out a long lease on his 'seat' of Somerley Hall in Suffolk. His fortune consisted of real estate and 910 slaves in Jamaica, which, although considerable, was not comparable with the wealth of his cousin at Fonthill.[391] The full story of this man's birth and family remains to a considerable extent speculation. Born to parents who were unmarried and yet raised and educated in a manner equatable with that of his cousins, whilst the wealth of the Beckfords was deployed to establish a foothold in elite social circles through the purchase of landed estates, Beckford of Somerley's fortune apparently did not extend to this. Nevertheless his education and early experiences were essentially a training for a life of gentility and civic humanist retirement in such a setting.[392] And that is what he sought at Somerley Hall, marrying in April 1773 and living the life of a provincial gentleman, as described by the editor of the *Monthly Mirror*:

> A very short period of tranquil happiness […] occupied by an elegant, but unconscious display of genuine taste; by the cultivation of the arts and sciences; by

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[389] Patrick Brydone, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta: In a Series of Letters to William Beckford, Esq., of Somerly in Suffolk*, 2 vols (London: W. Strahan, 1773); Katherine Turner, 'Brydone, Patrick (1736–1818), Traveller and Author' https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3812 [accessed 13 September 2020].

[390] Brydone was elected to the Royal Society, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Society of Antiquaries on the strength of this critically acclaimed book.

[391] Richard B. Sheridan, 'Planter and Historian: The Career of William Beckford of Jamaica and England, 1744-1799', *The Jamaican Historical Review* 4 (1964), 34-45, (pp. 45-46).

[392] Barrell, *Political Theory of Painting*, pp. 3-7.

> encouragement to their votaries; by liberal hospitality; by frequent aid to honest industry; and by a beneficence to the surrounding poor […]. Somerley Hall, in fact, became the spot of social comfort and rational enjoyment.[393]

He was clearly respected within local elite circles, for at around the time of his marriage he was proposed, significantly at no expense to himself, by Mr Henry Gooch, the deputy mayor of Great Yarmouth, as a parliamentary candidate. Although the proposal was defeated, this story suggests that he was highly regarded in the community but his finances were limited and he was apparently not in a position to support himself as an MP. It is probably during this period that he became acquainted with Joseph Banks and Joshua Reynolds, both of whom were 'old acquaintances' at the time of his later incarceration in Fleet Prison.[394]

According to the editor of *The Monthly Mirror,* Richard Beckford had 'determined to educate his son for a ministerial career; but he died before this intention could be so far ripened into execution, as to give Mr William Beckford a bias to that pursuit'. Seemingly Richard foresaw for his son a career appropriate to his wealth and standing, whereas William's upbringing and education apparently instilled in him greater expectations. This writer goes on to observe that through 'the brilliancy of his talents' Beckford was 'endowed with every possible requisite to shine in the senate' but that 'benevolence and literature occupied his mind so entirely as to leave no vacancy for the more conspicuous, but less pleasing pursuit of politics'.[395] Up to 1774, 'he had enjoyed the pleasures of an Oxford undergraduate, the young man of fortune on the grand tour of the Continent, [and] the English country gentleman', essentially an absentee planter, distinct from a Jamaican creole, by culture and identity.[396] Having lived in England from the age of five, his background was similar to that of his Fonthill cousin, probably considering himself to be entirely an English gentleman. Unlike his cousin and namesake, however, it appears that he was not financially positioned for this

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[393] 'Biographical Sketch of William Beckford, Esq.', pp. 260-61.

[394] Charles Burney in a letter to his daughter Fanny, quoted by Cundall, 'William Beckford Historian', p. 358.

[395] 'Biographical Sketch of William Beckford, Esq.', p. 259.

[396] Sheridan, 'Planter and Historian' p. 44.

chosen lifestyle and that his father had been aware of this. Had Richard lived longer, Beckford may have entered the church and led a distinctly different life.

On Richard's death, his properties in Jamaica were held in trust for William by his uncles William and Julines until he came of age in 1765, after which he lived at Somerley as an absentee planter for a further nine years until in 1774, due to the deterioration of his sugar plantations, he left Britain for Jamaica. In 1776, he wrote:

> I found my affairs upon my arrival in such a situation, as was sufficient to convince me of the negligence of my attornies; and had I delay'd my projected voyage a few days longer the consequences might have been fatal to my properties, as well as peace. I have endeavor'd as far as was in my power to correct their past abuses; and I shall expect to see my estates establish'd, in the course of a few years, upon an economical and an advantageous footing.[397]

And he was confident regarding the future:

> I hope to make an annual reduction of my DEBTS: and to see (what does not often happen) my properties increase as THEY diminish: and when this shall be in any degree effected, I shall carry Mrs. Beckford back with tenfold satisfaction to her friends in England.[398]

As the son of a slave owner prominent in public affairs on both sides of the Atlantic, he would have had instilled in him an underlying mindset and culture of the colony, and he would have shared this with his wife who also came from a creole family. In other words, they understood the inherent tension between polite respectability and slavery. As an established pillar of the community in Suffolk, it is likely that he was apprehensive about returning to Jamaica, and the remark cited above regarding his wife's preference for her friends in England, suggests reluctance. Whilst he would arrive in the colony a prosperous

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[397] Thomas B. Brumbaugh, ed., *An Unpublished Letter of William Beckford of Hertford* (Jamaica Monograph No. 17), p. 5, cited by Richard B. Sheridan, 'Planter and Historian', p. 4.

[398] Ibid, p. 56.

landowner, his destination was essentially unknown to him experientially, and the prospect of settling in Jamaica to manage his estates was probably daunting.

Nevertheless, the Atlantic colonies were destinations of escape and reinvention, beyond the reach of polite social scrutiny. Beckford, it would seem, responded to this as an opportunity and configured his arrival in the colony in a performative fashion as a man of landed wealth and status. Thus he adopted the conceit of the patronage of two artists, who accompanied him on the journey out, and arrived in Jamaica in the persona of a polite metropolitan landowner and patron of the arts.[399]

In the colony, Frank Cundall tells us, his life was 'very unlike that of the average West Indian planter'.[400] Beckford was apparently exceptional or anomalous, a status that seems to have defined him in all settings. During his thirteen-year residence in Jamaica, as well as devoting himself to the management of his estates, he lived up to expectations of involvement in public life, serving as magistrate for Westmoreland parish from 1782 to 1788 and seems to have enjoyed a reputation as a gentleman and supporter of artists.[401]

Like many Jamaican planters, Beckford suffered losses as a result of the American War of Independence and the activities of American privateers, and in 1777 he mortgaged his three plantations (Roaring River, Williamsfield and Fort William) to the London firm of Messrs. Beckford & James.[402] Further disastrous loss was incurred when a particularly violent hurricane brought ruination to his estate in 1780, leading to his return to Britain in 1787 'to put his affairs into the best train he could'.[403] On arrival, he took a coach to London and was ambushed by one of his creditors accompanied by two bailiffs who arrested and took him to the Fleet debtors' prison.[404] This creditor, to whom his friend Charles Dallas claimed he had

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[399] R.C. Dallas, *A Short Journey in the West Indies, In Which are Interspersed, Curious Anecdotes and Characters*, 2 vols (London, 1790), II, pp. 138-39.

[400] Frank Cundall, 'William Beckford of Somerley', *Caribbeana* 1 (1990), http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Members/bcarib14.htm [accessed 27 August 2023].

[401] Dallas, *A Short Journey*, II, pp. 138-39.

[402] Sheridan, 'Planter and Historian' p. 56.

[403] Dallas, *A Short Journey*, II, p. 143.

[404] Ibid, p. 144.

previously been of great service, was his cousin Richard Beckford.[405] Like him, this cousin was of illegitimate birth, son of the Alderman.

A eulogistic article in *The Monthly Mirror* stresses Beckford's aestheticism, the patronage of the painter George Robertson, his 'innumerable drawings and books', 'his genius for poetry' and 'his fertile descriptive pen'.[406] He was an assiduous writer whilst in the Fleet prison, where he penned *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica*, followed by *A Descriptive Account*. His return to England in 1787 followed 'many years of incessant and dangerous illness' and failure to restore his finances.[407] On his release from Fleet, he lived the rest of his life in London as a regular contributor to *The Monthly Mirror*, presumably as a means of enhancing his income of £400, and died suddenly on 5 February 1799.[408]

The writer Charles Dallas, who was Beckford's house guest in Jamaica, was a white creole born in Jamaica, educated in Scotland, qualified at the Inner Temple and spent most of his life in Europe.[409] He perceived Beckford as exceptional in the colonial setting. In fact the two men shared much in experience and outlook and inhabited the same imagined space of transcontinental politeness. Both applied highly conscious and performative standards of gentility to white plantocratic society. In praising Beckford Dallas repeatedly assigns to him the epithet of the 'real West Indian', attributing to the Caribbean planter the highest integrity and, paradoxically, rarity in the West Indian setting:

> The real West Indian is the rarest inhabitant of the West Indies […] I am now at Hertford Penn, it is the residence of a West Indian, a man of taste and learning; and a description would but picture the elegance of European manners […]. A classical education, and a course of well-directed travelling, conspired to accomplish the mind

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[405] Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery 'Richard Beckford', https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146651337 [accessed 11 November 2020].

[406] 'Biographical Sketch of William Beckford, Esq.', p. 261.

[407] William Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, Impartially Made*, 2 vols (London: T. and J. Egerton, 1788).

[408] 'Biographical Sketch of William Beckford, Esq.', p. 263.

[409] James Watt, 'Dallas, Robert Charles (1754–1824), Writer' https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7038 [accessed 26 April 2021].

> of Benevolus; […] liberally stored with the beauties of science and of art, with every delicate refinement. […] As a man of the world, he is accomplished, mild, and pleasing; as a friend, sincere; as a husband, delicate and affectionate; as a brother, warmly attached; as a master, tender and humane.[410]

Confusingly Dallas uses the term 'real West Indian' to mean European, the same delusional belief in which Beckford was to configure his plantation as a landed estate and himself as a member of the landed gentry. This creole trope of transferring European cultural norms to the colony is a proactive, if unconscious, act of self-othering, the essence of creole existence, inhabiting the mantle of universal marginality. And the imagined synonymy of colonial planteresque with European picturesque further conflates in an uncomplicated continuum with whiteness, a configuration with which neither of these men had difficulty, itself symptomatic of the process of creolization.

Geoff Quilley applies the term 'chimerical' to Dallas's 'real West Indian' concept, a disjointed continuation of the botanical metaphor 'scion' applied to Beckford's illegitimate status.[411] The double meaning of scion conflates Beckford's descent from a prominent family with the botanical process of grafting, a paradoxical metaphor of continuity and departure in a new direction and change to an original genetic material. The chimera consists of an unnatural joining of distinct and incompatible elements, a metaphor for the inherently unstable creolization of politeness. Further, as Quilley continues, the 'real West Indian' is an entire misnomer and quintessentially Eurocentric, for the exterminated truly indigenous West Indian population remained in 'traces […] visible across Jamaica', whereas the white planters were one component of a heterogenous population, entirely creole in character, and unstable and contaminative. In the words of Dallas:

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[410] Dallas, *A Short Journey*, II, pp. 138-40.

[411] Geoff Quilley, 'Pastoral Plantations: The Slave Trade and the Representation of British Colonial Landscape in the Eighteenth Century', in *An Economy of Colour: Visual culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830*, ed. by Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 106-28 (p. 107); Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place*, p. 1; Dillman, *Colonizing Paradise*, p. 163.

> The real West Indian, sooner or later, becomes a prey to the harpies of his country - his own heart is too honest and too open - he perceives not the approach of the talons, till the gripe awakes him, alas! too late to sense danger.[412]

The routinely deployed picturesque mode to the colonized environment served as a vehicle for self-assurance in a setting of uncertainty and a mode of self-fashioning for the pretentious creole to erase the Atlantic and imagine a direct connection with the metropolitan landscape. This encompassed Beckford's experience and desire. Dallas named him *Benevolus*, and two written accounts by men of close acquaintance described him as gentle and exceptionally generous.[413]

Quilley's discussion of the place of landscape in the discourse of creole marginality and othering focuses on the paintings of George Robertson, another anomalous dimension to Beckford's colonial life. These paintings, as judged by Quilley, are 'exceptional', not least because they offer rare 'visual representations of the West Indies', but also because Beckford's desire for such representations of his landscapes and his European practice of patronizing artists singles him out.[414] Further, crucially and again anomalously, Beckford understood the significance of landscape as defining the landed gentry in the iconic landscape portrait. Such paintings of colonial landscapes were rare, particularly in the Caribbean. The presence of enslaved African workers was self-evidently more problematic for the visual artist than for the picturesque writer. Quilley points to a deliberate lack of interest in representations of the plantation landscape on the part of most planters, who strategically focused their interest in landscape paintings on those of metropolitan settings, in compliance with 'norms of taste and culture' and to distance displays of culture from the source of their wealth.[415] Beckford, however, departed from this norm by engaging Robertson to paint views of the only estates he possessed. Crucially, however, as discussed earlier, this did not follow the metropolitan prototype, in which the landscape enveloped

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[412] Dallas, *A Short Journey*, II, p. 142.

[413] Charles Dallas and the editor of *The Monthly Mirror.*

[414] Quilley, 'Pastoral Plantations', pp. 106-07.

[415] Ibid, p. 107.

and elevated the white landowner as an epicentre of power by locating him in the painting.[416] The planteresque, in contrast, distanced the proprietor, for, although it was framed and presented in the visual language of European aesthetics, it remained a slave plantation. The aestheticization, however, as also discussed earlier, was an attempt to render it humane and imply Beckford's 'Benevolus' exceptionality.

In summation, Beckford of Somerley lived between the society of the local landed gentry of Suffolk/Norfolk, his absentee creole planter family and extended community and the colonial plantocracy. In each setting his illegitimate birth compounded the marginality of his creole identity. This was not unusual in the Beckford family: the Alderman also had illegitimate children who were acknowledged and remembered in his will. The unusual circumstance of William of Somerley is that he was an only child, his father, it would seem, lived with his mother, a white creole, in a 'common law' marriage and had no other liaisons or children, and he was his father's sole heir. Nevertheless, the marginality of illegitimacy was determining for him and ultimately further defining beyond creoleness.

William Beckford of Fonthill

William Thomas Beckford was the only child of the Alderman's marriage. Like her husband, his mother was known for strength of character, particularly apparent in the expression of her Calvinistic Protestantism. Both parents had children already, Maria a daughter Elizabeth from her previous marriage, and the Alderman at least six children from three pre-marital liaisons. Many expectations fell on their sole progeny from each parent, most particularly that he would pursue a political career in the footsteps of his father. Following the premature death of her husband, Maria continued to pursue this ambition, although it was far removed from that of William himself and set mother and son on the path to a relationship of discord.

As the only legitimate child of the prestigious Alderman, Beckford of Fonthill was considered exceptional from the moment of his birth, and this was always known to him. His education was mapped out, in the words of Gikandi, 'to actualize many of the theories about manners,

[416] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp. 106-08.

culture, and taste that were circulating in Britain at the time', with a view to turning out an authentic polite metropolitan citizen devoid of any signs of creoleness.[417] This ambition was the generalized absentee planter desire, which acknowledged the othering of the creole in metropolitan society, and, in the estimation of Gikandi, accepted societal denigration in the interest of an assimilated future for their children.[418]

William's childhood is the subject of much speculation concerning his character and the course of his life. His home life was rich and lavish: the Alderman was famous for extravagance in everything, not least entertaining. The Beckford brothers now lived in Britain, close to one another and were leading members of the commercial and political world of the 'West India interest', which featured prominently in family life. He was indulged and over-protected, educated to great refinement by tutors at home, since his mother was set against him attending school or university.[419] His childhood was solitary, lacking the company of other children, and famously replete with introspection and fantasies, conjured up in and circumscribed by the grounds of Fonthill. And, as theoretical consideration of landscape earlier in this text predicts, environmental, in particular landscape, imaginings featured prominently in the fantasies he articulated.

Under these circumstances, the tutors in whose company he spent much time were particularly significant, especially the drawing master Alexander Cozens who was to play an exceptional role in his life. Cozens was born in Russia and had met 'Persians travellers, Tartar princes and other exotic personages' in that country.[420] He is said to have encouraged and even participated in his charge's imaginative fantasies. Something of their relationship is revealed in correspondence, such as in this letter to Cozens:

> the time will arrive when we may abstract ourselves at least one hundred days from the world, and in retirement give way to our romantic inclinations […]. There we will

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[417] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 126.

[418] Ibid, p. 132

[419] Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, p. 38.

[420] Fothergill, *William Beckford of Fonthill*, p. 43.

> execute those plans you have imagined, and realise in some measure the dreams of our fancy.[421]

Cozens is also said to have introduced his student to 'occult ideas', and possibly to 'exoticized desires', probably a reference to Beckford's homosexuality and speculation regarding Cozens's encouragement of early experimentation.[422]

Beckford's relationships with his two most prominent tutors reflected a tension that pervaded his early life. In contrast to Cozens, John Lettice, his first tutor, left a traumatic imprint on his student when, under the instruction of his guardian, Lord Chatham, and in compliance with the wish of his mother, Lettice forced Beckford, at the age of thirteen, to burn a treasured collection of 'oriental drawings, &c'.[423] Maria Beckford's concern for her son's assimilation led to a strict régime and frequent conflict between mother and son. This anecdote is also stressed by his biographers as indicating an early interest in the exoticism of the Arab World which would inform the setting and characters of *Vathek*.[424]

The exclusive company of adults and their intense attention made Beckford precocious and highly intellectual at a young age. By the age of twenty he had written two books and was possessed with a sense of self-importance and entitlement.[425] Equally, he was accustomed to the lavish social life of his class and witnessed the requisite routine performance required of the socially ambitious nouveaux riches. His upbringing instilled in him the significance of the opinion of others in polite society heightened by an egocentrism born out of his anomalous childhood. Discussion of the Fonthill landscape will reveal the extent to which this concern with himself and how others saw him grew into the desire, or need, to see himself reflected in all engagements with the outside world.

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[421] Quoted in Ibid, p. 153.

[422] Ibid, p. 43; Haggerty, *Men in Love*, p. 139.

[423] Fothergill, *Willian Beckford of Fonthill,* p. 41; Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, pp. 42-43.

[424] Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, p. 41.

[425] Malcolm Jack, 'Introduction', *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* and *The Long Story*, also known as *The Vision*, both in William Beckford, *Vathek and Other Stories*, ed by Malcolm Jack (London: Penguin, 1995).

His life and the horizons of his fantasies expanded in his late teens when he started travelling. This commenced in Switzerland, where he was sent by his mother at the age of seventeen, followed by a tour of Britain. Then, most significantly, came two grand tours, the first, undertaken conventionally in the company of Lettice, included an extended stay with his mother's uncle Sir William Hamilton who was the British envoy to Naples. Here he became acquainted with and formed a trusting relationship with the ambassador's wife, Catherine, who urged him repeatedly to desist from potentially scandalous homosexual relationships. For on both of these overseas sojourns he involved himself in relationships with other young men, to the great consternation of his mother, who foreshortened his stay in Geneva when rumours reached her.

The end of the first grand tour marked Beckford's coming of age, which was celebrated by a lavish ball at Fonthill Splendens, followed a few months later by a Christmas celebration. These two celebrations align with the two grand tours: the first one in each case occurred while he was a minor and was arranged by his mother, the other after his coming of age was arranged by him and invested with huge conscious self-creation.

Beckford's twenty-first birthday celebration, in September 1781, was entirely the lavish event to be expected for the wealthiest absentee plantocrat, culminating in a ball for three hundred guests, whereas the second event in December was intimate, consisting of a few friends, including Cozens, and legendarily rumoured to be an occasion of sinister and supernatural engagements. The high point was 'theatrical manipulations' by the artist Philip James de Loutherbourg, famed for his innovative light and sound effects with moving images, entitled 'Imitations of Natural Phenomena, represented by Moving Pictures'.[426] The writing of *Vathek* early in 1782 was the subtext to these events and the second grand tour, which was configured to enact an iconic journey undertaken by the caliph Vathek.

A further critical factor that informs consideration of Beckford at this time is his expressed ambivalence regarding coming of age and the loss of youth, as he explained in a letter to Cozens towards the end of the first grand tour:

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[426] Alexander, *Britain's Wealthiest Son*, p. 83.

> The World grows more and more irksome to me every Day and I am eagerly wishing for a Spirit like yours to comfort and revive my own. […] Why should I desire the applause of Creatures I despise? rather let me enjoy the heartfelt satisfaction which springs from innocence and tranquillity […]. I am now approaching the Age when the World in general expect me to lay aside my dreams, abandon my soft illusion and start into public life. How greatly are they deceived how firmly am I resolved to be a Child for ever![427]

A final significant event of his early years was the 'Powderham scandal'. In 1784, at the age of twenty-four, Beckford was discovered in bed with sixteen-year-old William Courtenay, whom he had first met and fallen in love with during his tour of England, when Courtenay had been just eleven years old. This discovery was reported widely, leading to social disgrace. He was obliged to stand down as the MP for Well, to which post he had been elected earlier that year, and he was consigned to the social margins of the polite society for which he had been groomed from birth.[428] Courtenay, in contrast, went on to become 3rd Viscount Courtenay and later 9th Earl of Devon. Soon after coming of age he was 'presented to King George III' and took his seat in the House of Lords, whereas that same king dismissed Beckford's proposed peerage and even apparently expressed the wish for him to be hanged.[429]

For many writers Beckford's sexual preferences are the key to his complexities and the subtext of his life and work. This analysis configures him as a victim, but it fails to acknowledge the persona of the entitled planter, apparent in his conduct, including within intimate relationships. Power featured centre-stage in a lifetime of same-sex relationships with men younger than himself, sometimes not even adults, and for the most part less wealthy and/or of lower social class than him. He is renowned for his obsessive pursuit of the objects of his emotional and/or sexual desires, cynical exploitation of the feelings for

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[427] Naples 16 November 1780, quoted in Fothergill, *Willian Beckford of Fonthill*, pp. 95-96.

[428] Ibid, pp. 169 and 174.

[429] 'William Courtenay (1768-1835) The Life and Times of a Gay Man' https://william1768courtenay.com [accessed 6 February 2024]; Rictor Norton, "William Beckford: The Fool of Fonthill", Gay History and Literature, updated 16 Nov. 1999 http://www.rictornorton.co.uk/beckfor1.htm [accessed 27 August 2023].

him on the part of others, particularly women, and the callous treatment of lovers when he lost interest.[430] All narratives pertaining to the Beckfords are inherently about power, most succinctly expressed in William's allegorization of his family as the Abbasid caliphate, famous and wealthy rulers of the Arab empire for 500 years, in *Vathek*.

Although he spent time in Italy, the Mediterranean land with which he fell in love was Portugal, birthplace of the Atlantic slave trade and the plantation system.[431] His first visit to Portugal was en route to his Jamaican plantations, initially a stop-off, rapidly transformed into a destination, when he declined to re-board the ship and continue across the Atlantic. This series of events reveals the extent of his self-denial as a planter and owner of human chattels: Europe was his world and he strategically avoided the transformative potential of the Atlantic crossing, instead reassigning his identity to the Mediterranean land which epitomized the conflicted essence of his being. Portugal combined: the taste and refinement of the Mediterranean, synonymous with the grand tour destination; the performative effeteness of the Catholic church, to which he was attracted as a lifetime performer of elitism and ritual; the architectural refinement of the iconic gothic monasteries of Batalha and Alcobaca; the brutal and racialized reality of that country's overseas history as the originator of Atlantic slavery. The intersection between Beckford as a creole and as a figure of refinement, embodied in his close association with Portugal, pervaded his entire life, and slavery, 'the greatest repressed force in Beckford's life', was its subtext.[432]

Beckford's obsessive fascination with Portugal was essentialized in his attraction to Bathala and Alcobaca, on which the design of Fonthill Abbey was based. And this attraction to the monastic settings fused with several other conscious and unconscious elements of his person, including, we might infer, an intuitive reaction against his mother's Protestantism. Institutionally the monastery was enclosed, self-sufficient, a locus of austerity and manual

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[430] He exploited the affections of William Courtney's sister, Charlotte, to get close to the young object of his desire; he enjoyed an intimate flirtatious relationship with Louisa, wife of his cousin Peter Beckford, but soon lost interest and callously disengaged from her; on hearing of the terminal illness of his long-term lover in poverty, unable to pay his doctor, he neither visited nor sent him funds. See Fothergill, *Willian Beckford of Fonthill*, pp. 70, 78, 105, 331-32, 345.

[431] Blackburn, *New World Slavery*, p. 166; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, pp.64- 65.

[432] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 137.

labour, particularly agricultural labour, hierarchical and highly controlled, potentially a sanitized reconfiguration of the source of his wealth, the slave plantation, and conceivably a means of internalizing and justifying the distant brutal landscape. Further it was a homo-social environment, in which men lived lives of marginality, frequently solitary but in proximity to one another, a set of circumstances which coincided with his own experience and fantasies. The controlled ritual and processionality of the Catholic church clearly informed the configuration of Fonthill as a Catholic monastery.

Finally, like his cousin and namesake, exiled to the margins of the Beckford dynasty by cause of his illegitimate birth, his marginalization due to his homosexuality compounded his personal neuroses. In the light of this it is no surprise that material accessorization was central to his self-creation, entirely in keeping with the mercantile culture of his class and his landscape of domesticated exotica. James H. Bunn tells us that 'the naturalization of foreign imports accords with one of the basic tenets of mercantilism'. Thus settings such as Fonthill Abbey transmuted the possession of exotic objects from vulgar consumerism into a mark of cultural refinement and obsessive acquisitiveness into discerning taste. Nevertheless, the creole trope of demonstrable excess pervaded the display of precious objects that adorned the interior of Beckford's Abbey-ego matrix, in the words of Bunn, 'broaden[ing] into a self-supporting empire'.[433]

This conflates with the grand tour as vehicle for acquiring a collection and re-enacted through that collection in a performance of class and culture. Thus for white creoles such as Beckford it was an 'indispensable form of self-fashioning', which went beyond the material collection to include diaries and correspondence as an essential component of the 'rituals of the grand tour'.[434] Gikandi illustrates how for Beckford these rituals and acquisitions went beyond the rite of passage to become 'a forceful presentation of himself in the public sphere'.[435] Knox-Shaw stresses the Jamaican creole 'love of display' in which 'the Beckford

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[433] James H. Bunn, 'The Aesthetics of British Mercantilism', *New Literary History* 11 (1980), 303-321 (pp. 305-06).

[434] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, pp. 127-28.

[435] Ibid.

family were more indulgent than […] most'.[436] To this day, Beckford is famed for his collection, 'numbered among the great collectors of his time', and yet beneath the assiduously cultivated façade of intuitive gentility, his zealousness reveals the underlying creole: 'praised as a collector and vilified as a man of taste'. [437]

The grand tour performance required a particular 'aesthetic palette', which sublimized the European landscape. For Beckford, this translated into his more sophisticated and ritualized second grand tour, crucially accompanied by the artist John Robert Cozens (son of his former tutor and confidant, Alexander Cozens), key to his aestheticizing mission. The sublime aesthetic of his grand tour writings also served as a rehearsal for the gothic sublime *Vathek*, which he completed in the course of the journey. This second tour was truly grand, *en prince*, with a substantial entourage of three carriages together with outriders, including, beyond a coterie of servants, cooks, valets, a personal physician, a harpsichord player, a chaplain and secretary in the person of his former tutor John Lettice, and Cozens.[438] The entourage itself was a performance, 'like a wandering emperor' in the words of Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, and a rehearsal for or replica of the caliph Vathek's journey from Samarah to Istakhar.[439] This imaginative configuration was designed to imitate the narrative he was engaged in writing. Gikandi suggests that his grand tour writings were also imagined rather than reported:

> [he was] impelled […] to make the imagination rather than memory the organizing principle […] what was observed and its effects on the sensations were as important as what was imagined or visualized, and one in which natural objects, such as

[436] P. H. Knox-Shaw, 'The West Indian Vathek' *Essays in Criticism*, 43 (1993), 284-307 (p. 287).

[437] Derek E. Ostergard, 'Introduction', *William Beckford, 1760-1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed by Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 11-15 (p. 13); Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 130.

[438] Fothergill, *William Beckford of Fonthill*, p. 134.

[439] Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, 'Beckford's Gothic Wests', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series, 13 (1954), 41-49 (42); *Vathek* p. 54.

> mountains, could be recollected and re-created in the mind independent of their location and temporality.[440]

In summary, the key element of the life of Beckford of Fonthill was performative and self-creative. The entire consuming project of the *Vathek*-Abbey matrix is summarized by Max Fincher in the homonym 'eye/I', self-projection and -reflection.[441]

A further element of this self-centred project, Beckford's 'collecting mania', became amalgamated with the entire Abbey project:[442]

> In some ways it is difficult to imagine Beckford ever having been content with a completely finished project. His continual need to refit or commission new furniture allowed him to be constantly in the process of change or refinement without ever actually reaching the end. He visited Paris in 1814 and again in 1819, and continued to travel to London until lack of finances forced him to give up the lease on his London house in 1817.[443]

This obsession, in line with other neuroses, followed from his great preoccupation of his close association with plantation slavery. Susan Stewart tells us that 'the point of collecting is forgetting', that the collector engages with objects in an obsessive way, seeking a 'form of self-enclosure' or a 'hermetic world', an escape into a removed and safe enclosure, a mode of existence that Beckford strove for in every location and context in which he found himself.[444] When escape proved impossible in the adult world, denial took over: 'Denial was Beckford's model of existence in the numinous zone between English freedom and African bondage, between Britain and Jamaica'.[445] The collector, as previously mentioned, is

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[440] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 129.

[441] Max Fincher, *Queering the Gothic in the Romantic Age: The Penetrating Eye* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 19.

[442] Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, p. 139.

[443] Amy Frost, 'The Beckford Era', in *Fonthill Recovered: A Cultural History*, ed. by Caroline Dakers (London: UCL Press, 2018) pp. 59-93 (pp. 91-92).

[444] Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 151-52.

[445] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 138.

frequently motivated by a desire to 'cover up a rapid social rise in the world or to cloak a range of nefarious activities': in the case of Beckford both of these apply.[446] David Watkin turns to the realm of mercantilism and a sense of inadequacy associated with 'new money' as a determining factor in the 'complex psychology' of the collector. He likens Beckford to his contemporaries and fellow-collectors John Soane and Thomas Hope, 'all outsiders in some ways, facing real or imaginary opposition'. All three of these men possessed fortunes of inherited commercial wealth which they used to create 'intensely personal interiors' and 'indulge their visual passions by collecting and by creating personal settings of immense aesthetic individuality'.[447] Beckford's collection was a central tool of his self-fashioning, configured to present as an aesthete and bibliophile, but it morphed into an obsession that conflated with the psychosis of collecting outlined by Jean Baudrillard:

> there is in all cases a manifest connection between collecting and sexuality, and this activity appears to provide a powerful compensation during critical stages of sexual development. This tendency clearly runs counter to active genital sexuality, although it is not simply a substitute for it. Rather, as compared with genitality, it constitutes a regression to the anal stage, which is characterised by accumulation, orderliness, aggressive retention, and so on. […] it is not designed to procure instinctual satisfaction […]; it may nevertheless produce intense satisfaction as a reaction […]. It is this passionate involvement which lends a touch of the sublime to the regressive activity of collecting […]. The collector's sublimity, then, derives not from the nature of the objects he collects […] but from his fanaticism'.[448]

Such was his sublimity that in November 1791 in the wake of the French Revolution Beckford travelled to Paris 'lured by the thought of the spoils he might pick up in the glittering debris

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[446] Rheims, *The Strange Life of Objects*, p. 23.

[447] David Watkin, 'Beckford, Soane and Hope: The Psychology of the Collector' in *William Beckford, 1760-1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed by Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 33-48, pp. 33-34.

[448] Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, pp. 93-94.

left in the wake of the revolution', as escaping aristocrats hurriedly sold off artworks and other collectable objects.[449]

Much discourse on the obsession of collecting stresses its association with nostalgia. In the case of Beckford, longing for youth, love of youth, a desire to return to the innocence of youth are evidenced in his frequently obsessive sexual encounters with young men, one of them represented in *Vathek*. Many features of his own youth arise in the novel, particularly the Alderman's landscape garden, and the famous grottoes within it. The grotto was a particularly significant feature of the absentee creole garden as a reference to caves in the Jamaican landscape. The Fonthill landscape largely circumscribed his childhood and adolescence and was inevitably enmeshed in the fantasies he articulated to Cozens and a lasting aesthetic and emotional influence. And, additionally, returning to the Fonthill of his youth was also to obliterate the scandal of Powderham and all that ensued from it. The reality of creoleness inherent to the landscape in which he found solace was, however, potentially difficult for Beckford. David Whitfield tells us that Courtney 'seems to have made little if any effort to disguise or deny the fact that he chose to have sex with other men', although it was a capital offence. Far from suffering the social disgrace and marginalization experienced by Beckford, '[h]is rank and wealth enabled him to escape the pillory, imprisonment or execution by hanging'. The aristocrat Courtenay was acknowledged and honoured by the same king who wished to see the creole Beckford held to account under the law. In other words, homosexuality was no obstacle to Courtenay, whose aristocratic status placed him above the law, whereas the creole Beckford was stigmatized and vilified for the rest of his life.

Hence engagements with Fonthill were potentially conflicted, a circumstance likely to have exacerbated Beckford's desire to transform his father's Palladian house and Brownian landscape.[450] His early musings on an imagined landscape and associated youthful romantic attachments had been immortalized in *Vathek* and remained remarkably unchanged into

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[449] Fothergill, *William Beckford of Fonthill*, p. 216.

[450] The term 'Brownian' refers to the landscape gardener 'Capability' Launcelot Brown.

maturity. This will be further explored with reference to the adolescent landscape of *Vathek* and that of the adult Fonthill Abbey.

To summarize, the Beckford cousins shared much more than a name. They were part of a privileged elite, educated to self-esteem and high expectations of wealth and social status. And that education also instilled in them an awareness of the otherness of their creole heritage. The complex narratives of their marginality as expressed in landscapes is the subject matter of the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 7: WILLIAM BECKFORD OF SOMERLEY

As a 'magisterial history', *A Descriptive Account* is imbued with planteresque authority, whilst serving the awkward purpose of justifying and sanitizing slavery, through the agency of aestheticizing the plantation and its attendant institutions, as declared in the title, '*Considered in a Picturesque Point of View*'.[451] In fact the aesthetic is the imagined viewpoint, or constructed disguise of reality, as in the case of Long's *History*, aligning the institution of slavery with the landscape. The deployment of the picturesque, as planteresque, by the white gaze was a frequent strategy to associate the colonial landscape with that of Europe and seamlessly incorporate slavery into the Claudian aesthetic. Such imagined landscapes, however, were inherently flawed and creole anxieties betrayed the intention. This was the second work penned by Beckford in the Fleet prison: clearly, in spite of his descent from 'decades of flamboyant prosperity' to humiliating incarceration and financial ruin, he resiliently took up and weaponized his pen to undertake a rationalization of colonial brutality via the medium of picturesque idealism, whilst, importantly, affirming or reaffirming himself as a refined aesthete.[452] His first book, addressed the uppermost matter for the planter community, slavery.[453] And the *Descriptive Account* also addressed '*What Would Probably Be the Effects of an Abolition of the Slave Trade, and of the Emancipation of the Slaves*'.

Keith Sandiford stresses this text's 'overt didactic purposes of depicting landscape, life and action with great detail, colour and imagination' achieved through a 'high incidence of natural description' and 'awful and sublime views', with particular focus on the pre-eminent event of the hurricane of 1780, all serving to comply with the European taste for 'evocations of beauty and terror […] in the aesthetic structures of the picturesque and sublime'. Further though these evocations 'construct the powerful metaphors of threat and violent cataclysm

[451] Dillman, *Colonizing Paradise* p. 172.

[452] Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place*, p. 1.

[453] William Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, Impartially Made*, 2 vols (London: T. and J. Egerton, 1788).

that clearly dominated Beckford's consciousness'.[454] Sandiford also stresses the 'sense of crisis' brought about by the external realities of the American Revolution, slave revolts and the abolition movement in Europe.[455] These unsettling circumstances were reinforced for the planter on a daily basis by the discomforts embedded in the colonial landscape and expressed in the sublime evocations of terror referred to by Sandiford. This discussion will further consider this role of landscape as a repository for the inner and outer conflicts experienced by this planter.

Planteresque: The Picturesque Creolized

Richard Dallas recognized the significance of landscape to Beckford's persona. In this extract he elides the estate with the proprietor, the essential characteristic of the picturesque landscape portrait, and foreshadows *A Descriptive Account*:

> The situation of Hertford, is one of the pleasantest in the country: it is on a very gently rising ground, nearly equally removed from the sea, and lofty mountains covered with wood, and at a short distance from a fine river. Some of the most romantic scenes in this island, are upon the estates of Benevolus, and I hope one day (for he is fond of writing, and writes charmingly) to see an account, not only of these scenes that belong to himself, but of the whole island.[456]

This representation of the proprietor – and proprietorship – through the estate portrait was inherent to the landscape garden. By the late eighteenth century, the picturesque genre had 'climaxed' through the three self-styled 'philosophical and cultural critics', William Gilpin, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price.[457] These men refuted the picturesque that referenced the elitism of the grand tour in favour of an aesthetic which prioritized vernacularism, and, alongside the transition from early rational politeness to sensibility, the

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[454] Keith A. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.119-20.

[455] Ibid, p. 122.

[456] Dallas, p. *A Short Journey*, pp. 140-41. 'Benevolus' is Dallas's name for Beckford.

[457] Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*, p. 72.

picturesque morphed into a more domestic and humane genre. This transition is clearly articulated by Hunt:

> We can identify here a distinct turn in picturesque thinking, from concern with the designer's role […], to the reception of a designed landscape by a specific individual or generalized sensibility. […] An individual's own experiences of a garden or landscape now take center stage […] In these there is […] more focus upon the world of associations and introspection.[458]

This 'turn' is most famously represented in the picturesque touring literature of William Gilpin, on which he commenced work in 1768 (although the first was not published until 1782) and in which he combined visual representations of scenes with textual accounts.[459]

Nevertheless, in the colonial setting, the nationalist poetics of James Thomson remained an important influence on aestheticizers of the colonial landscape, such as Long and Beckford, for Thomson embedded the celebration of appropriated exotica in the culture of the homeland and provided a convenient bridge for the elision of the creole landscape with the metropolitan. Thomson configured a way of seeing exotic botanical products as domestic luxury goods and signifiers of wealth, and Beckford extended this framework in an attempted normalization the hybrid flora and landscape, an elision, however, which morphed the picturesque into planteresque and subverted his elaborate performance of gentility in his colonial persona. Hence, in Beckford, we find a fusion of Thomson's and Gilpin's 'ways of seeing', also reflected in Robertson's paintings of his estate, which, in line with Gilpin's picturesque tours, Beckford intended to include in *A Descriptive Account*.[460]

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[458] Ibid, p. 65

[459] Ibid.

[460] Beckford, *Descriptive Account*, I, p. x.

A frequently deployed trope of the touring picturesque is the affectation of 'planter as painter' to configure the colonial landscape in metropolitan terms of reference:

> The palm, the cocoa-nut, the mountain-cabbage, and the plantain, when associated with the tamarind, the orange, and other trees of beautiful growth and vivid dyes, and these commixed with the waving plumes of the bamboo-cane, the singular appearance of the Jerusalem thorn, the bushy richness of the oleander and African rose, the glowing red of the scarlet cordium, the verdant bowers of the jessamine and Grenadilla vines, the tufted plumes of the lilac, the silver-shite and silk leaves of the portlandia, together with that prodigious variety of minor fruits and lowly shrubs, all together compose an embroidery of colours which few regions can rival, and which none can perhaps surpass.[461]

This passage presents an assembly of botanical transplants from different tropical regions, appropriated and assembled by European agency, metaphorized by that same agency in the European construct of an 'embroidery'. Framing invests the scene with the power of that white agency, transforming the other flora removed from disparate loci into a white European construct, but also enhancing the hybridity of an aggregated miscellany imprinted on an other terrain.[462] It also deploys the Enlightenment trope of the list or catalogue, echoing the metropolitan poetics of empire typified by Thomson.[463] Thomson's aestheticized and commodified representation of tropical plants, replete with hyperbole, configures material indulgence as a trope of tropicality but equally positions the fruits of the tropics in European culture and cuisine. Hence the fashionable pineapple is changed in appearance through removal from its native setting, 'stripped' of its skin, and transformed into an item of European provenance.

The list, however, served another function, as explained by Tobin: '[it] erases the real conditions under which such fruits grew as well as the politics of empire, ignoring the

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[461] Ibid, I, p. 32.

[462] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. 12.

[463] Appendix 4.

complicated and often violent systems of extraction […] that the British employed to gain control over the world's resources'.[464] And nowhere was the system of extraction more violent than on the west coast of Africa and on the sugar plantation. Beckford's mimetic botanical 'embroidery of colours' connects with Thomson's precedent, embracing the proprietorial and market mentality which requires the attribution of value to all things, with a nod to Enlightenment systematization, in a strategy of appropriation and attempted domestication of the other landscape.[465]

The planteresque landscape of Edward Long presents idealized visualizations of the colonial terrain but avoids any inclusion of the enslaved population which inhabited and laboured within it into the aestheticized rendition. Beckford, on the other hand, embraced the challenge as modelled by Thomson's domestic picturesque which configures agricultural work in the georgic mode as the virtuous taming of nature. He eulogizes the agricultural landscape and mythology of a harmonious countryside of unchanging longevity, in contradistinction to the reality of enclosure and associated agricultural innovations which were transforming the lives of the rural poor:

> HOME, from his morning Task, the Swain retreats;
> His Flock before him stepping to the Fold:
> While the full-udder'd Mother lows around
> The chearful Cottage, then expecting Food,
> The Food of Innocence, and Health! […]
> And, in the Corner of the buzzing Shade,
> The House-Dog with the vacant Greyhound, lies,
> Out-stretch'd, and sleepy.[466]

This amalgamation of simplicity with tropes of hard work, wellbeing and contentment serves as a social metaphor of an idyllic status quo. The cottage is 'chearful', the food 'innocent', the 'buzzing shade' provides an opportunity for relaxation and sleep for the 'House-Dog', a

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[464] Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, p. 54.

[465] Ibid, p. 12.

[466] Thomson, *The Seasons*, 'Summer', ll. 220-33.

ubiquitous motif of domesticity. But more than the dog and stock animals, the swain himself is assigned a role within the picturesque frame, processionally returning from field to cottage and the performative consumption of 'innocent' food.

The deployment of the aesthetic as a social metaphor aligns perfectly with Beckford's agenda, although, whilst Thomson's account objectifies the labour of the swain, the planteresque requires a considerably greater imaginative reconceptualization to aestheticize the brutal and racialized labour regime of the plantation. In Beckford's unconvincing georgic labourers do not accompany cattle, rather they are classified alongside them: 'From many situations you have views so much diversified […] of groups of negroes, herds of cattle, passing wains and by the recurrence of every rural object that imagination can form'.[467] And white creole hyperawareness of skin colour is a displacement for a more critical underlying hypersensitivity:

> Amidst the appearance of this calamity, should any of the cane-pieces happen to be on the side of hills, and near a river, the reflections therein of the clouds that roll in black and fiery volumes, the paly light that shoots out at the communication of every blaze, and the umbered appearance of the negroes, that in a certain manner help to darken the shade, are seen to double, as it were, the dreadful landscape, and to add the picturesque horror to the destruction that is blazing around.[468]

Here the picturesque shifts to the sublime in an account of a fire in a sugar cane field, a 'calamity', transforming the field into a 'dreadful landscape', and, georgic niceties forgotten, African labourers are 'umbered', reduced to a visual effect through skin colour, conveniently echoing black clouds of smoke and the dark 'shade' of the occasion. The embedded racialized consciousness of the planteresque landscape in this 'picturesque horror' illustrates the constant underlying awareness that haunted the plantocracy and configured the planteresque subtext.

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[467] Beckford, *Descriptive Account*, I, pp. 9-10.

[468] Ibid, p. 69.

The trope of 'planter as painter', again deployed, conflates European ocularity into the creole aspiration of metropolitan culturality. In one instance the planter sets out 'to take a view of his estate […] looks with a painter's eye, at the sky above, the plains below, and upon the various scenes', or with 'pencil in his hand […] wishing to select one confined view out of the pleasing variety by which he is surrounded'.[469] The 'delight and interest [of] the landscape painter', is frequently invoked, and famous European artists are routinely referenced, as the artist in search of a perfect view or the traveller enraptured and emotionally transported with evocations of European locations or painters, all in the well-worn convention comfortably familiar to veterans of the grand tour.[470]

In fact Beckford's first sight of Jamaica is reported in an 'aesthetic catalogue' listing mountains, hills, sea, shoreline, clouds, vegetation, cultivated fields and water descending from the mountains in a contrived painterly systematic transition from one feature to another, as if an eye were being cast over a canvas, interjected by references to famous artists: 'every growth that a painter would wish to introduce into this agreeable part of landscape: and those borders which Claude Lorrain, Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, took apparently so much pleasure and pains to enrich, are there excelled by the hand of Nature alone'.[471]

This consciously picturesque account is animated, by ripples appearing on the sea, torrents and cascades descending from the mountains, streams winding and roots running, and contains a routine nod to the iconic painters of grand tour familiarity to ground the experience in a European framework. Indeed Beckford's arrival in the colony not only invokes the aesthetic catalogue, it is configured more or less as a continuation of the grand tour: 'The first appearance of Jamaica presents one of the most grand and lively scenes that the creating hand of Nature can possible exhibit'.[472] But colonial angst creeps in as he

[469] Ibid, p. 175.

[470] Ibid, II, p. 236.

[471] Ibid, I, p. 11.

[472] Ibid, I, p. 7.

approaches the shore and the imagined magnitude of this return to the colony and ambivalence, even possibly fear, surface:

> The timber-trees in the mountains are large and lofty; and the cotton-trees in particular, both there and upon the plains, are of a very beautiful and magnificent growth, and are rendered strikingly picturesque by numberless withes that depend from branch to branch, and by the variety of creeping or stationary plants (deleterious, indeed, to their health and vegetation, but from which no painter would wish to see them disengaged) which attach themselves to the trunks and extremities; and as the roots are very large, and form recesses at the bottom of the stems, or run a considerable distance, and in various lines, above the ground, they make, all together, a very singular and a striking appearance.[473]

The 'large and lofty' trees depicted as displaying 'beautiful and magnificent growth', akin to the oaks and beeches in the conventional metropolitan landscape, are 'strikingly picturesque', and also, one might infer, statuesque, visible from a distance and of great strength, a metaphor for highly visible pervasive white power. As universal symbolic features in eighteenth-century landscapes, trees stood not only for longevity, strength and purpose, but also for stable government, maritime power, and countless other manifestations of patriotism.[474] In this instance, however, a conflicting subtext emerges, for the picturesque beauty described here is achieved through a sinister and subversive organic process, namely the parasitization of the very trees that stand for stable white control, by not one but a variety of plants, mirroring the variety of transported groups of people that constituted the creole society. These plants 'creep', or move slowly and unnoticed, from the very large and established roots, forming solid 'recesses,' or 'running' considerable distances', and are 'deleterious' to the wellbeing of the trees. In all its picturesque magnificence, the tropical landscape is a constant threat to the statuesque plantocracy. Indigenous, other rapidly spreading roots, by definition moving underground and at ground level through

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[473] Ibid, I, p. 10.

[474] Stephen Daniels, 'The Political Iconography of Woodland'.

undergrowth, and ultimately and paradoxically overwhelming the formidably strong structures above ground, are a powerful and disturbing metaphor for a colony founded on slavery, and Beckford's picturesque depiction of it reflects constant disturbance to the colonial peace of mind.

Beckford also adopts the Gilpinesque prototype of the picturesque as mobile: descriptive passages, frequently framed by the trope of the travelling artist in search of a vista, or a voyager happening upon a scene that evokes or surpasses a famous European landscape, reflect a constant comparative impulse to position himself as a traveller referencing Europe rather than a resident in the other setting. Ironically this highlights the distance and distinction that he is endeavouring to erase, a self-betrayal embedded in the creole unconscious.

The valley of the River Cobre, known as 'Sixteen-mile Walk' is the locus for which Beckford evokes the picturesque tour.[475] He also commissioned a painting of the site in line with the Gilpin prototype. In fact in a conscious 'material correspondence between metropolis and colony', Beckford suggests a likeness to 'some particular parts of Matlock and Dove-dale', places made famous and fashionable by Gilpin, and he even audaciously extols the superiority of interest offered by the colonial other, 'more varied and numerous' views, rocks 'more stupendous and lofty' and '[a]t every turn […] a novel scene, […] alternately […] pleasing to the terrific, through bursts of light, or nights of shade'.[476] In fact Gilpin tells his reader, 'The valley of Dove-dale is very narrow at the bottom, consisting of little more than the channel of the Dove, which is a considerable stream; and of a footpath along it's banks', that it is a 'calm, sequestered scene', possessing 'a great share of *beauty*' but that 'The hills, the woods, and the rocks of Dove-dale are sufficient to raise the idea of *grandeur*; but not to impress that of *horror*'.[477]

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[475] Beckford, *Descriptive Account*, I, pp. 22-24.

[476] Quilley, 'Pastoral Plantations', p. 113.

[477] William Gilpin, *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, On Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland*, 2 vols (London: R. Blamire, 1786), II, pp.230-32.

Beckford's suggested likeness to Dovedale and Matlock is a conscious manoeuvre to connect with the leading exponent of the picturesque tour, amalgamating the landscapes in a hybrid continuum, and positioning himself in a continuum with Gilpin. The passage stresses the contrast between 'pleasing' and 'terrific' experiences afforded on the walk, in parts the valley is open and 'the sun-beams […] warm the chilly bottom', in others the rocks are 'nearly closed on top, as if to prevent the day from peering upon its glooms'. The water 'in some places glides smoothly', whilst elsewhere it 'becomes a hoarse and troubled torrent'. There are 'tremendous precipices' in parts and 'gentle declivities and level plains' in others. Rocks are 'in some places, smooth and naked' and elsewhere 'they exhibit ruins, arches, towers, and caves'. And 'the most luxuriant and spreading foliage' is 'varied by trees of numerous description and growth, and many of which rise to a considerable height from the very centre and through the fissures of the rock, without the appearance of a particle of mould'. And finally 'that part of it over which a bridge is thrown, is, in my opinion, the most striking':

> it is flat and simple, and seems peculiarly adapted to the features of the scene: it communicates, as it were, disjointed beauties, and hardly appears to interrupt the progress of the stream, although the current is always seen to ripple, sometimes to break in foam, and in the rainy seasons to rush with such a violence, as oftentimes to carry it away, or to deposit its ruins amongst the docks and sedges. Indeed the whole stream runs through, and enriches, as many delightful scenes as a lover of Nature can any where meet with, or the most enthusiastic artist could possibly desire.[478]

Again the emphasis is on contrast in the current between 'ripple' and 'foam' with an acknowledgement of 'violence', and yet the poetic configuration is minimal, definitely contained and avoiding transition into the 'horror' of sublimity. This passage occurs at an early stage in the text (pp. 20-24 of the first volume) and endeavours to establish the notion of the colony as in the image of the metropole, Dovedale more or less in an exotic setting.

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[478] Beckford, *Descriptive Account*, I, p. 24.

Likewise, Robertson's visual representation is in the image of Gilpin's, framed by cliffs and trees with a background of disappearing mountains.[479] However, the connectivity between the Peak District and the slave colony is inherently flawed, the outcome of a trans-Atlantic creolized perception, for Beckford alludes to unseen underground activity in the form of roots giving rise to and nourishing above-ground activities in the most unlikely and barren substrate of a rock face. The exotic trees portrayed by Robertson contrast with the Gilpin's patriotic deciduous trees anchored in deep soil in the valley. And, most significantly, Robertson's representation of the valley includes human figures, affirming Beckford's identification of the African figure as incidental to the landscape, but equally essential. And this presence goes to the heart of the *Descriptive Account* project.

Robertson's several paintings under Beckford's patronage and intended for inclusion in the book, were substantially in the metropolitan style of estate portraiture, but significantly not entirely so. The metropolitan landscape portrait was often a 'conversation piece' that located a landowner with his family centrally in the landscape configured to proclaim power.[480] Most apparently, Beckford does not feature in the painting of his landscape or in any way centre himself within a narrative of power. Rather his landscape is portrayed as a Eurocentric georgic idyll. Hence seven African figures appear in the painting of the Sixteen Mile Walk, all at ease in the leisurely pursuit of pastoral activities, three sitting on the riverbank apparently fishing, three standing in a relaxed demeanour engaged in conversation, one on horseback and one with a basket on her head, deployed to establish a gentle and bucolic representation of labour. The final African figure is fishing from the bridge, rather implausibly, for, according to Dallas the bridge was precarious, 'a flat wooden bridge, that has neither wall nor rail, and scarcely raised above the water, which in rainy weather overflows in many feet', and Robertson's 'on the spot' representation of the water, is decidedly rough and potentially dangerous, both at odds with Beckford's description.[481] Quilley characterizes this idyllic representation of enslaved African workers in repose as a

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[479] Appendix 1, Figures 8 and 9.

[480] Landscape portraiture is discussed in Chapter 3.

[481] Quilley, 'Pastoral Plantations', p. 113; Dallas, *A Short Journey*, I, p. 77.

'double displacement', first sublimating their enforced transportation from Africa and the notorious middle massage, and secondly creating 'a separation between them and the reason for their enslavement, to be the labour force on the plantations'.[482] Rather Robertson evokes European precedents, such as Thomson's swain (cited above), and allows Beckford the fiction of a healthy and happy black workforce in the colonial landscape. The most crucial self-representation for Beckford is the alignment of his entire world, landscape, workforce and artist, as synonymous with that of the British ruling class.[483] Naturally this hybrid fiction is fractured, not least by the turbulent river which he characterises as a 'stream'.

Beyond the plantation lie countless further landscape features:

> the towering grandeur of the Blue Mountains which are covered with a sapphire haze, and which appear to lose their summits in the clouds, combine their magnificent powers to awaken the surprise, and to fix the attention of every beholder: and he who can view this romantic variety without preserving a record of it in his mind, must be deemed a frigid observer indeed, where he ought to be an admirer of the beautiful, and an enthusiast of the sublime.[484]

This romantic description continues the jewel metaphor of Beckford's introduction to the colony ('one of the richest jewels in the crown of Great-Britain').[485] However, the precious sapphire haze envelops further anxiety, for the mist conceals a location beyond the writer's knowledge, namely the dwelling place of the most threatening other element in the landscape, the Maroons. In this light the mountains' 'magnificent powers to awaken surprise' assume a narrative of insecurity and rightly render the European viewer 'frigid'. This wariness configures a frontier in Beckford's landscape. Mountains, cliffs and caves are

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[482] Quilley, 'Pastoral Plantations', p. 116.

[483] This 'plantation picturesque' was a generalized formula, as illustrated by the watercolour sketches of Worthy Park plantation in Appendix 1, Figure 3.

[484] Beckford, *Descriptive Account*, I, p. 21.

[485] Ibid, I, p. xiii.

sinister geological formations, and discomfort around such concealed places emerges, particularly regarding water that descends from the threatening concealed mountain tops:

> In the declivity of the hill, that is darkly shaded by rocks on one side, and by massy foliage on the other, is drilled the bed of a hoarse, impetuous torrent; and which, when the waters are out, is observed to tumble in successive, though not stupendous, falls, and rushing through the adjoining ornaments of underwood and shrubs, is sometimes seen, and sometimes lost; and now the murmurs die away, and now they swell with the breeze, until at last they become unheard from distance, or silenced by the more noisy washings of the beach, or the roarings of the surge.[486]

The disappearance and re-emergence of the moving water, shrinking and swelling, audible and inaudible, renders the European observer at the mercy of the other landscape, passive and without knowledge or control.

> Sometimes as the stranger journies […], he is lost in the shadows of surrounding rocks and forest glooms; and many of the trees that produce those shadows, receive their nourishment and the means of growth in the bosom of these massy fragments; and sometimes three or four at a time are seen to struggle together from the same fissure, and interweave their branches overhead, as they unite their stems below; and of these singular appearances in every part of the island, it is hardly possible to describe the variety as well as beauty.[487]

Here vigorous statuesque vegetation emerges from 'massy fragments' of inert rock, interweaving above and critically 'uniting' unseen below, an amassed solidarity, affirming the narrative of subversion pervading the colonized landscape. These trees are nourished from below, emerge in closely connected groups and crucially exist in 'every part of the island'. This vegetation may possess beauty 'hardly possible to describe', but the European traveller is 'lost' in it, at its mercy and definitely not monarch-of-all-he-surveys.

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[486] Ibid, II, p. 234.

[487] Ibid, p. 249.

Thus far the discussion has favoured aestheticized uncultivated features of the colonial landscape, likened experientially to the sublimity of grand tour adventures and domestic picturesque tours. Ironically, Beckford undermines this narrative of blasé adventurism through the metaphorization of these loci as gathering spaces for enslaved people, subversive activities and a running subtext of anxiety. In contrast, the plantation is an extension of the planter's ego, strategically embedded in the romanticism of the wider environment and configured to enhance Beckford's proclaimed identity as a metropolitan gentleman of property and taste. The presence of content black workers is an element of this: for a polite metropolitan audience it is important that he is polite (picturesque) and beneficent, signalled by a happy workforce. The European-designed plantation, 'Nature in a state of cultivation', is a welcome disruption to 'the long-continued uniformity': in a reversal of Gilpinesque sentiment he declares 'those silent retreats which human industry has left unexplored' to be 'uniform', whereas the plantation elicits spontaneous 'cheer'.[488]

But there is more to this veneer: in eulogizing the plantation, Beckford resorts to the contrast between beauty and sublimity to express inner feelings. The 'extreme boundaries on one side shut in by mountains' which are 'of inaccessible height and sublime appearance' contrast with an 'intermediate view divided in to different plantations'. Through this contrast threats from unenclosed spaces, in particular those of 'inaccessible height', recede, for Beckford is grounded in a familiar enclosed (framed) place in which buildings ('fabriques') pepper the hills and valleys, cattle are bucolically 'driven in herds', smoke 'aspires' from the sugar works (not the only element of aspiration in the scenario), and 'the groups of negroes [are] employed in their useful avocation' and 'altogether exhibit a grand, a various, and a moving scene'.[489] Passages on the beauty and comfort of the plantation accompany accounts of the workings of the sugar plantation, how best is should be managed, the risks to planter and relative comfort for others configuring his own role as one of selflessness.[490]

Nevertheless discourse on the cultivation of sugar is replete with underlying anxiety:

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[488] Ibid, p. 235.

[489] Ibid, p. 254.

[490] Ibid, pp. 36-38.

> The sugar-cane is […] the most uncertain production upon the face of the earth; and has […] the greatest number of foreign and local enemies to encounter of any plant that either contributes to the wants, or that administers to the comforts and luxuries of man.[491]

The Jamaican planter, we are told, performs a role in satisfying the 'wants' and 'comforts' of humankind in the face of 'enemies', protecting a vulnerable plant and undertaking risks for the benefit of metropolitan wellbeing. He even seeks to assert his superior knowledge regarding the cultivation of sugar, 'The cane-holes in Jamaica are left, in general, too long open; as by this delay the salts, so necessary to vegetation, are exhaled by the constant ardours of the sun'.[492] This reflection on agricultural practice and implication that his knowledge is superior to that of other planters, which is suggested in the very title of '*With Remarks on the Sugar-cane throughout the Different Seasons of the Year*', frames a sad metaphorical sub-textual account of Beckford's experience in the colony, shrouded in the trope of tropicality as inherently diminishing for white people, expressed more explicitly elsewhere. For those 'who have a liberal education', he tells his reader, 'that climate […] relaxes the nervous system, makes indolence succeed to industry, disease to health, and disappointment and vexation undermine the body, and care and despondency overcome, and at last destroy the vigour of the mind'.[493] Whereas for 'the negroes […] the climate is congenial to their natural feelings, and […] the careful benevolence of Providence has thickened their skins to enable them to bear what would otherwise be insufferable', 'otherwise' meaning for white people.[494]

This is a text of self-narrative, and it is to be expected that reflections on the situation in which he found himself at the time of writing should interrupt his discourse on the colony. Here he selects a view, 'as beautiful as the eye can see, or the imagination form' which

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[491] Ibid, p. 11.

[492] Ibid, I, p. 48.

[493] Ibid, p. 44.

[494] Ibid, II, pp. 65-66.

consoles his 'sick and melancholy hours' and still gives rise to 'a kind of pleasing melancholy' for the plantation that he misses:

> A projecting hill confined the sight, which likewise caught a reach of the same romantic river, over which, as an image of picturesque variety, a wooden gutter conveyed a stream of water from the mountains to the distant mill, which, with the works, the plantation-buildings, the negro-houses, and an immense plain, upon which were planted twelve hundred acres of canes, and these bounded by an apparent town below, and covered and surrounded by lofty mountains above, shut in the varieties of art and nature in the front.[495]

This scene is classically picturesque framed by mountains, containing water, 'varieties of art and nature', and a middle ground consisting of all the key components of the plantation, cane fields, works and the slave village. The plantation, he suggests, is a community, the 'negro-houses' are not 'at all more mean in general appearance than those that help to form a village in some of the more sequestered and needy parts of England', indeed they are apparently 'found to be more tight and commodious'.[496] Enslaved African workers, Beckford informs us, have a demeanour of 'pleasing alacrity' when:

> they run, in playful mood, across the pasture […] and a picture of a very singular cast might be made from the different groups of men, women, and children, that surround it [the grindstone]; and upon which, while one is whetting his tools, and others are employed in turning the shaft, the rest remain in eager expectation, and seem to divide or anticipate their mutual toil.[497]

This idyllic passage constructs the plantation as a tropical echo of Thomson's pastoral idyll, 'the romantic wonders of his estates', in the words of *The Monthly Mirror*'s homage.[498] However, it is in reality highly strategic and strains the picturesque to and beyond the limit:

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[495] Ibid, p. 182.

[496] Ibid, p. 20.

[497] Ibid, p. 43.

[498] 'Biographical Sketch of William Beckford, Esq.', p. 261.

uppermost in the mind of this deflated and humiliated planter is the potential end of slavery. And within the parameters of politeness, encoded in the picturesque genre, his attempt to project himself as a polite aesthete whilst justifying his complicity in the brutality of the plantation, emerges near the end: enslaved people, he contends, are 'slaves by nature' with 'no idea of the charms of liberty'.[499] And critically, 'Of what avail is land in Jamaica, without negroes, and without stock?'[500]

Elizabeth Bohls imagines Beckford as he wrote *A Descriptive Account* 'pining and fuming in London's Fleet Prison'.[501] In a condition of bankruptcy, his conflicted state of mind is amply affirmed in the text. Back in the metropolitan setting, established as his point of reference in the colony, he had met disappointment materially, in that he was incarcerated, and emotionally in that he did not find a welcoming environment. The financial insecurity, whether real or imagined, which had haunted his entire life, had proved determining. And he expresses nostalgia for the only landscape in which he could configure himself as 'monarch-of-all-he-surveyed'.

In one unlikely passage, he contrives a quite distinct demeanour:

> perhaps some poor afflicted mourner is heard, in one corner of the mill-house, pouring out her complaints in gentle sights and falling tears, in sad responses to the lingering drops; and while she rests upon her empty basket, and lives perhaps unfriended, unconnected, and unnoticed, upon the plantation, the thoughts of her distant country, her connexions, and her friends, at once rush upon her mind, and excite her sighs into tempests, and increase to torrents the gushing of her tears; for, although insensibility appears to be the characteristic of an African negro, yet are there many who have their feelings as exquisitely alive to the melting impressions of tenderness and sorrow, as those who are distinguished by a better fortune, and have

[499] Beckford, *Descriptive Account*, II, p. 386.

[500] Ibid, p. 393.

[501] Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place*, p. 1.

> not to encounter the disgraceful persecution of power, or to bend the neck before the humiliating depression of bondage and despair.[502]

This stand-alone paragraph is not contextualised beyond the observation that the end of the harvest can lead to 'a particular cast of reflection', and it is quite distinct from the rest of the text. Whilst apparently revealing sympathy, it is equally the case that Beckford's argument throughout is consciously contrived with a strong purpose and audience in mind, so this nod to the emotional needs of enslaved Africans gives credence to his argument for the need of their improved treatment by certain planters (although not him). And the extent of his self-obsession is such that he reflects this observation back on himself. Having voluntarily decided to leave the colony, 'I took a melancholy farewell […] upon my arrival […] I have found that a man, although born to freedom, may become a slave'.[503]

Although minded of his proclaimed and deeply felt mission of defending plantation slavery, the consciously false argument is disrupted by Beckford's personal bitterness, including in the concluding sentiment and last words of the text:

> in quest of a change of climate to recover a constitution broken down by sickness and affliction; after having left a country in which slavery is established by law, I found myself a prisoner, unheard, and unarranged, in one in which arrest is sanctioned, though contrary to the constitution, and in which I have found that a man, although born to freedom, may become a slave.[504]

Thus William Beckford, even in a state of imagined slavery, retains the entitlement inherent to his white skin and erstwhile planter status. Displacing culpability for the circumstances that have reduced him to penury and in righteous indignation, he finds a dignified precursor to identify with in the person of the great European literary figure, Miguel de Cervantes,

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[502] Beckford *Descriptive Account*, II, pp. 119-20.

[503] Ibid, pp. 404-05.

[504] Ibid, p. 405.

who ‘added dignity to misfortune, and […] taught the pen to charm in the confines of a gaol’, and continues the self-narrative of aesthete.[505]

In summation, *A Descriptive Account* is full of repetitive hyperbolic accounts of an implausible exotic picturesque landscape, revealing a disguised central and inherently egocentric preoccupation. The entire text is a narrative of self, in particular a justification for the writer’s involvement with slavery. This performative dimension is a summation of Beckford’s being. The absentee creole planter who traversed the Atlantic as a genteel, mild-mannered, benevolent aesthete and with an appropriate entourage, constructs a landscape to affirm that character and status. The subtext, however, is discomfort and insecurity. The very process of configuring himself through the medium of a picturesque landscape is fraught with irreconcilable conflict between the idealism of the European genre and the reality of colonial brutality. His final condition at the time of writing, bankruptcy and incarceration, and the set of circumstances that resulted in it are not entirely different from those of his younger cousin and namesake. The story of the imagined landscape of *Vathek*, realized in a dream of ‘impossible’ architecture and ultimate collapse and financial ruination is the subject matter of the following chapter.

[505] Ibid, I, p. 243.

CHAPTER 8: WILLIAM BECKFORD OF FONTHILL

This final consideration addresses a substantially different configured landscape in an entirely different setting. William Beckford of Fonthill has attracted and continues to attract much interest as a figure of refinement and high culture, as a collector, and as a writer 'non-normative fiction'.[506] His character brought together the self-obsession, confidence and precociousness of an elite and indulged only child and the highhandedness of the all-seeing, all-controlling plantocrat. The conceptualization of landscape as identity and narrative of self is truly writ large in the case of this man. He is the subject of copious critical comment, much of which, however, overlooks the fundamental element in this man's character, the colonial root of his identity.

Vathek

'Without question, the novel is a document in Beckford's life, as biographically relevant as, say, his construction of Fonthill'.[507] These words, written by R. B. Gill, reference two creations, separated by around twenty years, which unlock the life and person of William Beckford of Fonthill, and point to their shared narrative. Beckford's fantasies and imaginings were largely associated with landscapes. In Vathek, we find an amalgamation of the Fonthill of his childhood, the Mediterranean and alpine terrains of the grand tour and a received understanding of the slave colony. In adulthood Beckford sought to realize the romantic fantasy and memories of his childhood and return to an imagined utopia of innocence and youth in the highly contrived building and landscape of Fonthill Abbey.

Hence this exploration will commence with a selective reading of *Vathek* in so far as it furnishes an understanding of Beckford's creole preoccupations and his landscape engagements, in particular the *grand oeuvre* of Fonthill Abbey. The novel is the subject of a substantial body of critical work, much of which finds the autobiographical content

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[506] Fincher, *Queering the Gothic*, p. 12; Max Fincher 'Queer Gothic', https://maxfincher.com/queer-gothic/ [accessed 5 October 2021].

[507] R. B. Gill, 'The Author in the Novel: Creating Beckford in *Vathek*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 2. 15 (2003) 241-54 (p. 246).

compelling, and tends to align the novel with the Abbey. Beyond this, different approaches prioritize different aspects of Beckford's person and life and elicit different conclusions from the text.

For many, such as George E. Haggerty, the point of departure is Beckford's homosexuality as the source of his inner conflict, or even 'internalized self-hatred', and the subtext of *Vathek*.[508] Haggerty sees a continuity between Beckford's 'paederasty' in adulthood and idealized memories of his youth, and he endows it with the exceptionalism that was and continues to be so frequently attributed to him.[509] Haggerty associates Beckford's desire for young boys with 'Greek love', reflective of refined same-sex desire as distinct from 'sodomy'. 'The particular combination,' he tells us, 'of intelligence, self-indulgence, narcissism, sensibility, and descriptive power that were Beckford's give his paederasty a special place in the history of sexualities'.[510] The significance of the stage in his life at which he wrote *Vathek* has been highlighted, and one of the ways in which he tried to retrieve his lost youth was through relationships with adolescent boys.[511] Haggerty also points to the attraction he held for a number of women, with whom he engaged as a means to an end: 'Again and again throughout these early affairs, Beckford uses a woman to bring him closer to the boy he loves'.[512] One significance of this exploitative and egocentric behaviour is its reconfiguration in the tripartite relationship between Vathek, Gulchenrouz and Nouronihar in *Vathek*. The pre-adolescent Gulchenrouz, betrothed to Nouronihar, is displaced by Vathek, who engages with her in a degenerate adult heterosexual relationship, and the idealized Gulchenrouz finds salvation at the end. Haggerty's interest in Beckford is as a figure in the history of male-male relationships, in which context he expresses the emotional conflict he experienced between desire and fear of desire.[513]

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[508] Haggerty, *Men in Love*, p. 145.

[509] Ibid, p. 139.

[510] Ibid, pp. 141-43.

[511] Ibid, p. 151.

[512] Ibid, p. 143.

[513] Ibid, p. 148.

For Max Fincher *Vathek* is a gothic novel residing in the 'cultural space' of 'queerness', within which he places emphasis on 'plurality' enabling unfettered discourse outside the boundaries of 'normativity' and developing concepts of 'crossing over or between places, making links that have perhaps gone unnoticed or are not immediately obvious'.[514] Fincher also stresses the theme of occularity: 'I have used the title "The Penetrating Eye" to play upon the homonym of I/eye to indicate the reversibility of the positions of subject and object of the gaze. Not all subjects or ways of seeing are the same'.[515]

The popularity of the *Arabian Nights* gave rise in Europe to the eighteenth-century Oriental novel, deployed mainly as a means of social commentary and satire. For Beckford, however, at the age of twenty-one, it was a vehicle for more personally immediate concerns. *Vathek* is an allegorical tale set in the exotic location of the court of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, Samarah in the novel, suffused in Orientalist tropes of '[s]ensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy: […] a chameleonlike quality called (adjectivally) "Oriental"'.[516] Beckford's fascination with the Orient originated in childhood: Fonthill Splendens boasted many elements of Oriental design, and he read *The Arabian Nights* as a child in his father's library.[517]

Hence, the setting of *Vathek* was replete with memories of childhood and an imaginative framework significantly developed via the agency of his father, at a stage in his life when he was coming to terms with reaching adulthood and wishing himself back to a younger age and imagined state of innocence. The projection of his fantasies against the backdrop of a fictional Orient, enmeshed in childhood memories, acquired further dimensions on coming of age, for embedded in the romantic trope of Orient 'as exotic locale' and milieu of extravagance is that of the colonial construct of Orient as locus of decadence and despotism, which readily aligns with the slave colony.[518] Having reached adulthood, the realization of his

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[514] Fincher *Queering the Gothic*, p. 12; Fincher, 'Queer Gothic'.

[515] Fincher, *Queering the Gothic*, p. 19.

[516] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 118-19.

[517] Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford: Composing for Mozart* (London: John Murray, 1998), p. 31; Alexander, *England's Wealthiest*, 41.

[518] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 118.

own *direct* involvement in the slave colony was unavoidable and, one might infer, deeply uncomfortable: what emerges in *Vathek* is inner conflict regarding his family and his fortune. On the one hand this text is a *homage* to the achievements of his family, on the other it represents the Beckfords as depraved reprobates.

The caliphate, or ruling Islamic dynasty, represents the Beckfords, the most powerful of Jamaican creole planters. Dynastic gravitas opens the novel, essentially positioning the Alderman as the titular hero, grandson of the greatest Abbasid caliph, equating the founder of the Beckford planter dynasty (the first Peter Beckford) with Harun al-Rashid:

> Vatekh, ninth Caliph of the race of the Abassides, was the son of Motassem, and the grandson of Haround al Rachid. From an early accession to the throne, and the talents he possessed to adorn it, his subjects were induced to expect that his reign would be long and happy.[519]

Further to the Oriental setting, *Vathek* falls into the gothic genre, associated with a sublimity that embodies the fearful and unknown. This fusion of two genres, Oriental and Gothic, expresses the apprehension of a twenty-one-year-old, reflecting on the familiarity of his past whilst looking forward to an unknown worrying future. Hence the setting and characterization were familiar: he based the main characters on people he knew and placed them in a setting of wealth and extravagant living. The plot, in contrast, exposes this familiar scenario to gothic sublime experiences and settings via the agency of other characters, representing that part of his heritage which up to this point he had eschewed, but which, as he came of age, was an undeniable concern, namely the world of his sugar plantations and his substantial, black-skinned enslaved workforce.

The plot of *Vathek* entails the transition of the caliph Vathek from a young and newly ascended ruler of great intellectual capacity and appetite into a depraved egomaniac. This character is based on his father, while his mother is represented in the character of the caliph's mother, Carathis.

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[519] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 29.

A number of gothic features facilitate the allegory, in particular the Grotesque, characterized by Susan Stewart as the 'hyperbolization' of 'convexities and orifices' of the human body, which the reader encounters from the outset.[520] The opening paragraph, cited above, goes on to describe the caliph:

> His figure was pleasing and majestic; but when he was angry, one of his eyes became so terrible, that no person could bear to behold it; and the wretch upon whom it fixed, instantly fell backward, and sometimes expired. For fear, however, of depopulating his dominions and making his palace desolate, he but very rarely gave way to his anger.[521]

Vathek is monstrous and endowed with a supernatural power, another trope of the Grotesque, but he is also paradoxically 'pleasing and majestic'. In fact the latter attribute is given prominence of place, the monstrous is not apparent on initial encounter, rather it lurks below the surface as a potential danger, a plausible perception by a child of his father's authority. Hence, this scene-setting description configures ambivalence regarding Vathek, famed for his violence of temper and 'terrible glance when he was angry', an acknowledged attribute of the Alderman, of whom Beckford wrote: 'if my father had been Lord Mayor, […] he would have stopped this riot [i.e. Gordon Riots] in a moment, aye almost with one of his own ferocious glances'.[522]

The representation does not stop at ambivalence regarding the author's father, for he has chosen a significant organ to represent the caliph's monstrosity. The eye neither exactly orifice nor convexity, but equally potentially both, is a powerful symbol introducing the theme of ocularity, gaze and surveillance with an ambiance of malevolence and the supernatural. However, the caliph, it is suggested, is innocent, for the destructive power he exerts is inherent, outside his control, and he makes efforts to avoid exerting it. The tension between the grotesque and the 'pleasing and majestic' demeanour combined in one person

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[520] Stewart, *On Longing* p. 105.

[521] Beckford, *Vathek,* p. 29.

[522] Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, p. 35.

readily translates as a young person's conflicted feelings regarding his father, and to the aspirational polite planter. The narrative proceeds to further describe the caliph as possessing other attributes in common with the Alderman: 'Being much addicted to women and the pleasures of the table, he sought by his affability, to produce agreeable companions; and he succeeded the better as his generosity was unbounded and his indulgences unrestrained'.[523] The 'addiction to women' aligns with the Alderman's pre-marital liaisons, the 'pleasures of the table' with the lavish banquets he was famed for and 'indulgences unrestrained' with the extravagance of taste in the décor of Fonthill.[524]

The translation of a white plantocratic dynasty into a brown-skinned Arab one raises another major anomaly concerning this novel and its author. The hybridity of creole otherness that Beckford cannot but embody is represented in a half-way compromise between the African and European, for a key element of Beckford's grotesque or monstrous is encoded in skin colour. The caliph's European 'pleasing and majestic' character is tainted by the grotesque gaze, allegorizing the transformative outcome of colonial encounters with the exotic other in the creole planter. Princess Carathis, mother to the caliph, adds another dimension to the stratified exotic: she is Greek, although not a slave as the real Qaratis was, and 'a person of superior genius', a fusion of Enlightenment and ancient Greek learning: 'It was she who had induced him, being Greek herself, to adopt the sciences and systems of her country which all good Mussulmans hold in such thorough abhorrence'.[525] However, she also embodies the degenerative transformation of a notional European purity by the contaminative other: 'This Princess was so far from being influenced by scruples, that she was as wicked, as woman could be'.[526] Her monstrosity is expressed in the cohort of 'fifty female negroes mute and blind of the right eye', whom the reader first encounters guarding 'the oil of the most venomous serpents; rhinoceros' horns; and woods of a subtile and penetrating odour, procured from the interior of the Indies, together with a thousand other horrible rarities', a

[523] Beckford, *Vathek*, p.29.

[524] Fothergill, *William Beckford of Fonthill*, p. 18.

[525] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 33.

[526] Ibid, p. 45.

totalizing configuration of other, tropical continents as toxic.[527] In these black-skinned women the Grotesque most blatantly caricatures the plantation workforce. They are passive, subservient, undifferentiated, and inherently grotesque. The unquestioning compliance and obedience, signalled by their muteness, translates into bestial monstrosity, they are a fearful pack of animals trained by and loyal to Carathis. This extraordinary imagined collective constitutes a conscious and absolute demonization of African people, based on a series of internalized tropes of racism and misogyny, 'She Devil' stereotypes, as conceived by Barbara Bush: the slave plantation was clearly a preoccupation for Beckford, who had never visited the colony from which his lavish lifestyle was financed, nor witnessed the labour of enslaved Africans.[528] The muteness of these women signals a conceptualization of Africanness as inarticulate or non-verbal, like animals. Famed as a lover of animals, it suited Beckford's alleged humaneness to animalize Africans whose wellbeing he could rationalize as compatible with enslavement. As actors in the novel these women reinforce the strength and power of their mistress as an object of fear and respect. As well as being mute, these women feed into the overarching theme of ocularity: their absence of vision in the right eye renders them significantly blind to the proper and seeing of the sinister, confirming the particular focus of their reason for being, to follow and obey Carathis in pursuit of the sinister and evil. This configuration of enslaved Africans in the Jamaican plantations labouring to ensure the luxury in which Beckford lived at Fonthill must have been based on accounts passed down generations of Beckfords, for William was without knowledge or experience of the slave colony and it is probable that he never even encountered a black person. These women highlight Carathis as powerful but also grotesque and other, potentially, in that she wields control over a group of blindly obedient, black-skinned people, analogous to the plantocracy.

The novel opens with a description of Vathek's palace, consisting of five palaces added by him to that inherited from his father, representing sensual pleasures, '*The Eternal or unsatiating Banquet*', '*the Temple of Melody*, or *The Nectar of the Soul*', '*the delight of the*

[527] Ibid, p. 46.

[528] Bush, '"Sable Venus", "She Devil" or "Drudge"?', p. 764.

Eyes', '*The Palace of Perfumes* […] [or] *The Incentive to Pleasure*', and '*The Retreat of Mirth or the Dangerous*. But his greatest pride is a tower, ascended by fifteen hundred stairs, from which he 'cast his eyes below, and beheld men not larger than pismires; mountains, than shells; and cities, than beehives'.[529]

Stress is placed on Vathek's pride, configured as 'irreligious' even at the outset and represented in the hyperbolized imagined tower, a motif which connects the child Beckford to the adult and even to his father. Two years prior to writing *Vathek*, in a letter to Cozens he wrote:

> we shall ascend a lofty hill, which till lately was a mountain in my eyes. There I hope to erect a Tower dedicated to meditation, on whose summit we will take out station and survey the vast range of countries beneath […]. At midnight […] we will recline on stem couches placed on the roof of our Tower, and our eyes shall wander among the stars. We will then hazard our conjectures of their destination and audaciously wing towards them our imaginary flight.[530]

The original Fonthill tower was planned by the Alderman as a folly, 'intended to have been the rival of Alfred's Tower' at Stourhead.[531] Foundations were laid, but it was incomplete at the time of the Alderman's sudden death. The prospect tower was a patriotic celebration of significant historical events and a common iconographic feature of the landscape garden. Further, it served to 'herald the taste and wealth of the owner many miles from his power base', and furnish panoramic views and 'the illusion (reinforced by the ubiquitous ha-ha) that he [the estate owner] owned the countryside for as far as the eye could see'.[532] Stourhead boasted an exceptional tower, 'so tall it can be seen from the distant hills for miles around', and the Alderman intended his tower to reach a greater height, for the story

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[529] Beckford, *Vathek*, pp. 29-31.

[530] Quoted in Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, p. 153.

[531] John Rutter, *A Description of Fonthill Abbey and Demense* (Shaftesbury: J. Rutter, 1822), p. 20.

[532] Rutherford and Lovie, *Garden Buildings*, p. 109. The tower at Stourhead was named after King Alfred as a symbol of liberty.

of the Fonthill Beckfords is one of endless superlatives, with self-creation and outward appearances always in mind.[533]

Beyond mere outward appearance, however, the tower motif resonated more extensively for the creole landowner and fed into the narrative of ocularity and the associated power of surveillance, necessarily built into the plantation landscape. The essential feature of the tower was the combination of panoramic vision and invisibility in alignment with the 'panopticon' model of surveillance and control, as well as emphasizing the 'perceiving', 'ego-centred' and 'spectacular' European landscape, which positions the estate owner centre-stage.[534]

The great resonance of the tower for the younger Beckford finds expression in *Vathek*: on first ascending the tower, Vathek's 'pride arrived at its height' and he was 'great in the eyes of others', a sentiment that Beckford apparently shared with his fictional hero, for eight years after writing *Vathek*, he wrote:

> One of my new estates in Jamaica bought me home seven thousand pounds last year more than usual. So I am growing rich, and mean to build Towers, and sing hymns to the powers of Heaven on their summits, accompanied by almost as many sacbuts and psalteries as twanged round Nebuchadnezzar's image.[535]

This letter contains one of Beckford's very rare mentions of his colonial wealth, significantly associated with tower building and tropes of elevation and of power.

Vathek's ego compels him to engage in 'disputes' with men of learning whom he imprisons if they 'push their opposition too far'.[536] The plot is set in motion with the arrival of the primary gothic monster and the caliph's nemesis, the dark-skinned, 'abominably hideous', Giaour and his gem-encrusted, supernaturally-endowed 'merchandize', slippers which 'enabled the feet to walk', knives that cut 'without motion of the hand', and sabres that dealt

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[533] Ibid, p. 111.

[534] Bender, 'Landscape', p. 1; Thomas, 'The Politics of Vision', pp. 22-23.

[535] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 31; Letter to Lady Craven, cited by Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, pp. 156-57.

[536] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 30.

blows and were engraved with 'uncouth characters'. This stranger responds to Vathek's questions thus:

> The man, or rather monster, instead of making a reply, thrice rubbed his forehead, which, as well as his body, was blacker than ebony; four times he clapped his paunch, the projection of which was enormous; opened his huge eyes, which glowed like firebrands, began to laugh with a hideous noise, and discovered his long amber-coloured teeth, bestreaked with green.[537]

This is an archetypal grotesque body, conforming with Stewart's 'body of parts' and the 'isolation and display of the exaggerated part', in this case an 'enormous' paunch, enhanced by elongated teeth and, continuing the ocular emphasis, 'huge eyes'.[538] However, in this instance hyperbolization applies not just to body parts but also to the Giaour's 'blacker than ebony' skin colour. The very otherness of this character, also alternatively referred to as 'the Indian', is hyperbolized. Imprisoned for his insolence, he disappears from the jail, sending Vathek into a rage. An old man appears next who translates the characters on the iconic sabres left by the Giaour, but he is banished when he rereads them on the following day and announces that the text has changed, although Vathek subsequently observes that the text changes every day. In a state of emotional turmoil Vathek becomes possessed of an insatiable thirst and the Giaour reappears and cures him with a remedy 'to satiate the thirst of thy soul, as well as they body'.[539]

Celebrations follow in honour of the 'Indian', but soon he again enrages Vathek, who 'immediately kicked him from the steps', upon which the Giaour famously metamorphoses into a rolling ball. This episode is iconic, said to have been based on Beckford's great grandfather's fatal fall down the stairs in the chamber of the Jamaican Assembly. The transfiguration of a tragic family anecdote into the infliction of violence on a black-skinned individual tells not only of an obsession with and ownership of his colonial past, but also of

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[537] Ibid, p. 32.

[538] Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 105.

[539] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 37.

an absence of reverence for an ancestor and disdain for the conduct of the creole planter. Peter Beckford, renowned for violence, was described by his great grandson as a person who 'would knock down a member of the chamber who presumed to differ from him […] thinking himself the greatest man in the world, carrying and using, too, a large stick of very trivial provocations'.[540]

Vathek pursues the rolling ball out of the city to a valley, where it disappears and he encamps. One night the voice of the Giaour invites the caliph to abandon his religion and become a devotee to him, in return for which he will be guided to the 'Palace of Subterranean Fire'. There, Vathek is told, he will 'behold in immense depositories, the treasures which the stars have promised thee', and the Giaour adds, 'It was from thence I brought my sabres, and it is there that Soliman Ben Daoud reposes, surrounded by the talismans that control the world'.[541]

These circumstances pivotally drive the plot by setting the caliph on the path to moral and physical degeneracy. The Giaour requires from Vathek the blood of the fifty 'most beautiful sons' of the caliph's courtiers, whom Vathek tricks by flattery. The children are paraded before the caliph who 'scrutinized each, in his turn, with a malignant avidity that passed for attention and selected from their number the fifty whom he judged the Giaour would prefer'. As they journey unknowingly to their place of sacrifice the children are 'lovely innocents'; their destination, and the location of the Giaour, evokes the trope of colour and darkness, a 'vast black chasm', a 'portal of ebony', a 'black streak' that […] divided the plain'.[542] This seminal episode allegorizes the commodification of human lives: the children are the currency exchanged by Vathek for admission to the Giaour's territory, and the processional selection of the most beautiful boys echoes the invasive examination of human chattel in the colonial slave market.[543] The deceit by which the parents are enticed to engage in the sacrifice of their own children evokes the perfidy of the slave trade. And the agony of

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[540] Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill, Author of* "*Vathek*", 2 vols (London, Charles J. Skeet, 1859), II, p. 101.

[541] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 41.

[542] Ibid, p. 42-43.

[543] Knox-Shaw, 'The West Indian Vathek', p. 302.

the parents indicates Beckford's understanding of the forced familial disruption, disregard for human life and suffering inherent to slavery.

The narrative proceeds with a journey, undertaken on the advice of Carathis who has consulted supernatural powers. This voyage echoes the picturesque tour, configured as a processional performance, accompanied by his wives and courtiers, in a stereotypical Oriental 'caravan'. This journey is historic, the first undertaken 'since the time of Haroun al Raschid', echoing and echoed in Beckford's grand tour experiences.[544] Several allegorical encounters, both good and evil, which tempt Vathek from his mission, also echo Beckford's European travels. But Vathek has made a 'Faustian pact' with the Giaour and is on the road to damnation.[545] In the course of it he encounters and seduces Nouronihar. She abandons her betrothed, Goulchenrouz, and her father, who is Vathek's host and a particularly observant Muslim and to whom Vathek has shown immense disrespect. She becomes an accomplice in the quest for the treasures promised by the Giaour. Vathek's apparently gratuitous insulting conduct signals another watershed moment in the caliph's spiralling descent, with Nouronihar as companion, counterposed to the abandoned androgenous Goulchenrouz, beauty and innocence personified, and the author's idealized representation of William Courtenay. The ultimate hedonistic pursuit of materialism leads him, Nouronihar and Carathis to eternal damnation in the Hall of Eblis, where their hearts 'took fire, and they, at one lost the most precious gift of heaven:- HOPE […] in an eternity of unabating anguish'.[546] In contrast, the final sentence describes the fate of Gulchenrouz, passing 'whole ages in undisturbed tranquillity, and in the pure happiness of childhood'.[547] The last four of these words, 'pure happiness of childhood', are an affirmation of the youth and innocence which haunted Beckford and were pursued by him through relationships with men younger than himself in his idealized nostalgia-infused landscape. The fifty boys sacrificed by Vathek have also been rescued and reside in 'nests still higher than the clouds'.[548] In his final

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[544] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 54.

[545] Knox-Shaw, 'The West Indian Vathek' p. 294.

[546]Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 97. The character Eblis is synonymous with the devil.

[547] Ibid, p. 97.

[548] Ibid, p. 84.

sentence Beckford enshrines male beauty, youth and innocence in a narrative of internality which mourned the loss of youth and innocence regarding the source of his wealth.

The Landscape of *Vathek*

Rocky and mountainous terrains prevail in *Vathek*. After the Giaour's disappearance from the prison, the caliph, afflicted by a fever, loss of appetite and an uncontrollable thirst, visits a mountain retreat habituated by him for repose in the hope of recovery:

> a high mountain, whose sides were swarded with wild thyme and basil, and its summit overspread with so delightful a plain, that it might have been taken for the Paradise destined for the faithful. Upon it grew a hundred thickets of eglantine and other fragrant shrubs; a hundred arbours of roses, entwined with jessamine and honeysuckle; as many clumps of orange trees, cedar, and citron; whose branches, interwoven with the palm, the pomegranate, and the vine, presented every luxury that could regale the eye or the taste. The ground was strewed with violets, hare-bells, and pansies; in the midst of which numerous tufts of jonquils, hyacinths, and carnations perfumed the air. Four fountains, not less clear than deep, and so abundant as to slake the thirst of ten armies seemed purposely placed here, to make the scene more resemble the garden of Eden watered by four sacred rivers. Here, the nightingale sang the birth of the rose, her well-beloved, and, at the same time, lamented its short-lived beauty; whilst the dove explored the loss of more substantial pleasures; and the wakeful lark hailed the rising light that re-animates the whole creation. Here, more than any where, the mingled melodies of birds expressed the various passions which inspired them; and the exquisite fruits, which they pecked at pleasure, seemed to have given them double energy.[549]

This is an archetypal botanic 'aesthetic catalogue', quintessentially affirming the creole world view that Beckford so desperately disguised and denied. The similarity between the landscapes of the Arab Eastern Mediterranean and Southern Europe facilitates an elision between the environments of grand tour familiarity and the Oriental other. In the colonial

[549] Ibid, p. 36.

setting, the picturesque served as a means of appropriating land by configuring it as European; in the case of this Oriental-gothic imagined landscape, the Eurocentric conceptualization locates a European setting, most particularly a Mediterranean one in the classic picturesque mode of Claude, in an imagined other place. Whilst picturesque settings are associated with the deeds of European classical heroes, and the colonial picturesque references the colonized territory to the Mediterranean, in *Vathek* the otherness consists of a displaced other, the Caribbean colony, in disguise and therefore hybrid. Thus, the herbs of the Italian scrubland 'sward' the mountain plateau, citrus trees are grouped in signature English Brownian 'clumps' interwoven with the decidedly exotic 'palm' of tropical associations. Also striking are the apparently naturally occurring fountains, 'seem[ingly] purposely placed here, to make the scene more resemble the Garden of Eden watered by four sacred rivers', a classic trope of edenic tropicality, reducing the other to sensuality. In fact this suggestion frames the entire narrative, which opens with descriptions of the 'five wings, or rather other palaces', 'destined for the particular gratification of each of the senses'.[550] Beckford's veiled portrait of his father's extravagant embellishment of buildings, excessive banqueting and suchlike, evidences the signature ambivalence of the second-generation absentee planter. In the words of Knox-Shaw:

> The Oriental setting combines a romantic trope of Otherness with the image of an unlovely proprietorship far to the West, and he would manage in *Vathek*, though he elsewhere failed, to bring the various rays of his mind's eye to a single focus.[551]

The mountainous and rocky terrain is an archetypal gothic setting, and Vathek's pilgrimage to a cave, Istakhar, where the Giaour directs him, a frequent locus of sublimity and potential monstrous encounters.[552] The gothic sublime always contains 'the presence or threat of death' and is 'so thoroughly interlocked with sexuality that it becomes difficult to know them

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[550] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 29.

[551] Knox-Shaw, 'The West Indian Vathek', p. 288.

[552] Caves are mythologically frequently associated with sublimity and the monstrous: several monsters of ancient Greek mythology, for instance, inhabited caves or similar places, such as the Cyclops, the Minotaur, the Centaurs, all part-human and part-animal, another indirect reference to the planteresque trope of animalization of dark-skinned people.

apart'.[553] Vathek's voracious all-round appetite underscores the entire narrative with sexuality. The precipice and gorge, a landscape of metaphorized sexuality, are also frequent motifs of sublimity, serving a symbolic function in the gothic narrative, inherent to towering and engulfing mountains and storms which overwhelm and destroy. In *Vathek* the gorge is a key element in the plot, for it is the means by which Vathek's viziers unknowingly despatch their sons to their death. Such tropes of the Gothic feature prominently in colonial picturesque representations of the Caribbean landscape. In such a setting Vathek's procession encounters a storm:

> The females and eunuchs uttered shrill wailings at the sight of the precipices below them, and the dreary prospect that opened, in the vast gorges of the mountains. Before they could reach the ascent of the steepest rock, night overtook them, and a boisterous tempest arose, which, having rent the awnings of the palanquins and cages, exposed to the raw gusts the poor ladies within, who had never before felt so piercing a cold. The dark clouds that overcast the face of the sky deepened the horrors of this disastrous night, insomuch that nothing could be heard distinctly, but the mewlings of pages and lamentations of sultanas.
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> To increase the general misfortune, the frightful uproar of wild beasts resounded at a distance; and there were soon perceived in the forest they were skirting, the glaring eyes, which could belong only to devils or tigers. The pioneers, who, as well as they could, had marked out a track; and a part of the advanced guard, were devoured, before they had been in the least apprized of their danger. The confusion that prevailed was extreme. Wolves, tigers, and other carnivorous animals, invited by the howling of their companions, flocked together from every quarter. The crashing of

[553] David B. Morris, 'Gothic Sublimity', *New Literary History*, 16.2 (1985), 299-319 (pp. 308-09). These tropes are not completely unconnected with the slave plantation. The 'presence or threat of death' and of sexual violence were ubiquitous elements of the slave plantation, in the view of some, synonymous with the experience of slavery, as discussed in previous chapters.

> bones was heard on all sides, and a fearful rush of wings over head; for now vultures also began to be of the party.[554]

Here the landscape functions as an overt metaphor. At this juncture the 'precipice below' and 'vast gorges' foreshadow Vathek's destiny, whilst the onset of night and the storm that ensues offer him the opportunity to arrest it and predict the likely consequences of his decision: the precipice he stands on is metaphorical. Having been the agent of suffering and death, he has the opportunity to reconsider his chosen path and turn back. The alternative of proceeding takes him to the court of Fakreddin and to Nouronihar. Once again in this passage we encounter an analogous reference to the Caribbean climate and topography and the disregard of the slave owner for the lives of those over whom he wields power. The hurricane was a climatic feature of which Beckford was very much aware, not least because of their frequency in Jamaica and the crucial vulnerability to them of his finances, affirmed in a letter to Catherine Hamilton a year prior to writing *Vathek*, in which he expresses concern regarding his financial interests and disregard for the wellbeing of enslaved workers:

> This whole morning I have been condemned to the perusal of Jamaica letters filled, as you may imagine, with ruin and desolation. No language can describe the situation of that unfortunate colony Savannah le Mar which has felt the force of the hurricane. How dreadful the calm which preceded it! the silence, suspense and frowns of the elements! the solitary black cloud, its fatal path and destructive explosion. The West Indian seas seem to have been swept from one extremity to the other, and the ports of almost every Island strewed with wrecks and devastation. Happily for me the power of the storm and earthquake fell upon those villages in which I have least concern.[555]

The slave plantation was an avoided item in the life and psyche of William Beckford, although it was not a forgotten one, as affirmed by Knox-Shaw, '*Vathek* is the product of this

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[554] Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 29.

[555] Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill (Author of "Vathek")* (London: William Heinemann, 1910), p. 101.

schizophrenic state of mind. Its distanced setting allows the release of desires which – whether erotic, aesthetic or social – lay beyond attainment, or could only approximately be fulfilled'.[556] In fact, this was not entirely the case: Vathek's obsessively dreamed-of tower was realized twenty years later in the landscape at Fonthill.

Further recurring motifs of grotesque hyperbole allegorize an insatiable desire for wealth: they include greed, gluttony, and lust. As previously alluded to, the Beckfords of Fonthill, both father and son, were known as libertines of excessive appetite, and so it is no surprise that Vathek is 'much addicted to women and the pleasures of the table' and possesses an 'insatiable curiosity', which is the agency of his undoing.[557] The palaces devoted to sensual pleasures set the scene at the outset for a narrative of appetite and indulgence. Three hundred dishes are placed before him daily when he dines, when afflicted with thirst, liquid is poured into his mouth 'like a funnel', and the Giaour's challenge is signalled by an appetite that exceeds the caliph's.[558] And this appetite conflates with power: again, in the words of Knox-Shaw, 'his despotism is constantly associated with greed', as '[h]is eating mediates the full horror of unrestrained passions'.[559]

The obscenity of this metaphorization of creole power stands in contrast to the refinement of Beckford's taste, a conflict reflected in the Fonthill landscape where the narrative of scale contrasts with the elegance of architectural detail. And this conflict found expressions in his life and persona, unrestrained by financial limitation.

Fonthill: Landscape of Exceptionality

> The houses constructed by the Beckfords at Fonthill were designed as physical representations of the status, wealth and power of their owners. Unlike many of their contemporaries, however, both Alderman William Beckford […] and his son […] had ambitions that went beyond the standard need to mark their place in the social and political hierarchy of the day. Through Fonthill, father and son cleverly and

[556] Knox-Shaw, 'West Indian Vathek', pp. 288.

[557] Beckford, *Vathek*, pp. 31 and 41.

[558] Ibid. p. 41.

[559] Knox-Shaw, 'The West Indian Vathek', p. 293.

> consciously crafted a public identity for themselves and their family that continues to endure, making the word Fonthill synonymous with the name Beckford. At the epicentre of this image-making were two very different buildings driven by equal amounts of wealth and ambition.[560]

Amy Frost here succinctly expresses the impelling narrative of exceptionality that was the driving motivation for every undertaking by the Fonthill Beckfords. At the time of his death in 1735 Peter Beckford Jr. had been the wealthiest planter in Jamaica.[561] Alderman William Beckford was the main benefactor of his father's will and set his ambition for his family equally high in the metropolitan environment. The Palladian villa he built at Fonthill, Fonthill Splendens, is described in Chapter 3. Nelson's previously mentioned characterization of Fonthill Splendens affirms its exceptionality amongst the houses of the most affluent colonial absentees and returnees.[562] The tasteful restraint and external conformity of the Palladian villa and the ostentatious décor of the interior in line with the Alderman's genuine creole taste must have struck the young and perceptive William. We are told by Peter N. Lindfield and Dale Townsend that William had a strikingly 'architectural imagination' (see below), which may have derived from the exceptionality of the home in which he grew up.[563] The lavish Oriental elements certainly inspired the setting of *Vathek*.

As discussed earlier, metropolitan landscape and garden creations of the plantocracy were a continuation as much as a reconfiguration of colonial culture. As embedded preoccupations with race and power passed to later generations, they became complicated by metropolitan externalities which challenged creole understandings and were potentially assigned to the unconscious. William Beckford was born and spent his entire life in Europe, and yet evidence of the deep-seated creole mindset abounds in his creative enterprises, including the plantation landscape embedded in the garden that surrounded Fonthill Abbey.

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[560] Frost, 'The Beckford Era', p. 59.

[561] Sheridan, 'Planter and Historian', p. 38.

[562] Nelson, *Architecture and Empire*, p. 258.

[563] Peter N. Lindfield and Dale Townsend, 'Reading *Vathek* and Fonthill: William Beckford's Architectural Imagination' in *Fonthill Recovered: A Cultural History*, ed. by Caroline Dakers (London: UCL Press, 2018) pp. 284-301 (p. 294).

By the time the younger William Beckford turned his attention to making his own mark on the landscape at Fonthill, he had undergone determining experiences that shaped and, in some instances, haunted the course of his life, in particular the Powderham scandal, which transformed him from a prominent socialite to a figure of marginality and entirely realigned his father's imagined outcome of his assimilating quest. The layered combination of social ostracism, the stigma of creole wealth, and the entitlement of an excessively indulged and isolated childhood resulted in a self-reflective, entitled and egocentric character and a conflicted psyche. The landscape of Fonthill Abbey is the outcome of that psyche, educated to refinement and to disdain the creole culture of his father, whom he lost at a young age, overlaid with the received values of a planter heritage. Whilst the Alderman's imprint on the landscape of Fonthill was imagined assimilation into polite society for the Beckford dynasty, his son's was an assertion of defiance in the face of rejection by it. Both were projects of performance and highly conscious self-creation. And a further crucial dimension to the entire Beckford world, the overarching inherent assumption of power, was encoded in both.

Hence, although famously entirely different, the father and son Fonthill landscapes constituted a continuous narrative of conscious self-promotion from different starting points and proclaiming very different selves. And the process of creation was integral to the completed performative space, hence the emphasis on cost in the general discourse of garden-making. But, in the light of Morphy's contention that landscape is 'integral to the development of concepts of Self and other', there is another layer of 'self' to be read in the absentee creole landscape.[564]

Fonthill Abbey

The Abbey was the realization of several life-long preoccupations, including the Beckford desire to be at all times exceptional. The direct connection between Fonthill and *Vathek* is not contested, but Gill also stresses that they were strategically constructed, for 'Beckford cared greatly about the image of himself created', and the circumstances in which he created these two seminal oeuvres differed substantially.[565] Not least, the self-creation

[564] Morphy, 'Colonialism', p. 206.

[565] Gill, 'The Author in the Novel', pp. 244 and 246.

agenda required adjustment in the light of marginalization following the Powderham scandal.[566] Whilst *Vathek* was a reflection on his family and the experiences of his youth, for the adult who designed Fonthill Abbey the scope of experience and engagements was wider.

The narrative of identity in any space operates on two levels, the performed identity and that underlying the contrivance: in the consciously self-promoting space of Fonthill, this duality was writ large. The displaced creole identity of the second-generation absentee planter remains a central subtext buried under layers of genteel conceits and eccentric posturing that made Fonthill Abbey a most contrived and performative landscape.

The Fonthill landscape and the iconic Abbey have attracted and continue to attract claims of unprecedented significance, a claim that Beckford consciously strove to achieve by means of a crafted legend that surrounded his person. Three writers published five books on the subject of Fonthill between 1812 and 1823, all in regular discussion with Beckford, who, as an apparently copious diarist and correspondent, is also known to have redrafted diaries and letters, composed them after the event, changed dates, and suchlike, in the interest of configuring himself for future readers:

> [H]e forged his own life. He was a fluent and seductive liar who had ample funds to pay secretaries to rewrite letters, and ample time in an eighty-four-year life span to reconstruct the past. […]. Hardly any source is reliable.[567]

Therefore the Fonthill/Beckford legend must be approached as potentially imagined, and the Abbey must be understood as a self-promoting and egocentric construct, an intention in which it was highly successful.

The Abbey project commenced in 1794 with the unique conceptualization of the Barrier, a wall twelve feet in height and seven miles long, enclosing an area within the Fonthill estate

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[566] Beckford wrote *Vathek* in 1782, two years before the Powderham incident, although it was not published until 1786.

[567] Mowl, *William Beckford*, p. 1.

that would become integral to the Abbey with no rights of way to disrupt the outcome.[568] Whilst social ostracism and public interest and gossip were doubtless motivating factors for such an impenetrable exterior delineation, the significance of the Barrier was manifold. It was a tool of inclusion as well as exclusion, echoing Beckford's adolescent longings to withdraw from the world into private fantasies. It also echoed the enclosure movement that was transforming the countryside, in 'an internal colonization of the home country', and aligned with picturesque framing, in a combination of aesthetics and conscious mastery, performed in an entirely safe setting without threat of challenge or disruption.[569] Equally the Barrier externalized the egocentric performance to address the world, paradoxically entrenching Beckford's marginalization whilst generating and perpetuating a considered performative mythology around his person, in which the Abbey was the star performer both within and outside the Barrier, the prospect tower writ large. Beckford's desire to circumscribe his space and to imprint on it so assertively and proprietorially reflected extensive underlying narratives: the insecurity and fiction of greatness through the possession of a huge tower, and evidence of a mercantile preoccupation with property. Equally of course it fed the narrative of power in the exercise of control and continuation of the monarch-of-all-I-survey cultural legacy of the plantation landscape with its apparatus for domination. Hence, the Barrier in the metropolitan context echoed the plantation regime of forced containment.

The Barrier was a point of departure for an extraordinary, continued narrative of power encoded in picturesque and romantic configurations, designed and executed with exacting standards of precision, a process that incorporated and was incorporated in the mythology as much as the outcome. And, whilst contained within the framing Barrier, the Beckford narrative was also perceived beyond it thanks to the legendary and highly visible tower, the crowning feature of the Fonthill *nonpareil*.

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[568] Min Wood, 'The Landscape at Fonthill', in *Fonthill Recovered: A Cultural History*, ed by Caroline Dakers (London: UCL Press, 2018), pp. 201-220 (p. 212).

[569] Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscapes', p. 17.

Frequent comparisons are made between Fonthill and Stourhead, which featured the replication of the Claudian idyll on the ground, and with his great uncle's estate at Painshill. Stourhead and Painshill are both eminent instances of the landscape of the eighteenth-century self-made and self-assured proprietor proudly presenting a persona of success and wealth, the archetype of just reward for hard work enshrined in the Protestant work ethic. The circuit tourer in the landscape garden rested at each viewing station where they were rewarded with a picturesque, not infrequently Claudian, vista. This was also an act of veneration and affirmation of the power and entitlement of the proprietor, configured in an outward-looking proclamatory landscape of distant horizons and expansive ambition. And the prospect tower was a key element of this expansiveness, and a reference point for the Beckford tower.

Whilst the Fonthill landscape was equally proclamatory, in contrast to Stourhead, the focus was inward, travelling out from the Abbey to turn and reflect back on it as the central point, more or less the whole point, its stature and scale more immense than anything else and a stand-in for the egocentric owner. The paths and rides were carefully designed not as a circuit but in the form of 'occasional episodes', 'glades and openings framing views of his Abbey, […] an exercise in self-congratulation rather than one of picturesque expression'.[570]

As the outcome of a long-held obsession and adolescent fictional creation, the tower was clearly envisaged by Beckford prior to construction as an egotistical projection, as a locus of elevation 'spatially and socially', literally and metaphorically.[571] Beckford told Cyrus Redding in 1835, 'I am partial to glancing over a wide horizon – it delights me to sweep far along an extended landscape': this was the vision of the one-way gaze of the monarch-of-all-he-surveys, a facility for seeing without being seen: this self-created monarch insisted on control of his audience and *sic* access to his space, achieved by means of the Barrier.[572]

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[570] John Claudius Loudon, 'Notes on Gardens and Country Seats', *The Gardener's Magazine* 11 (1835) 441-49 (p. 442); Wood, 'The Landscape at Fonthill', p. 213.

[571] Sarah Wise, 'The Man Who Had Too Much' *The Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/feb/09/books.guardianreview4 [accessed 9 April 2019].

[572] Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill*, p. 149.

Lindfield and Townsend characterize Beckford's tower fixation as utopian fantasy manifest in 'an interest in "impossible" architectural structures that have no existence beyond the realm of fantasy'.[573] This equates Vathek's hyperbolized tower (fifteen hundred steps) with the tower of Fonthill: the former burnt down, signalling a fault line in Vathek's power, whilst structural faults in the latter led to collapsed in 1825. The tower was a material manifestation, a constantly visible reminder of the presence of power, as it was for Vathek, who articulated its function as standing in for his persona, configuring a fiction of power beyond mere humanity.[574]

The tower also constituted a part of a wider landscape, as the colony was a part of the imperial panorama. Thus the tower was configured to outshine that at neighbouring Stourhead, and further to assimilate into the Wiltshire landscape of iconic structures such as Stone Henge and Salisbury Cathedral, asserting, or imagining, historical gravitas as a legend in its own time.[575] In summation the Barrier operated in partnership with the tower as a proclamation of ego from a position of power combined with invisibility. And the tower functioned far more widely in the mythology of Fonthill.

Integrity between the house and landscape was a key design element. The apparent disconnect between the symmetry of the Palladian villa and the contrived informality of the landscape garden, such as the Alderman created, was a complexity of ideological and pragmatic political considerations. Fonthill Abbey, in contrast, was uniquely conceived as a seamless experiential entity of house and landscape, the most immediate element of which was grandeur of scale, attested by the garden writer John Claudius Loudon who wrote of the excessive size of the avenue approach to the Abbey as 100 feet wide and nearly a mile in length, described by James Storer in 1812 as 'most luxuriant', 'a scene so noble, so princely'.[576]

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[573] Lindfield and Townsend, 'Reading *Vathek* and Fonthill', p. 294.

[574] Beckford, *Vathek* p. 31.

[575] Aldrich, 'William Beckford's Abbey at Fonthill', p. 117.

[576] Loudon, 'Notes on Gardens', p. 442; James Storer, *A Description of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire: Illustrated by Views, Drawn and Engraved by James Storer* (London: W. Clarke, 1812), p. 1.

In harmony with this approach, the entrance hall was disproportionally high, 78 feet, with doors 30 feet high. Beckford is even said to have arranged for guests to be admitted through these doors by his dwarf servant, Pierre Colas de Grailly, to enhance the scale, an evocation of Vathek's delight to see 'men not larger than pismires' from his tower.[577] The scale of the Abbey is apparent in the illustration of two people ascending a staircase in the Great Western Hall in *Delineations of Fonthill*.[578]

As well as furnishing a visitor with an overwhelming experience, the vastness of scale operated externally. Loudon's account starts with views of the estate, journeying towards it:

> occasional glimpses caught of Fonthill from the high parts of the open downs, surrounded by woods, and without a single human habitation, a fence, or a made road appearing in the landscape, convey to a stranger a correct impression of the character of the place; viz, that of a monastic building in a wild, hilly and thinly inhabited country, such as we may imagine to have existed three or four centuries ago.[579]

The tantalizing 'occasional glimpses' conflate with the more generalized mystery in which Beckford contrived to surround himself. A further critical part of the fiction of Fonthill was the Abbey itself: the decision to build a house in the style of a monastery and entitle it as an abbey was itself exceptional. Beckford became enamoured of the Roman Catholic Church and conceived a 'devotion to St. Anthony of Padua' in Portugal in 1787, in contradistinction to his mother's fervent Protestantism, and when sojourning *en route* to his plantations, which he was never to visit.[580] During a second stay in Portugal, 1793-96, he became enraptured by the gothic architecture the Monasteries of Batalha and Alcobaça, which became the prototype for his home.[581] Lindfield's and Townsend's joint reading of *Vathek*

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[577] Martha Hamilton-Phillips, 'Benjamin West and William Beckford: Some Projects for Fonthill', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 15 (1980), 157-174 (p. 171); Beckford, *Vathek*, p. 31.

[578] Appendix 1, Figure 10.

[579] Loudon, 'Notes on Gardens', p. 441.

[580] Fothergill, *William Beckford of Fonthill*, p. 193.

[581] Appendix 1, Figure 11.

and Fonthill conclude that Beckford was uniquely possessed of an 'architectural imagination', by means of which his creativity conceived and expressed, 'a broader imaginative "complex" that informed both his literary and his architectural works, and a rich, generative faculty of which he was himself self-consciously aware'.[582] From an early age he wrote of idealized settings, both outdoor and architectural, including the tower to which he wished to withdraw with Cozens. The Abbey emerged from a highly visualized conceptualization as an amalgam of Catholic gothic and the romantic architecture of his fantasies.

Thus the surface performance of the landscape configured it as monastic and the house as an abbey constructed around a shrine to Saint Anthony of Padua, patron saint of Lisbon, appropriated by Beckford as 'his own'.[583] The interior was processional, forming a cross on the ground with named spaces and galleries connected in a configured procession, a 'dramatic sequence of rooms, culminating in a candlelit oratory/sanctuary/chapel to Saint Anthony', located in 'the cavernous octagon at the centre of the building'.[584] In alignment with this fiction, the octagon of the interior corresponded with the tower of the exterior, the most visible part of the Abbey, St Anthony was immediately below it, and the landscape was constructed around this climactic locus. This scenario was an overt narrative of worship and connectivities which ultimately aligned Beckford as the object of worship, situated in the very heart of the Abbey, visible from afar, domineering from close proximity, and a shrine within the building. The entire processional design at these three distances cohered all the strands of admiration to the centre of the Abbey where various sublimations of Beckford came together as an object of reverence. Family portraits, statues, family trees were all displayed as evidence of good birth and racial purity, processionally passed in the act of reverence leading to the statue of St Anthony.

Besides scale, other elements that linked the landscape and interior included the seminal concern with the Gothic. The avenue was planted in alignment with this theme, in particular

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[582] Lindfield and Townsend, 'Reading *Vathek* and Fonthill', p. 294.

[583] Aldrich, 'William Beckford's Abbey at Fonthill', p. 118.

[584] Ibid, p. 120; Appendix 1, Figure 12.

it was lined by irregularly spaced trees of different species, including exotic conifers, leading right up to the main entrance. This planting is described by Loudon as:

> bounded by trees and undergrowths of different sorts, not at regular distances, but just as we may suppose they would have been if the avenue had been cut out of a natural wood. The presence of undergrowth among these trees decides this question at once in the eye of the stranger'.[585]

The notion of the woodland as sinister, threatening and unknown, amalgamated the Gothic into the colonial frontier concept, enhanced by the undergrowth which inhibited movement through the landscape and even echoed the subversive undergrowth discovered by the other William Beckford in the colony. In this instance it was of course a fiction, representing the impenetrability of the Abbey and its narrative.

Loudon's particular horticultural interest adds another dimension and links to a further far greater subtext of the landscape:

> The avenue is naturally of that fine close turf peculiar to elevated regions and chalky soils, and, in Mr Beckford's time, it was kept smoothly shaven: the work being always performed during the night in order that the prevailing character of solitariness might not be interrupted during the day.[586]

The reality of a mile-long turf avenue, in spite of appearing as 'if the avenue had been cut out of a natural wood', was high maintenance. And this was not limited to the avenue: throughout the landscape the reality of Beckford's exacting aesthetic standards required constant labour, a paradoxical disruption to the 'natural' aesthetic. The issue of labour in the Fonthill landscape is stressed by Casid in an identification far more disruptive to the aesthetic. Beckford's stringent and uncompromising requirements echoed the intensive labour in another landscape, also owned by him, that enabled his every aesthetic endeavour, namely the sugar plantations from which his wealth derived. Casid configures Fonthill as the

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[585] Loudon, 'Notes on Gardens', p. 442.

[586] Ibid.

'anesthetize[d] […] forced transplantation of enslaved people from Africa to the Caribbean' transferred to and embedded in this Wiltshire landscape.[587] The reality of enslavement was something Beckford tried to displace, but it was inherent to him: all that was dearest to him, particularly his home, his collection and his landscape, although encoded in polite and culturally rarefied terms, affirmed this central tenet of his identity.

Labour and the wellbeing of workers was a concern for Loudon. He reports conversations with local men employed by Beckford:

> No sooner did he decide upon any point, than he had it carried into immediate execution, whatever might be the cost. After the abbey was commenced, he was so impatient to get it finished, that he kept relays of men at work night and day, including Sundays.[588]

This is remarkably similar to the harvest regime on the sugar plantation, although Beckford is said to have plied his English labourers 'liberally with ale and spirits while they were working' (a practice which Loudon is unlikely to have approved of). Such incentives were clearly necessary in the metropolitan setting to achieve the labour regime of the plantation. Loudon also reports:

> when he wished a new walk to be cut in the woods, or any work of that kind to be done, he used to say nothing about it in the way of preparation, but merely give orders, perhaps late in the afternoon, that it should be cleared out and in a perfect state by the following morning at the time he came out to take his ride. The whole strength of the village was then put in requisition, and employed during the night.[589]

Loudon's remarks on the organization of labour are illuminating. Storer writes of paths 'happily formed by nature, and improved by art, into such a variety of mazy and deceptive

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[587] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. 68.

[588] Loudon, 'Notes on Gardens', p. 445.

[589] Ibid, p. 447.

paths, that it is scarcely possible to retrace the way without a guide'.[590] This fictional 'natural' landscape contained no gravel drives or walks, and the turf was the subject of an intense maintenance regime of clipping.

Loudon's account also incorporates the monastery fiction, although he implicitly acknowledges the disparity between the labour regime and the ideology of the monastic life of hard work and modest living. He describes some outbuildings as: 'a range of humble sheds, in which workmen of different kinds were employed, hewing and carving for continuous additions of improvements […] quite in character with the scene, as such was often the case with ancient monastic establishments'.[591]

Casid finds significance in the 'American Plantations' in which American trees were intermixed with native and exotic species from other regions, laid out in archetypal English clumps to suggest that exotic trees 'had sprung up naturally'.[592] These 'by-scenes' of colonial hybridity operated on several levels.[593] While the hybrid integration was inherent to the creole outlook, the configuration of the exotic as native legitimizes the otherness of the Beckfords as much as it disguises it, allowing Beckford to place his father's family in the ancestral gallery alongside his mother's prestigious ancestors. The complex amalgam of creole discomfort, proclaimed racial purity and self-admiration were brought together in a fictional 'personal empire sufficiently fortified to ensure an idea of genealogical and racial purity and yet elastic enough to encompass monuments to and vicarious experiences of the first colonial exploits in America'.[594]

Finally, a last important neurosis inhabited the Abbey in the form of Beckford's collection. As a shrine to himself, the collection was the Abbey: as discussed in Chapter 6, obsessive collecting, such as Beckford's, is a displacement and protection, amalgamating several psychoses, primarily the imperative to forget (Stewart), through the material accumulation

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[590] Storer, *A Description of Fonthill Abbey*, p. 2.

[591] Loudon, 'Notes on Gardens', p. 443.

[592] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. 66.

[593] Loudon, 'Notes on Gardens', p. 443.

[594] Casid, *Sowing Empire,* p. 67.

of artefacts to create 'settings of immense individuality' (Watkin), deployed in a conscious, egocentric self-fashioning. This is an absolute summation of Beckford in his tower.

Fonthill Abbey was in the words of Min Wood 'made to serve one man's needs', which were multiple and complex, typically configured in a fantasy of a monastic order.[595] The rituals of Roman Catholic worship were contrived and led away from his family, but a series of more extensive and less conscious connectivities led back to its colonial origin. The Atlantic was an arena of transition. Beckford embarked on this transition but stopped when he reached Portugal, a European country with a legacy of greatness, which brought together a number of strands that touched his experience. Specifically Portugal offered the refinement of Mediterranean culture and landscape and a history of great wealth and influence in the world. It was also the country from which Atlantic slavery originated: plantation slavery was the invention of the Portuguese.[596] This series of varied national attributes touched on the conflicts experienced by Beckford, and the monastic setting was a continuation of this. As an all-male environment the monastery most evidently inferred a narrative of the homoerotic. It was also an enclosed institution, governed by a strict and hierarchical regime, a locus of agrarian labour and little or no outside contact for the majority of inhabitants. Loudon's description of the 'range of humble sheds, in which workmen of different kinds were employed, hewing and carving for continuous additions of improvements' could equally apply to a sugar plantation where such work was undertaken by enslaved Africans in similar buildings. For Beckford this was an outward conceit, and yet it encapsulated much of his family's story.

The landscapes of *Vathek* and Fonthill Abbey were essentially the same, a consistent, idealized and largely imagined narrative of self, a narrative that has been substantially explored through the landscapes of *Vathek* and of Fonthill Abbey. Whilst they feature sexualized and architecturally impossible fantasies, I have argued that the overriding narrative is that of discomfort about and displacement of Beckford's proprietorship of enslaved Africans. I have suggested that the fantasies and paederasty largely conflate with a

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[595] Wood, 'The Landscape at Fonthill', p. 213.

[596] Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, pp. 6 and 111.

desire to escape from adulthood and responsibility, also connected with slavery. *Vathek*, the vehicle for the formulation and expression of these feelings, was written as he came of age and assumed responsibility for his own affairs. Innocence was something he regretted the loss of and which he sought through others, although paradoxically this became a vehicle by which he asserted power quite ruthlessly. For power was a reality to which he was raised and habituated. Hence his narrative of self and self-obsession is asserted in the Fonthill landscape as both proclamatory, through size and scale, and inwardly reflective and hidden by means of the spectacular Barrier. The entire construct was designed around the Beckford ego, metaphorized in the tallest of towers, which was to collapse into ruins subsequent to reducing him to circumstances that had necessitated the sale of both the Abbey and the collection within it.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

From the outset this discourse was configured as multi-stranded and complicated: it has assembled approaches and narratives from a range of scholarly disciplines, assembled to devise a holistic approach. Arguments have rested on the understanding of multiple coexisting landscapes as repositories of narratives and pursued intersections and subtexts within the discourse of plantation slavery in the circum-Atlantic/trans-Atlantic context. Here, I offer a summation of my arguments.

My opening consideration of contemporary 'heritage' engagements with the landscapes of stately homes and gardens dating from the era of plantation slavery positions my argument within present-day discourse on representations of slavery and whose voices should be prioritized. And from this starting point Berger's 'way of seeing' has featured critically in presenting landscapes as multiple and frequently conflicted.

A key stated intention was to affirm the role of the Atlantic plantation landscape historically as an important contributing factor in British racism. My focus and argument has been the origin of racism in historic landscapes of the long eighteenth century, in particular the plantation landscape of enslaved labour and its resonance in polite metropolitan landscapes. From this starting point, I find much in common with Simon Gikandi, both in his appraisal of 'the culture of taste' and his declared intent of 'trying to make the case […] for slavery as one of the informing conditions of modern identity'.[597] The intersection of metropolitan refinement, or politeness, with the brutality of slavery as an irreconciliation is the core of his book and my thesis. Through the presentation of differing white engagements with the slave plantation, the continuing presence of slavery in British cultural life has been foregrounded, in line with the position of BLM.

This initial framing positions the colonial plantation as counterpoint to the metropolitan polite landscape: in a narrative of circum-Atlantic production and consumption, people, botanics and consumer goods endlessly traversed the ocean in differing directions under

[597] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 29.

differing circumstances, configuring it as a contact zone of 'clashing' and 'grappling' cultural encounters driven by the middle passage, synonymous with the European criminality of slavery. The text has explored connections and disconnections between elements of that white power, residing on either side of the Atlantic but also moving between them in unconscious identity/cultural transitions displaced by conscious refashionings.

These propositions have been argued with reference to the personae and experiences of selected individuals representing different interests and connections with slavery. The two-part locational structure functioned as a notional background (Chapters 2 to 5) to the metropolitan-framed discussion (Chapters 6 to 8). The choice of the Beckford dynasty as a framework for the later chapters enabled a linking consideration of a third William Beckford, uncle to one and father to the other of the main subjects, whose identity resided in a transitional space, precisely located on neither side of the ocean, but whose wealth and power signified him as substantial on both. There is also a chronology to the presentation of material, commencing with Henry Drax's 'Instructions', followed by instances of the colonial white male gaze through the eighteenth century, aestheticizing and pornographic, and incorporating two generations of absentees. The journal of Maria Nugent represents a further way of seeing, both as a representative of metropolitan politeness in the colony and as a female counterpoint to the male gaze. Whilst the prevalent way of seeing has been that of the ruling class on each side of the Atlantic, to reference the metaphor cited by Achebe, the voice of the hunters, the authentic plantation landscape lay outside the performative domain of the plantocracy and within the brutal realm of the overseer, as configured by Rosalind Carr, 'argued' by the planters and 'placed upon' the subordinate class of landless white men.

The plantation was the essentialized landscape of enslavement and the *raison d'être* of the colony, and it transformed the lives of individuals and communities, some of whom were the agents of change, most the victims. It was a creole landscape populated by differing and conflicting identities formed on other continents and a composite of translocations: of people, some voluntarily, most against their will; of botanics, removed from tropical settings around the world to be cultivated for the benefit of temperate-clime-dwelling Europeans; of the luxury products of the plantation, sugar, tobacco, rice and many more exotic products transformed into emblems of British ruling class culture; of imitative metropolitan

behaviours in distant other settings; of the plantation itself as a motif and/or internalized source of anxiety; and of ideas and cultural exchanges, which configure the Atlantic Ocean as an arena of transition and cultural interchange.

I have considered the plantation as a motif and mindset, at once metonymic of and synonymous with slavery. It has been positioned as a core with reference to which various strands of discourse have been extrapolated. These include internalities and externalities, gazes of power and its absence, sources of self-construction and performative dissemblance, connections and disconnections, visibility and invisibility, suffering and trauma. Narratives of slavery enshrined in the plantation landscape remain as a continuing source of trauma in the collective memory of the black diaspora. Equally in the white psyche slavery was and remains a source of anxiety and neurosis based not least on the impulse to deny white culpability. This is endlessly evidenced in the historic engagements and representations I have presented and in the present-day responses of the descendants of slave-owners, such as Richard Drax, who inhabits the stately home of his plantocrat predecessors and enjoys a remarkably similar lifestyle.[598]

Exceptionally in Jamaica, immediately prior to British settlement, there was no embedded continuing landscape, for prior to the arrival of British colonizers the terrain had been ethnically cleansed. Hence the landscape was characterized by prior identities formed on other continents, and this configured the colony as entirely hybrid or creole.

As settings and representations of identity, landscapes have the potential, amongst other things, to express and even essentialize conflict. The plantation landscape existed for the uncomplicated reason of generating wealth of previously unimagined magnitude, through a series of appropriations and exploitations, the implementation of which had massively complicated outcomes. This consisted primarily of a strong racialized polarization between unlimited white power and the absence of black power, expressed in the controlling strategies of violence and the inducement of fear. This took the form of ritualized performances of torture against black people as a deterrent to self-expression and the

[598] Drax owns and profits from the Drax Hall sugar plantation in Barbados while residing in Britain and sitting as an MP.

important function of the erosion of African identity and its replacement with low self-esteem and acceptance. The intention was to induce fear and subservience in the workforce in order to maximize productivity and profit. This ritualized violence was strategic and performative, and it was the focus of metropolitan disapproval of slavery.

Sexual abuse of black women was strategically individualized and relegated to liminal spaces away from the gaze of empathy or shared experience. This violence has failed to attract the same degree of disapproval as ritualized tortures or the same scholarly attention. The extreme sexual violence of the serial rapist Thomas Thistlewood has been marginalized within the substantial body of work on this man, possibly because most of those who have written about him are men and less equipped to understand or empathize with rape than with other forms of violent abuse. Enabled by the insights of some women scholars, in particular, Heather V. Vermeulen, I have understood and presented this violence as traumatizing for victims and as an expression of the white male pornographic, misogynist gaze and animalized behaviour.

I have adopted Anne Salmond's framing device of 'entailments' in exploring landscapes of enslavement which have ultimately manifest as narratives of self. Susan Stewart's discourse, described by Geoffrey Galt as the 'reconceptualization of the relation between language and the system of objects', adopts a similar approach in tracing excessive materialities of polite practices to the unconscious and reconfiguring them as displacements for internal neuroses.[599] Stewart's 'entailments' of inner configurations of the external other are a key to much of the narrative of racism deriving from slavery. The white gaze transferred cultural tropes of distaste, in particular the grotesque and animalization, to the body of the colonized African other. The extent of this ingrained mindset of racism is exemplified in *Vathek*, written by the absentee planter William Beckford of Fonthill and replete with animalized and demonized representations of African people.

This configures the unconscious as a significant element in considering landscapes, instrumental in opening paths to identities rooted in them. Not only is it the locus of the

[599] Geoffrey Galt Harpham, 'The Language of Longing', *Raritan*, 4 (1985), 107-114 (p. 114).

landscape-identity nexus, it is also an expansive starting point for exploring consequences of discomfort in identity, frequently expressed in landscapes and associated material and conceptual matters. And, as Jung has taught us, there is a generality to this found in the collective unconscious. Hence much in this discussion has concerned landscapes as expressing the interest/s of groups or classes.

The connectivity between eighteenth-century landscape changes on both sides of the Atlantic is evidenced in cultural echoes. Specifically the enclosure movement in Britain, which Mitchell tells us was a domestic form of colonization, and the appropriative colonization in the Atlantic region which established and 'enclosed' plantations as a necessary strategy of control, were aligned with the cultural trope of framing, a defining feature of the prevalent picturesque genre. Framing recurs throughout the thesis as a generalized preoccupation and strategy for control and for white security in the face of frontier or other landscape and geomorphological settings. The prevalence of islands in the entire discourse of British colonization in the Caribbean also configures the colonies as framed by the finite borders of the encircling shoreline. Stewart stresses framing with reference to containment of the collection as narrative of self. And framing also distinguishes the proclamatory planteresque accounts of the plantocrats Long and Beckford of Somerley from their sublime internalities which perceive surrounding landscapes as inherently dangerous and replete with the threat of subversion, discerned in subtextual readings which reveal the framing white gaze as fractured.

Botanics and objects have been considered as components of colonial narratives, in several functions. Most significantly the plantation landscape was one of ruthless exploitation in conjunction with the plunder and appropriation of tropical plants. Enlightenment classification and binomial systematization renamed and framed biota as European. Many appropriated objects were translated into trophies, items in collections and other reconfigured roles which disguised and denied original provenances. Such engagements also touched on the unconscious and connected with internal neuroses generated within the 'vortex' of circum-Atlantic transformations. Such reassignments of provenance were one amongst many transformations effected within the Atlantic 'vortex', the contact zone *par excellence*, where Pratt's notion of cultures 'clashing' and 'grappling' is a very readily visualized metaphor. I have stressed the fashioning and re-fashioning function of the Atlantic

crossing, in both directions, on the part of white people, 'intercultural and internally self-referential'.[600] But most significantly and notoriously the ocean was the arena of the greatest transformative and criminal act which turned fifteen million African people into monetized chattels. And finally the ocean was the locus of a circular configuration, a ubiquitous circuit, across the Atlantic and back, the much-travelled route of repatriation and absenteeism, which I have foregrounded in the personae of two, possibly three, William Beckfords.

The co-existing landscapes I have identified align with the hierarchy of power in the plantation infrastructure. The white gaze necessitated complicated responses from enslaved people as a strategy for survival of performed submissiveness and conformity to an ascribed role, whilst subversively nurturing an internalized identity in the light of constant surveillance, 'forced to accept a new identity, Negro, and the expectations and behaviour involved'.[601] However Casid points out that, whilst the colonial landscape was a theatre for the 'production of imperial power', it was equally 'a medium and ground of contention for countercolonial strategies'.[602] This critically centres around the trope of ocularity: the European way of seeing consigned the enslaved other to the role of subservient 'Negro', attributed with grotesqueness, outside the sanitizing and aestheticizing frame of the picturesque idyll. The animalization of the black body conflated the workforce with the terrain and externalized it to the sublime, a space within which unseen other identities and 'counter colonial strategies' could manifest in a process that did not privilege visuality. The conscious misrepresentation of the plantation landscape as humane in framing it in the domestic genre of politeness is revealed in subtextual disruptions to the white gaze and the 'slippage' of unconscious anxieties.

As the perpetrators of brutality in the plantation, overseers were assigned a role of performing unadulterated violence against enslaved workers as a means of control and a strategically honed subversion of identity and self-worth. The major part of the plantation population were victims of this violence and lived with the combined burden of daily

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[600] Roach, *Cities of the Dead,* p. 4.

[601] Bontemps, *The Punished Self*, pp. ix and 12.

[602] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. 191.

humiliation, physical brutality, deep trauma and concealed anger. Black women additionally trod the landscape in a state of added vulnerability to a violation born of racism and misogyny, normalized through Linnaean botanical classification and Enlightenment botany, aligning the exploitation of enslaved women and the land they worked in an encompassing trope of fecundity. Whilst the white male gaze erased distinctions between the biota and the enslaved through the animalization of the subaltern other, its own animality has ironically been affirmed through consideration of the conduct of Thomas Thistlewood who wielded sexual power to 'mark his territory', as outlined by Vermeulen.

Edward Long's *History* is an eminent instance of the planteresque aesthetic embedded in an extensive and varied text designed to promote the entire colonial project as both in the economic and political interest of Britain, and as humane and polite. The function of the picturesque within the broader text was to contrive the last two attributes. William Beckford of Somerley's way of seeing the plantation declared the fashionable genre in its very title, so it is no surprise that the landscape configurations of these two men had much in common. What is more striking though is the similarity between each writer's configuration of the sublime and its unconscious subtext of instability inherent to the colony. Anne Salmond's insistence on the role and function of metaphorical landscapes in the human psyche coalesces with the association of the Freudian concept of repression with metaphor. Both Long and Beckford reveal unconscious anxieties in configurations of the landscape as unstable through the agency of unseen, subterranean vegetation and biological processes, in particular decay.

Maria Nugent's representation of the colonial landscape is both in contrast with and in a continuation of the planteresque, and her journal has enabled a wider consideration of the polite genre in the colonial setting. Nugent's presence in the colony was an embodiment of the clash between metropole and colony, expressed via her othering response, in an appropriately polite self-fashioning journal, to the creole other. The marginality of her way of seeing, in a circumstance of 'reverse absenteeism', is rare. Her engagement with the landscape is immaculately polite: visually descriptive, expressive of emotional response and decisively distant. Her immense metropolitan entitlement was enhanced by her status as wife to the governor (surrogate queen?), and her expressed disdain for creole planters can leave no doubt regarding metropolitan attitudes to them. Hence her awareness of, or belief

in, the colony as degenerative and contaminative frequently surfaces in her judgemental assertions about the creole lifestyle, and the polite journal was surely imagined as a protection against such degeneration.

A further significant dimension to Nugent's perspective is her domesticity and the gendered dimension of her colonial gaze. In her we uniquely observe a microcosmic reference to the plantation (and colony) in a framed domestic setting. Her weaponization of politeness and judgemental demeanour focus on the domestic preoccupation of hygiene, both physical and moral, although her judgements went unnoticed by those at whom they were aimed. Naturally the entirety of her experience is underscored by her gendered marginality: in spite of high social status, she exerted no power outside the 'framed' domestic setting.

The choice of the Beckfords as a paradigmatic dynasty in the metropolitan setting enabled consideration of the third, first generation absentee experience of Alderman William Beckford as distinct from that of his son and his nephew. In spite of the humiliation of being othered for his coloniality, this planter did not seek to refashion his creole identity, for he retained an emotional investment in the plantation colony, amply evidenced in the landscape he created at Fonthill. Fonthill Splendens was a metaphorical narrative of the interiority and exteriority of the complicated creole identity, conforming to polite expectations in the Palladian Villa on the outside, whilst indulging in creole excess on the inside. The complicated outcome of the influence of this man and his generation of planters cannot be exaggerated, as consideration of his son's landscape-identity ego has revealed.

The metropole-colony polarization is embodied in the experiences of the younger William Beckfords. I have contended that the disconnect and internalized anxieties of this polarization became exacerbated over time and was experienced more acutely by later generations. Whilst the Alderman contrived an internalized-externalized modus vivendi in his metropolitan home, the dysfunction of the creole identity was amply evident in his son.

The lives of the two planter cousins are an exposition of the complexity of the creole planter. On the one hand was Somerley's hopeless attempt to create a seamless continuation between the colony and the metropole framed in the aesthetic of the oxymoronic colonial picturesque, or planteresque. His return to the colony removed that distance and confronted him with the contradiction. On the other hand was Fonthill's denial, expressed in the his

failure to cross the Atlantic 'vortex' of transition and refashioning, and his redirected destination to Portugal, where he embarked on an alternative journey to a shrine in an abbey. The entire consuming project of the *Vathek*-Abbey matrix is summarized by Max Fincher's eye/I homonym: it was self-projection and -reflection.

Hence the Beckford cousins illustrate, and even embody, the disconnect between the plantation colony and politeness. As metropolitan-dwelling fourth-generation planters, they were educated in the mores of politeness and aware of the taint of slavery, which each internalized as a source of inner conflict, repressed, assigned to their inscapes and expressed in displacing obsessive and performative behaviours.

Beckford of Somerley's concern with the colonial picturesque representation is analogous to his cousin's collection, a displacement for anxieties, which emerges in a narrative of threats of destabilization contained in a continuum of below-the-surface tropes within the *Descriptive Account*. And, having traversed the transformative Atlantic and been confronted by the reality of the source of the Beckford fortune, the entire loss of his share of that fortune aligns his narrative with that of the ruined abbey in the Wiltshire landscape.

In both instances, the colony is configured as unstable and unsafe, by one as a locus of destructive climate, by the other through the imagined degeneracy of material and sexual decadence, configured entirely through dark-skinned people, replete with monstrous and hyperbolized distorted bodies.

To conclude, a significant part of this thesis has consisted of penetrating and reformulating disguise: the aestheticization of the plantation landscape as European and humane; the appropriative reconfiguration of provenances to possess and domesticate other items and biota; the animalization of enslaved others to justify their enslavement; various external performances of self in contradistinction to internalities; the presentation of violence, exploitation and plunder as courageous and laudable; the equation of wealth and property with taste and moral standing. This last connects to my opening statement regarding heritage and landed estates today, regarding which I add a further item to the list of disguises: the representation of slavery as wrong but in a setting which finds no contradiction between this disapproval and the valorization of wealth created through slavery. Whilst the previously mentioned *Interim Report* published by the NT in 2020 was

unquestionably welcome, further contextualization affirms the limitations of this initiative. In 2021 the Director General of the NT, Hilary McGrady stated, 'My biggest mistake was publishing it when we did, because it got conflated with Black Lives Matter'.[603] This desire to distance the Trust from BLM positions the NT's re-evaluation of narratives of race and slavery solidly within a continuing white institutional framework.

In contrast, beyond the echo-chamber of the heritage industry and middle England, the African diaspora and anti-racist movement introduced the immediacy of BLM into the debate. For instance, the theologian Robert Beckford, descended from enslaved workers on Beckford plantations, said of the statue of the Alderman in London's Guildhall, 'a plaque is not sufficient to recontextualise the acts of a West Indian mass murderer'.[604] There has also been much focus on the need to 'interpret' the embarrassing Blackamoor statuary found in many eighteenth-century houses and landscapes. An article in a community magazine in August 2020 criticized the NT's response to BLM, which was to remove all Blackamoor statues in their properties from display. And the writer contrasts this with the honesty he encountered at Wentworth Castle where Patrick Eyres 'led public walks around the grounds explaining the politico-historical context of the house and gardens and the particular significance of the ***"Blackamoor"***'.[605] Eyres's research and commitment is admirable and important.[606]

However, it is my contention, in line with the argument of Celia Naylor, that this misses the point and is in danger of diminishing slavery by apportioning it to a position of marginality in the visitor experience.[607] The involvement of black people in slavery is well known, regardless of how it is presented. What is much less well known is the role of the white

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[603] See Appendix 1.

[604] Robert Beckford, 'A plaque on a statue can't cover a cruel slave trader's mass murder. My ancestors deserve better', *Guardian*, 19 September 2023

[605] Christopher Draper, 'Forget Slavery – Have a Scone!', *Northern Voices*, 1 August 2020. http://northernvoicesmag.blogspot.com/2020/08/forget-slavery-have-scone.html [accessed 14 June 2024]. Wentworth Castle had recently become a NT property.

[606] See *New Arcadian Journal*, 69/70 (2011) devoted to the theme of 'The Blackamoor & the Georgian Garden'.

[607] I do not attribute this marginalizing to Patrick Eyres: I am sure that his tours were honest and comprehensive.

people who had the audacity to celebrate the humiliation of enslaved Africans in their homes and landscapes. The acknowledgement of slavery as a part of the narrative is yet another disguise, for slavery is the entire narrative. To acknowledge in passing with reference to a Blackamoor statue that slavery financed a luxurious setting and then proceed to admire that property or landscape is to not understand. Like Colston's statue, a provenance of criminality is attached to every item on display in such properties and every architectural and landscape feature. It is my contention that this framework should inform visitor interpretation and that this can only be achieved if the white establishment concedes ownership of the task to the 'way of seeing' of the wronged African diaspora. For, as I have amply demonstrated, white supremacy and racialized attitudes to slavery are embedded in British culture.

A heritage site which has endeavoured to achieve this model of 'interpretation' is promised at Beckford of Fonthill's second Tower, built in the landscape of his home in Bath, where he moved after the collapse of his fortune in 1823, and where he significantly built a tower and grotto.[608] This building, which accommodates the remains of his collection following the famous Fonthill sale, has been refurbished and the website claims a radically different framing of enslavement, as a narrative of whiteness, not a celebration of Beckford but as an 'exploration of history through his story'.[609] In the case of Beckford, it is not difficult to convey the synonymy of the house and landscape with the owner, and the 'refreshed' interpretation, as suggested on the website, comes much closer to narrating the integrality of slavery in the entire tower-landscape-collection entity, in the words of Amy Frost 'everything' on display is presented as 'underpinned with the source of [Beckford's] wealth'.[610]

However, this encouraging model is exceptional and at a nascent stage. In this interview Amy Frost discusses this 'refreshed' interpretation as an ongoing process based on continuing

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[608] Beckford's Tower and Museum https://beckfordstower.org.uk [accessed 16 June 2024].

[609] The words of Amy Frost in Richard Wyatt, 'Beckford's Tower' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1b9hZgr6LY [accessed 16 June 2024].

[610] Beckford's Tower and Museum, scheduled to open on 29 June 2024.

future consultations, an exceptional openness and investment of resources, which it would be wrong to generalize from at this stage.[611] Nevertheless I acknowledge that positive alternatives exist, although they remain marginal and necessarily require a very different mindset from that of the mainstream within the heritage industry.

To conclude, the Beckford Tower model acknowledges potential mistakes and the continuing need to learn and adjust, and it is to be hoped that this humility will eventually lead to a debate within the 'heritage' industry.[612] With regard to my opening assertion, Raymond Williams wrote of the landscape garden, 'the real invention of the landlords [was that] we cannot see them separate their decorative from their productive arts'.[613] This refers to the dissemblance of framing, the polite function of inclusion and exclusion, a process applied extensively to landscapes of enslavement on both sides of the Atlantic. And it is further parallel to ways in which slavery is frequently represented in the public arena in our own time, as explained by Oldfield, 'through the moral triumph of abolition, thereby substituting for the horrors of slavery and the slave trade a "culture of abolitionism"'.[614] The very device by which slavery was sanitized in the eighteenth century has been assimilated and reproduced in modern times in a continuation of British white power and entitlement across four centuries. Just as the trauma of slavery persists in the African diaspora, so the entitlement of the white gaze affirms its imagined moral high ground and perpetuates its hegemony over the enslaved other. Racism in British society is the afterlife of the unequal power relations of the plantation landscape in the collective internality of today. The Beckford Tower project is evidence that other ways of seeing the role and responsibility of presenting the heritage of slavery exist, but change can only come about through the abnegation of white institutional control and the incorporation of minority and marginal voices whose identities derive from the experience of enslavement.[615]

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[611] Wyatt, 'Beckford's Tower'.

[612] Ibid.

[613] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 154.

[614] Oldfield, *Chords of Freedom*, p. 2.

[615] For example, in another narrative of the Beckfords, see the article by the black theologian Robert Beckford about the statue of Alderman Beckford in the London Guildhall: Robert Beckford, 'A Plaque on a Statue Can't Cover a Cruel Slave Trader's Mass Murder. My Ancestors Deserve Better', *Guardian*, 19 September 2023

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/sep/19/plaque-statue-slave-trader-murder-ancestors-william-beckford-london [accessed 16 June 2024].

APPENIDICES

APPENDIX 1: ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1 Claude, *Landscape with Aeneas at Delos*, 1672, National Gallery.

Figure 2. Thomas Gainsborough, *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, c. 1750, National Gallery.

Figure 3. Anon, *Two Views of Land on the Worthy Park Estate*, late 18th century, National Archive MPGG1/56/15-15.

Figure 4. *View of the Roaring River*, from Long, *History of Jamaica*, II, facing p. 92.

Figure 5. *The White River Cascade*, from Long, II, facing p. 94.

Figure 6. William Berryman, *Happy Valley Estate buildings*, c. 1810, British Library Add MS 43397E.

Figure 7. William Beckford's Coat of Arms, 'Jamaican Worthies. VII William Beckford, Historian', p. 349.

Figure 8. George Robertson, engr Daniel Lerpiniere, *A View of the Island of Jamaica, of Part of the River Cobre near Spanish Town*, hand-coloured etching and engraving on paper, 1778, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

Figure 9. William Gilpin, *Dovedale in the Peak district of Derbyshire*, 1785 from Gilpin, *Observations*, II, facing p. 226.

Figure 10. *Interior of the Great Western Hall Leading to the Grand Saloon or Octagon*, from John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (London: Shaftesbury, 1823), facing p. 24.

Figure 11. *Fonthill Abbey,* from Rutter*, Delineations of Fonthill Abbey*, facing p. 66.

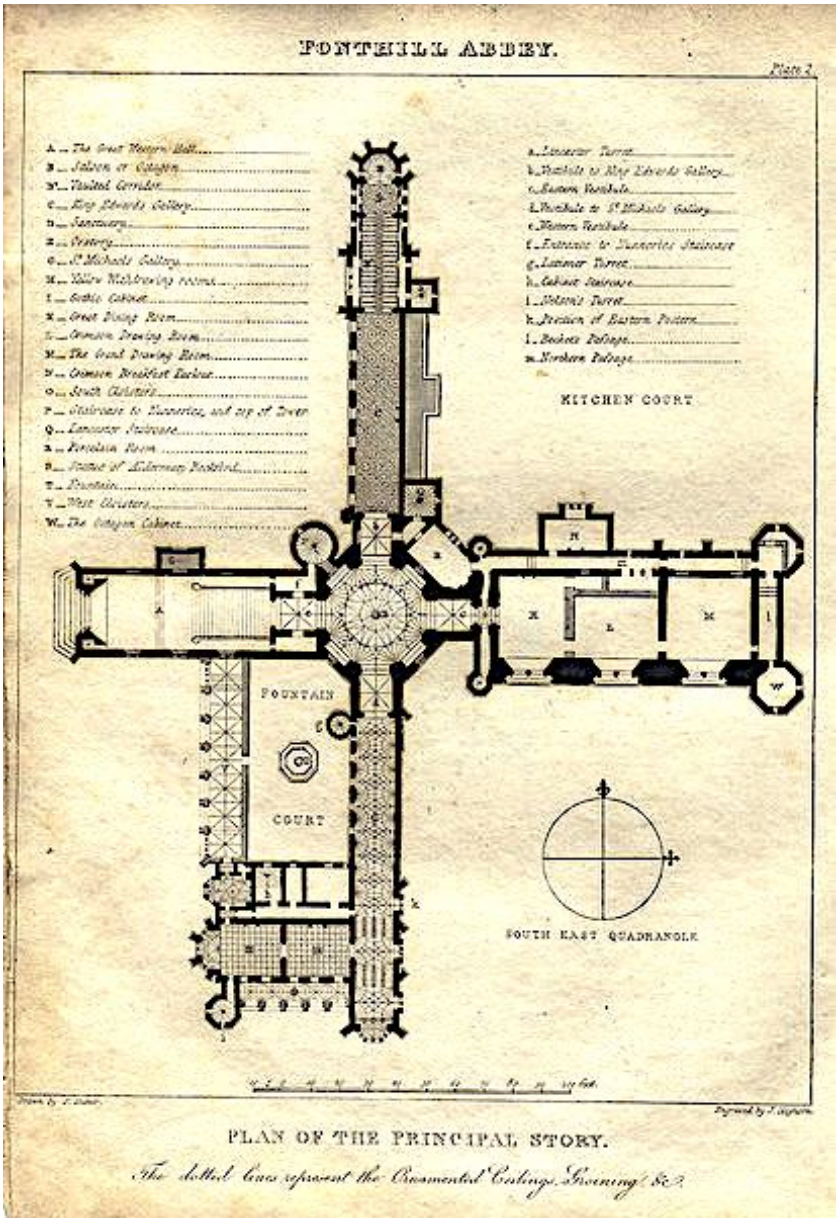

Figure 12. *Plan of the Principal Story*, from Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, facing p. 6.

APPENDIX 2: Edward Long, History *of Jamaica*, II pp. 92-95

This parish contains two remarkable cascades. The lesser is formed by a branch of Rio Alto, which is supposed to re-emerge (after a subterraneous current of several miles) between Roaring River Plantation and Menzie's Bog. The hills in this part are many of them composed of stalactite matter; by whose easy solution the water, oozing through the rocks, are copiously charged with it, so that they incrusctate all bodies deposited in them. This river rises at a considerable elevation above the sea's level, and at a great distance from the coast, and continues its course between the hills successively broad or contracted, as they on each side approach nearer, or recede further from, one another. In one of the more extended spaces, it expands into water in a gentle descent among a very curious group of anchovy pear-trees, whose spreading roots intercept the shallow stream in a multitude of different directions. The water, thus retarded, deposits its grosser contents, which in length of time have formed various incrustations, around as many cisterns, spread in beautiful ranks, gradually rising one above another, and bearing no ill resemblance to a magnificent flight of steps in rustic work, leading up to the enchanted palace of some puissant giant of romance. A sheet of water, transparent as crystal, conforming to the bend of the steps, overspreads their surface; and, as the rays of light, or sun-shine, play between the waving branches of the trees, it descends glittering with a thousand variegated tints. The incrustation in many parts is solid enough to bear the weight of a man; in others it is so thin, that some persons, whose curiosity led them to venture too far, have suddenly found themselves plunged up to the middle cold reservoir. These accidents give it still more the appearance of a Fairy region. The cisterns, or reservoirs, have their sides formed by broken boughs and limbs, incrusted over, and sustained by the trunks of trees, promiscuously growing between them. The cisterns themselves are always brim-full of water, which trickles from one to the other; and, although several of them are six or seven feet deep, one may clearly discern whatever lies at the bottom. The *lamina* which envelope them are in general near half an inch in thickness. To a superficial observer their sides have the appearance of stone; but, upon breaking any of them, there appears either a bough between the two incrusting coats, or a vacant space, which a bough has once filled, and by the mouldering of which in length of time a cavity has been left.

On opening several of these incrustations, not only boughs were found, but entire leaves of a muddy-green hue. Whence it may be conjectured, that a shell, somewhat thicker than that of an egg, may be concreted by this water in less than a twelvemonth.

[…]

The other, or great cascade, more properly a cataract, is formed by the White River which is of considerable magnitude, and, after a course of about twelve miles among the mountains, precipitates in a fall of about three hundred feet or more, obliquely measured, with such a hoarse and thundering noise, as to be heard at a great distance. Viewed from below, the Ajutage[s] appears to be a body of water, of small bulk, issuing between a tuft of wood; but, as it continues its descent, the breadth gradually increases, until it reaches the bottom, where it forms a beautiful circular bason, and then flows away in a serpentine course towards the sea. Through the whole descent it is broken and interrupted by a regular climax of stalactic matter, incrusted over a kind of soft chalk stone, which yields easily to the chisel. So vast a discharge of water, thus wildly agitated by the steepness of the fall, dashing and foaming from step to step, with all the impetuosity and rage peculiar to this element, exhibits an aweful, pleasing scene. But the grandeur of it is astonishingly heightened by the fresh supplies which it receives after the rainy-season. At such times, the roaring of the flood, reverberated from the adjacent rocks, trees, and hills; the tumultuous violence of the torrent, tumbling headlong with resistless fury; and the gloom of the over-hanging wood, contrasted with the soft serenity of the sky, the silvery glitter of the spray, the flight of birds skimming over the lofty summit of the mountain, and the placid surface of the bason below; form, all together an assemblage of subjects, the most happily mingled, and beyond the power of painting to express.

“Wide o’er the brim, with many a torrent swell’d,

“And the mix’d ruin of its banks o’er-spread;

“At last the rous’d-up river pours along,

“Resistless! Roaring! Dreadful! – Down it comes

“From the rude mountain, and the mossy wild,

“Tumbling through rocks abrupt, and sounding far: –

“The o’er the sanded valley floating spreads,

“Calm; sluggish; silent; – till again, constrain’d

“Between two meeting crags, it bursts away,

“Where rocks and woods o’er-hang the turbid stream.

“There gathering triple force, rapid and deep,

“It boils! And wheels! and foams! And thunders through!”

THOMPSON.

A beautiful intermixture of tall and stately trees rises gracefully from the margin on either side; whose bark and foliage are diversified with a variety of the loveliest tints. And, to complete the picture, the bason is ornamented with two elegant trees of the palm kind, which spring like straight columns out of the water, placed by the hand of nature at such even distance from the banks on each side, that art could not have done the work with more attention to propriety and exactness. […] If the lesser cascade is delicate and curious, this is grand and sublime. The former is contemplated with delight, and this with a pleasing and reverential wonder. The fall is said to exceed in grandeur that of Tivoli, or any other in Europe, though much inferior to that of Niagara.

APPENDIX 3: THE SABLE VENUS

The Sable Venus; An Ode. (Written in Jamaica in 1765.)[616]

Alba ligustra cadunt vaccinia nigra leguntur. Virgil.

I long had my gay lyre forsook,
But strung it t'other day, and took
T'wards HELICOON my way;
The muses all, th'assembly grac'd,
The president himself was plac'd,
By chance 'twas concert-day.

ERATO smil'd to see my come;
Ask'd why I staid so much at home;
I own'd my conduct wrong; —
But now, the sable queen of love,
Resolv'd my gratitude to prove,
Had sent me for a song.

The ladies look'd extremely shy,
APOLLO's smile was arch and fly,
But not one word they said:
I gaz'd, — sure silence is consent, —
I made my bow, away I went;
Was not my duty paid?

Come to my bosom, genial fire,
Soft sounds, and lively thoughts inspire;
Unusual is my theme:
Not such dissolving OVID sung,
Nor melting SAPPHO's glowing tongue, —
More dainty mine I deem.

Sweet is the beam of morning bright,
Yet sweet the sober shade of night;
On rich ANGOLA's shores.
While beauty clad in sable dye,
Enchanting fires the wond'ring eye,
Farewell, ye PAPHIAN bow'rs.

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[616]By Isaac Teale, in Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 2 vols (London, John Stockdale, 1794), II, pp. 27-33.

Oh sable queen! thy mild domain
I seek, and court thy gentle reign,
So soothing, soft and sweet;
Where meeting love, sincere delight,
Fond pleasure, ready joys invite,
And unbought raptures meet.

The prating FRANK, the SPANIARD proud,
The double SCOT, HIBERNIAN loud,
And sullen ENGLISH own
The pleasing softness of thy sway,
And here, transferr'd allegiance pay,
For gracious is thy trone.

From East to West, o'er Ind
Thy scepter sways; thy pow'r we find
By both the tropicks felt;
The blazing sun that gilds the zone,
Waits but the triumph of thy throne,
Quite round the burning belt.

When thou, this large domain to view,
JAMAICA's isle, thy conquest new,
First left thy native shore,
Bright was the morn, and soft the breeze.
With wanton joy the curling seas.
The beauteous burthen bore.

Of iv'ry was the car, inlaid,
With ev'ry shell of lively shade,
The throne was burnish'd gold:
The footstool gay with coral beam'd,
The wheels with brightest amber gleam'd,
And glist'ring round they roll'd.

The peacock and the ostrich spread
Their beauteous plumes, a trembling shade,
From noon-day's sultry flame:
Sent by their fire, the careful East,
The wanton breezes fann'd her breast,
And flutter'd round the dame.

The winged fish, in purple trace
The chariot drew; with easy grace
Their azure rein she guides:
And how they fly, and now they swim;
Now o'er the wave they lightly skim,
Or dart beneath the tides.

Each bird that haunts the rock and bay,
Each scaly native of the sea,
Came crowding o'er the main:
The dolphin shews his thousand dyes,
The grampus his enormous size,
And gambol in her train.

Her skin excell'd the raven plume,
Her breath the fragrant orange bloom,
Her eye the tropic beam:
Soft was her lip as silken down,
And mild her look as ev'ning sun
That gilds the COBRE stream.

The lovliest limbs her form compose,
Such as her sister VENUS chose,
In FLORENCE, where she's seen;
Both just alike, except the white,
No difference, no — none at night,
The beauteous dames between.

With native ease serene she sat,
In elegance of charms compleat,
And ev'ry heart she won:
Faire dress deformity may shade,
True beauty courts no foreign aid:
Can tapers light the sun? —

The pow'r that rules old ocean wide,
'Twas he, they say, had calm'd the tide,
Beheld the chariot roll:
Assum'd the figure of the tar,
The Captain of a man of war,
And told her all his soul.

She smil'd with kind consenting eyes —
Beauty was ever valour's prize;
He rais'd a murky cloud:
The tritons sound, the sirens sing,
The dolphins dance, the billowing ring,
And joy fills all the crowd.

Blest offspring of the warm embrace!
Fond ruler of the crisped race!
Tho' strong thy bow, der boy,
Thy mingled shafts of black and white,
Are wing'd with feathers of delight,
Their points are tipt with joy.

But, when her step had touch'd the strand,
Wild rapture seiz'd the ravish'd land,
From ev'ry part they came:
Each mountain, valley, plain and grove
Haste eagerly to shew their love
Right welcome was the dame.

PORT-ROYAL shouts were heard aloud,
Gay ST. IAGO sent a crowd,
Grave KINGSTON not a few;
No rabble rout, — I heard it said,
Some great ones join'd the cavalcade —
The muse will not say who.

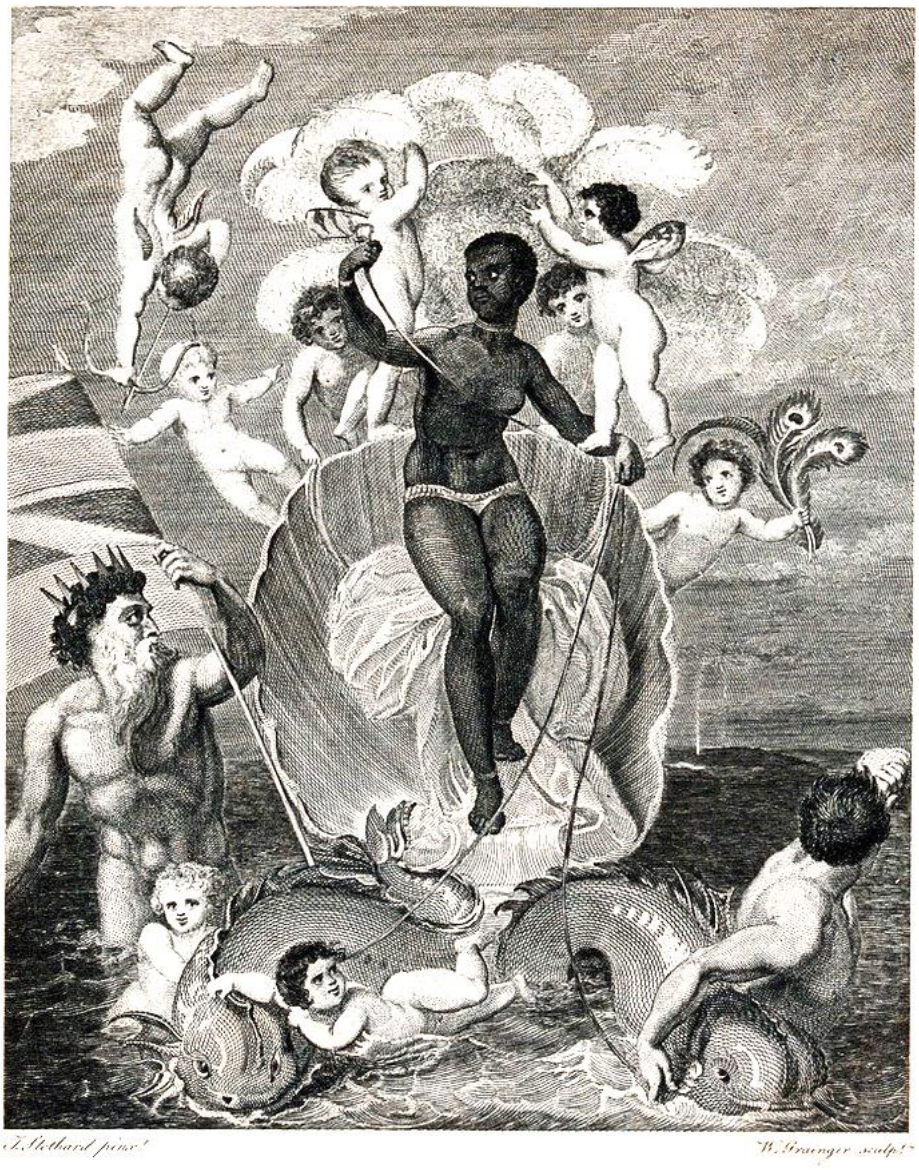
Gay Goddess of the sable smile!
Propitious still, this grateful isle
With thy protection bless!
Here fix secure thy constant throne;
Where all, adoring thee, do ONE,
ONE Deity confess.

For me, if I no longer own
Allegiance to the CYPRIAN throne,
I play no fickle part;
It were ingratitude to flight
Superior kindness; I delight
To feel a grateful heart.

Then, playful Goddess! cease to change,
Nor in new beauties vainly range;
Tho' whatsoe'er thy view,
Try ev'ry form though canst put on,
I'll follow thee thro ev'ry one;
So staunch am I, so true.

Do thou in gentle PHIBIA smile,
In artful BENNEBA beguile,
In wanton MIMBA pout;
In sprightly CUBA's eye look gay,
Or grave in sober QUASHEBA,
I still shall find thee out.

Thus have I sung; perhaps too gay
Such subject for such time of day,
And fitter far for youth:
Should then the song too wanton seem,
You know who chose th'unlucky theme,
Dear BRYAN tell the truth.



The VOYAGE of the SABLE VENUS, from ANGOLA to the WEST INDIES.

T Stothard, engr. W. Grainger, *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies,* Wellcome Collection.

APPENDIX 4: James Thomson, *The Seasons*.

'Summer' ll. 663-89

Bear me, Pomona! To thy citron groves;

To where the lemon and the piercing lime,

With the deep orange, glowing thro' the green,

Their lighter glories blend. Layme reclin'd

Beneath the spreading tamarind that shakes,

Fann'd by the breeze, its fever-cooling fruit.

Deep in the night the massy locust sheds,

Quench my hot limbs; or lead me thro' the moze,

Embowering endless, of the Indian fig;

Or thrown at gayer ease, on some fair brow,

Let me behold, by breezy murmurs cool'd,

Broad o'er my head the verdant cedar wave,

And high palmetos lift their graceful shade.

O stretch'd amid these orchards of the sun,

Give me to drain the cocoa's milky bowl,

And from the palm to draw its freshening wine;

More bounteous far, than all the frantic juice

Which Bacchus pours. Nor, in its slender twigs

Low-bending, be the full pomegranate scorn'd;

Nor creeping thro' the woods, the gelid race

Of berries. Oft in humble station dwells

Unboastful worth, above fastidious pomp.

Witness, thou best Anâna! thou the pride

Of vegetable life, beyond whate'er

The poets imag'd in the golden age:

Quick let me strip thee of thy tufty coat,

Spread thy ambrosial stores, and feast with Jove!

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